Pahankanuwa Sermon #62

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.130)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

Asātaṃ sātarūpena,

piyarūpena appiyaṃ;

Dukkhaṃ sukhassa rūpena,

pamattaṃ ativattati.

From:

from Udāna 2.9, Asātarūpa Jātaka, and Sutta Nipāta 1086

Dear Listeners,

The Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Supreme Buddha, points out to us that the entire journey of saṃsāra, which is a struggle between life and death, is indeed a state of heedlessness, and that the path to the Deathless Nibbāna is heedfulness. One traverses this journey of saṃsāra by regarding Suffering (Dukkha) as happiness. How one falls prey to this perverted perception, which arises due to ignorance and Craving (Taṇhā), will become clear through today's thematic verse and its corresponding origin story.

In the Kuṇḍasāla forest of the Koliya country, the Buddha preached this verse in connection with the female lay disciple named Suppavāsā. She, known as Suppavāsā Koliyadhītā, was the mother of the Great Arahant Sīvalī. The Great Arahant Sīvalī, who attained the foremost position among those of great gains, obtained the gift of life amidst a mountain of great Suffering (Dukkha). For Ven. Sīvalī spent seven years and seven days in his mother's womb. During those last seven days, that mother experienced extremely bitter labor pains due to an obstructed pregnancy. Even at that moment, having faith in the Triple Gem, she endured that bitter pain through three Dhamma-accordant reflections, through three thoughts. It is recorded there in this manner:

“Sammāsambuddho vata so bhagavā yo imassa evarūpassa dukkhassa pahānāya dhammaṃ deseti”

The Blessed One is indeed the Fully Self-Awakened One, who teaches the Dhamma for the abandoning of such Suffering (Dukkha).

“Supaṭipanno vata so bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho yo imassa evarūpassa dukkhassa pahānāya paṭipanno”

Of good conduct indeed is the Sangha of disciples of that Blessed One, who have entered the path for the abandoning of such Suffering (Dukkha).

“Susukhaṃ vata taṃ nibbānaṃ yatthidaṃ evarūpaṃ dukkhaṃ na vijjati”

Extremely peaceful indeed is that Nibbāna wherein such Suffering (Dukkha) is not found.

Through these kinds of reflections, through these three Dhamma-accordant thoughts, she endured that bitter pain. Then, she spoke to her husband and told him: “Go and inquire about the health of the Blessed One, and then inform Him in this manner: ‘Suppavāsā, the Koliya daughter, having carried a child in her womb for seven years, is now experiencing the bitter pain of a difficult pregnancy for these seven days. Yet, she endures that pain through these three kinds of reflections.’” Suppavāsā's husband met the Buddha and conveyed that message exactly as requested. As soon as it was spoken, the Buddha uttered just one sentence as a blessing: *“Sukhini hotu suppavāsā koliyadhītā, arogā arogaṃ puttaṃ vijāyatu”* — “May Suppavāsā, the Koliya daughter, be happy. Being healthy, may she give birth to a healthy son.” At that very moment, Suppavāsā became well and gave birth to a son.

Now, when the husband returned home and witnessed this miracle, he was greatly delighted, thinking: “This is a great wonder, a marvelous thing! Such relief was received just by the word of blessing spoken through the power of the Blessed One.” Next, Suppavāsā says to her husband: “Now, go and make this invitation to the Blessed One: ‘Suppavāsā, the Koliya daughter, has given birth to a healthy child. Suppavāsā invites the Sangha of monks headed by the Buddha to accept alms for seven days.’” So, the husband went back, reported this matter to the Buddha, and made the alms invitation on behalf of Suppavāsā.

By that time, the Sangha of monks headed by the Buddha had already received another invitation from a certain lay disciple, who was an attendant of the Great Arahant Mahā Moggallāna. The Buddha did something special here; He called Venerable Mahā Moggallāna and said: “Moggallāna, tell that lay disciple: ‘Suppavāsā, the Koliya daughter, having carried a pregnancy for seven years and seven days, has now safely delivered. She makes this invitation for seven days. Let those next seven days be given to her, and postpone your alms-giving to a later date.’” The Great Arahant Moggallāna went and made this request to that lay disciple.

Perhaps because that lay disciple was wise, he made the following statement to the Great Arahant Moggallāna: “Venerable sir, if you can guarantee three things for me, I will yield my turn of alms-giving to Suppavāsā.” What were those three things? “You must assure me that my wealth and possessions will not be destroyed within these seven days. Similarly, you must guarantee that my life will not end; that is the second point. And you must guarantee that my faith (saddhā) will not waver or decline.” He asked the Great Arahant Moggallāna to guarantee these three things.

The Great Arahant Moggallāna says: “Lay disciple, I can guarantee two of those things for you. But the third thing you must guarantee for yourself.” You, meritorious friends, know that the Great Arahant Moggallāna possessed great psychic powers; he was the foremost among those with psychic power. He must have seen clearly regarding those two matters. He says: “I can guarantee that your wealth will not perish during these seven days, and that your life will not perish. But faith is something that belongs to you alone; you yourself must be responsible for it.”

Then, that lay disciple wisely replied: “Very well, Venerable Sir, if you assure me of those two, I agree. Let Suppavāsā offer this alms-food. I will undertake to offer my alms-giving later.” After the Great Arahant Moggallāna went and reported this matter to the Buddha, Suppavāsā prepared the alms-food magnificently on the following day and personally offered it with her own hands to the Sangha of monks headed by the Buddha.

