Pahankanuwa Sermon #130

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.127)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

Sabbattha ve sappurisā cajanti,

na kāmakāmā lapayanti santo;

sukhena phuṭṭhā atha vā dukhena,

noccāvacaṃ paṇḍitā dassayanti ti.

From:

Dhammapada 83 (Paṇḍitavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The rare quality of equanimity, of remaining balanced in both pleasure and pain, is a valuable exemplar we receive from the life of the Buddha. Becoming elated in pleasure and depressed in pain (*dukkha*) is a weakness commonly seen in society. The Blessed One preached that remaining balanced in both these situations is a characteristic of the wise (*paṇḍita*), and that is the occasion we are presenting today.

We believe that on this Duruthu Full Moon Poya day, as you commence a new year, you will be able to extract certain points from this verse and its background story that will assist your philosophy of life. The Blessed One preached this thematic verse at Jetavana monastery in reference to five hundred monks. However, in truth, the primary incident related to this story occurred in Verañjā. Not long after the Great Awakening, the Blessed One, along with five hundred monks, was residing at the root of the Naḷeru margosa tree in Verañjā. At that time, a Brahmin named Verañja came to discuss with the Blessed One. After a long, debate-like Dhamma discussion, he developed faith in the Blessed One and became a lay follower who went for refuge in the Triple Gem. Right at that moment, he invited the Blessed One and the community of five hundred monks to spend the upcoming rainy season there. However, due to a certain unfortunate circumstance, this Brahmin Verañja

completely forgot to attend to the needs of the monks during the rainy season. Along with this, there was a famine in Verañjā. When the monks did not receive any support from that Brahmin, even though they went on alms-round (*piṇḍapāta*), the famine in Verañjā was so severe that they received nothing during their alms-round. Meanwhile, five hundred horse dealers traveling with five hundred horses from the Northern Route (Uttarāpatha) arrived in Verañjā. Those horse dealers wished to offer a measure (*pata*) of barley grain to each of the monks. The monks went to the horse paddocks, received a measure of barley grain each, brought them back, pounded and powdered them in a mortar, and offered them to the Blessed One as well, sustaining themselves on this during those three months.

The Blessed One asked Ven. Ānanda, "Ānanda, what is that sound of a pestle striking a mortar?" Often, the Blessed One does not ask such questions because he does not know. The reason is that although he knows, when there is a need to deliver a Dhamma discourse or to lay down a disciplinary rule, the Blessed One asks a question to create an opportunity. We must think it was the same on this occasion. For when he asked about the sound of the pestle, Ven. Ānanda explained the matter: that they were not receiving support from the Brahmin Verañja, and even when going on alms-round, they received nothing, and finally they were receiving this measure of barley grain.

After that was said, the Blessed One uttered a very deep and meaningful short statement: "Ānanda, sadhu, sadhu, Ānanda! It has been won by you, good men." "Won" (*vijita*) is the word used. "It has been won. Yet, future generations might look down even upon red rice." "Future generations" means the monks who will arise in the future will disparage even high-quality rice. "But it has been won by you, good men." From this, we must understand that they conquered both greed and the famine through this practice of fewness of wishes (*alpeccatā*). In any case, at the end of that rainy season, the Blessed One told Ven. Ānanda, "It is the custom of the Buddhas, if they have spent the rainy season in a place, to inform the donor who invited them before departing on their provincial tour." So, together with Ven. Ānanda, he went to the house of the Brahmin Verañja and told him, "Brahmin, in accordance with your invitation, we have spent the rainy season. Now we are prepared to go on our provincial tour. We have come to inform you of this." It was only then that the Brahmin Verañja remembered the matter. Then he said, "It is true, Venerable Gotama. Indeed, I did invite you. But it was not because I lacked the means to give, nor because I was unwilling to give. Something happened. I think it must have been forgotten due to the many duties, worries, and household chores in this lay life." To make up for it, the Brahmin Verañja, with great faith, invited them for the next day and offered an excellent alms-giving.

After this, the Blessed One journeyed by stages and returned to Sāvatthi. On that occasion, the residents of Sāvatthi offered a grand alms-giving to the Blessed One and the community of monks as guest-offerings. By that time, five hundred lay followers had handed over their household properties and goods to their wives and

children and were staying at Jetavana, listening to the Dhamma of the Blessed One. It is mentioned that there was an arrangement such that they too could subsist on the same food offered to the monks. Furthermore, those who served as attendants, described in the Dhamma as "eaters of leftovers" (*vighāsāda*), were also living on the remnants of the food offered to the monks.

Having eaten the delicious food received as leftovers, these people behaved in an extremely undisciplined manner; they went to the riverbank, where some slept soundly, while others engaged in wrestling and various absurd and improper behaviors, creating a great disturbance both in the monastery and on the riverbank. A discussion arose about this among the monks: "The monks, even during that famine in Verañjā, endured those difficulties in an extremely peaceful manner, and even now, when exquisite food is received, they remain peaceful. But these undisciplined people are behaving in this manner." Thus, a discussion arose in the Dhamma assembly. The Blessed One, having arrived there and asked about the discussion, said, "Indeed, monks, good men do not show highness or lowness in either pain (*dukkha*) or pleasure, but remain balanced." And he uttered the verse we took as our theme:

> *Ve sappurisā cajanti na kāmakāmā lapayanti santo,*
>
> *sukhena phuṭṭhā atha vā dukhena, noccāvacaṃ paṇḍitā dassayanti.*

"Indeed, good men let go" (*ve sappurisā cajanti*)—this means that in all places, good men renounce; they practice letting go. Everywhere. "They do not speak out of desire for sensual pleasures" (*na kāmakāmā lapayanti santo*)—*santo* means good men. What is the habit of those good men? *Kāmakāmā* means because of those desires, with the hope of fulfilling desires; *lapayanti* means they do not speak self-interested or flattering words. They do not behave by speaking flattering words to please others. Next, "when touched by happiness or indeed by suffering" (*sukhena athavā dukhena noccāvacaṃ paṇḍitā dassayanti*). This means that when the wise are touched by pleasant sensation (*vedanā*) or painful sensation (*vedanā*)—when experiencing pleasure or pain (*dukkha*)—they do not show highness or lowness, elation or depression. Furthermore, before preaching this verse, the Blessed One related a certain Jātaka story to illustrate this. He declared the Vālodaka Jātaka, showing that those undisciplined individuals had behaved in this same way in the past as well. We will present that Jātaka only in brief on this occasion.

