Pahankanuwa Sermon #35

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

Uṭṭhānenappamādena, saññamena damena ca;

Dīpaṁ kayirātha medhāvī, yaṁ ogho nābhikīrati.

From:

Verse 25 from the Appamādavagga (Chapter on Heedfulness) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

At times there can be a vast difference between a person's socially accepted level of intelligence and their samsaric level of intelligence. Even within an individual who is marginalized according to conventional social examinations and tests, deep understandings and special mental strengths developed through samsara may lie hidden. If such a person receives the proper association of a good spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) and strives with unyielding, unremitting effort, they can unearth wondrous abilities from within themselves. A fine illustration of this is revealed in the background story of the verse we have chosen as our theme today.

In the city of Rājagaha, the young daughter of a certain wealthy merchant family was kept by her parents on the seventh floor of a mansion for her protection. However, she developed an intimate relationship with her own male servant and ran away from the merchant's mansion. They went to live in another province, living in disguise. While living like this, when she was close to giving birth to her first child, the merchant's daughter said to her husband, "Giving birth in a place where there are no relatives is very troublesome. Let us go to my parents." But this husband was afraid to go, thinking, "If I go, they will kill me." Yet, he did not voice this. Instead, he kept putting it off, saying, "Let us go tomorrow, let us go tomorrow." The merchant's daughter understood this. Therefore, when her husband was away, she informed the neighbors, tidied up the house, and departed. After the husband returned home, he

learned of this from the neighbors and went in pursuit of her. He met her along the way, and she gave birth to the child right there on the road. Thereafter, the two of them decided, "Now let us go back to our home." Because the child was born on the road (*pantha*), they named him "Panthaka."

While they were living back at home, when the time came for her to have her second child, the merchant's daughter again thought that she must go to meet her parents. Since her husband would not allow it, she set off alone. The husband pursued her as before and met her. It is mentioned that on this occasion, too, the child was born right on the road. Since both were born on the road, both had to be named "Panthaka." Therefore, the first-born child was called "Mahāpanthaka" (Panthaka the Elder), and the second child was called "Cūḷapanthaka" (Panthaka the Younger). While the two children, thus named, were growing up, Mahāpanthaka, while playing with his friends, heard them talk about their grandfathers, uncles, and relatives. He came and asked his mother, "Do we not have relatives? Do we not have grandfathers?" Then the mother said, "We have them in the city of Rājagaha." When she explained that the merchant and his wife of that merchant clan were their relatives, he asked, "Why do we not go there?" She could not answer that question. However, the child kept asking repeatedly, "Why do we not go there?" Finally, unable to avoid it, the merchant's daughter told her husband, "I cannot escape these children because of this question; let us take the two of them. After all, my parents are not going to eat us alive, are they?" They discussed it in this way. The husband said, "I cannot go, but I will devise some means." Then, the two of them set off with the two children. They went and stayed at a rest house for travelers near the gate of the city of Rājagaha, and sent a message to the merchant's mansion, saying that their daughter had arrived with the two children. But the merchant thought, "There is no one in this samsara who has not been our child. Yet, these two have brought great disgrace upon us. Therefore, they need not come to us. Send only the two children to us." He sent a message, along with wealth, saying, "Take this wealth, as much as you need, and live wherever you wish. Send only the two children here." In this manner, the two children were sent to the merchant.

Now, this merchant used to go regularly to see the Blessed One and listen to the Dhamma. The child Mahāpanthaka also went with him. As he listened to the Dhamma repeatedly, this child felt the desire to ordain. So, he said to his grandfather, "Please! If you would give me permission, I would like to ordain." "Oh! I would prefer your ordaining over everyone else in the entire world ordaining!" said the grandfather, and took him to the Blessed One. "This grandson of mine wishes to ordain," he told the Blessed One. The Blessed One also assigned a certain monk to ordain the boy Mahāpanthaka. Thus, he ordained, received higher ordination, learned the Dhamma, practiced meditation, and attained Arahantship. Having attained Arahantship, he thought, "Ah! How wonderful it would be if I could also give the bliss of ordination, the bliss of absorption (*jhāna*), and the bliss of fruition (*phala*) to my younger brother, Cūḷapanthaka." One day, he went to the merchant's mansion and said, "O Merchant, if you permit, I shall ordain Cūḷapanthaka." "Oh,

very well. I have no objection at all," said the grandfather, granting permission. Thus, he took Cūḷapanthaka and ordained him.

Next, he assigned a verse to the young monk Cūḷapanthaka to memorize and recite. The verse was highly beautiful, of a kind suited for young children. Indeed, it pertained to the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), carrying a meaning that inspires faith (*saddhā*) in the Blessed One:

Padumaṃ yathā kokanadaṃ sugandhaṃ

pāto siyā aṅgīrasaṃ passa virocamānaṃ

tapantamādityamivantalikkhe

Even when judged by its rhythm, it seems easy to memorize. Yet, for some reason, the young monk Cūḷapanthaka could not memorize it; he simply could not commit this verse to memory. When he memorized the first line and moved on to the second, he would forget the first line. In this manner, he tried to memorize it for four whole months, but failed. The reason for this is given as a past karma. In the past, during the time of Kassapa Buddha, this young monk Cūḷapanthaka had been a highly intelligent monk. On an occasion when an incompetent monk in the group was reciting his lessons, he had mocked and humiliated him for his inability to memorize. Consequently, that monk eventually gave up reciting and studying altogether. It is shown that due to that unwholesome karma, in this life, Ven. Cūḷapanthaka was unable to memorize even such a small verse for four whole months. Therefore, Ven. Mahāpanthaka thought, "Now, if he cannot memorize even this single verse, what is the use?" He called Ven. Cūḷapanthaka and said, "Cūḷapanthaka, if you cannot memorize this small verse in four months, how will you complete your monkhood? How will you become an Arahant? It is better for you to go home now." He made him cry. However, by that time, Ven. Cūḷapanthaka had developed a great love for the monastic life. He did not wish to go home; he was deeply attached to the life of a monk.

