Pahankanuwa Sermon #58

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.141)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

Koci bhavo nicco, saṅkhārā vāpi sassatā?

Uppajjanti ca te bhūtā, cavanti aparāparaṃ.

Etamādīnavaṃ ñatvā, bhavasmiṃ anapekkho;

Sabbakāmehi mutto me, āsavakkhayo'ti.

From:

verse from the Aṅgulimālattheragāthā (Thag 121–122), which is found in the Theragāthā (Khuddaka Nikāya)

Dear Listeners,

The Tathāgata, the Fully Enlightened One, revealed to the world that because of not properly understanding *Anicca* (Impermanent) within existence, beings wander in *saṃsāra* for a long period of time. Due to the perverted view of regarding *Anicca* (Impermanent) things as permanent, *bhava-taṇhā* (craving for existence) is deposited within the mind in an extremely subtle manner. Today, we have chosen as our theme two advisory verses that help to eradicate this *bhava-taṇhā*. The Great Arahant Uttara, who uttered these two verses, attained Arahantship through the meditation on the contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*). At a time when he was sentenced to be impaled on a stake on a baseless accusation, sitting on that very stake, he conquered that painful feeling (*vedanā*) through the meditation on the contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*) and attained Arahantship. The story of Ven. Uttara Thera is told as follows:

To a child born to a certain wealthy Brahmin family in the kingdom of Magadha, the parents gave the name Uttara. As this virtuous child Uttara grew up, seeing him growing in virtue, wisdom, knowledge, and physical beauty, the chief minister of Magadha, Vassakāra, proposed to marry his young daughter to him. However, as his

wisdom gathered over *saṃsāra* had already matured by this time, the young man Uttara rejected that marriage proposal and came into the association of Ven. Sāriputta. Serving the Great Arahant Sāriputta and listening to the Dhamma, he soon received ordination. Having received ordination, he served him as a close attendant.

On one occasion, when the Great Arahant Sāriputta fell ill, the novice monk (*sāmaṇera*) Uttara set out early in the morning to seek medicinal alms food. Having placed his bowl near a pond, he went down to the pond, washed his face and mouth, and while returning, a thief who had broken into a house through a tunnel the previous night and plundered goods was fleeing through the main gate of the city with the king's men in hot pursuit. Arriving near the pond, the thief dropped the bag of gems into the novice's bowl and ran away, escaping. When the king's men arrived and checked, seeing the bag of gems in the bowl, they arrested the novice monk, accusing him of being the thief. Whom did they take him to show? To none other than Minister Vassakāra. Vassakāra, the chief minister who was acting as the judge at the time, harboured ill-will and hatred because his proposal had been rejected. Out of pure hatred because Uttara had rejected his proposal and ordained among the ascetics, without even holding a trial, he ordered him to be impaled on a stake. When the executioners took him and were impaling the novice monk Uttara, the Buddha saw this and arrived at the spot. After he was impaled, the Buddha placed his hand on his head and declared, "Uttara, this is the ripening of your past *kamma* (karma). Therefore, endure and bear that feeling (*vedanā*) through the power of reflection." The Buddha gave a fitting instruction and Dhamma advice to him. Having heard this, the novice monk Uttara suppressed the feeling (*vedanā*), and through that very meditation, attained Arahantship with higher knowledges (*abhiññā*), and as mentioned there, rose into the sky from the stake and even performed miracles.

The monks asked, "Venerable, how did you derive benefit from insight meditation (*vipassanā*) while experiencing such intense feeling (*vedanā*)?" Then the Arahant Uttara said, "For a long time, I had seen the danger in *Bhava* (Becoming). I had understood the nature of *saṅkhāras* (preparations). Therefore, I was able to attain Arahantship through the contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*)." Expressing this thought, it is said that he uttered these two verses:

"There is no *Bhava* (Becoming) that is permanent. There are no *saṅkhāras* (preparations) that are eternal or everlasting. They arise as this or that. They pass away in various ways, again and again—not just arising, but changing and passing away. Having seen this danger regarding this *bhava*, this existence, I have come to the firm stance that I have no further use for this *bhava*. Having emerged from all sensual pleasures, the destruction of the influxes, Arahantship, has been attained by me." It is said that Venerable Uttara answered the monks in this manner.

This story is deeply miraculous. Such miraculous things are mentioned in the Dhamma. Sometimes, even more miraculous things are recorded. In the past, even though highly meritorious individuals encountered such disasters due to certain

forces of *kamma*, it is recorded in various Dhamma stories that they were able to realize the Four Noble Truths and the truth of *Dukkha* (Suffering) taught by the Buddha through those very disasters.

If we direct our thoughts to the specific matters spoken of here, what is this permanent existence? Now, those of you who have some understanding of the Dhamma of Dependent Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) would know that it is stated: "*upādāna-paccayā bhavo*" (dependent on grasping/holding is existence). Where there is grasping/holding (*upādāna*), there is existence (*bhava*). This existence is something that goes hand in hand with grasping/holding (*upādāna*).

As Buddhists, we all know that what the Buddha pointed out as a "person" is not a soul or self (*attā*). What is here is a heap of form, a heap of feeling (*vedanā*), a heap of perception (*saññā*), a heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and a heap of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). These are grasped in the manner of grasping/holding (*upādāna*). It is through grasping, by holding on, that this idea of existence (*bhava*) arises. And due to that very grasping, it becomes a conditioned/prepared (*saṅkhata*) thing. Now, the word *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) was mentioned.