According to that story, in the past, when King Brahmadatta was reigning, enemy hostiles arose in a border province. The king went with his army, quelled the hostile threat, and returned. To treat the horses that were exhausted from the warfare, he ordered his royal officers to press grapes, without mixing water, and to give pure grape juice to the horses to drink. After that was done, the pressed grape dregs remained. When asked what to do with them, he ordered that they be mixed with water and given to the donkeys that had carried the horses' baggage and food. After those donkeys were fed with it, they became intoxicated by it and began running here

and there in the royal palace, creating a huge nuisance. The king asked what the noise was. There, acting as minister, the Bodhisatta declared: “Yes, your majesty, horses of noble birth—thoroughbred horses—remain silent even after drinking such excellent grape juice. But donkeys of low birth behave in this manner after drinking merely this sour, dregs-water.”

The Blessed One showed this as an illustration and then uttered this verse. In the Jātaka story, it is said that those donkeys were indeed these five hundred people. Accordingly, we can understand this verse in this manner. When the Blessed One said here, “Indeed, in all places, good men let go,” he referred to how those monks endured and acted with fewness of wishes (*alpeccatā*) during that extremely difficult time of famine. Furthermore, “they do not speak out of desire for sensual pleasures.” They did not go and speak self-interested words because of those desires. To put it briefly, not a single monk out of those five hundred went to the Brahmin Verañja to complain: “Lay devotee, you invited us to spend the rainy season here, didn’t you? But there is no care as promised. Even the Buddha is consuming barley grain.” Not a single monk went to complain. That is what is called “winning” (*vijita*). From this, we can understand why the Blessed One used that word “conquered” (*vijita*). Indeed, if any monk had gone and said such a thing to the lay donor, it would have been a defeat.

We must learn something from this. The Blessed One preached this verse as praise for the practice of the monks. He also made a certain prediction for future generations, saying that the monks who would arise in the future would be different. The dispensation (Sāsana) has to go forward into the future. It must have been because the Blessed One felt that such things would happen in it that he said they would disparage even red rice. Various related matters are mentioned in the history of the dispensation and in later times, which you too have heard of.

There was an undisciplined group led by six monks known as the Chabbaggiya. They were constantly seeking loopholes in the dispensation of the Blessed One and behaving in a highly rebellious manner. Because of this, many disciplinary rules had to be laid down. Next, you have also heard the stories regarding the elder Devadatta. Elder Devadatta was a relative of the Blessed One. Out of pride, overcome by gain and honor, he requested the Blessed One to hand over the Saṅgha to him in the Buddha's old age, subsequently caused a schism in the Saṅgha, and created a great deal of trouble. Having won over King Ajātasattu, the king began to go to serve him daily, morning and evening, with five hundred carriages carrying five hundred bowls of rice. When the monks mentioned this incident, the Blessed One declared, “Do not be envious of that; therein lies the ruin of Devadatta.” For it is the nature of base men that the more they receive, the more proud they become. On that occasion, he preached a verse using similes:

Phalaṃ ve kadaliṃ hanti, phalaṃ veḷuṃ phalaṃ naḷaṃ,

sakkāro kāpurisaṃ hanti, gabbho assatariṃ yathā.

“Indeed, its fruit destroys the banana tree; its fruit destroys the bamboo and the reed. Honor destroys the bad man, just as the embryo destroys the she-mule.”

“Indeed, its fruit destroys the banana tree”—when the banana tree bears fruit, it is destroyed. Bearing fruit is a sign of the destruction of the banana tree. Likewise, if bamboo trees, reeds, etc., bear fruit, they too meet with destruction. “Honor destroys the bad man” (*sakkāro kāpurisaṃ hanti*)—*kāpurisa* is the opposite of the word *sappurisa* (good man). *Kāpurisa* means a bad person, a bad man, an ignoble man. What is the nature of an ignoble man? When he receives honor and hospitality, he is destroyed by it due to pride. Through this, we can understand how those of base character gradually fall into decline the more they receive gains and honors. In the early days of the dispensation, the noble monks endured that famine in Verañjā. But as time went on, due to the undisciplined actions of some monks and their greed for the four requisites, various corruptions occurred in the dispensation.

Next, let us look at exemplary characters. The Blessed One constantly presented the great character of Ven. Mahā Kassapa to the monks as an example regarding the practice of gathering alms (*piṇḍacaryā*), etc. Foremost among those who observed the ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*), the Ven. Mahā Kassapa received high praise from the Blessed One in a manner that no other monk or Arahant received. He was held up as an exemplar to the monks.

On such an occasion, the Blessed One said to the monks, “Monks, the nature of Mahā Kassapa is that he is content with whatever” (*santuṭṭho itarītarena*)— “whatever” (*itarītara*) is used to mean much or little, exquisite or coarse. He has the nature of being content with any kind of alms-food. Furthermore, he speaks to others about that contentment in terms of praise, recommending and demonstrating it as an example. Next, he does not become dejected when he does not receive alms-food. After receiving it, he partakes of it without greed, reflecting upon it wisely, focused on liberation (*nissaraṇapaññño*), which means with Nibbāna as the goal.

