Pahankanuwa Sermon #16

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:

Suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti, sadā gotamasāvakā;

Yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca, niccaṃ buddhagatā sati.

Suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti, sadā gotamasāvakā;

Yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca, niccaṃ dhammagatā sati.

Suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti, sadā gotamasāvakā;

Yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca, niccaṃ saṅghagatā sati.

Suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti, sadā gotamasāvakā;

Yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca, ahiṃsāya rato mano.

Suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti, sadā gotamasāvakā;

Yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca, bhāvanāya rato mano.

From:

Verses 296-301 from the Bhikkhuvagga (Chapter on the Monk) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

This Esala Full Moon Poya day reminds us of the correct vision of life, the Right View (*sammādiṭṭhi*), which the Blessed Buddha placed before gods and humans. On that day, in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, the first step of the Noble Eightfold Path—the Middle Path placed before the world by the Buddha—was Right View. Today, we have chosen as our theme a few verses that illustrate and express the relief, happiness, solace, and protection that one can obtain in daily life through principles of living illuminated by that Right View, followed in accordance with Right View.

These verses were preached by the Buddha while he was residing at the Veḷuvanārāma in Rājagaha. The origin story (*nidāna kathā*) that led to this is stated as follows:

In the city of Rājagaha, a child from a family of Right View and a child from a family of wrong view had started playing a game of marbles together regularly—*guḷa-krīḍā* refers to a certain kind of ball game played during that time. While playing this game, every time the child of Right View threw the ball, he would say, *"Namo Buddhassa"* (Homage to the Buddha). The child from the wrong-view family threw the ball saying, *"Namo arahantānaṃ"*. What was meant by that was paying homage to the heretics (*tīrthakas*). When they did this, the child of Right View kept winning, while the other lost.

The other child thought, "Now my friend is winning because he recollects the Buddha," and so he began to develop the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*). While this boy was practicing the recollection of the Buddha, one day, his father took him, hitched the cart, and went to the forest to gather firewood. Having loaded the wood onto the cart in the morning, around noon, he unyoked the cart near a cemetery outside the city and had some food. In the meantime, the two oxen wandered into the city along with other cattle returning to the city. After finishing his meal, the carter looked around and found the oxen gone. Therefore, he entered the city to find them. By the time he found the two oxen and was returning, it was evening and the city gates were closed. Because of that, the man could not get back out. Thus, the little child slept under the cart for the night.

Since it was near the cemetery, there were many non-human beings (*amanusya*) around. Two *yakkhas*—one of Right View, meaning devoted to the Triple Gem, and the other of wrong view—saw this child. The *yakkha* of wrong view said, "Here is a good meal, let us eat." The other tried to prevent him. However, the wrong-view *yakkha* pulled the child by the leg. As soon as he pulled, the child cried, *"Namo Buddhassa"*. At once, the *yakkha* got frightened and stood frozen. Then the other *yakkha* said, "We have committed a great mistake. Therefore, we must undergo punishment for it." Joining together, they guarded the child throughout the night and provided protection. Moreover, the *yakkha* of wrong view went to the royal palace and brought back food in a golden platter. Disguising themselves as the child's parents, they fed him and kept watch over him. After the child ate, the *yakkha*, using

his psychic power (*iddhi*), inscribed some letters on the platter: “May only the King see this”—concerning this matter of how this platter came to be there. Having done this and placed the platter in the cart, the *yakkhas* vanished.

The next morning, the palace officials, realizing that the platter was missing, searched around, inspected the city, came outside, and upon spotting the cart, inspected it and found the golden platter. Seeing this, they arrested the child, thinking he was the thief. When they brought him before the king along with the platter, the king saw the inscribed letters and asked, “What is the meaning of this incident?” The child replied, “I do not know. Throughout the night, my mother and father came, gave me food, and protected me. That is all I know.” At that moment, the child's real parents also arrived. The king, together with the child and his parents, went to the Buddha and related this news. Then, he asked the Buddha whether protection is indeed obtained through the recollection of the Buddha alone, or if there are other things as well. It was on that occasion that the Buddha preached these six verses, showing that if one directs one's mind and maintains one's thoughts in these six ways in one's life, there is no need for external protections or mantras; this itself is a great protection. That is why he spoke these verses.

Let us next consider the general meaning of these verses.

> *“Suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti — sadā gotamasāvakā*
>
> *Yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca — niccaṃ buddhagatā sati”*
>
> “Ever well awake they awaken, the disciples of Gotama,
>
> whose mindfulness is constantly directed, day and night, to the Buddha.”

This is the meaning of that verse.

The next verse follows the same pattern:

> *“Suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti — ...*
>
> *... — niccaṃ dhammagatā sati”*

Those who develop the recollection of the Dhamma, who contemplate the Dhamma, likewise awaken in the morning well-awakened. The next verse is about the recollection of the Saṅgha. Those who develop the recollection of the Saṅgha also awaken well-awakened. Next is mentioned the meditation on mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*)—mindfulness directed to the body—those who practice this also awaken well-awakened in the morning. The next verse says:

> *“Suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti — sadā gotamasāvakā*
>
> *Yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca — ahiṃsāya rato mano”*
>
> “Ever well awake they awaken, the disciples of Gotama,

whose minds, day and night, delight in non-violence."

