Pahankanuwa Sermon #38

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.113)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

Pakkodano duddhakhīrohamasmi (iti Dhaniyo gopo);

Anutīre mahiyā samānavāso;

Channā kuṭi āhito gini;

Atha ce patthayasī pavassa deva.

Akkodhano vigatakhīlohamasmi (iti Bhagavā);

Anutīre mahiyekarattivāso;

Vivaṭā kuṭi nibbuto gini;

Atha ce patthayasī pavassa deva.

From:

Dhaniya Sutta (Sn 1.2) from the Uragavagga of the Sutta Nipāta

Dear Listeners,

The pride that arises due to wealth is introduced in the Dhamma by the name *bhoga-mada* (the intoxication of wealth). When one is intoxicated by the intoxication of wealth, the world appears to him as a secure place. One even tends towards an optimistic view that any adversity can be overcome through wealth. The Dhaniya Sutta of the Sutta Nipāta, a Dhamma text, mentions how the Blessed One dealt through the Dhamma with a very wealthy herdsman, a cattle-owner, who held such a view. We have set the first two stanzas of that Dhaniya Sutta as our sermon topic today.

A very wealthy herdsman, a cattle-owner named Dhaniya, lived in the country of Videha during the Buddha's time, owning a herd of about thirty thousand cattle. A

cattle-owner cannot live in the same place all year round due to the problem of fodder. Usually, cattle-owners with such large herds spend the rainy season in a highland area near rivers, building cattle pens and other structures. During the other eight months, they live along riverbanks or any other suitable area. So, this herdsman Dhaniya also lived by making his dwelling on a small island near where the great river Mahī flows into the sea. He spent eight months of the year there. Then, when the rainy season approached and its signs appeared, Dhaniya went to high ground near that very riverbank with his cattle, built cattle pens, prepared a dwelling, and got ready for the rainy season. By the time all these tasks were finished, rain clouds gathered from all sides. So, Dhaniya, with a very joyful mind since food for his people, fodder for the cattle, firewood, fire, and everything else were ready, lay down on his bed and uttered this joyful stanza, a stanza of exultation:

Pakkodano duddhakhirohamasmi,

anutīre mahiyā samānavāso,

channā kuṭi āhito gini,

atha ce patthayasī pavassa deva.

If we try to put this stanza into Sinhala verse, we can express it in this manner:

"The rice is cooked, the milk is milked, I dwell along the banks of the river Mahī surrounded by my people; the house has a roof, the fire has been blown and kindled; if it rains, let it rain, my work is done, let it rain."

"The rice is cooked, the milk is milked, I dwell along the banks of the river Mahī surrounded by my people; the house has a roof, the fire has been blown and kindled; if it rains, let it rain, my work is done, let it rain." That is to say, '*pakkodano*' means the food, the rice, is already cooked. '*Duddhakhiro*' means the milk of the cows has been milked. Next, '*anutīre mahiyā samānavāso*' means I dwell with my companions of like-mind. '*Channā*' means my house, my hut, is well thatched; there is no fear of rain. '*Āhito gini*' means the fire is also kindled. Unlike in these times, in those days it was with great difficulty that a fire was kindled—by rubbing two pieces of wood. A fire kindled in such a way is preserved by constantly blowing on it. So, the fire is also kindled. All this is said with a joyful heart. '*Āhito gini*', therefore, '*atha ce patthayasī pavassa deva*': rain! If you wish to rain, rain. In this manner, he kept on reciting a stanza of challenge over and over again—a challenge to the rain.

When the Blessed One was in the Fragrant Chamber (*Gandhakuṭī*) of Jetavana monastery, He heard this stanza with His divine ear. Upon investigating the reason for this, He saw that Dhaniya and his wife possessed the necessary supportive conditions to ordain and attain Arahatship in this Dispensation, and that if He did not go and preach the Dhamma, they would both be swept away by a great flood on the following day and meet their death. Seeing this, the Blessed One travelled through the air and, sitting in space above the house of Dhaniya the herdsman in that

distant country of Videha many leagues away, uttered a reply stanza that matched Dhaniya's stanza.

That is the second stanza we presented:

Akkodhano vigatakhīlohamasmi

Anutīre mahiyekarattivāso

Vivaṭā kuṭi nibbuto gini

Atha ce pavassa deva.

"I have no anger, my stubborness is gone, on the banks of the river Mahī I dwell for only one single night, my house is open, my fire is extinguished, if it rains, let it rain, my work is done, let it rain." '*Akkodhano*' means there is no anger within me. '*Vigatakhīlo*'—*khīla* means a peg or stake. The idea represented here is that when anger or ill-will is present in someone's mind, it is like a driven-in stake. What is expressed there is the absence of hatred. I have no anger within me, no hatred. Next, '*akkodhano vigatakhīlohamasmi anutīre mahiyekarattivāso*': I spend only one single night along the banks of the river Mahī. I only dwell there for one night. Next, '*vivaṭā*': Dhaniya said his house was thatched. The Blessed One declares: "My house is open, unfolded, there is no roof on my house." '*Nibbuto*': "My fire is extinguished." '*Atha ce pavassa*': "Rain if you wish, if there is work, rain." In this way, the Blessed One also made a challenge to the rain.