As Buddhists, we have all heard the word *saṅkhāra*. However, it must be said that this is a difficult word to understand. If we think about it at an ordinary level, its basic meaning is "preparing" or "constructing." That *saṅkhāra* means "preparing" is also mentioned in the Dhamma. When defining each of these aggregates (*khandha*), the Buddha asks: "And what, monks, do you call *saṅkhāras*? They prepare/construct what is prepared/conditioned (*saṅkhataṃ abhisaṅkharonti*), therefore they are called *saṅkhāras*." They prepare the conditioned into a state of being prepared. This is done by *saṅkhāras*. Next, what is spoken of as the conditioned/prepared thing (*saṅkhata*)?

"*Rūpaṃ rūpattāya saṅkhataṃ abhisaṅkharonti*"—it is these *saṅkhāras* (preparations) that prepare form to be form as a conditioned/prepared entity. Through a collection of thoughts arising in the mind due to ignorance (*avijjā*), there is a taking of it as "this is mine." Through that, one grasps form as "my form." Thereupon, a limit or boundary is established. A prepared thing, a *saṅkhata*. It is the same with feeling (*vedanā*). Where one grasps it as "my feeling," through that very grasping/holding, they become conditioned/prepared things. Perception (*saññā*) is the same. Finally, preparations (*saṅkhāra*) themselves are prepared into the state of preparations (*saṅkhāra*) by preparations (*saṅkhāra*). It is very difficult to understand that. It is hard to comprehend by thinking logically: how do preparations prepare preparations? Why is it said so? When a person takes something as "my preparations (*saṅkhāra*)," that too is a conditioned/prepared thing (*saṅkhata*). That too is through grasping (*upādāna*). It is the same with consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Consciousness too is made into a conditioned/prepared (*saṅkhata*) entity by preparations (*saṅkhāra*). That is why it is said: "dependent on ignorance are preparations (*avijjā-paccayā saṅkhārā*), dependent on preparations is

consciousness (*saṅkhāra-paccayā viññāṇaṃ*)." The story of the five aggregates of grasping/holding (*pañcupādānakkhandha*), of holding on, lies right there.

There is another instance where this is beautifully revealed, which the Venerable (Ananda) expresses to his fellow monks: "Friends, when we were newly ordained, the Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta often admonished us with Dhamma instructions." Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta is the one who held the foremost (*etadagga*) position among Dhamma preachers during the Buddha's time. He was someone who delivered very deep Dhamma discourses to his fellow monks on many occasions. So, Venerable Ānanda recalls a memorable sermon delivered to him when he was newly ordained. What was it? "Puṇṇa Mantāniputta told me this: 'Friend Ānanda, it is through grasping/holding (*upādāna*) that the conceit "I am" (*asmi*) arises, not without grasping/holding (*upādāya asmi'ti hoti, no anupādāya*).' It is through grasping that the thought 'I am' comes to a person, not without grasping." A very deep point is expressed there. It is only where there is grasping that one can say 'I am'. Then, he also gives a simile for this.

Often, we can understand something with the help of a simile. Even if the sentence regarding that Dhamma point is not understood immediately, Venerable Ānanda relates to the other monks a beautiful simile that Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta had declared to him. Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāniputta said to Venerable Ānanda: "Friend, just as a young woman or man fond of ornaments, looking at the reflection of her or his own face in a mirror, or in a bowl of clean water, does so by grasping/depending on something, by relying on something." In modern terms, we would say "relative to something."

If we take the story told here in light of the simile, a person is reminded of their own form when looking into a mirror. That is when they can say "this is me." Why? Because a mirror has a reflective quality. To reflect means to show back, as if manifesting or conjuring. This reflective quality exists in this consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Within the human mind, within consciousness (*viññāṇa*), there is this reflection (*paccavekkhaṇa*). When looking back, something is caught; something is caught by the mind. It is that which is caught that one grasps as "this is my form." One looks into the mirror to adjust, to prepare and construct one's form, thinking "this is my form." Thus, through that simile, it is shown that existence (*bhava*) arises within that very grasping/holding (*upādāna*).

On another occasion, as a teaching of the Buddha, it is stated that a person sees form as self (*attā*). They regard form as self. That very regarding is a preparation/formation (*saṅkhāra*). Here we get a clue to the word *saṅkhāra* as well. To declare "this is my form" is itself a preparation/formation (*saṅkhāra*). A preparation/formation (*saṅkhāra*) means a prepared/constructed thing. In prepared things, there is an artificial nature, an untrue nature. There is something like a departure from the natural state within the word *saṅkhāra*. Thus, one grasps it as

"this is my form." This shows that taking form, feeling (*vedanā*), etc., as "I" and "mine" is itself a preparation/formation (*saṅkhāra*).

It is in this manner, upon preparations (*saṅkhāra*), that this conditioned/prepared (*saṅkhata*) state is built. Next, there is a valuable discourse taught by the Buddha regarding this conditioned/prepared state: "Monks, there are three characteristics of the conditioned/prepared (*saṅkhata*). If something has been prepared/constructed, in every such constructed thing, these three characteristics are found. What are the three? *Uppādo paññāyati* (arising is discerned), *vayo paññāyati* (passing away is discerned), *ṭhitassa aññathattaṃ paññāyati* (alteration of that which stands is discerned)." In any constructed thing, an arising can be shown. *Vayo* means a wearing away or passing away can be shown. *Ṭhitassa aññathattaṃ* means that which is between the arising and the passing away, which we call "existence" or "persisting." Within that existence—here "standing" refers to its state of persisting—*ṭhitassa aññathattaṃ* (alteration of that which stands) is found. That is the special thing. An alteration or change is seen there. This is what the Buddha had to remind the world of.

