Pahankanuwa Sermon #117

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.12)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

Attanā codayattānaṃ, paṭimāse attamattano;

so attagutto satimā, sukhaṃ bhikkhu vihāhisi;

attā hi attano nātho, attā hi attano gati;

tasmā saṃyamayattānaṃ, assaṃ bhadraṃva vāṇijo ti.

From:

Dhammapada 379–380 (Bhikkhuvagga)

Dear Listeners,

Today is the Duruthu Full Moon Poya Day—the first Full Moon Poya Day of the new year according to worldly convention. When a new year arrives, worldly people usually make new resolutions, look at new calendars, set aside old things, and expect to begin a new life. Just as we try to make things new, we are also compelled to preserve and protect certain old things. There is also a custom in the world to maintain old things as mementos and souvenirs. However, most people maintain and protect as mementos and souvenirs those things that increase defilements and prolong samsara. But when we think in accordance with the Dhamma, the true mementos and souvenirs we should utilize and protect are those through which our minds develop, our minds are purified, and those things and objects that bring an end to samsaric *Dukkha* (Suffering).

It is a story about a Venerable monk who derived the maximum benefit from such a practically valuable memento that is presented in the Dhammapada Commentary as the background story to the verses we have taken as our theme. We have themed two verses from the *Bhikkhu Vagga* of the Dhammapada.

At the time when our Buddha was residing at Jetavana monastery, there lived a certain poor man in the city of Sāvatthī. He was someone who lived with great difficulty, doing various hired manual labor for others. One day, a compassionate monk saw this man going to work with a plow on his shoulder, wearing a very dirty, ragged piece of cloth—let us say, like a loincloth. Out of compassion, this monk asked him: "Rather than leading a livelihood of this nature, wouldn't it be better for you to ordain?" The man replied: "Oh, Venerable Sir, who would ordain someone leading a life like ours?" Then the monk declared: "If you are willing to ordain, my dear friend, I shall ordain you." The man agreed, saying, "Oh, that is very good!"

At that very moment, this monk took that man to Jetavana monastery, bathed him well with his own hands, brought him to the *Sīma Mālakaya* (ordination hall), and ordained him. Furthermore, this monk did something specific at that time: he arranged to place the ragged piece of cloth the man had been wearing, along with the plow, on a branch of a certain tree within the *Sīma Mālakaya* premises itself. Because of this, a nickname was attached to this newly ordained monk: "Nangalakula" (of the plow family). After being ordained, this monk received higher ordination (*upasampadā*). He was known as "Venerable Nangalakula." "Nangalakula" means one ordained from a plow family; somehow, a name connected to this plow was attached to him. During the lifetime of our Buddha, the Sangha generally did not lack the four requisites. This monk, too, received the four requisites well, in contrast to his previous miserable life.

However, the conduct of this new monk must not have been conducive to Nibbāna. Before long, he became disillusioned with the monastic life. He felt like disrobing and leaving. Yet, he thought: "Right now, I have nothing to wear and go. It is not good for me to go in this robe. It is not proper to go home taking the clothing given by people out of faith." Thus, he went to that tree in the *Sīma Mālakaya*, to the place where the ragged piece of cloth was kept. When he went there, a great sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) arose within him. He admonished himself: "You shameless man! Do you expect to wear this and do hired labor again?" He admonished himself thus. Lo and behold! His mind turned back toward the monastic life. His mind settled. The mind was stilled. Thus, he went back to perform his duties of the monastic life. After a few days, he again felt like going home. Once more, he came to that spot. He came and admonished himself. In this manner, this monk frequently visited the vicinity of that plow and loincloth.

Then, the other monks, seeing this, asked: "Friend Nangalakula Thera, why do you go to that particular place so often?" This monk gave a very wise answer: "Venerable Sirs, I go to my teacher (*ācariya*)." Who was this teacher? The plow and the loincloth. For this monk, who had accustomed himself to go there frequently in this manner, there was no need to go there for long. Before long, having destroyed all defilements, he realized the noble fruit of Arahantship.