Indeed, this is a miraculous event. Perhaps some might even doubt it. It is mentioned that even that young child was made to pay homage to the Sangha headed by the Buddha. Not only that, the Great Arahant Sāriputta addressed this child and asked: “Child, I hope you are comfortable, with no pain or trouble?” This was like inquiring about the well-being of an ordinary person. Then this little child answered: “Venerable Sir, what happiness could there be for me? What happiness could there be for one who lived for seven years and seven days inside a jar of blood?” Hearing this conversation, Suppavāsā, the Koliya daughter, was exceedingly delighted. She was overjoyed thinking, “What a meritorious child this is, to converse with the Great Arahant Sāriputta in this manner!” Seeing her joy, the Buddha asked Suppavāsā: “Well, Suppavāsā, would you like to have more children like this?” Then Suppavāsā replied, just like many mothers say nowadays: “Not just one child, I would be delighted to have even seven children like this!” It was then that the Buddha uttered the verse we mentioned earlier.

Asātaṃ sātarūpena,

piyarūpena appiyaṃ,

dukkhaṃ sukhassa rūpena,

pamattaṃ ativattati.

This is declared as an Udāna verse. When we say 'Udāna' (inspired utterance), we usually think of a joyful exclamation. But one should not think that the Buddha was merely approving Suppavāsā's words. Looking at the mind in accordance with the Dhamma, this verse contains an instructive, advisory statement.

Asātaṃ sātarūpena — what is unpleasant in the guise of the pleasant;

Piyarūpena appiyaṃ — what is unlovely in the guise of the lovely;

Dukkhaṃ sukhassa rūpena — Suffering (Dukkha) in the guise of happiness;

Pamattaṃ ativattati — overwhelms the heedless person.

Now, you, meritorious friends, can think about this. In addition to this, we must say that you have probably heard much about the Great Arahant Sīvalī. As the foremost Great Arahant in terms of great gains, many meritorious people even hang pictures of the Great Arahant Sīvalī in their homes. But they do not think much about the other side—about the mountain of Suffering (Dukkha) he endured. They do not think of the immense mountain of Suffering (Dukkha) amidst which he obtained his limited gains. Well, the Buddha, on a certain occasion in the Jātaka Pāli, explains under the name 'Asātarūpa Jātaka' that there was a kamma underlying this as well. It appears that when the monks had gathered, they discussed: “Ah, what Suffering (Dukkha) this mother and son have endured, especially Ven. Sīvalī in his childhood!” The Buddha, having entered the Dhamma hall, revealed the past story in this manner:

In the past, when the Bodhisatta was born as the son of King Brahmadatta of Bārāṇasī and was ruling, the King of Kosala, being more powerful, came and seized the kingdom, killed the king, made the queen his chief consort, and began ruling Bārāṇasī. At that time, the son escaped through a waterway, hid, gathered an army, and came to fight to reclaim his kingdom. He sent a message to the King of Kosala: “Hand over the kingdom or fight!” As the king prepared for war, the chief consort, who was the prince's mother, sent a secret message: “There is no need to fight; just besiege the city. Once the city is besieged, you can capture it by leaving the people with nothing to eat or drink, starving them.” This was the advice given by the mother. Following this, the son blockaded the city for seven days. With the people left helpless, they finally killed the King of Kosala and brought his head to the prince. In that manner, the problem was solved. However, it is the unwholesome kamma that is pointed out here. The Buddha declared that because of the advice given—the advice to blockade and starve them in that manner to capture the kingdom—and the kamma committed by the son who followed that advice, the kamma ripened in this exact manner.

Now, a certain aspect of the ripening of kamma is revealed through this. Next, let us try to uncover an important aspect of this story. We see that there is something to be grasped even from the conversation between that lay disciple and the Great Arahant

Moggallāna. The lay gentleman was not ready to yield his turn of alms-giving merely because the Buddha said so. A doubt arose in the lay disciple: “Even though I promised to give alms, if by any chance my wealth to give alms is lost during these seven days, or if my life is not preserved, or even if all these are present, if my faith (saddhā) is lost, how will I give alms?” Thinking in this way, he made that request to guarantee these things.

And the Great Arahant Moggallāna, too, acted in accordance with the Dhamma; there too, we have a lesson to learn. Even though he was so highly advanced in psychic power and possessed great majesty, he could not guarantee another person's faith (saddhā). This is an important point in the Dhamma.

The faith (saddhā) found in the Dhamma of the Buddha is not blind devotion. It is not something done by becoming enslaved or subservient to anyone. It is something belonging to oneself. One must be responsible for it oneself. Regarding that matter, the word of the Great Arahant Moggallāna is indeed in agreement with the Buddha’s word. Related points are mentioned in various places in the Dhamma. Especially, there is a discourse called the Vīmaṃsaka Sutta. There, the Buddha tells the monks that even a monk who does not possess the power to read others' minds should investigate even the Tathāgata Himself through things cognizable by the eye and ear, and only then develop faith (saddhā). Thus, the living Buddha invited even His own Sangha of monks to investigate whether He has any shortcomings, and then, having investigated, to establish their faith (saddhā) that He is indeed the Fully Self-Awakened One.

Similarly, on another occasion, in the discourse called the Upāli Sutta, mention is made of Upāli the householder, who was a very prominent disciple of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta. When, on a certain occasion, through a Dhamma discussion, he developed faith (saddhā) in the Buddha and took refuge in the Triple Gem, the Buddha declared: “Householder Upāli, it is not good for well-known people like you in the country to make such hasty decisions. *Anuviccākāro*—investigate, think it over, and think further before taking refuge in the Triple Gem. Do not be so hasty.” Then, the householder Upāli was actually much more delighted. What is shown by this is that the Buddhist attitude leads to investigation. That faith (saddhā) is not blind devotion. It is something belonging to each individual. This, meritorious friends, you too should understand well.

