Pahankanuwa Sermon #121

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.34)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

Na taṃ kammaṃ kataṃ sādhu, yaṃ katvā anutappati;

Yassa assumukho rodaṃ, vipākaṃ paṭisevati ti.

From:

Dhammapada 67 (Pāpavaagga)

Dear Listeners,

The Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Fully Self-Awakened Buddha, saw how beings in this saṃsāra swim in an endless ocean of karma and an ocean of suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*), with no visible boundary or shore, due to not understanding properly the relationship between karma and its result (*vipāka*). When performing an action (karma), a certain volitional force (*cētanā-śakti*) that arises in the mind gradually matures and ripens, and the stage where it manifests its result is called the ripening of karma (*karma-vipāka*). Thinking only about the superficial appearance of these results of karma, many people form a wrong understanding of good and bad based on that, and committing various deeds in the world, they undergo dreadful painful consequences in saṃsāra.

What we distinguish as good and bad, wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*), merit and demerit, are generally understood by people according to their capacity to bring pleasant results or suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*) results. However, the manner in which a karma matures and ripens is difficult for ordinary worldly people to see or understand; it is known only to the Buddha himself. What is the reason for this? The perspective of the ordinary worldly person is narrow. They lack far-reaching wisdom and deep understanding. Because of that, according to their short-term perspective, narrow view, and superficial outlook, they think only of the superficially visible pleasant results of those actions (karma),

establish a social convention that “this is good, this is bad”, conduct their lives accordingly, and ultimately suffer in terrifying places like the hells (*apāya*).

For this very reason, the Buddha often seized opportunities to show the world what is necessary regarding good and bad. One such occasion is presented in the books as the background story (*nidāna kathā*) related to the verse we have chosen as our theme today.

While the Buddha was residing at Jetavana monastery, a farmer nearby went to plow his field. On the previous night, a gang of thieves had entered the city through a sewage drain, tunneled into a wealthy house, stolen gold, silver, ornaments, money, and other items, and made their escape. One of the thieves, without the knowledge of the others, tied up a purse of gold coins (*kahāpaṇa*) and hid it in his waist pocket. He joined the others, went near a field, and divided the stolen goods. As they were departing after dividing the loot, the hidden purse of coins accidentally dropped by the side of the field without his knowledge.

As was his custom, when the Buddha surveyed the world with his attainment of Great Compassion (*mahā-karuṇā-samāpatti*) that morning, he saw this farmer plowing his field. At that moment, the Buddha perceived a certain Dhamma-principle (*dhammatā*) within this event. Seeing how the farmer would fall into danger and how He could rescue him from it, and also seeing that this farmer possessed the supportive condition (*upanissaya-sampatti*) and past merit to attain the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*), He journeyed to the vicinity of that field accompanied by the Venerable Ānanda.

The farmer indeed approached the Buddha, paid homage, and returned to his plowing. The Buddha went to the spot by the side of the field where the purse of coins lay and asked Venerable Ānanda: "Do you see the serpent, Ānanda?" Venerable Ānanda replied: "Yes, Venerable Sir, the deadly, poisonous serpent." Again, the Buddha asked: "Do you see the serpent, Ānanda?" "Yes, Venerable Sir, the deadly, poisonous serpent," Venerable Ānanda replied. Hearing this, the farmer, after the Buddha departed, thought, "It seems there is a serpent in the place where I am working at this odd hour," and took a stick to kill the serpent. But when he went and looked, what was there was a purse of coins. He understood that the Buddha had referred to this as the serpent. However, lacking far-reaching wisdom, he took the purse of coins, set it aside, covered it with soil, and resumed plowing his field.

Meanwhile, the owners of the burglarized house, following the footprints of the thieves, arrived at the edge of the field and saw the spot where the goods had been divided. Then, following the farmer's footprints, they caught the farmer, saying: "This man is pretending to plow here after breaking into our house!"

They took the farmer and presented him to the King. The King sentenced the farmer to death. Then, the executioners bound the farmer's hands behind his back and led him to his execution, whipping him along the way. While being led, at every lash of

the whip, what did the farmer say? "Do you see the serpent, Ānanda?" It is recorded in Pāli in the books. But when we take the meaning, at every lash of the whip he went along saying: "Do you see the serpent, Ānanda? Yes, Lord, the deadly, poisonous serpent." Then the royal guards asked: "Man, what is this you are saying?" He replied: "I will explain this only if you take me before the King."

These men took him before the King. When the King questioned him, he narrated the entire story: "I am innocent of this. The Buddha journeyed to this spot. This is what happened. I only hid it," he explained. Thereupon, the King said to the royal guards: "According to what this man says, he is citing the Buddha, the foremost in the three worlds, as his witness. Therefore, do not execute him; I will investigate this matter." Having dismissed the royal guards, in the evening, the King went to see the Buddha along with this farmer.

Taking the farmer along, the King asked the Buddha: "Blessed One, did you journey to a certain field in the morning with Venerable Ānanda?" When the Buddha replied, "Yes," the King asked: "What was the incident that occurred there?" The Buddha repeated those words and further declared, giving the advice that a wise person should not perform any deed that leads to regret, uttering the verse we mentioned:

Na taṃ kammaṃ kataṃ sādhu, yaṃ katvā anutappati,

yassa assumukho rodaṃ, vipākaṃ paṭisevati.

