Pahankanuwa Sermon #118

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.31)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

Uccinda sineham attano, kumudaṃ sāradikaṃ va pāṇinā;

santimaggameva brūhaya, nibbānaṃ Sugatena desitaṃ ti.

From:

Dhammapada 285 (Piyavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The word "peace" (*santi*) is a beloved word to everyone. This word is frequently used in the Dhamma in reference to Nibbāna. The Buddha introduced Nibbāna as the supreme peace, the highest tranquility. Devotees like you often perform various propitiatory rituals (*shanthi karma*) to escape the turmoils and problems of your daily lives. However, the true peace, the supreme peace, is the deathless Nibbāna. This deathless Nibbāna is the state where the exhaustion, suffering, and thirst that arose from running after a mirage in this *saṁsāra* out of *Taṇhā* (Craving) for an extremely long duration are completely stilled. That is why the Buddha introduced Nibbāna as the supreme peace.

It is a verse and a story that shed light on that path to supreme peace that we intend to expound today. This verse was delivered by the Buddha concerning a pupil of Venerable Sāriputta. Under Venerable Sāriputta, a very handsome young man born into a family of goldsmiths was ordained. Venerable Sāriputta gave this monk the meditation on foulness (*asubha*) as his subject of meditation. The Elder thought that since this was a young man, lust/passion (*rāga*) would be intense, so a meditation on foulness would be more suitable. So, this monk went to a forest and tried for three whole months to concentrate his mind. But this meditation on foulness was not suitable (*sappāya*); it did not agree with him. When this monk returned to Venerable Sāriputta, the Elder asked him, "How is it, is the meditation subject becoming clear to you?" The monk expressed that he was still unable to settle his mind on it. Then

Venerable Sāriputta clarified and explained that meditation subject further and said, "Do not let your mind weaken just because it didn't succeed all at once. Try again." That monk went back to the forest and meditated, but it did not succeed. He returned once more. On that occasion too, Venerable Sāriputta explained the meditation subject with more reasons and similes and sent him back. Yet, this monk returned once again and stated, "My mind does not agree with this meditation subject. The mind does not settle."

At that moment, Venerable Sāriputta thought: "There must be some reason. It is very difficult for me to understand how this monk's mind works. Perhaps this monk is 'Buddhaveneyya' (meaning, he is someone with some difficult mental problem who must be tamed by the Buddha Himself)."

He took this monk to the Buddha and related the matter. When the Buddha, using His unique knowledge of the inclinations and underlying tendencies (*āsayānusaya-ñāṇa* (inclination and Anusaya: Latency / Underlying tendency)), inquired into this monk, He understood that because he had been born into a family of goldsmiths for five hundred consecutive lifetimes, it was difficult for him to concentrate his mind on the meditation on foulness. He only delighted in agreeable things, in beautiful sights and the like. Because for a very long time he had kept his mind settled on crafting various beautiful forms out of gold, such as lotus flowers, his mind did not take to the meditation on foulness. There was a tendency for the mind not to grip it. Therefore, the Buddha said to Venerable Sāriputta: "Sariputta, go. This matter is something relevant only to a Buddha who possesses the *āsayānusaya-ñāṇa*. Therefore, this monk whom you could not tame for four months, I shall bring to Arahantship this very evening, today itself." Having said this, He sent Venerable Sāriputta away. What did the Buddha do? Through psychic power, He created a lotus flower as large as a cartwheel. It was a life-like lotus flower showing dewdrops trickling from its petals, and water drops trickling from its stem. Giving that flower to this monk, He instructed him to go to the edge of the monastery, place this lotus on a heap of sand, and gaze at it while cultivating this meditation subject by repeating: "*Lohitakaṁ, lohitakaṁ*" (Red, red). He directed his mind to the red *kasiṇa* meditation.

As soon as the Buddha gave that flower to this monk, his mind became highly pleased. Likewise, he took it, placed it on a heap of sand as instructed, and as he gazed at it repeating "*lohitakaṁ, lohitakaṁ*", all the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa-dhamma*) that obstruct mental concentration—such as sensual thoughts, thoughts of ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness, and skeptical doubt—were stilled, and his mind reached absorption (*jhāna*). Furthermore, because he had cultivated these in the past, the monk mastered the first *jhāna* almost instantly. To "master" (*vasībhāva*) means that he attained a state where he could handle it as he wished. When one attains a *jhāna*, there is a method of mastering it in five ways: to enter it, emerge from it, dwell in it, advert to it, and review its factors as and when one wishes. In that manner, he mastered the first *jhāna* in five ways. Next, he attained the second *jhāna*. He attained the third *jhāna*. He attained the fourth *jhāna* very quickly.