That wealth belongs to oneself. Among the types of wealth such as the wealth of faith, the wealth of virtue, and the wealth of moral shame and fear, this is the foremost wealth; it cannot be shaken by anyone in that manner. Whether it is shaken or not is something belonging to oneself. Wrong views can indeed shake it. But one must strive to make it unshakable faith. What is called unshakable faith is the stage where one has, to some extent, directly realized the Dhamma. We pointed out this fact as an additional point, yet it is contained within this discourse.

Next, let us return to the main narrative mentioned in this story. Look now at the mother of the Great Arahant Sīvalī, Suppavāsā. Having suffered such pain—pain that no other mother had ever experienced—and due to the joy arising from maternal affection, when the Buddha asked her, she said she would be pleased to have even seven more such children. That is exactly what is expressed in that verse. That is the nature of the world. Even if one suffers a massive mountain of Suffering (Dukkha), one forgets it. That is why it was said: *Asātaṃ sātarūpena*—what is unpleasant appears as pleasant, and what is unlovely appears as lovely. Thinking in this way, one falls into heedlessness. No matter how much faith (saddhā) she possessed, because Suppavāsā fell into heedlessness at that moment, the Buddha uttered this verse as an admonition. This is a hidden aspect of the life of the Great Arahant Sīvalī during his childhood.

We rarely hear of people who have the power to recall the past. However, in most cases, a child has no memory whatsoever of the time spent in the mother's womb. Even if there is no memory, the child comes out crying, as if to express that Suffering (Dukkha) in brief. We must understand this. Yet, it is mentioned that the Great Arahant Sīvalī possessed a certain power. It is clear from his answer that he had a recollection of it. If he was able to say, “What happiness could there be for me who lived for so long inside a jar of blood?” then that child indeed had that power. Regarding this, it is recorded in the texts in this manner: Ven. Sīvalī did not need to be given a separate meditation subject. Simply by reflecting on that Suffering (Dukkha), on that Suffering of Birth (jāti-dukkha)...

Many of our Buddhist friends do not even like to accept the Suffering of Birth (jāti-dukkha). When a child is born in a home, it is a cause for great joy—obtaining the 'treasure of a child.' But the disaster within it is not understood by many. That disaster is also quickly forgotten. That birth was a disastrous, perilous occasion for both the mother and the child. They forget it, make merry over it, and commemorate it year after year by holding birthday parties. There lies the Suffering of Birth (jāti-dukkha). Thus, it is mentioned in the Dhamma that by recollecting the Suffering of Birth (jāti-dukkha), the Great Arahant Sīvalī attained his Arahantship, making that his subject of meditation.

Furthermore, if we go deeper into this, and compile the Dhamma categories mentioned here like 'pleasant form' and 'agreeable form,' the Buddha points out that the defilement or purification of beings occurs through causes and conditions. The most valuable part of this Dhamma—as you, meritorious friends, also accept—is the teaching of Dependent Arising (paṭicca-samuppāda), which is the teaching that everything occurs according to causes and conditions, a teaching not found in any other doctrine. An occasion that highlights this is mentioned. Once, a Licchavi chief named Mahāli said to the Buddha: “Venerable Sir, the teacher named Pūraṇa Kassapa expresses this view: ‘Beings are defiled without cause, without condition. Beings are purified without any cause. The purification and defilement of beings are

without cause and without condition.' Pūraṇa Kassapa holds such a view. What does the Blessed One say about this?" he asked the Blessed One.

Then, the Buddha declared: "I say that it is with cause and condition that one becomes defiled. Likewise, it is with cause and condition that one obtains purity, obtains purification of mind." When asked, "How do I understand this?" the Buddha explained it by means of these five: form, Sensation (vedanā), perception, Preparations (saṅkhāra), and Consciousness (viññāṇa).

The Buddha analyzes it in this way: "If this form, or the part we call the body, were exclusively painful, if nothing called happiness could ever be associated with it, if this body were purely filled with Suffering (Dukkha), beings would not become attached to it. This body is not purely Suffering (Dukkha); there is a pleasant aspect to it, and one can form a perception of pleasure in it. It is because of this that they get attached to it. Due to that attachment, a bond is formed. Due to that bond, defilement occurs." There, the natural law was shown. It is the same with the others. In Sensation (vedanā), too, there is a similar nature. Sensation (vedanā) is not purely Suffering (Dukkha). There is also a pleasant aspect. It is the same with perception and so on. Up to Consciousness (viññāṇa), every single one cannot be said to be purely Suffering (Dukkha); there is also a pleasant aspect. If we look at things as they really are, that is why there is attachment. Due to that attachment, a bond is formed. Due to the bond, there is defilement. Due to that defilement, one goes on and on in saṃsāra.

Next, He states the other side. What was described just now was how one becomes defiled. Next, He explains how one becomes purified: "If this aggregate of form was purely pleasant, if there were no Suffering (Dukkha) in this form, then one would never become disenchanted with it. One becomes disenchanted with it because there is a certain nature of Suffering (Dukkha) in it." That too is a natural law. The Buddha accepts that too as a truth. It is because of that nature of Suffering (Dukkha) that beings become disenchanted with it. Through that disenchantment, dispassion arises. Through that dispassion, purification, liberation arises. This is the natural law shown there by the Buddha. It is not something done by the Buddha, nor is it something done by anyone else. It is demonstrated here that this occurs in accordance with causes and conditions.