In this manner, the character of Ven. Mahā Kassapa was highlighted. Next, on another occasion, the Blessed One asked the monks, “What kind of monk is suitable to approach lay families for alms-food, etc.?” Then the monks said, “We do not have a clear understanding. May the Blessed One himself clarify this matter!” Then the Blessed One waved his hand in the air for a moment. In the preaching style of the Blessed One, you may have heard of such actions, like taking a little soil on his fingernail. On this occasion, waving his hand in the air, he said as a simile, “Monks, just as this hand does not adhere to, bind with, or get caught in the air, when a monk goes to lay houses, if his mind does not adhere to, bind with, or get caught in those lay houses, then such a monk is suitable to go for alms-round among families.” “Mahā Kassapa is just such a person.” Various similes have been given regarding the Arahant Mahā Kassapa, such as the “moon simile” (*candūpamā*)—like the moon. No one can grasp the moon. The moon is seen everywhere. The reflection of the moon in the sky is seen in any body of water, yet no one can grasp it. Through various such

similes, the limit of the connection between Arahant Mahā Kassapa and lay people was shown.

Similarly, the Buddha pointed out: “If, before going for alms-round, a monk thinks, 'Lay people must give me alms-food. They cannot avoid giving. They must give a lot; they cannot give a little. They must give exquisite food; they cannot give coarse or rough food. They must give quickly; they cannot delay. They must offer it respectfully; they cannot offer it disrespectfully'—if he goes with such thoughts beforehand, then if those lay devotees do not give alms-food at all, that monk becomes distressed and troubled by it. Even if they do give, if they give only a little and not a lot, he still becomes distressed. If they give coarse food instead of exquisite food, he still becomes distressed. If they give slowly instead of quickly, he still becomes distressed, falling into dejection. Furthermore, if they give without preparing it properly or without order, he likewise becomes distressed.”

Having shown that incorrect way, he then declared, “But if a monk thinks beforehand, 'How can one get what one wants from others' families? Therefore, there is no necessity; they may or may not give. Furthermore, how can one expect that others' families will give a lot? How can one expect that they will give exquisite food? How can one expect that they will give quickly? How can one expect that they must prepare it properly?'—if he considers this beforehand and goes on alms-round, then even if he receives nothing at all, or receives a little, or receives coarse food, or does not receive it quickly, or receives it unprepared, that monk does not become distressed. He remains balanced.”

Thus, in this way, the Blessed One pointed out certain valuable facts regarding the practice of gathering alms. All of this comes under that word “conquered” (*vijita*). There are valuable discourses (*sūtras*) that further explain this noble practice of the monks that the Blessed One declared. Especially, in explaining the practice of sagehood (*moneyya-paṭipadā*) to the ascetic Nālaka, valuable verses related to this are mentioned.

In one verse, the attitude that a monk should cultivate when going for alms-round is described as follows:

Alābhā yadi vā lābhā, ubhayeneva so tādī,

rukkhaṃva paṭinivattati.

If he receives, it is well; if he does not receive, that too is well. In both cases, he is one who is “such” (*tādī*); he returns like one who approached a tree.

If he goes for alms-round and receives, that is good; if he does not receive, that too is good. “If he receives, it is well; if he does not receive, that too is suitable… In both cases, he is 'such' (*tādī*).” The word *tādī* is used. *Tādī* means “suchness” or “being as such.” This is a word with a special, deep meaning. It is a word indicating the quality of *tādī*, the quality of equanimity, shown in reference to Arahants and the Blessed

One. In both situations, he is shown to be thus, as such. Next is the simile given. “He returns like one who approached a tree.” Just as someone who goes to a tree to see if there is fruit does not beat or curse the tree if there is no fruit, when a monk goes to a layman's house and does not receive anything, he does not blame the lay devotees, saying, “What is this, lay donor?” There is no such blaming at all. That is what is meant. He returns with balance and equanimity, just like one who went to a tree and returned. That is what is shown as the quality of *tādī*.

Now, the meaning of this quality of *tādī* is shown in relation to the eight worldly conditions (*aṣṭa loka dharma*). The simile used in ancient times for the eight worldly conditions is the balance-beam (*tulā-daṇḍa*). A balance-beam is like the beam of a weighing scale. Thus, in weighing equally, it is mentioned as “balanced like a scale in pleasure and pain” (*sukha-dukkhe tulābhūto*). In pleasure and pain (*dukkha*), it is like a scale; it remains perfectly level.

On another occasion, we used a modern simile, saying that the eight worldly conditions are like a rotating Ferris wheel (scissors-swing). Just as one does not fall whether going up or going down, one develops a certain attitude of mind. There is a deep meaning in “being as such.” If one receives, it is so; if one does not receive, it is so. If there is pleasure, it is so; if there is pain (*dukkha*), it is so. That is “suchness”—the quality of equanimity. That is why it is said here, “touched by happiness or indeed by suffering, they show neither elation nor depression”—they do not show highness or lowness. That is the meaning.

In the end, the Blessed One declared that this entire collection of qualities regarding the practice of gathering alms exists in the Arahant Mahā Kassapa, and urged others to take him as an example. Thus, both the declining side and the sublime side of this dispensation are shown in the Dhamma through the character of the Arahant Mahā Kassapa regarding this practice of gathering alms. Indeed, in this day and age, we must especially consider this matter because, like everything else, within the monkhood, the practice of gathering alms and meditation are things that must be done with a deep meaning. However, due to various reasons, they often tend to become a mere fashion. The Blessed One declared that going for alms—begging—is the lowest livelihood in the world: *“Antamidaṃ, bhikkhave, jīvikānaṃ yadidaṃ piṇḍolyaṃ.”* Among all the livelihoods in the world, the lowest is begging. Yet, noble sons of good families enter even this begging for the deep purpose of fulfilling renunciation (*nekkhamma*).