Generally, meditations of this kind are called tranquility meditation (*samatha-bhāvanā*). Due to that tranquility meditation, there is a tendency to get immersed in that pleasure; one clings to that pleasure. Because when a person who has enjoyed the pleasures of the five cords of sensual pleasure (*pañcakāma-sampatti*) for a long time in *saṁsāra* receives the bliss of *jhāna*, it is hundreds of thousands of times greater. The Buddha has declared that compared to the bliss of *jhāna*, the pleasures of the five cords of sensual pleasure are like a small child playing with excrement and urine. He declared that *jhāna* bliss is hundreds of thousands of times more noble and superior. Therefore, when this monk received this bliss of *jhāna*, out of desire for that pleasure of tranquility, he began to engage in *jhāna* play. That pleasure is an extremely subtle pleasure. "Jhāna play" (*jhāna-kīḷā*) means practicing the *jhānas* one has mastered, moving up and down through them.

At that time, the Buddha, seated in His Fragrant Chamber (*gandhakuṭī*), was watching how this monk was acting according to his subject of meditation. Seeing this, the Buddha considered whether this monk could turn this into insight (*vipassanā*). For the sake of Nibbāna, this *jhāna* must be turned toward insight—from the side of insight. When He saw whether he could do it without help, He realized that help was necessary. Then, while the monk was absorbed in *jhāna*, the Buddha caused that flower right in front of him to wither, just like a fading lotus flower. When a lotus flower squeezed, bruised, and crushed by a hand withers, it turns blackish. In that manner, the Buddha, through His psychic power, turned the created flower into something discolored and decayed.

Then, as soon as this monk emerged from *jhāna*, he saw that the flower in front of him had become misshapen. Next, he reflected: "Alas! Even this insentient, inanimate object is subject to such *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death / Aging and Death). Then what need is there to speak of this sentient body?" He then thought about his own body: "My body, too, which is sentient, will surely undergo decay in this very manner, won't it?" That was the sign of turning toward insight. At that very moment—according to how it is recounted in this story—a group of young children came to a pond near where this monk was sitting, plucked the blue water-lilies (*kumudu*) in that pond, and piled them on the shore. This monk's eyes turned toward that as well. He saw the withered nature of the flowers piled on the shore, and the vibrant, fresh nature of the flowers still in the water. Once again, he reflected further on his own body, realizing that this body too would fall into decay at some point. Through that, his mind fell upon *Anicca* (Impermanent).

You have heard that insight meditation is expressed in three terms: *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self) (*aniccaṁ, dukkhaṁ, anattā*). Whatever is *Anicca* (Impermanent) is *Dukkha* (Suffering). That *Anicca* (Impermanent) means it constantly has to be prepared/formed; one has to keep looking after it and attending to it. It does not remain in a constant state. It is *Dukkha* (Suffering). It cannot be kept as one wishes. Therefore, one cannot say of it, "This is mine, this I am." It cannot be made to yield to one's power—it is *Anattā*

(Not-self). In this manner, as soon as he saw impermanence, simultaneously, the nature of suffering and the nature of non-self within it became clear to this monk. At the moment of this realization, the Buddha projected a light—it is mentioned in many instances that the Buddha did so. Without physically going there, He projected a light, and through that light, He made His form appear as if He were present right in front of the monk. At that moment, the monk stood up and worshipped Him. It is at that very moment, as recounted, that the Buddha uttered the verse we mentioned earlier:

Uccinda sineham attano, kumudaṁ sāradikaṁ va pāṇinā,

Santimaggameva brūhaya, nibbānaṁ Sugatena desitaṁ.

The meaning of the first two lines is: "Just as one would pluck an autumn lily with one's hand, so should one completely cut off self-affection (affection for oneself)." "Cherish only the path to peace, Nibbāna as taught by the Sugata." That was the brief advice presented by the Buddha. It is recorded in the story that, with that advice, his insight was brought to its culmination and this monk attained Arahantship.

Now, what we have to do is to gather from this verse and story a few core values that can be useful for our lives. Now, almost everyone has heard that we travel in this long *saṁsāra* due to ignorance (*avijjā*) and *Taṇhā (Craving / Thirst)*, according to the Buddha's word. Ignorance and craving are just like the father and mother of *saṁsāra*. Why? Because this ignorance supports and helps the concept of 'I' that a person has formed. Generally, one identifies 'I' in relation to what is 'mine'. In this manner, being immersed in these two concepts of 'I' and 'mine', and remaining in that wrong view for a long time, is what is called the journey of *saṁsāra*.