Now, next we present a Dhamma category that is extremely valuable for practitioners and meditators. You, meritorious friends, might have heard that the Buddha preached deep, valuable discourses like the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta and the Mahānidāna Sutta to the people of the Kuru country. Even in the commentaries to those origin stories, it is mentioned that the Kuru country was a prosperous land and its people were wise. The Buddha preached those valuable discourses on His own initiative, even without any specific question being asked.

On one occasion, the Buddha addressed the Sangha of monks and asked this question: "Monks, do you practice the exploration called *antara-sammasana* (internal scrutiny)?" *Antara-sammasana* means scrutinizing from within. Scrutiny

actually means exploring or investigating. Otherwise, the general idea is "investigation from within." This can be analyzed further in due course. When He asked the monks in general whether they perform such an internal investigation, a certain monk declared: “Venerable Sir, I do practice such a thing.” Next, this is all that is mentioned in the Dhamma: when that monk was asked, “How do you practice that internal exploration called *antara-sammasana*?” the answer given by that monk is not recorded. It is recorded in this way: the Blessed One was not satisfied with the answer he gave, deeming it insufficient. At that moment, Ven. Ānanda stepped forward and said: “Blessed One, this is the time, this is the proper time! Let the Blessed One explain to the Sangha of monks what this *antara-sammasana* (internal scrutiny) is, what this investigation from within means.”

From there, the Buddha explains: “A certain monk investigates the facts from within, as they really are, in this manner. He thinks: ‘What is this Aging and Death (jarāmaraṇa)?’ If there are various kinds of Aging and Death (jarāmaraṇa) and diverse forms of Suffering (Dukkha) in the world in connection with this life, what is the cause of these sufferings? From what does this Suffering (Dukkha) arise? What is its root? What is its cause?’ Investigating thus, he realizes: ‘Whatever Aging and Death (jarāmaraṇa) and Suffering (Dukkha) exist, they all arise due to assets (upadhi).’”

The word 'upadhi' (assets) is used in the Dhamma to refer to the five aggregates of Grasping (upādāna)—form, Sensation (vedanā), perception, Preparations (saṅkhāra), and Consciousness (viññāṇa), which one holds on to thinking ‘this is mine.’ These things grabbed through Grasping (upādāna) are what become assets (upadhi). To put it briefly, the wealth we earn and acquire becomes deposits, our assets, when deposited in a bank. In the same way, the greatest asset we carry through saṃsāra is the five aggregates of Grasping (upādāna). These five heaps of 'my form, my Sensation (vedanā),' which are held by the mind—that is what is called assets (upadhi). When that monk investigates within, he understands that this problem of Aging and Death (jarāmaraṇa) arises precisely because of these five. He investigates further into it from within: ‘Why do assets (upadhi) arise? Due to what cause? By what condition? What is its root?’ When seeking the cause in this way, he understands that Craving (Taṇhā) is its root. For it is due to that Craving (Taṇhā) that one grabs things through Grasping (upādāna). It is those grabbed things that one deposits as 'I' and 'mine.' Therefore, Craving (Taṇhā) is the root. This is how one penetrates deeper. May you, meritorious friends, direct your minds accordingly.

Next, that monk contemplates: ‘Where does this Craving (Taṇhā) arise? Where does it establish itself?’ Then he realizes that this Craving (Taṇhā) arises—the words ‘piya-rūpa’ (lovely form) are mentioned there—wherever there is something of a lovely nature, an agreeable nature in the world; it is there that Craving (Taṇhā) arises. It is there that Craving (Taṇhā) settles down, or establishes itself. Wherever the world perceives or thinks there is a lovely nature, an agreeable nature, right there Craving

(Taṇhā) settles down. There Craving (Taṇhā) is born. There Craving (Taṇhā) establishes itself.

Next, it is asked: 'What is it in the world that is regarded generally as lovely form and pleasant form, as a lovely nature and an agreeable nature?' It is these six sense-bases—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—that are regarded in the world as lovely and pleasant things. It is in dependence on them that one experiences that pleasure in the world. The Buddha further declares regarding this: "In the past, whatever recluses and brahmins regarded these things considered as lovely and pleasant form—these six sense-bases, either one or all of them—as pleasure, as permanent, as a refuge, as health, as safety, those recluses and brahmins, because of that, fell into those attachments. Consequently, because of that attitude, they nurtured what they had regarded as lovely and pleasant form. Since Craving (Taṇhā) grows through that attitude, assets (upadhi) grew as a result. What was grabbed by Grasping (upādāna) due to Craving (Taṇhā) deposited in the mind and grew as assets (upadhi). If any recluse or brahmin nurtured assets (upadhi), they nurtured Suffering (Dukkha)."

So, what we have here is that, due to that attitude, because of regarding those lovely and pleasant things as permanent, as pleasure, as health, as safe, as a refuge, they grew. Due to Craving (Taṇhā), assets (upadhi) grew. Due to assets (upadhi), Suffering (Dukkha) grew. Because Suffering (Dukkha) grew, they never escaped from saṃsāra. They did not escape from Birth (jāti), Aging and Death (jarāmaraṇa), sorrow, lamentation, and despair. Just as in the past, so too in the future, whichever recluses and brahmins adopt that attitude regarding these lovely and pleasant things, regarding them as permanent, as pleasure, as health, as safe, they will nurture Craving (Taṇhā). By nurturing Craving (Taṇhā), assets (upadhi) grow. From assets (upadhi), Suffering (Dukkha) grows. Through the growth of Suffering (Dukkha), they remain imprisoned in saṃsāra, enduring that kind of mountain of Suffering (Dukkha).

