## Pahankanuwa Sermon #7

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:**

*Cakkhumā visamānīva,*

*vijjamāne parakkame;*

*Paṇḍito jīvalokasmiṃ,*

*pāpāni parivajjaye.*

**From:**

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

Dear Listeners,

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is meant by "the talk on giving" is the teaching first given on giving—praising generosity and explaining that giving is a practice rich in fruits and benefits. Next, in "the talk on virtue," He explains that just like the sacrifice of material goods in giving, the sacrifice made through the restraint of body and speech is also highly beneficial. Following that, in "the talk on heaven," He explains that as a result of giving, undertaking precepts, and so forth, rebirth in the heavenly worlds is possible, and He relates accounts of those reborn there. Thus, while the listener's mind is focused on and delighted by the pleasures and splendors of the heavenly realms, the Buddha

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

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

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

matters, regarding the Dhamma, and regarding the path to Nibbāna were eliminated, and he entered into that practice. He also attained the state of confidence—fearlessness in this Dispensation.

That first path-knowledge is a supramundane (*lokuttara*) state. Having attained it, and once the sermon had ended, this leper approached the Buddha and in praise declared, “Excellent, Bhante! Excellent, Bhante! Just as”—then he gives a simile—“Just as one, Bhante, might set upright what had been overturned, or reveal what had been hidden, or point out the way to one who is lost, or hold up an oil lamp in the dark so that those with eyes might see forms, even so has the Blessed One clarified the Dhamma in various ways. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma for refuge, and to the Saṅgha for refuge. May the Blessed One accept me as a lay disciple who has taken refuge from this day forth for as long as life lasts.” Having made this declaration of joy, he departed from that place.

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

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

Then, one of the monks asked, “Bhante, Blessed One, why did Suppabuddha, who obtained such a high state, become a leper? Why was he so poor? Why was such a fortunate person born in such a life?” Thereupon, the Buddha related his past story: “Monks, in the past, in the very distant past, Suppabuddha the leper was a treasurer's son (*seṭṭhi-putta*) in this very city of Rājagaha. One day, as this treasurer's son was leaving the city to go to the pleasure garden, a Paccekabuddha named Tagarasikhī was entering the city for alms. Seeing the robes worn by this Paccekabuddha, the treasurer's son, intoxicated by pride, conceived a feeling of disgust: 'Who is this

leper, wearing the garments of a leper?' Thinking thus in a derogatory way, he spat in that direction, turned his left shoulder towards him—which in ancient times was a sign of disrespect, since turning one's right side, known as circumambulation (*padakkhiṇā*), is a sign of respect—and, uttering insulting words and spitting, he went on to the garden."

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

*Cakkhumā visamānīva*

*Vijjamāne parakkame*

*Paṇḍito jīvalokasmiṃ*

*Pāpāni parivajjaye*

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

Let us therefore contemplate the lessons we can draw for our lives from this verse as well as from this story. Even from this present account of Suppabuddha the leper, we can gain much inspiration. Suppabuddha came to the place where the Buddha was preaching while searching for food, having approached upon seeing a crowd. He thought he might find something to eat there. However, after coming close, when he realized that this was a place where a sermon was being preached, he did not turn away with contempt, as some people with a materialistic view nowadays might say: "Can we eat sermons?" Instead, what did he do? He sat down, thinking, "I, too, must listen to some of the sermon." At that moment, we can imagine what arose in his

mind: sacrifice, letting go. You too, meritorious ones, perform acts of giving (*dāna*), offering alms, and so forth. In all of these, what is expected is this very sacrifice—letting go. Thus, on this occasion, he could have turned back to search for food. Instead, he sat down, thinking, "Even if there is no food, it does not matter; I must at least listen to some of the sermon." So great were the benefits of that sacrifice that he was able to obtain the fruit of Stream-entry, which is superior even to universal monarchy, and secured a heavenly rebirth after death. This fruit of Stream-entry is the first step on the path to Nibbāna—comprising the stages of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahantship. He attained that state, eliminating all samsaric suffering (*dukkha*) except for a maximum of seven lives. He will never again go to the four woeful states. Such a noble state did Suppabuddha the leper attain through that sacrifice made in his mind.