As it is said: “Abandoning a small mass of wealth or abandoning a great mass of wealth, abandoning a small circle of relatives or abandoning a great circle of relatives,” they depart from the home life and go forth into homelessness. After going forth, having abandoned all—just as the Buddhas, and even those of merchant families and royal families did—the next thing to do as a livelihood, though we call it a livelihood, is the alms-round (*piṇḍacārikā*). However, we are shown here that they do not go and beg like a beggar. Unlike beggars and pleaders, they stand silently

designated for alms (*uddhissa*). Going on alms-round (*piṇḍapāta*), they stand before a house for a certain amount of time waiting, and only then depart. Furthermore, "they do not speak out of desire for sensual pleasures"—this means that when going on alms-round, they do not ask the lay donors, "Give me this or that." *Lapayanti* means they do not speak self-interested words in that manner. Or rather, there are no flattering, chit-chat, or pleasing conversations on alms-round. Where that practice is spoken of, it is also mentioned in this manner:

Sa pattapāṇi vicaranto, amūgo mūgasammatho,

appaṃ dānaṃ na hīḷeyya, dātāraṃ nāvajāniya.

"Wandering with bowl in hand, though not mute, he is regarded as mute. He should not despise a small gift, nor look down on the giver."

A somewhat deep and meaningful verse is mentioned in that manner. "Wandering with bowl in hand" (*sa pattapāṇi vicaranto*)—that monk wandering with his bowl; "though not mute, he is regarded as mute" (*amūgo mūgasammatho*)—on the alms-round, though he is not mute, he behaves as if he were mute. Lay devotees may ask various questions. They may try to draw him into various pleasant chit-chats, but monks are instructed to behave like a mute person. Although not mute, he must behave as if mute. Furthermore, "he should not despise a small gift" (*appaṃ dānaṃ na hīḷeyya*)—even if the gift is small, he does not look down on it, weaken his mind because of it, or find that offering repulsive. "Nor look down on the giver" (*dātāraṃ nāvajāniya*)—it is also mentioned that he does not show disregard or contempt toward the person who gives a small amount. This quality is shown in the character of the Arahant Mahā Kassapa, as well as in the incident in Verañjā we discussed.

Similarly, another important incident is mentioned concerning the Blessed One. Perhaps you have heard the story of the slave-woman Puṇṇā. Let us consider this briefly, as it is a valuable story. There was a slave-woman named Puṇṇā belonging to the treasurer of Rājagaha, who was extremely poor. She was faithful, but poor. One day, she made a coarse bran-cake for herself, baked it on the embers, placed it in her waistband, took a pot, and went to the watering place. On the way, she met the Blessed One coming into the village on his alms-round (*piṇḍapāta*).

This woman thought, "On other days when I meet the Blessed One, I have nothing to give. But today, I have something to give. However, this is a very coarse food, a rough food. If the Blessed One would accept it, I will offer it." Saying these very words, she said, "Venerable Sir, this is my extremely poor and coarse food, a rough food. May the Blessed One, out of compassion, accept this as an offering to bless me!" The Blessed One made a sign to Ven. Ānanda. Ven. Ānanda handed over the bowl. The Blessed One accepted it in his bowl. This woman also paid homage and aspired, "May this be a supportive condition for me to attain that Dhamma which the Blessed One has attained!" The Blessed One blessed her, saying, "May it be so!"

However, this slave-woman thought, “Now, although the Blessed One accepted this out of compassion for me, perhaps he will give it to a crow and go to a royal palace or a treasurer's house on alms-round.” Just as this thought arose, the Blessed One, perceiving it, made a sign to Ven. Ānanda. Seeing a tree-root nearby, Ven. Ānanda spread a robe. The Blessed One sat down and consumed that very bran-cake as his meal for the day, so it is mentioned. There, we are shown that even from the life of the Buddha, he accepted even the small gift of the giver in that manner, without allowing any stain in his mind, helping them to give. As mentioned in the Dhamma, rather than modern economic principles, there is a different concept of gaining merit. The Blessed One pointed out that a true monk goes on alms-round with this kind of thought:

“May those who seek gains of merit receive gains of merit! May those who desire merit (*puṇṇakāmā*) perform merit!” with such a thought.

Often, concerning characters like Mahā Kassapa, it is mentioned that after rising from the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*), they go on alms-round (*piṇḍapāta*) to poor huts. Why is that? According to modern thinking, one should go to places of abundance, not to places of lack. For the world considers taking from a place of lack to be wrong. But here, when looking at the concept of gaining merit, the Blessed One declared: *“Appasmā dakkhiṇā dinnā…”*—offering something from very little is worth a thousandfold. It is worth a thousand times the gift given. Because, according to the concept of gaining merit, that which is given with difficulty, given in suffering (*dukkha*) and hardship, is highly fruitful. It was understanding this that those Arahants and Buddhas accepted and consumed those offerings out of compassion for poor people.

Accordingly, we too must think of that: “They do not speak out of desire for sensual pleasures.” Concerning alms-food (*piṇḍapāta*), they do not engage in various self-interested words, flattering words, or pleasant chit-chats for its sake. Furthermore, they do not look down on what is given, whether it is little or much. Especially, considering that when the Arahant Mahā Kassapa rose from the attainment of cessation and someone got the chance to offer alms-food, it would be of great fruit and great benefit; giving that opportunity to poor people is a valuable example we see in the history of the dispensation.

