Pahankanuwa Sermon #42

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.169)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

Ayaṃ loko paro loko, jānatā suppakāsito;

Mārena sappattaṃ appattaṃ yañca maccunā.

Sabbaṃ lokaṃ abhiññāya, sambuddhena pajānatā;

Vivaṭaṃ amatadvāraṃ, khemaṃ nibbānapattiyā.

Chinnaṃ pāpimato sotaṃ, viddhastaṃ vinālīkataṃ;

Pāmojjabahulā hotha, khemaṃ nibbānapattiyā.

From:

Cūḷagopālaka Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya

Dear Listeners,

The Noble Eightfold Path, placed before the world by the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Fully Self-Awakened One, on an Esala Full Moon Poya day like today, is the only transcendental path to cross over from this shore to the other shore, parting the fierce flood of this terrifying saṃsāra. It is the salvific path that leads to the further shore of Nibbāna, escaping the realm of Māra and remaining beyond his grasp. Just as a skilled cowherd safely guides his herd of cattle across a river from this bank to the other during the rainy season, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Fully Self-Awakened One, revealed the Middle Path to lead worldly beings across the fierce flood of saṃsāra to the other shore.

In the *Cūḷagopālaka Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha illustrated His peerless, supreme enlightenment through the simile of a cowherd. The three verses that come at the very end to culminate this Sutta discourse are what we have taken as our topic today. According to the Sutta, the background story is as follows: On one

occasion, the Blessed One was staying among a group of monks on the banks of the River Ganges near the town of Ukkācelā in the Vajjian country. As it appears to us, this was not due to some unusual problem or event. It may be that the Buddha wished to deliver a heart-touching sermon to the Sangha, drawing inspiration from a common sight frequently witnessed on the River Ganges. In any case, He began the discourse in this manner. In the Pali language, there is a word, *bhūtapubbaṃ*. Its meaning is a true event—indeed, such an event actually occurred. It begins with that word: "Monks, once upon a time, such an event occurred. What was it? A foolish cowherd of Magadha, in the last month of the rainy season, during the autumn, tried to drive his herd of cattle across the River Ganges to the Videhan country on the opposite bank, without properly examining this bank, without properly examining the further bank, and at a place that was not a ford (*anotitithena*)." As you merit-seeking devotees know, a ford is the shallowest place in a river, where it is easy to cross. He tried to cross his herd not at a proper ford, but at a non-ford. "But monks, that herd of cattle got caught in the current in the middle of the river and met with destruction." What was the reason? That cowherd of Magadha was unwise. Furthermore, before undertaking that task, he did not properly examine this bank, nor did he properly examine the further bank. And he tried to cross the cattle at a non-ford. That is why it was not successful. "In the same way, monks, if any ascetics and brahmins are unskilled regarding this world"—the word used there is *akusalā*—"unskilled regarding the next world, without comprehension, unskilled regarding the realm of Māra, unskilled regarding what is not the realm of Māra, unskilled regarding the region subject to death (Maccu); if anyone decides to place faith in such ascetics and brahmins, and decides to listen to them, that will lead to their harm, suffering (dukkha), and misfortune for a long time." Thus, the Buddha declared.

In line with that simile, the Buddha next presents another factual event: "Monks, such an event also occurred. A skilled, wise cowherd of Magadha, in the very same way, in the last month of the rainy season during autumn, properly examined this bank of the river, properly examined the further bank, and crossed his herd of cattle at the proper ford." The Buddha beautifully describes the manner in which they were crossed. First, that cowherd took the bulls who were the leaders of the herd (*gopitaro gopariṇāyakā*), the chief cattle, and they cut across the river's current, went forward, and crossed over safely. Secondly, the strong cattle and cows of the herd similarly cut across the river's currents, went forward, and crossed over. Thirdly, the grown heifers and young bulls likewise cut across the river's current, went forward, and crossed over safely. Fourthly, the weak calves of the herd were also taken across, cutting through the current, going forward, and crossing over safely. Then the Buddha declares something further, something very special: "Monks, such a thing also occurred on that occasion. There was a newborn calf in that herd, born that very day, who, being urged on by its mother's lowing"—there is a unique phrase mentioned there, which scholars interpret in various ways: *mātugoravena vuyhamāno*. As you merit-seeking devotees know, after a cow gives birth to a calf,

she makes a special protective sound, like "hum, hum." Urging the calf forward with that sound, or searching for it when lost; encouraged by that lowing sound of the mother, the newborn calf also went forward safely through the water parted by its mother's chest and crossed over.

Then the Buddha explains according to that simile: "What was the reason? That cowherd was wise. He properly examined this bank, he properly examined the further bank, and he crossed the cattle at the proper ford. That is why it was successful. In the same way, monks, if any ascetics and brahmins are skilled regarding this world, skilled regarding the next world, skilled regarding the realm of Māra, skilled regarding what is not the realm of Māra, skilled regarding the region subject to death, and skilled regarding the region free from death; if anyone thinks it fit to listen to such ascetics and brahmins and thinks it fit to place faith in them, that will lead to their benefit and happiness for a long time." Having declared this, using the actions of the skilled cowherd as a simile, the Buddha next explains the corresponding reality regarding the individuals in this Dispensation (*Sāsana*): "Just as, monks, that cowherd first crossed the bulls, the leaders of the herd, so too, monks, the Arahants in this Dispensation, having severed the ten fetters (*saṃyojana*) that bind one to saṃsāra, and having destroyed the taints (*āsava*)"—many other terms describing Arahants are mentioned there—"the Arahants in this Dispensation cross over safely to the further shore of Nibbāna, having cut all ten fetters." Thus, that is the simile for them. The Arahants, having destroyed all defilements and become pure, cross over safely.