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

Next, regarding how Suppabuddha had the Dhamma-eye arise when the Buddha preached the Dhamma—it is mentioned there as: *"Yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ, sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ"* ("whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to cease"). Many try to learn that deep Dhamma, such as Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), from books. Dependent Arising is a profound Dhamma. It is the basic principle of that deep Dhamma that Suppabuddha the leper understood here by listening to just one sermon. What is its meaning? "Whatever has the nature to arise, all that has the nature to cease." This means he thoroughly understood

impermanence (*aniccatā*): that everything in the world has the nature of arising and ceasing. Here, "everything" refers to these five aggregates we grasp, namely: form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). This is a heap of form. Here, "the aggregate of form" (*rūpakkhandha*) means a heap of form. We take it as a single form. Through the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*), we take it as one thing. Bound by the thoughts of "I" and "mine", worldly people think of form as "my body" and try to groom and decorate it. When a feeling (*vedanā*) arises, they think "it is my feeling". Perception is recognition; they think "it is I who recognize this". Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), intentions, expectations, and so forth are also usually regarded as a single unit. Next is consciousness (*viññāṇa*); when we say "my mind", we think of it as a single mind. Yet, these are a multitude. In reality, although worldly people take them as one due to the perception of compactness, within each of these lies a vast multitude. That is why in one place the Buddha gave those similes—highly profound similes. The more one contemplates them, the more one can realize Nibbāna through any single one of them.

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

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

Next, perception (*saññā*) means recognition. The Buddha compares recognition to a mirage. You, meritorious ones, know what a mirage is; during the hot dry season, on a road or a plain, one can see what looks like flowing water in the distance. Due to the heat, vapor rises and something shimmering and moving is seen far away. That is called a mirage, and deer are fooled by it, thinking it is water. Thinking there is water, they run towards it. The more they run, the further the mirage recedes. The Buddha describes perception—recognition—as such a thing. We say, "I recognized so-and-so, it is indeed that person and no other." Again, a distant object, like a beautiful mountain view, might appear to us here. Thinking it is beautiful, we might take a photograph of it and then decide to go there to see the view closely. Once we get there, that beautiful view is gone. When we turn around and look back, perhaps

the beautiful view is now on this side. In this way, perception too is made of layers upon layers. When examined, there is nothing substantial to be found here either.

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

Next is consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—what we call "my mind". This too is not a single thing. It is something that arises and ceases with extreme rapidity. Furthermore, look at what is shown by this. To this mind, various things are presented, distinguishing one thing from another as separate entities. However, both this and that, both of these have the nature of arising and ceasing. This is merely a heap of illusions. The Buddha compares it to something shown by a magician or an illusionist through sleight of hand. He conjures up and displays what is non-existent as if it exists. In that same way, it is said that certain things are conjured up and shown to our mind, that there is a nature of conjuring up illusions.

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

Similarly, when we reflect on those five treasures—faith (*saddhā*), virtue (*sīla*), learning (*suta*), generosity (*cāga*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—even through a single discourse, someone listening to the Dhamma generates faith through it. They generate faith in the Triple Gem. Next, when the benefits of virtue are explained, they undertake virtue. The Buddha presents it there as if they are undertaking the

precepts. Indeed, during the Buddha's time, when the Buddha preached the Dhamma through the graduated discourse, people undertook the precepts in their minds. Even without formally asking to undertake the precepts, they would undertake them mentally, thinking, “What a good practice this is! From today onwards, I will protect this practice.” That is it. They generate faith, they establish virtue. Next, “learning” (*suta*) means they retain this Dhamma well, holding it firmly in their minds. Then, as they understand the Dhamma, they realize that what must truly be done is to let go of everything—sacrifice. It is through that sacrifice that the understanding called wisdom (*paññā*) arises. Generally, worldly knowledge is something gathered, something accumulated. Worldly knowledge aims at accumulating and obtaining various positions, degrees, and so forth. However, meritorious ones, wisdom (*paññā*) is shown as a power of penetrative seeing, a power of comprehension. It is the emergence of a Dhamma-eye, the emergence of an eye of wisdom, so that what is hidden in the world is opened and seen, or what is concealed is clearly visible to one's own eye. In this way, we can understand the beneficial side of the fruits of such virtues.