But there is a deep meaning here. Since Dhaniya was intelligent, it was expressed in a way that Dhaniya could understand. Now, these kinds of stanzas also have a certain literary value. It is difficult to convey it completely even when translated into Sinhala. An aspect of the Blessed One's style of teaching is that, when preaching the Dhamma to intelligent people, He sometimes expresses the same word with two meanings, or uses words that sound alike. Pay attention to that. This is called alliterative resonance (*prāsa rasaya*). There is alliterative resonance in these stanzas. To Dhaniya's statement '*pakkodano duddhakhiro*', the Blessed One responded with '*akkodhano vigatakhīlo*'. It goes on in that manner. There is a series of stanzas, and they possess this characteristic. Here, what is expressed by saying "that hut is open" is that defilements are compared to a roof. One is covered by defilements, isn't that so? So, the roof of defilements has been removed. "My hut is open." Dhaniya says without fear that his hut is closed and thatched. The Blessed One says, "My hut is open." Likewise, Dhaniya says he has kindled the fire and is maintaining it by blowing on it. The Blessed One also says, "I have extinguished all my fires." "My fire is extinguished." Therefore, "If it rains, let it rain, if there is work," the Blessed One challenges the rain. He challenged not only the rain but Dhaniya as well. We must understand that the Blessed One replied to Dhaniya's optimistic stanza with a Dhamma-imbued stanza. But it did not end there.

Next, Dhaniya the herdsman uttered another stanza. To that, too, the Blessed One replied with a similar Dhamma-aligned stanza. In this manner, five more stanzas are shown in that Sutta. However, we do not intend to deliver a poetic sermon at this moment. We only intend to express the meaning of those stanzas to these meritorious friends and, as usual, provide some Dhamma exposition.

If we take only the general meaning of those other stanzas: in the second stanza, Dhaniya declares the security of his herd of cattle in this way: "There are no gadflies or mosquitoes in this region. My cattle roam in the meadows and lowlands where the grass grows tall and lush. They can withstand even a heavy rain; they are cattle that can endure it. So, if you wish to rain, rain." That is the meaning of the second stanza.

The reply given by the Blessed One to that is as follows: "My raft has been well constructed and bound together. I have crossed over this raging flood and reached the further shore. Now I have no use even for the raft. If you wish to rain, rain." There, too, we have to decipher the meaning. That "raft" refers to the Noble Eightfold Path. It is mentioned in the Dhamma. The Noble Eightfold Path is compared to a raft. Similarly, it is mentioned in the Dhamma that this Noble Eightfold Path is solely for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of grasping: "*nittaraṇatthāya no gahaṇatthāya*" (for crossing over, not for holding onto). That is why the Buddha declared here: "Now I have crossed over by the raft. I have no more use for the raft." It is meant only for crossing over. Such is the deep meaning. The replies given by the Blessed One always contain Dhamma-aligned thoughts. So, that is the second stanza.

Then, next, Dhaniya the herdsman boasts about his domestic environment: "My herd-wife, my wife, is very obedient to me. She does not have bad conduct such as longing for other men. We have lived together in a pleasing way for a very long time. I have never heard of any fault or sin regarding her. Therefore, if you wish to rain, rain."

Next, what is in the reply stanza uttered by the Buddha? "My mind is completely under my control. It is obedient to me. My mind is freed from defilements. It is well-tamed. I have cultivated my mind for a very long time, by way of meditation (*bhāvanā*)."

Then, in the next stanza, Dhaniya says: "I do not live by performing service for anyone. I live on my own earnings. Moreover, my sons, my children, are healthy and well just like me. If you wish to rain, rain."

Thereupon, the Blessed One declares: "I too do not live by performing service for anyone. I have finished my task. I do not expect a wage from anyone. Free from servitude, without expecting any wage, I wander throughout the entire world. I have no use for wages." These meritorious friends can understand this. Because the Blessed One has eradicated all defilements, it is mentioned in many places: "I wander debtless." If there is any debt to the world by consuming food and utilizing the four requisites with defilements, He has freed Himself from that debt. So, the Blessed One

does not need a special wage anymore. That is why He said He has no concern with wages.

Then, next, Dhaniya describes his cattle wealth: "I have young bulls. I have milk-drinking calves. I have pregnant cows. I have heifers capable of breeding to carry on the herd. I have the lordly bulls (*gavampati*), the leaders of the herd, to control my herd. So, if you wish to rain, rain."

