Pahankanuwa Sermon #68

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.95)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

Avajje vajjamatino, vajje ca abajjadassino;

micchādiṭṭhisamādānā, sattā gacchanti duggatiṃ.

Vajjañca vajjato ñatvā, avajjañca avajjato;

sammādiṭṭhisamādānā, sattā gacchanti suggatiṃ.

From:

Dhammapada 318–319 (Nirayavagga)

Dear Listeners,

A life turns towards the right path precisely when a correct vision dawns upon it. Today, on this Poson Full Moon Poya Day, we commemorate the day when a correct vision arose in the lives of the people of this country. The light of Dhamma that the Great Arahant Mahinda Thera spread on that day from the summit of Mihintale Mountain brought about a massive transformation in the lives of the people of this land. They abandoned wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), which leads to states of misery, and embraced right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), which points the way to happy states and to Nibbāna. The two verses we have taken as our theme today were also preached by the Greatly Compassionate Buddha on an occasion when a transformation of life occurred in a group of children who held wrong views.

The followers of other religious teachers living in Savatthi saw their children playing in groups with the children of lay devotees (*Upāsakas*) who were disciples of the Buddha. When those children returned home, their parents made them promise not to bow down to the Sangha and not to enter Buddhist monasteries. One day, both groups of children were playing near the gate of the Jetavana Monastery. When they became thirsty, those children of wrong view said to a child of a right-view lay devotee, "Go to the monastery, drink some water, and bring some water for us too."

That child entered the monastery, drank water, paid respects to the Buddha, and when he explained the reason for his coming, the Buddha said, "Child, drink your water, and then go and tell the others to come here. Do not carry water back." Accordingly, the other children also came and drank water. As they were about to leave after drinking water, the Buddha called them close and preached the Dhamma to them. He preached to such an extent that he made their confidence (*saddhā*) unshakeable, established them in the refuges and precepts (*saraṇa-sīla*), and sent them on their way.

When these children returned home and told their parents about what had occurred, those parents began to weep and lament, saying, "Alas! Our children have fallen into a wrong view!" After wise neighbors gathered and explained things to those parents, establishing some faith in them, those parents, together with their relatives, took the children and said, "Let us hand over these children to the Ascetic Gotama himself," and went and handed them over to the Buddha. On that occasion, the Buddha preached the Dhamma to the group of parents as well, in accordance with the occasion, and inspired faith in them too. He turned them into lay devotees who had taken refuge in the Triple Gem. Coming back from time to time to listen to the Dhamma, in the end, all of them attained the stage of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*). The two verses included in the sermon delivered to those parents at that time are the very ones we have placed as our theme.

Avajje vajjamatino, vajje ca abajjadassino,

Micchādiṭṭhisamādānā, sattā gacchanti duggatiṃ.

The meaning is that those who have the perception of fault in the faultless, and who see the faultless in the faulty, having embraced wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), go to a state of misery. Next is the other verse:

Vajjañca vajjato ñatvā, avajjañca avajjato,

Sammādiṭṭhisamādānā, sattā gacchanti suggatiṃ.

Those who, seeing the faulty as faulty and the faultless as faultless, have established right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), go to a happy state after death.

In this short story about the little children, a valuable lesson is contained. Along with the Great Compassion of the Buddha, there is also His wisdom of skillful means (*upāya-kosalla-ñāṇa*). It was through a certain harmless, strategic skillful means employed in accordance with that wisdom of skillful means that the group of children of wrong view became established in right view, and their parents also became lay devotees who had taken refuge in the Triple Gem. We can understand that the Buddha, instead of just letting them drink ordinary water, made them drink the nectar of the Deathless (*amā-pæn*). He made them drink the nectar of the Deathless. It was not by giving them other things that He brought the confidence of these children to an unshakeable state, but by giving them the pure Dhamma, by giving

them the realization of the Dhamma. On a day like today, that harmless and exemplary method employed by the Buddha is highly beneficial for this era as well.

If we consider the meaning of the verse, the Buddha has shown here the difference between wrong view and right view. This verse shows both the characteristic and the result of wrong view. What is its characteristic? The feeling that the correct thing is wrong, and seeing the wrong thing as correct. That is the characteristic of wrong view. Its result is a state of misery, a realm of downfall, hell. The characteristic of right view is seeing the wrong as wrong and the correct as correct. Its result is arriving at a happy state. Indeed, the Buddha has spoken about this wrong view with grave concern on many occasions. To what extent? On one occasion, addressing the Sangha, He declared: "Monks, I do not see any other single thing so highly detrimental in the world as wrong view. Among great wrongs, the greatest wrong is wrong view." What is the reason for this? If a person's view goes wrong, their entire conduct goes completely upside down. He shows this matter with a simile in a discourse.

On one occasion, the Buddha said to the monks: "Monks, whatever bodily action, verbal action, or mental action a person of wrong view performs—that is to say, whatever work they do through body, speech, and mind—and whatever intentions, aspirations, goals they set, if there are any preparations / Preparations / volitional activities (*saṅkhāra*), all of them lead to that person's harm, suffering, and detriment." Having said so, He gave a simile: "Monks, just as when a seed of nimba (neem), a seed of bitter-melon, or a seed of bitter-gourd is planted in moist soil, whatever soil nutrients and moisture that seed absorbs definitely turn bitter." In the same way, He connects it to that simile: "In this manner, if someone's view is wrong, everything else accordingly turns bitter, harsh, and harmful."

