Pahankanuwa Sermon #70

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.171)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

Bahū devā manussā ca,

maṅgalāni acintayuṃ;

ākaṅkhamānā sotthānaṃ,

brūhi maṅgalamuttamam.

From:

from Sutta Nipāta, Mahāmaṅgala Sutta

Dear Listeners,

The word '*Maṅgala*' has been used since the distant past to designate various signs or occurrences that bring well-being and prosperity to human beings. It is mentioned that during the time of the Buddha, when the Blessed One appeared, there were various disagreements in Jambudīpa as to what should actually be considered a blessing (*maṅgala*). The very first stanza of the Mahāmaṅgala Sutta, which we took as our theme today, reveals that this question of what constitutes a blessing was discussed not only among human beings but even among the deities.

According to the commentaries, while people gathered in the assembly halls of ancient Jambudīpa to discuss various matters, discussions also took place as to what should be designated as a blessing. No consensus could be reached on this. Some declared that the auspiciousness or inauspiciousness of the day is determined by the first thing seen in the morning. Some declared that seeing certain things considered auspicious is a stroke of fortune. They are called *diṭṭha-maṅgalika*—those who consider what is seen as a blessing. According to their view, seeing things such as a full pitcher, a pregnant mother, a lime branch, a bull, a cow, or a horse-drawn chariot first thing in the morning was thought of as auspicious, as a blessing. Another group said that it is not what is seen, but what is heard that should be considered a blessing.

According to their opinion, hearing words like "today is a good day," "a good asterism," "a good moment," "growth of goodness," or "glorious prosperity" first thing in the morning was declared by them to be a blessing. Yet another group said that it is neither what is seen nor what is heard that should be considered a blessing, but what is sensed by the nose, the tongue, and the body. According to their opinion, smelling the fragrance of flowers, touching the earth, touching fresh cow dung, touching fruits, wearing a new turban, or touching a new garment—things that come into contact with the body in the morning—were considered blessings. Thus, these disagreements spread further and further, and according to the commentary, a "blessing uproar" (*maṅgala-kolāhala*) arose. An "uproar" does not mean fighting and stabbing as in modern times. It means it became a topic discussed by everyone. The commentaries mention that this "blessing uproar" started among humans and went up to the terrestrial deities (*bhumma-deva*), and then among the deities of Cātumahārājika, Tāvatiṃsa, and so on. So in the end, on behalf of those deities, a certain deity came forward and presented this question to the Blessed One through the stanza we mentioned earlier; this is what is stated in this sutta.

You, meritorious listeners, know how such suttas begin. It is said that when the Blessed One was residing at Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthī, after much of the night had passed, a deity of radiant beauty, illuminating the entire Jetavana with his light, approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, stood to one side, and uttered this very stanza we have themed:

"Bahū devā manussā ca, maṅgalāni acintayuṃ; Ākaṅkhamānā sotthānaṃ, brūhi maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

"Many deities and humans, desiring well-being, have thought about blessings. Tell us the supreme blessing." This is the general meaning. So, in response to this statement or request made to the Blessed One, the Blessed One expounded, in eleven stanzas, thirty-eight blessing factors—though in counting them, there might be slight discrepancies—which are known today as the Mahāmaṅgala Sutta. So, before analyzing each one, let us try to bring out the general meaning of these stanzas of the Mahāmaṅgala Sutta, which is a sutta used by everyone and frequently heard by all. In reply to that stanza, the Blessed One began like this:

> "Asevanā ca bālānaṃ, paṇḍitānañca sevanā; Pūjā ca pūjanīyānaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Not associating with fools, associating with the wise, and honoring those worthy of honor—this is the supreme blessing.

> "Patirūpadesavāso ca, pubbe ca katapuññatā; Attasammāpaṇidhi ca, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Living in a suitable locality, having made merit in the past, and setting one's mind rightly—this is the supreme blessing.

"Bāhusaccañca sippañca, vinayo ca susikkhito; Subhāsitā ca yā vācā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Great learning, craftsmanship, being well-trained in discipline, and speech that is well-spoken—this is the supreme blessing.

"Mātāpitu-upaṭṭhānaṃ, puttadārassa saṅgaho; Anākulā ca kammantā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Supporting one's parents, cherishing one's wife and children, and peaceful (unconfused) occupations—this is the supreme blessing.