Now let us see the reply given by the Blessed One to that. What is the reply? "I have no young bulls, I have no milk-drinking calves, I have no pregnant cows, I have no breeding heifers, I have no lordly bulls (*gavampati*). If you wish to rain, rain." What must be understood from this is that the wealth of a layman is shown in the Dhamma as "pleasure" based on "having, having, having"—this is the layman's pride. The things from which they derive pride: "I have this and that." But for the monk who enjoys the taste of renunciation (*nekkhamma*), the "not-having" is indeed happiness. That is why the Blessed One exulted saying "I have not, I have not," while Dhaniya exulted saying "I have, I have." Now you can understand the difference. So, that is that stanza.

Then, next, Dhaniya says once again, also regarding a matter connected to the cattle: "The stakes for binding the cattle are driven in very firmly. The cattle are bound with new ropes made of *muñja* grass, which is a soft grass. Even the milk-drinking calves cannot pull and break them. If you wish to rain, rain."

To that, the Blessed One declares: "Like a bull that has broken all its bonds, I have broken through the fetters of this round of rebirth (*saṃsāra*). I have shattered *Bhava* (Becoming)." He also gives another simile: "Like a great lordly elephant that has broken a rotten creeper, I have broken all these bonds and remain liberated. I have attained Nibbāna." He expressed it in that manner.

Having heard all these stanzas, it is mentioned next that the Blessed One revealed Himself. Then, Dhaniya and his family must have seen the Blessed One. Immediately, at that very moment, a rain with great thunderclaps poured down. Dhaniya then expressed his faith in the Blessed One: "It is a great gain for us to see the Blessed One. May the Blessed One be our Teacher! We go to the Blessed One for refuge. My wife and I will practice the holy life under the Blessed One's Dispensation and cross over the suffering of *saṃsāra* such as *jāti* (birth / arising) and *jarāmaraṇa* (decay and death / aging and death)." Thus, they made their pledge. So, that series of stanzas ends there.

Next, as concluding stanzas, two stanzas are mentioned in that Sutta which are also found in other places. In fact, we have to assume that to this series of stanzas presented in a dramatic way, two stanzas have been extracted from elsewhere and appended as concluding or final summary stanzas.

The meaning of those stanzas—we have mentioned this on many previous occasions. Those stanzas were a challenge made by Māra to the Blessed One on one occasion.

There, too, in short, it is the story about that "positive (wealth-oriented) thinking." What is said there is—

Nandati puttehi puttimā — gomiko gohi tatheva nandati

Upadhīhi narassa nandanā — na hi so nandati yo nirūpadhi

It is Dhaniya's philosophy that is shown in that stanza. "The one with sons rejoices because of sons. The cattle-owner likewise rejoices in cattle." What is referred to as "cattle" is indeed that collection of material objects used to reinforce one's egoism. In the Dhamma, the word *upadhi* (grasping / holding / fuel) is used for this. Wife and children, money and wealth, land and property—all these are known by the name *upadhi*. Having *upadhi* is a cause of joy for a human being. "He who has no *upadhi* does not rejoice." This challenge was presented by Māra to the Blessed One on one occasion. On that occasion, the Blessed One declared:

Socati puttehi puttimā — gomiko gohi tatheva socati

Upadhīhi narassa socanā — na hi so socati yo nirūpadhi

"The one with sons sorrows because of sons. The cattle-owner likewise sorrows because of cattle," he falls into sorrow. *Upadhi*—all those possessed material assets become a cause of sorrow for a person. "He who has no *upadhi* does not sorrow." The Blessed One declared that he who has abandoned all those *upadhi* (grasping / holding / fuel) and attained the state of Nibbāna, which is called *nirūpadhi* (without acquisitions), does not sorrow. This stanza was also placed at the end of this Sutta.

In fact, this goes much deeper than just lands, properties, and grains. The five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) that we have accumulated throughout this long *saṃsāra*—the five accumulated aggregates of grasping: *rūpa* (form), *Vedanā* (Feeling), *saññā* (perception), *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *viññāṇa* (consciousness)—these indeed are *upadhi*. The Blessed One declared that the one who has abandoned all of them and attained Nibbāna does not sorrow.

So, next, this story ends as follows: it is said that the Blessed One returned to Jetavana monastery through the air, and those two actually ordained in the Dispensation, attained Arahatship, and entered final Nibbāna. Next, it is mentioned in the books that the herdsman community built a monastery called Gokulaṅka Vihāra at that site, which existed in India for several centuries.

Now let us look at the lesson we can learn from this. If we look at this as an exposition, the first thing we have to say by way of revealing the facts is that in the ancient past, when considering wealth, the cow was the measure—the measure of money. That is why it is mentioned in the Dhamma: '*gosamitaṃ dhanaṃ*' (there is no wealth equal to cattle). In the pastoral era of the ancient past, cattle were considered as currency. Since cattle-wealth was such a major thing, he exulted in that

manner. He boasted: "I have thirty thousand cattle, I am the boss." He had no fear whatsoever and even challenged the rain to fall because of this.