He also shows the opposite side: "For a person of right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), all bodily actions, verbal actions, and mental actions are shaped according to that view. Furthermore, that person's intentions, aspirations, goals, processes, activities, and preparations / Preparations (*saṅkhāra*)—every single one of them—conduce to that person's welfare, goodness, and happiness." What is the simile? "Just as when a sugarcane seed, a sugarcane cutting, a seed of hill-rice, or a grape seed is planted in moist soil, whatever soil nutrients and moisture it absorbs result only in sweet fruit." In that way, one can understand the difference between wrong view and right view. Moreover, this description is shown in a way that provides an opportunity for a person to actually examine whether their own view is correct or wrong.

Furthermore, the sutta discourses of the Tipitaka begin with the sutta called Brahmajāla. For a Buddhist who begins to read the sutta discourses, the Brahmajāla Sutta is the first great discourse they encounter. A "Brahma-net." In that discourse, the Buddha has included every wrong view that has arisen and could possibly arise in the world, pointing out, "These are they." You, merit-seekers, can observe this well; it can be shown like a supreme standard, enabling one to compare one's own view with

it and see whether it is correct or wrong—just as every single fish is caught in a finely woven net. That is why it is called the Brahmajāla (The Supreme Net). As a net of views (*diṭṭhi-jāla*), the Buddha has compiled and shown all existing views in the world, sixty-two of them in that manner. In that discourse, the views of the wrong-view teachers of that time are shown as being "this, this, and this." In this way, because of the extreme danger of wrong view, the Buddha showed them in this manner so that we must safeguard ourselves from them. Not only those sixty-two views, but the views of the six contemporary teachers of the Buddha's time have also been subjected to criticism with reasoned arguments, because we must protect ourselves from them. A wrong view has an enticing nature; it drags one along if it is not clearly pointed out. It has a tendency to lead one astray.

It is said that there were six such teachers, teachers of the past: Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalī, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, and Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta. In this way, there were six teachers. Most of them—about four of them, such as Pūraṇa Kassapa and Makkhali Gosāla—were proponents of non-action (*akiriyavāda*), who rejected the doctrine of kamma. They presented a multitude of wrong views, claiming that one escapes saṃsāra without any effort, having no faith in things like merit and demerit, and saying that giving and making merit are unnecessary. They also had large groups of disciples. On many occasions, the Buddha critically refuted them by presenting reasoned arguments and debates. In particular, the teacher named Makkhali Gosāla is called a determinist (*niyativādī*), who claimed that everything happens spontaneously. He asserted that just as a ball of string, when thrown, rolls along until it is completely unwound, so too both the wise and the foolish run through saṃsāra for a certain period and will one day spontaneously bring an end to suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) in saṃsāra. He stated that there is no need for a person to exert effort or strive, nor do they even have the capacity to do so; this happens deterministically. In this manner, it is shown. Similarly, many teachers held a view of "non-cause and non-condition" (*ahētu-appaccaya*), stating that a being is defiled or purified without any cause or condition, and that there is no such thing as merit or demerit. On many occasions, the Buddha, speaking specifically of the teacher Makkhali Gosāla, said: "Monks, I do not see any other single person who has arisen for the detriment of so many people as Makkhali Gosāla. Just as someone casts a net at the mouth of a river for the destruction of fish, so Makkhali Gosāla has cast a net for the destruction of human beings."

Such nets can be cast not only in those times but even in the present day. Those kinds of wrong views reject a person's capacity for action—called *akiriyavāda*—and have no belief in kamma and its result, claiming that these things happen spontaneously or deterministically. Likewise, on certain occasions, the Buddha also subjected the philosophy of the teacher Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta to criticism. That teacher did not reject kamma in that manner. Rather, his view was that everything happens because of past causes, because of past kamma. That too is a going to one extreme; it is an overreaching. Because that teacher's opinion was: "It is solely because of past kamma

that a person experiences pleasure and pain. Therefore, this is all there is to do: by tormenting the body and undergoing self-mortification as an ascetic, one must wear out that past kamma. One must refrain from accumulating new kamma. By thus refraining from accumulation, one day kamma will be worn out." Such was the opinion held by the teacher Niganṭha Nātaputta. The Buddha Himself has described how He met his disciples, asked them if they held such an opinion, and refuted that opinion. "I ask them: 'Now, you are trying to wear out suffering by tormenting this body. Well, can you say that you have actually committed such and such evil deeds in the past? Do you have any idea about them?' 'No, we do not know.' 'Do you know how much of these sins have been worn out through this effort of tormenting the body?' 'No, not that either.' 'Do you know how much more is left to be worn out?' 'We do not know that either.' 'In that case, this effort of yours is fruitless.'" In this way, the Buddha rejected those opinions that claim everything happens solely due to past kamma.