"Dānañca dhammacariyā ca, ñātakānañca saṅgaho; Anavajjāni kammāni, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Generosity, righteous conduct, helping one's relatives, and blameless actions—this is the supreme blessing.

"Āratī viratī pāpā, majjapānā ca saññamo; Appamādo ca dhammesu, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Avoiding and abstaining from evil, refraining from intoxicants, and diligence in the Dhamma—this is the supreme blessing.

"Gāravo ca nivāto ca, santuṭṭhī ca kataññutā; Kālena dhammasavanaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Reverence, humility, contentment, gratitude, and hearing the Dhamma at the proper time—this is the supreme blessing.

"Khantī ca sovacassatā, samaṇānañca dassanaṃ; Kālena dhammasākacchā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Patience, obedience, seeing ascetics, and Dhamma discussions at the proper time—this is the supreme blessing.

"Tapo ca brahmacariyañca, ariyasaccāna dassanaṃ; Nibbānasacchikiriyā ca, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Ardent effort (*tapo*), the holy life (*brahmacariya*), seeing the Noble Truths, and the realization of Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna)—this is the supreme blessing.

"Phuṭṭhassa lokadhammehi, cittaṃ yassa na kampati; Asokaṃ virajaṃ khemaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Although touched by the worldly conditions, the mind of one who is unshaken, sorrowless, stainless, secure—this is the supreme blessing.

"Etādisāni katvāna, sabbatthamaparājitā; Sabbattha sotthiṃ gacchanti, taṃ tesaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Having done these things, undefeated everywhere, they go in safety everywhere. This is their supreme blessing. This is the general meaning of the Maṅgala Sutta.

Now let us analyze this meaning further. There are not so many deep things that require analyzing every single word. Most of you know the meaning. There are some words that need to be analyzed in detail. So, the word of the Buddha in the Maṅgala Sutta begins with the letter "A":

"Asevanā ca bālānaṃ, paṇḍitānañca sevanā; Pūjā ca pūjanīyānaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Let us focus our minds on the three things mentioned here. First, it is presented as a pair: *Asevanā ca bālānaṃ*—not associating with fools, and *paṇḍitānañca sevanā*—associating with the wise.

Here, something needs to be mentioned. In our modern Sinhala usage, we use the word *bāla* to refer to those young in age. We say *bāla-mahalu* (young and old). However, in the Pali language, the word *bāla* is never used in the sense of being young in age. In the Pali language, the concept of "young and old" is expressed as *dahara-vuddha*. *Bāla* is used precisely in the sense of a fool, whereas *paṇḍita* means the wise.

This too can be understood by you through this analysis. Being a *paṇḍita* (wise person) is not something obtained through an academic degree. Indeed, we must discuss these matters in detail because in modern times, certain debaters question this, claiming that the Blessed One said something contradictory here. Why? Because he says not to associate with fools (*bāla*), and to associate with the wise (*paṇḍita*). Then how can there be a connection between these two groups? How can the fools associate with the wise? Can they avoid it?

There are people who formulate such questions. An answer to this will also be found as we proceed. First, let us look at the statements made by the Blessed One regarding fools (*bāla*) or ignorant people, taking them from various places in the texts.

On one occasion, the Blessed One states: "Monks, whatever fears, dangers, and calamities arise, they all arise from the fool (*bāla*), not from the wise (*paṇḍita*)." The fool is shown to be that dangerous there. Dangers and calamities do not arise from the wise. An analogy is also given for this. "Just as, monks, when a reed-house or a thatched house catches fire, even a nearby luxurious house that is well-plastered inside and out can be destroyed. Those other houses catch fire easily. Then, because they have caught fire, even large palaces and mansions nearby are burnt down." That is a simile given by the Blessed One to show the danger that comes from the fool. In another place, the Blessed One states: *"Kammalakkhaṇo, bhikkhave, bālo; kammalakkhaṇo paṇḍito"* ("Monks, a fool is characterized by his actions; a wise

person is characterized by his actions"). The character of the fool is recognized through his conduct. The wise person is also recognized through his conduct. What is the conduct of the fool? A person with bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, and mental misconduct is a fool. A person with bodily good conduct, verbal good conduct, and mental good conduct is a wise person. According to this, we do not know how many "wise men" in this country would fall into this list!

