Pahankanuwa Sermon #78

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

Author: Ven. Katukurunde Nanananda Thero

(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.112)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

Pupphāni heva pacinantaṃ,

byāsattamanasaṃ naraṃ;

suttaṃ gāmaṃ mahogho va,

maccu ādāya gacchati.

From:

Dhammapada 47 (Pupphavagga)

Dear Listeners,

Just like a florist who enters a flower garden and walks about gathering beautiful flowers, a human being who is infatuated with the treasures of the fivefold sensual pleasures is lost in a world of flowers. That person has no correct understanding of the reality of life, or the *Anicca* (Impermanent) nature of life. Suddenly, Death (*Māra*) comes and drags him away, shattering the sweet dreams of that person who had fallen into the sleep of negligence.

Now, this verse we have taken as our theme was preached by the Buddha on an occasion when a group of people, who had fallen into the sleep of negligence while dreaming sweet dreams of victory, were swept away by a great flood and fell into the jaws of death.

King Pasenadi of Kosala once thought that if he could establish a blood relationship with the Buddha, the Saṅgha would come to the palace more often for alms. To make himself more trusted by the Saṅgha, he devised a plan to marry a princess of the Sakyan clan. Thinking thus, he sent a message to the Sakyan kings asking them to send a princess. So, those Sakyan princes gathered in their assembly hall and discussed: “Now, this king is not of equal clan to us; how can we give him a Sakyan

daughter? If we do not give her, since this king is powerful, he might think to destroy us." While discussing this problem, Mahānāma the Sakyan came forward and said, "I have a daughter named Vāsabhakhattiyā, born from the womb of a maidservant. Let us give her and save ourselves."

So, the Sakyan kings sent a message saying they were ready to give a daughter of a son of the Buddha's uncle. King Kosala, very pleased, sent a delegation to bring her. However, King Kosala also had a suspicion. He told his men, "These people called Sakyans are very crafty; they might even give a slave's daughter. Therefore, tell them to send a daughter who dines from the same dish as her father." When this condition was mentioned, Mahānāma the Sakyan used a trick: he adorned Vāsabhakhattiyā beautifully, showed a demonstration of her eating together with him, and handed her over to the royal emissaries. Thus, having taken her back, King Kosala made her the chief queen, putting her at the head of the five hundred women of the harem, and consecrated her.

In the course of time, a son was born, and this son was named Viḍūḍabha. With the aim of becoming even more trusted by the Buddha, King Kosala appointed Prince Viḍūḍabha as the commander-in-chief in his childhood. In fact, nominally, he was designated as commander-in-chief from his early childhood. Also, when this prince was seven years old, he asked his mother, "Other princes of my age receive gifts and presents from their mother's side. Why is it not so for me? Doesn't mother have relatives—parents and others?" Then she deceived him, saying, "They live very far away; that is why they do not send anything."

Next, when Prince Viḍūḍabha turned sixteen, he asked for permission, saying, "I would like very much to see my mother's relatives; please give me permission to go." She tried to prevent him, saying there was no use going there, but failed. Having no alternative, she allowed him. A message was also sent to the Sakyans: "Prince Viḍūḍabha is coming." So, this was a problem for the Sakyan princes as well. Gathering again in the assembly hall, they thought: "Now when Prince Viḍūḍabha comes, if we are to perform the custom of salutation, the younger princes will have to bow to Prince Viḍūḍabha." To prevent this, they used a trick: they sent all those who were younger than Prince Viḍūḍabha to the countryside, as if sending them on some business. When Prince Viḍūḍabha arrived with his retinue, the elders introduced the relatives to him, saying, "This is your uncle, this is so-and-so." Prince Viḍūḍabha bowed to all of them, but when he looked around next, there was no one bowing to him. He asked, "Why is there no one to bow to me?" They told another lie there: "We have sent the younger princes to the countryside on an urgent matter." So, after showing great hospitality and honor to them, they sent Prince Viḍūḍabha and his retinue back.

After they departed, a certain slave woman, while washing the wooden bench where Prince Viḍūḍabha had sat with milk-water, muttered and cursed: "This is the bench where the son of the slave-woman Vāsabhakhattiyā sat. What a nuisance!" While she

was washing it with milk-water, an incident occurred. One of Viḍūḍabha's soldiers, having forgotten his weapon, came back to fetch it and heard her cursing Prince Viḍūḍabha. When he investigated and inquired into this, he found out through gossip that Vāsabhakhattiyā was indeed the daughter of a slave woman. That soldier went and told the rest of the army. It became a huge uproar among the army: "This Vāsabhakhattiyā is a slave's daughter!" and the story spread. Hearing this, Prince Viḍūḍabha developed intense hatred and malice, forming a firm determination and grudge: "Very well! This lot washed the bench where I sat with milk-water. On the day I become king, I will cut their throats and wash this bench with their blood!"

Having harbored this, after the group returned, the members of this soldier group revealed this secret to King Kosala. King Kosala became extremely angry, thinking, "They have given me a slave's daughter!" and conceived intense rage against the Sakyans. Right then, he stopped all the hospitality and special privileges previously given to Queen Vāsabhakhattiyā and Prince Viḍūḍabha, and began treating them in the manner of slaves. He completely suspended the hospitality and benefits given to them up to that point.

