Pahankanuwa Sermon #2

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:

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

From:

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

Dear Listeners,

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

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

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

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

Then the monks asked, "Bhante, what is that weapon?" That weapon is what the Buddha then presented as the *Metta Sutta*. For the first time, for the sake of those monks, the Buddha expounded this *Metta Sutta*, which is of great benefit to the world. The Buddha advised the monks: "Memorize this *Metta Sutta*, and upon entering that forest grove, chant it even from afar as you enter. Put it into practice constantly." Following these instructions, the monks entered the forest grove while chanting the *Metta Sutta* right from the entrance. Based on that *Karanīyametta Sutta*, they developed a mind of loving-kindness (*mettā*). Due to the power of that loving-kindness, the minds of the deities who had previously harassed them became

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

Let us recollect that verse of the Dhamma once again:

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

"Knowing this body to be like a clay pot" — understanding this physical form to be like a fragile clay pot. Most often in the world, ordinary worldlings commit various demeritorious deeds for the sake of this body. Forgetting that this body is bound to break, that it decays moment by moment, that no matter how much effort is made and how much comfort is provided, they will have to abandon this body in about a

hundred years or a little more—forgetting all this, most people commit sins for the sake of this body. In truth, it may be because even those monks gave undue prominence to the body that they became afraid and declared, "Oh, we can no longer go there." Now, you all know very well that a person going to war cannot fight if they maintain such attachment to their body. Similarly, it is for this reason that the Buddha presents the concept of the battle against Māra to the meditating yogi. If one bases their efforts on the idea of pampering and preserving this body, that yogi can never succeed in their life's spiritual task.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*) are things that anyone can identify by looking at their own mind. No special word is needed for feeling (*vedanā*); everyone knows that when we speak of feeling, it is not only pleasant feeling and painful feeling but also neutral feeling—all of them. Perception (*saññā*)—recognition. These can be called perceptions. Based on feeling, various perceptions are formed. Next, according to perceptions, intentions (*cetanā*) arise—various intentions. Everyone knows what intention is. Next is contact (*phassa*). A feeling of contact arises

regarding a point of impact of these. Next, there is attention (*manasikāra*)—contemplation. These five factors are often taken as mental phenomena. Next, physical phenomena (*rūpa-dhamma*) are shown as earth, water, fire, and wind (*pathavī, āpo, tejo, vāyo*)—the four great elements out of which our body and external things are formed. It is by combining these that such forms (*rūpa*) are conjured up and shown in an extremely wondrous way. It is these four elements that conjure up and show these forms. If one understands these few points, it is as if they have understood the entire world.

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

Furthermore, if it is a weapon—as in a sword fight, one must wield one's sword extremely rapidly to ward off the enemy's sword blows. Similarly, in attention too,

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

"One should fight Māra with the weapon of wisdom"

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

Yaṃ yaṃ hi lokasmiṃ upādiyanti

Teneve māro anveti jantuṃ

(Sutta Nipāta, 1108)

"Whatever they grasp in the world, by that very thing Māra pursues the person." Such is the nature of the mind. That is what is called the battle against Māra. The mind is always looking to perch on, to grasp, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Such a grasping nature can be prevented through that contemplation. When one contemplates rapidly, that grasping (*upādāna*) nature is cut off, and those things slip away through contemplation. One contemplates, and then lets it go—in this way, by understanding its nature, that delusion is removed. If there is delusion, one is inclined to grasp it completely. When understanding comes through attention (*manasikāra*) and wisdom, one does not tend to grasp it. It is its impermanent (*anicca*) nature that is then understood. It is understood that these are things that come and go. In association with that, then, one is able to go forward on the "path of insight" (*vipassanā-vīthi*). On the path of insight, on the cognitive series of insight—it can also be called cognitive series (*citta-vīthi*)—to go forward on the path of insight, do not get stuck or attached to those things you have conquered. Making use of them, applying that power of concentration, instead of getting attached to them, basing oneself on equanimity—with the help of equanimity—understand that state of the Dhamma. This is the Buddha's instruction in this verse.