Now, the things that are taken as 'I' or 'mine' were pointed out by the Buddha as five heaps (aggregates): *rūpa* (form), *Vedanā* (Feeling), *saññā* (perception), *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness). The heap of form is this physical body. The world regards this as a single unit. Next, *Vedanā* (Feeling). The feelings that keep coming are regarded as distinct units. Next, perception. Based on feeling, some recognition is formed—recognizing the feelings and sensations that arise in this physical body. Next, based on those recognitions, various desires, expectations, intentions, wishes, etc., arise as activities of the mind. These are called *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), a preparing/forming. There is a preparation/formation within the mind; one tries to maintain things as one wishes. Next, there is a mind that cognizes them distinctively. This mind we refer to as *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness)—the nature of distinguishing one thing from another. That characteristic is in this mind. Thus, due to the unwillingness to let go of these five heaps, clinging and sticking to them, we travel in *saṁsāra* for a long time thinking "this is I, this is mine." Now here, it is said to cut off at the root the affection for self—the attachment to oneself. The most superficial part is form (*rūpa*), the attachment to form. Sentient beings in the world have, for a long time, generated the perception of beauty/sublimity (*subha-saññā*) regarding their own form and the forms of others.

The Buddha declared that there exists in the world a distorted view called perversion (*vipallāsa*). They regard what is foul as beautiful. No matter how many foul substances are inside the body, due to defilements (*kilesa*), they tend to appear as beautiful. It is to counter this perception of beauty (*subha-saññā*) that Venerable Sāriputta gave this monk the meditation on foulness. However, because of the perception of beauty he had habituated himself to in *saṁsāra* in the past, and due to his unwillingness to let go of it, his mind did not take to that meditation subject. The Buddha, applying His *āsayānusaya-ñāṇa* (knowledge of inclinations and *Anusaya* (Latency / Underlying tendency)), as if pulling out this monk's personal saṁsāric file, contemplated: "This is this monk's past tendency, inclination, and preference." Accordingly, He created a lotus flower and gave it as his meditation subject. But even there, He created it as something life-like, living, or vibrant. Next, by causing it to wither, He led his mind back, through a detour, to the foul nature of reality. What is visible there is the Buddha's skill-in-means (*upāya-kosalla*).

From this, we understand that for insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) to reach its culmination, both sides must be completed. Now let us consider the meditation on foulness. In that, merely considering the foulness of one's own body is not sufficient. On the other hand:

"As this body is, so is that body; as that body is, so is this body."

Yathā idaṁ tathā etaṁ, yathā etaṁ tathā idaṁ, ajjhattañca bahiddhā ca, kāye chandaṁ virājaye.

It is expressed in that manner: "Just as this body is, so is that body. Just as that body is, so is this body." By comparing them in this way, by relinquishing attachment (*chanda*) to both the internal and the external (*ajjhattañca bahiddhā ca*)—concerning one's own body internally, and other bodies externally—insight is brought to completion.

For some, this can be started by directing the mind to one's own body. For some, perhaps, they must first understand the foul nature of another's body, and then direct that realization toward their own body. This is also seen in the story of this monk. Similarly, other such instances are recounted in the Dhamma. King Bimbisāra's Queen Khemā was intoxicated with her own beauty because she was extremely beautiful. Her pride in her beauty was such that she did not even go to see the Buddha, who was residing in the Veluvanārāma monastery built by King Bimbisāra himself. Having heard that the Buddha frequently preached about the foul nature of the physical form, she was unwilling to go because of that. King Bimbisāra employed a certain stratagem.

He had songs sung about the Veluvanārāma monastery in a way that the Queen would hear them. Having been encouraged in this manner, Queen Khemā went to see the Buddha one day. When she arrived, the Buddha was preaching the Dhamma to the congregation of monks. The Buddha also saw that Queen Khemā was no ordinary

person, but one who had fulfilled her perfections (*pāramī*) to become the foremost female disciple in wisdom among the female disciples in this long *saṁsāra*.

At that moment, the Buddha created the image of a woman even more beautiful than Queen Khemā fanning Him. Then, Queen Khemā did not listen to what the Buddha was preaching. Instead, she looked at that form, thinking, "Isn't this someone more beautiful than I?" While she was watching, the Buddha gradually transformed that form from youth to old age, showing her decaying through decrepitude (*jarā*). It was at that very moment that Queen Khemā felt disenchantment (*nibbidā*) toward her own body and attained the paths and fruits. There are such accounts in the Dhamma. From this, we can understand that in one way or another, we must develop disenchantment toward this physical form. For some, they can first think of their own body and then realize that others' bodies are also the same. For another, they can contemplate the loathsome nature of an external body and understand that their own is similar. Many such opportunities occur in our daily lives.

In whatever manner, one must also think of oneself again. It is not only others who are like this. For some, by thinking only of their own body, a kind of self-hatred arises. They even think of committing suicide. That is due to a lack of balance. For it to be balanced, one must think as a matter of natural law (*dharmatā*) that "just as my body is, so are other bodies." This foul nature, this loathsome nature, is not unique to my body alone, but is common to other bodies as well. It is recorded in the Dhamma that because they did not do so, a group of monks who meditated on the loathsome nature of mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*) were led to commit suicide. On such occasions, the Buddha pacified and balanced this by teaching mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). From such stories, we see that both aspects must be fulfilled to become disenchanted with form and to let go of form. It is through letting go that this Nibbāna can be attained. Letting go does not mean destroying this, but destroying the attachment that exists toward it.