In any case, the Blessed One further declares the signs and characteristics for identifying the fool and the wise person. Regarding the fool, his nature is shown: *duccintitacintī, dubbhāsitabhāsī, dukkatakammakārī* (one who thinks bad thoughts, speaks bad words, and does bad deeds). His thoughts are bad, his words are bad, and his actions are bad. The wise person is *sucintitacintī, subhāsitabhāsī, sukkatakammakārī* (one who thinks good thoughts, speaks good words, and does good deeds). The train of thoughts of the wise person is good, his words are good, and his course of action is good. How does one identify someone as a fool or a wise person? That is why the Blessed One introduced certain signs, so that these two groups could be identified through these signs.

Next, the Blessed One speaks of this in the Dhammapada; you may have heard of the places in the Dhammapada where the fool is mentioned. This fool is compared to a pit of filth. The danger that could happen to a wise person is shown in this way. The simile given is that if rotten fish is wrapped in kusa grass, although kusa grass normally has a pleasant scent, when rotten fish is wrapped in it, the kusa grass also stinks. It is just the same with associating with a fool.

So when this is said, we must consider: is it completely impossible for these two groups to come together? That is exactly what we are clarifying as an answer to those debaters mentioned earlier. Fools should associate with the wise just as—to use an analogy—patients associate with doctors. Or, to use a modern analogy, like drug addicts associating with a rehabilitation counselor nowadays. They do not associate to share a bottle! It is with a certain respect. They seek help from a counselor to overcome the wrong addictions they have acquired through habitual patterns of Saṃsāra. It is the same with the teacher-pupil relationship. That is why the Blessed One highlighted its gravity beforehand. Even a doctor has to treat patients, but he does so while maintaining his own safety. Likewise, one must associate with the wise while knowing the fool. One must identify both the fool and the wise and then associate. That, meritorious listeners, is what is meant by *"Pūjā ca pūjanīyānaṃ"*—honoring those worthy of honor. If a fool approaches a wise person with an attitude of honoring those worthy of honor, the extent to which the fool can progress is such that, in the end, the fool becomes a wise person, if he properly receives the association of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), if he receives the association of the wise well. That is why the Therī Kisāgothamī declares in her Therīgāthā: "Kalyāṇamittatā muninā, lokaṃ ādissa vaṇṇitā; Kalyāṇamitte bhajamāno, api bālo paṇḍito assa." The Blessed One pointed his finger to the world and proclaimed the value of noble friendship; he praised it. By associating with noble friends, even a fool becomes a

wise person. From that, we must understand that with that attitude of honoring those worthy of honor, fools can benefit from the wise. Likewise, the wise person must—according to the simile we mentioned earlier, where the counselor trying to save the drug addict does not go to share bottles—act knowing his own limits. So, regarding that stanza, considering the time, I think this is sufficient.

Now, consider the depth within this. Meritorious listeners, why did the Blessed One say these things first among the thirty-eight blessings? Why did he mention this matter at the very beginning? Because the most fundamental requirement, the most primary factor for laying the foundation of life, is association, companionship. Therefore, one must be careful about that association. Especially, after a person is born into the world, if they happen to associate with such fools in their childhood—even though we now use *bāla* to mean young, that young child eventually becomes a fool (*bāla*) indeed. Therefore, the Blessed One highlighted the matter of association in life through this. Next: "Patirūpadesavāso ca, pubbe ca katapuññatā; Attasammāpaṇidhi ca, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ." "Living in a suitable locality," "having made merit in the past," and "setting one's mind rightly." There too, there are some matters that need to be analyzed a bit.

"Living in a suitable locality"—in modern times, according to environmental engineering, this might mean suburban proximity, tap water, and perhaps electricity, when thinking about environment. But if we think in terms of the Dhamma, the commentaries specifically point to having the opportunity to associate with the fourfold assembly: monks (*bhikkhu*), nuns (*bhikkhunī*), laymen (*upāsaka*), and laywomen (*upāsikā*). Otherwise, living in an environment suitable for turning towards a life in accordance with the Dhamma is what is called *patirūpadesavāso ca*. Why? Because we previously spoke about association. Next, if we speak using a similar word, this is *nissaya* (dependence/support). First is association, next is environment. In simpler words, in the first one we said association, now we say environment. That is, the locality where one resides.