"And protect what is won, remaining without settling down (without making a home of it)" — meaning, do not settle down in them. The nature of this mind is always to build houses. The mind is always looking to build houses. The Buddha uses the word "dwelling" (*nivesana*) in the sense of a house. It is connected with the idea of settling down. Now, if we wisely contemplate the Buddha's Dhamma—it is just like when building a house, we erect scaffolding. We erect scaffolding while constructing the building. But no one should think of living on the scaffolding. If they live on the scaffolding, the building will not be completed. They keep removing them and going higher. The path of the Dhamma—the Middle Path—is just like that. Thus, "And protect what is won, remaining without settling down"—this advice is an extremely useful matter for us, generally for those who are practitioners—or those engaged in meditation. Because quite often, among meditating yogis, when asked about their results, they express with great joy, "I have such and such experiences." But they do not know that they have been deluded, being overwhelmed by the defilements of insight (*vipassanā-upakkilesa*). "Oh, lights are clearly visible. There is a wonderful pleasure. I can sit for as long as I want; I can sit for hours." But they have perched there. They have perched in that concentration they attained. There is no forward journey. That is why "remaining without settling down"—it is through that contemplation that we can finally win this battle. Because wherever there is grasping (*upādāna*), Māra is right there. One is subjected to Māra right there. Such a wondrous Dhamma is present here. Thus, according to that verse, we can understand how important this attention (*manasikāra*) is, which helps us to reveal the three characteristics of impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) in this insight meditation. Everything is caught through this very contemplation. Even if it is not expressed in words, when one sees how those Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)

come, exist for a very brief moment—a fraction of a second—and pass away, their impermanent (*anicca*) nature becomes clear. Likewise, if something is impermanent, if it changes, no pleasure can be found there—if it turns around, if it breaks up. Because of that, its nature of suffering (*dukkha*) is understood. One also understands, realizes, and sees directly that taking such a thing as "mine" or "myself" is foolishness. Therefore, to understand those three characteristics through direct realization, that contemplation is helpful. Contemplation, then, as mentioned, is in the beginning: "form, form", "sound, sound", and so on. That is to say, in the ordinary world, we use names like "there is a car", "there is such and such a person", "a woman", "a man", and if needed, further details about those persons; these are necessary in the ordinary, everyday conventional world. They cannot be dispensed with. But the insight yogi must get away from these if they are to realize Nibbāna, if they are to transcend the world. In mundane terms, we identify everything that comes by name. These are called "signs" (*nimitta*) and "features" (*anuvyañjana*). We take signs of things seen and heard. It is due to the lack of control over those signs that we are overwhelmed by this stream of defilements and experience various sufferings in this long *saṃsāra*. Therefore, to escape from these, the yogi engaged in meditation must make a special effort to break the habit of taking signs. That cannot be broken all at once. But a factor that helps in this is perception (*saññā*)—recognition. First, a basic experience of something comes. Based on that, one recognizes it. It does not stop there. Next, feelings (*vedanā*) arise regarding this. Most often, feelings of anger, or a strong attachment to what is pleasant. Thus, the true state of all of these is understood by a person through that attention (*manasikāra*). Thinking in this way, what the ordinary world understands through many words, one tries to understand extremely briefly in contemplation, without following perceptions. One stops right there, taking it as purely "form" or "sound". A process akin to "elision on the spot" (*lath tana lop kirima*) must take place there. Thus, as one goes on, as one goes further and gains progress in insight, one has to contemplate even the mere contact of awareness, the mere sensing. Stop right there. That rapid contemplation. Just like in the sword fight we mentioned, while both are fighting in the same way, to defeat the enemy, one must be strong enough to ward off the enemy's blow with a speed greater than the speed with which the enemy wields their weapon. Similarly, to prevent thoughts running at an unspeakable speed—at the wondrous speed of this army of Māra—one must perform this contemplation with equal rapidity. If this contemplation weakens, what happens? One is caught by perceptions. The Buddha has declared that perception (*saññā*) is a mirage. A mirage is such that when seen, one chases after it. We take this perception to mean knowing this correctly. We feel like knowing what this is. Now, if someone is traveling on the road—a person who is prepared to go on a journey, let us say they set out to go to Colombo. But if this person, while going in the vehicle, looks around and starts watching how beautiful the things around are, how they are—they will never get to Colombo, if they think they must stop and look fully at everything their mind goes to. That is the thing.