Next, He gives an illustration and a simile for this: "Monks, suppose there is a cup of beverage that is very fragrant, colorful, and delicious, but it is mixed with poison. A man arrives there, thirsty and exhausted in the scorching heat of summer. When he arrives, the people there say to him: 'Here is a beverage that is beautiful, fragrant, and tasty. But there is a small drawback: it is mixed with poison. If you wish, you may drink it. While drinking, it is very delicious and fragrant, a beautiful drink. But once drunk, you will either die or undergo suffering equivalent to death.' Yet that man, without thinking further, being thirsty and exhausted, drinks it. Having drunk it, he either meets death or undergoes suffering equivalent to death." This is the simile the Buddha presents regarding that first attitude.

Next, the Buddha shows the other side regarding those lovely and pleasant things. "In the past, if any recluses and brahmins changed their attitude towards them, regarding them as Impermanent (anicca) (whereas previously they regarded them as

permanent), as Suffering (dukkha), as Not-self (anattā), as a disease, as a danger, they thereby abandoned Craving (Taṇhā).” This is the second attitude towards those lovely things. What is it? They regarded them as Impermanent (anicca), as Suffering (dukkha), as Not-self (anattā), as a disease or illness, as a danger. “Such recluses and brahmins destroyed Craving (Taṇhā). When Craving (Taṇhā) was destroyed, assets (upadhi) were destroyed. When assets (upadhi) were destroyed, Suffering (Dukkha) was destroyed. They were liberated from those sufferings such as Birth (jāti), Aging and Death (jarāmaraṇa).” Hearing this, you, meritorious friends, can now understand those terms like lovely form and pleasant form.

Here is the simile given for that: “Just as before, there is a cup of poison. Just as before, a thirsty and exhausted man arrives. People say to him: ‘This is a colorful, fragrant, and delicious beverage. However, once drunk, such-and-such a thing will happen.’ That person, contemplating wisely, thinks: ‘I can quench my thirst with some water, or buttermilk, or some other beverage. I can satisfy my thirst with that. If I drink this, it will bring about my ruin.’ Thus thinking, he rejects it.” This is what is said about that attitude. Recluses and brahmins of that kind, through that attitude, reject those lovely things. Through that, they are liberated from Suffering (Dukkha).

This is an extremely deep discourse. Now, if we investigate this word *sammasana* (scrutiny) a little further: for an insight (vipassanā) practitioner, meditation means practicing the scrutiny of Preparations (saṅkhāra-sammasana). We have occasionally compared this word *sammasana* (scrutiny) with the word *parāmāsa* (grasping). The word *parāmāsa* is mostly used in connection with views. Followers of other sects often look at things superficially, adopt a certain view, and asserting *“idaṃ eva saccaṃ mogham-aññaṃ”* — ‘this alone is the truth, everything else is false’ — they hold on to it through Grasping (upādāna), become trapped within it, and end up unable to progress. But what is found in the Dhamma is not *parāmāsa* (dogmatic grasping) but *sammasana* (wise scrutiny). If we go further by means of a simile, we can explain the simile the Buddha gave for those Preparations (saṅkhāra) when discussing *parāmāsa*.

You, meritorious friends, have heard that the aggregate of Preparations (saṅkhārakkhandha) is compared to a banana tree trunk. The Buddha on one occasion explained why this aggregate of Preparations (saṅkhārakkhandha) is compared to a banana tree trunk. It is like this: when a man enters a forest and sees these banana trees, what does he think? Thinking there is some essence or heartwood in it, he cuts it at the root, shoulders it, brings it home, and when he examines it, he finds no heartwood at all. He realizes there is no essence in it. But let us think for a moment: without going to the trouble of carrying the banana trunk home, what if he gently peeled it and inspected it right there? As he removes one layer of the banana trunk, there is another layer. As he removes that, there is yet another layer. It is just a pile of layers. There is no heartwood or essence whatsoever. The method that leads to this understanding is what is called *sammasana* (wise scrutiny). It is like carefully touching and examining. On the other hand, tightly

gripping it, grasping it, and carrying it on one's shoulder is what is called *parāmāsa*. *Sammasana* means gently handling, inspecting, and examining.

Therefore, this is why the Buddha spoke of *antara-sammasana* (internal scrutiny) here. One approaches those lovely and pleasant forms gently through that understanding: 'From where does this mass of Suffering (Dukkha) arise? From where does this Aging and Death (jarāmaraṇa), this Suffering (Dukkha) arise?' When thinking about it, here are the assets (upadhi). Beneath them is Craving (Taṇhā). Going step-by-step in this manner, one comprehends those lovely and pleasant forms. The Buddha has left it to the practitioner himself to realize this directly through scrutiny. Yet, there is a vast difference in attitude. That is why various perceptions (saññā) are shown in the Dhamma: the perception of Impermanence (anicca), the perception of Suffering (dukkha), the perception of danger, and so forth. To develop the strength to reject the invitation made by the world regarding those lovely forms, one must develop these special Dhamma-accordant perceptions.

What exists in the world is a heap of perverted perceptions arising due to ignorance, Craving (Taṇhā), and thirst, much like a deer chasing a mirage. These are what you, meritorious friends, have often heard of as perversions. There are four perversions: the perception of permanence in the Impermanent (anicca); the perception of pleasure in what is painful/Stress (dukkha) (now, Suppavāsā experienced Suffering (Dukkha), but in the end, she formed a perception of pleasure); next, forming a perception of beauty in what is unbeautiful; and regarding what is Not-self (anattā) as self, as belonging to oneself. These perverted perceptions are called perversions.