Secondly, showing the second point, just as the strong cattle and cows of the herd crossed over safely next, in this Dispensation, what is spoken of next—as you merit-seeking devotees know—is about the Non-Returner (*Anāgāmī*) noble individuals. Now let us define the ten fetters (*saṃyojana*) for those who do not know. Fetters are described as the bonds that tie one to saṃsāra. They are: dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*), adherence to rules and rituals (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*), sensual lust (*kāmarāga*), ill-will (*paṭigha*), craving for fine-material existence (*rūparāga*), craving for immaterial existence (*arūparāga*), conceit (*māna*), restlessness (*uddhacca*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). These ten are known in the Dhamma as the ten fetters (*saṃyojana*). The ten fetters are divided in the Dhamma, dear devotees, into the lower fetters (*oramabhāgiya*) and the higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya*). The lower fetters belong to this side—when we look from this side, the five fetters on this side. The higher fetters belong to the upper side. So, regarding the Non-Returner (*Anāgāmī*), it is mentioned that they have severed those five lower fetters, and as you may have heard, they are reborn spontaneously (*opapātika*), without parents, in the Pure Abodes (*Suddhāvāsa*). They take birth in the Pure Abodes of the Brahma world: Aviha, Atappa, Sudassa, Sudassī, and Akaniṭṭha. Moreover, the meaning of the word *Anāgāmī* is "one who does not return here." The Non-Returner does not come back to this world. Another phrase is used in the Dhamma for this: *anāvattidhammo tasmā lokā*—not returning from that world. They do not turn back from the Brahma world. The Non-Returner who has attained

that state is compared to the second category of cattle. Thus, regarding those individuals, the Buddha declares that while the Arahants have crossed over, these individuals "will cross over." It is stated in the future tense; they will definitely cross over, with certainty. The Buddha affirms this decisively regarding Non-Returners. Now you can understand that second point.

Thirdly, just as the grown heifers and young bulls were crossed over, in this Dispensation, we next have the Once-Returner (*Sakadāgāmī*). You have probably heard the meaning of the word *Sakadāgāmī*: one who comes to this world only once more. Regarding Once-Returners (*Sakadāgāmī*), this is how it is described in the Dhamma, and in this Sutta too, it is said that they have severed the first three fetters—the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*), and adherence to rules and rituals (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*)—and in addition, they have thinned out the defilements of lust, hatred, and delusion. So, they have severed three fetters and thinned out lust, hatred, and delusion. To cut through the river's current, the Buddha here compares it to cutting through Māra's stream: *Mārassa sotaṃ chetvā*—having cut Māra's stream. Māra's stream is craving (*taṇhā*). Cutting through the stream of craving (*taṇhā*), this third group will also cross over. They will definitely go. It is something that happens in the future. They return only once, but they will definitely realize Nibbāna. That is the third category.

In the fourth category are the weak calves. That simile is shown regarding the Stream-Enterer (*Sotāpanna*). Regarding those who have severed only the first three fetters—dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*), and adherence to rules and rituals (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*)—the Buddha often mentions *sambodhiparāyaṇo* (bound for awakening) and *avinipātadhammo* (not subject to ruin/rebirth in lower worlds). They do not go to the hells anymore; they do not go to states of misery. Special things are mentioned about the Stream-Enterer too. Just as Arahants are spoken of from that end, if we look from this end at the level of ordinary people, the Stream-Enterer is indeed a noble being. Yet, here they are compared to the weak calves. Why is that? "Calves" because they have severed only three out of the ten fetters. This is not said to disparage them, but this much is certain. It is mentioned in other places regarding them—even if not in this Sutta, you merit-seeking devotees have heard it—the Stream-Enterer is described as *sattakkhattuparama*, meaning they take birth at most seven more times. Within seven lifetimes, they will somehow bring an end to saṃsāric suffering (dukkha). There are the words *niyato sambodhiparāyaṇo*—destined with certainty for awakening. "Awakening" (*sambodhi*) means Nibbāna, or Arhatship. They will attain Arhatship. That reassurance exists for the Stream-Enterer too. Moreover, *avinipātadhammo* means they are free from rebirth in the hells and states of misery. Thus, they are compared to the weak calves.

Now comes a deeper part. For the next, fifth category, the Buddha shows words that most of you have probably not heard: "Just as, monks, that newborn calf, born that very day, crossed over urged by its mother's lowing and with her assistance, so too in

this Dispensation there are two groups of individuals: those called *Dhammānusārī* (Dhamma-followers) and *Saddhānusārī* (Faith-followers)." These two groups are even below the level of Stream-Entry (*Sotāpanna*). Yet the Buddha declares even of these two groups that, like the newborn calf, these two tender ones will also definitely cross over. This is a source of great consolation in this Dispensation. It shows that it does not end only with the Stream-Enterer; there is still room for others. This means that the Buddha has revealed a Middle Path by which even those newborn calves can cut through Māra's stream and cross over. So, those two categories of individuals, the *Dhammānusārī* and *Saddhānusārī*, cross over in that manner. We shall speak of them to you devotees in due course. Let us first finish this story. In brief, this is all that is said here. Compared to that calf are the noble individuals in this Dispensation named *Dhammānusārī* and *Saddhānusārī*. Those two groups, who are mentioned in places describing virtuous people (*sappurisa*), will also, just like the others, definitely cross over someday.