Now, think about yourselves. When you think about your own lives, one end is birth (*jāti*). The other end is the disaster called death (*maraṇa*). During the period between these two, who thinks about death? How many of us do? Who thinks about this impermanence (*aniccatā*)? Based on the conceit of "I" and "mine," believing that this exists permanently—if aging (*jarā*) begins to show, that too is covered up; some dye or paint is applied to cover it up. You know how with vehicles, they keep the same license plate, but from time to time they patch it up with new-looking parts and keep it running. They are unwilling to accept the truth. So, it persists until then; that is the way.

The Buddha points out *ṭhitassa aññathattaṃ*—this grasped/held portion is not permanent. What is within it is alteration (*aññathābhāva*). Since there is this alteration, due to various social requirements, we sometimes even have to prove our identity—proving an identity that is not there, during various administrative tasks.

Yet, the nature of the world is indeed alteration (*aññathābhāva*). It is change itself. There is nothing identical in this; there is no self-identity. This is precisely what is to be understood as impermanence (*aniccatā*). However, seeing impermanence (*aniccatā*) in the present moment is extremely difficult.

It is easy to think that past things are over. It is also easy to think that in the future, this will cease to be. But seeing impermanence (*aniccatā*) right there in the present, moment by moment, is extremely difficult. That is precisely how the impermanence of preparations (*saṅkhāras*) is contemplated in deep insight (*vipassanā*). What is mentioned as the knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*) in insight (*vipassanā*) is that the arising and passing away start to appear in a rapid manner when one's attention (*manasikāra*) is directed there. Let us bring in another simile for this. It is close to the mirror simile, but not something found in books. It is

a simile we use to explain certain Dhamma points; we cannot claim it is entirely our own. Now, you have surely heard how a dog, while crossing a footbridge carrying a piece of meat, thought there was another piece of meat in the water, jumped in to grab it, and committed a foolish act.

Thinking further along those lines, suppose a dog is crossing a footbridge. While crossing, it sees its own shadow or reflection. It might think it is a friendly dog and wag its tail. Or think it is an enemy and growl. Or look with curiosity, wondering where this dog came from. What is the reason for all this? It is because the dog forgets that water has a reflective quality. If there is reflection (*paccavekkhaṇa*)—real reflection means reflecting within the mind, gaining an understanding—when looking while thinking "this is something in a mirror," its artificial nature has already struck our mind. Now, that dog looks at the water forgetting the reflective nature of water. That is why it is deceived by it. But to dispel that delusion, that is precisely what the Buddha pointed out as radical attention/wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Thus, through unwise/improper attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*), through incorrect reflection, the dog is deceived and might stay there even for hours. But when radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) is awakened, it understands, "Because of the reflective nature of this water, it is my own shadow that is seen." In that manner, as one progresses in insight (*vipassanā*), what helps is radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*).

Where radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) is awakened, one sees that in what the world takes to be "a thing, a thing," there is a Dhamma term for it: Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). We are going through this systematically so that it helps meditating devotees to learn something from this, rather than just listening to a sermon and leaving. "Name-and-Form" (*nāmarūpa*) means that the practitioner of insight (*vipassanā*) sees the object appearing to them as an instance where some mental phenomena (name) and some material phenomena (form) are mutually supporting each other. Speaking of mental phenomena (name/mental factors), what is the first thing our attention is drawn to? Think about it. Even right now, suppose there is some slight feeling (*vedanā*), even if it is not a major painful feeling (*vedanā*) like being pierced by a thorn. The very first thing felt is feeling (*vedanā*), isn't it? Is it not within feeling (*vedanā*) that we are prompted into action? So much so that on one occasion, the Buddha asked Venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, if there were no feeling (*vedanā*) anywhere, could there arise the perception (*saññā*) of a self (*attā*)?" "No, Lord," he replied. From this very fact, it is clear that it is through feeling (*vedanā*) that the notion of a self is awakened. Even if it exists as an underlying tendency (*anusaya*), at the moment of feeling (*vedanā*), behold, it is awakened. Thus, that feeling...

...perception (*saññā*) tries to identify. Suppose some creature bit you, say, a centipede, while you were suddenly sitting here. Thus, perception (*saññā*) is there. Next, based on that perception (*saññā*), shouldn't one find a way to escape from it, to get free? Intention (*cetanā*) is applied. When intention is applied, contact occurs. For

contact, the Pali word *phassa* is used there. Wherever it may be, the mind is directed to that point of contact (*phassa*). And what lies at the end of this? Attention (*manasikāra*), reflection. These are the mental phenomena pointed out as "Name" (*nāma*): feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). It is through these that we initially recognize something; we might not know what bit us, but what helped us identify it was that feeling (*vedanā*), the perception (*saññā*) that followed, the intention (*cetanā*) applied accordingly, the contact (*phassa*) there, and the attention (*manasikāra*) that aided it. Thus, those are mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*).

Next, what are shown as material phenomena (*rūpa-dhamma*)? As form (*rūpa*), the Buddha has pointed out the four great elements (*cattāro mahābhūtā*): earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). We recognize them through their properties: hardness, fluidity, heat, coldness, etc. You have heard of these characteristics of the four great elements. We identify them through those very mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*). This is why it is said that there is a constant mutual relationship between Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*).