(That deed is not well done, which, having done, one repents, and the result of which one experiences weeping, with a tearful face.)

It is recorded that upon hearing this verse and the sermon delivered by the Buddha in connection with it, the farmer attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*). That is all there is to the story.

Looking at the surface of this story, what appears to us is that it is dangerous to pick up a purse of coins fallen on the road. That is all that ordinary intellect grasps. Even that is a great thing. Nowadays, if any pile of rubbish is fallen on the road, people not only pick it up, but they do so with a dishonest mind. Such is the era. So, even from that much, there is a great lesson here. The Buddha referred to that purse of gold coins as a serpent because he knew exactly the perspective from which an ordinary poor man, or an ordinary person, looks at a purse of coins. Without realizing it is a serpent, he picks it up and carries it away. Ultimately, it is when that serpent bites that suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*) occurs.

Next, why the Buddha journeyed there can be understood in that way today. But there is a depth far greater than this. In the scriptures, there is no record of the Buddha appearing as a witness for every court case. Here, he specifically presented himself as a witness because there was a far more valuable potential within that farmer. He possessed the merit to realize the fruit of Stream-entry. In such instances, the Buddha would travel even many leagues and, when the right moment arrived,

employ an appropriate means. Now, here too, in some way, there must have been a karma of the farmer's past that led to his being accused in connection with the purse of coins, for it is due to past karma. We are often agitated by these groundless accusations that happen to us. But in reality, the 'locus' of every groundless accusation is visible to the Buddha. That is why it is said that the Buddha has the correct understanding of what is a ground (*ṭhāna*) and what is not a ground (*aṭṭhāna*). Behind the groundless accusations through which we are punished innocently, there is a force of past karma. Be that as it may, we can understand at our level that the Buddha journeyed there because the farmer had the potential to become a Stream-enterer, and also because it provided the opportunity to preach a certain Dhamma-exposition that would help the world develop deep foresight.

Next, let us consider what it was in this story that caused this person to attain Stream-entry. Just a short while before, or rather that very morning, he was an ordinary man plowing a field, and one who possessed a dishonest thought. How did he, by evening, attain the supramundane state which is superior even to universal kingship? This might be a problem in this day and age. Let us now look at this story. The fruit of Stream-entry is obtained as the final result of a certain transformation that occurs within the mind, known as insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). In order to attain the fruit of Stream-entry, one must realize to a certain extent the three characteristics of impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*), suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*), and not-self (non-self / unsubstantial) (*anattā*). The primary knowledge in this regard is called the knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*), which is the understanding of arising and passing away. This must be deeply realized. Next, in the aspect of passing away, to a meditative or calmed mind, there is a stage where passing away is seen to occur with extreme rapidity. That is what is called the knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*)—everything is breaking up and dissolving. All these are preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*). This is a series of revolutions taking place within the mind. All these things arise and pass away. Seeing that passing away is even faster than arising, a terror arises: "Are all these things breaking up and dissolving, which I am grasping, clinging to, and holding as 'I' and 'mine'?" That is called the knowledge of the appearance of terror (*bhayatupaṭṭhāna-ñāṇa*).

Next, in accordance with that terror, in that path of knowledge, he understands the disadvantage (*ādīnava*) and the undesirable side of everything that worldly people generally grasp. Consequently, a great disillusionment arises within him. Even though it is not visible to other worldly people, a special transformation occurs within his mind regarding this entire saṃsāra, regarding the world: "If such is the nature of preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*), there is no use in remaining here. There is no use in this becoming (existence) (*bhava*) and continued existence." Thus, a disillusionment arises. Next, according to that disillusionment, there comes a stage where, in accordance with his capacity of understanding, he feels: "Somehow, I must escape from this, I must attain Nibbāna, I must bring an end to this suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) of saṃsāra through the supreme bliss of Nibbāna." This

is called *muñcitukamyatā-ñāṇa*—the desire for deliverance. That too is a certain insight-knowledge. Next, in accordance with that, there comes a stage where the three characteristics of impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*), suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*), and not-self (non-self / unsubstantial) (*anattā*) are deeply understood by him. A stage of deep investigation and contemplation. That is called the knowledge of reflective contemplation (*paṭisaṅkhā-ñāṇa*).

Thus, passing those knowledges, there comes a stage concerning these preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*) where, having understood their impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*), suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*), and not-self (non-self / unsubstantial) (*anattā*) to a certain extent, one distances oneself from them, realizing "these do not belong to me." Just as a drop of dew on a lotus leaf slips away without belonging to the leaf, there is a time when the objects that come to the mind are not grasped. That is called *saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*—equanimity towards preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*). There is a stage of equanimity towards preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*). Even though he has not read vast books, these arise even in a poor farmer when the time comes, if he has developed corresponding meditation in the past. Let us see if there is any trace of effort that we can see in this story that could have given rise to such a thing in this farmer. First, let us think: what kind of thoughts would have arisen in that farmer when he found the purse of coins, set it aside, and started plowing? A thousand dreams and thoughts, pleasant dreams, must have arisen. "Now I have this purse of coins. Now I don't need to do farming anymore"—thus dreaming various pleasant dreams, he must have been.