Having said this, the Buddha explains the reason for it by making a declaration akin to a lion's roar: "Monks, why is this so? Because, monks, I am skilled regarding this world"—the word used is *kusalo* (skilled)—"I am skilled regarding the next world, skilled regarding the realm of Māra, skilled regarding the region subject to death, and skilled regarding the region free from death. Therefore, monks, if any deem it fit to listen to me, and deem it fit to arouse faith in me, that will lead to their benefit and happiness for a long time." Having declared this, He uttered the three verses we have taken as our topic, which culminate that discourse.

Ayaṃ loko paro loko jānatā suppakāsito... The meaning of this verse is: This world and the world beyond have been well declared by the One with deep understanding—it is understood here that it refers to the Buddha, the Fully Self-Awakened One. Next, it says: *yañca mārena sampattaṃ*—that which can be reached by Māra; *appattaṃ yañca maccunā*—and that which cannot be reached by Death. Both of these have been declared by the Fully Self-Awakened One.

Sabbaṃ lokaṃ abhiññāya sambuddhena pajānatā, vivaṭaṃ amatadvāraṃ khemaṃ nibbānapattiyā. Having known the entire world through direct knowledge (*abhiññā*), with supreme wisdom, the Fully Self-Awakened One who understands, has opened the door to the Deathless (*amatadvāraṃ*), the secure door to the Deathless, for the attainment of Nibbāna.

The next verse says: *Chinnaṃ pāpimato sotaṃ viddhastaṃ vinalīkataṃ, pāmojjabahulā hotha, khemaṃ... bhikkhavo*. That victory is then declared by the Buddha in the next verse: *chinnaṃ pāpimato sotaṃ*—the stream of the Evil One, that stream which was mentioned, has been severed. *viddhastaṃ*—it has been destroyed; *vinalīkataṃ*—the pride of Māra has been rendered useless. Therefore, *pāmojjabahulā hotha*—be full of joy and happiness, O monks. "Seek the secure..." Here, it means to aspire for Nibbāna. So, we have discussed almost the entirety of that Sutta.

Now, what remains is for us to say something by way of commentary. Especially from the points mentioned in the Sutta, through the comparison of the simile and the reality, you merit-seeking devotees can understand this. Even though more details are not given, everyone has heard at this point the descriptions of the Stream-Enterer, Once-Returner, Non-Returner, and Arahant. Something unique mentioned here, however, is the *Dhammānusārī* and *Saddhānusārī*. It is on this that we will make a special commentary. These two groups are only briefly mentioned in this Sutta. However, in certain places in several Suttas, the Buddha describes these two generally unrevealed/uncommon individuals in this manner. Specifically, in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, it is mentioned that the *Dhammānusārī* and *Saddhānusārī* are indeed destined with certainty for awakening (*sambodhiparāyaṇo*), bound for Nibbāna or Arhatship in this Dispensation.

Their qualifications are mentioned next in the *Kīṭāgiri Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, where they are presented more clearly at the end of a list of seven types of individuals. Regarding the *Dhammānusārī* individual, it is mentioned in the *Kīṭāgiri Sutta* as follows: that *Dhammānusārī* individual has, to a certain extent, reflected upon and scrutinized with wisdom the teachings declared by the Tathāgata, and has gained a conviction in them. The Pali phrase used for this is also deep: *mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti*. To a certain degree or measure, *nijjhānaṃ khamanti* means we can say they have become convinced. Having thought and reflected, they have reached a certain conclusion: "Ah, this is indeed so." That is on their part. Next, the special thing is that within this *Dhammānusārī* individual, there are established—as you merit-seeking devotees have also heard among the thirty-seven aids to awakening—the five spiritual faculties (*indriya*): faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Thus, the five spiritual faculties—the faculty of faith (*saddhindriya*), energy (*viriyindriya*), mindfulness (*satindriya*), concentration (*samāhindriya*), and wisdom (*paññindriya*)—are established within this *Dhammānusārī* individual. That is why an ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*) does not possess them. Even if they think they do, in no way whatsoever—*sabbena sabbaṃ sabbathā sabbaṃ*—are these five faculties established in an ordinary worldling. Faith may be present, and the other qualities may be present, but they have not reached the status of a spiritual faculty (*indriya*). Thus, at the very least, that status has been attained by this *Dhammānusārī* individual. So, why is the word *Dhammānusārī* used? There is a deep meaning for the reason here. Among those five faculties, some have developed a particular one strongly in saṃsāra. For some, the faculty of faith (*saddhindriya*) is strong. Now, in this *Dhammānusārī* individual, the faculty of wisdom (*paññindriya*) is strong. While all five are established, the faculty of wisdom is particularly strong, enabling them to proceed with their practice. Further details are mentioned about this. If we speak systematically, that is what is described in the *Kīṭāgiri Sutta*.