After becoming an Arahant, there was no necessity to go to that plow and loincloth in that manner. Seeing that he no longer went in that direction, the other monks asked

him in jest: "What is the matter, Venerable Nangalakula? Has the road to your teacher now been closed?" Then this monk replied: "Friends, when I had attachments and blockages, I went to that teacher. Now that they are broken, there is no need for me to go there." This was a profound statement. From this, the monks understood that this monk was declaring his realization of Arahantship. To claim Arahantship without having attained it is a grave offense according to the Vinaya. Therefore, these monks went and complained to our Buddha: "Indeed, the monk of such a name is speaking in this manner." Then our Buddha declared: "No, monks, it is indeed so. My son, having exhorted himself and established himself in the practice of accusing himself, destroyed all defilements and attained supreme Arahantship." It was then that our Buddha uttered the two verses we mentioned earlier:

Attanā codayattānaṃ

paṭimāse attamattanā

so attagutto satimā

sukhaṃ bhikkhu vihāhisi.

That is the first verse: "Exhort yourself by yourself, examine yourself by yourself. Thus self-guarded and mindful, O monk, you will dwell in comfort."

The next verse states:

Attā hi attano nātho

attā hi attano gati

tasmā saṃyamayattānaṃ

assaṃ bhadraṃva vāṇijo ti.

"Self indeed is the savior of self. Self indeed is the destiny of self. Therefore, restrain yourself, as a merchant restrains a noble horse." Since that is the case, the advice is to tame, discipline, and restrain oneself. Next, a simile is given: just as a horse-merchant, upon receiving a fine horse, tames and domesticates it, so should one domesticate and discipline oneself. The Buddha's advice concludes with this verse.

Let us now reflect, in this new year, on the lesson we can extract for our lives from these verses and the story. *Codayattānaṃ*—this "accusing" or "exhorting" is a deep word. In modern times, it is commonly used as something to be directed at someone else. In courtrooms, the word "accusation" is used in that sense. However, this word contains many far-reaching meanings. Exhortation (*codanā*) does not mean merely accusing. The idea of urging or driving forward is present there. It is like what we call "driving" cattle. Even this monk, when he went near that plow and rags, might have remembered how he used to drive bulls. It is not easy to drive a bull in the mud; the bull always tries to avoid the yoke. But he had the habit of driving. Instead of driving

bulls, what did this monk do? He drove himself out of the muddy swamp of defilements. Thus, in the word *codayati*, there is that quality of beating and driving oneself, or in other words, admonishing oneself. Admonishing is something that helps one reform.

Through *attanā codayattānaṃ*, this Venerable monk did a very wise thing.

Next is *paṭimāse attamattanā*. This means measuring oneself by oneself. At first, this monk went there because he wanted to disrobe and needed the ragged cloth to wear. But when he got there and thought about it, two images must have appeared to him. On one hand, the monastic image clad in the robe, which is the banner of Arahantship. On the other hand, the image of the farmer wearing rags, carrying a plow, or driving bulls. Then, the question must have naturally arisen within him: "Is this suitable for me? Is this fitting? Is it proper?" Thus, our Buddha explains that way. The lesson required for someone to reform is found here. *Attanā codayattānaṃ paṭimāse attamattanā*. One must drive oneself; one must admonish oneself. Likewise, one must measure oneself by oneself.

In the world, "self-respect" (*ātma-gauravaya*) is often spoken of, as in, "this is harmful to self-respect." That word "self-respect" is often used in the sense of pure conceit (*māna*), meant to stand out above others rather than with an intention to reform. However, our Buddha shows its practical value. The Dhamma points out three guiding principles for a person to reform: *Attādhipateyya* (Self-sovereignty), *Lokādhipateyya* (World-sovereignty), and *Dhammādhipateyya* (Dhamma-sovereignty). *Attādhipateyya* means measuring things and making decisions with oneself as the primary authority. Raising the questions: "Is this suitable for me? Is this fit for someone like me? Is it proper for me?" Then, if it is not suitable, one refrains from doing it. Our Buddha points to this principle as something that helps one reform.

There is another method for someone to rise from wrong and shape their character. That is called *Lokādhipateyya*. It is also called *lokāpavāda* (censure of the world) or *parānuvāda* (blame by others). *Lokāpavāda* here means that one should be mindful of being subjected to the censure of wise people. Generally, fools praise what is bad. However, there are always things in the world that the wise censure, and things the wise praise. Thus, our Buddha declares that it is good to refrain from doing things that invite the censure of the wise, and to do things that receive their praise. This is what is meant by *Lokādhipateyya*. By utilizing this, too, a person can correct their shortcomings. The third principle is shown as *Dhammādhipateyya*. This is acting out of respect for the Dhamma, in accordance with the Dhamma one has learned and heard: "In the Dhamma declared by the Buddha, this has been stated as good, and this has been shown as bad." Thinking thus, discarding wrong thoughts according to the Dhamma, and turning to the right path is *Dhammādhipateyya*.