The wrong view held by many is that there is no this world and no next world, and that everything, such as pleasure and pain, happens spontaneously. Or, as shown in another instance, they say that these things happen because of a god or a Brahma. On another occasion, the Buddha points out: "There are three doctrines. When a wise person examines these three doctrines through question and answer, they ultimately turn into a doctrine of non-action (*akiriyavāda*), which refutes and rejects the capacity for action." The Buddha demonstrates this in the following way: "There are some who say, 'All this happens due to past causes.' I go to them and ask, 'If so, if what you say is true, then when someone becomes a killer of living beings, a thief, one who engages in sexual misconduct, or a liar—does all of that happen because of the past? Can that be so?' But that is devoid of truth. If one says it happens solely due to past kamma, there is no place for anyone's effort or energy. Then one must simply let things happen on their own." The Buddha declares that the aforementioned Niganṭha view ultimately falls into non-action (*akiriyavāda*). Because of that doctrine, the unique power within a human being called desire-to-act (*chanda*), endeavor (*vāyāma*), and energy (*viriya*) is rejected.

The Buddha further states: "On certain occasions, since the view existed among those brahmins that Brahma created everything and that Brahma is the cause of all this pleasure and pain, I also go to them and ask: 'According to what you say, when someone becomes a killer of living beings, a thief, one who engages in sexual misconduct, a liar, or a drunkard—is all that because of the god's creation? Do you accept that?'" They have no answer to that. It is a rejection of the power of intention, effort, and desire-to-act within a person that can turn one's life towards the right path. Just as was said about Makkhali Gosāla, the idea that a being is purified or defiled without cause and condition, without any reason at all, is a completely wrong view. Yet, even during the Buddha's time, those teachers who held such views had a large number of followers. They accepted the doctrines of the six teachers who propounded non-action (*akiriyavāda*), the doctrine of non-cause and non-condition (*ahētu-appaccaya-vāda*), and so forth. Even today, there is no reason why such

people cannot exist. But we must reflect that the Buddha raised these matters in the sutta discourses so that we might safeguard ourselves. If we have arrived at any conclusion regarding the Dhamma, we must compare it with these to see how far it agrees with the Buddha's view and whether it is in accordance with the Dhamma.

We can point to an example of an occasion when the Buddha, through the power of His wisdom, dispelled wrong opinions. Once, when the Buddha was residing in the Koliyan country, a certain Punna who practiced the ox-duty (*gova-vatta*)... By "ox-duty" it is meant that certain people in those days behaved like animals. What was the idea? Self-mortification. There was a wrong opinion that by tormenting the body, one could wear out suffering, achieve liberation, attain a happy state, or become a god or a Brahma. That too was an overreaching, or a going to an extreme—an extremist view. Punna, who practiced the ox-duty, and Seniya, who practiced the dog-duty (*kukkura-vatta*), came to meet the Buddha. Both of them arrived and paid respects to the Buddha, and Seniya, who practiced the dog-duty, sat down curled up just like a dog. After both had sat down, Punna spoke, "Venerable Sir," and introduced the other person like this—a custom that still exists today: "This Seniya who practices the dog-duty is an *acela*—that is to say, a naked ascetic—and for a long time, Seniya has been practicing this kind of difficult vow. After Seniya dies and passes away, where will he go?" he asked the Buddha. So the Buddha said, "Punna, let that question be. Do not ask that question." Then he asked a second time, and a third time. Because he asked, the Buddha said, "Well, Punna, I was not going to answer. But since you harass me, I will answer. I will tell you now." He said, "This Seniya has for a long time practiced the dog-duty, cultivated the dog-precepts, developed the dog-attitude, and cultivated a dog-mind. Therefore, due to cultivating that for a long time, after death he will be reborn among dogs." Next, He tells what happens if he does not get that: "If someone holds the view that by practicing this kind of vow one becomes a god or a Brahma, I say there are only two destinations for that person after death: hell or the animal realm. Thus, if this vow succeeds, he becomes a dog. If it fails, he goes to hell." When this was said, Seniya began to shed tears. He began to cry. Then the Buddha said to Punna, "See, Punna, that is why I did not answer. Since you harassed me, I gave this answer." Then Seniya said, "No, Blessed One, I am not crying because of that, but because I practiced this vow for such a long time."

Next, Seniya speaks: "Master Gotama, this Punna has practiced the ox-duty for a very long time. Just like an ox, he performed a very difficult practice. Where will he be reborn?" There too, the Buddha says, "Let that question be. Do not ask that." But there is no escape. Seniya asks three times. After he asked, the Buddha says, "I will tell you. Because he has practiced the ox-duty for a long time, practiced the ox-precepts, developed the ox-attitude, and generated an ox-mind, after death he will be reborn among oxen. If not, because of that wrong view, he will go to hell. Either to hell or to the animal realm." When this was said, then Punna began to cry. Then the Buddha says, "That is why, Punna, I did not answer. You are crying because I told you." Then Punna says, "No, Blessed One, it is not because the Blessed One told me. I

am crying because I practiced this for such a long time. So, Blessed One, please preach the Dhamma to us in a way that we may abandon this wrong vow we have undertaken," he invited. On that occasion, the Buddha delivered a special discourse on kamma.

"Yaṃ karoti tena upapajjati"—one is reborn according to what one does. Finally, He demonstrates as a principle that the reborn person has to experience various results of kamma.

"Kammassakā sattā" / *"Kammādāyādā sattā"* (Beings are owners of their kamma, beings are heirs to their kamma).

When He declared in this manner that beings are heirs to their kamma, in the end, Punna became a lay devotee (*Upāsaka*), having gone for refuge in the Triple Gem, and Seniya, who practiced the dog-vow, was ordained in the Dispensation and finally became an Arahant. In this way, according to the discourses, there are endless instances where the Buddha, in accordance with His method of disciplining individuals, removed them from wrong views and established them in right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*).