Now, while things were in this state, it is mentioned—though most of these events usually took place at the Veḷuvana monastery—that on this occasion, the Blessed One was residing in the Mango Grove of the physician Jīvaka. Thus, one day—perhaps on this very day—physician Jīvaka, having visited the Blessed One and listened to the Dhamma, approached Ven. Mahāpanthaka. Why? Because by then, Ven. Mahāpanthaka held a certain office among the Sangha. What was that office? It is called the *bhattuddesaka* (distributor of meals). What is the meaning of that office? When there is a large number of monks and lay devotees come requesting fifty or a hundred monks for an alms-giving, it is this monk who selects and sends the monks according to their turn. Ven. Mahāpanthaka held this office. Ven. Mahāpanthaka asked physician Jīvaka how many monks were needed. Jīvaka replied that he invited the entire Sangha, led by the Buddha. He asked how many monks were residing there. When told there were five hundred monks, physician Jīvaka said, "I invite

them all." At that, Ven. Mahāpanthaka said, "This young monk Cūḷapanthaka has no skill in learning. Setting him aside, I give permission to invite the rest." The young monk overheard this. Thinking, "It seems Ven. Mahāpanthaka has given up on me. I am forced to go home. I must go home and at least make merit by giving alms," the young monk prepared to return home the following morning and set off.

That morning, when the Blessed One entered the attainment of great compassion (*mahā-karuṇā-samāpatti*) and surveyed the world, he saw Ven. Cūḷapanthaka. What did the Blessed One do then? He was walking up and down near the gate on the path Cūḷapanthaka was taking. When Ven. Cūḷapanthaka saw the Blessed One, paid homage, and stood to one side, the Blessed One asked, "What is it, Cūḷapanthaka, at this hour? Where are you going?" He replied, "My elder brother, Ven. Mahāpanthaka, is expelling me from the monastery, saying I am incompetent. Therefore, I am going home." Then the Blessed One said, "Cūḷapanthaka, does your ordination not belong to me? When your elder brother told you to leave, why did you not come to me? Come to me." Saying this, he stroked his head, took him along, and had him sit near the Blessed One's Fragrant Chamber (*gandha-kuṭi*). Having had him sit down, it is said he created a piece of cloth through psychic power. In any case, placing a clean white piece of cloth in his hand, he said, "Cūḷapanthaka, face the rising sun and rub this piece of cloth while repeating: '*Rajo haraṇaṃ, rajo haraṇaṃ*' (removal of dirt, removal of dirt)." He assigned him this task, telling him to rub this white cloth while repeating "removal of dirt, removal of dirt."

By that time, the group arriving to conduct them to the alms-giving arrived. Thus, the Blessed One and the entire Sangha proceeded to the house of physician Jīvaka for the alms meal. What happened next is recounted. Physician Jīvaka poured the water of dedication over the Blessed One's hands and prepared to offer the alms food. However, the Blessed One covered his bowl with his hand. When he covered his bowl with his hand, physician Jīvaka inquired about the reason. The Blessed One said, "Are there not still monks left at the monastery?" Ven. Mahāpanthaka replied, "There are no monks left, Venerable Sir." When the Blessed One repeated that there were, physician Jīvaka sent a servant to go and see.

By the time the servant went, what had occurred? In the meantime, another event had taken place. As Ven. Cūḷapanthaka was rubbing and rubbing that cloth, he noticed that it was becoming dirty. He was rubbing it with the thought, "I am removing the dirt," yet it was becoming soiled. Then he began to contemplate: "This cloth became soiled because of the impurity of my own body. Alas! *Aniccā vata saṅkhārā*—impermanent / inconstant indeed are preparations / Preparations / volitional activity!" Reflecting on the nature of preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*) in this way, his mind turned towards insight (*vipassanā*). At that very moment, the Blessed One, while seated at the house of the alms-giving, projected his aura and admonished Ven. Cūḷapanthaka with a verse. He declared: "Cūḷapanthaka, it is not merely the dirt on your body; within the mind, too, there are impurities called lust, hatred, and delusion. Abandon those!"—proclaiming

these verses as if through psychic power. Relying on this, Ven. Cūḷapanthaka developed insight (*vipassanā*) and became a great Arahant possessing the direct knowledges (*abhiññā*).

Thus, as mentioned before, when the Blessed One covered his bowl with his hand, Ven. Mahāpanthaka insisted, "There are no monks at the monastery." But the Blessed One asserted that there were. It was to resolve this that physician Jīvaka sent a servant. When the servant arrived, the monastery was filled with monks. Some monks were sewing robes, some were dyeing robes, some were reciting texts—there resided a thousand monks, each having a different appearance. What was the reason for this? Ven. Cūḷapanthaka was observing everything that was happening. By now, he possessed direct knowledges (*abhiññā*). He saw with his divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) that Ven. Mahāpanthaka was saying there were no monks, while the Blessed One was saying there were. Thinking, "I shall show that I am here," he created them—he created those thousand monks. The servant could not understand it. He returned and said, "There are about a thousand monks." The Blessed One then said, "Go back and say, 'The Teacher summons Ven. Cūḷapanthaka.'" When the servant went back a second time and said this, all those thousand monks created through psychic power declared, "I am Cūḷapanthaka, I am Cūḷapanthaka!" Unable to resolve this, the servant returned and reported it. Then the Blessed One said, "In that case, hold the hand of the monk who first says 'I am Cūḷapanthaka.' The others will then vanish." The messenger went back and did exactly as told. Thereupon, Ven. Cūḷapanthaka accompanied the messenger back. After arriving, when the alms meal was finished, the Buddha assigned the delivery of the appreciation of the meal (*anumodanā*) to Ven. Cūḷapanthaka. Ven. Cūḷapanthaka, now a great Arahant possessing direct knowledges (*abhiññā*), delivered that sermon in an exceptionally eloquent manner.

