Pahankanuwa Sermon #39

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.80)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

Alaṅkato cepi samaṃ careyya, santo danto niyato brahmacārī;

Sabbesu bhūtesu nidhāya daṇḍaṃ, so brāhmaṇo so samaṇo sa bhikkhu.

From:

Verse 142 from the Daṇḍavagga (Chapter on Punishment) of the Dhammapada

Dear Listeners,

The Blessed One declared that due to various kinds of intoxication, worldly beings fall into heedlessness in this saṁsāra. In addition to natural intoxications such as the intoxication of youth (*yobbana-mada*), the intoxication of health (*ārogya-mada*), the intoxication of life (*jīvita-mada*), and the intoxication of wealth (*bhoga-mada*), the Dhamma indicates that the most well-known intoxication in society—the intoxication of liquor—is also a cause for heedlessness. What helps one to escape from all these intoxications is *saṁvega* (spiritual urgency). The background story for the stanza we have chosen as our theme today reveals how *saṁvega*, arising out of the sorrowful situations in life, can help a person conquer all these intoxications and draw closer to Nibbāna.

The Lord Buddha preached this stanza concerning King Pasenadi Kosala's minister named Santati. When this prime minister, Santati, returned after suppressing a rebellion on the borders of King Kosala's kingdom, the king, as a special privilege, granted him royal luxury for seven days. This does not mean he gave him the kingdom itself; it was more like an honorary title. He arranged for him to enjoy pleasures equal to royal luxury—the fivefold sensual pleasures (*pañca-kāma*). So much so, that a female dancer skilled in dancing and singing was handed over to him for his entertainment. Thus, this minister Santati spent seven days enjoying liquor, watching those dances, and listening to songs. On the seventh day, he set out to go to

the bathing ford, riding on an elephant with his retinue. On the way, seeing the Buddha walking for alms, he bowed his head in respect to the Buddha and went on. At that moment, the Buddha showed a gentle smile. Since there is a special significance to such a smile, Venerable Ānanda usually asks, "Exalted One, what is the reason for showing that smile?" When asked thus, the Buddha declared, "Even though this minister goes on like this now, today itself, adorned in all his garments and jewelry, he will come to me, listen to a stanza, and attain final extinguishment (*parinibbāna*) today." Among the crowd who heard this, those with wrong views thought, "This recluse Gotama says whatever comes to his mouth; today we must be prepared to expose his falsehood and disgrace him." That group prepared themselves in that manner. Those with right views and faith were eager, thinking, "We must witness this miraculous event."

Meanwhile, during the daytime, Minister Santati engaged in water sports and then went to the drinking hall in the park. There, the dancer went onto the stage and began to perform her dance. In order to display her dancing grace to the best of her ability, this woman had not eaten properly for all seven days. At this moment, due to hunger and exhaustion, a severe ailment suddenly arose, and she fell down dead right there, with her eyes and mouth wide open. When the minister asked to have her examined, the people said, "Now her life has ceased." As soon as he heard this, a great *saṁvega* (spiritual urgency) and grief arose in this minister. So much so, that due to the *saṁvega* that arose, his seven days of intoxication subsided right there. He thought, "To whom should I go to subside this grief of mine? I must go to the Buddha." In the evening, he came to the Buddha, along with his retinue, adorned in his garments and jewelry in that very manner. When he related this story to the Buddha, the Buddha said, "Santati, not only in this life, but in this long saṁsāra, the tears you have shed due to this woman dying in this very manner are greater than the waters of the four great oceans." Thus instilling the fear of saṁsāra, He preached a short stanza of deep meaning:

Yaṁ pubbe taṁ visosehi,

pacchā te māhu kiñcanaṁ;

majjhe ce no gahessasi,

upasanto carissasi.

When looked at in terms of meaning, in terms of literal meaning, it has to be translated like this: '*Yaṁ pubbe taṁ visosehi*' — whatever there was before, dry it up; '*pacchā te māhu kiñcanaṁ*' — let there be nothing for you afterwards; '*majjhe ce no gahessasi*' — if you do not grasp anything in the middle either; '*upasanto carissasi*' — you will wander completely at peace.

It is said that by deeply considering this brief advice, the sorrow-stricken Minister Santati attained Arahantship at that very moment. Along with this, some texts

mention that if a person has cultivated meditative absorptions (*jhāna*) in the past, they surface. Now, here, it is said that he obtained not only the state of *jhāna*, but even direct knowledges (*abhiññā*). For next, it is said that the Arahat Santati, after attaining Arahantship, examined his life-Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) to see how long his life would last. Knowing that he would have to pass away (attain *parinibbāna*), he asked permission from the Buddha, saying, "Please give me permission to attain *parinibbāna*." The Buddha said, "Very well, but before that, declare to this assembly the past kamma that helped you to become an Arahat. And do this not sitting on the ground, but rising into the air." At that moment, it is mentioned here that the Arahat Santati declared his past history in this manner:

"Ninety-one aeons (*kalpas*) ago, during the time of Vipassī Buddha, I was born in the kingdom of Bandhumatī and wondered what would be a good livelihood to pursue. When I thought about what occupation would not cause harm or injury to others, I felt that the activity of a Dhamma announcer (*Dhamma-ghosaka*) was the best occupation. The activity of a Dhamma announcer means wandering about proclaiming to people, encouraging them to perform meritorious deeds like giving alms, to observe the precept days, to listen to the Dhamma, and to be devoted to the Triple Gem. So, I started to behave in this way in society as a profession. King Bandhumatī, who was the Buddha's father, came to know about this, summoned me, and asked, 'What are you doing and how are you doing it?' When I told him, 'I am practicing the profession of a Dhamma announcer,' he said, 'Very good. But you are doing this by walking on foot, aren't you? For this work, you should travel on horseback,' and he gave me a horse. He told me to perform this duty riding on a horse while wearing a garland of flowers. After I had done this for some time, the king summoned me again and said, 'A horse is not sufficient; do this work traveling in a chariot drawn by four horses.' Then, for the third time, he summoned me again and assigned me to perform this work of a Dhamma announcer adorned in garments and jewelry, riding on an elephant, having also given me various forms of wealth, possessions, and resources. In those days, the lifespan of human beings was extremely long. During the time of Vipassī Buddha, I performed this task of a Dhamma announcer for eighty thousand years." Declaring, "It is as a result of this that I obtained this state," Minister Santati entered into the fire-element attainment (*tejo-dhātu-samāpatti*) right there in the air and kindled fire in his own body. The blood and flesh of his body were consumed. At that time, the Buddha had a cloth spread out to collect the burnt bone relics and had a stupa built there at the four-way junction, wishing, "May people worship this stupa and accumulate merit."

After this event, after this miraculous event, a discussion arose among the monks: "This minister Santati attained Arahantship while adorned in his garments and jewelry. Do we call this person an ascetic (*samaṇa*), a monk (*bhikkhu*), or a Brahmin (*brāhmaṇa*)?" A discussion of this nature arose. Having heard this, the Buddha uttered the stanza on that occasion, which is presented as follows:

Alankato cepi samaṁ careyya

santo danto niyato brahmacārī

sabbesu bhūtesu nidhāya daṇḍaṁ

so brāhmaṇo so samaṇo sa bhikkhu

The meaning of it is: "Even if someone is adorned in garments and jewelry, if they are peaceful, tamed, established in celibacy, having laid aside cudgels and weapons towards all beings, having a practice of non-violence, discarding uneven conduct and practicing even conduct—to such a person, whichever word is used, whether ascetic, Brahmin, or monk, there is no wrong. This is the idea conveyed by that stanza."

That is the story. What we have to extract from this story and event is—indeed, one might wonder how a layperson, having been intoxicated for seven days in that manner, could attain Arahantship. One should not misunderstand this. However, it is connected to past kamma. Only to someone who has the power of past perfections (*pāramī*) does the Buddha preach the Dhamma, looking at the right moment. This Dhamma is of such a timeless nature (*akālika*) that, though short, if it is deeply understood, that person can escape from saṁsāra at that very moment. There are many such highly miraculous things in Dhamma stories. In this day and age, someone might even question them.

Now, if we analyze this, what we have to say is that even if we think about this story, at first glance there is only one drama. But there is no wrong in thinking that there are two dramas. Because within this entire saṁsāra existence, there are three stages: gratification (*assāda*), danger (*ādīnava*), and escape (*nissaraṇa*). Gratification means enjoyment. Worldly beings are tempted to enjoy sensations based on the fivefold sensual pleasures (*pañca-kāma*). Especially animal beings. Even human beings—ordinary persons—live in the fivefold sensual pleasures. That is where they are. What we call "stages" is also one such stage. Next, when experiencing this, at a certain point, danger arises from within it itself—gratification and danger. At that moment, worldly beings are tempted to think. They wonder, "Why does this happen to us? Why do we get such sorrowful results?" and fall into contemplation. Next, they begin to search. A way to get out of this, to be free. That is what is called "escape" (*nissaraṇa*). Escape means leaping out of this circular wheel of saṁsāra—the stage of escape. For that, if one meets a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), a Buddha, at the right time, one can attain the escape called Nibbāna. Those are the three stages. All of these are contained within the short seven-day experience of Minister Santati. That royal luxury of seven days was a false royal luxury. It was perhaps the liquor that helped him forget its falsity and impermanence (*aniccatā*). He was intoxicated for all seven days. From this sleep—instead of sleepiness, it was intoxication—he awoke from this sleep, this dream of life, when he saw the tragic drama of that actress's dance. It became a drama. When we think a little about that, it is rare to see that final scene of an actor's or actress's life on a stage. That is the final scene of the dance of all of our lives. But we can contemplate that in a deeply moving way (*saṁvegī*). That woman must have danced because she could not avoid dancing. Because it was her

profession. But at that moment, the dancing was done in madness. A certain passage in the Buddha's Dhamma is clarified to us by this. The Buddha described this drama—now, in these times, artists who enjoy aesthetic pleasure might feel some displeasure toward the Buddha about such things—but the Buddha compared drama to madness: *"Ummattakamidaṁ, bhikkhave, ariyassa vinaye naccaṁ"* — "Monks, in the discipline of the Noble Ones, dancing is madness." So, this fits perfectly here. Indeed, she danced unable to bear the pain of hunger. That is exactly what we say on some occasions: if someone is made to stand on a heated iron stage, the effort they make to shift their feet will appear to those looking as a dance. To a foreigner, it might even be a dance worth filming. Thus, according to the Buddha's word, it is clear that this dancing is like madness. Now, this fits perfectly. In the end, it was a struggling due to the pain of hunger. She struggled and fell, with both her eyes and mouth open. That is the final dance. We do not say this in mockery of dancing; these are natural occurrences. But the world forgets this, due to various intoxications such as the aforementioned intoxication of liquor. This reality (*yathābhūta*) became manifest to Minister Santati. Through that, a deep weariness (*nibbidā*) arose. Indeed, to cross over from saṁsāra, weariness—which is called *nibbidā*—is essential. It arises in each individual at their own level. In daily life, we experience the suffering (*dukkha*) of separation from loved ones. But it does not go that deep. Here, it was immediate. Through that *saṁvega*, his intoxication subsided right there. That is why the Buddha declared it in that stanza. "Peaceful, tamed..." — indeed, during that short time, through the weariness (*nibbidā*) that arose from it, a certain restraint must have developed in that person. Time is not the issue here. A great transformation had occurred in him by the time he came to see the Buddha, due to that *saṁvega*. He was no longer the same minister as before.