All of this began to shatter when the royal guards and the owners of the house came and arrested this person on a groundless accusation. What arose then was the fear of death. He saw that there indeed was a serpent in the purse of coins, just as the Buddha had said. That understanding came. There too, what arose was a heap of preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*)—what is called a purse of coins. It is something that gives rise to thoughts and expectations in a person. This is a heap of preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*). So, he understood that too, and its disadvantage (*ādīnava*). He saw that the very object which initially helped him dream pleasant dreams about the future had now become the cause of his death. It was for this reason that he responded in that manner when being whipped. Generally, when a person is whipped, how much hatred (*dosa*) and anger arise? Towards those who whip him, or especially if he is innocent, he develops further hatred thinking, "They are beating me innocently." But what did this farmer do? At that moment, he entered into the meditation on the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*). He began to repeat those few words through which the Buddha had identified the situation: "Do you see the serpent, Ānanda?" and then the reply given by Venerable Ānanda. He kept reciting that like a mantra.

So, what did he do through that? If we look at it as a serenity meditation (*samatha-bhāvanā*), he recollected the Buddha. You know that when some danger arises, as stated in discourses like the Dhajagga Sutta, recollecting the Triple Gem is a special protection. Recollecting the Buddha, that person obtained that protection according to his own direct experience. Next, it can also be considered as the recollection of the Buddha, as a serenity meditation. It must have helped to calm his mind. Likewise, when contemplating deeply on that statement, a disillusionment towards preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*) could also arise. "Now I realize this is indeed a serpent. Everything in the world is like serpents. They are fine until they bite." Having understood in this way, what arose next was equanimity towards preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*). He endured those things. When uttering those words at every lash of the whip, there was a certain equanimity in his mind. Without weeping or wailing, he uttered those few sentences. Thus, we can think that indeed all those experiences were, as we often say, blessings in disguise. So, the Buddha allowed these things to happen. This person brought forth those insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) from the university of the world, or through life, through those shocks and conflicts.

Now we can learn many lessons from this. Regarding the groundless accusations and various other sorrowful conflicts and life problems that confront us, we often get agitated, blame others, and get entangled in great currents of karma. But in reality, if we think of it from one perspective, these are the results (*vipāka*) of past karma. Even if we do not know it, it is a turn of ripening (*vipāka-vāra*) of past karma. In the face of this turn of ripening, if we begin to struggle by generating defilements like greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) towards them, we accumulate more karma. This is due to the lack of understanding that these are preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*). Therefore, this farmer has given us a good lesson to practice wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*)—which is reflection with wisdom—concerning those life problems.

When beaten with whips, a person would at least speak of the pain that arises, perhaps by way of cursing. Instead, this person contemplated the true word spoken by the Buddha. He expressed the understanding of 'this serpent', which is the nature of preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*). Through that, we can think that even within the various severe shocks that confront us in life—in short, within every current of karma—these insight-knowledges lie dormant. Just as only a doctor or someone with knowledge can read the description of a vitamin pill and know that 'this and that are contained in this', yet even a small child who does not know this will still receive its benefit if given the vitamin pill—likewise, these insight-knowledges are embedded within these experiences. Whether there is book-knowledge or not, what is needed and helpful to realize them is precisely that wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), which is contemplating properly with wisdom. Contemplating the place where these arise. Instead, if one engages in unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*), which is incorrect contemplation, those will never

emerge. Instead, one prepares further karma that brings results. This is the entanglement of saṃsāra.

If we grasp a rope while its twists are untangling, more twists will be added to it. Instead of that, one lets it untangle with equanimity. That is what this farmer must have done. He developed equanimity towards preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*). Then, we can extract a valuable Dhamma from that. This story contains the manner in which that person, relying on wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), turned the danger that befell him into good. Likewise, there he made use of situational wisdom (*sthānocita-prajñā*). It was the word of the Buddha that he ultimately held as his point of witness. Because of those very words, he also received pardon from the King. The King said to the Buddha: "Venerable Sir, it is because of the Blessed One that this person received the gift of life today." And what is even more valuable is that, upon hearing that verse and the Dhamma sermon, that man attained the noble fruit of Stream-entry.

From this, we can imagine how many Dhamma-matters are contained in a simple Dhamma-story. In our daily lives, there are many things to learn for our lives not only from the highly educated but even from an ordinary man. Nibbāna is present within all of this. That is why the Buddha sometimes says: "This Nibbāna which is so close is not seen by fools." Within the shocks and conflicts of life that confront us, those insight-knowledges lie dormant. All of them are connected to the forces of past karma. That is to say, in short, insight (*vipassanā*) is seeing the nature of impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*), suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*), and not-self (non-self / unsubstantial) (*anattā*) that is found within everything in the world. It is impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*). If something is impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*), its nature is suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*). If its nature is suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*), it is something that brings fear. Next, there is no reason to grasp it as 'I' and 'mine' there. One cannot keep it under one's control, just as he could not make that purse of coins his own by covering it with soil. In this way, we can extract many points even from that story.