Now, in this instance, this monk utilized *Attādhipateyya*. The specific reason we see here is that this monk ordained with a certain sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*)

regarding his miserable life. Our Buddha points out eight factors called *saṃvega-vatthu* (objects of spiritual urgency) which help a person reform and which a meditator must constantly reflect upon daily. Just as various speeds and forces are required for other journeys in the world, the force that helps the journey to Nibbāna—which extinguishes the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of samsara—is *saṃvega* (spiritual urgency). Our Buddha has pointed out eight objects that assist this spiritual urgency: *Jāti* (Birth), decay/aging, sickness, death, woeful states, *Dukkha* (Suffering) endured in the past, *Dukkha* (Suffering) that will have to be endured in the future, and the *Dukkha* (Suffering) that has to be endured in the search for food.

To explain them one by one, *Jāti* means Birth. Birth / Arising is *Dukkha* (Suffering). In this samsara, for an infinite time, one is born and dies, born and dies. The event of birth itself is an occasion of *Dukkha* (Suffering) that brings pain. From the place of birth, next is decay and aging (*jarā*). Reaching old age, decaying—one must think about this. For an infinite time in this samsara, one has built up these physical cages and watched them decay.

Next is sickness (*vyādhi*), diseases; one does not know when they will arrive. Perhaps sickness is remembered by many only when doctors tell them so—when they say "you have only a week or two to live," only then does spiritual urgency arise in some people. In this day and age, there are infinite, boundless diseases like cancer. It is in such circumstances that spiritual urgency sometimes arises. That is too late. This is something that must be recalled constantly: this physical cage can fall prey to sickness in this manner. What happens in the end? Death. Everyone has a fear of death. They think about the pleasures and resources of the world, and thereby suppress this. Some do not even like to think about death even when they are at a funeral house. However, for a meditator, if they are to develop spiritual urgency and proceed along this path of Dhamma, death is something that must be contemplated daily.

Next is the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of woeful states (*apāya*) that many have to endure after death—the *Dukkha* of the four woeful states. In this samsara, if one has not attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), anyone can go to the four woeful states just like going to their own home. Why? Because in leading a human life, it is mostly unwholesome actions (*pāpakamma*) that are performed. Therefore, one must think of this *Dukkha* of woeful states and develop spiritual urgency. Next, if the Buddha's word is true, one must think of the past *Dukkha*(Suffering) endured in samsara over infinite time, and develop spiritual urgency, thinking: "I must shorten this samsara, I must end this samsara." If one does not realize Nibbāna, for how much longer in the future will one have to endure *Dukkha* in this manner? The past *Dukkha* and the *Dukkha* to be endured in the future are of that nature. The final factor is the *Dukkha* one has to endure in this very life in order to search for food. For those who are wealthy and have money in their daily lives, this is not understood as *Dukkha*. However, for a poor man, for someone who had to lead a poor life like Venerable Nangalakula, it is easily understood how painful a matter this is—this

matter of sustaining one's stomach. This is something that causes great spiritual urgency.

Since monks did not lack the four requisites during the Buddha's time, one might think they lived such a monastic life. But this monk must have thought: "For an infinite time in this samsara, I have lived in this manner just to sustain my stomach." Our Buddha also declared on a certain occasion: "Monks, when you see a poor person, think in this way: I, too, must have lived in this manner at some time." Now, some people do not think that way. Seeing others, they develop conceit about their own superiority, rather than thinking: "I, too, must have led such miserable lives for an infinite time in this samsara; I, too, must have begged." But our Buddha tells the monks to recall this constantly: "You have suffered *Dukkha*(Suffering) like this for an infinite time in samsara."