This event was so wondrous that the monks, on several occasions, discussed the natural principle (*dhammatā*) within it. That is to say, Ven. Mahāpanthaka had deemed him incompetent and treated him as an unsuitable person (*abhavya*) in this Dispensation—to put it bluntly, like an unfortunate wretch. Indeed, if one cannot memorize a single verse in four months, does it not seem like an unfortunate wretch? For this reason, regarding him as unsuitable and as someone who could achieve nothing in this Dispensation, Ven. Mahāpanthaka had prepared to send him home. It is mentioned that the Sangha spoke several times in the Dhamma assembly about this wondrous fact: how such a person, through the great compassion and marvellous skillful means (*upāya-kosalla*) of the Buddha, became an Arahant endowed with the direct knowledges (*abhiññā*) within a single morning. On certain occasions, the Buddha demonstrated through Jātaka stories that in the past, too, he had assisted Cūḷapanthaka in various instances.

What is particularly important regarding this Dhamma is that on one occasion, while the monks were discussing this very topic, they remarked that it was because the young monk Cūḷapanthaka did not abandon his efforts and acted with energetic

strive, that he obtained the help of the Blessed One and attained such a state so rapidly within a single morning. Upon hearing this conversation, the Blessed One declared, "So it is, monks. If anyone in this Dispensation acts without negligence (*appamāda*) and with energetic strive (*uṭṭhāna-vīriya*), they are capable of attaining their own Nibbāna." He then uttered the Dhamma verse we chose as our theme earlier:

Uṭṭhānen'appamādena

saññamena damena ca

dīpaṃ kayirātha medhāvī

yaṃ ogho nābhikīrati

"By energetic strive (*uṭṭhāna*), by diligence (*appamāda*)"—with unyielding energy and the practice of diligence—"and by restraint and self-control (*saññamena damena ca*)"—with the restraint developed through virtues like morality, and with sensory control—the wise person (*medhāvī*) builds an island that cannot be swept away by those sweeping floods. Here, "island" refers to Nibbāna. "Floods" (*ogha*) mean the sweeping currents. These refer to the mental defilement floods of sensual desire (*kāmoghā*), becoming / existence (*bhavoghā*), views (*diṭṭhoghā*), and ignorance (*avijjoghā*). The island is Nibbāna—a place where one does not get caught in these defilement floods that sweep beings along in samsara, and where one can remain safe from them. The reason "island" is a name for Nibbāna is that it represents the extinguishment enjoyed in the state of the concentration of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samādhi*). The Buddha expounded this Dhamma verse containing this deep meaning: that one attains that very state.

Briefly, that is the summary of the story. Next, let us try to bring out the Dhamma points we can extract from this, which can also help us in our own lives.

Now, as we said, one's samsaric level of intelligence cannot be measured by conventional social examinations, tests, and so forth. Certain strengths may exist, and if one receives the association of a good spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) when the opportunity arises, those strengths can be brought out. A perfect example of this is how Ven. Cūḷapanthaka—whom Ven. Mahāpanthaka had failed in this "examination of Nibbāna," deemed unsuitable, and prepared to send home—attained the supreme state in a very short time, within a single morning, due to the help of the Buddha as his good spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) and his great compassion. From this, we see that whatever intelligence tests, interviews, examinations, and so forth we devise in this world cannot reveal a person's true worth. Highly valuable strengths can lie embedded within.

Furthermore, this story reveals that after the young monk Ven. Cūḷapanthaka attained that state, he played a little joke on his elder brother. He made a certain playful tease toward Ven. Mahāpanthaka. What was this joke? We can say that this

joke was a way of teaching a certain lesson. Now, we know that in this society too, there are many—especially some scholars nowadays—who bring forward the concept of triple-root rebirth (*tihetuka-paṭisandhi*) to discourage many faithful people who are striving for Nibbāna. It is as if they are failing them in the exam beforehand and sending them home. Many seem to be doing exactly that kind of thing. Something similar to that happened here from Ven. Mahāpanthaka as well. In response, Cūḷapanthaka taught Ven. Mahāpanthaka a lesson by showing him a monastery filled with a thousand monks. This means that one cannot marginalize someone so abruptly. Valuable strengths can exist within a person. Thus, we can describe this as a kind of "playfulness within the Dispensation" (*sāsanika huratalayak*).

Next, alongside that, a highly valuable point revealed by this story is the Buddha's quality of great compassion (*mahā-karuṇā*). Along with this quality of great compassion, the Buddha himself declares on certain occasions, "Monks, I have compassion (*anukampā*) for you." "There is compassion in me for you." We know, and we have heard, that the Buddha had attained a state, Nibbāna, that is unshakable by the eight worldly conditions. However, due to the power of the perfections (*pāramī*) the Buddha fulfilled over a long period, any perturbation or tremor in the thoughts and feelings of those in the world who deserve compassion and mercy is registered in the Buddha's mind. The special occasion when this is felt is indeed that attainment of great compassion (*mahā-karuṇā-samāpatti*). Today, you devotees might think of various modern instruments—even though these are not perfect analogies or equivalents. In whatever manner, when the Buddha enters the attainment of great compassion, the tremor of those trembling hearts that deserve compassion is captured by the Buddha's mind.