Therefore, we can understand from this that we must strive diligently (even though the world makes its invitations) to contemplate wisely in accordance with the hint given by the Buddha. We must constantly strive to develop those Dhamma-accordant perceptions. This is further explained as the 'modes of scrutiny' (*sammasana-vidhi*). Especially in the Dhamma related to meditation, eleven modes of scrutiny are mentioned: *aniccatō* (as Impermanent), *dukkhatō* (as Suffering), *rōgatō* (as a disease), *gaṇḍatō* (as a boil), *sallatō* (as a dart), *aghatō* (as a calamity), *ābādhatō* (as an affliction), *paratō* (as alien/other), *palōkatō* (as disintegrating), *suññatō* (as empty), and *anattatō* (as Not-self) — thus, eleven are shown.

In the Pāli language, this suffix *-tō* means looking at something in a certain manner. When looking at it superficially, it seems permanent, but one looks at it as Impermanent (*aniccatō*), because in reality, it is Impermanent (anicca). It is not as it appears on the outside. That is why it was called *antara-sammasana* (internal scrutiny). One penetrates and looks within. It is not in the way the world accepts, but in the way the Buddha brought to light. One sees it as Impermanent (*aniccatō*). Next, one sees it as Suffering (*dukkhatō*). One sees it as a disease (*rōgatō*). One sees it as a boil (*gaṇḍatō*). One sees it as a dart (*sallatō*). One sees it as a calamity (*aghatō*). One sees it as an affliction (*ābādhatō*). One sees it as alien/other (*paratō*), as belonging to someone else. One sees it as disintegrating (*palōkatō*). One sees it as empty

(*suññatō*). One sees it as Not-self (*anattatō*). These are the modes of scrutiny described in the Dhamma.

These are shown in this manner according to a certain practical value. Many logicians argue that happiness can be obtained through impermanence. They say: "Why, it is because of impermanence that an illness or a painful Sensation (vedanā) which existed has now disappeared!" A sophist could even take up this very story of Suppavāsā and say: "Even though she suffered so much for seven years and seven days, Suppavāsā was so happy in the end!" If one views Suppavāsā from a logical standpoint, that is exactly what one would have to say. But the Buddha showed that despite suffering such pain, she forgot it through ignorance and, through maternal affection, fell back into heedlessness. That is how we must understand it. Nowadays, many people, when a painful Sensation (vedanā) disappears, claim it is happiness, and ask: "How can impermanence be called Suffering (Dukkha)?" In this way, wrong, perverted views taken up through logical speculation prevail in the world.

At that point, we must consider: 'What is my ultimate goal? Is it bondage to saṃsāra, or liberation? Is it defilement, or purification?' That choice belongs to oneself. If one has clarified one's ultimate goal, then we must adopt what the Buddha points out in relation to it. The Buddha shows Himself to be a true physician. He points out the causes of the disease, and also the method of curing it. You, meritorious friends, know that for a true physician, it is essential to understand the disease, the origin of the disease, the causes of its occurrence, and also its cure. The Buddha pointed out that this is a disease, and showed Dhamma-accordantly how it arises. Otherwise, He could have just said, on someone else's word, that this is entirely Suffering (Dukkha). See how objectively the Buddha presented it. In the section mentioned at the beginning, He declared that if this were entirely characterized by Suffering (Dukkha), the world would not get attached to it; there is a pleasant aspect to it. Yet, the Buddha preaches the reality: sensual pleasures are of little gratification and of much Suffering (Dukkha). The gratification aspect is very little, and the Suffering aspect is far greater.

It was through the research conducted over a long period in saṃsāra that the Buddha understood this. On one occasion, the Buddha declared: "Monks, for a long time in this saṃsāra, I conducted research into gratification. Whatever results there are from that research into gratification, I possess them. Next, I researched the danger of it. The results of that research are also with me. Next, I sought the escape. I arrived at that escape." It is in this manner, like a physician, that the Buddha speaks with a clear understanding of every state of affairs. You, meritorious friends, might be working in various institutions. But more than any of those institutions, it is these six sense-bases that are dear to everyone, that are pleasant. It is in association with these six sense-bases that anyone who experiences pleasure in this world does so. Yet, the Buddha points out that although they are indeed lovely and pleasant—having a lovely nature, a pleasant nature—it is right here that Suffering (Dukkha) also lies.

On one occasion, the Buddha preached: “This pleasant Sensation (vedanā) is pleasant as long as it lasts; when it changes, it is Suffering (Dukkha). A painful Sensation (vedanā) is painful as long as it lasts; when it changes, it is pleasant.” As for the neutral Sensation (vedanā), neither-painful-nor-pleasant, as long as it lasts, some do not even recognize it—therein lies ignorance. Furthermore, though it is peaceful, it is Impermanent (anicca). The ordinary worldly person has no understanding of this neither-painful-nor-pleasant Sensation (vedanā). It is the practitioner who gradually uncovers that aspect. This worldly person merely plays a game of seesaw between pleasure and pain.