A few days later, when the Buddha visited the palace, King Kosala complained, "Blessed One, your relatives have given me a slave's daughter..." Then the Buddha stated, "That is a very unjust thing the Sakyans have done. To say the least, they should have given someone of their own clan. Even so, Great King, I tell you this: Vāsabhakhattiyā, when looked at from the father's side, is after all the daughter of a king, and she has also been consecrated as the queen of a king. Similarly, Viḍūḍabha too, from the father's side, is a royal prince." Next, he said, "The mother's clan is secondary; the father's clan alone is sufficient." To support this, he cited a Jātaka story—we do not intend to relate that Jātaka story at this moment. Recounting the *Kaṭṭhahāri Jātaka*, where in the past a similar event occurred where a child was born due to a connection between a wood-gathering woman and a king, yet eventually received the kingship, the Buddha consoled the King. Consoling his mind with that, King Kosala restored Vāsabhakhattiyā to her former status and Prince Viḍūḍabha to his previous position. But Viḍūḍabha's hatred did not cease.

We are telling this long story in brief. At a certain point, King Kosala was over eighty years old, quite aged. Because King Kosala was extremely faithful, when the Buddha was staying in a village near the Sakyan country, he went to see the Buddha, handed his royal insignia to his commander-in-chief named Dīghakārāyana, and went alone to see the Buddha, entering his chamber. Meanwhile, the commander-in-chief Dīghakārāyana took those royal insignia, went with the army, and made Prince Viḍūḍabha the king. He did so to settle an old grudge. On a previous occasion, King Kosala had put the commander-in-chief named Bandhula to death. This Dīghakārāyana was a nephew of that commander-in-chief Bandhula. Because he harbored that anger, he took the royal insignia and installed Prince Viḍūḍabha on the throne. Meanwhile, when King Pasenadi of Kosala came outside and looked, there was only a horse and a certain maidservant near that horse. After hearing this story,

King Kosala, extremely angry and with the intention of seizing back the kingdom from Viḍūḍabha, went to Rājagaha seeking the help of his nephew, King Ajātasattu, riding that horse, with only that woman as his follower. On that occasion, as he could not reach there before the city gates were closed, King Kosala ended up passing away helplessly during the night in an open hall.

The story of King Kosala ends there. Now, Viḍūḍabha was indeed the king. A few days after becoming king, he remembered the hatred he had harbored in the past. Thinking, “Now is the time for revenge,” he set out with a large army, determined to destroy the entire Sakyan clan. On the morning of that day, when the Buddha surveyed the world with the Attainment of Great Compassion, he saw the impending mass slaughter of his relatives. Seeing this destruction, and with the intention of preventing it, the Buddha traveled through the air. On the border of the Sakyans, in the portion belonging to the Sakyans, there was a tree that did not have much shade. He had gone for alms, partaken of his midday meal, and then departed. He traveled through the air in the afternoon. Thus going, the Buddha sat under that tree which had little shade. Beyond that, within Viḍūḍabha’s territory, there was a large banyan tree with plenty of shade. Now when Viḍūḍabha arrived with his army, he saw the Buddha, paid homage, and asked, “Blessed One, the banyan tree on my side of the border has good shade, why are you sitting like this in this hot sun?” Then the Buddha replied, “The shade of relatives is indeed cool.” From this, Viḍūḍabha understood that the Buddha had traveled this far for the protection of his relatives. Thinking so, he returned with his army. In the same way, for a second time, Viḍūḍabha’s mind urged him: “I must take revenge somehow.” So, when he went the second time, the Buddha was there. He came a third time as well. Even when he came the third time, the Buddha was there.

Thus, having gone three times, on the day he set out with his army for the fourth time, the Buddha investigated the past *kamma* (action/deed) of the Sakyans. This *kamma* of the Sakyans had now reached a point where it could not be prevented. What had these Sakyan princes done in the past? Collectively, through a certain conspiracy, they had put poison in a river. Perhaps with the intention of destroying the people of a kingdom downriver, they had committed the evil *kamma* of putting poison in a river, and that was now manifesting in an unpreventable manner. For this reason, the Buddha did not travel there on that day. So, Viḍūḍabha went with a huge army, and it is said that they did not even fight a proper battle with the Sakyans. They surrendered completely, as it were. Prince Viḍūḍabha commanded his men to kill everyone who said “I am a Sakyan,” but to spare the life of Mahānāma the Sakyan (who was his mother's father) and the retinue with him. According to that command, almost the entire Sakyan clan, including infants at the breast, were massacred, and Viḍūḍabha had that wooden bench washed with their blood.

Having finished all that, while this army was returning, it became night by the time they reached the river called Aciravatī. So, the army camped there. Although that river Aciravatī was a large river, during the dry season it was completely a bed of

sand; it dried up entirely. Due to such a situation, some of that group prepared to sleep on the riverbank, and some on the sandy bed in the middle of the river. After they lay down to sleep, some insects—let us say a type of small creatures like winged termites—emerged from the ground. Among those on the sandy bed in the middle of the river, there were some who had not committed the evil *kamma*, and among those on the bank, there were those who had committed the evil *kamma*. Those who had not committed the evil *kamma*, sleeping in the middle of the river, were troubled by the insects. Therefore, they got up and came to the bank to sleep, saying, "Because of these creatures, we cannot sleep here." Likewise, those on the bank who had committed the evil *kamma* were troubled when the insects emerged, so they went to the middle of the river and slept on the sandy bed—those who had done wrong. Look how *kamma* operates! Meanwhile, suddenly, as if a thick, dark cloud gathered—perhaps at the upper reaches of the river—a massive rain fell unexpectedly, and a flash flood rushed down, sweeping away the entire army and drowning them in the sea. Thus, just as they had destroyed the Sakyan clan, Viḍūḍabha and his entire host met their destruction in the very same way.