Drawing from these, we can reflect on our own view. The Buddha has declared that no matter how well one observes wrong view, if one possesses that wrong view, wrong thoughts, and incorrect ideas, and even if one perfectly observes a certain religious philosophy with corresponding speech and actions, the final result is completely in vain. To illustrate this, the Buddha has given four similes, such as someone putting sand in a boat, soaking it with water, and trying to extract oil from it—shortly put, like an effort to squeeze oil out of sand. Another one shown is like trying to milk a cow by pulling its horn; such are the fruitless efforts made by those of wrong view. It has been shown in various similes like this, such as trying to produce fire by rubbing two wet pieces of wood together. Through such similes, the Buddha explained the fruitlessness of that view.

So far, we have spoken about wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). Now, let us talk about right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). This right view has been analyzed in several ways in different places according to the respective themes. On one occasion, the Venerable Sāriputta asks the monks: "'Right view, right view' (*sammā-diṭṭhi, sammā-diṭṭhi*), so it is said. What, friends, is right view?" He asks just as a teacher would ask his students. The monks reply, "We have come from afar indeed to learn this Dhamma from the Venerable Sāriputta himself. May the answer to this occur to the Venerable Sāriputta himself." In response to that invitation, the Venerable Sāriputta delivers a long discourse, explaining what right view is. The first introduction he gives is a very simple introduction; since it is useful to everyone, let us present it at this time.

If a noble disciple knows the unwholesome and knows the root of the unwholesome, by that much alone is a person one of right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). Next, he preaches: "What is the unwholesome?" The unwholesome means killing living beings

(*pāṇātipāta*), taking what is not given (*adinnādāna*), sexual misconduct (*kāmesumicchācāra*)—these are unwholesome actions done by body. Malicious speech (*pisuṇāvācā*), harsh speech (*pharushāvācā*), and gossip/idle chatter (*samphappalāpa*) are unwholesome actions done by speech. Everyone knows these; there is no need to explain them in detail. Next, there are three terms: covetousness (*abhijjhā*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*), and wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). These are shown as wrongs committed by mind. *Abhijjhā* means intense greed / covetousness. Ignorance (*avijjā*) means not knowing, but that is not what is meant by *abhijjhā* here. It is intense greed / covetousness—the intense greed of thinking about someone else's property, "Oh, if only this were mine!" Greed is bad in any case, but intense greed / covetousness is even worse. This is a wrong attitude generated within the mind itself.

Next, *vyāpāda* means hatred / ill-will. Next, wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). Wrong view is an unwholesome act committed by the mind. Thus, these are the unwholesome acts committed by body, speech, and mind. Next, he declares what the roots of these unwholesome acts are: greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). These are the unwholesome roots. Now, if you have understood that much, that is one side. Next, he declares what the wholesome is. The wholesome (*kusala*) means abstaining from killing living beings, abstaining from taking what is not given, abstaining from sexual misconduct, abstaining from false speech, and so on. Abstinence, which is called *veramaṇī*. Thus, abstinence itself is taken as the wholesome here. The unwholesome is committing wrongs, which everyone in the world easily does. The wholesome is refraining from them. This might be a problem for some because, according to current usage, many people commonly use "wholesome" (*kusala*) and "merit" (*puñña*) as synonyms. To some extent that is correct, but due to certain reasons, there are shortcomings in that as well.

Venerable Sāriputta introduces two aspects: the wholesome (*kusala*) and the roots of the wholesome (*kusala-mūla*). What are the roots of the wholesome? Non-greed (*alobha*), non-hatred (*adosa*), and non-delusion (*amoha*). Non-greed means detachment from greed. It does not mean it is completely gone. Bringing the mind to a state of detachment from greed, even temporarily, is a wholesome act, a skill. It is towards greed that the world is drawn. It is greed that they face. If one turns one's back on greed and performs some work, such as a meritorious act of giving, that mental strength is wholesome (*kusala*). It is a skill. Next, non-hatred (*adosa*): getting angry is the general habit. But if one can prevent it, if one can remove ill-will, that is a skill. It is easy to be swept away by that wave of wrong view (*micchā*); stopping it with difficulty is non-delusion (*amoha*)—the departure from delusion.

As we said before, because this might be a problem for some, even without elaborate details, it must be said briefly: we often use the words merit (*puñña*), demerit (*pāpa*), wholesome (*kusala*), and unwholesome (*akusala*) synonymously. However, in certain places, we have to associate this word *kusala* with skillfulness regarding the mind. That is the primary idea. When we say "merit and demerit" (*puñña-pāpa*), it is their results, their *vipāka*—pleasant results and painful results—that mostly

come to mind. In *kusala*, there is a deeper meaning than that, which is described as skillfulness. To what extent? Here, Venerable Sāriputta speaks of "roots of the wholesome" (*kusala-mūla*) and "roots of the unwholesome" (*akusala-mūla*), but there is never any usage such as "roots of merit" (*puñña-mūla*) or "roots of demerit" (*pāpa-mūla*). No one can point to any usage of "roots of merit" or "roots of demerit" in these books. But "roots of the wholesome" and "roots of the unwholesome" are indeed mentioned. From this fact, one can reflect on something. Wholesomeness (*kusala*) is a deep concept. It is the turning around of our mental energy, which otherwise runs in the wrong direction in saṃsāra. That is why we always say to repeat the word *veramaṇī* with some strength when undertaking the precepts. *Veramaṇī* is abstinence, detachment. That is indeed the difficult part.