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

Thus, many such matters are contained in this verse. We must contemplate that we are living in an extremely rare era of a Buddha's appearance, having obtained a human life. We hear about meditation quite often, and everyone says they are practicing it. However, the targets of that meditation, most often, do not help to escape from this suffering (*dukkha*) of *saṃsāra* in the way the Buddha declared. Generally, they are trapped in purposes such as comforting the body, obtaining freedom from physical illness, seeing good visions, or fulfilling various other mundane things, curing illnesses, and so on. Those are indeed the settle-downs. Instead, if a state of concentration has arisen through some tranquility (*samatha*) meditation object, one must contemplate the disadvantage (*ādīnava*) of that concentration. In everything, there is this aspect of gratification (*assāda*) and the aspect of danger (*ādīnava*)—the Buddha has declared that there are three things in the world: gratification, danger, and escape (*nissaraṇa*). There can be a good side to these, but along with it, there are many dangers. Therefore, one must escape from this—escape—escape from all of these is what is meant here. Within grasping (*upādāna*) lies continuation; within letting go lies cessation. Understanding this, then, as the mind is trained in the arising and passing away nature in the world, one realizes: "If we grasp this, we will turn around along with it and go to ruin." In that way, then, one does not remain even in that concentration. Even during the Buddha's time, teachers like Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, whom the Buddha initially approached as teachers, had reached extremely high states through concentration and tranquility. But because they were attached to and stuck in them, they were unable to realize Nibbāna. Therefore, the greatest light that the world receives through the appearance of a Buddha is this light of insight (*vipassanā*). It is the valuable matters relevant to this insight meditation that are contained in this verse. According to this, we must contemplate that we must enter this path of the Dhamma to the best of our ability—even in daily life—and try to detach ourselves from these as much as possible. For that, we may have to make a great sacrifice. What is the reason for this? Especially for lay devotees leading a household life, when practicing insight

meditation, a great problem can sometimes arise. This complex society actually runs along that mirage of perception. Chasing after the mirage like deer, this world looks—not just inclining toward the mundane side—the world that is inclined to the mundane looks to deceive these humans and make them mad, either to sell their own things, or to direct them to other things, to drag them in. We live in the midst of many such forces. In such an era, when one observes the precepts on a day like today—a *Uposatha* day—some physical seclusion (*kāya-viveka*) is obtained. One is able to detach one's mind from those things. That habit of detaching must be increased. It is through that indeed that renunciation (*nekkhamma*) arises. Thus, regarding that body: there are three types of seclusion—physical seclusion (*kāya-viveka*), mental seclusion (*citta-viveka*), and seclusion from acquisitions (*upadhi-viveka*). When physical seclusion arises, a certain pleasure arises from it. But that is not complete. It is not complete merely because we say, "We are in a very secluded place without any noise." Next, through physical seclusion, one develops mental seclusion, having detached the mind. Next is seclusion from acquisitions (*upadhi-viveka*)—letting go of the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) is the ultimate thing. Form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—letting go of these five aggregates, these five heaps that we have been clinging to and traveling with for a long time in *saṃsāra*, is what is done through this insight; that indeed is the realization of Nibbāna.

Why are these called five heaps? The ordinary world thinks of this form (*rūpa*) as one thing, as "my form". When we take a photograph, the idea that comes to our mind first is "this is my form". But the power of change within this, the speed of change, the changing, is not visible to us. That is why, when a friend comes after a long time, they ask, "Oh, how much you have changed!" It was not at that moment of seeing that it changed. Nor did it change suddenly during that period. Such is the case with this form. In truth, form changes very slowly. Even faster than that, this mind changes. This mind changes extremely rapidly. But we take even that mind as a self, as "me" and "mine", and remain entangled in delusion—the entire world. This is what is called "view of existing group" (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). This is regarded as "self". One thinks, "form is my self." It is the same with feeling (*vedanā*). We take feeling also as one. It appears to us all at once as one thing. But when the insight yogi applies that attention (*manasikāra*) to this, they see that there are many quiverings here. Feeling is like many quiverings arising and passing away. Regarding form, it can also be understood through the comparison of the clay pot. Likewise, form is something made by many elements—earth, water, fire, and wind. Next, feeling is also like that. It is a vibrating event, changing extremely rapidly according to contact (*phassa*). There are many sensings there—what is called the aggregate of feeling is a heap of feelings. It is not one. Then, how can we say "it is me" to a heap? They are oppressed by arising and passing away. Next, perception (*saññā*)—recognition. That too is a heap of recognitions. Generally, we say we recognized all at once. "I recognized all at once," is said in ordinary usage. It is not all at once; we recognize something through a large number of recognitions extremely rapidly. We take that entire heap, the

bundle, as one. It is the same with intention (*cetanā*). Intention too is extremely rapid. There are many intentions there—a heap of intentions. We call that Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). All those things including feeling, perception, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and intentions are Preparations. A heap of fabrications. A power of fabrication inside the mind. We think of such a heap of fabrications as "me" and "mine". But an even more serious delusion is this mind—consciousness (*viññāṇa*). The place where this feeling of "me" lies hidden. Now we know, breaking through the enemy's fortresses one by one, the final fortress, like the city of Vijitapura, is consciousness (*viññāṇa*). This is where the greatest magic lies. That is why the Buddha compared this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) to a magic illusion. It is not easy to escape from an illusion. That is why the Buddha declared that when one thinks deeply in daily life about the comparisons He gave for the five aggregates, one can realize Nibbāna through that. Form is compared to a lump of foam. Feeling is compared to a water bubble.