If any disciples of Gotama delight in non-violence day and night, maintaining thoughts oriented toward non-harming, they awaken well-awakened.

Next, it says:

"Suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti — sadā gotamasāvakā

Yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca — bhāvanāya rato mano"

"Ever well awake they awaken, the disciples of Gotama,

whose minds, day and night, delight in meditation."

If any disciples of Gotama dwell delighting in meditation day and night, they awaken well-awakened.

There is a small point to be made here. In the commentaries, when explaining the last-mentioned verses, it is said that "delighting in non-violence" (*ahiṃsāya rato mano*) refers to the meditation on compassion (*karuṇā-bhāvanā*), and "delighting in meditation" (*bhāvanāya rato mano*) refers to the meditation on loving-kindness (*mettā-bhāvanā*). In this way, they restrict the meaning. However, it seems more reasonable to understand *ahiṃsāya rato mano* as maintaining thoughts of non-violence, such as loving-kindness and compassion, rather than strictly as a distinct meditation on compassion. Next, we think that *bhāvanāya rato mano* can be more meaningful if taken as generally having a mind inclined toward meditation. This is because the standard order of mention is loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), appreciative joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). It is difficult to think that compassion would be mentioned first and then loving-kindness here. Here, it can be understood more meaningfully and in a broader sense: *ahiṃsāya rato mano* means maintaining thoughts in accordance with non-violence, and *bhāvanāya rato mano* means spending one's daily life with a mind inclined toward meditation.

In any case, with these six verses, the Buddha placed before the world the way to awaken well, so as to spend the day in an excellent manner. What is illustrated by this story is the protection obtained from the recollection of the Buddha, and its great power. Every member of this pious audience knows that the Triple Gem—namely, the Buddha Gem, the Dhamma Gem, and the Saṅgha Gem—actually exists as a protective mantra for everyone. What is the reason for this? The quality of the Buddha Gem has permeated the universe. Through the power of the Buddha's perfections (*pāramitās*), the Buddha-quality has permeated the universe. Therefore, there is a natural law (*dhammatā*) where a certain protection is afforded by contemplating the mass of qualities (*guṇakkhandha*) of the Buddha. This is clearly visible to us in the Buddha's own words. In the *Dhajagga Sutta*—now known as the *Dhajagga Paritta*—the Buddha directly declares: "Monks, when you have gone to forests, to the roots of trees, or to empty huts to practice meditation, if any fear,

trepidation, or hair-standing-on-end should arise, on that occasion, recollect the Tathāgata, that is, me. Recollect me with this passage: *'Iti pi so bhagavā arahaṃ sammāsambuddho…'* When you recollect me, whatever fear, trepidation, or hair-standing-on-end you had will disappear. If you do not recollect me, then recollect the Dhamma with the passage starting with *'Svākkhāto…'* Then too, that fear will disappear. If not, then recollect the Saṅgha with *'Supaṭipanno…'"* In this manner, the Buddha himself declares this in the *Dhajagga Paritta*.

All of you have heard that in the *Ratana Sutta*, based on the power of the Triple Gem, the three-fold fear, including the fear of non-humans in the city of Vesāli, was dispelled as a *paritta—paritrāṇa* means protection—by declaring the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha as an assertion of truth (*saccakiriya*). From this, we can clearly see that *buddhānussati*, *dhammānussati*, and *saṅghānussati* can be considered not only as meditations but also as *parittas*. As a *paritta*, they provide protection to oneself. This is also what is demonstrated by this story. Although he was a child of a wrong-view family, having seen the child of Right View obtain certain benefits by developing *buddhānussati*, he became accustomed to *buddhānussati*. From that point on, its benefits occurred almost automatically and naturally; there is a tendency to repeat the practiced meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) when a disaster strikes. Even in this day and age—we think—perhaps because of the Buddhist imprint embedded in this nation, when a disaster occurs, people say *"Budu Amme"* (Oh Mother Buddha). Usually, they do not just say *"Amme"* (Mother), but they say *"Budu Amme"*. The Buddha is remembered. Similarly, here, as soon as he recollected the Buddha saying *"Namo Buddhassa"*, that *yakkha* became frightened of the Buddha's quality—the Buddha's majesty. Thus, we can see the power within the recollection of the Buddha, its power as a protection. Furthermore, here the Buddha declares, with the phrase *suppabuddhaṃ pabujjhanti*, that it helps one to wake up well-awakened. That is, if one lives through the day with a mind well-directed toward the qualities of the Buddha, one receives great solace.