After this event, a discussion arose among the general public: "Alas! This Sakyan clan, the Buddha's own relatives, were needlessly and blamelessly destroyed in this way by Viḍūḍabha, weren't they?" When the monks mentioned this talk to the Buddha, the Buddha stated, "No, monks, although the Sakyans did not commit such wrongs in this life, in the past they committed that unwholesome deed of putting poison in the river. It is because that could not be prevented that it happened in this way."

Next, on another day in the Dhamma assembly, the monks gathered and were talking about Viḍūḍabha: "Having committed such a great sin, he did not even get the chance to return and rule as king; they were swept away by the river water." It was on that occasion that the Buddha uttered the verse we presented at the beginning. Now, let us look at the meaning and the exposition of that verse.

"Pupphāni heva pacinantaṃ, byāsattamanasaṃ naraṃ,

Suttaṃ gāmaṃ mahogho va, maccu ādāya gacchati."

The meaning is: "Just as a great flood sweeps away a sleeping village, so Death comes and carries off the human being who gathers only flowers, who is infatuated with flowers, and whose mind is attached to gathering flowers." Thus, although it is a four-line verse, the more we analyze it, the deeper the meaning we can extract. In all of this, there is a profound meaning within this verse that goes far beyond the mere historical event. Indeed, the Buddha did not merely utter this verse; he must have preached a major sermon related to it. It is recorded that upon hearing it, people even attained the Fruits of the Path.

If we reflect on this story, we can see how much disaster can occur due to clan conceit (pride of birth). Because of the clan conceit of those Sakyans, they employed such

tricks. When those crafty tricks were exposed, Viḍūḍabha conceived intense hatred. It was like King Kosala also developing hatred and aversion. Even more so, Viḍūḍabha harbored a grudge over the insult done to him, and even though the Buddha tried three times, he could not prevent it. So strong was the thought of hatred and revenge that Viḍūḍabha came for the fourth time and, as they say, seemed to have fulfilled his heart's desire—the thing he hoped for. But just as the Buddha said, in the end, having fulfilled it, he did not get the chance to rule as king; he met his death.

However, from this we can realize how much heartbreak and destruction occur due to clan conceit. On the other hand, that aversion, the thought of revenge, is such a massive crime. Viḍūḍabha intended to destroy the entire Sakyan clan, including young infants at the breast. And it is mentioned that he did so to a great extent. There are various historical records regarding this. Some say that certain groups escaped. At any rate, that thought of revenge became the root of an astonishingly massive destruction. Furthermore, even though the Buddha saw the destruction coming to his Sakyan clan, and though there were so many who had gone forth into homelessness from the Sakyan clan, without even a trace of agitation in them, he peacefully tried to save that Sakyan clan using his own Buddha-power. But when it was impossible, he left it to *kamma* itself. This cycle of *kamma* is something that even Buddhas and Arahants cannot prevent. Allowing it to take its course, the Buddha accepted the truth. So, that too is an example for us. To protect his clan, the Buddha employed a peaceful and very subtle method to indicate that he had come to save his relatives. Apart from that, he did not make any great appeal to Viḍūḍabha. So, at any rate, that is how it was.

Next, there are many things we can draw from this. Now, although this Viḍūḍabha, intoxicated by royal power and wealth, and by the pride of possessions and all that, acted high and mighty, thinking “I can do all of this,” in the end, he had to experience the results of his *kamma* (actions) in this very life (*diṭṭhadhammavedanīya*). Next, we can understand why the Buddha declared that the domain of *kamma* is unthinkable (*acinteyya*). *Kamma* operated in such an astonishing manner. See how those small insects emerged from the earth, as if to give results to those who had done wrong, and to save those who had not done wrong. Meritorious friends, even today you can recall such events. In various severe disasters—not only floods but also tsunamis (sea-water flooding) and other destructive events—how certain individuals escaped in miraculous ways. When looking at it from a worldly perspective, when we hear how even some who had led good lives somehow ended up there, we are amazed. Since we are not Buddhas, we cannot say definitively, but we can understand through the Dhamma what lies underneath. Some people have the idea that there is no influence of *kamma* beneath such collective destructions, and that these are things that happen automatically by nature. But leave aside other things, even these four elements—*paṭhavī, āpo, tejo, vāyo*—the four elements in our body, as doctors well know, undergo disturbances of wind, bile, and phlegm. These disturbances mostly occur within the underlying forces of *kamma*. It is the same with