Next, there is a special factor: *"pubbe ca katapuññatā"*—having made merit in the past. As they say, "Even if one gets a hundred sons of little merit, it is futile"—that is what is meant. This is seen clearly only by the Buddha-eye. Let us call it the innate fortune or the inborn potential of each individual. Now we have spoken about association. We have spoken about environment. Next, we can call this *upanissaya* (strong support/decisive support). There is an ancient term: *upanissaya-sampatti* (the fortune of decisive support). The karmic force and the meritorious force brought from the past become apparent in early childhood. That too is a foundation for this life. In modern times, those who follow Western psychologists ridicule these things. We have heard and seen such instances. They discard what comes from the past and confine everything to childhood. That is the end of it for them. But the Blessed One points out that we have a vast past in our Saṃsāra. Thus, there are both good and bad in it. Depending on those, let us call it past fortune: *"pubbe ca katapuññatā"*.

Now next, it says it is not enough to just leave it to that. There is also something for oneself to do.

"Attasammāpaṇidhi ca"—setting one's mind rightly—this becomes extremely important. Behold, that is where the beginning of personality development lies. One's own agency begins from here. *"Attasammāpaṇidhi ca"*—setting one's mind rightly. To put it briefly, there is a stanza in the Dhammapada regarding this, which you, meritorious listeners, may know: "Na taṃ mātā pitā kayirā, aññe vāpi ca ñātakā; Sammāpaṇihitaṃ cittaṃ, seyyaso naṃ tato kare." Neither mother, nor father, nor any other relatives can do for one such good as a rightly directed mind can do. At one time, this was put into a Sinhala poem: "What parents and relatives cannot do, my own mind, when well-directed, accomplishes for my well-being."

There, the Blessed One has given a beautiful simile about this directing of the mind. Actually, within the word *paṇidhi* is a directing. The proper directing of the mind. The simile given by the Blessed One for this might not be understood by some. A grain of paddy—everyone who does farming knows—has a small sharp point at its tip. The ancient word for it is *vī-naṇḍuva* (the awn/tip of the paddy grain). People of this area do not even have a name for it. A nameless, easily forgotten small dot. The Blessed One has used such a small thing for a simile. In that simile, the Blessed One states that although that pricking part at the tip of the grain is a tiny thing, if that tip of paddy is placed rightly, it can pierce a hand or a foot. Similarly, if the mind is rightly directed, it can destroy the darkness of ignorance (*avijjā*). That is how the Blessed One states it. From that we can see that, whatever the power of past fortune may be, one's own part begins from there by directing the mind to the right side. *"Attasammāpaṇidhi"*—this too is a factor of blessing. Next:

"Bāhusaccañca sippañca, vinayo ca susikkhito; Subhāsitā ca yā vācā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Everyone knows what *bāhusacca* (great learning) is. Having heard and remembered much, erudition. Next, *sippañca*—craftsmanship. This factor also must be considered in accordance with the Dhamma. Even if one learns various worthless things unrelated to the Dhamma, if one lacks the skill to use them properly, we see in the world that one gets destroyed by that very learning. In any case, this learning, this craft, and in modern terms, the basically required training—*bāhusaccañca sippañca, vinayo ca susikkhito*—being well-disciplined, being disciplined. This refers to the discipline necessary for life. *Subhāsitā ca yā vācā*—that too is a part of discipline: well-spoken speech. Here, what is called "well-spoken" is truth in accordance with the Dhamma. Moreover, the Blessed One has shown a beautiful passage in various places to define the word "well-spoken":

"Yā sā vācā nelā kaṇṇasukhā pemanīyā hadayaṅgamā porī bahujanakantā bahujanamanāpā"

"Whatever speech is flawless (*nelā*), pleasing to the ear (*kaṇṇasukhā*), lovely (*pemanīyā*), reaching the heart (*hadayaṅgamā*), polite (*porī*), appealing to many, and pleasing to many"—words like that are well-spoken. Likewise, those truthful, timely words are well-spoken words. Next:

"Mātāpitu-upaṭṭhānaṃ, puttadārassa saṅgaho; Anākulā ca kammantā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Mātāpitu-upaṭṭhānaṃ—some take this as two: supporting the mother, and supporting the father. Whatever the count, if we take these points according to the Buddha's word, supporting one's parents—which you, meritorious listeners, have heard so often—is also a factor of blessing. Why is it a factor of blessing? Because the blessing of those parents can be obtained even during their lifetime by supporting them. In this dispensation of the Buddha, let alone other things, even after they have passed away, a form of service is shown. What is the place given to parents by the Blessed One? They are declared to be like Brahma (*brahmāti mātāpitaro*). "Āpādakā posakā, imassa lokassa dassetāro"—they brought up, nourished, and showed this world to them. That is why they are called first teachers, *pubbācariyo*. Likewise, you, meritorious listeners, may have heard that in suttas like these, the Blessed One represented the eastern direction as supporting parents. That too is indeed a blessing, which brings the parents' blessing. Next, *saṅgaho*—the proper cherishing of one's children and wife. These too are duties in this society. Fulfilling those duties directly in a way that shapes a life. *Anākulā ca kammantā*—occupations that are peaceful, not illegal, and free from improper things, is a factor of blessing. Next:

"Dānañca dhammacariyā ca, ñātakānañca saṅgaho; Anavajjāni kammāni, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Generosity, righteous conduct, *dānañca dhammacariyā ca*, and *ñātakānañca saṅgaho*—helping one's relatives, and *anavajjāni kammāni*—blameless actions: these are the supreme blessing. Behold, next turning towards society, *dāna*—giving. Not only to the Saṅgha, but also to the poor, travelers, and beggars—that giving is altruistic conduct. Having first fulfilled one's duty to one's home, then comes generosity, righteous conduct (*dhammacariyā*), a life in accordance with the Dhamma, and cherishing and helping relatives as the occasion arises. *Anavajjāni kammāni*—blameless action; it is perfectly fine to think of this as abandoning wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) and living by right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*).

"Āratī viratī pāpā, majjapānā ca saññamo; Appamādo ca dhammesu, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Āratī viratī pāpā is explained by showing that *āratī* means avoiding evil through the mind, removing oneself from it mentally. *Viratī* is explained as abstaining from them through precepts and such. Developing self-control regarding that. That too is a blessing. But nowadays, in both weddings and funerals, one cannot do without alcohol! Behold what has become of the Mahāmaṅgala Sutta now. The Mahāmaṅgala

Sutta too is probably recited at those auspicious events. Amidst all this, the true blessing factor is this word of the Buddha. *Appamādo ca dhammesu*—diligence in the Dhamma; then, step by step, one turns towards the spiritual side.

"Gāravo ca nivāto ca, santuṭṭhī ca kataññutā; Kālena dhammasavanaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Gāravo ca—showing respect, paying reverence to those worthy of virtue. *Nivāto ca*—humility. *Santuṭṭhi*—contentment with what is obtained. *Kataññutā*—gratitude. There is no need to explain these, is there? You, meritorious listeners, know them. *Kālena dhammasavanaṃ*—hearing the Dhamma at the proper time; *etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ*—these are factors of blessing.

"Khantī ca sovacassatā, samaṇānañca dassanaṃ; Kālena dhammasākacchā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Khantī—patience; *sovacassatā*—gentleness, obedience; *samaṇānañca dassanaṃ*—seeing ascetics. Behold, step by step, it turns towards the spiritual life. *Kālena dhammasākacchā*—previously one listened to the Dhamma, next is discussing the Dhamma. Discussing one's own problems by associating with the venerable monks. "At the proper time" means when the opportunity for Dhamma discussions arises. Also, when the mind is overcome by the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), or if there are matters unclear to oneself, discussing them: *kālena dhammasākacchā etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ*.