Similarly, when reflecting on that event, what goes hand-in-hand with the Buddha's great compassion, with that very sympathy, is the skillful means (*upāya-kosalla*) developed through wisdom. He devises a certain method. The quality known as *purisa-damma-sārathī* (charioteer of tameable men) is a special attribute of the Blessed One; he possesses a unique power to discipline various individuals and direct them to Nibbāna. The Buddha applies whichever method is required according to the situation. Here, too, let us think a little about Ven. Cūḷapanthaka. Now, when a young child in a home is driven out without even being given food, what great grief and helplessness would arise in that child's heart? A similar thing happened to Ven. Cūḷapanthaka. It was Ven. Mahāpanthaka who had ordained him—his own elder brother. After bringing him from home and ordaining him, he finally failed him, deemed him unsuitable, and on top of that, excluded him from the invitation to the alms-giving. What immense pain must have arisen in Ven. Cūḷapanthaka's young heart?

Now, we know how a mother would act in such a situation. Just as a mother would stroke her child's head and console him, saying, "Even if your elder brother drove you away, my son, why did you not come to me? Why did you not come and tell me?", the Buddha too, on that occasion, stroked Ven. Cūḷapanthaka's head and comforted

the young monk, saying, "Come, come to my Fragrant Chamber. After all, does your ordination not belong to me? It does not belong to Mahāpanthaka, does it?" In this instance, we clearly see that quality of great compassion as well as the knowledge of skillful means (*upāya-kosalla-ñāṇa*). Had there been even a slight delay, Ven. Cūḷapanthaka would have returned home. However, when the Buddha came to the gate before that, questioned him, and consoled him, what great courage must have filled that young head upon being touched by his sacred hand? There is a certain natural principle (*dhammatā*) in this as well. It is not generally mentioned that the Buddha stroked heads like that. He did not even stroke the head of young Ven. Rāhula. Prince Rāhula followed him, hanging on to him, yet he did not stroke his head even though he followed him so. But on this occasion, he stroked his head. There is a deep natural principle (*dhammatā*) within this. This will be revealed further as we proceed. So, he acted exactly like a mother on that occasion. We can understand the courage derived from that. Out of his sheer faith (*saddhā*) and reverence, Ven. Cūḷapanthaka might have previously thought of the Buddha as someone so exalted that one could not even go near him, let alone approach him closely. Ven. Cūḷapanthaka must have thought, "The Blessed One is no ordinary person; he is someone we cannot even approach." Yet, when the Buddha came right up to him, stroked his head, and said, "Come to my chamber," what immense courage must have arisen in that young monk?

Next, in the manner described, Ven. Cūḷapanthaka, relying on that courage, obediently kept rubbing that cloth just as the Buddha had instructed. All the other monks had gone to the house of the alms-giving. Ven. Cūḷapanthaka did not even have an alms meal. Even without food, he engaged in that meditation diligently, with energetic strive (*uṭṭhāna-vīriya*), with unremitting effort, and with restraint and self-control, exactly as the Buddha had directed.

When considering that meditation, there is a certain natural principle (*dhammatā*) in it as well. Devotees, in certain Dhamma stories, there is a wondrous depth in the combination and fitting together of events. Usually, when we narrate a story, we just recount the sequence of events without tending to analyze them. However, when we reflect calmly, we see a wondrous connection within every single event.

Two karmic results (*kamma-vipāka*) are mentioned regarding Ven. Cūḷapanthaka. One is a bad karma. What was that bad karma? During the time of Kassapa Buddha, he had mocked and made fun of a monk who was incompetent in learning. Because of that, he was unable to memorize that verse. Next, there is also a good side. It is explained like this: How did he attain Arahantship so quickly through the meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) of that piece of cloth? In the past, when he was a king, while touring the city—we can assume he was on elephant-back—which means he must have traveled around the city during the daytime to inspect it—while making this tour, due to the intense heat of the sun, sweat poured from his forehead. He wiped his forehead with a clean white cloth, something like a handkerchief, that was nearby. After wiping his forehead, when he looked at it, he saw that the piece of cloth

had become soiled. Even though he was a king, perhaps riding on an elephant, his mind turned toward insight (*vipassanā*): "*Aniccā vata saṅkhārā*—impermanent / inconstant indeed are preparations / Preparations / volitional activity! Every preparation / formation / volitional activity is impermanent / inconstant in this way. No matter what state one is in, this is the nature of the body." Thus, his mind turned toward insight (*vipassanā*). It was to connect with that mind which had turned toward insight (*vipassanā*) that the Blessed One, as mentioned, gave him a clean white cloth and told him to face the sun and repeat "*rajo haraṇaṃ, rajo haraṇaṃ*."

Nowadays, if we think about it, some people say that lay devotees should only be given sermons necessary to develop their businesses and so forth, and that it is not worthwhile to speak to them about insight (*vipassanā*). They claim that insight (*vipassanā*) is something meant only for monks meditating alone in the forests, and that lay devotees do not need it. Now, here is an excellent example. In the past, even though Cūḷapanthaka lived as a king—no matter that he was a king, sweat still poured, for the natural principle (*dhammatā*) is just the same—he did not let that sweat go to waste. Nowadays, perhaps when sweat flows, we merely wipe it with a handkerchief and put it in our pocket. However, in the past, that king directed that sweat toward insight (*vipassanā*); he credited it to insight (*vipassanā*); he deposited it into insight (*vipassanā*). It was that very thought of insight (*vipassanā*) credited to his account that ultimately helped him attain Arahantship. There is a good lesson there too. Through this, we see that we should make even the saliva we spit out in our daily lives support our attainment of Nibbāna. How do we make the flowing sweat support Nibbāna? By contemplating that the nature of preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*) is such, in accordance with the Three Characteristics (*ti-lakkhaṇa*) taught by the Buddha. If even for a single moment a tremor, a shock, or a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) regarding the true state of the world arises, it accumulates automatically. If at some point one hopes for Nibbāna, that experience might even present itself as a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). A wondrous natural principle (*dhammatā*) of this kind is seen here.