the disturbances of the four external elements. At certain times, amazing forces of *kamma* connect with them too, because the attraction of *kamma* is that powerful. That is indeed the fearsome nature of this *saṃsāra*, which is shown as "owners of their *kamma*," "heirs to their *kamma*," and so forth. Similarly, there is "the order of *kamma*" (*kamma-niyāmatā*); there are incomprehensible, amazing karmic energies. One is drawn to them. Even the four great elements assist them at times. The Buddha has illustrated the karmic results that affect beings in this *saṃsāra* with the simile of "a tangled ball of string." When we think about *kamma*, we can understand that idea. For instance, because of you meritorious friends, even if one person does a small offering, others share that merit by saying "Sādhu! Sādhu!!" and rejoicing in it. That is regarding merit. Many do not know that one can also participate in demerit (sin). You meritorious friends get to know through various media channels that a certain enemy of yours has died, or let us say, an enemy army has been killed. This is a common thing during times of war. When it is announced that such a number of enemy soldiers have died in this war, how many people rejoice over it, jump with joy, and even light firecrackers in the end? But even if one rejoices in that manner, what is done by it? Behold, one participates in the unwholesome deed. One must guard against that. There is no need to explain to you meritorious friends about sharing/rejoicing in merit. If, when someone does a good thing, one can share that merit by saying "Sādhu! Sādhu!!", then demerit can also be shared in the same way. It must have been such a sharing that the Sakyans did. Putting poison in a river is something even one person can do. But a large group conspired, gathered collectively, and put that poison in the river.

Such things happen even today. Even according to ordinary law, if a group gathers, the responsibility or the guilt is shared by the entire group. Even more than the legal aspect, there is a cosmic law in the world; that is what is called "the order of *kamma*" (*kamma-niyāmatā*). According to that, everything is contained within the Buddha's word: *"Cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi"* ("Monks, intention is what I call *kamma*"). If one shows solidarity or rejoices in it through intention, then indeed, one is caught. So from this, we have to reflect on how terrifying this *saṃsāra* is. That is why we spoke of a tangled ball of string. If you give a tangled ball of string to a cat and say, "This is tangled, untangle it for me," it will pull it this way and that, tangling it even further. A person who does not know the Dhamma, who lacks right view, interacts with the world in just that manner. When such an event occurs, he rejoices and leaps with joy, happy that the enemy is destroyed. But just like what happened to Viḍūḍabha, he too accumulates that *kamma*.

There are such terrifying things in the world. People tangle these up, gathering others' things to themselves. They get entangled with them. That nature of entanglement is present in the world. One can get entangled in good, and one can get entangled in bad. You meritorious friends have often realized the *Dukkha* (Suffering) that ultimately lies even in those entanglements you thought were good. Even in the entanglements done thinking they are good, in the course of time, one realizes how many drawbacks (*ādīnava*) there are in this entanglement. You must understand

what I am saying. It is the same with bad entanglements on the other hand. Right there lies the terrifying nature of *saṃsāra*.

We mentioned a word, 'ogha', which is found in these verses. *'Mahogha'*, 'a great flood/torrent'. In fact, as it appeared to us, up to now we thought of *'mahogha'* as a flood of a river. Starting from inland, the flood sweeps down to the sea. That was the greatest flood. Now, however, there is a new concept. A new word has also come to us—where the sea itself comes, sweeps over, and drags things back into the sea. There is such a flood too. That is what everyone is talking about now. But four floods far more terrifying than that are mentioned in this Dhamma. They are called the *'cattāro oghā'*. Now we are coming to the deep aspect of the Dhamma. In this Dhamma, there are the *cattāro oghā*, four floods. The Dhamma mentions these four floods that drag one into this ocean of *saṃsāra*. What are these four floods? They are: *kāma-ogha* (flood of sensuality), *bhava-ogha* (flood of existence), *diṭṭhi-ogha* (flood of views), and *aviijjā-ogha* (flood of ignorance). Briefly described, they are as follows. *Kāma-ogha* refers to being infatuated with the fivefold sensual pleasures, just like the infatuation we mentioned earlier. Being dragged towards the fivefold sensual pleasures is the most manifest and powerful one—the flood of sensuality. One is dragged into that torrent of sensuality.

Next, *bhava-ogha* (flood of existence) is in a subtler sense. Beyond the fivefold sensual pleasures, there is a deeper aspect of the mind called attachment to form and formless realms (*rūpa-arūpa-rāga*). In accordance with those, one is born in the *rūpa* and *arūpa* Brahma worlds. The desire to be born in the Brahma worlds is a form of *Taṇhā* (Craving) for *Bhava* (Becoming)—it occurs through craving for existence. Similarly, what is called *jhāna-nikanti* is the attachment to *jhānas* (meditative absorptions). We consider *jhāna* to be a good thing. Even the yogis of the past took *jhāna* as a great thing. The Buddha pointed out that even there, craving for existence is present. Entering into a *jhāna* is just like a spinning top. You know how when spinning a top, you wind the string around it tightly and cast it with force. As long as the top has that speed, it keeps spinning on and on. Although the top stands straight, and it appears to stand straight due to the speed it has gathered, in the end, it falls over. It is just like that with the power of *jhāna*; no matter how hard you work to develop them, the top spun by those *jhānas* is what keeps spinning in the Brahma worlds. Having spun in the formless realms for aeons, it falls, and it falls back into *saṃsāra* itself. That is the terrifying nature of the craving for existence. Those who think only of *samatha* (tranquility) think highly of these things like *jhānas*. There is a good side to them; calming and unifying the mind is good. But if you form an attachment to them, it is called *jhāna-nikanti* (attachment to absorption). If you develop an unlimited attachment to *jhāna*, or if you specifically target birth in the Brahma worlds as your sole goal, this is what happens. Because in the end, you are dragged into the ocean of *saṃsāra*, and the problem is not resolved there.