"Tapo ca brahmacariyañca, ariyasaccāna dassanaṃ; Nibbānasacchikiriyā ca, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

Here, *tapo* (ardent effort) is not interpreted in the sense of the ascetic practices of the past, but as the burning away of defilements, sensory restraint, and so forth. Coming to this point, we can think of lay disciples like those present here, who, having spent their lay lives, ponder in their old age. One does not have to be extremely old to walk this path of the Sasana. But some in this Sasana, as you, meritorious listeners, have heard, have become Arahants even at seven years of age. If one argues dogmatically based on this Maṅgala Sutta, one might think that one should incline towards the spiritual life only after growing old like that. One needs to think so only if one failed to do so in one's early years. The primary purpose here is to analyze the meaning of the word "blessing". There, the Blessed One shows *tapo*—that is, undertaking virtue (*sīla*), leaving homes, and doing things by way of burning away defilements, by way of meditation; these are taken as ascetic practice (*tapas*). Celibacy (*brahmacariya*) is possible. What is understood by that, generally understood, is abstaining from sexual relations and the pure conduct associated with it. Some, as we have heard, those laymen and laywomen who led householders' lives, after coming to a life in accordance with the Dhamma, consult each other and establish themselves in this very practice. Not only that, now if on some occasion one can separate from lay life and implement the aforementioned *tapo* and *brahmacariya* at the highest level by

ordaining—then that too belongs to this. Through *tapo ca brahmacariyañca* comes *ariyasaccāna dassanaṃ*—the seeing of the Four Noble Truths: the truths of Suffering (*dukkha*), Origin, Cessation, and the Path. At that stage, through one's own life experiences, in accordance with the Buddha's word, if one has understood to some extent that rebirth / arising (*jāti*), aging and death / decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and death are Suffering (*dukkha*), and if one is engaged in meditation, going even deeper, if one gets the realization that this entire five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*) is Suffering (*dukkha*), that indeed is the understanding of Suffering (*dukkha*).

Next, when reflecting on the cause of this Suffering (*dukkha*), if one understands that it becomes Suffering (*dukkha*) because of the Grasping (*upādāna*) towards the five aggregates of grasping—clinging to them—then, at that point, Craving (*taṇhā*) too is understood. That is, the Craving (*taṇhā*) that lies underneath that Grasping (*upādāna*). Next, that Craving (*taṇhā*), at some point... seeing these Four Noble Truths is indeed the direct realization of the Four Noble Truths. As the final result of some insight-consciousness-process (*vipassanā-citta-vīthi*), having seen the impermanence (*anicca*) of all these things, having seen their nature of arising and passing away, having seen their breaking-up nature by way of *udayabbaya* (arising and passing away), *bhaṅga* (dissolution), etc., and having developed fear towards these preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and next, having understood their disadvantageous side (*ādīnava*), and next, having developed that weariness with Saṃsāra called *nibbidā*, and having generated the thought "I must somehow escape from this", if one constantly develops the three characteristics of Impermanent (*anicca*), Suffering (*dukkha*), and Not-self (*anattā*) in daily life, whether as a monk or a layperson—it is through that development that at some point, when they have matured, using those three characteristics, one drops to the other shore. How does one drop? Through that very weariness. When one drops to the other side at some point due to disgust—that is to say, for a moment, the grip of this holding is let go. In that letting go is what is called extinguishment; therein, for the first time, one experiences a peaceful sensation (*vedanā*). As that experience, it is something completely different from what the people of the world think. That is why it is called world-transcending (*lokuttara*). The peace, the extinguishment obtained through that letting go—one experiences it, even for a short moment. That indeed is: "by the destruction of Craving (*taṇhā*), the Mind Stilled / Extinguishment (Nibbāna) was seen."

For that to happen, indeed, within one's mental continuum, not only the Noble Eightfold Path shown by the Blessed One but also the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*) must have been developed to some degree. It is when they have matured through the meditation one does, that the seeing of the Noble Truths (*ariyasaccāna dassanaṃ*) occurs; within this is *nibbānañca*—that is, extinguishment / the Mind Stilled, and *sacchikiriyā ca*—which means direct realization. To realize Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna) means the Dhamma is to be realized in this very life. The Blessed One has shown that there is indeed such a thing as this extinguishment / stilled mind. A state of the mind

becomes directly realized by oneself. *Nibbānasacchikiriyā ca etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ*—this is the supreme blessing. Behold, next, the state of the mind as the result of attaining that Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna) is expressed in the next stanza:

"Phuṭṭhassa lokadhammehi, cittaṃ yassa na kampati; Asokaṃ virajaṃ khemaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

"Worldly conditions" mean the eight worldly conditions (*attha-lokadhamma*). You, meritorious listeners, may have heard: "Lābho alābho ayaso yaso ca, nindā pasaṃsā ca sukhaṃ ca dukkhaṃ." Gain, loss, disrepute, fame, blame, praise, pleasure, and Suffering (*dukkha*). The Blessed One has expressed these eight worldly conditions in a series of stanzas on one occasion.