Well, having begun to analyze the wholesome and unwholesome in this simple manner, Venerable Sāriputta finally shows at a deep level what this right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is. Indeed, as we all know, the ultimate goal of this Buddha-Dispensation is liberation from this perilous saṃsāra. That is no easy task. The right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) that only a Buddha reveals to the world is the natural truth of the Four Noble Truths, namely *Dukkha* (Suffering), *samudaya* (origin), *nirodha* (cessation), and *magga* (path). These entire five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*)—form, feeling / sensation (*vedanā*), perception, preparations / Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*), which we call "I" and "mine"—are purely suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). Generally, omitting that part, we often say that birth is suffering, aging is suffering, sickness is suffering. We think of stopping just by saying that much. But the Buddha does not end there. After saying those things, He says in brief that the entire five aggregates of grasping are suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). Because this is generally understood only partially, the Buddha declared concerning the truth of suffering (*dukkha-sacca*) that it is "to be fully understood" (*pariññeyya*), meaning it must be completely comprehended. An ordinary person has only a partial understanding of suffering. But the Buddha says "pariññeyya"—one fully comprehends it, knows it thoroughly. When one understands that, the entire five aggregates are completely included. That is the truth of suffering (*dukkha-sacca*).

Next, as its cause, the origin of suffering (*dukkha-samudaya*) means the cause. As the cause of suffering, the Buddha points to craving / thirst (*taṇhā*). Underlying the suffering of anything and everything is craving / thirst (*taṇhā*). Next is the eradication of that craving / thirst. The stilled mind, the quenching of that thirst obtained by its eradication, is shown as Nibbāna. That is the peace attainable in this very life. Next, the path to it is shown as the Noble Eightfold Path.

What is meant by this "correctness"? Everyone has a view regarding life. There is what is called a philosophy of life. The drunkard's philosophy is about alcohol. The fisherman's philosophy is about fish. In various ways, each has their own philosophy of life. Correct vision according to the Dhamma is shown in two ways: *kammassakatā sammā-diṭṭhi* (right view of ownership of kamma) and *magga*

sammā-diṭṭhi (right view of the Path). *Kammassakatā* means that kamma is one's own. The Buddha declares: if a being in saṃsāra takes these aforementioned five aggregates of grasping and performs any action, there are results (*vipāka*) of that action. One cannot escape those results. Some clever scholars ask, "If this is not-self / non-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*), how can we talk about a result?" But that is not the truth. The Buddha declares that here we have a deep natural law of the mind. Truly speaking, the natural law of dependent co-arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) is present here as a heap of preparations / Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) arising due to ignorance (*avijjā*). Taking the five aggregates of grasping, one is driven to a course of action. The results of that activity must inevitably be experienced, whether as pleasure or as pain. That is what we call kamma and its result (*vipāka*).

What the Buddha shows as the ten-fold view (*dasavatthuka-diṭṭhi*) is His assertion of "there is, there is" against the nihilistic view (*nātthika-diṭṭhi*) of Makkhali Gosāla and others who say "there is not, there is not." There is this world, there is the next world; there is mother, there is father; there are results of wholesome and unwholesome deeds; there are ascetics and brahmins who have a correct understanding of this world; there are results of treating parents well, and so forth. Why does the Buddha show these? Because from that standpoint, a person can go to a happy state. If they take the other standpoint, they go to a state of misery. That is what is there. Yet, even that is still within saṃsāra.

What helps one to escape from saṃsāra is the realization of the truth. That is called the right view of the Path (*magga sammā-diṭṭhi*). This is the realization that these five aggregates of grasping are suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*); the cause of this is craving / thirst (*taṇhā*); and the quenching of that craving / thirst is happiness. One must actually experience that attainment. It is at the stage of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*) that this becomes directly realized by a person. Next, the path, the practice that helps one to achieve this, is the Noble Eightfold Path.

Now, many have heard that indulgence in sensual pleasures (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*) is one extreme. Tormenting the body is the other extreme. Everyone has heard that between these two lies the Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*), which is the Noble Eightfold Path. That is exactly what is said here. The Buddha has declared a wonderful Dhamma that goes right down the middle, transcending all those views. To that right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), both of those aspects belong. One does not go to the extreme of annihilationism (*uccheda*); one does not go to the extreme of saying "it ends here, so there are no results for killing animals, theft, and so on." If one has assumed responsibility in saṃsāra, in performing wholesome and unwholesome deeds, one has to accept that there are results according to that responsibility. On the other hand, it goes further: in reality, here there is only a collection of causes and conditions. This must be understood through wisdom. It is when this is seen through wisdom that liberation is obtained. This is called the Path right view (*magga sammā-diṭṭhi*). It is those who confuse these two who sometimes present distorted ideas about this Dhamma. Thus, if a complete right

view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) of both sides has arisen in someone, thoughts and intentions arise in accordance with it.