Somehow, it is through these phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), by recognizing Name-and-Form, that we recognize the reflective nature of that consciousness (*viññāṇa*). It is Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) that directs our attention toward consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Dependent on Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*) exists. It is on this basis that we must proceed. Thus, the Buddha points out that if the world, which is trapped within the phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), at some point understands their impermanence (*aniccatā*)—what has been taken so far as the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) are these heaps. The heap of form, the heap of feeling (*vedanā*). All this is taking them as "I" and "mine." What is caught in that taking is the heap (*khandha*). The Buddha also shows what is meant by "heap." *Khandha* means heap. This heap of form is described in eleven ways: past, future, present... Now, when you think about your own form, "this is my form," if we take the past childhood, or youth—it could be a photograph—yet "this is my form." Thus, past, future, then gross or subtle, internal or external—meaning it can be one's own form, or an external form of another. Or it can be gross, or subtle; inferior or superior; far or near. All these are heaps of form. All of of these are taken as "I" and "mine." It is the same regarding feeling (*vedanā*). When a feeling (*vedanā*) is slightly felt, behold, it is already awakened within. Next, one conjures it up in the mind.

If truth be told, contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*) is like a very short path to Nibbāna. Even though short, it is like a difficult path. It is so powerful that it is hard for everyone to face it. That is why it is called a miracle. How does one do this meditation while sitting on a stake? We go searching for a nice, comfortable seat to meditate. Yet, because Venerable Uttara had that understanding of existence (*bhava*), because he had that understanding of preparations (*saṅkhāras*), he used that very feeling (*vedanā*) as an aid. He turned it into a blessing in disguise. He

realized suffering (*dukkha*)—the suffering (*dukkha*) concerning existence (*bhava*) taught by the Buddha.

Let us, in our own way, consider what issues arise during meditation for all these devout meditating devotees. First of all, if a teacher has given a certain meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), it is difficult to raise the mind to that meditation subject. Why? Because the mind runs to familiar thoughts. Those are called the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa-dhamma*). Various thoughts about the past, the future, and useless things come crashing into the mind. At that point, there is a battle with thoughts (*vitakka*). When battling with thoughts (*vitakka*), one is not here. Perhaps at home, or somewhere else. Therefore, one does not even know that this body is here. Even feelings (*vedanās*) are not felt because the mind is wandering around. But suppose that at some point, they are suppressed. One tries to raise the mind to the meditation subject. That is called the victory over thoughts (*vitakka-vijaya*).

There are various stages of meditation. Regarding progress, the initial stage is the victory over thoughts (*vitakka-vijaya*). Thoughts (*vitakka*) are the first to present themselves as Māra. When the Māra of thoughts is somewhat subdued, to some extent, it can be regarded as *vitakka-vijaya*. Next comes feeling (*vedanā*). One must remain in one posture to settle and concentrate the mind. But that is not permitted. Why? Because the Buddha pointed out that the nature of the body is purely a heap of suffering (*dukkha*). It is a heap of suffering, a heap of diseases. In short, one may well consider existence (*bhava*) as entirely a stake. In the Buddha's words, not only form but all five—feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—should be looked at with an insight eye. The Buddha has shown them in various ways. You may have heard: to look at them as *Anicca* (Impermanent), as *Dukkha* (Suffering), as a disease, as a boil, as a wound, as a stake, as a calamity, as an affliction, as *Anattā* (Not-self), as not belonging to oneself, as empty. This was not an exaggeration by the Buddha; it is its actual nature. Therefore, just as was said of form, feeling (*vedanā*) too is purely a stake. Whether it is pleasant feeling, painful feeling, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, within all of these, the Buddha points out that very impermanence (*aniccatā*). In another discourse, the Buddha points out: see pleasant feeling as suffering (*dukkha*), painful feeling as a stake, and neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling as peaceful but impermanent (*anicca*). It is through such understanding of feeling (*vedanā*) that one becomes an Arahant, if viewed from that angle.

This attaining of Arahantship is the realizing of Nibbāna. One can approach it from several angles. In meditation on the contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*), there is disillusionment towards feeling (*vedanā*)—complete disillusionment. That very feeling (*vedanā*) helps in that disillusionment. What is done in *vedanānupassanā* is not looking at it as "my thing," but looking at feeling (*vedanā*) simply as feeling (*vedanā*). When one practices looking at feeling as feeling—now, as we said, after achieving the victory over thoughts, next there is a feeling (*vedanā*) somewhere in the body in the sitting posture. In most cases, by changing posture, we

cover up that feeling, the suffering nature of the body. The body reminds us: "this is a heap of suffering." How do we cover it up? By changing postures. But if, at some point, without changing postures, one tries to identify the feeling insightfully, that is a very difficult thing. It is hard to do all at once. But if there is strong determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*), thinking "even if it breaks, let it be," then the practitioner of insight directs the mind right there. They do not look at it as "my feeling." They see it as impermanent (*anicca*). Feeling (*vedanā*) is something that comes from this impermanent (*anicca*) body. It is due to respective contact (*phassa*) that respective feelings (*vedanā*) arise. There is also a passage shown in the Dhamma regarding arising from respective conditions, which helps in meditation:

Tajjaṃ tajjaṃ paccayaṃ paṭicca tajjā tajjā vedanā uppajjanti;

Tajjassa tajjassa paccayassa nirodhā tajjā tajjā vedanā nirujjhanti.

Dependent on respective conditions, respective feelings (*vedanās*) arise. Due to the absence of those respective conditions, those respective feelings (*vedanās*) cease. Then, without taking them as "I" and "mine," there is reflection according to cause and condition. Within that, feeling (*vedanā*) too can be recognized as impermanent (*anicca*). That is the meditation of *vedanānupassanā* (contemplation of feeling).