Furthermore, the matters mentioned in this verse have been explained here only in relation to the community of monks or the monastic society. However, if we contemplate further with wisdom, the “good man” (*sappurisa*) mentioned here is not only found among the monks; such a person can also be found among the laity. Therefore, these points of the Dhamma in this verse, which can be shown as the practice of a good man, can be integrated even into lay life. That is what we must especially remind you of on this occasion. Thus, if we take the very first line of the verse: *“Sabbe ve sappurisā cajanti”*—“Indeed, in all places, good men let go.” Monks let go of household things and go forth. But lay devotees also face various occasions

to let go. In fact, what is done in acts of giving (*dāna*), etc., is letting go. Similarly, various occasions may arise in one's day-to-day life where, according to the situation, one must sacrifice pleasure, sacrifice wealth, and let go in the mind—that is what is meant. In all situations, one must develop the strength to let go. Next, "they do not speak out of desire for sensual pleasures"—the nature of good men is that they do not use self-interested words, flattering words, deceitful methods, or deceitful speech to fulfill their expectations for various reasons.

Next, "when touched by happiness or indeed by suffering, the wise show neither elation nor depression"—this is the quality of remaining balanced in all things, whether pleasure comes or pain (*dukkha*) comes. Those eight worldly conditions affect all of us. The Blessed One declared that the world rotates around the eight worldly conditions, and the eight worldly conditions rotate around the world. When one understands the eight worldly conditions that constantly present themselves to oneself in accordance with the karma performed in *saṃsāra*, there is no room for those fluctuations. The most important word we have to extract from here is the quality of *tādī*—"suchness." That is the unshakable state amidst the eight worldly conditions. The eight worldly conditions are described as: gain (*lābha*) and loss (*alābha*), disrepute (*ayasa*) and fame (*yasa*), blame (*nindā*) and praise (*pasaṃsā*), pleasure (*sukha*) and pain (*dukkha*). There are these eight states. Thus, in these states, ordinary beings, in times of loss, disrepute, blame, and pain (*dukkha*), are oppressed by them and fall into depression. Next, when the good side comes—gain, fame, praise, and pleasure—their minds become puffed up and proud. Through that understanding, one must strive to prevent this. Here, let us look at the incident in Verañjā. The Blessed One was the supreme one who completed the perfection of giving (*dāna-pāramitā*). Nevertheless, due to those changes of time and famines, even the Blessed One and the monks had to face such situations.

So, when we think about how we will spend the coming year of our lives, and when we reflect on the sequence of events happening around us, we must be prepared for anything. There, a sacrifice of pleasure becomes necessary. As said in "Indeed, good men let go," depending on the situation, even lay devotees have to sacrifice their pleasures for the well-being of the majority. Similarly, one must act in accordance with the Dhamma as much as possible, free from selfishness. For the main cause of these disasters is one's own karma brought along in *saṃsāra*. Those karmas yield their results through the eight worldly conditions. This wheel of karma, in accordance with karma, is what is shown to us through the worldly conditions—that the eight worldly conditions rotate.

Thus, even the Blessed One had to face gain, loss, disrepute, fame, blame, praise, pleasure, and pain (*dukkha*). From stories like that of Ciñcā Mānavikā, we see how much insult the Blessed One received from the sectarians. He endured all of that without being shaken. That is what is called the quality of *tādī*—suchness. Fashioning the mind according to whatever comes. The quality of equanimity. Indeed, it is for this very purpose that we engage in this practice-dispensation. On this occasion, too,

you are spending this Poya day by letting go of various comforts and pleasures of the household life, leaning toward a very simple life, as a rehearsal for the life of the Arahants, a rehearsal for that way of living. In a manner fitting the eight-fold Uposatha precepts (*uposatha aṭṭhaṅga sīla*), in accordance with various training rules, you separate yourself from entertainment like dancing, singing, and instrumental music, separate yourself from wearing various ornaments, and train in a simple life. There too lies letting go. Therefore, from the very beginning of this dispensation, one must train in that letting go. Lay devotees, instead of being drowned in household thoughts in their day-to-day lives, separate themselves from them, and indeed, keep even the Poya eight precepts as a training in renunciation (*nekkhamma*).

The word *veramaṇī* (abstaining) present in every training rule is what is important there. That too is letting go. Killing living beings is easy; one likes it. But abstaining from it is difficult. In the Dhamma, concerning grasping (*upādāna*), two types of desire are mentioned: sensual objects (*vatthu-kāma*) and sensual defilements (*kilesa-kāma*). In practicing generosity, first, to eliminate sensual objects, one trains in letting go of things belonging to oneself. Furthermore, to let go of defilements, one must take an even subtler course of action. In day-to-day life, we can understand the way the world behaves according to the habits of *saṃsāra* through the behavior of animals and those who lack virtues like morality (*sīla*). When we consider the opposite of those training rules—killing living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicants—we see that these are the easy things in the world. Anyone can quickly enrich their life or make it pleasurable through these. But the Blessed One has shown the danger (*ādīnava*) of these. Although they are easy, if we do not let go of them, we will have to face a great mass of suffering (*dukkha*), and not only in this life.

You have heard of the four fears: the fear of self-reproach (*attānuvāda-bhaya*), the fear of reproach by others (*parānuvāda-bhaya*), the fear of punishment (*daṇḍa-bhaya*), and the fear of an unhappy destination (*duggati-bhaya*). “Fear” means that the mind blames itself. When one commits acts like killing living beings or stealing, that wrong deed remains deposited in the mind. Because of that, one's own mind blames oneself. Some people cannot sleep. That is the fear of self-reproach—one's own mind blaming oneself. Next is the fear of reproach by others—the blame of others. Next is the fear of punishment—getting caught in the grip of the state and the law, and having to suffer pain and hardship. Finally, the fear of an unhappy destination—going to an unhappy destination, which the Blessed One saw and declared with his Buddha-eye. Similarly, the Arahant Mahā Moggallāna, who possessed direct knowledges (*abhiññā*), and others showed illustrations to the world, demonstrating the danger of breaking these five precepts, of breaking these training rules—the suffering and hardships that lay people or monks who break them have to endure.