Next, when we reflect on that past story declared by the Buddha—which is closely connected to the verse—every one of us can develop a great sense of fear. How many grave unwholesome deeds might we commit unknowingly in this samsara, in this life? Meritorious ones, who did Suppabuddha, as a treasurer's son in the past, insult by polluting his mind in that brief moment, spitting, and showing disrespect? Even though he was wearing a soiled robe, in the forests of that time, before the appearance of Buddhas, noble beings called Paccekabuddhas arise. By their own efforts, they attain a state of Buddhahood. They cannot guide others to realize Nibbāna, but they are called “Paccekabuddhas”—Private Buddhas. The Buddha, the Paccekabuddha, and the Arahant are the three greatest individuals in the world. Therefore, showing disrespect to the noble objects in the world is an evil karma that brings extremely severe retribution. This is called “insulting the Nobles” (*ariyūpavāda-kamma*). Disrespecting, abusing, or insulting those who have attained the paths and fruits, such as Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, Arahants, and Stream-enterers, is declared to be the karma of insulting the Nobles. It is a grave unwholesome karma. That is why he boiled in hell for many years, many hundreds of years, many thousands of years, and many hundreds of thousands of years. Reflecting in this way, these are indeed the uneven places, the rugged potholes of the world. One must be careful of these if one has eyes—'eyes' here meaning Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), correct vision. From this, the value of having correct vision is evident. The ordinary worldly person is blind. As the Buddha declared: *“Andhabhūto ayaṃ loko, tanukettha vipassati”* (“Blind is this world; few here see clearly”). The Buddha has shown that this entire world is blind, and only a very few understand through insight (*vipassanā*). Worldly people think they have eyes; they get glasses to improve their physical vision. Yet, meritorious ones, the Buddha declared that the worldly person is blind. To eliminate this blindness—blindness is eliminated to some extent when one distinguishes good and bad, black and white, and understands merit

and demerit by listening to the Dhamma. Next, what Suppabuddha the leper did is far deeper. By understanding that noble basic principle of Dependent Arising and the Four Noble Truths, he caused the eye of wisdom—the Dhamma-eye—to arise. It is called the Dhamma-eye (*dhamma-cakkhu*)—the path-knowledge of Stream-entry. When that eye arises, the doors to the four woeful states are closed forever. That is a massive gain, an unimaginably great gain. Therefore, one must be careful of these uneven places, these rugged potholes in the ordinary world. Falling and getting injured in these during travel is a minor thing. But in this samsara, if we fall by polluting our minds, corrupting our speech, and ruining our actions, we will have to endure severe retribution for aeons. That is the lesson we can draw from this past story.

Furthermore, many people generate pride regarding their wealth, position, and power. Carrying pride about these things, they look at the world. Suppose a beggar, like Suppabuddha the leper, came among this crowd. Perhaps someone would cover their nose, and another might look at him with angry eyes, even if they do not tell him to leave. Yet, unknowingly, there might lie within that person the capacity to realize Nibbāna. It is such a thing. Suppabuddha the leper committed that mistake in his past life. But in this life, he did not repeat it. Instead, as if having thoroughly learned the lesson, without showing disrespect to the sermon at that moment, and without saying "Can we eat sermons?", he sat right there and began to listen to the sermon. Let us reflect on what kind of sacrifice that was.

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

At that moment, what Suppabuddha the leper did was also a kind of exertion. That is, he conquered his mind. The mind might have said, "No, go search for some food,

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

*Ārabhatha nikkamatha*

*Yuñjatha buddhasāsane*

*Dhunātha maccuno senaṃ*

*Naḷāgāraṃva kuñjaro*

If we render this into English:

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

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

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

*Yo sahassaṃ sahassena*

*Saṅgāme mānuse jine*

*Ekañca jeyya attānaṃ*

*Sa ve saṅgāmajuttamo*

Though one may conquer a million men in battle,

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

A highly heroic, valiant warrior goes to war and—though he is just one warrior—defeats a million enemies. Consider what a feat that is! One person defeating a million enemies. Yet the Buddha shows something greater than that: *"Ekañca jeyya attānaṃ, sa ve saṅgāmajuttamo"*—conquering this single "self" that one conceives of. Conquering oneself is called "self-conquest" (*ātma-vijaya*). "Conquering oneself"

means practicing giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), and meditation; cultivating the virtues of virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla-samādhi-paññā*); developing these virtues of the Dispensation; practicing meditation; and, through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, realizing the noble Dhamma of Nibbāna. It is conquering all samsaric suffering (*dukkha*) and the Mara of defilements. The Buddha also declared that He fought that battle with Mara and defeated Mara's army. This army of Mara resides in the mind. It is an army of Mara that arises in the mind that is ultimately and profoundly indicated here. Thus, the Buddha utilized the concept of "war" or "battle" to bring out that power of energy within human beings—the energy of initiation, the energy of persistence, and the energy of exertion. Now, you prepare to perform some heroic feat. You equip yourselves with the necessary gear, clothing, and weapons, and get ready. Then you go forward. As you go forward, enemies appear. You strike those enemies completely, crush them, and achieve victory. That is what exertion is. Thus, the element of initiation, the element of persistence, and the element of exertion—it is based on these three energies that we conquer even the disasters that come in our day-to-day lives.