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

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

Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā — manoseṭṭhā manomayā

— is the word of the Buddha. Mind is the forerunner. In the final analysis, this world is conjured up by the mind itself. Such is the state. There is a great, wondrous thing here, in a way that no other teacher has declared. Then, what is the cause of that delusion? Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is compared to a magic illusion. When a magician shows an illusion at a crossroads, in a public place, everyone who sees it stands with open mouths, shouting "ah" and "oh", being deceived and amazed by this great wonder. But only the magician knows that what is being done here is entirely a lie—showing a lot of things that do not exist. Similarly, it is our mind, our consciousness (*viññāṇa*), that conjures up and shows what does not exist as if it exists. This state cannot be understood by the ordinary world. It cannot be understood through logic. Intellectuals cannot understand it through degrees. This

must be understood by oneself through one's own wisdom, in the manner of *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*. By *viññūhi* is meant those with real wisdom—not merely pandits. This is something that must be understood by oneself through that insight wisdom. No one else can do it. Even the Buddha cannot do it. Having established oneself in some moral virtue, having developed concentration—a state of concentration—then, through that attention (*manasikāra*)—entering insight meditation with correct guidance—it is through that attention that the true state of this illusion of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) can be understood. It is through this that one can escape from this illusion. What is called letting go of these five aggregates is this. They are not things to be grasped by the hand and thrown away. If at some point, through this wisdom, the aggregate of form is understood as the aggregate of form, one understands right there that there is nothing to grasp here; one is not caught. One is not caught in grasping this. Next, it is the same with feeling (*vedanā*). When the comparison of the water bubble is understood by oneself, one understands that there is no core here, nothing to be taken. Its essence-less nature. Perception (*saññā*)—the mirage. Next, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)—the banana trunk.

Thinking that there is heartwood in a banana trunk, and thinking of making a wardrobe, someone carries a banana trunk home for the first time—when they look at it, when they touch and examine it, they see that there is another layer beneath it. Similarly, what the Buddha declared here is understood by the insight yogi through the word "comprehension" (*sammasana*). Comprehension is something like gently touching and examining. What the world does is clinging tight (*parāmasana*). Letting go of this habit of clinging tight, the extremely subtle way of contemplation called comprehension is what helps in insight. Now we know, generally when sharpening a razor, one holds it in a way that it can be flipped. Holding it in that way, when rubbing the razor up and down on the whetstone, it must be done in a way that the edge does not get blunted. It is done to align the edge, not to blunt it. If grasped too tightly, that razor gets blunted. Instead, by holding it in that subtle way and drawing it back and forth, a razor can be sharpened. Similarly, in the same way, without getting bound to even one thing in attention—without getting bound to perceptions, feeling, or any of those—one contemplates them just as they come, like in a sword fight, and stops right there. Going on in this way, through this path of insight, through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, one can directly realize the supreme, peaceful happiness of Nibbāna, which is obtained by the calming of all Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)—what is called *sabbasaṅkhārasamatho*.

Thus, according to that teaching of the Buddha, you have received the opportunity to hear many instructions on this *Uposatha* day that will help you to incline toward meditation. Without stopping at merely hearing, one must think: "I too must enter this path, associate with those who can give instructions and guidance, obtain them, and make an effort to escape from this extremely terrifying suffering of *saṃsāra*." Likewise, having established oneself in good moral virtue, even at this moment of listening to the Dhamma, with a concentrated and stilled mind, allowing room for

understanding, one's moral virtue, concentration, and wisdom must have developed to some extent through listening. Traveling on that path of moral virtue, concentration, and wisdom, may you cultivate and develop those faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*) of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) within your own mental continuums as the benefit of listening to this Dhamma. One must make a determination, a wish, that this listening to the Dhamma may help to realize the supreme, peaceful Nibbāna which helps to cross over this suffering of *saṃsāra* shown by the Buddha. Likewise, if there is a mass of merit we have accumulated through expounding the Dhamma and listening to the Dhamma up to this moment, may all beings from the Avīci hell to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, including the assembly of deities who protect the Dispensation (*Sāsana*), who rejoice in this, rejoice in the mass of merit accumulated by us on this day at this moment. Having rejoiced, may they all realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through their own sought-after enlightenment (*bodhi*). Likewise, may all those who have passed away in the name of each of you rejoice in this mass of merit and gain the strength to put an end to suffering! Wish in that manner. Now, at this moment, we shall transfer merit by reciting these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*"