Next, *diṭṭhi-ogha* (flood of views) refers to the sixty-two wrong views, which the Buddha has specifically declared as wrong views. Once one is overcome by them, it is

not easy to escape from them. After the mind is dragged into them, nothing else is seen. One is blinded by the guise of views.

Next, likewise, what is called *avijjā-ogha* (flood of ignorance) is the non-knowing of the truth. That is the subtlest problem existing at the highest level. Failing to understand the truth does not mean the mere reciting of words from memory. It is the failure to understand that this entire existence is *Dukkha* (Suffering), the failure to understand that this fivefold aggregate is entirely *dukkha*. What does it mean to say that *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) arise due to ignorance? Because of not understanding that this fivefold aggregate is *dukkha*, those preparations, arrangements made to bring about another fivefold aggregate—those are indeed what are called *saṅkhāra*. In short, it can be regarded in this way. It can be said that our effort to accumulate those *saṅkhāra*, and our engagement in them, is due to the lack of understanding of the Four Noble Truths. Because in the end, everything is shown to be *dukkha*. So, the lack of deep understanding of that is indeed what is called *avijjā-ogha*. Ignorance, the flood of non-knowing. So that is the explanation regarding those floods.

Next, another aspect of this, regarding the floods mentioned in the Dhamma, is that the Buddha speaks of crossing over these torrents. That is what is meant by *'oghassa nittharaṇāya'*, crossing over. It speaks of crossing the flood (*ogha-taraṇa*). It is mentioned that the Buddha crossed over all four torrents. The Arahants too are said to have crossed over those four. Now, why is it applied in this way? There, this concept of the torrent goes much deeper. In the exposition of crossing over this torrent, it is mentioned in certain places:

"Pañca chinde, pañca jahe, pañca cuttari bhāvaye,

pañca saṅgātigo bhikkhu, oghatiṇṇoti vuccati."

The Buddha uttered this verse in reply to a question asked by a certain deity. The deity's question was as follows:

"Kati chinde, kati jahe, kati cuttari bhāvaye,

kati saṅgātigo bhikkhu, oghatiṇṇoti vaccatīti."

A deity comes and asks the Buddha, "How many are to be cut? How many are to be abandoned? How many more are to be developed? A monk who has surmounted how many ties is said to have crossed the flood?" Such riddles and catechism-like verses on Dhamma points are mentioned in the Dhamma. So, the Buddha's reply to the question asked by that deity was: *Pañca chinde*—five must be cut. *Pañca jahe*—five must be abandoned. *Pañca cuttari bhāvaye*—five more must be developed. *Pañca saṅgātigo bhikkhu*—a monk who has surmounted five ties. *Oghatiṇṇoti vuccati*—is indeed said to have crossed the torrent.

Beings in the world are bound to *Bhava* (Becoming) by fetters (*saṃyojana*). Those fetters are ten in number. They are divided into two: the lower (*orambhāgiya*) and the higher (*uddhambhāgiya*). Out of these, five are forces that pull downwards. They are: *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (View of existing group/body), *sīlabbata-parāmāsa* (adherence to rules and rituals), *kāma-rāga* (sensual lust), and *paṭigha* (repulsion/anger). These are known as the lower fetters. These are the five that are to be cut. The simile given for this is as follows: if a bird is tied by its feet, even though it tries to fly, it cannot, can it? Then, the bond tying its feet has to be cut. It is said to be just like that with the lower fetters.

Next, the higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya*) are the subtle bonds known as lust for form (*rūpa-rāga*), lust for the formless (*arūpa-rāga*), conceit (*māna*), restlessness (*uddhacca*), and ignorance (*avijjā*). Now, what is the simile mentioned for them? When someone is hanging onto a tree, he cannot let go of that branch, can he? There, on that branch, there is an upward pull. Hanging onto a branch is an upward pull. That is why it was said here: five are to be cut, and five are to be abandoned. The forces pulling downwards must be cut. The forces pulling upwards must be abandoned. Having understood their true nature, once those that pull one towards the Brahma worlds, such as lust for form and lust for the formless, are removed, only then are the five abandoned.

Next, what is helpful for this? *Pañca cuttari bhāvaye*—those to be developed are the five: faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). It is through the development of these five that the cutting and abandoning of those fetters can be accomplished. Next, *pañca saṅgātigo bhikkhu*—there are various attachments (clings). The attachments known as lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), conceit (*māna*), and views (*diṭṭhi*) must also be abandoned. Such a monk is indeed called *oghatiṇṇa*—one who has crossed over the torrent. In this manner, the flood, the torrent, is mentioned.

Similarly, if we analyze further and explain this verse, there is *'suttaṃ gāmaṃ'*, which speaks of a sleeping village. It is said that just as a sleeping village is swept away, Death comes and carries one off. Let us talk and reflect a bit on this sleep as well. Regarding this sleep, too, there are similar catechism-like verses. It is mentioned in the Dhamma that a deity comes and asks:

> *"Kati jāgarataṃ suttā, kati suttesu jāgarā,*
>
> *katībhi rajamādeti, katībhi…"*

Among those who are awake, how many are asleep? Among those who are asleep, how many are awake? When asked thus, the Buddha declares: *Pañca jāgarataṃ suttā, pañca suttesu jāgarā*. That means, among those whom ordinary worldlings think are awake, five are asleep. What are those five? The five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) known as sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*), sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*). The

five hindrances are things that put a person into the sleep of defilements. Thus, among those who are awake in the world, those who have these are asleep. That is how we have to understand it. These riddle-like verses, riddle-stanzas, are presented as riddles concerning Dhamma points.