So, somehow, through the drama we see that the minister saw gratification, and then danger (*ādīnava*) due to the sudden death of the actress. Next, he came to the Buddha seeking escape (*nissaraṇa*). To help with that escape, although the Buddha's sermon was a short stanza, we know it was wonderful. It is something beyond our imagination. The Buddha sees the dispositions and latencies (*anusaya*) of characters, and the strengths they have brought from the past. If they have practiced meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*), He sees that too. It is according to those that the Buddha utters a stanza.

Now, this stanza is a deep stanza. In the past, through the merit of being a Dhamma announcer (*Dhamma-ghosaka*)—encouraging others towards the Dhamma is a great merit. The greatest thing one can do in the world is to establish others in the Dhamma. If he did this for his entire life, there must have been a vast mass of merit, a strength of perfections (*pāramī*), within that person. It surfaced, ripened, and matured through that short stanza uttered by the Buddha. That stanza is like a riddle to an ordinary person. What does it say? "*Yaṁ pubbe taṁ visosehi*" — if there was something before, dry it up. What is this thing that was there before? Past Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). The Buddha told Minister Santati, "The tears you have shed in this long saṁsāra due to this very woman dying in this very manner are

greater than the four great oceans." Thus, such life stories are mentioned in the Dhamma—some people come together as husbands and wives five hundred times, or even more. They come together as parents and children, and in various other ways in this long saṁsāra due to the power of attraction they have for one another. What we have to understand here is that Minister Santati must have had some saṁsāric connection with that actress. Be that as it may, with that saṁsāric background, Minister Santati understood the side of danger (*ādīnava*)—that he had shed an ocean of tears over a long period in saṁsāra for this very woman. Now, here, it is as if the Buddha declared, "Dry up that ocean!" and what is contained within that are past Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Let us analyze this term *saṅkhāra* a little.

The term *saṅkhāra* is used in many contexts. But to truly understand this deeply, it must be understood through meditation. Briefly, it can be explained in relation to drama. In ancient India, the word *saṅkhāra* was often used in connection with drama. Before an actress comes onto the stage, how much makeup and dressing up does she do? Even today you know, don't you? There are various kinds—we don't need to specify—indeed, nowadays we see actresses even on the high road. Why? Because they are not in their natural state. They come onto the stage having made a change by applying various colors. These are called makeup Preparations (*anga-saṅkhāra*). They make many artificial, deceptive modifications to suit the scene presented in the drama. That is basically the meaning of the word *saṅkhāra*. Therefore, it is in accordance with this deep meaning that the Buddha designates everything we do in our entire life as Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). In the very effort we make to live, within the good or bad kamma, when considered deeply, what exists is our making a personality, grasping it as "I" and "mine".

It is deeply shown in the Dhamma that in one place, an untaught worldling regards form as self. *"Rūpaṁ attato samanupassati"* — he regards form as self. *"Yā kho pana samanupassanā — saṅkhāro so"* — that very regarding as self is a formation (*saṅkhāra*). Because the Buddha has shown that what is called the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*)—whereby an ordinary worldling thinks that there is a self, grasping it as "I" and "mine"—is a falsely assumed thing. Or rather, it is something made up. How is it projected? One has a body. One either thinks, "This is my self," or that "the self possesses a body," or thinks "my self is within form," or "form is within the self." In this manner, looking at each of the aggregates in four ways has been shown by the Buddha as a formation (*saṅkhāra*). One regards form as self; one regards self as possessing form; one thinks that form is within self; one thinks that self is within form. What this indicates is the inability to let go of form. It is like seeing one's photograph and saying, "Ah, this is me! This is my childhood; this is my youth." Thus, one has taken form as "I". In the same manner is feeling (*vedanā*). In the same manner is perception (*saññā*)—recognition. In the same manner are Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Making Preparations is taken in that way. Now, when that actress comes onto the stage, she is not the same person who was behind the stage. At that moment she thinks, "I must perform this character." It is not like being at

home. Thus, there too, we see the deceptive nature of these Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). That is why Preparations are compared to a banana trunk. A banana trunk has no essence, no heartwood; it is substanceless. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is this thinking of "I" and "mine", it is to that mind. In this way, when considering each of these, right there are Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). This is a small clue given to understand Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). The Buddha shows this as something occurring due to ignorance (*avijjā*). What is ignorance? It is not knowing that this entire saṁsāric existence is suffering (*dukkha*). Because of not knowing it as suffering (*dukkha*), we perform a great deal of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) in this life. The Buddha says that, in the end, suffering (*dukkha*) is received within that. Since we do not understand this, we go on and on in saṁsāra accumulating Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). That is what is contained in this brief story—the Dhamma of Dependent Arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), in short. Thus, somehow, those Preparations are past Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). In the past, Minister Santati understood that all Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) associated with that woman were impermanent (*anicca*). "*Yaṁ pubbe taṁ visosehi*" — he dried up those Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). He dried up that grief.