Next, what is spoken of here as grain, wealth, and assets—in terms of those times—such as cattle and so forth, are all *upadhi* (grasping / holding / fuel). In terms of the present era, as everyone knows, *upadhi* refers to money, lands, and various other things like bank accounts, savings, securities, insurance, etc., expressed in diverse words; all of these represent *upadhi*. The world holds the view that these provide security to oneself. But when we look at this series of stanzas, we can see that it is like a dramatic debate between the two sides of *upadhi* and *nirūpadhi* (the state without acquisitions). Every time Dhaniya praised the value of *upadhi*, the Blessed One declared the advantages of *nirūpadhi*—renunciation (*nekkhamma*) and Nibbāna. This is highly relevant to the present day. Because we know that even in such a disastrous era, many people lean towards "positive thinking" and are tempted to look at the world optimistically based on that.

In fact, they even try to distort and explain away the Three Characteristics—*Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self). But we know the reality of suffering declared by the Blessed One. If one forgets that, one will have to fall into suffering (*dukkha*) someday. Instead of facing reality, viewing everything in a positive/favorable light following capitalism—this ultimately ends in delusion, madness, and various mental aberrations. Meritorious friends know good examples of this. When the future dream-world that Paṭācārā built with her beloved shattered, she became insane and ran naked on the highway. Similarly, when the world Kisāgotamī had built out of maternal love shattered, she went from house to house looking for medicine while clutching her dead child. The Buddha helped both of them by reminding them of reality.

Therefore, we must reflect on this. Day by day, we hear of destructions occurring in the world due to floods, tsunamis, earthquakes, cyclones, etc. In the midst of these, we must decide whether to continue spinning on this *saṃsāra* merry-go-round or to get off it. The period of a Buddha's appearance is indeed a great opportunity to escape from *saṃsāra*, a good opportunity to leap out. This merry-go-round spins on top of *jāti* (birth / arising), *jarā* (decay), *vyādhi* (sickness), and *maraṇa* (death). Clutching onto an optimistic view, people keep spinning and enjoying themselves amidst the sound of the fivefold musical instruments. But through that, Nibbāna is distanced. Therefore, we must contemplate that the lesson to be learned from these stanzas is that no protection whatsoever can be obtained from such *upadhi* (grasping / holding / fuel).

As a reply to Māra's challenging stanzas, the Buddha preached a powerful stanza on another occasion in this manner:

Nabhaṃ phaleyya paṭhaviṃ caleyya

Sabbepi pāṇā idha santaseyyuṃ

Sallampi ve urasi pakampayeyyuṃ

Upadhīsu tāṇaṃ na karonti

— Māra Saṃyutta, Saṃyutta Nikāya.

Even if the sky should split, and the earth should shake, and all living beings here should tremble, even if a spear were driven into their chest, the Buddhas do not seek protection in *upadhi*. They do not expect help from *upadhi* (grasping / holding / fuel). What is shown there as a challenge to Māra is the value of *nirūpadhi* (being free from acquisitions).

Accordingly, we must contemplate—and shape our lives according to the vision of things as they are presented by the Buddha. For the Buddha has shown these as distorted views. Perceiving the impermanent as permanent (*anicce nicca-saññā*) is a distorted view. It is not just a view; distortions (*vipallāsa*) are shown in three ways: distortion of perception (*saññā-vipallāsa*), distortion of mind (*citta-vipallāsa*), and distortion of view (*diṭṭhi-vipallāsa*). The perception that takes the *Anicca* (Impermanent) as permanent is distorted. The thought that thinks of the impermanent as permanent is also distorted. The view that considers the impermanent as permanent is distorted. In this manner, taking the impermanent as permanent in all three ways is shown by the Buddha as a distortion, a perversity.

Similarly, perceiving the foul as beautiful (*asubhe subha-saññā*), taking what is foul as beautiful. No matter how much one tries to hide the foulness of this body, it becomes exposed. Yet, the world possesses the view of beauty. Even when it stinks, when it falls ill, in ways that are repulsive to oneself, the world tries to present it as beautiful. They keep thinking of it as beautiful. They maintain a distorted perception, a distorted mind, and a distorted view. But there lies the reality: taking the foul as beautiful is prevalent in the world.

In the same way, taking what is painful as pleasant (*dukkhe sukha-saññā*). In reality, this entire body is to be regarded as a heap of feelings (*Vedanā* (Feeling)). We cannot remain in a single posture. By changing the posture, we conceal the *Dukkha* (Suffering) inherent in the body. So, the world takes what is painful (*dukkha*) as pleasant. They try to enjoy pleasure through this. That, too, is a distorted perception, a distorted mind, and a distorted view. Next is this perception of self (*atta-saññā*). Taking this as a self, as "I", "mine", and "myself". Dhaniya also spoke of his possessions with pride, with the idea that they would not change. He invited the rain. It is through rain that floods and everything else come. Yet, he invited it without fear. Without considering the disastrous nature of it, he grasped everything through the perception of self as "I" and "mine". "All this belongs to me. I have calves, milk-drinking calves, I have cows," and so he went on listing those who belong to him. The more possessions he has, the greater he considers himself to be. But the Blessed One, instead, declared the value of the *nirūpadhi* state. We can reflect on that too. That,

too, is that distorted, perverse condition. The place where the distorted view, the distorted mind, and the distorted perception are removed is indeed Nibbāna.