There is another method called the attention to the elements (*dhātu-manasikāra*). It is the understanding that "my body, as well as external things, are made of the elements of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*); both here and there, these are made of these elements." The only difference is that this is sentient—this body is alive—and external things are insentient. Here, it is mentioned that the monk, reflecting on the lotus flower, thought: "If even an insentient thing is subject to such decay in this manner, what about our body?" In this way, we can draw many points related to this meditation subject from this story.

Regarding these five heaps, ordinary worldlings have a perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*). The perception of compactness means that this appears as a single unit. This form changes moment by moment, but to the mind, it is felt as one: when we take it as "my form," we do not think about its changing parts. Similarly, feeling follows form. These are also taken as one. That is called the perception of compactness. Insight (*vipassanā*) means "seeing in a special way." When a concentrated mind is directed toward a meditation subject through the three

characteristics of *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self), that object, which was perceived as one, gradually begins to be understood as a collection. One must reach such a state. It is by seeing in this way that the mind is inclined to let go of this—seeing it as something that is breaking up and disintegrating. No one likes to grab onto something that is breaking apart. Along with grabbing it, one falls. This is seen in insight. First, one sees the arising and passing away of things. That is called *udayabbaya* (arising and passing away). These are things one can experience in daily life.

The Buddha tells us to experience this impermanence regarding our own form: "This form arises in this way, it passes away in this way." This can be understood by oneself at various levels. Even when one is about to eat food, one can see the state that food goes through after being consumed. Next, there is the exhalation that comes along with the inhalation. One is forced to cast it out. In this manner, we can understand the impermanent nature of this form within this body through this. As one directs the mind more and more to arising and passing away, and as that deepens, one then sees how it breaks down even faster than it arises. The mind inclines to that extent toward dissolution (*bhaṅga*). Along with the dissolution of the object, one sees the mind itself dissolving. Why? Because it is with the mind that one grasps these objects. When that object dissolves, the mind also dissolves. It is through this that one experiences fear—fear regarding this *saṁsāra*—and the desire to travel further in this *saṁsāra* thins out, and the mind progresses toward the path-knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*). In this manner, the Buddha shows the path of insight (*vipassanā-magga*). Ordinary worldlings think only of clinging to the pleasure obtained from tranquility meditation (*samatha-bhāvanā*). Without the instruction on insight, even that monk would have remained playing with those *jhānas*. That too is a high pleasure. But the Buddha points out that the true pleasure, peace, is the tranquility attained by being freed from this entire *saṁsāra*.

There comes a stage when one can deeply understand the desire for form, feelings, and the recognition of perceptions, each one of them. Next, the intentions (*cetanā*) within the mind. All these are things subject to arising and passing away. Next, this thing called "mind" (or consciousness) cannot be taken as mine either. To what extent? The Buddha declares that the mind changes even faster than this body; this mind is something that changes extremely rapidly. The Buddha declared that He could not even find a simile for the speed at which the mind changes, though we call it "my mind." In this way, if one practices directing one's thoughts in daily life so that attachment to the five aggregates—*rūpa*, *Vedanā* (Feeling), *saññā*, *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *Viññāṇa* (Consciousness)—is abandoned or thinned out, Nibbāna is not far from that person. That is why the Buddha declared: "This is the truth, Nibbāna, which lies closest to oneself, yet the world does not see it."

From this, we see that the things we take as subjects of meditation are not costly things. They are things that lie closest to ourselves. It is through these very things that we must direct the mind toward Nibbāna. In ordinary parlance, within what is

called "the world," there are many worlds. There are various worlds such as the world of sports, the world of cinema, the world of literature, and the world of drama. Similarly, we can say there is also a "world of meditation." This world of meditation is more exquisite than all these other worlds. One enters this world of meditation through the doorway of the meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). "Kammaṭṭhāna" means the meditation topic, the subject of meditation. If one hopes for Nibbāna, or if one hopes for those meditative tranquilizations, pleasures, etc., which are superior to the thoughts of ordinary worldlings, one must obtain such a *kammaṭṭhāna*, a meditation topic, from a suitable person and practice it.

The Buddha possessed the *āsayānusaya-ñāṇa* (knowledge of inclinations and *Anusaya* (Latency / Underlying tendency)) to the highest degree, a knowledge that no other disciple possessed. As soon as the Buddha directed His mind to any individual, He could see the strengths, tendencies, likes, dislikes, and the states hidden within that person's mind developed through their saṁsāric existence. Nowadays, many people are amazed by computers. But more amazing than any product manufactured by man is the mind that produces it. It is to understand this very mind that meditation helps. Thus, through this *āsayānusaya-ñāṇa*, the Buddha could pull out an individual's personal file in a single moment and give the matching solution. That is how He gave subjects of meditation.