Right view, right thoughts, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration—this is how those Pali terms have been translated into Sinhala. They are *sammā-diṭṭhi*, *sammā-saṅkappa*, *sammā-vācā*, *sammā-kammanta*, *sammā-ājīva*, *sammā-vāyāma*, *sammā-sati*, and *sammā-samādhi*. When you, merit-seekers, reflect on this, you will see how systematic it is. A person's life is completely transformed. View is what is important there. If the view goes wrong, it ends up in wrong concentration (*micchā-samādhi*). If it is correct, one achieves right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) and, through that, can attain one's liberation. Thus, what Venerable Sāriputta finally gave concerning right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) was the right view concerning the truth.

Now, we are gradually moving towards the side of Nibbāna. On one occasion, the Buddha declared: "Monks, right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is twofold." For beings bound to saṃsāra who are unable to bring an end to suffering in this life, He introduced the ten-fold right view of ownership of kamma (*kammassakatā sammā-diṭṭhi*), which helps them to turn away from the path to misery and go to happy states. That is "accompanied by taints, siding with merit, ripening on the side of acquisition" (*sāsavā puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā*). It is accompanied by taints (*āsava*). Taints mean the taint of sensual desire (*kāmāsava*), the taint of existence (*bhavāsava*), and the taint of ignorance (*avijjāsava*), which you, merit-seekers, might have heard of—these saṃsāric habits we have formed. Being drawn to sensual pleasures, being drawn to existence / becoming (*bhava*), being drawn to views—in this way, caught in certain currents, we travel on this saṃsāric journey. This right view is accompanied by taints. However, *puññabhāgiyā* means it sides with merit. The aforementioned view of Makkhali Gosāla and others is *apuññabhāgiyā*, or rather, it goes to the side of sin / demerit; it drags one down to states of misery. But from this right view, a person can obtain a small opening to a happy state. In this perilous saṃsāra, if one obtains at least a human state, a divine state, or even a Brahma state, instead of going to hell, there is some degree of peace. It does not mean one is completely freed. But if one goes to states of misery—to the ghost realm or to hell—one cannot rise again for aeons. There too, the Buddha points to the Middle Way. Thus, there is no prohibition for a saṃsāric being to establish themselves on that standpoint and perform meritorious deeds according to the aforementioned right view of ownership of kamma. It does not end there. Through that, one can obtain happy states in this becoming / existence (*bhava*) and realize Nibbāna. Therefore...

The term *upadhi* (acquisitions / assets / fuel) also needs to be explained. *Upadhi* means the worldly assets, possessions, and resources that support a person as accessories once they are born. These are things that help sustain a life. Because they lack these, there are people who spend their entire lives begging in misery, solely to keep body and soul together. For them, there is no opportunity even to think of religious or spiritual progress. Even if we preach the Dhamma, it does not penetrate.

What is meant (by *upadhivepakkā*) is that it brings about these assets and resources (*upadhi*). Now, what happens to many people is that they confuse these two.

Next, when speaking of escaping saṃsāra at a deep level, that second right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) is introduced thus: *"Atthi, bhikkhave, sammā-diṭṭhi ariyā anāsavā lokuttarā maggāṅgā"*—the right view that is noble, taintless, supramundane, and a factor of the Path. That is the truth; in it, there is no talk of a self. There is no talk of "I" and "mine." It is purely a mass of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). Purely a mass of suffering. When some people take to intellectual debates, they speak of the Four Noble Truths. Yet, in their day-to-day lives, they remain at that lower level. It is when these two are confused that many people even reject merit and demerit. These are called intellectual overreachings; they are overreachings. The Buddha clearly shows that here too, there is a middle path. We have reminded you, merit-seekers, on many occasions: a person crossing a swift current must cross the stream at a middle pace, neither struggling excessively nor stopping. It is something like that. In this saṃsāra, the swift currents of sensual desire (*kāmogha*) and the current of existence / becoming (*bhavogha*) are flowing. A person trying to cross this cannot simply leap from this side to the other, even if they wish to do so. Allowing some leeway to the wave, one must cross to the other side carefully, neither struggling excessively nor stopping.

According to that vision, the Buddha shows that beings living in the world must obtain some opening through meritorious deeds. We must remember that whatever wholesome kamma, whatever merit, has granted us at least this human state of existence is gradually wearing away. We have made plans on how to spend the income we earn once a month on payday. This is visible in the budgets of these times. However, we do not see that the merit which granted us this human state, this comfort, is running out. We squander it by dancing, singing, and playing music. Meanwhile, without our even knowing, the moment the merit runs out, if we are in the sky, we will fall straight onto the road along with that luxury vehicle. If we are on a ship, we will sink to the bottom of the sea. Coinciding with the exhaustion of wholesome kamma, the unwholesome kamma surfaces. Some evil deed done in the distant past will surface and yield its result (*vipāka*). It is because of this perilous situation that the Buddha urged us to be diligent (*appamāda*) in performing meritorious deeds. Thus, it was the very Buddha who preached that profound Dhamma who also spoke about merit and demerit. It was no one else. That word of the Buddha is in accordance with the aforementioned Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*). No matter how much we say, intellectuals think that just because they have studied books, they stand upon this truth. Yet, unless they possess the Dhamma-eye (*dhamma-cakkhu*), they have not realized the Four Noble Truths. We often mention only half of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), compartmentalizing suffering. Only this much is suffering, and the other part is pleasure, so we think.