The world runs entirely along that optimistic view. They have started white-washing this Noble Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*). In the Four Noble Truths, the Blessed One declares that, in short, this entire five aggregates of grasping—*rūpa*, *Vedanā* (Feeling), *saññā*, *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *viññāṇa* (consciousness)—are entirely *Dukkha* (Suffering). It is presented in the Dhamma as a simple equation. But many people try to say, "This Truth of Suffering is too dark; we need to beautify it a bit, we need to white-wash it," and they make such attempts optimistically. This is an extremely foolish effort. Through that, because of their ignorance, what do many people do next? They get lost in a luxurious, pleasure-seeking lifestyle. At the same time, if we contemplate the danger aspect of it, selfishness, competitiveness, jealousy, wrong livelihood, and wrong ways of living find space through that positive philosophy. Through looking at the world in this capitalistic, optimistic way, they run after wealth in a way that makes their egoism stand out, even by defeating or killing the other person.

But the Dhamma presents a different concept of wealth. It is the concept of wealth shown in the Dhamma that belongs to Buddhists. That is called "Noble Wealth" (*ariya-dhana*). In some places, it is shown as seven types of wealth: *saddhā-dhanaṃ* (the wealth of faith), *sīla-dhanaṃ* (the wealth of virtue), *hiri-ottappiyaṃ dhanaṃ* (the wealth of shame and fear of wrongdoing), *suta-dhanañca* (the wealth of learning), *cāgo* (generosity), and *paññā ca sattamaṃ dhanaṃ* (wisdom as the seventh wealth)—thus shown as the Seven Noble Wealths. In another place, it is shown as five Noble Wealths. These meritorious friends hear about them constantly: faith, virtue, shame and fear towards sin which help in protecting virtue, learning or Dhamma knowledge, the quality of sacrifice or letting go, and next, wisdom—these are the real wealth. We must bring forth this wealth. We must incline towards our Noble positive thinking, not towards the worldly-accepted capitalism. We must develop the perception of "possibility" to bring this wealth closer.

For it is said about faith: "*saddhīdha vittaṃ purisassa seṭṭhaṃ*" (faith is a man's best wealth here). In the Āḷavaka Sutta, even a yakkha accepted—the yakkha named Āḷavaka accepted: what? That faith is the greatest wealth for a person. Now, many people fail to accept the truth that even a yakkha accepted. Faith is indeed the most valuable asset in the world. Because where there is faith, all other virtuous qualities connected to Nibbāna gather there.

Similarly, on the other hand, if we look at the ultimate end: "*paññā narānaṃ ratanaṃ*" (wisdom is the jewel of human beings). The greatest jewel, the most valuable gem that humans possess is wisdom. Therefore, the path that leads to wisdom, to the supreme insight wisdom that brings about one's liberation from *saṃsāra*—that is the Dhamma-aligned way of thinking we must bring forth instead of this worldly way of thinking. Recalling this concept of wealth, we must reflect that

various wrong views arise in society from time to time to conceal the truth. This could be due to various selfish motives. Many people get dragged into them.

At a time when the world is clearly going to ruin day by day, we must consider this as a final opportunity—how rare indeed is a human birth, and equally rare is a human birth during the period of a Buddha's appearance. Even an animal lives some sort of life. But animals do not have something called the Dhamma. The animal's life consists of food, sleep, fear, and copulation—as even the sages of the past pointed out: food, sleep, fear, and sexual indulgence are common to both humans and animals. But the Dhamma is unique to humans. It is the Dhamma that is the distinguishing characteristic of humans.

Therefore, from the perspective of Dhamma-aligned thinking, we have received an extremely rare opportunity in this long *saṃsāra* to end the suffering of *saṃsāra*. Instead of saying "it is impossible," we must bring forth the perception of "possibility." Now, in these times, many people think, considering the decline of the Dispensation: "Now is not the time for Nibbāna. We should just keep doing other things. The time for Nibbāna has now passed." Thinking in that way is a wrong idea.

Now, let us illustrate this with a small simile. Sometimes, when there is a special exhibition or a special event, large crowds queue up to see it. Sometimes, they have to stay in queues miles long, day and night. At that time, if someone gets discouraged because the queue is long and abandons their place in the queue, they can never get back in. That is to say, on the first day, space is made available for a certain number of people. On the next day too, many people remain there regardless of the sun or rain. It is to those people that the opportunity is provided. He who arrives first is the one who, despite the suffering, remained in line. We must think in the same way.