From this series of verses, we should mainly focus our attention on the recollection of the Buddha, which almost everyone knows and practices. There is something special to be said about it. We will also have to briefly mention the other matters depending on the time available. If we consider the meditation on the recollection of the Buddha, everyone knows the nine supreme qualities of the Buddha. *Buddhānussati* is developed based on the text of these nine qualities. Either the text of the nine qualities is recited in its entirety, or there is also a method of expressing each quality in detail, with explanations. Such a method of developing *buddhānussati* has existed for a long time. However, it occurs to us that sometimes when one goes to analyze each term in that manner, a state of mental distraction arises. Now, the nine qualities in the *kammaṭṭhāna* section for *buddhānussati* are presented as follows:

> *"Iti pi so bhagavā arahaṃ sammāsambuddho*
>
> *vijjācaraṇasampanno sugato lokavidū*

anuttaro purisadammasārathi

satthā devamanussānaṃ buddho bhagavā”

Nine qualities are mentioned here. There is a custom of taking each of these and explaining them in various scholarly ways. Some people even consider it a meditation to go on explaining them through their etymologies and reciting those details. However, one must consider that there should be a certain distinction between reading a book written about the Buddha's qualities and meditating on those qualities. There must be a difference. If it is a book written on the Buddha's qualities, yes, you have the opportunity to develop a wholesome mind by reading it with detailed and beautiful passages. However, deep concentration (*samādhi*) is not obtained; the mind gets distracted in it. Instead, what is expected from *buddhānussati* is actually to plunge into each term and train oneself to see the Buddha through it. Now, scholars often analyze the word “Arahant” (*arahaṃ*) in a scholarly manner, linking it to numerous indirect meanings far removed from the primary meaning of the word, and present them to the meditator, telling him to recite them systematically. Through this, the mind actually gets distracted, and it is difficult to think that the mind becomes one-pointed. The mind does not become concentrated. The purpose of a meditation should be the concentration of the mind, its one-pointedness. For one-pointedness, those numerous words, numerous passages, and numerous praises are not so relevant.

Instead, what should be done is to consider the general meaning of each term and draw as close as possible to it with one's heart. Just as the young prince Rāhula approached the Buddha and said, “Ascetic, even your shadow is pleasant to me,” one should train to see the Buddha through each of these terms, by plunging into that term. In that case, only a basic understanding is necessary regarding the meaning of those words. Now, to put it briefly, as the context demands, the primary meaning of the word *arahaṃ* is worthiness of receiving offerings. Due to the greatness of the Buddha's qualities, due to his being worthy of veneration, he is worthy of receiving offerings. If one wishes, it is sufficient to think of him as a supreme being worthy of being honored with both material offerings (*āmisa-pūjā*) and the offering of practice (*paṭipatti-pūjā*). Apart from that, other various meanings and extra commentaries are not relevant there.

The same applies to *sammāsambuddho*. Fully Self-Awakened means that he himself—referred to as self-sprung knowledge (*svayaṃbhū-ñāṇa*)—correctly unravelled the secret of saṃsāra, the secret of life, through the Four Noble Truths or that Buddha-knowledge. He himself thoroughly realized those Noble Truths, without the advice or guidance of another teacher, without any of that. It is that uniqueness that is contained in the word *sammāsambuddho*.

Next is *vijjācaraṇasampanno*. Similarly, within the two words *vijjā* and *caraṇa*, there are two aspects of the mass of the Buddha's qualities. *Vijjā* there refers to the knowledge portion consisting of insight (*vipassanā*) and other wisdoms—one side

being knowledge and understanding in a person's life. Next, conduct (*caraṇa*) is the other side. Here, the Buddha is complete in both these factors. There are some in society who have great knowledge, but their conduct is worthless. Some conduct themselves well, but are weak in their power of understanding. Far from being like that, the Buddha is perfect in both. It is just like this: if *vijjā* represents the two eyes, and *caraṇa* (or *caraṇadhamma*) represents the two feet, he is complete in both these limbs, the eyes and the feet. He is complete in both the basic factors necessary to travel along this path of practice. Therefore, through the quality of *vijjācaraṇasampanno*, one can understand that the Buddha is endowed with both these aspects.

Next is *sugato*—this too is explained in various ways, such as having an excellent gait or having good qualities. However, we should understand *sugato* meaningfully as having travelled well on the path of practice that leads to Buddhahood, or rather, to Nibbāna. He completed that journey. He arrived at the end of that journey. Precisely because he was "endowed" (*sampanna*) with the two qualities of *vijjā* and *caraṇa* mentioned earlier, the Buddha arrived correctly at the end of that path of practice.

And having arrived there, that he understood everything that needs to be known about the world is what is shown by the quality of *lokavidū*. The quality of *lokavidū* can also be explained in various ways: he understood everything to be known about the world systems (*loka-dhātu*). But it can be understood best in this way: nowadays, many people understand the external world scientifically. However, the Buddha did not just understand the world in that way; he also understood the inner world of each individual. He understood the internal world of the individual. He also understood the external world that exists as the environment for the individual. Because the Buddha understood everything that needs to be known about it, he is called *lokavidū* (knower of the world).