Now let us look at this verse. There, the Buddha declared that if a person is wise, a true pandit, he should not do that which leads to regret. Regardless of the definitions of the wise and the foolish in these times, the Buddha has presented a very deep philosophy regarding good and bad, wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*) in the manner shown here. Now, if we look from a short-term perspective, because they bring temporary pleasant results, we incline towards certain things; we perform certain karmas. Later, when viewed according to the word of the Buddha, they are sins (*pāpa-kamma*). That is why the Buddha declared that the fool, as long as the karma does not ripen and mature, as long as its results are not received, considers it as honey: *Madhuvā maññatī bālo yāva pāpaṃ na paccatī*—the fool thinks of the sinful deed as sweet like honey as long as it does not ripen. It is for this very reason that Ven. Vīdāgama Maitreya declared in the *Lō Väḍa Saṅgarāva*:

When committing sins, they seem sweet as honey;

When experiencing the suffering, it becomes intense like fire.

Knowing this, the advice to discard those sins

Should be known, not giving opportunity to the three doors.

So, when committing them, sins, sinful actions, appear sweet. But when experiencing them, one has to suffer the results like burning in the fires of hell (*apāya*) and other places. Falling victim to a groundless accusation in this world and facing the death penalty is an event that can happen in the world. Stealing and other such deeds, which have deeper consequences, appear good to worldly people because of some temporary benefit or utility. The Buddha shows their consequences deeply. What is meant by 'the advice to discard those sins'? What is the advice? It is right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), which is true foresight. It is indeed a far-reaching vision. The right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) presented by the Buddha is a far-reaching vision. Now, in these times, according to various short-term plans, people do various things by setting up ten-year plans, twenty-year plans, etc. Many things belonging to the five sins (violations of the five precepts) can be included in them. Killing animals, stealing, increasing liquor taverns, and various other sinful deeds can occur. According to those plans, economic results might be obtained. But when viewed according to the Buddha's philosophy, one will have to suffer their grave undesirable consequences some day. Not just once, but hundreds of thousands of times. Ten million times.

The nature of this mind is that when a certain karma is deposited in the mind, deposited in consciousness (*viññāṇa*), it re-emerges again and again. Just like when one gets hiccups. It has a nature of re-emerging again and again. Every time it re-emerges, that person repents (burns). He repents in this world; he repents in the next world. This is what the Buddha declared: that having done a certain karma, if it leads to remorse, one should not do it. Then, how do we recognize good and bad in this? The Buddha has shown this in a very simple manner. That which is done with a defiled mind is bad. That which is done with a pure mind, a clear mind, is good. To understand this further, the Buddha has pointed out greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) as the causes, or roots, of all sinful deeds. Even without explaining greed, hatred, and delusion anew, everyone can recognize them when looking at themselves. Through the arising of greed, hatred, and delusion, the mind is defiled. If one thinks, speaks, or acts, using a certain volition rooted in them, the Buddha briefly declared all of them to be sinful deeds, unwholesome karma (*akusala-karma*).

Next, wholesome qualities (*kusala-dhamma*). What lies beneath wholesome actions (*kusala-karma*)? The exact opposite of the other. It is departure from greed, which is called non-greed (*alobha*). If one has departed from greed to some extent, to that extent that mind is pure, bright, and clear. Actions done with such a mind are wholesome actions (*kusala-karma*). So, in this way, the path of traveling from greed

to non-greed is what is called the practice (*patipadā*). It is the path leading from hatred to departure from hatred, which is called non-hatred (*adosa*). From delusion to wisdom, or departure from delusion, which is called non-delusion (*amoha*). So, it is between these two that the Buddha showed the distinction between the wholesome and the unwholesome. Not according to temporary results. Beyond that, the word 'result' (*vipāka*) is indeed a force of ripening and maturing that extends very far. Such a thing within karma is a highly wondrous thing. It is a Dhamma-principle (*dhammatā*), because consciousness (*viññāṇa*), turning round and round, brings up these turns of ripening. When we look at karma, it seems like a small thing. But once it is deposited in the mind, like the onset of hiccups, it re-emerges again and again. Every time it re-emerges, it brings about birth either in the realm of hungry ghosts (*peta-loka*), the demon realm (*asura-loka*), or the hells (*apāya*), or in the human world, the animal world, and such places. What is done by all of these? Creating a bodily cage out of the four great elements of cohesive, hot, mobile, and solid elements (*āpo, tejo, vāyo*...), it says 'suffer/experience this', and so one suffers. This kind of thing is what is called saṃsāra. It is what is called becoming (existence) (*bhava*). It is what is called continuation. It is to escape from this condition that the Buddha preached this Dhamma of Nibbāna.

When the Buddha says 'fool' (*bāla*), it does not mean young in age, but foolish. Even if a person has reached sixty years of age, if he does not have even the knowledge of a crawling child, that person is a fool (*bāla*). A small child. Thus, the word 'fool' (*bāla*) is used in the Dhamma in the sense of a foolish person.

The method of distinguishing the fool and the wise person was declared by the Buddha on a certain occasion in the *Bālapandita Sutta*. If there is someone who thinks bad thoughts, uses bad words, and performs bad deeds, no matter how much worldly education he has, he is a fool, a foolish person. The wise person (*paṇḍita*) is the person who thinks good thoughts, speaks good words, and performs good deeds. It is very easy to recognize them. The Buddha shows how much the fool repents because of his foolish deeds. In this verse, it is specifically said that if a certain karma leads to regret, it should not be done. The Buddha points out the occasions when that regret arises. The five sins are indeed the worst things in the world. They can be easily recognized.