During this period of a Buddha's appearance, if one thinks "now this Nibbāna is invalid/unobtainable" and does not practice the virtues relevant to Nibbāna, that person will always have the philosophy of "tomorrow, tomorrow." Instead, we must think: while this True Dhamma is present, we must exert ourselves to the best of our ability, bring forth those Buddhist core values in accordance with that noble Dhamma, and live according to those Buddhist core values. We must not abandon the essence and grasp the non-essential. Then, if we cultivate those core values with effort, even if we fail in this life due to some reason or because our merits have not matured, according to that simile of the queue, when the next Buddha comes, we will be at the front of the queue. It is not those who just keep talking, but those who engage in the practice who are at the front of the queue. There are good examples of this; it is not said in vain. Meritorious friends have heard of Bāhiya Dārucīriya, Pukkusāti, and others.

That ascetic Bāhiya Dārucīriya, along with Pukkusāti and others—actually seven monks, as mentioned there—during the time of Kassapa Buddha, when the Dispensation was in decline. When the Dispensation was degenerating in a very dangerous manner, they climbed onto a great rock, threw away the ladder, and

making a life-sacrificing effort, rejecting food, put forth great energy and strove. It is said that through that effort, one monk became an Arahat. One became a Non-Returner. The other five monks, without food, withered and died. But they did not die in vain. Those five who meditated with life-sacrificing effort were the ones who understood the Dhamma most quickly in this Dispensation. Everyone now knows Bāhiya Dārucīriya. The Bāhiya Sutta is a Sutta that almost everyone considers highly sublime. Nibbāna was not gained by the ascetic Bāhiya Dārucīriya through just those few words without effort; he had acquired the qualification for it. That is what we must understand from this. It was the same with Ven. Pukkusāti. Pukkusāti attained the stage of Non-Returner immediately upon hearing a certain deep discourse.

They realized the Paths and Fruits very quickly in this Dispensation. It is said that they possessed the capacity for swift realization. If we cultivate the strength for swift realization, we will not just keep saying, "I will become an Arahat next time, next time," but like in that past Buddha Sasana, we will apply the maximum possible effort. That is what we must understand from this. Therefore, we must not be lazy in this Buddha Dispensation. If we think: "Now the Dispensation is in decline. Let us abandon these things and run along that positive thinking. Let us applaud material progress"—if we think like that, we will never escape from *saṃsāra*, keeping on saying "tomorrow, tomorrow, in the next Buddha's Dispensation, in the next Buddha's Dispensation." That is the state of affairs.

Therefore, we must reflect wisely. This Dhaniya Sutta is a good opportunity, a great topic, to renew our understanding of our values. Indeed, even by name, he is "Dhaniya" (the wealthy one). So, he developed a great pride because of this wealth, possessing such a huge herd of cattle. Because of that herd of cattle, and that flood we spoke of—indeed, if the Blessed One had not gone and helped him in some way, they might have been destroyed the very next day. In the same way, regarding the events happening in these times, these meritorious friends have heard well, there is nothing new to say. About a year ago, after the tsunami disaster occurred—now that has become an historical event. Many people try to remove such things from the minds of these meritorious friends. But in fact, those are the very things we must bring forth if we are to cultivate a sense of urgency. When the giant multi-story buildings were being destroyed by that tsunami, and vehicles, cars were being washed away into the sea, the Buddha statues that remained unharmed, sitting in concentration (*samādhi*), presented a demonstration of this very concept of *upadhi* (grasping / holding / fuel) and *nirūpadhi*. While all those *upadhi* were washed away, those statues sitting in concentration taught a lesson to the world. It was like the challenge the Blessed One made to Dhaniya. No matter how many tsunamis came, those Buddha statues, which reflect those core values, have given us a demonstration at least through their reflection/image. We must not forget that.

Recalling that too, in this disastrous time, there is something we often express—even though it is not a Buddhist concept, it is a Western saying: "a blessing in disguise." Practically, that is an important thing for many people. Because what helped

Paṭācārā to attain Arahatship was the bursting of her inflated balloon. As soon as that balloon of the future burst, Paṭācārā first lost her mind. That, too, is mentioned in the Dhamma. This principle is shown in the Dhamma in this way: there are two results of suffering (*Dukkha* (Suffering)). When suffering is presented, it works in two ways. That is: "*sammoha-vepakkāhaṃ, bhikkhave, dukkhaṃ vadāmi, pariyesana-vepakkaṃ vā*" (Monks, I say suffering has delusion as its result, or searching as its result). Here, "result" is not like the result of karma, but the consequence of suffering. Delusion, falling into confusion, or searching, going in search. So, when suffering is presented, one person falls into delusion—becomes mad, insane. Another person goes in search. That is present in both of the stories we mentioned. Paṭācārā, too, at first fell into madness and started running. Then how did she turn to searching? When Paṭācārā came naked before the Blessed One, He declared: "Regain your mindfulness, sister." As soon as she regained her mindfulness, she immediately realized that she was naked. From there onwards, regaining her composure, ultimately that word of the Buddha, "Regain your mindfulness, sister," helped Paṭācārā to attain the foremost position among the bhikkhunīs who were experts in the Vinaya in this Dispensation.