Next, "*pacchā te māhu kiñcanaṁ*". Those devotees who practice insight meditation (*vipassanā*) know that what is called investigation of Preparations (*saṅkhāra-sammasana*) means contemplating Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Now, in the Dhamma, in insight meditation, it is said that what we take as kamma in the world are these very things. These are all our Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Indeed, when it is said "all Preparations are impermanent" (*"sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā"*), it refers to these thoughts of ours, the thoughts (*vitakka*) that arise in the mind within this existence. Indeed, the past is something grasped by the mind, isn't it? There, too, are Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). The Buddha declares that every single one of those past Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) is impermanent (*anicca*). Likewise, they are substanceless; there is no essence to be grasped as "I" or "mine". Next, because those past Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are no longer there, it becomes easy for us. We can contemplate it like waking up from a dream and realizing that the dream was false. Therefore, it is easy for an insight meditator (*vipassanā-yogī*) to understand the impermanence (*aniccatā*) of past Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). It is the same regarding future Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). According to that same principle, one can understand that if one generates Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) in the future, they will likewise perish.

But the most difficult thing is the present. The present is the middle: "*majjhe ce no*". The ordinary person grasps the Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) of this present—called *paccuppanna* (the present)—tightly. Otherwise, there is no existence either, is there? What is past, one can easily understand, "what is gone is gone." What comes in the future has not arrived yet; even if it comes, one can think, "it is just that much." But the form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) of this very moment are held onto tightly. Now, here, the feat performed by Minister Santati was seeing this with wisdom through that

saṁvega that arose, through the weariness (*nibbidā*) towards saṁsāra. That is how the realization of the Paths and Fruits (*magga-phala*) occurs. The insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) arising out of impermanence (*aniccatā*) mature, and through the breaking of that, weariness (*nibbidā*) towards saṁsāra arises. Through weariness (*nibbidā*), the desire to be liberated from saṁsāra arises. Through that, by deeply seeing the three characteristics, as a result of a highly rapid and subtle transformation occurring in the mind, one obtains the realization of the Paths and Fruits. Thus, what is fundamental to this is the weariness (*nibbidā*) towards saṁsāra, against the background of this event. That is why the Buddha, like 'hitting the nail right on the head,' waited exactly until the time of that person's arrival. That is why the Buddha showed a gentle smile. The Buddha sees the moment when this person can be helped. Otherwise, when Minister Santati bowed his head and was leaving, He could have said, "Wait a moment, listen to this sermon and then go," couldn't He? No, He waited until he had gone through all of that and returned humbled. Only after his intoxication had subsided, and when the time had arrived, did He deliver that short sermon. Santati understood it most deeply. "*Majjhe ce no gahessasi*" — if you do not grasp the middle, the present Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) either, "*upasanto carissasi*" — you will wander completely at peace, which refers to Arahantship.

That is what we have to extract from this story. Many such events are mentioned in the Dhamma. In this day and age, someone might question this. Likewise, on the other hand, we must say that taking this as a general rule, some people might think that just by hearing a short stanza, anyone can obtain this state. We should not think in that way generally. This is an extraordinary occurrence. It is not an ordinary thing; highly extraordinary events are recorded in this Dhamma. One must understand their background properly.

Then, next, what we need to bring out here is what causes weariness towards saṁsāra. We also started with this life—now, here, it was not only the intoxication of liquor; within this, what must have helped Minister Santati perform such a heroic deed were also the intoxication of youth (*yobbana-mada*), the intoxication of health (*ārogya-mada*), and so forth. It was with their support. Next, the intoxication of life (*jīvita-mada*)—he conquered others and returned. Next, the intoxication of wealth (*bhoga-mada*)—royal luxury was given. It was on that very intoxication born of wealth that he began to enjoy royal luxury for the entire seven days. If we think about it, this "middle" is indeed those seven days. He understood the emptiness of the royal luxury enjoyed during those seven days. Then, it is easy to let go of it. If it was understood in that way, the grief caused by this event subsided right there. One was able to conquer that grief. Next, the danger of this saṁsāra is understood even more deeply: "Have we not spent such a long time in saṁsāra in this manner, is it not an ocean of tears?" So, this aspect—this aspect of the Dhamma—is not brought out by most people in this day and age. We have mentioned on many occasions that now the trend is, both for protecting our Dispensation (*Sāsana*) and for carrying this Dhamma forward, what is mostly brought out is the side of worldly development. Developing the world. The Buddha has said: *"Na siyā lokavaḍḍhano"* — "Do not be a

developer of the world," or "Do not be a developer of cemeteries." Developing this saṁsāra is a practice of worldly development and cemetery development—the weariness towards saṁsāra does not fit with that. Therefore, much attention is not paid to such things in this day and age. However, during the Buddha's time, on many occasions, to the monks and laypeople who listened to the Buddha's Dhamma, and to those who came to ask questions, He constantly reminded them of sermons that created a wonderful, powerful sense of urgency (*saṁvega*) and weariness towards saṁsāra.