Similarly, next, regarding the *Saddhānusārī* individual, they differ from the *Dhammānusārī* in that while the former walks this path in accordance with the Dhamma, the *Saddhānusārī* individual crosses over in accordance with faith,

utilizing faith as their support. Therefore, regarding that person, the Buddha does not speak of a conviction in the Dhamma, but something special is said there: *yassa saddhāmattaṃ hoti pemamattaṃ*—"who has a mere degree of faith, a mere degree of love" toward the Tathāgata. They have faith and love toward the Tathāgata. Now we can think of cases like Ven. Vakkali, whom you have heard of. Due to a highly developed faculty of faith (*saddhindriya*), perhaps from associating with Buddhas in past saṃsāric lives, they have without any doubt a deep faith and love toward the Tathāgata. That is why they are called *Saddhānusārī*. Thus, the *Dhammānusārī* individual has the Dhamma convinced to some extent. The *Saddhānusārī* individual does not even have that, but they have faith and love toward the Tathāgata. In addition to that, just like the former individual, they also have the five faculties established: faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). They possess that qualification as well. Now you merit-seeking devotees have some understanding of these two.

Next, if anyone wishes to find a good Sutta to learn more about these two, there is a section of teachings in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* called the *Okkantika Saṃyutta*—a word of the Buddha, a Buddha-discourse. *Okkantika* is a word that carries the meaning of "entering into" or "descending into." Indeed, it is in that *Okkantika Saṃyutta* that these two are specifically spoken of. In that *Okkantika Saṃyutta*, the Buddha declares as follows: "Monks, the eye is impermanent (inconstant), subject to change, subject to becoming otherwise." The words used are *aniccaṃ*, *vipariṇāmi*, and *aññathābhāvi*. Just like the eye, all six—including the ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind (*mano*)—are impermanent (inconstant), subject to change, subject to becoming otherwise. Regarding these declared facts, a person has, to a certain extent, gained a conviction. That is, the *Dhammānusārī* individual has not yet realized them through direct knowledge and vision (*ñāṇadassana*). Yet, by directing the mind to them, they have become convinced to a certain degree: "This is indeed so." *Paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti*—they have accepted it through wisdom to a certain measure. Thus, something is declared there regarding that *Dhammānusārī* individual. Along with that, several other details are mentioned to identify that individual. Regarding that person, the words *okkanto sammatta-niyāmaṃ* are used. Then the Buddha declares that, in addition to the aforementioned qualification, this person:

The meaning of *okkanto sammatta-niyāmaṃ*, dear devotees, is: *sammatta* means correctness or rightness. You devotees know the word *sammā*. *Sammatta* means the state of being correct or right. Therefore, they have entered the path of certainty, which is correctness. When the mind has entered this certainty of correctness, it does not turn back to the wrong side again. There are two states: *micchatta* and *sammatta*. *Micchatta* is the state of wrongness, while *sammatta* is the state of rightness. Thus, this *Dhammānusārī* individual has entered into the certainty called *sammatta*, having arrived at the correct path, the right way. Alongside that, it is said: *sappurisabhūmiṃ okkanto*—the *Dhammānusārī* individual has entered the plane of the virtuous (*sappurisa*). Devotees, the terms *sappurisa* (virtuous) and *asappurisa* (non-virtuous) are not used in the Dhamma merely in their worldly social meanings.

The word *sappurisa* is applied to individuals. In the *Sappurisa Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* and other texts, it is applied to the noble (*ariya*) individual. The true *sappurisa* is that person—the noble individual. Therefore, *sappurisabhūmiṃ okkanto* means that this *Dhammānusārī* individual has also entered the plane of the noble ones. Next, another qualification is mentioned: *vītivatto puthujjanabhūmiṃ*—they have transcended the plane of the ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*), going beyond the worldling's plane. Next, another thing is said: *abhabbo taṃ kammaṃ kātuṃ yaṃ kammaṃ karitvā nirayaṃ vā tiracchānayoniṃ vā pettivisayaṃ vā…* That means this *Dhammānusārī* individual is incapable of performing any unwholesome karma (*kamma*) that would cause rebirth in hell, the animal realm, or the ghost realm. They cannot do it. That is what *abhabba* (incapable) means. This too is a massive qualification. Now, we cannot say this about any one of you devotees—that you are incapable of doing so. This is the Buddha's word. The word *abhabba* is a special word. It means they can never do it again. And finally, the most special point is shown: that *Dhammānusārī* individual will not pass away without realizing the fruit of Stream-Entry (*sotāpattiphala*). They will not die without realizing the fruit of Stream-Entry. Therefore, if by any chance the *Dhammānusārī* individual fails to become a Stream-Enterer beforehand, at the very last moment, before death, they will definitely become a Stream-Enterer. This is the word of the Buddha. That is why you merit-seeking devotees have now understood something about the *Dhammānusārī* individual.

Explaining the *Saddhānusārī* individual is easy now, because in addition to the other points, it is also mentioned here. The *Saddhānusārī* individual does not have those insights regarding impermanence (inconstancy) to that extent; they have not even gained a slight conviction in that way. But they possess faith and love. Now, whatever we mentioned as the special qualifications of the *Dhammānusārī* individual, all of those are possessed by the *Saddhānusārī* individual as well. What are they? Having entered the certainty of correctness, having entered the plane of the virtuous, having transcended the plane of the ordinary worldling, they are incapable of performing any karma that would lead to rebirth in states of misery such as hell, the animal realm, or the ghost realm. Next, they will definitely attain the fruit of Stream-Entry before death. Thus, for you devotees who previously knew only of the four types of noble disciples, there is this kind of refuge in the Dispensation. Therefore, it is not just those four. Indeed, if one walks the path of the Dhamma correctly as introduced by the Buddha with genuine faith, then at the very least, like that newborn calf crossing over under its mother's protection, they too can cross over. The special thing is that before death, according to the Buddha's word, even when facing the death-sensation (moraṇa vedanāva / pain of death), they will practice insight (*vipassanā*) and become Stream-Enterers. That is what is declared there.