Pañca jāgarataṃ suttā—among those who are awake, five are asleep. Next, among those who are asleep, five are awake. Although they appear to be asleep in the ordinary sense, if they possess those qualities of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), they are awake. Those who have the hindrance-factors of sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt are asleep. But those who have faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—these are called the wakeful factors (*jāgariya-dhamma*)—are awake. Let me tell you a good illustration of this. Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha was someone who debated much with the Buddha. On one occasion, while debating with the Buddha, Saccaka asked the Buddha, "Do you remember, Blessed One, sleeping during the daytime?" "Yes, Saccaka, in the last month of the summer season, during the day, after my almsround, I lay down on my right side in the lion's posture, mindful and fully aware (*sati-sampajañña*)." Then he said, "The ascetics and brahmins say that is a deluded sleep." The Buddha replied, "I do not call it a deluded sleep merely because of that. If someone has the defiling taints (*āsava*) and other things that lead to future rebirth, that indeed is the deluded sleep. But the sleep of the other (one who is free) is not a sleep at all." That is what we have to take in this sense. While ordinary people in the world are awake, when they possess the hindrances of sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt, it is like being asleep. But even if someone is asleep, there—where mindfulness and full awareness are also mentioned—if they have developed those virtues of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom, they are awake even while sleeping. So, we can draw such deep meanings from this.

Next, let us consider why flowers were mentioned. It is the fivefold sensual pleasures that were compared to a flower garden. There are, especially in this era too, various kinds of optimistic attitudes in the world. Even though so many disasters occur, to the world deluded by defilements, only happiness is seen everywhere.

So let us think about production now. In the commercial world—we call it commercial. What is in it? Within the competitive commercial world, there are pleasing objects (*subha-ārammaṇa*). Brand new, latest fashions and designs are presented to consumers at a highly competitive level. Thus, there is a competition among manufacturers to present the most luxurious fashions and consumer goods in a newer way than others. Likewise, on the consumers' side too, there is that competitiveness, the desire to enjoy the fivefold sensual pleasures at a level far higher than one's neighbor.

So, even though everyone pursues happiness in that manner, if we look at it from the perspective of this life, at some point they are swept away either by a flood coming

from inland like that, or by sea-water coming from the ocean. In this life, there are such disastrous things. If we look at it from the perspective of the next life, from the perspective of *saṃsāra*, they are overcome by those aforementioned *kāma-ogha*, *bhava-ogha*, *diṭṭhi-ogha*, and *avijjā-ogha*, and are dragged into the ocean of *saṃsāra* nonetheless.

That is indeed what is meant in that verse by *"Pupphāni heva pacinantaṃ, byāsattamanasaṃ naraṃ"*—going about seeking only flowers, seeking flower after flower. When one falls into that flower garden of the flowers of the fivefold sensual pleasures, one falls into the sleep of negligence and goes on gathering them. One does not understand the reality of life. What is that reality? That is what we highlighted at the very beginning here: first, the terrifying nature of this *kamma*. In fact, why is *saṃsāra* considered an extremely terrifying place? The Buddha has declared that this (unwholesome action) never passes away without giving its result. It never passes away without giving its result!

Next, the Buddha has shown a way to break the power of their results. At the highest level, it is broken by the supramundane paths (*lokuttara-magga*). It is through the supramundane paths that this cycle of *kamma* is broken at some point. Short of that, it is broken by the person who lives according to a certain right view, having separated himself from those wrong views—which is called *kammassakatā-sammādiṭṭhi* (right view that one is the owner of one's actions). At the very least, without falling into woeful states, escaping from the path of the planes of misery which are regarded as terrifying abysses and indicated by words such as *apāya, duggati, vinipāta, niraya*, one can obtain at least those good human existences, good living conditions, lives that can assist in realizing Nibbāna. If one lives according to right view, on one hand, it is possible to make an effort to break that power of the force of *kamma*. More than that, what is to be done during the period of a Buddha's appearance is, as we mentioned at this time, in order to become *oghatiṇṇa* (one who has crossed the flood), to cut five, abandon five, and then develop another five, as said before. We must think specifically about the five to be developed: the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) known as faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

Now, ordinary worldlings, those who walk inside that aforementioned flower garden, use only the five sense-faculties received along with our *Jāti* (Birth). But those mentioned in this Dhamma are spiritual faculties. Five faculties. They are things pertaining to the mind. Now, these five physical sense-faculties are common even to ordinary animals. But it is only a human being or a deity who can practice the Dhamma who is able to develop these faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. It is when one attains their value that these faculties are said to arise properly.

So, next, that they are helpful is what is mentioned in the *Ālavaka Sutta* and elsewhere: *"Saddhāya taratī oghaṃ"*—it is by taking faith as one's support that one

can cross over these four torrents. To cross over the four torrents, over the ocean of *saṃsāra*, faith is helpful as the primary factor.