So at that moment, what the meditator (*yogāvacara*) does, if they cannot keep the mind on the meditation subject, is to direct the mind to the place where feeling (*vedanā*) occurs, in the manner of *vedanānupassanā*. Through that, many things can be learned. Sometimes, to conquer that feeling (*vedanā*), one can even extend the sitting period, the duration of the posture. That helps tranquility (*samatha*). Why? Because within that lies the power of determination. Now, we are all afraid of feeling (*vedanā*). We are afraid of it as soon as it approaches. We are afraid when a pin or a needle is brought close. Similarly, we are afraid as soon as a feeling (*vedanā*) is slightly felt. Yet, there is a level at which it can be endured. When the meditator faces the feeling (*vedanā*) at that moment, they realize they can go beyond it. Through that, the tranquility (*samatha*) aspect develops. Next, looking directly at the feeling (*vedanā*) and making it a meditation subject, behold, the nature of preparations (*saṅkhāras*) is understood. All of these are a heap of ripples, a heap of preparations (*saṅkhāras*). Feeling (*vedanā*) is not a single thing.

That is why the Buddha pointed out, as you have often heard, "*vedanā bubbuḷūpamā*" (feeling is like a water bubble). Water bubbles are indeed directly experienced—just as form was said to be like a lump of foam, feeling (*vedanā*) is like raindrops falling during a rainy season. They do not last long. When water falls from the roof, water bubbles arise and pass away, arise and pass away. It is through that understanding that impermanence (*aniccatā*) is realized in the contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*). When it is directly realized that "all this is impermanent (*anicca*)," it is then that the lineage of insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) properly emerges within the mind. For we usually consider only arising and passing away. Between the two ends of arising and passing away, there is that alteration

(*aññathābhāva*) we mentioned. A change. That change is then caught next, like ripples in various ways. That is one thing. How is it caught? Behold, in the form of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Attention (*manasikāra*) is directed; to that attention is caught the minute feelings (*vedanās*), perceptions (*saññā*), intentions (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). These phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) keep arising and passing away. The realization that "there is no 'I'" arises through that. That is how contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*) progresses in insight (*vipassanā*).

We cannot even imagine how Venerable Uttara did this, sitting on a stake in that manner, but the path of contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*) is to be practiced in this way. Indeed, we do not need to invite or bring feelings (*vedanās*) into our lives. These feelings (*vedanās*) that naturally come are quite sufficient for our meditation on suffering (*dukkha*). In our daily lives, we have to experience various feelings (*vedanās*). Yet, we do not know their meditative value.

That is why on one occasion the Buddha delivered a valuable discourse: "Monks, the uninstructed worldling (*assutavā puthujjana*) experiences pleasant feelings (*vedanā*), painful feelings, and neither-painful-nor-pleasant feelings. The instructed noble disciple (*sutavā ariyasāvaka*) also experiences pleasant feelings, painful feelings, and neither-painful-nor-pleasant feelings. What, monks, is the difference between the two?" This was a question asked of the monks. The monks replied: "Venerable Sir, Blessed One," on such occasions they say a special phrase, "Blessed One, our teachings are rooted in the Blessed One, guided by the Blessed One. Please, Blessed One, clarify the matter for us. Having heard it from the Blessed One, we, the monks, will retain it." In short, they did not give an answer. They expected the answer from the Buddha himself. This was probably because it was a deep question. Then, behold, the Buddha himself declares, "This is the reason." The Buddha presents that when a painful feeling (*vedanā*) arises in that uninstructed worldling, the ordinary person who does not know the Dhamma...

...they weep, wail, beat their breast, become bewildered, and grieve. Through this, the uninstructed worldling generates another feeling (*vedanā*). The Buddha gives a simile for this: "Suppose a person is struck by an arrow. After being struck by that arrow, another arrow comes and strikes them." In the same way, this uninstructed worldling adds mental suffering to physical suffering. Thus, they experience two arrow strikes. That uninstructed worldling, because of that painful feeling (*vedanā*), reacts in that manner—in reaction to it.

Similarly, another weakness shown regarding the uninstructed worldling is that when a painful feeling (*vedanā*) arises, they develop aversion (*paṭigha*), a friction, or hatred, either towards a person or towards the feeling (*vedanā*). Let's say, they get angry even with their own body, thinking, "Where is this body letting me meditate?" Here, we can understand that because the Buddha's words reminded the novice monk Uttara, "Uttara, this is the force of a past *kamma*. Endure it, reflect on it, and tolerate (*adhivāsetu*) it," it must have helped him. Otherwise, suppose we were in

that position at that moment. When impaled on a baseless charge, one would first of all develop a great aversion (*paṭigha*) towards the Brahmin Vassakāra, thinking, "Why was such a punishment given to innocent me?" At that moment, because the Buddha connected it to *kamma*, saying, "This is something that must be endured, a past *kamma*," that too must have helped Venerable Uttara to direct his mind to the contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*). But in an ordinary person, it generates aversion (*paṭigha*). They do not think of it as coming from a force of *kamma*. Instead, they develop aversion (*paṭigha*). That is the other aspect.