"Anuttaro purisadammasārathī"—then, relying on that very quality of *lokavidū*, the Buddha was like a charioteer in taming men who can be tamed—beings who can be tamed. He was like an extremely skillful driver. The Buddha had the ability to discipline anyone through his wisdom and through the skillful means called compassion. This is that power of disciplining. To whom, where, in what manner, and by giving what kind of discourse he could discipline someone clearly registered in the Buddha's knowledge. Therefore, using that quality of *lokavidū*, the Buddha possessed the ability to tame those beings in the manner described as *anuttaro purisadammasārathī* (unexcelled trainer of tamable persons).

So too, *satthā devamanussānaṃ*—meaning teacher not only of humans but also of gods.

Next, *buddho* means, when considered generally, complete with all the aforementioned qualities of a Buddha. Just as he attained Buddhahood through self-sprung knowledge, he also has the power to make others understand.

The term *bhagavā* carries the meaning of "fortunate" or "blessed." Within it lies the fortunate quality, the blessing, the majesty of fortune, which is seen within the physical body of the Buddha acquired through the power of his perfections (*pāramitās*), as well as within the mass of his qualities and his wisdom.

When we have briefly considered the nine qualities of the Buddha in that way, what needs to be done next is to recite those nine qualities in sequence for a considerable amount of time: *'Iti pi so bhagavā... arahaṃ... sammāsambuddho... vijjācaraṇasampanno...'* and so on. While doing so, one can choose the term that appeals to one most, that suits one's liking. In making that selection—if one has chosen a certain term—one does not need to struggle to give reasons for it. Frankly speaking, if after directing one's mind to those nine qualities for a considerable time, leaving out one by one those that do not appeal to one so much, reducing the nine to eight, the eight to seven, and so on, one selects a certain quality as the one that appeals to one's mind, one does not need to struggle to explain why it appeals. It is just like when, in a very natural way, someone develops an affection due to some past saṃsāric connection, and sometimes thinks, "Oh, I don't know why, but this is the person who appeals to me, this is how it is for me." Even saying that is enough. If one can say, "I do not know, but out of these nine qualities, this is the one that appeals to me," that indeed is the most natural selection. What is felt through that is some aspect of the Buddha-qualities deposited in one's mind during past saṃsāric associations, when seeing Buddhas, and when hearing the Dhamma. The selection is based on that. That is why we say it is natural. It is when one makes such a choice that it becomes like when prince Rāhula approached the Buddha and said, "Ascetic, even your shadow is pleasant to me." "This word is enough for me." If one can see the Buddha through this one word, there is no need to weave stories around it anymore. There is no need to keep repeating various beautiful words and passages in praise of it. What is done by that is only the distraction of the mind.

Just like anchoring a boat in a body of water so that it does not drift here and there, and does not rock this way and that, the mind must plunge into that quality. Having plunged into it, one must train oneself to see the Buddha through that quality. Once trained in this way, many words are not needed. If one has chosen *'Bhagavā'*, as one repeats *'Bhagavā, Bhagavā, Bhagavā'*, one can attain concentration (*samādhi*) through it. One does not need to think about it in detail. One sees the Buddha through that word. Now, that child said, "Namo Buddhassa." That was an era when the Buddha was alive. Now, even though the Buddha is not alive, these lay devotees can see the mass of his qualities in their minds. A faithful person, a person with Right View, can see the Buddha in the mind. In that case, even a single word that helps one to see him in the mind is sufficient. Meditating continuously on that word, without letting the mind wander elsewhere, is indeed the meditation on the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*).

We spoke specifically about *buddhānussati* because many people practice and train in it. If there are any shortcomings in it, and if you think that what we have said here is correct, one can correct oneself accordingly.

Now, we will mention the other meditations very briefly, according to the time available. The recollection of the Dhamma (*dhammānussati*)—which you have also heard of many times, even if it is not as well-known as the other—has six qualities mentioned there:

> *"Svākkhāto bhagavā dhammo*
>
> *sandiṭṭhiko akāliko ehipassiko*
>
> *opanayiko paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhīti"*

The quality of *svākkhāta* means that this Dhamma preached by the Buddha is well-preached. It is preached excellently. This "preached excellently" does not refer to the tone of the Buddha's voice, nor to the phonetic qualities of the words preached. What is meant here is that the Buddha's Dhamma was preached targeting a certain goal, a certain supreme purpose, and was preached with the beginning, middle, and end well-connected in a way that leads to that purpose. This is not something useless. It is not something devoid of meaning. This Dhamma is something that yields results. *Svākkhāto* means "well-proclaimed." A result is obtained in accordance with the practice. The practice exists in accordance with the result. What is to be understood by the word *svākkhāta* is that it is well-preached, being good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end.

Next, *sandiṭṭhika* means that its results can be experienced by oneself in this very world, in this very life. Why? Because within this Dhamma of the Buddha lies the path to remove the defilements (*kilesas*) of greed, hatred, and delusion existing in our minds. When a certain portion of these is removed, one can experience it for oneself to that same extent in this very world. It is not something to be received in a future life. The path, fruit, and Nibbāna can be obtained in this very world. It is not an Nibbāna to be received in a next life. That is why it has the quality of *sandiṭṭhika* (visible here and now).