Considering those, one must perform that letting go. Letting go through the primary renunciation of giving (*dāna*) is sometimes easy. Letting go of external objects is easy. What is difficult is to free oneself from those bad habits and wrong practices that have been cultivated for a long time in *saṃsāra*. It is for this that morality (*sīla*) is necessary. The Blessed One declared that as an effort to cleanse the mind from the unwholesome karma performed over a long time in *saṃsāra* as animals, hungry ghosts (*preta*), demons (*yakṣa*), etc., one must observe the five precepts as permanent morality (*nicca-sīla*).

While observing the five precepts, gradually going higher, you observe the Poya eight precepts or ten precepts on this Poya day, making a sacrifice of pleasure, as an effort to escape from this *saṃsāra* with its terrifying fear of unhappy destinations, and as a training in the lifestyle of the Arahants. The word *veramaṇī* in every training rule reminds us of a letting go. Thus, that indeed is the quality of good men (*sappurisa*). The Blessed One has shown both the danger (*ādīnava*) side and the benefit (*āniśaṃsa*) side. The Blessed One constantly points out the benefit side. Generally, everyone enters into something after seeing its benefits. Similarly, when the danger side is shown, one becomes concerned and develops a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*), realizing that a change must occur.

As benefits, it often brings wealth and resources of becoming (*bhava*). But the benefit of morality (*sīla*) brings good births—it brings good births in the human world or happy destinations (*sugati*). Because it is through morality (*sīla*) that the true cultivation of virtues takes place within. Thinking about morality (*sīla*) in this way, we see that it too is a letting go—“Indeed, good men let go.” Letting go is a characteristic of good men. Next, an even deeper letting go belongs to those among you who are inclined toward meditation. From the moment the mind wishes to meditate, obstacles appear from all sides; one must make an effort to conquer these obstacles from within oneself. It is of no use to blame externals, saying, “I cannot meditate because of this or that.” How is one's lifestyle structured? What are the things that can be let go of from these? One must contemplate and see for oneself. Then, one might think, “Although we have done these things so far, they are unnecessary; they do not contribute to the task of developing the mind.” Therefore, one must develop the strength to let go of them.

Indeed, the very first problem for meditators is to break those bonds. Those bonds are things created due to attachment, due to craving (*taṇhā*). Therefore, if one hopes to escape from this *saṃsāra*, those too must be broken. Those are the defilements of desire (*kilesa-kāma*) in the mind. Therefore, one must conquer the attachments and conflicts regarding one's wives, children, wealth, etc.—the craving (*taṇhā*) for them. Sometimes, unless one contemplates them with wisdom, the craving (*taṇhā*) for them will not cease merely by giving them away. To assist in meditation, the Blessed One highlights the impermanence (*anicca*), the suffering (*dukkha*) nature, and the non-self (*anattā*) nature of all these. The Blessed One has presented various such perceptions (*saññā*) from the perspective of insight (*vipassanā*).

Lay devotees too must contemplate in some way this nature of suffering (*dukkha*) in *saṃsāra* highlighted by the Blessed One. Every time we recollect it, we understand the danger aspect of this *saṃsāra*. By grasping things that have danger, we become further trapped in *saṃsāra*. We will have to let go of them naturally. Therefore, the meditator must contemplate with wisdom and be strong enough to let go of those bonds and what are shown as impediments (*palibodha*) for one's progress in meditation. Indeed, the word “good man” (*sappurisa*) is used especially in reference to Arahants. If anyone is a good man, he must possess that collection of qualities within him. In any place, he must have the strength to let go and act altruistically. He must use words honestly without self-interested talk. Then, he must endure those pleasures and pains (*dukkha*). One must develop such strength.

The Blessed One declared: “I do not see a single thing in this *saṃsāra* that is not a bond,” let alone even the meditative absorptions (*jhāna*). Now, an ordinary meditator might think, “By attaining these absorptions (*jhāna*), etc., I will spend time in the Brahma worlds or Deva worlds.” But the Blessed One showed that these too are bonds. These too must be let go of—to the extent that there is nothing of which he said, “Do not let go.” The Blessed One has highlighted this regarding the Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) in this entire becoming (*bhava*).

You have heard many times: *“Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā”*—“All Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are impermanent (*anicca*).” Often, we recollect such things at funeral houses, etc. But we must constantly recollect this collection of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) related to this *saṃsāra*, seeing them as Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and realizing: “These are not mine; there is nothing here that can be taken as 'I' or 'mine'.” It is by constantly instilling this understanding in the mind that one can develop that strength. One who hopes for concentration (*samādhi*) in meditation must remove even those things that are pleasing to oneself if they obstruct the one-pointedness of mind, concentration (*samādhi*), and only then can the mind be concentrated. After that, for the development of insight (*vipassanā*), the Blessed One has pointed out various perceptions (*saññā*), such as the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), the perception of non-self (*anattā-saññā*), the perception of danger (*ādīnava-saññā*), and the perception of abandoning (*pahāna-saññā*). The Blessed One has declared four wrong perceptions—perverted perceptions (*vipallāsa-saññā*)—present in the ordinary world: the perception of permanence in the impermanent (*anicce nicca-saññā*). The Blessed One declared that the world, not seeing impermanence (*anicca*), forms a perception of permanence in impermanent things and acts in a perverted manner in *saṃsāra*. Similarly, the perception of beauty in the foul (*asubhe subha-saññā*), considering foul things as beautiful; the perception of pleasure in the painful (*dukkhe sukha-saññā*), forming a perception of pleasure in things fraught with suffering (*dukkha*); and finally, the perception of self in the non-self (*anattani atta-saññā*), considering that which is non-self (*anattā*) and cannot be kept under one's control as self. In this manner, these perverted perceptions exist in the world.