Next, there is more. When a painful feeling (*vedanā*) arises, the uninstructed worldling wishes for a pleasant feeling (*vedanā*). What is the reason for this? To the uninstructed worldling, the only way to escape from painful feeling (*vedanā*) appears to be pleasant feeling (*vedanā*). No other path of liberation is seen. When an ordinary person experiences a painful feeling (*vedanā*), as a remedy, they run after pleasant feelings (*vedanās*). That is why we say that the ordinary worldling is engaged in a seesaw ride between suffering (*dukkha*) and pleasure (*sukha*). As much as suffering (*dukkha*) comes, they hope for pleasure. But this is not a solution. Thus, one weakness shown by the Buddha regarding that worldling is adding another arrow to the first arrow—through weeping, wailing, beating the breast, and grieving over that feeling (*vedanā*), in addition to the physical pain. The second point is that an aversion (*paṭigha*) arises within this person towards the feeling (*vedanā*). As a result of this, the Buddha points out, the underlying tendency of aversion (*paṭighānusaya*) is deposited in the mind. Aversion, hatred. That too is a bad thing. Next, in place of that, by running after pleasant feelings (*vedanās*) as a way of escaping painful feeling (*vedanā*), the underlying tendency to lust/attachment (*rāgānusaya*) is acquired. Thus, the Buddha first points out these shortcomings in the uninstructed person.

Next, he shows how the instructed noble disciple who has heard the Dhamma acts. When a feeling (*vedanā*) arises, the disciple who has gained Dhamma knowledge does not weep, wail, or beat their breast in that manner. They do not add mental pain to physical pain. Next, the noble disciple does not develop aversion (*paṭigha*) towards it. There is no conflict with the feeling (*vedanā*). Feeling (*vedanā*) is something natural. Regarding this, the Great Arahant Sāriputta expresses an amazing statement about patience (*khanti*). Venerable Sāriputta is a monk who gave a highly remarkable example of this. He is also a monk who delivered valuable discourses regarding the meditation subjects of the elements: earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*).

On one occasion, he says: "Now, suppose someone strikes your body, say, with a stick." In that case, the Great Arahant Sāriputta does not look at the person who struck with the stick. He looks at his own body. Why? Because the body is made in such a way that if struck with a stick, it hurts. If struck with a stick, it hurts. Someone might laugh, thinking this is humorous. But let us think for a moment: what if this body were made of iron? Then that stick would bounce back and strike that very

person, wouldn't it? But this body is at fault. Let us think for a moment: we have a wound. We put a bandage on it and go to a meeting. We collide and clash with everyone we bump into—but it is our wound!

The Buddha declared that this body is entirely a wound, a boil, a disease, an affliction. Therefore, one should not clash either with the stick or with the person who swung the stick. It is the nature of this body. Such was the attitude of the Great Arahant Sāriputta—to us, hearing this sounds like a joke. But the practitioner of insight (*vipassanā*) has to think in that very way. We should not clash with that feeling (*vedanā*). Sometimes, it might be an unseen force of past *kamma*. We might be harassed innocently. We might be arrested and subjected to harassment by some severe enemy. Yet, there may be some force of *kamma* underneath it. If we react to it without understanding this, we pile up more *kamma*. But the practitioner of insight makes it an opportunity; they make this feeling (*vedanā*) a meditation subject. They make both a meditation subject. A short path to Nibbāna. A difficult path, but a short path.

Because the perception of self (*attā-saññā*) is bound up with feeling (*vedanā*). It is also there that it must be broken. This drive to take things as "I am," as "me." Now, "I am" is indeed what is found in the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), the conceit "I am" (*asmimāna*) which is rooted in "I am"—the proposition "I am." Usually, the fundamental proposition of existence (*bhava*) is "I am." But one has to elaborate "I am" a bit further: "I exist" or "this I am." Now, taking one by one from form, feeling (*vedanā*), etc., one says "this I am." Thus, on whatever occasion existence is brought up or shown, one directly has to say "this I am." But in the beginning, it is in dependence on that very feeling (*vedanā*) that the sense of "I" and "mine" arises. Why? Because here, feeling (*vedanā*) is something arisen from causes and conditions in that manner.

Venerable Sāriputta was struck with a stick. The body is something that swells or hurts when struck by a stick. That is all there is to the story. If the body were an iron thing, none of that would happen. That is how one must think if looking from that perspective. The noble disciple does not go into aversion (*paṭigha*) in that way. When a painful feeling (*vedanā*) arises, the noble disciple does not chase after pleasant feelings (*vedanās*) as a solution. Why? Because that disciple knows there is another path of release from painful feeling (*vedanā*), a path to Nibbāna. By making that small painful feeling (*vedanā*) the object, sometimes the entire suffering of *saṃsāra* can be brought to an end. This is done through the understanding of these feelings (*vedanās*). To help with this, the Buddha has shown these feelings (*vedanās*) in manifold ways: as arising, as passing away, their satisfaction (*assāda*), their danger (*ādīnava*), and the escape (*nissaraṇa*) from them—by regarding it as an opportunity to gain the correct understanding of all these, making it a meditation subject. Behold, that is how the Buddha shows the difference between the uninstructed worldling and the instructed noble disciple on the question of feeling (*vedanā*).

Thus, it is mentioned in many ways in the Dhamma. According to the Buddha's words, we must reflect on pleasant feeling (*vedanā*)—now, pleasant feeling is indeed what everyone wishes for. The Buddha has pointed out to see that too as suffering (*dukkha*). Why is that? It is mentioned in the Dhamma that these feelings of pleasure, pain, and neither-painful-nor-pleasant are classified in this way. Regarding pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), it is said: "*sukhā ṭhitibhāve, vipariṇāmadukkhā*"—pleasant feeling is pleasant while it persists, but painful when it changes. Painful when it changes.