These are called the *Anamatagga* (Suttas). In the *Anamatagga Saṁyutta*, several such Dhamma sections are mentioned. Why are they called the *Anamatagga* Suttas? The Buddha repeatedly reminds us that this saṁsāra is something whose beginning and end are not visible. The beginning of this cannot be found; to illustrate this, there are similes—it is said that upon hearing those discourses, monks attained Arahantship right then and there. Now, here, we started by speaking about the ocean of tears. That discourse is mentioned in more detail in the Dhamma. The Buddha asks, "Monks, what do you think, which is greater? The tears you have shed over this long saṁsāra—while wandering for a long time covered by ignorance and bound by craving—due to associating with the disagreeable and separating from the agreeable, or the water in the four great oceans?" When that question is asked, the monks humbly declare, "Exalted One, if we have properly understood the Dhamma preached by you, the tears we have shed in this long saṁsāra due to associating with the disagreeable and separating from the agreeable in such situations are indeed greater, and the water in the four great oceans is less." "Sadhu! Sadhu! So it is, monks," the Buddha declares. Because this saṁsāra is something whose beginning and end are not visible. A starting point cannot be declared. For those running in saṁsāra for a long time, it cannot be said, "Here is the beginning." Preaching in this manner that the first beginning is not visible, He then says in that discourse to become weary (*nibbidā*) towards all those Preparations (*saṅkhāra*).

Thus, next He says, "Monks, if you collect the tears you have shed in this long saṁsāra solely for your mothers, those tears are greater than the four great oceans." Just as a teacher in a school repeatedly brings up a certain point to make the children understand it deeply, the Buddha also asks, "What do you think, monks? Are the tears shed for your mothers greater, or is the water in the four great oceans greater?" Next, He asks the same about fathers, daughters, and so on—due to the loss of relatives, the loss of wealth, and the calamity of disease—asking, "Are the tears shed due to these greater, or is the water in the four great oceans greater?" The answer given to that is that the water in the four great oceans is less, and the tears are greater. In this way, there are many discourses in various places regarding the ocean of tears.

Similarly, next there are other discourses about an "ocean of mother's milk." There, too, the same is asked: "Monks, what do you think? Is the mother's milk you drank while running in this saṁsāra—covered by ignorance and bound by craving—greater,

or is the water in the four great oceans greater?" There, too, the monks reply, "If we have properly understood the Exalted One's Dhamma, that mother's milk is indeed greater, and the water in the four great oceans is less." Thus, by that too, the length of this saṁsāra and the fact that we have traveled in this saṁsāra for such a long time is shown.

Likewise, there is another discourse that is even more stirringly urgent (*saṁvegajanaka*): about the "ocean of blood." It is a highly famous discourse. This was preached to thirty monks who came from the city of Pāvā, who were earnest practitioners of ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*). When those thirty monks came to the Buddha, they had not obtained any of the Paths and Fruits. But the Buddha began the discourse: "Monks, what do you think, which is greater? The blood that has flowed when you had your heads cut off in this long saṁsāra, or the water in the four great oceans?" the monks replied, "If we have properly understood the Buddha's Dhamma, that blood is indeed greater." He does not stop there. Next, the Buddha asks, "Is the blood shed by you solely while being cows, solely while being buffaloes, while being sheep, while being goats, while being pigs, while being chickens, greater, or is the water in the four great oceans greater?" These devotees know that even when thinking about the present times, this is not an exaggeration. When we think about the quantity of animals being killed, some of them might even be one's relatives. The Buddha never utters an exaggeration. An exaggeration is a falsehood. Therefore, this is not a falsehood. It is said that there is not even a simile for this.

In this manner, there are other highly wonderful discourses. From various perspectives, the Buddha points out the danger of this saṁsāra. Indeed, we spoke of the objects of urgency (*saṁvega-vatthu*), didn't we? Decay, illness, death, and so forth are well-known. There is another: the suffering (*dukkha*) experienced in the past saṁsāra, and the suffering (*dukkha*) to be experienced in the future—if one does not become an Arahat. These, too, are objects of urgency (*saṁvega-vatthu*). In this day and age, not much consideration is given to them. However, to a faithful person, these suttas are highly meaningful if they sink in deeply. To put it briefly, it is mentioned that upon hearing this discourse, the thirty monks who came from Pāvā destroyed all defilements (*āsava*) and obtained supreme Arahantship.

From this, we see that without generating *saṁvega* regarding this saṁsāra, without generating weariness towards saṁsāra, one cannot attain these high states. Without being weary of the world, one cannot attain supramundane states (*lokuttara-dhamma*). One must become weary at various levels. Some people might be afraid, thinking, "If we do that, we cannot carry on our lay life." There are different levels. If, at that moment, the mind is directed to that supramundane state, what the Buddha preaches is nothing strange. It is the necessity of understanding the Four Noble Truths. This is what the Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*) in the Four Noble Truths is. Nowadays, the Truth of Suffering is explained as applying only to those who are sick in hospitals, to the poor who have nothing to eat and drink, or to those who expect various positions in the world—not getting what one wants is suffering

(*dukkha*). If those things are provided, it is happiness. Ideas about the Buddha's Sasana are moving within such a narrow vision. But indeed, if someone hopes for Nibbāna, and if a great *saṁvega* arises in them, thinking, "Have we not traveled in saṁsāra for such a long time in this manner?"—it is through that that one becomes weary of existence (*bhava*). Without being weary of existence—what the Buddha has pointed out as the lust for existence (*bhava-rāga*) is the subtlest attachment within worldly beings, the attachment to existence, to continuity. To break that, one must constantly contemplate the terrifying nature of saṁsāra, and the length of saṁsāra.

There are other discourses of that very kind. In one discourse, the Buddha declares one's maternal lineage. That too is a good simile. The Buddha presents that too like a story: "Monks, if you cut all the trees, leaves, branches, and twigs in this entire land of Jambudīpa into four-inch pieces, and taking each piece, say: 'This is my mother,' and taking the next piece, say: 'This is my mother's mother,' and taking the next piece, say: 'This is my mother's mother's mother'—if you go on counting the past maternal lineage in this way, the wooden pieces will run out, but the maternal lineage will not be exhausted." He presents even that simile, which shows that we have traveled in saṁsāra for such a long time in this manner. Next, He points out the same regarding fathers.