But instead of that, in discourses such as the Girimānanda Sutta, the Blessed One highlights Dhamma-conforming perceptions (*saññā*) to be constantly raised in the mind, such as: the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), the perception of non-self (*anattā-saññā*), the perception of foulness (*asubha-saññā*), the perception of danger (*ādīnava-saññā*), the perception of abandoning (*pahāna-saññā*), the perception of dispassion (*virāga-saññā*), the perception of cessation (*nirodha-saññā*), the perception of non-delight in the entire world (*sabba-loke anabhirata-saññā*), and the perception of impermanence in all Preparations (*sabba-saṅkhāresu anicca-saññā*). You constantly deal with perceptions (*saññā*). However, those perceptions (*saññā*) are often things that cause one to remain in *saṃsāra*. Instead, one must incline the mind toward those perceptions highlighted by the Blessed One in discourses like the Girimānanda Sutta. These thoughts must be constantly cultivated as attitudes in the mind. These are not things that arise all of a sudden. The Blessed One has declared that each of these contributes to Nibbāna.

If someone is trained to see impermanence (*anicca*) as a trait of their character, by developing that perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), they can complete all other tasks as well. In discourses delivered concerning the community of monks on certain occasions, the Blessed One points out: “In this community of mine, there are some who develop the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*). Certain individuals in that group, being directed to that alone, complete the rest through it.” There, it is the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) regarding the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*). Similarly, the perception of non-self (*anattā-saññā*). Regarding the sense bases (*āyatana*)—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—and their corresponding objects, cultivating the perception of non-self (*anattā-saññā*), that “nowhere is there a self,” is the perception of non-self (*anattā-saññā*).

Next, concerning the thirty-two impure parts of the body, the impure parts of the body, or what is shown as the nine cemetery contemplations (*nava sīvathika*), reflecting on the fate of this body when it goes to the cemetery, one can cultivate the perception of foulness (*asubha-saññā*). Next, the illnesses within this body. The list mentioned in the Buddha's time is not enough; we have to extend it further when we think about the diseases of this day and age. The Girimānanda Sutta is especially meant for this. Indeed, as shown under the perception of danger (*ādīnava-saññā*), this body is a nest of diseases, a heap of diseases. The Blessed One declared that if anyone says this body is healthy even for a single moment, it is foolishness. Not even for a single moment is there real health, real disease-free state. Thus, we generate this *saṃsāra* again and again due to the desire for this body. It is because of not understanding that it is a nest of diseases, a heap of diseases. When one understands the true nature of the illnesses and pains of the body, the strength to face them arises. Conversely, the attachment to this body gradually disappears. Similarly, one understands from this that it is something that cannot be kept under one's control. Next, what is shown by the perception of abandoning (*pahāna-saññā*), etc., is the strength to eliminate those defilements at the very moment they arise.

Next is the perception of dispassion (*virāga-saññā*). With Nibbāna as the object, it is shown as the impermanent nature of all Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and their pacification alone being pleasant. The perception of Nibbāna is there. This itself is peaceful: *"Etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ"*—"This is peaceful, this is sublime, namely, the stilling of all Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), the relinquishment of all assets (*upadhi*), the destruction of craving (*taṇhā*), dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna." In every single word, there is letting go. *"Etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ"*—looking at these words, they are very beautiful. "This is peaceful, this is sublime." What is sublime? It is not what we think that is considered peaceful and sublime here. *"Sabbasaṅkhārasamatho"*—the calming, the stilling of all Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). *"Sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo"*—if there is any asset (*upadhi*) we are holding onto, whatever things we are cultivating, as they say, and when speaking ultimately, the form, sensation (*vedanā*), perception, Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) of these five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*), which we call "I" and "mine," as well as one's houses, lands, vehicles, and mass of wealth—all these are assets (*upadhi*)—letting go of them in the mind. This is not throwing them away or destroying them; it is letting go of the attachment to them in the mind (*sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo*).

Similarly, craving (*taṇhā*). It is through craving (*taṇhā*) that we are carried on and on in this *saṃsāra*. There is nothing that cannot be completely satiated by nourishing it as much as this craving (*taṇhā*). This craving flows in various directions like rivers flowing here and there. The destruction of this craving, drying it up, is *taṇhakkhaya* (the destruction of craving). Next, *virāga* (dispassion) directly means that very attachment—attachment to becoming (*bhava*), attachment to these five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*). Eliminating them, or in other words, Nibbāna itself is there.

Looking at the highest level, it is the occasion of letting go of the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhandha*). Dispassion, cessation. Cessation (*nirodha*), when looked at from one perspective, is the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*). It is the ending of this suffering (*dukkha*) of *saṃsāra*. The Blessed One declared this as something that can be realized in this very life: *"Bhava-nirodho nibbānaṃ"*—"The cessation of becoming (*bhava*) is Nibbāna." It is difficult for many to even think of. Because they long for becoming (*bhava*), they are born again and again. No matter how much we say this *saṃsāra* is painful (*dukkha*), as long as the feeling of "I" and "mine" remains within us, the world longs for becoming (*bhava*). That is why it is said, "as long as there is grasping (*upādāna*), there is becoming (*bhava*)." As long as there is grasping (*upādāna*), we establish this mind in some place that is prey to that grasping, and then from there, we take birth again. That is resolved by karma.