From there, let us proceed. You devotees have heard that on a day like today, in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, the Buddha introduced this Noble Eightfold Path as the Middle Path. I believe you all know this. If we briefly consider at this moment what the Middle Path is: you devotees have heard of the two extremes that existed in

the world, namely *kāmasukhallikānuyoga* (devotion to sensual pleasure) and *attakilamathānuyoga* (devotion to self-mortification). Devotion to sensual pleasure can be understood as living a loose life, eating and drinking and enjoying the fivefold sensual pleasures without any belief in a next world, and without a correct understanding of this world. Devotion to self-mortification means needlessly torturing the body in order to save the soul, believing that Nibbāna can be realized through that alone—thus having no understanding of the further shore. Both of those groups continue endlessly in saṃsāra. That is why the Middle Path discovered by the Buddha—which He identified as the Middle Path—is indeed the Noble Eightfold Path itself, which is secure. Such is the declaration.

Even if we do not discuss that Sutta at length: to convey the meaning, among whatever beings there are—footless, two-footed, four-footed, many-footed, with form, formless, percipient, non-percipient, neither percipient nor non-percipient—the Tathāgata is declared supreme. If anyone places faith in the Tathāgata, they have placed faith in the supreme being in the world. Next, it says finally: *ye buddhe pasannā, agge te pasannā; agge kho pana pasannānaṃ, aggo vipāko hoti*—"Those who have confidence in the Buddha have confidence in the supreme; and for those with confidence in the supreme, supreme is the result." If someone has aroused faith in the Tathāgata Fully Self-Awakened One, they have aroused it toward the supreme being in the world. Therefore, that speaks of its benefits. They do not go to those extremes mentioned.

So, to speak further, first we must now discuss some deeper matters regarding the Noble Eightfold Path. You devotees might have heard of a Sutta called the *Aggappasāda Sutta*. The Buddha has preached the *Aggappasāda Sutta* in a way that deeply touches a faithful person, speaking about Himself. Since we are speaking of faith here, we have mentioned this on certain occasions. This discourse is such a powerful declaration: *Yāvatā sattā apadā vā dvipadā vā catuppadā vā, bahuppadā vā, rūpino vā, arūpino vā, saññino vā, asaññino vā, nevasaññināsaññino vā, tathāgato tesaṃ aggamakkhāyati, arahaṃ sammāsambuddho…* "To whatever extent there are beings—footless, two-footed, four-footed, many-footed, with form, formless, percipient, non-percipient, neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient—the Tathāgata is declared supreme among them, the Worthy One, the Fully Self-Awakened One." The benefits of gaining faith in the supreme person are likewise supreme. In the same way, the Sutta speaks of the Dhamma. Let us bring out the portion regarding the Dhamma here, as a deep point is mentioned: *Yāvatā, bhikkhave, dhammā saṅkhatā…* "Monks, to whatever extent there are Preparations (saṅkhāra)…" Dear devotees, *saṅkhata* (prepared/conditioned) means things that are constructed out of causes and conditions. Everything in the world is like that—something constructed out of causes and conditions. *Asaṅkhata* (the Unprepared/Unconditioned (asaṅkhata)) refers to Nibbāna, in the sense of not being constructed out of causes and conditions. There are these two: *saṅkhata* and *asaṅkhata*. Among all conditioned things (*saṅkhata*): *yāvatā, bhikkhave, dhammā saṅkhatā, ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo tesaṃ aggamakkhāyati*—of all conditioned

things, the Noble Eightfold Path is declared supreme. Having said that, it continues in the same way: *Ye kho pana ariye magge pasannā, agge te pasannā; agge kho pana pasannānaṃ, aggo vipāko hoti*... Therefore, if one establishes confidence in the Noble Eightfold Path, that confidence yields the supreme result and benefit.

Why do we highlight this here? Because the Noble Eightfold Path is conditioned (*saṅkhata*). This is a great wonder: through something conditioned (*saṅkhata*), one proceeds toward the Unconditioned (asaṅkhata). A logician of today might argue: "How can one go from the conditioned to the Unconditioned?" That is precisely where the genius of the Buddha lies! Utilizing the conditioned, the Middle Path—just as that cowherd understood this bank and the further bank, and crossed over one group first with wisdom at the proper ford, and then through the faith generated by that, crossed the second group with a specific examination, finally crossing the entire herd down to the newborn calf born that very day. In the same way, we must understand that the Buddha crossed beings over through this Noble Eightfold Path.