As you know, none of these five sins can be done with a clear mind. One cannot kill an animal, kill a human, steal, commit sexual misconduct, lie, or consume intoxicants while keeping the mind clear. The mind is defiled. The mind is completely defiled. So, the results of that defilement are what are called results (*vipāka*). Evil results. Sinful results. The fool maintains thoughts related to the sinful actions of the five sins. You know that for killing, murder, stealing, etc., they often make plans for a long time, they have to think. When maintaining those thoughts, sinful karmas flow in. Sinful results flow in. Next, they organize words regarding that. Next, they perform it through action.

Those three doors are what are called the 'three doors' in the phrase 'the three doors'. The three doors are those three. Not the doors of houses. So, those are the three doors to be guarded. We make great efforts to guard the doors of our houses. But if we do not guard these three doors, to that extent we have terrifying dangers in this saṃsāra. That is indeed what Ven. Vīdāgama also said: 'not giving opportunity to the three doors'. Thus, the fool, without concern for those three doors, maintains wrong thoughts, speaks wrong words, commits those sins like killing animals, and let us say he goes to a crossroads or an assembly. The five sins are spoken of there. At that moment, a regret arises in this person. 'What they are saying is what I too have done,' thus a certain amount of regret arises. The Buddha points out that this is the first occasion of regret that arises in the fool.

Next, likewise, this person gets to see another person who committed the very same wrong deeds being caught by the law and punished. Sent to prison. Or, as happened here, facing the death penalty. At that, a shock and regret arise in this person: 'Now, I too have done those things. If I too get caught, if someone gives information about this, this will happen to me too,' thus he repents. As the third occasion, the Buddha points out that whether the fool sits on a chair, lies down on a bed, or even sits on the ground, on all those occasions, the memory of the sinful deed he committed comes and torments him. The Buddha gives a good simile regarding this. The similes given by the Buddha are very deep. By reflecting on them, one can drive that advice into one's mind. He declares to the Sangha: 'Monks, just as in the evening, think of the shadow of a great mountain—how is the shadow of a great mountain when it becomes evening? It extends even further than the mountain. It extends further and further. It is like something hanging from the mountain. As if the shadow is hanging on the mountain. In the same way, the remorseful mind of the fool is as if hanging on the body of the fool.'

That is to say, even if he sits on a chair, lies down on a bed, or sits on the ground, that person's mind is covered. The memory, the trace of the sinful deed done in the past, hangs in the mind. He remembers it. Every time he remembers it, that person repents. This is what the Buddha points out through the simile. The things that have to be experienced in this very life as the terrifying consequences of those sinful deeds are this regret. Next, the Buddha declares a regret far more serious than that regret. If at any point this person dies and is born in hell, from there onwards, the Buddha points out these sufferings of hell. He gives very long descriptions of the terrifying nature of this hell (*apāya*). Having described that, the Buddha declares to the Sangha that the amount of suffering in hell is so great that it is impossible to show even by a simile; even giving a simile is difficult.

A certain monk who was among the Sangha requested of the Buddha: 'Blessed One, please give me a simile.' Even though he said it is difficult to give, the monk requested a simile. Then, the Buddha gave this simile: 'Well, monks, think of a king who catches a thief who has committed a serious crime and, as a punishment, tells his royal guards: "Pierce this man a hundred times in the morning with sharp

spears." The royal guards did so. Next, having summoned them, he asks: "How is it, is that man still alive?" "Yes, Your Majesty," they say. "Ah, then give him the same medicine at noon. Pierce him a hundred times." They do so at noon. Next, in the evening, he asks: "How is it, is that person still there?" "He is still alive." "Ah, then pierce him in the same way a hundred times in the evening." Then, when pierced three hundred times in this way, what kind of suffering does that person experience?' the Buddha asked the Sangha. 'Blessed One, three hundred is not needed. Even if pierced once, a person experiences very severe suffering,' they replied.

Next, the Buddha presented the simile. As he often did, the Buddha took in his hand a pebble about the size of his palm. 'Monks, is this pebble larger, or the great Himālaya, the king of mountains?' 'Blessed One, this pebble cannot even be compared to the great Himālaya, the king of mountains.' 'Just so, monks, the suffering a person experiences from the severe tortures mentioned in this simile I gave is like this small pebble in my hand. One will have to experience an amount of suffering as large as the Himālaya mountain in the four lower realms (*apāya*), especially in hell,' the Buddha declared in simile.

On another occasion, the Buddha pointed out four fears that can come to a person: the fear of self-reproach (*attānuvāda-bhaya*), the fear of others' reproach (*parānuvāda-bhaya*), the fear of punishment (*daṇḍa-bhaya*), and the fear of an evil destination (*duggati-bhaya*). 'Fear' there means danger. Then, the fear of self-reproach means one's own mind blames oneself. That is what was shown in the matters mentioned earlier: that person's mind blames himself. That can ultimately lead to madness. Sometimes, for those extremely wealthy people—we are not saying this of everyone, but in some instances—one reason for insomnia and such must be that they acquired their wealth through unlawful means. Every time those are remembered, that person has no peace. He has to seek the help of sleeping pills. In this way, we can understand how terrifying a burning, a regret, that comes in this very life is. Far more terrifying is dying at some point and being born in those realms of hungry ghosts (*peta-loka*), or the demon, yakkha realms, or hells, and having to experience the exact same results corresponding to the karma one did. If one killed, one too is put to death. If one stole, one is born sometimes without even a cloth to wear, lacking the stolen things, in an even more terrifying manner. In this way, there is a nature of giving results exactly corresponding to the karma. From all of this, we can understand in what a terrifying ocean of karma worldly people are lost.