Akāliko means that it yields results without delay. This is also connected to the former. If someone has a certain degree of greed, hatred, or delusion, that person will experience a corresponding degree of heavy distress or mental defilement. If those are removed to some extent with the help of the Dhamma, there is immediate solace as soon as they are removed. That is *akāliko*. In a deeper sense, this is shown with regard to the supramundane path (*lokuttara-magga*)—when directly experiencing the Dhamma in its supramundane aspect. In that context, two things are mentioned: path (*magga*) and fruit (*phala*); the fruit follows immediately after the supramundane path. The supramundane path refers to a very subtle state of concentration (*samādhi*) obtained through insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*).

The fruit follows immediately upon it. That is the quality of *akāliko*—the characteristic of yielding results without delay.

Ehipassiko means "come and see." Within this "come and see" is the idea that "this Dhamma is something that invites one to put it into action." It demonstrates its practical nature. The Dhamma itself says, "Come and see—try putting me into practice." To such an extent, there is an amazing practical quality in the Dhamma. It is in this sense that it is called *ehipassiko*.

The word *opanayiko* is a somewhat deep word. What is to be understood there is that it leads one onwards, drawing one in, just as one is invited with "come and see." Such a quality exists in the Dhamma. In the Dhamma, there is a quality of leading one from one stage to another, as they are interconnected. For example, when one develops Right View, almost without knowing it, right intention (wholesome thought) arises. When that is developed, in accordance with it, wholesome words are spoken. In this way, if one lives in certain ways—lives in accordance with the Dhamma—it automatically leads one to those respective stages. That is what is meant by *opanayiko*. One is drawn in and led onward by the Dhamma. Such a quality exists in this Dhamma.

Paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhīti—this is a Dhamma that can be directly realized by the wise within their own minds. In the end, it is realized by oneself. This is the mass of qualities—the six qualities—that are presented as the qualities of the Dhamma.

Next, as the qualities of the Saṅgha—which you, lay devotees, have also heard often. There is a passage like this:

> *"Supaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho,*
>
> *ujupaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho,*
>
> *ñāyapaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho,*
>
> *sāmīcipaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho,*
>
> *yadidaṃ cattāri purisayugāni aṭṭha purisapuggalā,*
>
> *esa bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho,*
>
> *āhuneyyo, pāhuneyyo, dakkhiṇeyyo, añjalikaraṇīyo,*
>
> *anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassāti"*

Within this too, there are nine qualities. Here, mainly, *supaṭipanno* means that the Saṅgha of the eight Noble Persons has entered correctly and well upon the path leading to Nibbāna, and they are engaged in that practice. Next, to emphasize this and present it more strongly, it is called *ujupaṭipanno*. Straightforwardly—the Noble Eightfold Path is also a straight path. It means that they act by plunging straight,

directly, and honestly into that path. Next, *ñāyapaṭipanno*—they entered upon that path of practice systematically, logically from one stage to another. Likewise, *sāmīcipaṭipanno*—they travel correctly, inclined toward Nibbāna. All of these refer to their practice.

Next: *"yadidaṃ cattāri purisayugāni aṭṭha purisapuggalā esa bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho"*—that is, as eight individuals, this refers to the eight Noble Ones who have reached the four paths and the four fruits.

Due to that mass of qualities, the worthiness of worship of those monks is mentioned next. *Āhuneyyo* means being worthy of having requisites brought even from afar to be offered. *Pāhuneyyo*—if one has prepared food in one's home for relatives or guests, when they arrive on alms-round, they are worthy of being offered that as well, because of their mass of qualities. Likewise, *dakkhiṇeyyo* means being worthy of receiving special offerings—even special offerings made with faith in the fruit of kamma. *Añjalikaraṇīyo* means being worthy of being saluted with hands clasped together—palms placed on the forehead.

Next: *"anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassa"*—they are like an unexcelled field of merit for the world, a field of merit capable of yielding the highest benefits to the lay donors because of that mass of qualities.

In that manner, many points are mentioned there as the qualities of the Saṅgha. Therefore, the Buddha shows that even contemplating the Saṅgha through any of those words, as the recollection of the Saṅgha (*saṅghānussati*), provides protection for one's life and, as stated in those verses, becomes a cause for awakening well. In short, one who contemplates the Triple Gem is able to spend the day in a well-awakened state from day to day.

The next thing mentioned there is mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*). Mindfulness of the body means contemplating the nature of this body of ours. This is also presented in three ways. You, lay devotees, have often heard about mindfulness of the body. The Buddha compares this bodily cage to a bag open at both ends, like a bag open at both ends, filled with grains. It contains thirty-two impure parts. What is meant here is contemplating those impure parts. Seeing the various parts of this body, from the hair of the head down to the soles of the feet, as impure and repulsive—in short, this is called *paṭikkūlamanasikāra* (contemplation of repulsiveness). Contemplating it as repulsive.