Thus, we can gather the factors that helped Ven. Cūḷapanthaka attain Arahantship from this. This meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) is, in truth, the dirt on a white cloth. When one gazes at a white cloth for a long time, absorption (*jhāna*) can arise through it, such as in the form of a *kasiṇa* (meditative device). Then, using that absorption as a basis, the insight (*vipassanā*) is developed precisely on that dirt we mentioned. While looking at the white piece of cloth and repeating "*rajo haraṇaṃ, rajo haraṇaṃ*," a wondrous thing occurred within a single mealtime. If we try to understand how a young monk who could not memorize a verse, without any other instruction, passed all stages of absorption (*jhāna*), obtained the direct knowledges (*abhiññā*), and reached the highest peak of insight (*vipassanā*) to become an Arahant, we see that it may lie within the meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) given by the Buddha itself. He developed insight (*vipassanā*) based on tranquility (*samatha*), or based on absorption (*jhāna*). That white color supported tranquility

(*samatha*), but it was that moment of soiling which served as the cause for insight (*vipassanā*).

If we dive deeper into this, another factor that supported this was, for whatever reason, the verse Ven. Mahāpanthaka had given him to memorize. Even if you, devotees, cannot memorize it, we mentioned that it is a highly beautiful verse. There is a certain natural principle (*dhammatā*) in that verse as well. For one thing, what is expressed in that verse inspires a wondrous faith (*saddhā*) in the Blessed One. It is a truly beautiful verse:

Padumaṃ yathā kokanadaṃ sugandhaṃ

pāto siyā aṅgīrasaṃ passa virocamānaṃ

tapantamādityamivantalikkhe

"Just as there is a fragrant red lotus blossomed in the morning, even so..." This is a simile applied to the Buddha. He is like a fragrant red lotus blossomed in the morning. Next, what is the other simile? "*Tapantamādityamivantalikkhe*"—like the sun shining in the sky. Look at the Blessed One, Aṅgīrasa, who is of such characteristics, who is so exceedingly magnificent: "*Aṅgīrasaṃ passa virocamānaṃ*"—"Behold the radiant Aṅgīrasa Buddha!" "Behold the radiant Aṅgīrasa Buddha, who is like a fragrant red lotus fully blossomed in the morning, and who shines like the sun glowing in the sky." This is the very verse given to the young monk Cūḷapanthaka to memorize. Although he could not memorize it, the meaning must have struck his heart. Through that, recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*) and faith (*saddhā*) in the Blessed One must have grown. So, that too did not go to waste. On that very background, through that very attraction, the Buddha established him.

Next, if we reflect a little, there is something more there. When the Blessed One handed him the cloth and told him to meditate facing the sun, normally a person would not like that. Even nowadays, those who meditate look for highly comfortable places. But here, as the sun rises, sweat flows. This is a difficult thing. Yet, as expressed in the verse, indeed, even for a lotus to blossom, it needs sunlight; it blossoms by looking toward the sunlight. Similarly, due to the young monk Cūḷapanthaka's faith (*saddhā*) in the Blessed One—where the Blessed One is compared to the sun, like the shining sun—and just as the lotus blossoms by looking at the shining sun, so did his mind open. Perhaps no one interprets it in this way. Yet, when we contemplate a bit more deeply, it comes to light like this. In whatever manner, that verse too must have helped to complete that meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*).

With unremitting effort and strive, obedient to the Buddha's word, he rubbed the cloth while facing the sun. Through this, his past experience from his life as a king became connected to it. If there was any deficiency in it, the Buddha stroked his head

to complete it. When the touch of the Buddha's sacred hand met his forehead, that too was completed. Every element necessary for that thought of insight (*vipassanā*) that arose in the past was present here to assist Ven. Cūḷapanthaka. They came together in one way or another. Although he could not memorize that verse for four months, its meaning must have struck his heart: the Buddha is like the sun, and the sun's light is necessary for a lotus to blossom. Thus, along with the other factors—the cloth and the dirt—all these came together, and it was through this combination that Cūḷapanthaka attained Nibbāna so quickly. We must think that it is the same for anyone. In this long samsara, as said before, if we credit even a bit of spat-out saliva to Nibbāna, if we credit the sweat that flows away to Nibbāna, we will receive its ultimate benefit some day. Thus, a profound depth is seen even within the events of this story.

Next, it is the same with the Buddha's quality of great compassion and his knowledge of skillful means. It is specifically mentioned that the Blessed One possesses a wondrous wisdom of a kind not shared by other disciples. A knowledge regarding the past karmas of various beings. This is called the knowledge of the inclinations and underlying tendencies of beings (*āsayānusaya-ñāṇa*). "Inclination" (*āsaya*), generally speaking, is the place where an animal lies down. "Underlying tendency" (*anusaya*) refers to certain specific mental states that lie latent deep within the mind. All of these are captured by the Buddha, by his Buddha-knowledge. Thus, understanding that "in the past, this person was in such-and-such states and did such-and-such things, and through those, these kinds of mental energies lie embedded within the mind," the Buddha acts in that manner. The ordinary world cannot comprehend this. Ordinarily, one might think: why did the Blessed One stroke Ven. Cūḷapanthaka's head? Why, when there was so much work to do, did he come out to the path and walk up and down? Yet, all of these fit together in a wondrous way. These were not given by the Blessed One; they are connected to both the good and bad deeds done by Ven. Cūḷapanthaka in samsara. It was due to the bad karma that he had to go home, and that such great grief arose. His brother, by failing him, had caused him to return home, missing the alms-giving.