No matter how the world thinks, in truth, birth (*jāti*) is easy; ending birth (*jāti*) is difficult. Therefore, if birth (*jāti*) is suffering (*dukkha*), what we have to do is to end birth (*jāti*). The Blessed One declared that what supports this is that mental grasping

(*upādāna*). It is when that is eliminated that becoming (*bhava*) also ceases. The Blessed One highlighted that this can be done in this very life, in a manner that no other teacher has shown. That is what is called the mind of Nibbāna. At some moment, seeing the danger (*ādīnava*) in these, drawing the mind away through seeing that danger—that is what is called dispassion (*virāga*). When the mind is drawn away, one sees that cessation (*nirodha*) as happiness. Constantly, the nature of a formation (*saṅkhāra*) is arising and passing away: origination and fall (*samudaya-vaya*), arising and passing away (*udayabbaya*), origination and cessation (*samudaya-nirodha*)—these various words describe the arising and passing away. This is the nature of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). But the world, because of craving (*taṇhā*), remains in the aspiration for rebirth. The nature of craving, described as leading to rebirth (*ponobbhavikā*), is that it longs for becoming (*bhava*) again. It is said, *"taṇhā ponobbhavikā"* (craving leading to rebirth). Similarly, it is accompanied by delight and lust (*nandī-rāga-sahagatā*). The nature of this craving is that it finds delight and attaches here and there (*tatra-tatrābhinandinī*). It finds delight here and there. At one moment here, at another moment there. Jumping from place to place in this way, this craving seeks satisfaction.

Thus, craving leading to rebirth, accompanied by delight and lust, finding delight here and there (*taṇhā ponobbhavikā nandī-rāga-sahagatā tatra-tatrābhinandinī*). Craving itself creates rebirth, creates another becoming (*bhava*). Similarly, that characteristic of attachment and delight is present within that craving. It finds delight here and there. It is the occasion when that craving is destroyed that the Blessed One called the destruction of craving, cessation, Nibbāna (*taṇhakkhayo nirodho nibbānaṃ*). The destruction of craving itself is cessation. There, the person who hitherto directed the mind toward the side of origination (*samudaya*), who longed for repeated arising, when he sees the happiness of cessation (*nirodha*), that is extinguishment (Nibbāna. Fuel (*upādāna*) is also the word used for firewood. If we want to spread a fire, we must feed it with fuel (*upādāna*)—firewood. When firewood is thrown in, the fire spreads. No matter how much we hope to extinguish the fire, if we feed it with firewood, the fire will grow and not be extinguished, won't it? That is why the Blessed One declared: be without fuel (*anupādāno*). He says to remove the fuel (*upādāna*) material. When the mind is developed through meditation, the true nature of the Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) in this *saṃsāra* begins to be understood. Just as when a corpse is placed on someone's shoulder, they immediately let go of it with disgust, a turning away occurs in the mind. Letting go occurs through a deep turning away. For that to be nourished, as the Blessed One pointed out, so that knowledge of things as they are (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa*) is developed, we must maintain our thoughts in accordance with the three characteristics: impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*).

Everyone in *saṃsāra* dislikes seeing cessation. Instead, they direct the mind toward production. If you think about your own lives, you will see that no one even looks at the waste products excreted from their body. Instead, they try to preserve this by constantly putting raw materials into it. Even if we think about our clothes,

ornaments, etc., when they get old, we discard them as rubbish and get new ones. We go shopping, but we do not direct our mind to the fate of the things we have used so far, to their impermanence (*anicca*). We have described this through various similes—this is the impermanent nature of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). The Blessed One highlights this so that we may see cessation (*nirodha*). The world dislikes cessation (*nirodha*). They look only at the side of origination (*samudaya*). Everyone likes to watch the sun rise tomorrow morning. They do not like to see the sun set. But what we have to do in *saṃsāra* is to make this sun set. That is why the Blessed One constantly tells us to recollect cessation (*nirodha*). Arahants declare that when the mind goes to cessation (*nirodha*), there is a peace within it that was never known before. That is why it is said, *"bhava-nirodho nibbānaṃ"*—the cessation of becoming (*bhava*) is Nibbāna. When becoming (*bhava*) ceases right here, that cessation characterized by peace, which is called the bliss of Nibbāna by many, can be experienced permanently. *"Etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ"*—"This itself is peaceful, this is sublime"—what is meant is that occasion when all is let go of.

Starting from day-to-day life, when that letting go is developed to its maximum state, it is understood by one's own mind: this is a state where nothing is grasped, a state where one is not trapped in anything—a state of liberation (*vimukti*). Nibbāna means liberation—the liberation of the mind. The mind is constantly bound. At this moment, thoughts are experienced as a trouble. No matter how subtly those are attained in states of absorption (*jhāna*), there is some connection to becoming (*bhava*) there. It goes and gets trapped somewhere. Even if one attains those states of absorption (*jhāna*), one goes to the Brahma world and gets trapped. There too, one goes round and round like a spinning top. But the Blessed One alone showed the true medicine for this. Looking at everything as Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), considering their arising and passing away and their conditions, when the mind is directed toward cessation (*nirodha*), we attain liberation.

Therefore, you must contemplate that through this short verse, we have gathered a great many facts on this valuable day that are helpful for day-to-day life as well as for Nibbāna. Your constant performance of actions like offering alms to the virtuous and providing requisites to the monks helps to eliminate the desire for sensual objects (*vatthu-kāma*). Observing morality (*sīla*), listening to the Dhamma, and meditating help to eliminate the defilements of desire (*kilesa-kāma*). Employing whatever wholesome power you have gathered so far through all of these, and whatever strengths there are that help to develop the faculties (*indriya-bala*) of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) gained through the benefits of hearing this Dhamma, aspire: "May this wholesome power definitely be a supportive condition to realize the noble, supreme, deathless Nibbāna through the path, fruit, and penetration of stream-entry, non-returning, and Arahantship as quickly as possible, before the decline of this Dispensation of the Buddha!" Similarly, let us recite these verses so that all beings, from the Avīci hell up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, including your deceased relatives who have passed away, may rejoice in this

merit of Dhamma-preaching and Dhamma-hearing, and realize the noble, supreme, deathless Nibbāna through their aspired enlightenment (*Bodhi*)!

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*"