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

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

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

Therefore, in accordance with the Dhamma of the Buddha, we must reflect on our own lives. What we expect from listening to such a story—this Dhamma talk is not a fabricated story, a novel, or a short story. These are true events. They are accounts of how various individuals met the Buddha during His time and attained those noble states. These are excellent examples and lessons for us. Through these, we must understand that this power may also reside within us, and we must make an effort to bring it forth. Even on this occasion, you, meritorious ones, undertook the valuable precept of Right Livelihood as the Eighth (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*). One must reflect on each of these precepts. What do we do by undertaking these precepts? By saying *"samādiyāmi"* (I undertake), I make a determination to abstain from destroying life—that is, from killing living beings. Even in protecting that determination, one can gain an understanding of those states called the element of initiation, the element of persistence, and the element of exertion. I determined, "I will not kill living beings." Yet, for various reasons—whatever they may be, whether for food, for pleasure, due to the instigation of others, to acquire more wealth, or to satisfy

hatred—the mind inclines towards killing; a thought arises. But the moment that thought arises, one must recall this precept in accordance with what is called the element of initiation, the element of persistence, and the element of exertion on this Dhamma path. “It is not good to do that. It has such retributive consequences. I have undertaken the five precepts; I have undertaken the *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*. This is one of those precepts. I myself accepted this and promised to practice it.” Thinking thus, one makes an effort to protect it. Exerting such effort, at some point, one completely pushes aside that unwholesome thought that arose in the mind. Sometimes, it is difficult to push it aside. At times, one even has to fight against it. The mind might say, “Just this once—it does not matter—even if there are consequences, let's do it. It cannot be avoided at this moment. This is 'timely' and 'appropriate'. According to the situation, this must be done.” In this way, the unwholesome arises from deep within the mind. That is indeed Mara standing behind, saying, “Do it, do it!” It is at that very moment that faith is needed—unshakable faith, firm faith in the Triple Gem: “The Buddha's word is indeed true.” Reflecting thus, if one firmly decides, “No, I will not break this,” and banishes the unwholesome thoughts, that indeed is exertion. It is the same regarding theft, sexual misconduct, lying, harsh speech, and those unwholesome deeds mentioned, as well as wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) at the end—which many find unavoidable to maintain their living. Yet, one must make an effort regarding these to see if they cannot be overcome. Trading in weapons, trading in poison, trading in intoxicants, breeding animals for slaughter, trading in flesh—one must contemplate these matters and see if we cannot conquer them. For there is a terrible retributive side to these.

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

protective meditations (*caturārakkha-kammaṭṭhāna*). By constantly practicing and training in such things, one must attempt to gather the mind that runs wild in the world, anchoring it within a deep, wholesome thought, and make an effort to unify the mind.

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

Therefore, you, meritorious ones, should be glad that you spent this time shaping your lives by utilizing the Dhamma declared by the Buddha. On this occasion, you determined to keep the valuable precept of *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*. Likewise, during this time of listening to the Dhamma, you must reflect that you made an effort to develop the five faculties (*indriya*) and the five powers (*bala*) that will aid in your Nibbāna some day. It is by bringing forth the five faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom (*saddhā, viriya, sati, samādhi, paññā*) that one sees Nibbāna. Faith is a faculty. "Faculty" (*indriya*) means a ruling power—a ruling state in one's mental stream. We must crown this—faith. Next, we must bring forth energy—*viriya*. Energy must be turned into a faculty. Next is mindfulness—

*sati*, then concentration—*samādhi*, and then wisdom—*paññā*. Listening to the Dhamma helps in developing and generating these faculties. If these faculties are generated, they become "powers" (*bala*) for that person: the power of faith (*saddhā-bala*), the power of energy (*viriya-bala*), the power of mindfulness (*sati-bala*), the power of concentration (*samādhi-bala*), and the power of wisdom (*paññā-bala*). You engaged in listening to the Dhamma on this occasion, which serves as a supportive condition (*upanissaya*) for generating them. You must contemplate that a multitude of wholesome thoughts was deposited in your mental stream at every single moment. From them, numerous other samsaric benefits flow. There is no need to emphasize this. But above all, we must reflect on the nature of suffering (*dukkha*) in this samsara, which the Buddha has declared on countless occasions. Therefore, in this rare era of a Buddha's appearance, we must utilize every wholesome acquisition—we must "invest" them—for the sake of Nibbāna, for the peace of Nibbāna, and to bring an end to the suffering of samsara.

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

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"