Next, the skillful method the Blessed One applied was intended to draw the attention of the monks to this wondrous event. Everyone must have been waiting to eat the alms meal, but the eating was delayed. A servant was sent several times to check whether Ven. Cūḷapanthaka was there or not before eating. Through this, a highly valuable natural principle (*dhammatā*) was revealed to us. That is the most wondrous thing. Precisely because it was a wondrous matter, as we see from the books, the monks spoke about it repeatedly. In this day and age too, we must indeed think about such things repeatedly, because, as mentioned, some people possess the attitude of completely failing others based on conventional examinations and tests, and trying to send them home. Otherwise, as mentioned, the view is spread that because one lacks a triple-root rebirth (*tihetuka-paṭisandhi*) one is unsuitable (*abhavya*) and should not strive in insight (*vipassanā*) and so forth; such opinions

spread due to this very kind of weakness. Therefore, as far as stories go, this is an excellent story to inspire courage in everyone.

Next, there is the verse the Buddha preached at the end. In truth, there are numerous points related to the Dhamma in it:

Uṭṭhānen'appamādena

saññamena damena ca

dīpaṃ kayirātha medhāvī

yaṃ ogho nābhikīrati

Most often, in the Dhammapada verses, not a single word can be cast aside. It is truly wondrous; if one goes deep into each and every word, there is enough material to write a massive book. Thus, several points are mentioned here. We already stated the meaning earlier: the factors mentioned here are those that assist in the attainment of Nibbāna:

"*Uṭṭhānen'appamādena damena ca*"

Uṭṭhāna means unremitting effort. One must rise up every time one falls. That is how success is achieved; that is the path to success. Here too, Ven. Cūḷapanthaka's mind had fallen. He was about to leave, thinking, "Now I must go home and at least make merit by giving alms." But the Buddha inspired his effort; he encouraged him. So much so, that the touch of that sacred hand might have been a blessing that exhausted his karmic momentum. In whatever manner, encouraged by it and obedient to the Buddha's word, he meditated in that way. Everyone else had gone to the house of the alms-giving. In the empty monastery, in the Mango Grove, this young monk Cūḷapanthaka meditated. It is precisely to that that "unyielding effort" refers. "*Appamādena*"—diligently, he meditated, disregarding even food. Next, "*damena ca*"—and by self-control; restraint, being obedient to the Buddha's word. It was precisely because he was attached to virtues like morality (*sīla*) that he did not wish to go home. Usually, some young monks are constantly waiting for the moment to go home; there are those who think to that extent, their minds always on home. But this young monk did not wish to go home. It was only when there was absolutely no other choice that he prepared to leave. From this, we see that he had already developed those virtues of restraint and self-control (*sañyama, dama*) to some degree by then. It was particularly because he practiced them obediently in a way that supported Nibbāna that we have "*uṭṭhānen'appamādena saññamena damena ca*."

Next, "*medhāvī*" means the person who is wise from the perspective of Nibbāna. Nowadays, there are various words to describe a wise person. Not only words, but various other things exist too. You, devotees, know that there are letters (academic titles) used to identify an educated person or a scholar. There is also a socially

accepted method of appearing as a scholar through degrees obtained by passing examinations at the mundane level. However, the word "*medhāvī*" is special. In the Dhamma, *medhā* is defined as "*dhammoja-paññā*"—wisdom containing the essence/nutriment of the Dhamma. Wisdom containing the essence/nutriment that is the Dhamma. "Essence/nutriment" (*oja*) means wetness or moisture. If we state its opposite, it is dry, arid. The wisdom of most other people is a dry wisdom; virtues like faith (*saddhā*) are not present there. "*Dhammoja*" means wisdom having the essence/nutriment that is the Dhamma. It is such a person who is called "*medhāvī*." Most of the educated people of today are not fit to attain that state. Yet, here Ven. Cūḷapanthaka was called "*medhāvī*," even though he could not properly memorize a single verse despite studying it for four months. Nowadays, if one is to pass an exam, one must indeed memorize. Although he was unable to do so, the Buddha described him as "*medhāvī*." So, what does such a wise person do?

Dīpaṃ kayirātha medhāvī

yaṃ ogho nābhikīrati

The meaning is that he makes an island that is not overwhelmed by the fierce torrents, that is not swept away by the fierce torrents.

When the word "island" is used, there are those who take it upside down as well. Giving Nibbāna the name "island," "cave," and various other names have been shown regarding Nibbāna. Merely by that, some people think that Nibbāna is some hidden place, a mystical place we would like to call a place, within this very becoming (*bhava*). Some people think so. To that extent, the lust for becoming (*bhava-rāga*) is strong within beings. They want to end the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra, but they also want to remain in saṁsāra. This kind of thing is present here. That is how many scholars explain this Nibbāna. They use even this word "island" to support such explanations. There is a concept regarding Nibbāna that the Buddha has said to leave the ocean of saṁsāra, go to the island called Nibbāna, and remain eternally in an eternal, deathless (*ajara-mara*), permanent, festive, supremely beautiful place. But we should not misunderstand. Here, this "island" is a state of this mind that is not swept away by saṁsāric beings. What is meant here is a liberation of the mind (*ceto-vimutti*). It is the liberation of the fruit of Arahantship. That is to say, every being in saṁsāra is swept away by the fierce torrent of sensuality (*kāmogha*). Next, they cling to becoming (*bhava*), to existence. Whatever kind of existence it may be. Now, if you ask a patient in a hospital if they want to die, they say no. Even if there are worms crawling in their eyes, they prefer existence. In that manner, a wonderful desire for existence exists within this world. So, they are pulled towards it. Next, views (*diṭṭhi*). They hold various views, various wrong views. They create wrong feelings and philosophies of life. Next, ignorance (*avijjā*). Ignorance is said to be not knowing. Briefly considered, ignorance is normally explained in books as not knowing the Four Noble Truths. They do not know that saṁsāra is suffering (*dukkha*). They do not know that the cause of that suffering is craving (*taṇhā*). They do not know that the

calming of craving is Nibbāna. They do not know that the path to it is the Noble Eightfold Path.