These eight worldly conditions revolve around the world, and the world revolves around the eight worldly conditions. If you think a bit deeply, you will understand. The eight worldly conditions revolve around the world. Actually, this is exactly how this whole discussion of blessings arose. The signs that bring goodness and well-being to humans. People went after these blessings with the idea that, through some hidden signs, the suffering caused by these eight worldly conditions could be avoided.

Thus, the Blessed One, having rightly realized Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna) spiritually, then declares the state of that person: *phuṭṭhassa lokadhammehi*—whose mind is not shaken when touched by the eight worldly conditions; next, that unshakable state is described. *Asokaṃ virajaṃ khemaṃ*—sorrowless, dustless (free from the dust of defilements), secure (which is called the ground of safety). That state indeed is the supreme blessing: *asokaṃ virajaṃ khemaṃ etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ*.

If we are to say something more related to that—now indeed we have arrived at the deep side of the Dhamma. We have told you on various occasions not to let this become just a mundane lay sermon. Therefore, at this point, we must recall those things stated by the Blessed One, especially regarding Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna). Not only the Blessed One, but the Venerable Sariputta Mahathera also on one occasion states with a beautiful simile, the state of that liberated mind. These are experienced in the state called the attainment of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-samādhi*). Venerable Sariputta Mahathera describes how the mind remains in that state: "No matter how many visual objects cognizable by the eye may come, the mind of that Arahant does not get mixed up with them. That mind remains in a firm, unshakable state." Just as it was said about visual objects cognizable by the eye, so too with sounds cognizable by the ear, and so on—you can imagine, not only things coming from the five physical senses. Finally, it points to thoughts/mind-objects (*dhamma*) coming to the mind; that indeed is the deepest part. No matter how many of these come, the mind remains unshaken, in that aforementioned stable state; this is what Venerable Sariputta Mahathera states on one occasion. Next, to

show that unshakable state, he gives a simile: just as a stone pillar of about sixteen cubits, with eight cubits buried in the ground and standing firmly established, is not shaken no matter from which direction strong storms blow. Venerable Sariputta Mahathera gives this simile regarding the aforementioned unshaken mind. Then, *asokaṃ virajaṃ*—that is, that sorrowless state.

Thus, illustrations of these have been shown on various occasions. When Devadatta once rolled down a rock at the Blessed One—karma affects anyone—a splinter from that rock struck the sole of the Blessed One's foot, causing a deep wound and severe sensation (*vedanā*) of pain. Even though the Blessed One experienced severe sensation (*vedanā*) of pain, he directed his mind to the power of the fruit (*phala-samādhi*), and is said to have endured that severe pain. At that time, even the deities exclaimed that he was enduring such severe sensation (*vedanā*). That mind capable of enduring is what is shown as "refuge, security, place, shelter, and resort" in Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna). An Arahant can bring the mind to that state by bringing back that aforementioned direct realization; and that will definitely emerge at the final moment of an Arahant. Because of that emergence, because the mind is liberated (*vimutta*), they do not come back to another Becoming / Existence (*bhava*).

Regarding the Blessed One, it is told that on one occasion, when it was raining heavily, with water flooding, and thunderbolts striking and cracking, four oxen and two men were killed by the lightning. At that time, near a threshing-shed (*bhūsāgāra*) or barn, perhaps because the Blessed One was absorbed in this very concentration (*samādhi*), when the Blessed One came out and asked why these people had gathered, they replied: "Why, did the Blessed One not see that such a thing has happened?" He said "No." He said he did not even hear it. "Then, were you asleep, Venerable Sir?" "No, I was conscious." That is a very deep matter that most people cannot understand. If he had been completely without perception (*saññā*), it could have been understood. But what we have here is that the Blessed One had perception (*saññā*) at that time, and was also awake. *"Saññī samāno jāgaro"*—even while awake and conscious, none of those things were heard by the Blessed One. Why? Because at that time, he had attained a wakefulness far greater than what the people of the world call wakefulness.