Next, those who have attained direct knowledges (*abhiññā*) also have a limited power to think according to the past lives of an individual; if they give a meditation subject based on that, the work is quick. Otherwise, as happened to that monk, there can often be a delay. In any case, if someone has entered the world of meditation through the doorway of the meditation subject, from there onward, they progress on the path of development. Next, by arriving at those *jhānas* through tranquility (*samatha*), they are able to experience extremely subtle, noble pleasures that are secluded from the world and secluded from the five cords of sensual pleasure.

Next, what is even higher than that is arriving at those paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) beginning with Stream-entry (*sotāpanna*), which are attained as liberation from the entire *saṁsāra*. This is the path pointed out by the Buddha. Liberation from this *saṁsāra* is something no other teacher was capable of showing, because the Buddha has declared the dreadfulness of this saṁsāric journey on many occasions. At the very least, a person who has not even attained the fruit of Stream-entry cannot say when, either due to past actions (*kamma*) or due to bad actions committed in this life, they might fall into the four woeful states (*apāya*). Such a dangerous situation exists.

Therefore, if one has obtained a human rebirth during the lifetime of a Buddha, one must especially give place to insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*). Using tranquility (*samatha*) as a basis for insight meditation, one can settle the mind through *jhānas* and the like. Those energies one has cultivated in *saṁsāra* over a long time do not go to waste.

For five hundred lifetimes as a goldsmith, that monk had directed his mind to pieces of gold. When a goldsmith fashions an ornament out of a piece of gold, how much attention does he pay to it? Similarly, one carves a statue out of stone. In such instances, a certain concentration (*samādhi*) is applied. Not a single one of the energies generated by our actions in *saṁsāra* goes to waste. All of them are deposited in the mind in an extremely subtle way. Now, many people are amazed by things like computers. That too is a material object. But that material object arose within the immaterial mind. In that mind are stored both the good and the bad we have done in *saṁsāra* over a long time, the strengths we have built up, and our weaknesses. All of these exist within the mind-stream (*citta-santāna*). So what is it that we need? It is to bring out the good side and free ourselves from this *saṁsāra*. Therefore, to enter the subjects of meditation and exit through the door of Nibbāna, one must enter this world of meditation. Various worlds are presented in this society in attractive ways. But we should not be deceived by them as Buddhists. Reconsidering our core values and our worth, we see how our ancestors spent their lives; no matter how many fancy things there were in the world, because they did not forget the three characteristics of *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self) taught by the Buddha, as soon as a disaster struck, "*Aniccaṁ, dukkhaṁ, anattā*" would naturally escape their lips. But it is not a mere utterance of words that is there. In these times, perhaps, there is a group that thinks merely reciting them is meditation. In the past, our ancestors had the habit of directing their minds to how the trees and leaves around them, the flowing river, the things around them changed, and how their own bodies changed. Therefore, they lived a meditative life, even though their daily lives appeared to be spent in an ordinary way.

In any case, we too must reflect, however fast the world changes, on developing new evaluations and new values regarding our lifestyle. "Kammaṭṭhāna" (meditation subject) can be translated as "workplace." A meditation subject is a workplace that helps toward one's Nibbāna or toward attaining this noble goal. For that monk, it was a red lotus flower by way of *kasiṇa* meditation. For some, even a single hair of the head can be a sufficient and suitable meditation subject. It is by settling the mind in that manner, and directing that settled mind toward the three characteristics of *Anicca* (Impermanent), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not-self), that one can attain the realization of the paths and fruits. When we consider it in this way, the Buddha has presented this path of Dhamma in such a way that even a very young child can start it.

You know that three types of meritorious deeds are mentioned: *dāna* (giving/generosity), *sīla* (virtue/morality), and *bhāvanā* (meditation). In these times, why do people practice giving? To receive hundreds of thousands of times more than what is given in a future life. Or to go to the heavenly worlds. It is true that such benefits exist. But that should not be the ultimate purpose. If someone has developed a sense of urgency (*saṁvega*) regarding *saṁsāra*, if they have thought that freeing themselves from this *saṁsāra* is necessary, even at the moment of giving a small thing, they should not think of heavenly pleasures. Those too are

impermanent (*anicca*). Even if one goes to a heavenly world, as soon as a past bad action (*kamma*) surfaces—since the bodies of deities are extremely subtle, even an unwholesome thought is sufficient for them to fall from there, pass away, and drop into the woeful states. Such a dangerous situation exists in the heavenly worlds, regardless of how beautiful they seem. Therefore, even heavenly pleasure is nothing major. It is received as a side benefit. If one misses the mark, one goes to a heavenly world. But in reality, we should try, even at the moment of giving a gift (*dāna*), as pointed out by the Buddha, to base it on the thought of non-greed (*alobha*), or the intention of removing the *Taṇhā* (Craving) in it, the intention of removing that self-affection; even meritorious deeds like giving must be done with that at the forefront.