Therefore, when we invite this pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), we must at the same time be prepared to accept the suffering (*dukkha*) that comes from its change. That is why, in properly considering feeling (*vedanā*), the Buddha tells the noble disciple to see it in this way: "*yo sukhaṃ dukkhato addakkhi*"—he who has seen pleasant feeling as suffering (*dukkha*). Since it brings suffering (*dukkha*), even though we invite pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), what comes with it is the emptiness and suffering (*dukkha*) when it ends. We know how a small child blows soap bubbles and runs after them because they look beautiful. How far can they run? In the end, they disappear without a trace. Such is the way with pleasant feeling (*vedanā*). That is why it is seen as suffering (*dukkha*).

Next, painful feeling (*vedanā*) is directly said to be seen as a stake. Painful feeling (*vedanā*) is indeed a stake. So, a stake must be understood as a stake. Next, neither-painful-nor-pleasant, neutral feeling (*vedanā*). It is peaceful. It is peaceful, yet it too is impermanent (*anicca*). Why? Because between the seesaw of pleasure and pain lies this neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (*vedanā*). It too is not permanent. Defilements (*kilesa*) are present there as well. That is why the Buddha rejected even the levels of absorption (*jhāna*) attained with the help of neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), and went beyond them. It is the state of completely stepping off the seesaw regarding this feeling (*vedanā*). This seesaw ride is entirely based on the conceit "I am" (*asmimāna*). Then, feeling (*vedanā*) is seen simply as feeling (*vedanā*). That is what is called contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*).

The Buddha showed how to approach the knowledge of things as they are (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa*). Breaking the coarse level of the grip of "I" and "mine" at the stage of abandoning the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), and then gradually—that is what is found in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. "*Kāye kāyānupassī*"—contemplating body as body. "*Vedanāsu vedanānupassī*"—contemplating feeling (*vedanā*) as feeling (*vedanā*). Why is it said to look at them in that way? What is "contemplation" (*anupassanā*)? Contemplation (*anupassanā*) means understanding their true nature, removing the notion of "I" and "mine" as "this is mine, this is another's." Whether it is one's own feeling (*vedanā*) or another's, feeling (*vedanā*) is just feeling (*vedanā*). It is to see it in this manner that we are trained in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. You have heard the term "*bahiddhā*" (externally). The Buddha could have said "one's own" and "another's." But there is no "one's own" and "another's" here. There is only "internally" (*ajjhatta*) and "externally" (*bahiddhā*). The story of internal and

external. What is internal is called "mine." What is external is called "another's." But in both, there is the same nature of Dhamma. It is found in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta concerning the body, the mind, feeling (*vedanā*), and mind-objects (*dhamma*). It is in reliance on these very things that we must progress in insight (*vipassanā*). The main thing is mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*). Next is radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). That is the most important thing. The seed of wisdom is within all of us. It only needs to be awakened. That is what radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) is. The Buddha brought to light that way of looking at the world. That is what is mentioned as *vipallāsa* (distortions/perversions). We said that the world has a perverted view; the Buddha points out not just one, but four perverted views/distortions (*vipallāsa*):

1. Regarding the impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent.
2. Regarding that which is suffering (*dukkha*) as pleasant.
3. Regarding that which is not-self (*anattā*) as self.
4. Regarding the foul as beautiful.

These four perceptions (*saññā*) are indeed shown as the distortions (*vipallāsa-dhamma*). The Buddha declared that this perversity exists in three levels within us: distortion of perception (*saññā-vipallāsa*), distortion of mind/thought (*citta-vipallāsa*), and distortion of view (*diṭṭhi-vipallāsa*). There is a distortion of perception (*saññā-vipallāsa*) that takes the impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent. *Saññā* means recognition/perception. One forms a perception (*saññā*) that it is permanent. Based on that perception (*saññā*), a stream of thoughts arises, hopes and wishes are formed. That is the distortion of mind/thought (*citta-vipallāsa*). Thus, starting from a distorted perception (*saññā*), it leads to distorted thoughts. Once those thoughts are firmly established, they become a view/dogma. An unshakeable view. That is what is called the distortion of view (*diṭṭhi-vipallāsa*).

Thus, the Buddha taught that these distorted phenomena (*vipallāsa-dhamma*) affect the world in three ways: *saññā-vipallāsa*, *citta-vipallāsa*, and *diṭṭhi-vipallāsa*. It is the same regarding those four: "*anicce nicca-saññino*"—whether it is regarding the impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent, regarding what is suffering (*dukkha*) as pleasant, regarding what is not-self (*anattā*) as self, or regarding the foul as beautiful. They arise at the level of perception (*saññā*), become established as intricate and fancy thoughts, and finally arise as a view (*diṭṭhi*). It is within this perverted state that the world exists.

But why did the Buddha bring this to light for the world? To make a beginning. Through unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*) and radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), the Buddha has placed us on the path of Dhamma realization. From that point on, the work is ours. The journey from there on is insight (*vipassanā*).