The Buddha declares that if you make the entire earth into a heap of clay and make small clay balls, and discard one clay ball saying, "This is my father," "This is my father's father," "This is my father's father's father"—even by counting in this manner, the number of past fathers cannot be exhausted.

There are discourses of that kind. In another place, there is a discourse about the length of an aeon (*kalpa*). There too, a monk comes and asks the Buddha, "Exalted One, how long is this aeon?" "Monk, this aeon cannot be measured and completed in terms of years, hundreds of years, thousands of years, or hundreds of thousands of years." "In that case, Exalted One, can you give a simile?" "What is the simile? Suppose there is a great mountain, one league (*yojana*) high, one league wide, and one league long. It is a solid mountain with no crevices in the middle. Once every hundred years, a man comes with a cloth of Kāsī silk and wipes that mountain, then goes away. By such wiping with the Kāsī cloth, wiping once every hundred years, that mountain of one league in height, width, and length would wear away, but the aeon would not wear away. So long is an aeon."

Another simile is presented: Suppose there is a city with iron walls, one league in length, width, and height, filled with mustard seeds. Once every hundred years, a person comes and removes one mustard seed. Those mustard seeds would run out, but the aeon would not wear away.

In another place, it is mentioned: A Brahmin comes and asks, "Exalted One, how many aeons have there been in the past? How many past aeons?" Then, when the Buddha said that a number cannot be given and a simile was requested, He said, "Brahmin, if there is a quantity of sand from where the river Ganges begins to where

it flows into the sea, and if each grain of sand could be counted, the number of aeons one has spent in the past is even greater than those grains of sand." It is pointed out in this manner.

Another person asks—though it was not in response to a question—on an occasion when the Buddha delivered a special sermon about the size of that aeon. When the Buddha came near the Vepulla Mountain, the Vepulla Mountain in India: "Monk, if the skeletons discarded by a single living being within a single aeon were collected together, and if those collected skeletons did not perish, they would be larger than this Vepulla Mountain," the Buddha declared. What this shows is how long a person goes on being born and dying, discarding skeletons in this manner, within a single aeon. There are many such discourses in the Dhamma.

Through each of these, we can understand that what the Buddha brought out based on those *Anamatagga* Suttas was the terrifying nature of this saṁsāra. Because, we know the uniqueness of the Buddha's Dhamma. The Buddha is not outstanding because He gave some novel social philosophy to the world. True, those things are also there. However, the most important thing—which also helps in the long-term survival of the Buddha's Sasana—is declaring the path to the problem faced by worldly beings when searching for a way to cross over from this saṁsāra over a long period of time. Then, only the person who understands the terrifying nature of saṁsāra feels like crossing over from it. Therefore, indeed, one must constantly direct the mind to these things: the suffering (*dukkha*) experienced in past saṁsāra. It was to help with that that the Buddha explained the length of saṁsāra in various ways. When thinking about these similes, one is filled with great wonder. They might seem like exaggerations. However, through each of them, we must contemplate that for such a long time, living beings have traveled covered by ignorance and bound by craving (*taṇhā*). One must contemplate: "We have swum in such an ocean (of tears), we have swum in an ocean of mother's milk, we have swum in an ocean of blood."

Even if we think about the lineages of parents, we are highly proud of various relationships. Next, the Buddha declares, "Monks, we have traveled for such a long time in this saṁsāra that it is almost impossible to find anyone in this world who has not been one's mother. It is difficult to find someone who has not been one's mother, who has not been one's father, who has not been one's son, who has not been one's daughter." Then, one might think about this distinction of male and female. One must understand that even that does not belong to oneself. Due to various demeritorious deeds (*kamma*), there can be changes in the distinction of male and female. Looking at it from that perspective, according to the Buddha's word, we can understand: "Those who are near us are our mothers, our fathers, our children." It is precisely because of not knowing this that it is called a drama. That is why the entire existence is a drama. The ordinary world does not understand this deep reality. The ordinary world sees only the lifespan starting from the mother's womb and ending at the cemetery. To scientists and everyone else, only that much is visible to the physical eye. Only that much is visible to the physical eye. To those with direct knowledges

(*abhiññā*), a greater extent is visible. To us, only the animal world is visible. The ghost realm (*peta-loka*) can also be known by some to a certain extent by inference. But those divine realms (*deva-loka*) and Brahma realms (*brahma-loka*) are deeply visible only to those with direct knowledges (*abhiññā*). Other than that, ordinary persons, like blind people saying there is no sun or moon, say, "Where are they? There is only this world. So, as long as we are in this world, we should eat and drink well. It is enough if we find the necessary economy etc. and live well." Such is their view. But that is not it. We pay homage to the Buddha because He discovered liberation from this saṁsāra, which no other teacher could discover. The Buddha has shown a highly wonderful Dhamma—a path of escape (*nissaraṇa-magga*). Indeed, to enter upon this, one must understand gratification and danger (*ādīnava*). If someone is prompted to think about this, using the very danger (*ādīnava*) that arises within gratification as a footing, and if they are assisted by a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*)—if the Dhamma falls into place at the right time—even if that person cannot perform it as rapidly as Minister Santati did that escape (*nissaraṇa*), they can obtain those aforementioned states even today by engaging in meditation.