In truth, the Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, does not appear in the world to teach an ordinary thing. That is why the ancient sages declared:

Na hi sīlavataṃ hetu,

uppajjanti tathāgatā,

Aṭṭhakkharā tīṇipadā,

sambuddhena pakāsitā.

(Tathāgatas do not arise in the world merely for the sake of moral precepts (*sīla*) and vows. It is to introduce to the world three words consisting of eight letters, which lead to disillusionment with this entire saṃsāra, and to provide an understanding of the three characteristics: *aniccaṃ* (impermanent / inconstant), *dukkhaṃ* (suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress), and *Anattā* (Not-self).)

That is indeed what that poor farmer obtained through his own experience. By thinking about karma as the disadvantage of this saṃsāra, a person can develop a great fear, a fear of saṃsāra. Now, in this dispensation of a Buddha, there is that right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) preached by a Buddha. It is present at least in books; one can read it or hear it from someone who knows. If one is born in a non-dispensation period, one lives like animals, yakkhas, and hungry ghosts. There is no Dhamma. One must think of how much terrifying suffering one would have to undergo in saṃsāra by committing sins in such an era. A person can develop a great fear, thinking, 'Am I ready for those burnings?' What we sometimes consider as groundless accusations are all forces of karma coming from beneath. How severe the turn of ripening of a karma is, is such that sometimes, due to a grave deed done in one single moment, one has to suffer for eons (*kalpas*). Various analyses of karma are mentioned in the Dhamma. The results of some grave sins have to be experienced in this very life as *diṭṭhadhammavedanīya* (to be experienced in this life). Or some others definitely bring results in the next life, the next birth. Others bring about birth in some future life.

In this way, through various methods, this karma emerges from those respective places. Beneath the many events that occur in our lives lies this wheel of karma (*karma-cakra*). That is why it is said that there are two wheels in this world: the wheel of karma (*karma-cakra*) and the wheel of Dhamma (*dhamma-cakra*). The wheel of karma is always turning. Whether the Dhamma is present or not, the wheel of karma turns. Worldly people, caught in this wheel of karma, fall victim to a multitude of terrifying sufferings. But they do not know its cause. They do not know how it happens. Because of that, when the results of karma come, they struggle with those results and accumulate more karma. That is why this becomes a great entanglement. Like a tangled ball of thread, this cannot be untangled. One must be eager to develop insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) along these three characteristics of impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*), suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*), and not-self (non-self / unsubstantial) (*anattā*), which are available only during the dispensation of a Buddha. Thereafter, with the understanding of arising and passing away, looking at how these break up and dissolve, one must develop fear towards them and understand the aspect of disadvantage (*ādīnava*). By further developing the three characteristics of impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*) and not-self (non-self / unsubstantial) (*anattā*), one can develop equanimity towards preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*). Going beyond that, passing through those insight-knowledges mentioned as the knowledge of reflective contemplation (*paṭisaṅkhā-ñāṇa*), the knowledge of conformity (*anuloma-ñāṇa*), etc., is how one realizes the path and fruit (*magga-phala*). This is a special transformation that

occurs within the mind. The raw materials needed for this are abundant in our daily lives. Now, the entire series of events that happened to that farmer that morning became a book of Dhamma. The farmer who was there in the morning was not the same by evening; he was a noble disciple (*ariya-puggala*). He became a person capable of delivering a good sermon by relating it to his own life, to his life story.

The Buddha praises such a Stream-enterer, saying he is: *diṭṭhadhammo, pattadhammo, viditadhammo, tiṇṇavicikiccho, vigatakathaṅkatho, vesārajjappatto sattusāsane*—one who has seen the Dhamma, attained the Dhamma, known the Dhamma, crossed over doubt, got rid of wavering, and attained courage in the Teacher's dispensation. One who has seen the Dhamma, entered into the Dhamma, understood the Dhamma, one who has removed doubts and anxieties regarding those supramundane qualities. A confident person. Now, we see the word 'confident' (*visārada*) being used extensively as degrees. But the Buddha gives the title of 'confident' (*visārada*) even to that poor farmer. He obtained confidence/mastery regarding the supramundane Dhamma. In a world where people run rapidly on the path of unrighteousness, casting the Dhamma aside to make short-term plans succeed through the economy, we as wise Buddhists, if we are to protect this dispensation, must train ourselves to think about these values of the dispensation even through such brief Dhamma sermons.