Next, if one receives encouragement from faith, what is done through faith? One is ready to bring forth even the energy hidden within oneself. Let us imagine that after a heavy rain, a great torrent is flowing. At first glance, looking at this flowing torrent, it seems: "Leave aside crossing to the other side, one cannot even think of it." But from the other side, the Buddha demonstrates with the gesture of fearlessness (*abhaya-mudrā*): "I have crossed over, it is possible to cross over. If you practice in this way and that, you can cross over." Behold, then faith arises. It is in accordance with that faith that one leaps into the water. Otherwise, saying, "Oh, how cold it is!" one would remain standing with arms folded. Instead, the faithful person, deciding "death or crossing," enters into these dispensational practices to cross over this torrent. There is such a great commitment within this faith. That is why faith is called resolution (*adhimokkha*). Through that faith, energy is released. Otherwise, one keeps it hidden. The capacity is there, but it does not come out. It comes out through that faith when the perception (*saññā*) arises: "This can be done." He can go there. There are people who have gone there. He sees that through the Buddha. That is what is called faith in the Teacher. Through the faith that arises from that, one generates physical and mental devotion/faith. Up to now, how much effort does a human being make to increase the heap of *dukkha* in daily life? How much suffering and hardship does he undergo? Hundreds and thousands of times more energy must be exerted to cross over this ocean of *saṃsāra*. That is what the Buddha declares regarding that energy. The Buddha applied energy at the highest level. What is called the fourfold-factored energy (*caturanga-samannāgata-viriya*) is: "Let only skin, sinews, and bones remain! Let flesh and blood dry up! If I am making this effort for a certain goal, without reaching that level, I shall not give up this energy." Applying it at that supreme level, the Buddha attained Buddhahood. So, even if we cannot do it at that level, we can apply an energy close to it only when we have that kind of faith.

Next, although we say "energy," it is not agitation that is there; it is not the arising of restlessness (*uddhacca*), but something that must be done mindfully. It must be done with mindfulness (*sati*). It is the energy applied with mindfulness that actually succeeds. Accordingly, in applying that energy, one has to use mindfulness so that the energy is not wasted.

Next, likewise, when these come together, mindfulness becomes strong, and at some point, concentration (*samādhi*) comes. What is called a more stable concentrated mind is this: up to now, the capacities of the scattered mind could not be fully brought forth, but once it is unified, a power comes to see what was previously unseen. That is indeed what is called wisdom (*paññā*). One can understand the true nature of things as they are through wisdom. All of these are shown as spiritual faculties (*indriya*). These are things to be developed; through development, these must be brought forth. They are not things received for nothing from within. Through engaging in them itself, these faculties must be brought forth.

It is by bringing forth faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) that, at some point, one is able to cross over that flood. So we must constantly reflect on life. This reality is very quickly forgotten by most people. Once they are overcome by the fivefold sensual pleasures, they forget the true nature of the world, and leave aside other things, they even forget the *Anicca* (Impermanent) nature of their own lives. Life is a very short time; we live for less than a hundred years. Yet within this, embracing the entire world, just like Viḍūḍabha did, one tries to perform all the exploits one can. But one never knows when or from where Death (*Māra*) will emerge. When past karmic forces gather together and operate at some moment, all of those become dreams. Life is a dream! In the end, the entirety of life is a dream!! Now, some think that at the final moment, they will be able to rejoice because of the exploits they performed in life. None of those are what will be presented before them in the end; an unexpected sign (*nimitta*) of some murder, theft, etc., which they kept hidden, might emerge. As the sign of destination (*gati-nimitta*), a thought regarding such a place as a plane of misery (*apāya*) or the animal world finally arises. When being swept away by seawater or a flood, it is not the success of this life up to now, nor the many experiences called successful in this life that are remembered at that moment. That becomes just a dream, and in the end, what is remembered in its place is the mind-produced form (*cittaja-rūpa*) presented in accordance with the karmic energy that brings about the next *Jāti* (Birth). It is according to that that the next form is created, a body is created. Such is the way of *saṃsāra*.

Thus, our lives have been spent in this manner for an infinite time. It is only during the period of a Buddha's appearance that one can cross over from this ocean of *saṃsāra*, from these four floods called *saṃsāra*. You lay meritorious friends know better than us how daily lay life is spent. Life is overcome by and drawn to various amazing forces, and within that aforementioned commercial civilization, there are amazing situations in society where the mind completely enters a state of madness. To avoid being caught in them, we must develop from within those spiritual faculties of faith, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. One must apply oneself at least in an effort to develop those faculties. Likewise, turning towards a simple life rather than those various fashions and designs mentioned, on an occasion like this of observing precepts, you meritorious friends get to recognize the true value of that Dhamma. It is not those fashions and designs in the world. Those are things that exist temporarily and then vanish. What can be regarded as eternal values is the recalling of the values of those virtues such as virtue (*sīla*) pointed out by the Buddha, and maintaining one's life in accordance with them. It is through that that one can establish real peace in life. Both in the past and in the present, even for those lay meritorious friends who led good lives, at least some peace could be established only by that kind of success—which we do not consider successful in this ordinary world, but is for those who led righteous, blameless, and virtuous lives in accordance with the Dhamma. It is only for those who listened to the Dhamma and meditated.