In that manner, what especially helped this monk to ordain was the last-mentioned object of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega-vatthu*) regarding the *Dukkha*(Suffering) of searching for food—the accumulation of *Dukkha* one has to endure by performing hired labor to sustain the stomach in order to lead this life. This monk utilized that very thing as a support for Nibbāna, using it just like a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). For some, they can bring meditation to its culmination through that very object of spiritual urgency. What does one do through that? What is its practical value? It is the ability to renew the mind when the mind runs after defilements. When the mind is about to fall, he used that memento as a support to raise it. When practiced in this way for a long time, it must have naturally become a meditation subject. Whenever this monk felt like going home, the plow and the rags appeared to him. In this way, he trained his mind. It was to renew this that he came there from time to time.

We have only two things to do: we must expel the defilements that arise in our minds, and we must arouse wholesome thoughts. To put it another way, in the Dhamma, this is expressed as the fourfold effort, or Right Effort (*Samyak Vyāyāma*): the non-arising of unarisen defilements, the expelling of arisen defilements, the arousing of unarisen wholesome thoughts, and the protection of arisen wholesome thoughts. The support for this is that memento. Indeed, the monk who derived the highest possible benefit from a plow in the world was this monk. He used it as a support all the way to Nibbāna.

Likewise, he measured himself by himself. Recalling his past, he thought: "If I go back now, how will it be? What a wrong thing to do! Now I am leading a valuable monastic life. If I go back, wear those rags, and lead that kind of livelihood again, haven't I turned back toward samsara?" Thus, he accused himself. He admonished himself. Because of doing so—*paṭimāse attamattanā—so attagutto satimā*, by maintaining thoughts in this way, he aroused mindfulness. *Satimā* means he aroused mindfulness. Through that, *attagutto*, he secured his own protection. To put it briefly, he entered the path of *Satipaṭṭhāna* (Establishment of Mindfulness). He

constantly watches over his body, *Vedanā* (Feeling), mind, and the mental objects (*dhamma*) that enter his mind—the unwholesome states that arise in his mind. Then, he takes the necessary course of action to dispel them. Next, he strives to develop and increase wholesome qualities. This is what one has to do if one expects to realize Nibbāna. *So attagutto satimā*—through that, one secures one's own protection.

In this Dhamma, there is self-discipline. One must do this oneself; another person cannot do this for you. In the world, in society, there is something called "self-service." There is something called "self-employment." When people look for jobs and fail, they create a job for themselves as self-employment. Or else, self-service: doing the service oneself. In the same way, in this Dhamma, what takes place is self-discipline. One disciplines oneself. This is not something another person can do. That is why in the second verse our Buddha declared: *Attā hi attano nātho*—Self indeed is the savior of self. There are some religions that say another person, some other god, secures one's liberation. Our Buddha declares unequivocally:

Attā hi attano nātho

ko hi nātho paro siyā

attanā hi sudantena

nāthaṃ labhati dullabhaṃ

"Self indeed is the savior of self, for who else could the savior be? With a well-tamed self, one obtains a savior that is hard to find." Thus, our Buddha declares.

Here too, *Attā hi attano nātho — Attā hi attano gati*. *Gati* means where one goes. For the next world, we often use the phrase "the place one goes to." Even if we do not explicitly say where one goes, most people know where they are going. Rarely does someone go upwards to a happy destination (*sugati*). Most people go to a woeful destination (*dugati*). Thus, the place one goes to is decided not by any other creator or god, but by oneself—in accordance with the kamma one performs. Thus, that too belongs to oneself. Our Buddha has constantly reminded us of this responsibility that lies with us. On another occasion, our Buddha declared:

Tumhehi kiccaṃ ātappaṃ

akkhātāro tathāgatā

"O monks, you yourselves must make the effort; the Tathāgatas are only teachers." They point the finger, showing: "Go in this direction." The journey itself belongs to you. *Paṭipannā pramokkhanti mārabandhanā* (those who tread the path will free themselves from the fetters of Māra). If anyone walks on this path and develops concentration (*jhāna*) and meditation, such people will escape from Māra. In various instances, our Buddha reminded us of this responsibility that lies within us.

Therefore, what we must do, which our Buddha points out as advice in conclusion, is: *Tasmā saṃyamayattānaṃ, assaṃ bhadraṃva vāṇijo*. "Therefore, restrain yourself, as a merchant restrains a noble horse." Restrain yourself, tame yourself, discipline yourself. How does one tame oneself? The simile is given: *assaṃ bhadraṃva vāṇijo*—like a horse-merchant when he gets a horse. Although we say "horse," when a wild horse is received, there is no use in a wild horse to sell and earn something. No matter how valuable this horse may seem, due to its wildness, that value is lost. Therefore, it must be tamed. The horse-merchant has to undergo considerable effort, toil, and expense for this taming.