But the Buddha says that there is nothing here to be taken up. The five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) are solely (*kevala*) a mass of suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). This realization must be reached through meditation, not merely by reading books. It is reached by looking at this body through the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), by looking at feelings / sensations (*vedanā*), by looking at the mind, and by looking at the mental qualities (*dhamma*) that arise in the mind—by watching their coming and going. That is where impermanence (*anicca*) reveals itself. Every single one of these is impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*). You, merit-seekers, have heard that what the Buddha said about this entire existence / becoming (*bhava*) is summarized in three words: *"aniccaṃ dukkhaṃ anattā." "Yadaniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ, yaṃ dukkhaṃ tadanattā"*—in that way, they are connected. Whatever is impermanent / inconstant is suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*); because of its shaking, changing nature, it is suffering. Whatever is suffering, no one wishes to claim as "I" or "mine." It cannot be kept under one's control.

Now, although that truth exists in mere words, one must realize it directly for oneself through the establishments of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). It is at that moment that the Four Noble Truths are understood. That is why it is "noble" (*ariya*); that is what is meant by attaining the noble state. It is "taintless" (*anāsava*); at that moment, one is freed from the power of those taints (*āsava*), even if for a single moment. What is called directly realizing Nibbāna is, in truth, if the mind has been liberated even for a moment through the power of Path-knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*), one has seen this not-self / non-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*) nature, this void nature, the emptiness of the world, right through those taints. At that moment, one has directly realized it for a split second. It cannot be shown to anyone else. It is something to be realized by oneself. "Supramundane, noble, taintless" (*lokuttarā ariyā anāsavā*). Crossing over the world—crossing over the world is not like going from this country to a foreign country. Supramundane (*lokuttara*) means a state that has transcended this worldliness. The worldly are swept away, submerged under those aforementioned currents.

A person who has practiced insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) for a long time might, perhaps even while listening to a discourse delivered by the Buddha according to His meditation instructions, in a single moment, attain this very realization within the mind through that insight meditation. If it is understood at any such moment, that is "supramundane" (*lokuttara*)—it is a supramundane state. It is a Path factor (*maggāṅga*)—it is the Path, the Eightfold Path. Indeed, we have practiced the Noble Eightfold Path in retail fashion, so to speak, in our day-to-day lives. The moment when it aligns perfectly in depth, from right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) up to right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*), is that very moment of realizing the Path and Fruit (*magga-phala*). That is called the Path-consciousness (*magga-citta*). That is why the Buddha called it *maggāṅga* (Path factor). The moment of profound realization of the Four Noble Truths occurs precisely as a Path factor. It is not something that can be

understood through logic. That is the deep-level right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). That is why the Buddha declared right view to be twofold.

The Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) declared by the Buddha is a highly wondrous teaching because there is a vast depth within it. Generally, we think that we have freed ourselves from indulgence in sensual pleasures (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*) and from self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*), and that this alone constitutes the Middle Way. Yet, the Buddha has shown it even more deeply in various places. To the brahmin named Kaccāyana, the Buddha declares: "'Everything exists'—this, Kaccāyana, is one extreme. 'Everything does not exist'—this is the second extreme. Without falling into either of these extremes, without approaching them, the Tathāgata preaches the Dhamma by the middle." Next, He shows that Middle Way as dependent co-arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*)—that profound teaching that there is an arising based on causes and conditions, and that by removing those causes and conditions, there is a cessation. Arising and ceasing; origin and cessation (*samudaya-nirodha*); rise and fall (*udaya-vaya*). In this way, regarding this world—regarding everything physical, bodily, and mental in the world—there is only a series of arisings and ceasings. Impermanence / Inconstancy (*aniccatā*) is understood as an arising and a ceasing. That is why in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the Buddha invites one to experience this directly.

Let us take mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*), which everyone knows. What is mindfulness of breathing? It is establishing mindfulness on our in-breaths and out-breaths. By establishing mindfulness, as it goes deeper and deeper, one understands: "There is no 'I' here who breathes. There is only a filling and an emptying. An emptying and a filling." When the emptying is finished, there is a desire to fill. Next, having filled, it cannot be maintained; it has to be expelled next. So, existence is found between these two. This is true not only of in-breaths and out-breaths, but of everything else as well. No matter how delicious the food we eat, even when we go to banquets and five-star hotels, where does even that food, where does everything end up? The delicious drinks we consume... we must contemplate all of these.

That is what the Buddha told us to make our objects of contemplation in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. This is not something strange. This is not something to be seen by going to a laboratory. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is not something that can be understood through physical experiments. Its magical/illusionary nature must be realized by oneself through the establishments of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). No one can display consciousness (*viññāṇa*) with any kind of instrument. That is why the Buddha declared: "I do not see any other single thing that changes so quickly as this mind." One can measure the speed of the body's arising and ceasing, but the arising and ceasing nature of the mind cannot be seen by an ordinary person. Some present various similes, like seeing a circle of fire when a whirling brand is spun. Similarly, this mind spins extremely rapidly. That is the greatest myth. The view, the illusion, grasps it as "I." The world dwells within that. It is experienced in that very way—the two aspects of arising and ceasing. Seeing these two aspects of arising and

ceasing, as one gradually understands its impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*) nature, a disillusionment (*nibbidā*) arises towards it. That cannot be prevented. As that disillusionment grows, the realization also becomes purified, because it is out of attachment that one grasps this. As disillusionment grows, realization arises and becomes pure. Realization is defiled by craving / thirst (*taṇhā*), desire, and so forth. Therefore, when these are removed, the mind comes to equanimity (*upekkhā*). Without bringing the mind to equanimity, we cannot understand the truth.