These qualities of the Dhamma, such as *sandiṭṭhika* (to be seen here and now), *akālika* (timeless), *ehipassika* (inviting one to come and see), mean that this Dhamma, the supramundane Dhamma, can be directly realized in this very life before one's own eyes. It brings results without delay. Likewise, the Dhamma invites us, saying 'come and see'. What is meant by saying the Dhamma invites us? It is not that the Buddha invites us. It is the Dhamma itself that invites us: if one lives according to the Dhamma to some extent, the benefit is naturally received to that extent. No other person needs to come and give it. If one takes one step on the path, a strength to go forward along that step arises automatically. There is a nature in the Dhamma that brings one to a certain point, and also: *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*—it is to be individually realized by the wise. These are the qualities of the Dhamma. We recite these passages daily in our homage to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. We do not tend to think about them. But like the vitamin pill, all of these are present within our life experiences. What is the method needed for that? One must bring forth wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) from within one's mind instead of unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*).

What is called insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) is precisely that reflection with wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). What is contained in that wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*)? Bringing forth the impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*) nature of these, instilling in the mind the understanding that 'all these are things that come and go, things that arise, exist, and pass away', and accordingly, contemplating mindfully the objects that come to the mind. We said earlier that if we grasp a rope that is untangling in the middle, instead of untangling, it gets knotted there. In the

same way, if we grasp the things that emerge as turns of ripening with craving (thirst) (*taṇhā*) as grasping (holding / fuel) (*upādāna*), or if we generate further karma through them, this will never be untangled. Instead, what is found in this path of meditation is equanimity towards them.

What is called equanimity (*upekkhā*) is looking at them. When letting a rope untangle, we have to look on. In the same way, looking on as these are completely untangled and dissolved within a force of karma is what that farmer did. So, he prepared for it according to the occasion. His hands were bound; there was nothing he could do. Then, there was also the desire to escape from that—which is called the desire for deliverance (*muñcitukamyatā*)—even in a worldly sense, there is the desire to escape. 'It is enough if at least my hands are freed.' But what was there to be done for that? To escape from the royal guards? None of that was possible. So, he contemplated with wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*): 'Do you see the serpent, Ānanda?' 'Yes, Lord, the deadly, poisonous serpent.' 'Do you see the serpent, Ānanda?' 'Yes, Lord, the deadly, poisonous serpent.' That was the mantra, that was the meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). That is what helped this farmer to attain the fruit of Stream-entry.

In this way, we can learn those lessons from the experiences in our university of life. Or, we can analyze the shocks and conflicts that come to our lives according to that angle of the Dhamma, according to that wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). In truth, there is nothing even to analyze; we must contemplate them and develop equanimity towards them. Contemplating them with wisdom by way of reflective contemplation (*paccavekkhaṇā*) and freeing the mind from them. What is called deliverance (*vimutti*) is freeing the mind. Freeing the mind from the things that flow into it is not something that can be done by struggling. It is something to be done by looking on with equanimity towards them, endowed with wisdom and understanding. Therefore, this path of Nibbāna is indeed blocked by ourselves. That is why the Buddha declares that humans do not see this Nibbāna which is so close. No matter how close we come to a lamp that has light, or to a lamp-post (*pahankanuwa*), if we do not open our eyes, we do not see. Therefore, we must try to open our eyes. It is of no use closing our eyes and saying 'it is not visible.' It is not visible. Therefore, each one must make some effort regarding one's own life.

First, by developing some meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) as serenity (*samatha*). Now, we said that for the farmer, it must have helped to calm his mind by way of the recollection of the Buddha, with faith: 'Ah, the Buddha told me this before. How valuable a person! What was invisible to me was visible to him, wasn't it? He knew this was a serpent, didn't he?' It was with that faith that he declared the Buddha's word. Even in the words that the farmer spoke, there is that quality of 'knower of the worlds' (*lokavidū*) we speak of. He knows things about this world that are invisible to others. In that way, that collection of virtues of the Buddha helped that farmer as a serenity meditation subject. We too can generate such faith and calm the mind through some meditation subject that helps to calm the mind regarding the Triple

Gem. You know that there are the four guardian meditations (*catu-ārakkha-bhāvanā*): it can be the recollection of the Buddha, the meditation on loving-kindness (*mettā*), the meditation on foulness (*asubha*), or the recollection of death (*maranasati*). Through any of these, the mind can be calmed to some extent.

This entire collection of thoughts, this heap of preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*) that arises in the mind by way of volitions and expectations, has the mind beneath all of them: *Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā*. Therefore, when viewed from the final analysis, beneath everything lies this thought. Even that thought is not something permanent. It comes and goes. It arises and passes away. If we do not grasp them, if we do not cling to them, they arise, exist, and pass away. When looking at that state, it is seen that this entire existence (*bhava*), continuation, which we grasp so greatly, all of this hangs on this thread called a thought. The entire world hangs on this thread called a thought. Then, to become supramundane, what is to be done is to cut this thread. This is not an easy task. Even though it is called a thread, it has to be cut with a subtle knife called the insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) or the path-knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*).

This entire world, the universe, hangs on a single strand of thread: the strand of thread called a thought. But all these educated people struggle, unable to break this strand of thread called a thought. The more they struggle, the more they are bound in that ocean of karma and swim in that ocean of karma. That indeed is the state of the world. That is the word of the Buddha. Wise people who contemplate this should try not to fall victim to the various wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) that spread in this era, or to the idea that Nibbāna is impossible in this day and age. Developing a true respect for the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha in this dispensation, relying on this Triple Gem, generating faith in it, one must then calm the scattering mind through some serenity meditation subject appropriate to one's temperament.