It is the same with Kisāgotamī. There is nothing new to say, these are stories these meritorious friends have heard hundreds of thousands of times. Yet, perhaps they have not learned the lesson they ought to take from them. In her case too, it was a similar thing. At first, she fell into delusion. That her child could die was something unthinkable to her. That future dream-world she had constructed around her infant child—she must have thought: "Because of this child, everything will help my future and my life ahead," and in various other ways. So, she did not want to let go of those. She could not believe that the child had died. The Blessed One directed Kisāgotamī, who had fallen into madness and went from house to house searching for medicine, towards searching. He guided her to search. How did He guide her to search? Everyone knows He asked her to bring a handful of mustard seeds from a house where no one had died. There, she began to search. Through that searching, wisdom arose. So, we too must reflect, taking these as blessings in disguise, and extract the true lesson from them. Instead, if we white-wash them, forget the Noble Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*), and cling to that distorted philosophy, we will remain in *saṃsāra* forever. In this very manner, we have wandered in *saṃsāra* for a long period, hundreds of thousands of times.

As declared by the Blessed One, covered by ignorance (*avijjā*) and bound by craving (*Taṇhā* (Craving)). Because of being covered by that veil of ignorance, we did not realize the truth. True, we did not realize it. It is a darkness, a great thick darkness. It is in a thick darkness that the world wanders. Next, bound by the fetter called *taṇhā*, unable to break that bond, we have run in this *saṃsāra* for a long period.

So, if we are to break this, we must realize the Three Characteristics—*Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self)—as shown by the Buddha. These meritorious friends have heard of the very first step of the path of

insight leading to that. Now, to the person who cultivates the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), what is first realized is that there is something called "arising" in everything in this world. And the aspect of "ceasing", which was previously unseen by us, begins to appear. Out of the two—arising and ceasing—the world always highlights "arising." After throwing one's worn-out clothes and other things into the dustbin, one does not even remember them. One keeps searching for new things. One performs a preparation/formation. *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). One keeps performing endless formatting. The Buddha showed this itself as *Dukkha* (Suffering). '*Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*' (all Preparations are impermanent) is true not only in a deep sense but even in an everyday, worldly sense. None of these preparations we make are permanent. Because of those preparations, we sometimes fall into suffering. All *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) are *anicca*. But because we have no understanding of their ceasing aspect, we keep preparing the same things over and over again, rather than thinking of the stilling of preparations. The Buddha has declared the stilling of preparations as happiness. We perform these *saṅkhāra* because of ignorance.

So, after seeing those two—arising and ceasing—next, a word used for this Nibbāna is *nirodha* (cessation). The state where that ceasing aspect is more clearly realized by the mind is called cessation. Out of arising and ceasing, how this breaks down must be understood more and more subtly. That is what is called dissolution (*bhaṅga*). Breaking down. When looking at the world with an inquiring eye, with insight wisdom, and strengthening one's concentration (*samādhi*), it appears in a subtle way that everything is a stream of arising and ceasing. That this is breaking apart, dissolving. Through that dissolving, what dissolves is not just things in the external world. Thoughts also dissolve. It is the thought that is grasped in the end. One sees that this thought also dissolves very rapidly.

Within that, a great fear and sense of urgency arise. "Am I not grasping this very thought in everything? That grasped thought also passes away, dissolves." The stream of insight-consciousness that starts from this gradually leads to that weariness (*nibbidā*), which is disenchantment with *saṃsāra*. This word *nibbidā* is indeed a valuable word in the Dispensation. Weariness/disenchantment with *saṃsāra*. To many, it is an unpleasant word. Now they attach new words to it and think along an optimistic philosophy. Now, something called a "depressed" state is prevalent among the younger generation. They say there are depressive symptoms, a depressive nature. Actually, what causes those is indeed that very optimistic philosophy. Because of limitless craving (*Taṇhā* (Craving)) and limitless expectations, young people run after various targets, become exhausted, and when the expected target is lost, they fall into a state of depression.

So, the Buddha has given the medicine pill for that. What is the medicine pill? It is the realization of reality. If one has some understanding of the Three Characteristics—*Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self)—they will not become despondent when they face such a situation. They will

accept it as, "Here, I have learned a lesson," treating it as a blessing in disguise as mentioned, and will incline towards the path of the Dhamma. Instead, calling it a depressive symptom, some kind of abnormal condition, many try to feed it through modern philosophies. But we must reflect: there is no one who can even come close to the Blessed One in terms of science, is there? We must realize that we can never attain true peace by closing our eyes to reality. That is what the Buddha has brought forth for us.