Having understood that with wisdom, according to what is said in this verse, since we do not know at what time that Death (*Māra*) will come in accordance with *kamma*, we must be ready for it at any time. That is why we say in certain instances, in this disastrous and calamity-prone era we have now, everyone should actually live with the "near-death mind" (*āsanna-citta*). We usually consider that when our aged parents or other relatives are close to death, we should bring a monk, preach a sermon, and think: "We must set this person's mind right"—thinking of the near-death mind, we make an effort for that. But a person who constantly has the fear of death, who has the awareness of the power of death, always tries to remain in a near-death state of mind. Why? Because he does not know at what moment death will come. Not only from external disasters, but from illnesses and ailments coming from within the body, in an completely unexpected manner—one can be talking like this, and suddenly one's speech can stop. Such things are present in this life. Therefore, that is why we are constantly, as the Buddha declared, said to be "prepared to die." One can say one is prepared to die, at least to some extent, only if one has led a life in accordance with the Dhamma. Yet the Buddha does not say that one should be satisfied even with that. Why? No matter what kind of state in the Brahma worlds one is born into, or even if one is born in the deva worlds, they too have to pass away (*cuta*) one day. They have to pass away from there once that *kamma* is exhausted. That top spins only as long as its energy is there, only as long as the force applied to it is there; next, having spun and spun, it slowly falls over. Such is the situation in the Brahma worlds and the deva worlds too. That is what the Buddha pointed out to the world.

Therefore, we must reflect: to resolve this fundamentally, we must bring forth that wisdom, insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*). We must always direct the mind towards the *Anicca* (Impermanent) nature of *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). That is the reality of life. The Buddha has declared that reality in three words: *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self). Even though we take all of this as "this is me, this is mine," what is here is merely a heap of efforts made to survive. In reality, there is no such thing as a life. Although we call it a "life," there is only an attempt to survive here. At times, it is merely a multitude of futile efforts. To use a simile, it is like trying to sleep on a brand new reed mat. When you unroll the new mat and try to lie down, behold, it curls up again. All the works we do are like that; just when we think they are well finished, behold, they curl back the other way.

That is what happened to Viḍūḍabha too. Having tried and made an effort four times like that, he fulfilled his heart's desire. He destroyed that entire Sakyan clan and tried to return after fulfilling his heart's desire by washing the bench he sat on with their blood as he had hoped. They lay down to sleep, whether in the middle of the river or on the bank, and were simply swept away by the water. It is just like that with our life-goals; just when we think we have attained each of them in a big way, sometimes due to various things they can be destroyed. Even if not, at the very least, at the moment of *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death) we have to abandon them. A moment comes when we have to leave behind all obtained positions, accumulated wealth,

gathered and raised children, and finally depart. At that time, preparing the mind for that is indeed what one should do. So, the moment of conquering that is what is called the Deathless, the deathless Nibbāna. It is the moment when the mind can be detached from this fivefold aggregate. That Deathless means: one dies, but there is no fear of death. The state where one can die without the fear of death is indeed what is called *Nivīma* (Extinction / Extinguishment).

What is called the deathless Nibbāna is not some strange food, nor a drink, nor something like a food found in the deva worlds. The deathless Nibbāna means, if at some moment, one can die without any fear of death. The fear of death is indeed what is present in the world, in everyone. If there is a state where one can die without a fear of death, it is the attainment of that. The noble ones who attained that state in this very life enter into those attainments—that is what is called the attainment of the Fruit of Arahantship—and having entered the attainment of the Fruit of Arahantship, they enjoy that peace (*nivīma*). That is not some strange world either. What is there is liberation from the world. There is the crossing over of *Bhava* (Becoming). There is the crossing over of the flood (*ogha*). That is what is called *Nivīma*, called Nibbāna. The terrifying nature of *saṃsāra* is indeed that one is born and dies again and again, born and dies. Born, dies. Born, dies. Thus, even though we rejoice when born, we are born only to die. Therefore, because of such a state, escaping from death is indeed the ultimate, highest, and most skillful thing to be done in the world. That is indeed Nibbāna, called the deathless Nibbāna. Even when that word is used, you meritorious friends might think of it as a world.

But for one who has developed those aforementioned faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), as their ultimate result, he is able to experience that strength to face *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death) without any fear of death. That is what the Buddha and the Arahants experienced. It is with that goal in mind that today you meritorious friends have observed the valuable precepts and listened to this Dhamma. Therefore, if everyone, if every Buddhist, aspires for Nibbāna, this is indeed what they aspire for. It is liberation from that aforementioned ocean of *saṃsāra*, from the flood.

Therefore, in order to attain that capacity, if you have accumulated any wholesome energy (*kusala*) through observing precepts, listening to sermons, and meditating up to now today, may that wholesome energy, with the help and assistance of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) in this very life, succeeding in sermons and meditation, assist you in quickly obtaining that! May the wholesome energy of Dhamma-preaching and Dhamma-hearing be a supportive condition! Thus, make your aspiration. Including the deceased relatives who have passed away in your names, may whatever living beings from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha who wish to rejoice in this wholesome deed of Dhamma-preaching and Dhamma-hearing, by doing so, realize the supreme and great Deathless Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their choice! Aspiring thus, recite these verses and share the merit.

“*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*”