Next, something related to this, which is included within mindfulness of the body itself, is the meditation on foulness (*asubha-bhāvanā*). Ten kinds of foulness (*dasa-asubha*) are mentioned. As soon as consciousness (*viññāṇa*) leaves this body, as soon as it dies, according to the ancient Indian custom, it is taken and thrown into a charnel ground. After being thrown into the charnel ground, ten different stages of decay of that bodily cage are presented as subjects of meditation on foulness (*asubha-kammaṭṭhāna*). The stages of this body, from swelling up and turning blue

within a day, then being infested with worms, filling with pus, and finally turning into a skeleton, are presented in ten stages as the “ten kinds of foulness.” Contemplating these is what is meant. What is expected from all of of this is disillusionment (*nibbidā*) regarding this body. The attachment—lust (*ragā*)—regarding this body, which exists strongly in saṃsāric beings, the attachment to one's own body and to the bodies of others, is what makes them go on and on in saṃsāra. As long as there is attachment to this bodily cage, even if this bird leaves from here, it willingly enters another cage again. It departs by creating a cage for itself in accordance with kamma. Not according to one's own wishes, but a cage is created in accordance with the kamma one has done. Then, after it is created, what follows along with birth (*jāti*) is aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*) and disease. This is the nature of saṃsāra.

Therefore, the Buddha points out that without developing disillusionment toward this bodily cage, one cannot escape from this saṃsāra. One cannot realize Nibbāna while maintaining attachment to it. Therefore, even if we do not like it—whether we are laypeople or monks—one who hopes to realize Nibbāna must develop mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*) to some extent. Mindfulness of the body is nothing foreign; it is the real state of our body. We do not like to display the real state of our body externally. But we must contemplate it in the mind. Not only the things inside the body, but everything external as well, the Buddha has shown to be repulsive. Indeed, it has a repulsive nature. But we cover it up. The ordinary world has no understanding of these things due to defilements. The repulsive nature of this body endowed with consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is what is contained in the aforementioned meditation on repulsiveness. Contemplating what is inside this living body like a bag open at both ends. Next, likewise, the state it enters after death—that is the future. Attributing and comparing it, thinking, “This body too is subject to that same law, this body too is just like that.” Through this too, one becomes disillusioned with the body. The understanding arises that: “If this is something that is bound to reach such a state, it is foolish to maintain such high pride (*māna*) about it as we do.” That is how the meditation on foulness is practiced.

In the same manner, another meditation that comes is called the “meditation on the elements” (*dhātu-kammaṭṭhāna*). This also helps in developing equanimity (*upekkhā*) toward this body—developing a certain equanimity free from attachment and aversion. That means thinking of this body as made up of the four elements (*dhātu*). When considered as elements, there is no difference between our body and the bodies of others. This bodily cage of ours—all of this—is constructed from what we usually take as examples: the earth, water, fire, and wind, which are called *paṭhavī*, *āpo*, *tejo*, and *vāyo*. The Buddha points out that contemplating in this way as elements helps the wise to quickly develop equanimity toward the body. In short, for the realization of Nibbāna, through this meditation on the elements, a disillusionment with all four elements must arise in the mind at some point. The mind must be freed from these four elements. Why? Because that aforementioned cage is created from these four elements. It is from the four elements—*paṭhavī*, *āpo*,

tejo, and *vāyo*—that this bodily cage is constructed, like mixing clay to build a house. It is created because of the attachment toward them. We have a subtle form of attachment toward these four elements. The Buddha taught the meditation on the elements to remove that. There are two ways of doing this.

One considers this very living body oneself. Hard things like hair, body hair, nails, and teeth represent the earth element (*paṭhavī-dhātu*). The factors for the earth element exist in my body, as hair, body hair, nails, teeth, and so on. The water element (*āpo-dhātu*), things with a fluid nature, a watery nature—such as bile, phlegm, snot, blood, pus, urine, and so on—these too exist in my body, belonging to the water element. Likewise, the activity of the fire element (*tejo-dhātu*) is in this body. Through conditions such as getting a fever, the digestion of food in the body, body heat, warmth, and so on, the fire element also exists within. Similarly, what is called the wind element (*vāyo-dhātu*) is our in-breathing and out-breathing, and the air that travels here and there within the body. All of these belong to the wind element. These are the four elements.

Next, one contemplates that these four elements inside and the four elements outside are the same. Whether they exist inside or outside, when considered as elements, they are the same. Then, gradually, this also helps to remove the conceit (*māna*) of "I am" and "mine." Vain conceit and other such attitudes disappear when one contemplates, "Isn't it these same four elements that exist in everyone's body?" In this manner, the Buddha presents this mindfulness of the body. When this is contemplated, it brings great solace in daily life. The agitations arising from life's problems can be largely eliminated. What is done by this mindfulness of the body is seeing the reality of life. If one sees the reality of life, one will not be inclined to commit suicide. One understands that one's life is short, according to the nature of this body. These are the benefits of mindfulness of the body.