This simile is presented here to show how one must tame oneself. Just like taming a wild horse or a wild elephant, this is something to be done systematically. It must be done with great care. This process of training is shown in the Dhamma as the threefold training: *Sīla* (Virtue/Morality), *Samādhi* (Concentration), and *Paññā* (Wisdom). If we translate the word *Sīla* into Sinhala, it is taming itself. *Sīla* means being tamed. This is not taming other animals, but taming oneself. Taming others sometimes seems easy; taming oneself is difficult. In the world, that is the very thing most people try to do last. Most people try to tame others. But most are reluctant to become tamed themselves. However, that is what must be done.

Now, here, these meritorious people undertook the precepts. In doing so, you uttered the word *samādiyāmi* at every turn. *Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*—the precept of refraining from taking the lives of beings, that practice of taming, *samādiyāmi* means "I take it up well and protect it. I observe that practice. I protect it." Although we say "we give precepts," we do this to make it easy to pronounce the Pali words correctly. But what is done here is not "giving" precepts, but taking them, through the word "I" (*samādiyāmi*).

There lies a self-discipline. One disciplines oneself. One promises to discipline oneself. How does this become a discipline? It is not merely saying it and forgetting it. Almost everyone here knows the meaning. It is to generate greater respect and faith that it is traditionally recited in Pali. However, one must understand its meaning clearly in Sinhala. Undertaking this practice of refraining from destroying the lives of beings and protecting it is a certain resolution—a promise to oneself. It is not a promise made to another person. Since it is a promise made to oneself, when that promise is broken, who is it that blames? Oneself. That indeed is the fear of self-reproach (*attānuvāda-bhaya*). Our Buddha declares: "Some people in the world say, 'I am not afraid. I am fearless. I am brave.'" But in the Dhamma, it is shown that one must fear what is to be feared.

Abhaye bhayadassino

bhaye cābhayadassino

micchādiṭṭhisamādānā

sattā gacchanti duggatiṃ

Thus, it is shown that some people fear what is not to be feared; that is wrong. However, one must fear what is to be feared. What are the things to be feared? The fear of woeful states (*apāya*), the fear of samsara—one must fear these. No matter if one says one is not afraid of these, in the end, as a consequence of these, one will have to endure a multitude of terrible sufferings (*Dukkha*). Therefore, as we have expressed, our Buddha always highlights those things that help us reform. They are not things to be settled by argument. They are things that help our reformation and our growth. Various debaters might speak in different ways: "There is no need to fear anything; one need not fear anyone!" However, our Buddha declares that those who said there is no need to fear in that manner might one day have to be born as animals in the animal world, living in the midst of a multitude of fears from all sides. Therefore, one must fear what is to be feared. Our Buddha points out four kinds of fear: *Attānuvāda-bhaya* (fear of self-reproach), *Parānuvāda-bhaya* (fear of others' reproach), *Daṇḍa-bhaya* (fear of punishment), and *Duggati-bhaya* (fear of woeful rebirth).

Attānuvāda-bhaya means, as we said before regarding self-respect, that one's own mind blames oneself. The mind of a man who committed a theft knows the theft he committed. Even if he did it as a great feat so that no one else would suspect, one person in the world knows it. Who is that? Himself. That is why our Buddha declared:

Na santi loke raho nāma

pāpakammaṃ pakubbato

attā te purisa jānāti

saccaṃ vā yadi vā musā

"For the person committing sin in the world, there is no such thing as a secret. Even if it is a secret to others, it is not a secret to oneself." Then, as if pointing a finger at that person, our Buddha says: "O man, you yourself know! You yourself know the wrong deed you did." Because of that, one's own mind blames oneself in that manner. Some people gather vast amounts of wealth unlawfully and unrighteously—through killing animals, stealing, and so forth—but in their final days, they cannot sleep. They go searching for sleeping pills. What is the secret? The wrong deeds they committed begin to appear to them. That is the television seen at night. That is the television seen when closing both eyes. When they cannot escape from this, they have to seek sleeping pills. That indeed is *attānuvāda-bhaya*—one's own mind accusing oneself.