That is precisely why, when explaining the five aggregates, the Buddha mentions: “What is the gratification of this form? Whatever pleasure and joy arise in dependence on this form, that is the gratification of form.” Next, He points out the danger: “What is the danger of form? The fact that this form is subject to change, alteration, turning into something else, the inability to keep it as one wishes—that is the danger of form.” Next, what is the escape from it? It is not suicide. It is the abandoning of desire-and-lust, the attachment towards this form. It is because of the attachment towards this form that those other attitudes exist. Therefore, the stage where that attachment is abandoned is called Nibbāna. The abandoning of desire-and-lust—that is the escape. The practitioner who targets that indeed moves towards realization with the help of those modes of scrutiny (*sammasana*) mentioned before. The world constantly invites us in the opposite direction. “Yes, this beverage is colorful. It is delicious. It is fragrant. But it contains poison. There is only a small drawback: it is poisoned.” That is what has happened.

At any rate, you, meritorious friends, might have heard of a discourse where the Buddha preached this very point to the monks in a way that evokes deep urgency. It is truly wonderful. When stating it, it is just like shouting to neighbors when a house is on fire. The Buddha declares: “Monks, the eye is burning. Forms are burning. Eye-Consciousness (viññāṇa) is burning. Contact (phassa) associated with the eye is burning. The Sensation (vedanā) arising from that Contact (phassa) is burning.” It is like an alarm calling the fire brigade. Some discourses are like that. Even though they seek Nibbāna, the ordinary worldly person does not realize that these are on fire. It is within these very things that they seek Nibbāna. For one who looks forward to extinguishment, the Buddha gives a method of scrutiny—not tightly grasping and carrying it on one's shoulder as the world does. One examines with wisdom. Examining, comparing, and weighing the aspects of gratification and danger, if the gratification is little and the danger is great, and if it leads to the defilement of the mind, one rejects it. If it leads to the purification of the mind, that is where the natural law is shown: through that attachment, a bond is formed, and through the bond, defilement occurs.

Next, He points out the other side. There, He uses an important word: *nibbidā*. The meaning of the Pāli word *nibbidā* is disenchantment. For the world, 'disenchantment' is an unpleasant, disagreeable word. But why does the Buddha

highlight it? It is because through disenchantment with saṃsāra that dispassion (no-attachment) comes. *Nibbidā, virāga*—from disenchantment with saṃsāra comes dispassion. From dispassion comes purification. Therefore, if we expect purification, we must definitely develop an attitude that leads to dispassion. To develop an attitude that leads to dispassion, we must constantly apply those mentioned modes of scrutiny. Because the nature of the mind is such that if it is constantly inclined towards something, it gets drawn in that direction. Just as dripping water on a stone or tree eventually leaves a mark even on a rock over time, by inclining the stream of thoughts towards that direction over time, one inclines towards liberation. We know nothing of the lives we spent in our past saṃsāra. Yet, the meritorious friends participating in these activities must reflect, must encourage their minds: “Out of these millions and billions of people, we have been fortunate enough to incline towards such a lineage of thought because we must have developed those mentioned perceptions to some extent in our past saṃsāra.” One must understand that this strength lies within oneself. Although the mind may wander at other times, this is something to be done with effort. For, as mentioned, the side of the world’s temptation is extremely powerful. Especially in this era, which is inclined towards materialism, the invitations from that side to drink this poison are very frequent.

One must contemplate wisely, Dhamma-accordantly, with the help of those mentioned modes of scrutiny. When discussing Nibbāna, although we constantly use the word 'extinguishment,' many do not contemplate the true, deep meaning associated with that word. In discussing Nibbāna, the Buddha illustrated with the simile of fire, showing the entire journey of saṃsāra as a sheer fire. As we demonstrated on a previous occasion, an old Sinhala poet described this entire body in this way:

Dara-ræsa gini æviluṇa kala nibaňdē

Gini-misa dara-yayi yana nama e-ma-lesē

Ek-koṭa vadahāḷa muniňdē

Duka-misa kaye-kayi yana nama e-ma-lesē

Once a heap of wood is on fire, inside those flames one cannot find a single piece of firewood. One cannot say, “There is a bundle of firewood.” It cannot be called 'firewood'; it is only called 'fire.' “Likewise, the Sage declared collectively, there is only Suffering (Dukkha), and the name 'body' no longer applies.” According to the vision of the Buddha, what we call this body is purely Suffering (Dukkha). We all talk about this mass of Suffering (Dukkha). Some even say: “I understood the First Noble Truth. I also understood the second one a little. I learned the third one from books. It is only the fourth one that I don’t understand.” There are people who say such things. Actually, they have not understood the first one at all. If one had understood the first, one would pass up to the fourth. Why? Because they separate it into departments: “Only where we two live is happiness, the rest is Suffering (Dukkha).” “As long as our

children and our bank deposits are safe, there is happiness. It is only when something happens to them that there is Suffering (Dukkha)." But the Buddha sees, at the deepest level, the mass of Suffering (Dukkha) generated within the mind itself. That is why the Buddha preaches *saṅkhārarūpā paramā dukkhā*—Preparations (saṅkhāra) are the ultimate Suffering (dukkha). Preparations (saṅkhāra) themselves are a heap of Suffering (Dukkha). If we understand Preparations (saṅkhāra) deeply, they include all volitional forces, desires, and expectations arising in the mind. Now, let us take the example of a multi-millionaire possessing great wealth. Is he living in happiness? With what great fear does he spend the night? "What will happen to those deposits? What will happen to those banks? What will tomorrow be like? What will happen to me through economic inflation and such crises?" He lives amidst such a mountain of Suffering (Dukkha). Yet he does not understand it. That is why the Buddha declared *saṅkhārā paramā dukkhā*—Preparations (saṅkhāra) are the ultimate Suffering (dukkha). That entire mass of thoughts is a heap of Suffering (Dukkha).