Likewise, "delighting in non-violence" (*ahiṃsāya rato mano*) is shown as non-violence. The commentary explains this by limiting it only to the meditation on compassion (*karuṇā-bhāvanā*). However, we can understand that non-violence is spoken of directly here as an attitude. *"Ahiṃsāya rato mano"*—liking non-violence, being inclined toward non-violence, delighting in non-violence. The Buddha shows that delighting in non-violence is a very valuable thing. For the most part, what exists in the world is a delight in violence. The world always looks to satisfy its own needs and wants by harming others. If someone develops an attitude within that they will not harm anyone, both loving-kindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) are present there—not only compassion. Delighting in non-violence here means looking at the world with an attitude of loving-kindness and compassion. If someone practices this daily, they can awaken well-awakened. A power comes to awaken well-awakened without regrets, if one maintains thoughts of non-violence, loving-kindness, compassion, and so on, in daily life.

Next is mentioned: *"bhāvanāya rato mano"*. We took this generally as a liking for meditation. Liking meditation is also a valuable thing. What is called meditation? It is the proper development of the mind. In this day and age, various kinds of mental development are spoken of—certain developments through science and technology—and developments through education. But the development brought about by this meditation shown by the Buddha is something much more special than that. It is the path leading to Nibbāna. If there is any meditation that should be done to cross over this saṃsāra, it is being inclined toward that meditation. There, generally, meditation (*bhāvanā*) means development of the mind, having mental development as a preference. Understanding its value and spending the day giving priority to it is a valuable thing.

Thus, through that we can see that the Buddha has brought out six life-values in these six verses—recollection of the Buddha, recollection of the Dhamma, recollection of the Saṅgha, mindfulness of the body, non-violence, and next, generally, liking for meditation, delighting in meditation. That is the shaping of our lives. In short, we know that in this day and age especially, the majority of people in this society are those who fall asleep in anxiety, awaken in anxiety, and spend their lives in anxiety. That anxious state arises because they maintain their daily thoughts in a wrong way. Now, there is no need to tell you, lay devotees, how people who engage their minds through various media spend their daily lives, how they spend day and night, and especially how they spend the night. There is no need to tell you with what kind of things and with what kind of thoughts they spend it. You yourselves can find evidence as to whether one can actually awaken well-awakened through those things, or spend the day mindfully, well and happily. But if one selects one of these six channels—along these six themes, these six values shown by the Buddha—and maintains one's thoughts accordingly, then as the Buddha promises here: *"suppabuddhā"*, one can awaken in the morning extremely well-awakened, spend the day well-awakened, and spend the day peacefully. Along with that, a development of the mind also occurs.

Therefore, in accordance with that, we can understand this multitude of values shown by the Buddha here. We must bring these closer to our lives. Increasingly, we head toward the mouth of ruin because we do not have a correct understanding of the real virtues and values of life. Why? Because the Buddha points out that this human mind we have received is extremely rare. In this mind, there is a capability, a power, to develop toward Buddhahood. But what do we do? In a very dangerous manner, tempted and drawn by the values presented through various modern artificial lifestyles and modern science, we destroy our lives through them. We spend our day through media that defiles our thoughts. Instead, the Buddha points out that, without any extra expense—without any expense at all—to shape one's life, to awaken well-awakened in that manner, and accordingly spend the entire day peacefully, one should make an effort to generate those series of thoughts in one's mind. Now, people usually think of meditation as something done only when sitting in the cross-legged posture. But here, the Buddha especially mentions *anussati*, which means

recollection. Even from that story, it is clear that the child did not know anything about the quality of "Arahant" (*arahaṃ*) or other things as stated in depth in books. But he might have seen the Buddha. In any case, having formed a feeling, a faith, toward the Buddha, as soon as he said "Namo Buddhassa", that *yakkha* was frightened. We must think in that manner. We must draw close to this Buddha-quality just as prince Rāhula drew close. Not through a massive number of long words and passages in a scholarly manner based on erudition and learning. Even one is sufficient. What is the reason for that? We cannot develop it daily like reading a book in our everyday lives. Now here it is said: *"Yesaṃ divā ca ratto ca — niccaṃ buddhagatā sati"*—that these disciples of Gotama develop the recollection of the Buddha constantly, day and night. So, to develop the recollection of the Buddha constantly, how can one develop it with such a large number of passages, alongside the duties of daily life? But if one considers these briefly—let us say, as mentioned, the quality of *'Arahaṃ'* is very dear to someone, or the quality of *'Bhagavā'* is very dear—if one has chosen it well after directing one's mind to it for a considerable time, and having directed the mind to the nine qualities... why do we call that a natural law (*dhammatā*)? For instance, if we take *"anuttaro purisadammasārathī"*, meaning "like an extremely skillful charioteer in taming beings." That term appears to be very long. But some people might like even that. Why? There could be a saṃsāric reason for that. It could be due to the faith arisen in the past, during the Buddha's time, upon seeing the display of Buddha-power on occasions such as the taming of Aṅgulimāla. In that way, if some quality naturally appeals to our mind, meditating on that quality briefly is what is called the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*). If so, it is indeed possible to incline the mind to that Buddha-quality and develop the meditation subject one has trained in, not only while moving about in daily life and during leisure times, but even during wasted times, such as when one is just loitering.