Regarding giving, the Buddha has pointed out: "They give gifts as an ornament for the mind" (*cittālaṅkāraṁ dānaṁ deti*). The deepest purpose is pointed out as the ornamentation of the mind—and requisites (*pirikara*) mean things that are helpful to someone, things that serve as causes. Thus, giving for the sake of developing the mind is the highest purpose. When we reflect on it in this way, even when we serve a spoonful of rice, or when we offer something to the poor, travelers, beggars, or to the Saṅgha, we should think: "May I, through this mental factor of non-greed (*alobha-caitasika*), gain the strength to abandon *Taṇhā* (Craving)." It is because of self-affection—attachment to oneself—that the world grasps onto everything as "I" and "mine". When freeing themselves from these, people often experience greed (*lobha*) and regret. What does a person do who gives with a clear mind in all three stages of volition? They give while paying attention to that mind, without any regret over that gift. The benefit of this is not to receive hundreds of thousands of times more in return, nor to go to heaven, but one must think: "This was a good opportunity to thin out the unwholesome state of greed, or *Taṇhā* (Craving), that was in my mind." That is the deepest aspiration one should cultivate regarding giving.

For one who thinks in that way, there are opportunities in daily life to thin out this self-affection. At times when one donates or offers something one owns or uses to the poor, travelers, beggars, or to the Triple Gem, one must look at one's mind: "Previously, I thought of this as mine. Now, this is not mine. At the moment of giving, I separated from it." By giving in that manner, one must habituate oneself to contentment. One must habituate oneself to that tranquility and peace mentioned earlier.

It is the same with virtue (*sīla*). Virtue is also something, in this era, which is often thought of as a mere customary ritual, like something to be taken on a Uposatha day or to be recited in front of monks. When we reflect deeply, virtue supports meditation. Why? Because it is through the taming of the body and speech that the mind can be tamed. This virtue is the method of taming body and speech. Whether it is the five precepts (*pañca-sīla*), the livelihood-as-eighth precept (*ājīv-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*), or other higher virtues—by undertaking this virtue and guarding it, one must have the thought: "I am preparing the foundation for my meditation." Generally, in *saṁsāra*, the things I like are killing beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying,

slandering, harsh speech, and frivolous speech that is of no benefit to this world or the next. These are things I like. The concepts of 'I' and 'mine' are the causes that lead to traveling in this *saṁsāra*. We see this in animal life. Animals are not outsiders; we too have lived there for a long time. We know how those minds of animals, ghosts (*preta*), and demons (*yakṣa*) operate—they are extremely low. What we should do is not prepare to go there, but rather to obtain a higher state; that is why virtue (*sīla*) is prescribed.

What is done through virtue is the thinning out of that self-affection. Now, while one dislikes being harmed, one harms others. One does so expecting some pleasure from it, for entertainment, or for food, or for various reasons. What is present there is self-affection. It is the same with stealing, committing other unwholesome deeds, and lying. Within every one of them lies the attachment to the concept one has taken as "self." This virtue can then be used to thin out this self-affection. Next, what is higher than even that is meditation (*bhāvanā*). In that meditation, too, generally, people do not like to be secluded from the world. Now, how many people have gathered in this hall at this moment? Those engaged in other various activities are hundreds of thousands of times more. Those are often things that do not help toward Nibbāna. In this way, to reject various invitations from cinemas, theatres, and other entertainment halls, and to come here to spend even an hour, a letting go is required for meditation.

First, the mind's delight in a meditation subject is called "delight in meditation" (*bhāvanārāmatā*). One must develop a delight in meditation. That is fundamental. The world mostly consists of a world that delights in very low, loud clamor. Having gradually developed a distaste for those, one then develops a liking for songs and music alone. Going further, realizing the coarse, gross nature of even those, one then begins to delight in tranquility, peace, silence, and stillness. It is such a world that is called the "world of meditation." This means gradually freeing oneself from those low delights common to animals, demons, and ghosts, and developing a higher inclination. What helps in this is the meditation topic called *kammaṭṭhāna*. If one has respectfully accepted it from a teacher, when one shapes one's daily life according to it, the opportunity arises to recognize the word "peace" mentioned in our thematic verse—what true tranquility is.