We must then contemplate: this is the real essence, the heartwood of this Dhamma. This is the practice leading to Nibbāna. We must do what is relevant to that. Indeed, what is called the three characteristics—impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*)—that is the essence of the Buddha's Dhamma. The impermanent nature, the suffering nature, and the not-self nature of this entire existence. When we say suffering (*dukkha*), it is generally not just painful feeling (*vedanā*). Now let us look at that separation from the loved ones. In lay life, coming together with loved ones is inevitably regarded as a grand festive occasion. That is called auspicious (*maṅgala*). Then, when a situation arises like the one experienced by Minister Santati, the word *'ava'* (un-) is prefixed to it. Next, it ends in an inauspicious event (*avamaṅgala*). That is the life story. Therefore, according to that, let us contemplate that every union ends in separation. It is said, *"saṁyogā viyogantā"* — "all unions end in separation."

That is why the Buddha points out that holding onto this entire fivefold aggregate is itself suffering (*dukkha*). Whether one holds onto form, feelings (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), or consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—within all of them, the drama created through grasping (*upādāna*), the drama of thinking "it is I," breaks down. Now, a photograph taken during youth, or when one was good-looking, is completely distorted after several years. So, one cannot say it is oneself. Indeed, why? Because this form is not self. The nature of form is to change constantly. Yet, we take only the good part as form. It is the same with other things. Every single one of them changes. It is due to that impermanence (*aniccatā*). Due to that very impermanence (*aniccatā*), one has to constantly repair it. Within repair, too, there is what is called formation (*saṅkhāra*). It is like a breaking-down vehicle—the number plate is there in the same way—but after fitting parts together, we do not regard it as a new vehicle, do we? It runs with parts falling off. Now, indeed, our life is also like that. Think about it.

Through medical discoveries, although we say "this is I, this is mine," when we return from a hospital, other people's blood, other people's organs have been grafted into us. Even the few teeth in our mouth do not belong to us. Even the spectacles on our eyes. Although we say, "I can see," we see thanks to the spectacles. Wearing such artificial things, this entire life of ours is a drama. That is why all these things are called Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). That is why when someone dies, they put up notices saying *"sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā"* (all Preparations are impermanent). If only one could understand even by that little bit that this entire saṁsāra existence is a heap of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). The Buddha understood this most deeply. The background to that is that long saṁsāra existence. Now, sometimes, this has been revealed through various empirical facts; it has been revealed through discoveries made using various modern methods regarding rebirth. Sometimes, the person who was one's mother in this life goes and is born as one's own child. There is a dramatic nature of this kind in this saṁsāric existence. That is why the Buddha declared that in this long (saṁsāra), there is no one who has not been one's mother, one's son, or one's daughter. So, if this entire saṁsāra existence is a performance of this kind, escaping from this is indeed happiness.

What is called the Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*) is the fact that when we look deeply into everything from birth to the end, there is the nature of suffering (*dukkha*). Due to impermanence (*aniccatā*), we have to go on repairing and preparing these things. That preparing itself is suffering (*dukkha*). It is something with no essence or heartwood to be called "I" or "mine". It is only by properly understanding this that one can be liberated from saṁsāra. Therefore, the person traveling on the path of insight (*vipassanā*) must start by observing arising and passing away (*udayabbaya*) to the extent they understand it in daily life, and make an effort to understand it deeply: how the parts of the body wear out, about painful feelings, and so forth. It is because we cannot remain in one posture that we turn to the other side. That is why it is deeply pointed out that we conceal the nature of suffering (*dukkha*) in this body by changing postures. Sometimes, the teacher advises the practitioner (*yogāvacara*) to remain in the same posture, experiencing the pain, and to contemplate in order to understand the painful feeling (*vedanā*). That is to understand the suffering (*dukkha*) contained in it, even for a short while. Yet, we always like to change postures and conceal that suffering (*dukkha*). That is where ignorance (*avijjā*) lies. It is the same with other things. However, the Buddha brings this out to open our eyes: "We solved this same equation over a long period, but the correct answer did not come."

Therefore, in this era of a Buddha's appearance, we must contemplate by regarding what is valuable as valuable, without narrow objectives such as meditating merely to cure minor illnesses and small ailments. We must engage in Dhamma practice and meditation with the determination: "This entire saṁsāra is like a hospital, and I must obtain complete cure and leave it." If we do so, only then can we utilize this Buddha's Dispensation properly. Only then can we help others to utilize it as well.

The essence of the Buddha's Dhamma lies within the Four Noble Truths. What is called the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*)—form, feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—every single one of these that is held onto is pointed out by the Buddha as suffering (*dukkha*). *"Saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā"* — in brief, the Buddha declares that the five aggregates of grasping are themselves suffering (*dukkha*). That is the essence of the Truth of Suffering. Next, the Buddha declares: "Why does this state of suffering (*dukkha*) exist? It is due to craving (*taṇhā*)." Due to the unquenchable thirst of craving (*taṇhā*), living beings run in this saṁsāra for a long time. They draw their last breath with the hope of obtaining in the next life at least the wishes they could not obtain in this life. They do not understand their substancelessness.