Next, without running with this running mind, to stop that running, practicing that equanimity (*upekkhā*) like looking at the untangling of a rope, is when those preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*) are understood, and they are brought to stillness. When preparations (Preparations) (*saṅkhāra*) are understood, at that very moment, the great delusion (*moha*) and ignorance (*avijjā*) within this consciousness (*viññāṇa*) are dispelled, and wisdom (*paññā*) arises. It is through that light of wisdom that a person frees himself from the suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*) of saṃsāra experienced for eons of ten million times, and realizes the noble, deathless Nibbāna.

Therefore, on this valuable Poyaday, at this moment, it is good for these meritorious people to look at the transformation that has occurred within their own mental continuums. What we call listening to a sermon is for a certain purification, even if temporary, of our minds. It is not about some benefit that can be obtained in the future by merely listening to a sermon. In the manner declared by the Buddha in those days, the noble disciple listens to the Dhamma thinking, "There is a purpose in

this Dhamma for me" — *atthikatvā, manasikatvā, samannāharitvā, ohitasoto dhammaṃ suṇāti*. *Atthikatvā* and *manasikatvā* mean contemplating every single word of that Dhamma. Next, likewise, leaning one's ear well, directing attention, one listens. It is when listening in that manner that deep understandings regarding these Dhammas arise. It is by listening to the Dhamma in that manner that even those paths and fruits were realized in the past. Therefore, the wise, meritorious people, having generated faith in the Triple Gem at this moment, undertook this noble precept of the eightfold precept with livelihood as the eighth (*ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla*).

What is called this *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla* is abstaining from eight things that cause regret in a person's life: killing animals, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, slandering, harsh speech, frivolous talk, and wrong livelihood. All of these are things that cause regret to oneself. Therefore, within the determination to separate from them lies deliverance from regret. That too is a great happiness. What is shown in the Dhamma as *anavajja-sukha* (bliss of blamelessness) is a happiness that a person who conducts a blameless livelihood has, which others do not receive. 'My blameless livelihood'—rejoicing in this, that person can be elated at any time. Just as you have undertaken such a valuable precept, you have also listened to a certain explanation of this verse which seems simple but contains a deep Dhamma. During that time, what happened to your thoughts? If you had spent that time in ordinary daily life, in such a society, how many heaps of defilements would have flowed into the mind? Either regarding the past, the future, or regarding the present. Instead, these meritorious people generated faith in the Triple Gem, generated respect for the Dhamma, and listened to the Dhamma at this moment. Next, if you did that with wisdom, at every single word it was seen that all of these come and go. A multitude of feelings arise from these. But when looking at the end, there is nothing to grasp in any of these. When contemplating deeply within this Dhamma, after calming the mind, what is seen is that aforesaid nature of impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*) and not-self (non-self / unsubstantial) (*anattā*).

We started saying we would preach a sermon for an hour. Now, the hour is near its end. We must think that the passing of this hour is the passing of a chapter of our life, a valuable chapter, a long period of time. We think of our life as a long one, we think of a great future ahead as the retirement time. But death can happen right here. In this way, when reflecting on death, we can think of how long a period an hour is in a human life; indeed, that hour has passed away. Along with it, our life too has passed away. We must deeply understand the nature of impermanent (inconstant) (*anicca*), suffering (unsatisfactoriness / stress) (*dukkha*), and not-self (non-self / unsubstantial) (*anattā*) of all of these.

As the Buddha declared, there are many reasons to be diligent (*appamāda*). One is this dispensation. Before long, this word 'Nibbāna' (The Mind Stilled / Extinction / Extinguishment) will be hidden. It will not even be heard. Such an era is what is called the disappearance of the dispensation. Until a Buddha appears again, one will lose the opportunity to escape from this saṃsāra. One will fall into a great darkness.

If, while walking in a great city admiring the sights under bright electric lights, the electricity suddenly fails, in what a great darkness will that group lose their way? In the same way, we must think. Such a time is coming in the future. Before that, whether lay or ordained, everyone must keep this noble supramundane state shown by the Buddha as the goal of their life, and make a determination: 'I must bring an end to saṃsāra through one of the three kinds of Bodhi.' To that end, may this collection of virtues deposited in your mental continuums by way of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—*saddhā, vīriya, sati, samādhi, paññā*—serve as a supportive condition (*upanissaya*)!

Now, up to this point, you have generated a multitude of wholesome volitions, whether by way of serving the Sangha, worshipping and offering, listening to the Dhamma, or in various other ways. May the deities of right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) who protect the dispensation, the devas and Brahmas, who wish to fulfill their own Dhamma-aspirations, rejoice in and accept these wholesome qualities we have accumulated! May they fulfill their Dhamma-aspirations! Likewise, may they protect us and help to maintain the dispensation for a long time! Thus we must share the merit with the deities. Likewise, if any being from the Avīci hell up to the Akanitā heaven, including our departed relatives, wishes to share in the merit of this listening to and preaching of the Dhamma, may all of them so share in the merit and make it a supportive condition to find peace in the supreme, deathless Nibbāna! With this aspiration, now share the merit by reciting these verses!

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"