Both the so-called developed society and the undeveloped society are now enslaved to their senses; to gratify them, they run along the path of various things presented by this commercial world, as if running after a mirage. Developed society uses them to the extreme, and ultimately, remaining stuck and immersed in them until life is destroyed, they sacrifice their lives for the five cords of sensual pleasure. Next, those who do not have such luxuries target those very things, and to obtain those five cords of sensual pleasure and luxuries, they tire themselves out, clash with weapons, get into debt, think of them day and night, lose sleep, dream of them, and destroy their lives. In contrast, what does the meditator do? They adopt the concept of simple living and high thinking. Stepping out of that world of pomp, show, and fashion,

instead, just as you do on a Uposatha day, clothed in simple attire, with simple food and drink, practicing contentment (*alpeccatā*) in everything, habituating themselves to be satisfied with what is received, they try to settle their mind according to a meditation subject, freeing themselves at least a little from the sensory inputs coming through the eyes, ears, nose, etc. That is how life in the world of meditation is.

The world of meditation cannot be recognized all at once like that fancy world thought of by the world. To what extent the energy in this, and its helpfulness to one's life, is great—the Buddha almost always pointed out the value of being diligent in this, urging us to enter this path of meditation diligently. Why? Because we cannot do this every day. The opportunity to do this does not always arise. The birth of a Buddha (*buddhōtpāda*) is rare. A human rebirth is rare. Similarly, the opportunity to benefit from this combination of opportune moments (*khaṇa-sampatti*), those who support it, and the hearing of the proper Dhamma are extremely rare. Therefore, if one gets the opportunity to know them at some point, everyone must be eager to recognize this world of meditation. One aspect of that world of meditation is what we mentioned as "jhāna play." That too is a very high pleasure, so much so that ordinary worldlings cannot experience it. Those who have attained those *jhāna* states experience something like Brahmic bliss. They experience Brahmic bliss in this very life. What is even higher than that is that peaceful tranquility pointed out by the Buddha as liberation from that *Bhava* (Becoming)—the state where *Taṇhā* (Craving) is eradicated at the root.

Why is it that a person cannot let go of these? Because of the concept of "I" that they have taken. But what is the path shown by the Buddha? He allows one to realize for oneself that this concept of "I" is an ignorance (*avijjā*), a wrong concept. Next, He allows one to realize that not a single one of the things taken as "mine" can actually be maintained under one's power. Such realization occurs through the application of attention in the mind—the application of meditative attention (*bhāvanā-manasikāra*), through reflection. If a meditator has directed themselves to this path of meditation, that meditator gradually understands that this body, which we are so attached to as "my body," is subject to decay very rapidly—at a speed we cannot even think of.

Also, how much suffering and difficulty must one undergo to maintain this form? One understands that it is *Dukkha* (Suffering). All of it cannot be taken as mine. How many living beings, such as worms, reside inside this? In this way, there is a nature of not being able to maintain this under one's power. When it gets sick, one cannot stop it by saying, "Do not get sick." That is form (*rūpa*). Next, it is the same with feelings. Pleasant feeling comes. It is not permanent; it is gone. Next, painful feeling comes. The Buddha pointed out that not only pleasant and painful feelings, but also neutral feelings—all of these are *Anicca* (Impermanent), they change. Therefore, this meditator gradually removes the desire for feelings as well. They also realize for themselves the nature of *Dukkha* (Suffering) in them. Next, perceptions,

recognitions. The Buddha compared their deceptive nature to a mirage. In everything, there is color and shape (*vaṇṇa* and *saṇṭhāna*). When some color is painted and presented with some shape, the world is deceived. There is a miragelike nature in it. That is perception (*saññā*).

Next, what are called *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations)—the intentions (*cetanā*) that constantly arise within our minds, the desires, intentions, aspirations, expectations that arise in extremely subtle ways—all of these are the vast number of preparations made very rapidly inside the mind. There is a moment when this too is understood as *Dukkha* (Suffering). As the meditative attention becomes more and more subtle, these are things that everyone can experience. For one who has developed these in *saṁsāra* for a long time, they can be attained very quickly, like that monk. One should not think that this happens merely by listening to a sermon. It is the energy present within that individual.

This entire world is like a huge school without partitioned classrooms. Sometimes, a small child may have a mental strength that a great professor does not have. Similarly, a so-called uneducated person may have an extremely great strength to see Nibbāna, a strength of rapid understanding. It is to such people, regardless of caste or social status, that the Buddha, using His *āsayānusaya-ñāṇa* (inclination and *Anusaya* (Latency / Underlying tendency)), went—sometimes with a single word, a word of Dhamma, a verse—and allowed them to realize that noble, deathless Nibbāna in that manner. Therefore, practically, we must think of absorbing something for our daily lives from this story of Dhamma and this verse. We must try to develop a specific determination, specific aspirations, new values, and evaluations regarding our daily life. Only then does one inherit the true benefits of hearing the Dhamma.