Therefore, according to the accumulated kamma, one is born in those various places. It is not as one wishes. According to the kamma performed by oneself over a long period, the wheel of kamma turns on one side in this manner. Subjugated to that, living beings swim in an ocean of tears and an ocean of blood over a long period of time. So, indeed, when we think in that manner, we must contemplate: if we are to protect the Buddha's Sasana, if we are to protect the Dhamma, we must enter upon this deep aspect. We must go from danger (*ādīnava*) to escape (*nissaraṇa*), without remaining in danger (*ādīnava*) forever. For that, one must think with wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) about one's own life. Now, some people say various things about the meditation on foulness (*asubha-bhāvanā*), and so forth. However, if someone wishes to be liberated from saṁsāra, this impermanent (*anicca*) nature—the aforementioned beauty of form fades away, the strength of the body fades away, and the state of old age arrives. Instead of one's two legs, one has to depend on the four legs of the bed. Thinking about those lives, and next, thinking about other things—even the possessions one considers one's own—every single thing is subject to impermanence (*aniccatā*). These are things the Buddha reminds us of. Why does He remind us of every single one of these? Because the weariness (*nibbidā*) towards saṁsāra is essential for escaping from saṁsāra. Sometimes, a special event can bring that out from within such sorrowful situations. That can be brought out only if a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) or the necessary Dhamma instruction falls into place at the right time. Otherwise, one falls back to sleep. One falls back to sleep again and again. That is the situation in this long saṁsāra. Ignorance (*avijjā*) means neglecting, forgetting; it is very easy. That is why this is called a dream of life. Therefore, to escape, one must remain awake, both regarding one's own life and the nature of the world. One must practice seeing in accordance with what was pointed out by the Buddha. Instead of the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*), one must generate the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*). That is why the mind must be brought to a level where one can look at the world without those perversions (*vipallāsa*)—without distorted views and distorted states. The distorted views are: regarding what is impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent, regarding what is foul as beautiful, regarding what is subject to suffering (*dukkha*) as happiness, and

regarding what is not-self (*anattā*) as self. That is the view of perversion (*vipallāsa*) existing within worldly beings. To conquer that, if one constantly trains the mind to see impermanence (*aniccatā*), from then on, one sees this gradually breaking down. Seeing it break down, fear arises: "Oh, is it not a breaking thing? Is it not a rotting fence that I am holding onto?" Many people think their lives are highly secure. They have bank deposits, they have children who have obtained high positions. In the end, when looking at the final period, the banks also collapse, and the children do not look after them. In the end, all those rotting fences that were held onto fall down. What remains for oneself is only the four legs of the bed. At that moment, what helps is indeed the Dhamma. If one has obtained some (Dhamma) in the past, that is the consolation at that moment. One must contemplate in that manner.

We brought out various Dhamma points through this short story. We do not always say these things merely for the aesthetic interest of the story. Through each of these, certain Dhamma principles can be brought out to help our lives. In the Buddha's time, those who lived with that Dhamma—sometimes a Brahmin comes and asks the Buddha, "How long is this aeon?" Due to the faith (*saddhā*) generated through that, in the end, he becomes a Buddhist. But nowadays, there is a way of thinking that treats this as something not belonging to oneself, discussing this world and space. That does not help one's life. They use them as means of obtaining various degrees. However, those must be brought close to one's life. The Buddha has already declared the essence of all these things. Whether we spend millions of money to go to strange worlds or not, when we die, we travel according to kamma. No vehicle is needed for that; no strange satellite is needed. Instead, at the moment of death, automatically along with that mind, in some instances, one goes to the Brahma realms. It is through that aforementioned strength of wholesome actions, not through other artificial strengths. Therefore, because of the nature of this existence (*bhava*), we must bring out these Dhamma values. We must bring them out because they are now fading away rapidly. There is a tendency to bring out other things through that aforementioned practice of worldly development and cemetery development. If this Dispensation is to survive for a long period, we must bring out the path to Nibbāna pointed out by the Buddha to the world, Nibbāna, and we must direct our minds to the things that help towards it. We must teach them to others.

Thinking in that manner, now, on this valuable day, these devotees, having established themselves in a virtue (*sīla*) that helps in traveling the path of Dhamma according to their respective measures—at this moment, they have observed the livelihood-as-eighth virtue (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*), and the eight virtue-rules of the precept day (*upoṣatha-aṭṭha-sīla*). In that manner, there are also those who have observed the ten virtue-rules (*dasa-sīla*) that help in meditation. Having established oneself in virtue of that kind, and having directed the mind to meditation, and having brought this mind—which was scattered by globalization and other things—to this place at this moment and directed it to the Dhamma, you have brought out the power of a concentrated mind through a certain meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). Next, you must utilize a Dhamma sermon of this kind: if the three characteristics of

impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*), which help in overcoming the fear of saṁsāra, are developed more and more to some extent in daily life, they will become perfections (*pāramī*). Even if they are not obtained in this life, they can be obtained at some point. However, we must be energetic and, without delaying heedlessly, resolve to realize it in this very life. Before the Buddha's Sasana ends, through this path of meditation and with the association of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), by practicing this Dhamma and meditation, we must obtain—at the minimum, if nothing greater—the path-knowledge of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-magga-ñāṇa*), which is the greatest and most valuable power of escaping from the four planes of misery. If possible, may we be completely liberated from the entire saṁsāra and cross over from this ocean of tears and ocean of blood to obtain the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna of Arahantship, through this strength of virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla-samādhi-paññā*) fulfilled today! You must wish: "May this be obtained through listening to this Dhamma sermon!" Now, may all those who wish for the merit of Nibbāna—from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha, including our relatives—rejoice in this mass of merit we have accumulated so far through this Dhamma sermon! Having rejoiced, with the aspiration to escape from all saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*) such as birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and sickness, and to find peace in the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna, recite these stanzas and share the merit:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*"