Next is *Parānuvāda-bhaya*. Some people do various things in this manner so as not to be seen by the world, but even their neighbors know the life they lead. Everyone in the country and the world knows. Perhaps they smile to their face, but everyone

knows. Worldly censure comes to that person. That is called *Parānuvāda-bhaya*. Our Buddha declares that if one wishes to reform, this is something to be feared.

Next is *Daṇḍa-bhaya*—punishments. Falling into the clutches of the law, one will have to suffer some punishment at some point, no matter how long one has remained escaped. Even if one escapes from such things, what one cannot escape from in the end is *Duggati-bhaya*—having to go to a woeful destination (*dugati*). No matter how much one lived according to worldly conceit, in accordance with the kamma one has performed, one will have to go to hell, the animal world, the preta world, and so on. When a person dies, if that person was prominent or held office, we usually use the term *divaṅgata*—meaning "gone to the heavenly world." Who knows if they went to the heavenly world? Yet, that word is used. But in the end, instead of going to heaven (*divaṅgata*), what has actually happened is that they have gone to the animal world (*tirisaṅgata*) or to the preta world (*pretagata*), or among yakkhas and so forth. One's destiny is decided by oneself: *Attā hi attano gati*. In this samsara, one cannot proceed by closing one's eyes to such dangerous words. Having understood these, our Buddha declared that one must fear what is to be feared.

Therefore (*tasmā*), *saṃyamayattānaṃ*—one must be especially diligent regarding *Sīla* (Virtue). *Sīla* is not merely a foundation that assists meditation. If one violates those precepts of *Sīla*, if one turns to living like in the lawless animal world where they kill and eat each other, as a consequence of that, one will have to be born in the animal world, the preta world, and so on. Therefore, one must especially be diligent about *Sīla*—about taming and disciplining the body and speech.

Why was *Sīla* shown as the first training in this path of Dhamma? By taming the body and speech, one obtains a lightness of mind, a lack of remorse, and a sense of relief and peace within oneself. Today, "restlessness" or "stress" (*asahana*) is a word frequently used in the world. If we consider it deeply, the root seed of this is the wrongness of the life one leads—the lack of discipline regarding body and speech. By taming body and speech in that manner, a person can secure a certain amount of relief and leisure. Leisure is not something to be obtained externally, nor is it something obtained through a holiday given by the government. Leisure means the mental leisure (*citta-viveka*) and peace of mind that one can obtain by taming body and speech.

Once that peace is obtained, it is consolidated through *Samādhi* (Concentration). One must remove the sensual thoughts, thoughts of ill-will, sloth and torpor, the shrinking nature of the mind, restlessness, remorse, and doubt—things that scatter the mind and obstruct its stillness. Thereafter, one must maintain the mind on a single meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). By constantly bringing to mind such words as "May all beings be well and happy," or "Buddhō," "Arahant," "Sammā Sambuddhō"—by frequently bringing them to mind through the multiplication of meditation—one can develop a certain *Samādhi*. That is a great relief. It is a wonderful relief that cannot be obtained from sleeping pills. It brings a wonderful

mental, spiritual joy (*nirāmisa-pīti*) that cannot be obtained through various other devices or intoxicants. One must strive to reach a certain level of *Samādhi* through that.

There are various meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) such as *Buddhānussati* (recollection of the Buddha), *Dhammānussati* (recollection of the Dhamma), *Saṅghānussati* (recollection of the Sangha), and *Ānāpānasati* (mindfulness of breathing)—directing the mind to inhalation and exhalation. Whether lay or ordained, one must learn these from those who know them, and constantly apply oneself diligently amidst one's daily activities. Without thinking of doing these after retiring in old age, by practicing little by little whenever opportunity arises in daily life, and doing so for a long time, one can obtain a certain *Samādhi*.

In this dispensation, during the period of a Buddha's appearance, the highest possible result, the supreme gain, is to free oneself from all this samsaric *Dukkha* (Suffering) through the path, fruit, and penetration of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship. If one is to obtain that noble fortune which can only be obtained during the period of a Buddha's appearance, what must be done next is the development of *Paññā* (Wisdom)—*Sīla*, *Samādhi*, *Paññā*.