It is the same regarding the recollection of the Dhamma. Consider the nature of this Dhamma briefly. If we do not praise it in detail, understanding just this general idea is sufficient for a person. What is called *sati* here is mindfulness. Recollecting the Buddha, recollecting the Dhamma, recollecting the Saṅgha.

Similarly, there is mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*). This too is not something done specifically by sitting on a meditation seat. Let us say we spat, or vomited. Everyday functions associated with bodily activities occur. On those occasions, we should not let them go to waste. We should not just throw them away as "waste products." One must see a Dhamma in them. Some people throw these away as waste products without deriving any benefit from them. Today, we see in this modern scientific world that much use is made of waste products. Things we throw away are sometimes taken to foreign countries, made into special products, brought back, and sold at high prices.

Therefore, we must think in the same way. We must derive benefit even from the waste products discarded from our body, in accordance with the Dhamma. How do

we derive benefit? We direct them toward mindfulness of the body. Spittle is directed to mindfulness of the body, feces and urine are directed to mindfulness of the body. At that moment too, our mind is developed. It develops through that meditation. Through that, one draws closer to Nibbāna. Attachment toward saṃsāra decreases. The attachment to build more and more bodily cages in this saṃsāra fades away. That is indeed why the Buddha declared this to be a Dhamma of dispassion (*virāga-dhamma*). What is contained within this Dhamma of the Four Noble Truths is departure from this saṃsāra. This is a journey toward that. Therefore, one cannot go on this journey while maintaining an attachment to it. Gradually, one must develop disillusionment (*nibbidā*) toward it. What is called *yathābhūta-ñāṇa* (knowledge of things as they are) is seeing truth as it is. The Buddha has pointed out that along with seeing truth as it is, disillusionment follows—inevitably. One cannot help but become disillusioned upon seeing truth as it is. If one sees truth as it is to some extent, to that extent one becomes disillusioned with saṃsāra, disillusioned with existence (*pavatti*). It is through that disillusionment that one can realize Nibbāna. The door of Nibbāna opens.

Therefore, one should not be afraid of these things. Whether lay or ordained, our ultimate goal is to escape from this dangerous saṃsāra as quickly as possible. Because of that, leaving aside those bonds of home and hearth, we must contemplate: we are born alone, and we die alone. We travel through this saṃsāra alone. Relationships with relatives are temporary. Therefore, our liberation belongs to us. The Buddha declares, “Not even I can liberate another; that is up to you.” The Tathāgatas are only teachers. Since this belongs to us—this mind of ours—in this era of a Buddha's appearance, in this rare opportunity of a human life-state, that human mind must be applied to something highly productive. Generally, there may be many profitable occupations and jobs in the world. But it is not those. The maximum benefit to be derived from a human life-state is what the Buddha has shown here, presented as six virtues to be developed. Therefore, you, lay devotees, must consider this with wisdom. Within their lifestyles, most people have a daily routine. One must make an effort to add these to that daily routine. If not all six, at least a few of them. If one directs one's thoughts through these channels, one can awaken well-awakened. One can escape from those anxious states mentioned earlier. One can draw close to Nibbāna much faster than one thinks, once these true preferences are developed. The Buddha has pointed out that this Dhamma has a quality of leading one onward. When one engages in the Dhamma, the Dhamma leads one further and further forward, because the Dhamma yields immediate benefits. When one sees the benefits of the Dhamma, one inclines more and more toward that path.

So, what remains for us to do is to identify the real virtues, generate a genuine interest, and enter upon that path. Through that, as promised by the Buddha, we can avoid the dangerous states of decline in our lives and achieve a certain solace. These cannot be done with money. The secret to this lies within ourselves. Contemplating that fact, on a valuable day like today—this Esala Full Moon Poya day is an occasion when the Buddha-quality, Dhamma-quality, and Saṅgha-quality radiated throughout

the entire universe, with a Dhamma-force extending from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha. Therefore, while there is a Buddha-force, Dhamma-force, and Saṅgha-force spread throughout the universe, if we spend our lives dedicating them to worthless, insubstantial things, we alone will have to regret it.

Therefore, thinking wisely, this pious audience has observed some level of virtue (*sīla*) on this valuable day, drew close to the aforementioned path of practice, and disciplined body and speech. You spent this time calming the mind with some such meditation. Now, through hearing the Dhamma at this moment, we believe that the factors necessary to develop the spiritual faculties (*indriya-dhamma*) and powers (*bala-dhamma*)—namely, faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—have been deposited in your minds. Furthermore, through this determination you have made, may you illuminate your lives even more, and through the association of admirable friends (*kalyāṇa-mittas*), may this accumulated mass of merit definitely be a supportive condition for realizing the supreme deathless Nibbāna in this very life through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahanthood!

Likewise, may whatever beings there are from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha, including the guardian deities and Brahmās of the Sāsana, as well as our departed relatives, rejoice in this mass of merit accumulated through preaching and hearing the Dhamma! Having rejoiced, may they all as quickly as possible attain the solace of the supreme deathless Nibbāna through whichever Bodhi they aspire to! Transfer the merit with these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"