That is also what is in the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). Contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*)—to one who looks closely at the body, what is seen in the body? Is it that beautiful nature we spoke of? As one applies the mind to the body, when washing one's face and cleaning one's limbs, what is the reality? What is shown in the mirror—is that what is inside? When looking with the eye of insight, it is not the condition seen in the mirror. In that way, the weariness that leads to disenchantment with the body is a disenchantment that comes according to reality. It is not a depression caused by the shattering of targets set through one's own foolishness. That might be depression. But this is *nibbidā*—disenchantment, a valuable word in the Dispensation. It is when the insight knowledges are maturing and drawing close to Nibbāna that this true weariness with *saṃsāra* emerges.

Through that alone comes fading of lust (*virāga*), which is non-attachment—letting go. One cannot escape from this *saṃsāra* while maintaining attachment to it. One cannot say, "Let me let go," while holding onto it. "Oh, I am holding on while trying to let go!" It is not to be done in that way. Through realization, a moment comes when those things held onto so far are let go without one even knowing it. It is not that "one lets go," but "they get let go." They slip away. They slip away. Such a state arises in the mind. Until then, one must cultivate that special vision we spoke of.

So, on this occasion, these meritorious friends have indeed undertaken a valuable virtue—this large crowd undertook the appropriate virtue on this Full Moon day. Why does everyone, as Buddhists, become virtuous at various levels of virtue? Going to heaven is indeed a result of it too. But if we look at the true meaning, virtue is cultivated for the sake of concentration (*samādhi*)—for the purification of mind. Establishing ourselves on virtue, training our body and speech, we next develop one-pointedness of mind, concentration, which is called purification of mind. This is not to see how the moon and the sun behave in the physical world, or what lies beneath the earth. This concentration was developed to see the reality, the nature as-it-is, of this five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). To the person who dwells in the Four Establishments of Mindfulness with that concentration, the insight knowledges emerge.

So, then, using virtue as a support, concentration is attained. Next, the concentrated mind is applied to insight, to contemplation. Through that contemplation, one gradually draws closer to true realization. When one draws close to that realization,

one sees that the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*), which were hitherto considered as "I" and "mine" as *upadhi* (grasping / holding / fuel), and the houses, lands, and vehicles we build in this long *saṃsāra* are all breaking down. As they break down, we acquire new things. But there is one thing we do not let go of in this long *saṃsāra*: being deluded by this five aggregates of *rūpa*, *Vedanā* (Feeling), *saññā*, *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *viññāṇa* (consciousness), we have worked to grow them rather than working towards their passing away, their cessation. That is why we have wandered for such a long time in this *saṃsāra*. Within that itself lies suffering. In short, the Buddha has declared the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) as entirely *Dukkha* (Suffering).

In truth, this world is like a (disease). The Blessed One is called the supreme surgeon, the physician-healer, because the Buddha gave the method—the medicine—to cross over this bound suffering of *saṃsāra*. That medicine is contained within the Four Noble Truths. The Noble Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-ariya-sacca*). Craving (*Taṇhā* (Craving)) is shown as its cause. Due to limitless craving, the people of this world are stuck and immersed in *Bhava* (Becoming). They are holding onto various things. So, these virtues such as virtue are cultivated to gradually thin out that craving.

Then, when that is removed at some point, along with the stilling of the thirst of craving and the stilling of preparations (*Saṅkhāra* (Preparations)), the attainment of Nibbāna is achieved. That is extinguishment. The Buddha declared: "My house is open, my fire is extinguished." Those fires He spoke of are indeed the fires of lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). Now, Dhaniya was pleased saying: "The fire is kindled, the fire is in the house." The Blessed One was pleased (by saying the fire is extinguished). Therefore, we must follow the Blessed One and not Dhaniya. We must reflect that as Buddhists, the great endeavor, the great task we have to do, is this work of extinguishing the three fires. That is what we must engage in.

For that purpose, these meritorious friends have undertaken virtue to some extent today. Through listening to this Dhamma, these meritorious friends also draw close to the Noble Wealths (*ariya-dhana*) we spoke of. The wealth of faith (*saddhā-dhana*), the wealth of virtue (*sīla-dhana*), the shame and fear that assist virtue itself, next, Dhamma knowledge—that also helps. That too is a valuable wealth. A person without Dhamma knowledge destroys his own life and also destroys society. Next, that letting go, the power of generosity. That is a great strength. A person without the strength of letting go falls into disaster in that manner when a misfortune or loss occurs. Finally, wisdom. The realization of the true nature of the world—wisdom—it is when that is brought forth that liberation from *saṃsāra* occurs.

May the store of merit gathered today by these meritorious friends through the virtue kept and the Dhamma heard, serve as a supportive cause to develop and mature the spiritual faculties and powers of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom which assist in the realization of Nibbāna. Establishing oneself on those, and with the help of association with noble friends, may this power of merit definitely be

a supportive cause for the realization of the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahatship within this very Buddha Dispensation! May you make this aspiration. Likewise, if there is any being from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha in this universe who wishes to rejoice in this merit of preaching and hearing the Dhamma, may they all, through that rejoicing, realize the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna in accordance with their aspirations. Now, let us recite these stanzas.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*"