Next, let us turn to another aspect. You devotees have heard so much about the Noble Eightfold Path and its eight factors. But many have not even reflected on why it is called a single unit, the "Noble Path" (*ariyo maggo*). All these eight factors form a single unit. *Maggo*—the path is actually the Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) that comes at the end. Right Concentration is the actual path. To explain this, we must point out that the Eightfold Path has both a mundane (*lokiya*) and a supramundane (*lokuttara*) aspect. There is a profound Sutta discourse in the *Majjhima Nikāya* that reveals this, named the *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta*. Drawing from that *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta*, let us proceed forward from there. In this *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta*, the Buddha declares: "Monks, I shall expound to you Noble Right Concentration (*ariya sammā-samādhi*) with its vital conditions (*saupanisaṃ*) and its requisites (*saparihāraṃ*)." You devotees know what *parikkhāra* (requisites) means—requisites offered to the Sangha are things that support life, things relevant to it. In the same way, the Buddha delivered this discourse saying, "I shall expound to you Noble Right Concentration with its supporting conditions (*saupanisaṃ*) and its requisites (*saparihāraṃ*)." Through this, the Buddha directly shows that the first seven factors stand as requisites for Right Concentration. The seven factors—Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*), Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*), Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), and Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*)—are required for establishing Right Concentration. This is a very deep matter. Given the time we have, let us mention this at least to generate interest, as it is highly relevant and important, especially since this aspect is barely considered in this day and age.

Thus, in speaking of Noble Right Concentration, the Buddha repeatedly utters a highly astonishing sentence that highlights the importance of Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*): "Monks, therein Right View comes first (*tatra, bhikkhave, sammā-diṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā*)." He constantly reminds us: Right View comes first, Right View comes first. Many people raise the question of why it is placed at the front. Right View

comes first. What is the reason for this? Now, consider this: even to acquire Right View, a form of Right View is required! Sometimes we have to state things that seem like riddles: even to develop Right View, one needs Right View. What is the reason? The Buddha explains it in this way: Right View is the forerunner because, before acquiring Right View, one must recognize Wrong View (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) as Wrong View. For that too, Right View is required! Thus, in defining Right View, that is how the Buddha shows why Right View is the forerunner: one understands Wrong View as Wrong View, and one understands Right View as Right View.

Then, He shows something further—from here onward, the path becomes extraordinary. At this point, the Buddha declares Right View in a manner not found in other places: "Monks, I say Right View is twofold (*sammā-diṭṭhiṃ pahaṃ, bhikkhave, dvayaṃ vadāmi*)." What is this twofold nature? He shows the two types next: "Monks, there is a Right View that is accompanied by taints (*sāsavā*), siding with merit (*puññabhāgiyā*), ripening in the acquisitions (*upadhivepakkā*)." "Acquisitions" (*upadhi*) refers to worldly resources and possessions that support one in saṃsāra. There is a Right View that yields these; that is mundane Right View. "And there is, monks, a Right View that is Noble (*ariyā*), taintless (*anāsavā*), supramundane (*lokuttarā*), which has become a factor of the supramundane path." Those are the two.

Out of these two, many people only know or have heard of the ten-point Right View. Perhaps you devotees have heard the opposite—the ten claims made by those with Wrong View about the world. In brief, they say: "There is no giving, no sacrifice, no offering; there is no fruit or result of good and bad actions; there is no this world, no next world; there is no mother, no father; there are no spontaneously born beings; there are no ascetics and brahmins who have correctly understood this world." This ten-point doctrine of "there is not" is called Wrong View. To all ten, the Buddha says "there is." That is mundane Right View: there are benefits and results of giving; there are results of wholesome and unwholesome actions; there are results of supporting parents; there are spontaneously born beings in this world; and there are ascetics and brahmins who explain this world and the next. This "is" perception replaces the "is-not" perception—asserting "there is" for what the others denied. That is the Middle Path. Those who make the "is-not" claims go to hell. If they say "there are no such things, let us eat, drink, and perish," they go to hell. At that level, the Buddha expounded this mundane Right View, which helps one avoid misery and attain happy states. Yet, one does not cross over from saṃsāra through this alone. That crossing over is achieved through the second type of Right View.

The Buddha accepts the former as *sāsavā*—that Right View is accompanied by taints, yet it is *puññabhāgiyā* (siding with merit). It leans toward merit. Unlike the other group that leans toward demerit with Wrong View, this leans toward merit, toward the side of goodness. It also yields acquisitions as results (*upadhivepakkā*) in saṃsāra, bringing good rebirths. That much is there, and it is good for that purpose. But one must also be liberated from saṃsāra, must one not?

Now, that is achieved through supramundane Right View. What is described there is an extraordinary thing. That Noble, taintless (*ariyā anāsavā*) Right View arises in that supramundane path-moment. Within an extremely brief moment, an incredibly wondrous thing occurs: at a certain point, all eight factors align and arise simultaneously in a single mind-moment to cross over. It is a highly wondrous event, about which various controversies exist. In that moment, Right View is described not through the ten mundane items, but as wisdom (*paññā*), investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*), and so forth, relevant to that state. In that moment, Right View manifests in the form of investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*), wisdom (*paññā*), and the faculty of wisdom (*paññindriya*). That is supramundane Right View.

Similarly, we may not be able to describe each factor in detail due to time constraints. But keep this in mind: the Buddha shows that while you devotees may have heard to some extent about Right View, Right Intention, and so on—and can read about them in books—here, in the supramundane path, each of these is defined in a unique way. In that path-moment, they manifest in an extraordinary form. Right Intention does not manifest merely as ordinary thoughts (*vitakka*). It is not like how people think in the world. Even in terms of Wrong Intention (*micchā-saṅkappa*), Right View is required to recognize Wrong Intention as wrong, and Right Intention as right. First, Right View must lead. Next, while in the ordinary world, the three intentions—intention of renunciation (*nekkhamma*), non-ill will (*avyāpāda*), and non-cruelty (*avihiṃsā*)—are called Right Intention, in the supramundane state, it is the application and directing of the mind (*takko vitakko*) toward concentration; that mental power of directing is what is called Right Intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*).