Paññā means insight (*vipassanā*)—a special seeing, the wisdom of insight. Opposed to this wisdom (*Paññā*) is delusion (*moha*), confusion, foolishness, and ignorance (*avijjā*). As long as this foolishness and confusion exist, the worldly people remain in darkness. Confusion and delusion are comparable to darkness; wisdom (*Paññā*) is comparable to light. Through this, the difference between the two can be understood. No expense is incurred in removing this confusion. This is not something that can be done only by the educated or the wealthy. One should not think that this can be done only by the Sangha. Whether lay or ordained, our Buddha has shown in various ways the method to arouse this. For that, one must develop the four establishments of mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*).

We mentioned souvenirs/mementos earlier. If we translate *Satipaṭṭhāna* into Sinhala, its meaning is "mementos of mindfulness" (*sihivaṭana*). The ancient word is *sihivaṭan*—the four *sīvaṭan*. That indeed is the true memento, the true object of remembrance. In the external world, we use things we can see with our eyes and touch with our hands as mementos. We keep them hidden away, or else in the living rooms of our houses, to remember. But the true memento must be created within one's own mind. Those indeed are called "mementos" (*sihivaṭan*). There are four establishments of mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*). What are they? This body—one dwells contemplating the body in the body. This means one must contemplate the nature of one's own body. This is not something made of pearls and gems, or cast from iron and steel. One must dwell seeing the true nature of this physical cage, which is made of a collection of impurities—the thirty-two impure parts—and constructed from the elements of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind

(*vāyo*). That is the memento. That is the object of remembrance. That is what must be brought to mind.

Next are the *Vedanā* (Feeling) that arise in this body—whether pleasant, painful, or neutral/middle feelings that lie between the two—contemplating how these feelings come and go; this is dwelling contemplating feelings in feelings (*vedanānupassanā*).

Next is *cittānupassanā*—this mind. The mind is just like signal lights; it changes according to the occasion in line with greed, anger, and delusion.

Next is *dhammānupassanā*—here, *dhamma* means the objects that come to the mind, the things that are cognized by the mind. These cognized objects also come and go. When one constantly watches these with close scrutiny in this manner, what emerges through this? In this world, there is nothing that is permanent (*nicca*). Everything arises and ceases. In everything, there is a nature of arising, existing, and ceasing. This physical cage, too, arises, exists, and ceases. This begins to be seen rapidly. This is not seen in the ordinary way of birth, youth, old age, and death; rather, it is seen deeply. Moment by moment, this body wears away very rapidly.

Next, the *Vedanā* (Feeling) likewise. Likewise, this mind changes—the thoughts that come to the mind. Dwelling seeing how these come and go. Arising and ceasing is *Dukkha* (Suffering) itself. It is through this that wisdom (*Paññā*) develops by way of insight (*vipassanā*). Each of these is seen deeply: the fact that there is nothing here to be taken as "I" or "mine," that this is an Inconstant / Impermanent (*anicca*) thing, and because it is impermanent, it is *Dukkha* (Suffering). This is constantly changing. It always has a nature of oppressing; it suffers pain. It has this nature of changing. It has to be attended to; it has to be repaired. This is a great trouble.

Next, likewise, in all of these, there is no essence, no core, no heartwood that can be taken as "I" or "mine." This is a heap of preparations (*saṅkhāra*), like a banana stem (*kadalikkhandha*). This realization must come to oneself: "This is a heap of bark without any heartwood."

Our Buddha declares that this well-proclaimed Dhamma is directly visible (*sandiṭṭhika*), timeless (*akālika*), inviting one to come and see (*ehipassika*), leading onward (*opanayika*), and to be personally realized by the wise (*paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*). What is the nature of this Dhamma that is well-declared, described as *sandiṭṭhika*? It can be seen by oneself—it can be seen by oneself in this very world. It is not that one sees its truth only after going to the next world; one can see it with one's own eyes in this very life. It is *akālika* (timeless)—without delaying, one can reap the benefits of treading this path of Dhamma. We can see its results in this very life without delay. If one recognized a greedy mind—that greed had arisen within oneself—and removed it with effort through a thought of generosity, then one knows: "Previously there was a greedy mind, now it is not there." If a certain amount of greed was present and was removed, how much greater is the relief when greed is completely removed? It is the same regarding anger, and the same regarding

delusion; that can be felt by oneself. It is *akālika*—its results are obtained without delay. Next is *ehipassika*—it says "come and see." Here, the Dhamma does not mean our Buddha is saying "come and see"; rather, the Dhamma itself says, "Come, put me into practice and see, then you will see the results." That is *ehipassika*. *Opanayika* means it leads onward, from one stage to another; they are connected to each other.

If Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*)—which is correct seeing—has arisen, then in accordance with that correct seeing, right thoughts arise in the mind; right thoughts and aspirations arise. If correct seeing has arisen, right thoughts arise. If right thoughts have arisen, right speech arises, right action arises, right livelihood arises. Next, likewise, right effort, striving, and exertion arise. Right mindfulness arises. Right concentration of mind arises. What we have just mentioned is the Noble Eightfold Path expressed by way of Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), Right Thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*), and so forth. In this manner, a complete transformation of life can take place. They lead onward, one to another, like the links of a chain—*opanayika*. Therefore, *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*—by the wise, just as Venerable Nangalakula did, by such wise people—not merely by the clever—*paccattaṃ veditabbo*, the true nature of this Dhamma, the Dhamma of Nibbāna, can be personally realized.

That is how our Buddha has declared this Dhamma. This path, this path of training—whether we call it *Sīla*, *Samādhi*, *Paññā*, or *Sati*, *Samādhi*, *Paññā*, or the Noble Eightfold Path—in whatever way we say it, this is the path to Nibbāna. What is the final result? Our Buddha brought to light the solution to this extremely terrible samsaric *Dukkha* (Suffering), which no other teacher in the world could find. The true nature of this world lies within the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). None of the things that the worldly people consider to be permanent have a permanent nature. Everything changes; they are impermanent (*anicca*). Because they are impermanent, they are of the nature of suffering (*dukkha*); they are constantly oppressed by suffering. Even the little that the worldly people think of as happiness is suffering (*dukkha*). In this manner, our Buddha declared unequivocally that the entire five aggregates—everything that the worldly people grasp as (*upādāna*) (*taṇhā*)—brings suffering.

The supreme bliss of liberation obtained by destroying that craving (*taṇhā*) is called the bliss of Nibbāna. The path to that is the Noble Eightfold Path. It is by treading this Noble Eightfold Path and through the path, fruit, and penetration of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship that one extinguishes this extremely terrible samsaric *Dukkha* (Suffering). In this manner, these meritorious people must think: "Let us take the ideas expressed by our Buddha through these Dhamma discourses and verses, put them into our minds, and shape our lives accordingly in this new year. Let us accuse ourselves by ourselves, measure ourselves by ourselves, and treading this path of Dhamma, strive to bring about some blessing, peace, relief, and comfort in this very life."

The matters we have expressed so far have helped to arouse a multitude of wholesome thoughts (*kusala-cetanā*) in the minds of these meritorious people. By undertaking these precepts, you restored your *Sīla* and gave a resolution to your mind; that too is a wholesome thought by way of *Sīla*. Next, during the time of listening to this Dhamma, by directing your minds to it by way of *Samādhi*, you developed a certain measure of concentration. Next, if any deep understandings arose, that too belongs to *Paññā* (Wisdom). To think of it in another way, there are five spiritual faculties (*indriya*) that assist Nibbāna: there must be faith (*saddhā*); next, energy (*viriya*) that follows faith must arise; next, with energy as the forerunner, mindfulness (*sati*)—good mindfulness and wisdom—must arise; through that, concentration (*samādhi*) must be consolidated; next, the deep understanding called wisdom (*Paññā*) must come. Listening to this Dhamma has also helped to develop such spiritual faculties within your mental continuum.

Reflecting in this manner, make a wish: "May this store of merit, this multitude of wholesome thoughts, this store of wholesome qualities accumulated so far, serve as a strong supportive condition (*upanissaya*) and a wholesome potential for us to realize that noble Dhamma of Nibbāna in this very life through the path, fruit, and penetration of Stream-entry and so forth!"

Likewise, make this wish: "May any guardian deities of this place, and the guardian deities of the Sasana, rejoice in this merit of listening to and teaching the Dhamma! Having rejoiced, may they be comforted by the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through a path of awakening (*bodhi*) of their choice!"

Likewise, make the wish: "Whatever departed relatives of ours there may be, and whatever beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha who desire merit and desire Nibbāna, may they all rejoice in this merit of listening to and teaching the Dhamma, and realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through a path of awakening of their choice!"

Having made that wish, let us now transfer the merits by reciting the verses in this manner:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*"