That is why this virtue (*sīla*) is needed. That is why concentration (*samādhi*) is needed—to calm the mind. To the extent that one removes what are called unwholesome deeds and wrongs and purifies the mind, wisdom (*paññā*) finally dawns. According to the Dhamma of the Buddha, that wisdom means understanding the principle that whatever has the nature to arise, all that has the nature to cease. When any poor person, any destitute person, attains the path of Stream-entry (*sotāpanna-magga*), that person is described as an expert—an expert in the Dhamma. As the principle of that expert knowledge they have attained, *"yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ"*—whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to cease—that person has already directly realized. Because they saw for a moment that this form, feeling / sensation (*vedanā*), perception, preparations / Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and this mind called consciousness (*viññāṇa*), which they are grasping and holding as "mine," have all ceased for a moment. They ceased precisely because that aforementioned grasping was removed. It is due to grasping that we see this not as a collection, but as solid things, owing to the perception of solidity (*ghana-saññā*). But when, through wisdom, a person realizes at some point that the moment grasping is abandoned, there is nothing left here—then they deeply understand: "Here it is impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*), suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), and not-self / non-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*)." There lies liberation. There is the supramundane state. This cannot be understood through machines or by logic. That is why it is called a Dhamma that is beyond logical reasoning (*atakkāvacara*).

The Buddha shows a quality of the Dhamma, *"paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhī"*—to be personally realized by the wise. Even the Buddha cannot simply hand the knowledge of the Stream-entry path to someone. He can only show the way, and by looking at that person's past kamma, past character, inclinations and underlying tendencies (*āsaya-anusaya*), and character traits, He can hasten that realization by delivering a suitable discourse. But the Buddha cannot give that realization like giving an object to someone. It must be generated within oneself. If one has sufficient past practice, it takes only a short time. Otherwise, one must strive for it. One must be prepared to work hard for it. One should not think that this can be obtained in a day, a week, from books, or merely by listening to a sermon. It is only when one thinks of this as a difficult thing that one can actually achieve it. On one hand, we must develop the perception that "it is possible." But we must not make this out to be too easy. We must exert that effort; in reality, only when one realizes it is something that can be done with effort does the endeavor apply. Otherwise, if one thinks: "I have obtained

so many degrees, I am a world-renowned wise person, a scholar, this is a very minor thing for me; if I want, I can obtain this in a short time after I retire"—then that is wrong. What one must think is that one has to dedicate one's entire life to this. Because for all this time, we have traveled in this saṃsāra due to the lack of this realization, this supramundane right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). Therefore, without having too much pride in oneself, one must humbly enter this path of practice, starting from virtues like precepts, just as you, merit-seekers, have done today.

The Buddha Himself has declared that this saṃsāra is like a swamp. One must think of constructing a small platform to sit on for meditation in this swamp. Planting five pillars represents the Five Precepts; planting eight pillars represents the Eight Precepts; planting ten pillars represents the Ten Precepts. Having constructed a small platform in this manner, reflecting on that virtue, generating a concentrated mind, and relying on the meditation subject to concentrate the mind—then, as shown by the Buddha, regarding the Three Characteristics of impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*), suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), and not-self / non-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*): insight meditation (*vipassanā*) is not merely repeating these words. We have reminded you on many occasions that insight is not saying, but seeing. For that seeing, we must engage in Satipaṭṭhāna as a meditation. Contemplate according to this body. Through contemplating according to the body, when looking with mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), the reality of the body is seen. Next, feelings / sensations (*vedanā*), the mind...

...and the mental qualities (*dhamma*) that arise in the mind. To put it briefly, the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), the factors of awakening (*bojjhaṅga*), and the thirty-seven factors of awakening (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*) declared by the Buddha are not things confined to books. These are things to be generated within ourselves. Only to the extent that we develop them will we be able to attain direct realization within ourselves. Everyone keeps precepts, develops concentration, and meditates in order to escape from this highly perilous saṃsāric suffering of birth / arising (*jāti*), decay / aging, sickness, and death (*jarāmaraṇa*).

Today is the valuable Poson Full Moon Poya Day. We speak a lot about protecting the Buddha-Dispensation; the sound of it is heard everywhere. But this is a Dispensation that must be protected from within. Without practicing these principles, protecting anything else is useless. The Buddha-Dispensation will not endure. Therefore, by walking on this path of Dhamma, if one directly realizes it for oneself to the extent of being able to help others as well, only then can the Buddha-Dispensation truly be preserved.

Therefore, with such a deep intention, this merit-seeking group, having engaged in undertaking the precepts today, practicing meditation to the best of your ability with the association of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), and listening to this Dhamma—may this accumulated store of wholesomeness strengthen your aspirations! Relying further on this very wholesome power, may this merit of listening to the Dhamma be

a supportive condition for directly realizing the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through the penetration of the Paths and Fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahatship! I make this aspiration.

From Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, if there be any being who wishes to rejoice in this merit of Dhamma-preaching and Dhamma-listening, may they all, by so rejoicing, realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through their aspired state of Awakening (*Bodhi*)! Likewise, may all your relatives and friends, and all beings of the world, realize that nectar-like, supreme, deathless Nibbāna! With this aspiration, recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*"