Today, on this Uposatha day, you listened to the Dhamma at this moment. Reflecting on this moment of listening, consider the change that has occurred in your mind now. To come to such a place and listen to this Dhamma, some faith (*saddhā*) must have arisen—faith in the Triple Gem: faith in the Buddha, the Dhamma preached by the Buddha, and the Saṅgha who live according to that Dhamma. When hearing it, it sinks into the mind only if there is a heart filled with faith. To a world blinded by intellectualism, they often cannot harvest the true practical value of this Dhamma. They cannot absorb it because it appears to them as a heap of words, or they look at the Buddha's word as something to be understood through a dictionary. All these dictionaries are deposited within our minds, like the computer we mentioned. We must benefit from this in the proper way by tightening the correct screw. Otherwise, one must enter this world of meditation through the doorway of the meditation subject and make an effort to test the strengths within oneself.

It must be because you directed yourself to these over a long time in *saṁsāra* that you received the opportunity to listen to the Dhamma with such faith. The growth that arises in the mind next to faith is energy/effort (*viriya*). If in some way a

thought arose at this moment according to faith, "From today at least, I must walk on this path of Dhamma, I must meditate," that is a thought of energy. Not only that, to remove drowsiness and laziness for this hearing of the Dhamma and to apply the mind to every single word also requires energy. Through that applied effort, mindfulness (*sati*) is developed; if one listens to these with good attentiveness and clear comprehension, that quality of mindfulness also grows. If one listened well in this manner for about an hour, some concentration (*samādhi*) regarding the value of the Dhamma is also likely to arise in the mind, by way of recollection of the Dhamma (*dhammānussati*). The mind settles on the value of the Dhamma—concentration.

Next, through this Dhamma, some deep understandings arise; even a Dhamma passage heard a hundred times, when heard in the correct manner, can produce deep understandings at that moment. Nowadays, such Dhamma sermons are heard incessantly when traveling in buses and vehicles. At every boutique junction where they stop, songs are heard from one place, and sermons from another. But do they strike the mind? Sometimes a song strikes the mind better—be it a song or a ball game. That is how the world goes. But if you have prepared yourself and listened to the Dhamma especially on such an occasion, then wisdom (*paññā*)—those deep understandings—arises.

The qualities developed in that manner—*saddhā* (faith), *viriya* (energy), *sati* (mindfulness), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom)—are not trivial. These five spiritual faculties are the very qualities that will support Nibbāna at some point in the future—or even in this very life. They are the virtues that must necessarily be developed in a mind striving for Nibbāna. We should gladden our minds thinking that this hour was not wasted because we spent this short time developing them. Similarly, you undertook some virtue (*sīla*) according to your level. Now, virtue is seen to be deteriorating in a very dangerous way in this society. There is a society where even the five precepts cannot be kept. In such a situation, you undertook the livelihood-as-eighth precept (*ājīv-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*). There may also be devotees who undertook the eight Uposatha precepts. In that manner, you engaged in an effort to tame your body, mind, and speech through a valuable virtue. To the devotee who is directed toward this meditation, even listening to the Dhamma is itself a meditation. Through that Dhamma, their meditative mind is made to grow. That is why it is said that some attained the paths and fruits through hearing the Dhamma. To a person who has cultivated meditation in *saṁsāra* for a long time, or has cultivated it in this life, it is like opening a door with a key. When the correct word, the correct verse of Dhamma is received, at that moment, the mind opens. One receives the strength and power to reach that mentioned supreme peace.

We also think that you too, according to your capacity, must have harvested the fruits and benefits of this hearing of the Dhamma. Having made determinations in the manner mentioned, you must look to the future. Because we cannot say where we will go next after letting go of this human rebirth at any moment or on any occasion—unless we have reached a certain destiny (*niyata-gati*) through a path and

fruit such as Stream-entry (*sotāpanna*). That is why they are called "objects of urgency" (*saṁvega-vatthu*). The speed, the fuel that helps to make the Sasana journey is what is called *saṁvega* (urgency). Directing your mind to the sufferings and turmoils of this world and this *saṁsāra* by way of *Jāti* (Birth / Arising), *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death / Aging and Death), sickness, and death, try to determine to make use of this invaluable opportunity.

May all those deities—including the guardian deities of the Sasana and the Brahmas—who desire merit and desire Nibbāna, rejoice in this store of merit accumulated by you through this Dhamma preaching and Dhamma hearing! May they rejoice in this noble merit! Rejoicing, may they fulfill their own Dhamma aspirations and realize the noble, deathless Nibbāna through whichever Bodhi (awakening) they aspire to! Transfer the merit to the deities in this manner. Similarly, may all beings, from your relatives to those in Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha, who wish to see Nibbāna, rejoice in this merit of Dhamma hearing and Dhamma preaching! May everyone find peace in the noble, decay-and-deathless (*ajaramara*) Nibbāna! May you too, through the strength gained from listening to this Dhamma, direct yourselves to the path of meditation in this very life, complete those tasks, and realize the noble, deathless Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits—Stream-entry (*sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*anāgāmi*), and Arahantship—and reach supreme peace! Cultivating these aspirations, recite these verses:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*"