Developing some level of concentration through tranquility (*samatha*) meditation, and gaining the capacity to practice mindfulness and clear comprehension (*satisampajañña*) in a more advanced manner, gradually—it is nothing strange. It is within this very five aggregates of grasping/holding (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) that we see—we must recall that noble word of the Buddha once again: "*Imasmiññeva byāmamatte kaḷevare sasaññimhi samanake lokañca paññāpemi, lokasamudayañca lokanirodhañca lokanirodhagāminiñca paṭipadaṃ*." That is the great word of the Buddha. If we think about it as a summary, that is what we have to take. What is the Buddha declaring there? "Monks, I declare that within this fathom-long carcass (*kaḷevara*)"—"carcass" usually means a dead body, a corpse. But here, the word "carcass" (*kaḷevara*) is used as "with perception (*sasaññimhi*) and mind (*samanake*)" within this carcass. It cannot be called a dead carcass because perception (*saññā*) and mind are present there. Yet, "carcass" is used to make us think. If there were no perception (*saññā*) and mind, this would indeed be like a corpse. Like a tree or a plant. But the Buddha says: "Within this very fathom-long carcass, endowed with perception (*saññā*) and mind, I declare the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world."

These two words, perception (*saññā*) and mind (*manas*), can be made even more meaningful through the analysis we have done so far. Why did the Buddha bring perception (*saññā*) and mind into this? They help us. Even though we blamed perception (*saññā*) on one hand as distorted perception, as distorted phenomena (*vipallāsa-dhamma*), that is the very thing we utilize for insight (*vipassanā*). The perception of permanent (*nicca-saññā*) is not good; in its place, the perception of impermanent (*anicca-saññā*). Those of you who have read discourses like the Girimānanda Sutta know that the Buddha has introduced a series of perceptions (*saññā*) to be developed by the noble disciples: *anicca-saññā* (perception of impermanence), *asubha-saññā* (perception of foulness), *anatta-saññā* (perception of non-self), *ādīnava-saññā* (perception of danger), *pahāna-saññā* (perception of abandoning), *virāga-saññā* (perception of dispassion), *nirodha-saññā* (perception of cessation)—all of these are perceptions (*saññā*). Behold, the perceptions (*saññā*) to be developed. Thus, in place of the perceptions (*saññā*) that exist in the world, that proliferate *saṃsāra*, in place of distorted perceptions (*saññā*), undistorted perceptions (*saññā*) are practiced according to the Buddha's Dhamma. That indeed is the path.

Now, it was said here that it is found within this fathom-long body. There, "world" meant nothing but this story of suffering (*dukkha*). Just as suffering, its origin, its cessation (*nirodha*), and the path to its cessation are spoken of, so were the world and the origin of the world. At times, the world itself was meant as suffering (*dukkha*). "*Dukkhe loko patiṭṭhito*..." (The world is established on suffering...) The world and suffering are mentioned as one, like two halves of a folding lid. What is said of this world is exactly what is said of suffering (*dukkha*). According to the Buddha's words, within this fathom-long body, there is suffering (*dukkha*), the origin

of suffering (*dukkha-samudaya*), the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*), and the path leading to the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha-gāminī paṭipadā*). When we say "path," it is this insight (*vipassanā*) path we are discussing now. To that path belongs this story of perceptions (*saññā*)—the perceptions (*saññā*) of *anicca*, *asubha*, *ādīnava*, etc., are merely a mirage. Yet, it is through a certain level of perception (*saññā*), a Dhamma-conforming level of perception (*saññā*), that we proceed toward realization to escape that mirage.

Next, mind (*manas*) is mentioned. Attention (*manasikāra*). Unwise attention (*ayoniso-manasikāra*). So far in *saṃsāra*, we have been led by Māra through unwise attention (*ayoniso-manasikāra*). Through incorrect reflection, the reflection of the dog on the footbridge is what we have carried for so long in *saṃsāra*. The Buddha has shown that through proper reflection, radical attention (*yoniso-manasikāra*), which helps to realize things as they are, is awakened. Unwise attention (*ayoniso-manasikāra*) means forgetting the place where something arose and running after it, like a deer running after a mirage. Radical attention (*yoniso-manasikāra*) means targeting the place where something arises and turning back towards that side. It is like a journey of returning back home. Thus, just as the deer runs and runs after the mirage until it dies of exhaustion without ever reaching it, the world runs for a long time seeking the end of suffering in *saṃsāra*. Yet, only suffering (*dukkha*) is encountered. Behold, the Buddha presented radical attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) to come to the place where these arise. Feeling (*vedanā*)—it starts from contact (*phassa*). Identify those phenomena—the phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). That is where radical attention (*yoniso*) begins. Dependent on consciousness (*viññāṇa*), Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) exists. Dependent on Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*) exists. That is where we finally arrive. If, at some point, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is understood, Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) becomes understood. If, in some way, Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) is understood, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) becomes understood. Right there is liberation from *saṃsāra*. This indeed is the Buddha's word.

On this valuable Uposatha day, having undertaken a valuable virtue (*sīla*), I hope that by doing so at this moment, you have gathered those Dhamma portions that assist your meditation, that help your insight (*vipassanā*), and particularly relate to the contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*).

If this merit of listening to the Dhamma, as well as this way of thinking relevant to one's own meditation, has helped you draw closer to Nibbāna, then relying on that power of merit, may this power of merit be a supportive condition to achieve peace by attaining the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*anāgāmi*), and Arahantship as quickly as possible within this very life, escaping from the suffering (*dukkha*) of *saṃsāra* such as birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and pain, and attaining the supreme deathless Nibbāna. Reflect in this manner.

Likewise, if any beings from the lowest Avīci hell to the highest Akaniṭṭha heaven wish to rejoice in the merits gained from this Dhamma sermon and Dhamma listening, may that rejoicing be a supportive condition for them to attain peace by reaching the supreme deathless Nibbāna through whichever Bodhi they aspire to. Make this aspiration.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"