Furthermore, what must be specifically noted is that Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*), Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*), and Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) do not manifest in the supramundane path-moment as they do in ordinary situations. One has already abstained from those wrong behaviors beforehand. When that moment arises, the abstinence is already complete. Therefore, they manifest as abstinences (*virati*). There is no special effort to abstain in that moment; the abstinence is already established. Thus, one is detached from those three.

In this manner, next, He reveals something highly wondrous. In the supramundane state, protection is provided to that mind in three ways by the three factors: Right View, Right Effort, and Right Mindfulness. In that supramundane state—that is, when path-knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*) arises—they perform a special function, a special task. The words the Buddha uses for their action toward that mind are *anuparidhāvanti* and *anuparivattanti*. *Anuparidhāvanti* means they run along in association with it; *anuparivattanti* means they revolve in association with it. Thus, this supramundane path-moment—the journey of using the conditioned (*saṅkhata*) to reach the Unconditioned (asaṅkhata)—is a highly wondrous and miraculous event. In it, protection is provided to that mind. Right View leads, Right Effort supports from behind by giving a push and providing security, and Right Mindfulness remains close at hand to assist.

Even if it is not an orthodox simile from the texts, we have on some occasion expressed this in a way that touches your hearts. Today, when prominent politicians or VIPs travel, there is no need to explain—one group of security personnel moves ahead, another group follows behind to protect them from danger, and another group stays right next to them. It is exactly like that. Just as the great figures of the world travel with such security, the two beautiful words *anuparidhāvanti* and *anuparivattanti* appear there to describe the retinue that accompanies Noble Right Concentration as it performs its immense, powerful task. These three factors—Right View, Right Effort, and Right Mindfulness—provide security during the supramundane path-moment. Similarly, with the other three factors we mentioned earlier, in daily life one constantly makes an effort to abandon Wrong Speech and practice Right Speech. In that way, it is merely a training (*sikkhā*). That training is practiced over a long time. When that training is perfected, in that moment it is described as *ārati* (avoiding), *virati* (abstinence), and *pativirati* (refraining)—that person has distanced themselves far from it. This abstinence (*virati*) itself becomes a protection for Noble Right Concentration.

The internal, inner nature of these eight factors is truly wondrous and miraculous. We simply go on repeating "eight," but through these eight, on one hand, a being is prevented from falling into states of misery and is directed toward happy realms by that mundane Right View accompanied by taints (*sāsava*). Supramundane Right View performs an even more powerful task: transcending this worldliness in the state of path and fruit. To put it briefly, let us consider it this way: while practicing a concentration such as mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*) as shown by the Buddha, if one also develops insight (*vipassanā*) into the Three Characteristics (anicca, dukkha, anattā), then by the time the factors of awakening—specifically, the thirty-seven aids to awakening (of which those five we mentioned are the spiritual faculties)—are perfected, it happens almost effortlessly. It occurs naturally, and at that point, there is a powerful disenchantment (*nibbidā*) toward the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). Through that disenchantment, one attains the supramundane state. One lets go of this bank and leaps to the other bank. In that moment, protection is provided to that Right Concentration. Devotees, it is about that Right Concentration that you have all heard in the *Ratana Sutta*:

> *Yaṃ buddhaseṭṭho parivaṇṇayī suciṃ,*
>
> *samādhimānantarikaññamāhu,*
>
> *samādhinā tena samo na vijjati…*

"The pure concentration which the supreme Buddha praised, and which they call the 'immediate concentration' (concentration with immediate result)—no equal to that concentration is found." It is that immediate concentration (*ānantarika-samādhi*) that is spoken of there. The *ānantarika-samādhi* highly praised by the Buddha is indeed path-concentration (*magga-samādhi*). Immediately following that path-

concentration, one realizes the fruit (*phala*). That is why it is called "immediate" (*ānantarika*).