Think about it a bit. The world being "awake" refers to the state where objects come to the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). The Blessed One being "awake" refers to the supramundane state that transcends them. That is why the Blessed One said *"saññī samāno jāgaro"*. *Jāgara* means staying awake, being awake. What does being awake mean? This perception (*saññā*), *samāno jāgaro* means he was awake. It is perception (*saññā*) that we highlight in most of our sermons. The passage describing Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna) is: *"Etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ, yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ."* ("This is peaceful, this is sublime, namely, the stilling of all preparations (*saṅkhāra*), the relinquishment of all assets, the destruction of Craving

(*taṇhā*), fading away, cessation, Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna)"). That is what is shown as *upasamānussati* (recollection of peace). The mind was directed there. Therefore, when the Blessed One remained with his mind directed to that state of Arahantship-fruit which he had ultimately attained as his path-and-fruit realization, that indeed is what is meant by "going to Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna)". That is why so many words are used for Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna), such as "place, shelter, refuge, resort, seclusion (*viveka*)." That is why those words are used. Thus, that state is the state of being liberated from the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). People think: "Ah! How awake the Blessed One was, having been liberated from the six sense-bases, it is a great wonder!" Having become world-transcending (*lokuttara*)—that is what we have shown on certain occasions, based on a simile given by the Blessed One.

The Blessed One declared to the Brahmin Verañja: "In this generation, I am indeed the first chick to have broken the eggshell of ignorance (*avijjā*) and come out." A simile worth reflecting upon, meritorious listeners. "The first chick to have broken the eggshell of ignorance and come out"—from that, what we have to understand is that all of us are inside that eggshell. The eggshell means the six sense-bases (*āyatana*). It is within those six sense-bases that everyone is active, including scientists. That is Saṃsāra. That is Becoming / Existence (*bhava*). All three worlds—the sensual (*kāma*), fine-material (*rūpa*), and immaterial (*arūpa*)—exist inside that eggshell. Thus, the Blessed One experienced that very world-transcending state. He broke the eggshell and went out. The state of remaining with the mind directed to that direct realization is the attainment of the fruit of Arahantship (*arahattaphala-samādhi*). Therefore, in the end it says:

"Etādisāni katvāna, sabbatthamaparājitā; Sabbattha sotthiṃ gacchanti, taṃ tesaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ."

"Sabbatthamaparājitā"—undefeated everywhere. Nowadays, we often hear about the defeated. Some have won in worldly terms but are defeated in world-transcending terms. Some have won in this world but are defeated in the next world. Here, it says they won in this world, they won in the next world, and they won Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna). That is why it says *"sabbatthamaparājitā". "Sabbattha sotthiṃ"*—whether in this world, or in the next world, or next, regarding Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna) on the world-transcending side, they arrive at safety and well-being from every side.

Regarding the time, this is all there is to say. I think a sufficient amount has been spoken. For centuries, the Mahāmaṅgala Sutta has been on everyone's lips. Hearing the Dhamma is valuable. But implementing these thirty-eight is the true blessing. Therefore, without stopping at the level of seen blessings (*diṭṭha-maṅgala*), heard blessings (*suta-maṅgala*), or sensed blessings (*muta-maṅgala*), we should hope to realize the true truth of blessings by implementing them. Then, this meritorious gathering—there may be people of various age groups here—for the elderly people

mentioned, this Mahāmaṅgala Sutta is a great strength. What is past is past. Yes, you spent a lay life. But with this opportunity received, as was said in *tapo ca brahmacariyañca*, having inclined towards the Dhamma and the Sasana, you must resolve to escape as quickly as possible from the Suffering (*dukkha*) of Saṃsāra, such as rebirth / arising (*jāti*), aging and death / decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and death, and attain the supreme Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna) which is complete liberation.

So, as a step towards that today too, you observed the precepts and meditated to the extent of your minds. We wish that today, this Mahāmaṅgala Sutta may also assist in that. May all beings, from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha, whoever wish to share in these merits, rejoice in this merit of expounding the Dhamma and this merit of hearing the Dhamma! Through that rejoicing, may they realize the supreme, deathless, great Extinguishment / the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna) through whichever state of enlightenment they aspire to! May you, meritorious listeners, also have the strength and power to realize the supreme blessing in the Mahāmaṅgala Sutta as quickly as possible, before the decline of the Sasana, through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship!

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"