But we can understand it in another way too. Not knowing means the tendency of forgetting this nature of saṁsāric suffering. It is very easily forgotten by beings. Even if one suffers extremely severe suffering in a life in this saṁsāra, being crushed and dying in fires in a highly terrifying and horrifying manner, because of the desire for becoming (*bhava*), that suffering, those experiences, are quickly forgotten. Next, just as that suffering is forgotten, the fact that craving (*taṇhā*) is the cause of that suffering is also forgotten. Next, the fact that the place where that craving is absent is the greatest solace is also forgotten. Next, the fact that to obtain this solace, a complete transformation of our personality must take place within our minds in eight steps—through the eight steps of the Noble Eightfold Path—is also forgotten. Not only Ven. Cūla Panthaka, but all of us in this saṁsāra forget these four lines. It is because we have been unable to memorize these four lines that we have traveled in saṁsāra for this long. If a person memorizes these four lines in exact order, that person attains the paths and fruits.

Then, this saṁsāric existence is suffering (*dukkha*), the cause of this is craving (*taṇhā*), the calming of this craving is the happiness in the world, and to do this, a complete transformation of life must occur through the Noble Eightfold Path, starting with right view and ending with right concentration, as a process of development and cultivation within us—in the form of right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration—a complete transformation of the behavior of mind, body, and speech must occur. It is due to forgetting these four lines that we have traveled in saṁsāra for this long. Therefore, what happens in attaining the paths and fruits is that through the powerful concentration of all eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path arising in a single mind-moment—through the path-concentration—all four facts become clear at once. It is exactly like memorizing the stanza. Why is that? Now, we know that when a lamp is lit, several things happen simultaneously. At every moment of lighting, the wick burns. To some extent, the oil is consumed. Light spreads. Darkness is destroyed. In the same way is this truth. The moment of realizing the Four Noble Truths is described by a similar simile. It is said that when one obtains that path-mind (*magga-citta*) and realizes the Four Noble Truths, all four are grasped together. Why? Because to realize that this entire existence is suffering, one must indeed see the craving underlying it completely. On one hand, suffering ceases. craving is also worn away. Through that, Arahantship, Nibbāna, which is the light, spreads. A certain development must take place within for this. The Noble Eightfold Path. Only if the lamp is lit does that light spread and darkness vanish. This is what is meant by saying that the Four Noble Truths are directly realized by someone.

Direct realization is not something like learning from books. At that moment, at the moment of attaining the paths and fruits, at the moment of becoming an Arahant,

the word of the Buddha is directly realized. This entire saṁsāric existence, or the five aggregates—the five aggregates called form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception, Preparations(*saṅkhāra*), and *consciousness* (*viññāṇa*)—is indeed suffering. The fact that it is suffering is understood by realizing the conditioned nature of these Preparations. Here, there is nothing to be taken as "I" or "mine". What is here is a heap of Preparations, a heap of things that arise and cease. A heap of Preparationsis the feeling. Similarly, what cultivates these, what urges them to increase, is craving—the desire that is never satisfied, the desire for pleasure, the desire for existence/becoming, and so forth. In that manner, realization is completed when all eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path are fulfilled and that path arises directly and uprightly in a single mind. At that moment. That is called the path-mind (*magga-citta*). That is an extremely powerful concentration. It is through that powerful concentration that the levels of defilements are cut off, and if there is any mental energy, any force, in our mental continuities that carries on the saṁsāric existence as shown in the Dhamma, they are worn away through that powerful concentration. Through that realization. That is why it is said that upon attaining Stream-entry, it is limited to seven births; upon attaining Once-returning, one comes to this world only once more; upon attaining Non-returning, one ends suffering in the Brahma world itself without returning to this world; and upon attaining Arahantship, the nature that gives rise to rebirth is destroyed, and birth (*jāti*) is ended completely. If there are any levels of defilements in this mental continuity that support another birth, things that lie dormant as *underlying tendencies* (*anusaya*), they are all dried up—that is the meaning. The moment when the Four Noble Truths are properly understood and directly realized. That state is what is called the "island" here. That is the liberation of the mind.

Now, the moment of entering the attainment of fruit (*phala-samāpatti*) is like the moment of standing on the island that the Arahants have obtained, found, and built. Detached from the world. That state is indeed the supreme state that cannot be compared to anything in the world. It is precisely because of finding this that we pay homages, offerings, and respects to the Buddha in a way we do not do for anyone else in the world. It is not because He preached about the development of the world, about worldly growth. Although He preached according to the capabilities of each individual, through all of those, the Buddha tried to make them understand that this saṁsāra is suffering, and to ferry them across this saṁsāra. Ferrying across saṁsāra is a state of the mind. It is not ferrying across saṁsāra and landing on another island to live there. Therefore, we must contemplate that due to various influences of defilements, many people misunderstand and distort even the Buddha's Dhamma. If the view is wrong, if the vision is wrong, if one goes in the wrong direction, how can one realize Nibbāna?