It is mentioned in the commentaries that scholars of the past had various controversies regarding this. But to be brief due to time constraints: you devotees have heard of the eight noble individuals. If asked, you might immediately answer, "The one on the path of Stream-Entry, the one in its fruit," and so on. That is how people answer: the four paths and the four fruits. But, devotees, this is how it is mentioned in the Dhamma. The eight noble individuals are mentioned in several places, not just one, as follows: *sotāpanno*, *sotāpattiphala-sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno* (one practicing for the realization of the fruit of Stream-Entry), *sakadāgāmī*, *sakadāgāmiphala-sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno*, *anāgāmī*, *anāgāmiphala-sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno*, and so on. That is how the eight are spoken of. Thus, what must be specially noted here is that although we use the words *magga* (path) and *paṭipadā* (practice/way) as synonyms, there is a certain difference between them. One enters the path by fulfilling a course of practice (*paṭipadā*); it is within that course of practice. Now this aligns. We began this sermon, or rather highlighted as a special point, the two individuals: *Dhammānusārī* and *Saddhānusārī*. It is often said of these two that they are "on the path of Stream-Entry" (*sotāpatti-magga*). What we must say is that they are those who are in the course of practice (*paṭipadā*) leading to that supramundane path. It was mentioned, was it not: *sotāpanno, sotāpattiphala-sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno*. If it could be said briefly, the Buddha would have said directly "those on the path of Stream-Entry." Since the path of Stream-Entry is momentary, how can it apply to all eight? If the mind-moment is just one flash, how can gifts be given to all eight? Now here, we showed that those two individuals, the *Dhammānusārī* and *Saddhānusārī*, are in the category of *sotāpattiphala-sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno* (practicing for the realization of the fruit of Stream-Entry). It is clearly visible, is it not? The Buddha declared that before death, these two will somehow reach the fruit of Stream-Entry. Therefore, they too are noble (*ariya*) individuals. They have entered the plane of the virtuous, having transcended the state of the ordinary worldling. The problem lies right there. Therefore, in accordance with the Dhamma and the Suttas, we must apply this to the course of practice (*paṭipadā*). Those who have entered the practice that leads to entering the path of Stream-Entry are called *paṭipanna* (practitioners). Those who have entered that practice are the *Saddhānusārī* and *Dhammānusārī*. It is not the path of Stream-Entry itself—if the path of Stream-Entry arises, the fruit follows directly, immediately. That is what "immediate" (*ānantarika*) means. Thus, the supramundane path is different. What is spoken of here is the course of practice (*paṭipadā*). Hence, there is a verse in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* that makes this very clear:

> *paṭipannā cattāro ca, phale ṭhitā…*
>
> *esa saṅgho ujubhūto, paññā-sīla-samāhito*

"Four practicing and four established in the fruit, this is the upright Sangha, composed of wisdom, virtue, and concentration." *Paṭipannā*—it could have said *maggaṭṭhā* (established in the path) there. But it does not. You devotees have heard the word *maggastha* (on the path). There is no mention of *maggastha* here; it is *paṭipanna*. "Four practicing (*paṭipannā*) and four established in the fruit (*phale ṭhitā*)"—there are the eight. The four who have entered the practice (*paṭipadā*) and the four established in the fruit. "This is the upright Sangha" (*esa saṅgho ujubhūto*). These are described as the eight upright noble individuals, "endowed with wisdom, virtue, and concentration" (*paññā-sīla-samāhito*). The eight shown in this verse are what we specifically mentioned. Although we generally treat "path" (*magga*) and "practice" (*paṭipadā*) as synonymous, there is a distinction here. Therefore, in identifying and introducing noble individuals, we must be careful: it is not "established in the path" (*maggaṭṭha*) that is meant, but rather having entered the practice (*paṭipadā*) for realizing the fruit of Stream-Entry. This would need to be explained in more detail; it is not simple.

Who are the eight? The Stream-Enterer; the individual who has entered the practice for realizing the fruit of Stream-Entry; the Once-Returner; the individual who has entered the practice for realizing the fruit of Once-Return. We spoke specifically of the one who has attained the fruit of Stream-Entry. You devotees can deduce the rest. Suppose someone has attained the fruit of Stream-Entry. If they do not fall into negligence as a negligent disciple (*sekha*), but continue to work further, walking that path of knowledge, then from that point on, the practice they undertake from being a Stream-Enterer until they become a Once-Returner is called *sakadāgāmiphala-sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno*—striving to reach the fruit of Once-Return. One can understand it in that way, up to the last one: the Arahant, and *arahattāya paṭipanno*—the Arahant, and the individual practicing for the realization of Arhatship.

Thus, what we have expounded to you devotees is deep. If deep Dhamma is unnecessarily simplified and presented as shallow, it would lead to the destruction of the Dhamma. Without simplifying it in that manner, but presenting the Dhamma as Dhamma, we have explained this Middle Path as set forth by the Buddha to some extent within one hour to you devotees on this valuable day. This aspect of the Dispensation is now largely forgotten. Therefore, you devotees have kept virtue (*sīla*) today on this valuable day to the best of your ability. Many lay devotees who come to us now say: "I do not want to be born in saṃsāra anymore. I must go somewhere and attain the paths and fruits as quickly as possible. I want to go somewhere and ordain." Everyone speaks in this way. Thus, we presented this to help those people, so that they may reflect. Even if one cannot attain the fruit of Stream-Entry, this is a great consolation. Let us at least strive to be like that calf urged on by its mother's protective lowing. That is what we have to say to you devotees.

Thus, through the virtue kept today, the meditation practiced, and this insight-oriented Dhamma sermon heard, may you devotees be able to bring your learning

and meditation to fruition as quickly as possible, realize those noble states mentioned, and cross over the entire wilderness of saṃsāra, facilitating this crossing from this shore to the other shore. In the past, "going from this shore to the other shore" did not mean traveling abroad; it meant crossing over this ocean of saṃsāra. May you devotees receive the necessary strength, power, and massive energy for that purpose. May your learning and meditation quickly bear fruit, and may you gain the ability to reach that peace of Nibbāna. From the Avīci hell to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, if there be any who wish to rejoice in the merits of this Dhamma preaching and Dhamma hearing, may they, through that rejoicing, realize the supreme, great, deathless Nibbāna by means of their aspired-for enlightenment (*bodhi*). May you devotees also receive the strength and power to realize that supreme, great, deathless Nibbāna very soon. With that aspiration, let us recite these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"