And it is upon those Preparations (saṅkhāra) that this Consciousness (viññāṇa) depends. We think of this Consciousness (viññāṇa) as a solid, singular entity. But on one occasion, this very question was raised with Ven. Ānanda. A monk named Ven. Udayī asked Ven. Ānanda: "Friend, I understand the statement that this body is Not-self (anattā). But how are we to understand that Consciousness (viññāṇa) is Not-self (anattā)? Please explain this to me." Then, Ven. Ānanda declared: "This Consciousness (viññāṇa), too, is of six kinds. We must understand that it is not a single, independent thing. Eye-Consciousness (viññāṇa) arises because of the eye and forms. Ear-Consciousness (viññāṇa) arises because of the ear and sounds. Just because there is an ear, Consciousness (viññāṇa) does not exist there. Just because there is a form there, Consciousness (viññāṇa) does not exist there. That is what is called Dependent Arising (paṭicca-samuppāda)." The Buddha points out that only when the eye and forms meet, and attention (manasikāra) and attachment towards it combine, does eye-Consciousness (viññāṇa) arise. But thinking otherwise is like the foolish idea that fire exists inside a matchbox. It is true that the matchbox is there. But the fire is neither in the matchstick nor on the side of the matchbox. It is when they are struck together that fire arises. Likewise, Consciousness (viññāṇa) arises where the eye and form meet. Similarly, ear-Consciousness (viññāṇa) arises where the ear and sound meet. Yet, one thinks, 'Consciousness (viññāṇa) is mine.' Because it revolves so rapidly—revolving at a speed beyond comprehension, at a speed for which no simile can even be given—the world thinks that Consciousness (viññāṇa) is my self.

One can understand that form is not self. One can also understand that Sensation (vedanā) passes away. But in the end, it is Consciousness (viññāṇa) that is grabbed. Even those who attained absorptions went and got stuck right there. The Buddha points out that, let alone others, even mind-Consciousness (viññāṇa) arises only when the mind and the object of the mind—whatever that object may be—come

together. Yet, it happens with such speed that one feels: 'This Consciousness (viññāṇa) of mine does not change.'

That is what the Buddha calls a stream. Like a river flowing down over a long time in saṃsāra, holding on to one thing after another—just as a river flows, rolling boulders, drawing under rocks, from here and there—in the same way, driven by the speed of ignorance and Craving (Taṇhā), based on this wrong perception of permanence, that Consciousness (viññāṇa) also flows extremely fast, grabbing various objects. The Buddha gives another simile for this grabbing. A monkey jumping rapidly from tree to tree in a forest does not consciously think, 'I am grabbing this branch.' Yet, because of its rapid habit, it does not fall to the ground; it goes on grabbing branch after branch. In the same way, Consciousness (viññāṇa) also goes on grabbing objects with great speed. This is the secret that the practitioner has to uncover. This is what is to be directly realized.

To realize this directly, one has to systematically practice reflection, which is called *manasikāra*. As Ven. Ānanda states, in the end, there is no self-nature in Consciousness (viññāṇa) either. Because Consciousness (viññāṇa) too depends on Preparations (saṅkhāra). It is something put together by combining the eye, forms, and so on. When a person directly realizes that stage, Consciousness (viññāṇa) ceases right through that. Thus, if a putting-together occurs due to ignorance, because of that putting-together, there is something we took to be Consciousness (viññāṇa). If, at any stage, Preparations (saṅkhāra) are stilled, at that very moment Consciousness (viññāṇa) also ceases. If Consciousness (viññāṇa) is also a running state, the direct realization of complete extinguishment is the stage where Consciousness (viññāṇa) also is extinguished. Right there is the cessation of Becoming (bhava-nirodha) as well. It is said, *"bhava-nirodho nibbānaṃ"* — the cessation of Becoming (bhava) is Nibbāna. Usually, one who has the Craving for Becoming (bhava) cannot even get close to this Dhamma. But if one looks at this with an open mind as shown by the Buddha, if what one wishes for is liberation from saṃsāra, the end of Suffering (Dukkha), the extinguishing of this fire of Suffering (Dukkha), we have to adopt that very attitude. This is exactly what the Buddha demonstrates through the Dhamma of Dependent Arising (paṭicca-samuppāda). When that practitioner goes deeper into that understanding, at some stage he understands that this Consciousness (viññāṇa), too, depends on causes and conditions. Together with that understanding, this Consciousness (viññāṇa) ceases. That itself is shown as the supreme peace.

Thus, all of you, meritorious friends, having undertaken a valuable virtue today—for this path in the Sāsana begins with virtue—and established in that valuable virtue, engaged in your accustomed meditation. Today's Dhamma sermon, too, was particularly oriented towards insight (vipassanā). Therefore, with its help, if you can bring your journey in saṃsāra to an end right here, you must strive to that extent. May all these meritorious deeds—such as the undertaking of virtue, offering alms to the virtuous, and other supplementary merits, as well as the strength of concentration gained through Dhamma discussion and meditation, and whatever

strength of insight (vipassanā) absorbed through this Dhamma sermon—serve as a supportive condition to quickly attain peace through the Deathless Nibbāna, through the realization of the stages of the path and fruit: Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, before the decline of the Sāsana!

May all beings from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, who wish to rejoice in the merit of this Dhamma preaching and Dhamma hearing, by so rejoicing, attain peace through the supreme Deathless Nibbāna by means of their aspired-for Bodhi—along with all one's relatives, friends, and everyone else. Pray in this manner, and having so prayed, recite these verses to share the merits.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"