Therefore, we must contemplate the deep meaning of this stanza and stories of this kind. Now, the impermanence mentioned here is the impermanence of Preparations. Even though he had been a king in the past—even though he was a king in the past, Ven. Cūla Panthaka must have had thoughts and wishes inclined towards the

Dhamma for an infinite time in this saṁsāra. In the same way, we must think about ourselves. No matter what level we are in our lay lives now, there can be certain strengths within us that help to attain Nibbāna. They do not just appear. We must strive to bring them out. That is why we said not to let them go to waste, but to credit them to Nibbāna. Doing so, gradually, the impermanence of Preparations, becomes well-digested in one's mind, and step by step, that insight is understood. Insight is not like seeing something through other machines and instruments of the world. One can obtain a direct, penetrating vision. That method of penetrating vision is described in the books as emerging as insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) regarding the realization of the paths and fruits. Even if we do not discuss it at length as a general academic subject, we must contemplate: what is the Dhamma principle there? We all know that to realize Nibbāna, simply and briefly put, we must realize the three characteristics—impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). We all know that. Even to the extent of saying, "Alas, it is impermanent!" We know the word *anicca*. But if we contemplate it deeply, when it emerges as insight-knowledge, it splits into two. That is why we say that like the first two leaves emerging from the seed of impermanence, they are arising and ceasing. Arising and ceasing are also seen if one contemplates a bit deeply. Impermanence means this arising and ceasing. Arising, existing, and ceasing. Although we mentally create a state called "existing", actually there is only arising and ceasing. Something arises. There is a moment we think of as existing. Then it ceases. When this is understood rapidly, next it is seen that it ceases even faster than it arises. Along with that, disenchantment (*nibbidā*) comes. As disenchantment increases, understanding also increases. Because the nature of craving (*taṇhā*) is to arise again and again. When craving decreases, then the impermanent nature is seen. Not one of these remains. They are a heap of Preparationsin terms of arising and ceasing, which, as described by various similes, cease very rapidly like sesame seeds popping in a frying pan, starting to be seen by the eye of insight.

Next, gradually, due to the very ceasing, destruction called "*bhaṅga*" (dissolution) is seen. Not only other things, when thinking about the mind, even that thought is seen to break away. When it is seen to break away so deeply, a fear also arises. What is this? There is nothing to be taken as "I" here. Here is a heap of arising and ceasing. There is nothing for me to grasp. All are decayed fences. It is thought in this manner. Thinking of this state, a fear arises through it. Because of that fear, next, a disenchantment arises regarding the five aggregates. Gradually, a disenchantment arises from within. It is not like a disenchantment of committing suicide. It is that "I must see the end of this saṁsāric existence." Next, the feeling that "I must be liberated from this" arises. "I must be liberated from this state that keeps breaking away." But it is difficult to let go all at once. Because the feeling of "this is mine" is there.

Then, when contemplating even more deeply, these are understood as Preparations(*saṅkhāra*). A heap of Preparations. There is nothing to be taken as mine. These only arise and cease. Sometimes, a simile is given in a way that ordinary

people can understand. Now, if someone's beloved wife is talking with another man, sometimes anger arises. If at some point that woman is divorced, it does not affect the mind. In the same way, when it is thought that these things which were thought of as "I" and "mine" are only a heap of Preparations, the mind is prepared to be liberated from this. Next, equanimity (*upekkhā*) arises regarding them. Next, cultivating deeply the three characteristics of impermanent, suffering, and not-self, in that manner, finally, the mind is liberated completely from the five aggregates. That liberated mind is what was called the "island". Because that liberated mind, as the final mind of the Arahant, does not lean towards another grasping (*upādāna*), there is no existence/becoming (*bhava*). That is the Dhamma principle.

So, we do not need to tire ourselves with how they are explained at length in books. This was a general hint regarding that "island." Many people think of the island only in terms of becoming (*bhava*); some do not even believe that this is a cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*), an end of the existence of becoming. This deep portion was spoken of in connection with this stanza.

On this valuable day, all of us, this group of devotees, must contemplate that if we are Buddhists, our journey is a journey towards Nibbāna. It is not a journey to turn back and cultivate becoming (*bhava*). Therefore, we must strive, keeping this target of Nibbāna in mind, and having done everything, we must wish, "May we attain Nibbāna through this, may we gain the ability to be liberated from this saṁsāra." What help in this are what we call meditation objects (*kammaṭṭhāna*). A meditation object is not some strange, mystical thing. When the opportunity comes to contemplate the nature of one's own body—the sweat, saliva, and so forth mentioned earlier—one must take full advantage of them, either through one's own body or through another's body. That insight thought of arising and ceasing is recorded somewhere. That will help ultimately for Nibbāna.

Thus, in this manner, through today's Dhamma sermon, we saw that "monastic playfulness" of young Ven. Cūla Panthaka. We saw the wonderful great compassion, mercy, and the mass of virtues of the Buddha as *buddhānussati*. Similarly, through this, we learned about Nibbāna, which must be our target. Nibbāna is not a non-existent thing; it exists. If we strive, having abandoned the perception of unsuitability and generated the perception of suitability, thinking "we can directly realize this today itself," we can attain it in this very life. An opportunity was provided to generate many such pure thoughts and intentions. Also, we know that all of these begin with virtues like morality (*sīla*). So, the eight precepts with right livelihood as the eighth (*ājīvaka-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*) were observed. Many of you are observing a virtue even more valuable than that. Thus, restraining body and speech through virtues like morality, associating with noble friends, obtaining meditation objects, and developing the mind through meditation, someday we can develop insight-knowledges within ourselves in the manner described, obtain those path-knowledges (*magga-ñāṇa*) that help to be liberated from this saṁsāra, and end this saṁsāric suffering through the penetration of the paths and fruits called Stream-entry, Once-

returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, thereby finding peace in the supreme, deathless Nibbāna.

Therefore, if we, this group of devotees, have generated any merit through listening to this Dhamma and through delivering this Dhamma sermon, let us dedicate all that merit. If there are any deities and Brahmas in this universe, including our relatives, who wish to rejoice in such merit, may this merit be shared with all of them! May all of them realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through their aspired Bodhi. May this merit of listening to the Dhamma serve as a supportive condition for us too, to act as quickly as possible, to become more and more interested in the Dhamma and meditation, and even though the dispensation is declining rapidly, to strive and establish these virtues within ourselves in this very life, during this period of a Buddha's appearance, and to realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship. Wishing thus, let us share merit by reciting the stanzas.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"