Pahankanuwa Sermon #134

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.117)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

Yo sāsanaṃ arahatānaṃ, ariyānaṃ dhammajīvinaṃ,

paṭikkosati dummedho, diṭṭhiṃ nissāya pāpikaṃ;

phalāni attaghaññāya, kambūva phalatattano ti.

From:

Dhammapada 164 (Attavagga)

Dear Listeners,

The true ultimate purpose of the Buddha's Dispensation is to direct the practitioner towards the Noble Path which culminates in Arahanthood. The Blessed One introduced whatever views that run contrary to this ultimate purpose as "evil views." He also pointed out the danger of presenting such views with the intention of fulfilling various selfish desires. With reference to the stanza selected as today's theme and its accompanying background story, we will be able to clarify this matter.

The Blessed One preached this Dhamma stanza while residing at Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthi, in connection with a certain Elder named Kāla. A certain faithful female lay disciple (*upāsikā*) in Sāvatthi was constantly attending on this Elder Kāla, placing herself in the position of a mother. That is to say, she attended on him with great faith, just like a mother. This lay disciple's neighbors would frequently return after listening to the Blessed One's Dhamma and praise it, saying, "How wonderful are the Buddhas! How sweet is the preaching of the Blessed Ones!" Hearing this, that lay disciple also felt a desire to go and listen to the Dhamma from the Blessed One. When she mentioned this intention to Elder Kāla, the Elder said, "Do not go; do not go to listen to the Dhamma from the Blessed One." She asked for permission a second and a third time, but he still said no. The reason was that this Elder thought: "If this lay disciple goes to the Blessed One and listens to the Dhamma, the support and services I receive from her might diminish."

However, one day, having taken her meal early in the morning and undertaken the Uposatha precepts, this lay disciple told her daughter to attend to the monk well and provide him with alms when he arrived. She herself went to listen to the Dhamma from the Blessed One. Elder Kāla, having arrived at the house at the time of almsround and finished partaking of the meal, asked, "Where is the chief lay disciple?" When told that her mother had gone to listen to the Dhamma from the Blessed One, a great burning sensation, like jealousy, arose within this monk. He went immediately to the place where the Blessed One was preaching the Dhamma. There he saw the Blessed One preaching the Dhamma to that lay disciple. Approaching, he said, "Revered Sir, this lay disciple cannot understand very deep Dhamma. Do not talk to her about things like the five aggregates. It is quite enough to speak on almsgiving and morality (*sīla*)." The Blessed One understood the intention of this monk.

Addressing that monk as a "foolish monk," the Blessed One said, "If someone, due to a wrong view, intends to attack the Dispensation in this manner, that person only brings about his own destruction," and he uttered that Dhamma stanza:

Yo sāsanaṃ arahatāṃ

ariyānaṃ dhammajīvinaṃ

paṭikkosati dummedho

diṭṭhiṃ nissāya pāpikaṃ

phalāni attaghaññāya phallati.

"Whosoever is a foolish person, who out of an evil view reviles the Dispensation of the Worthy Ones, the Noble Ones who live according to the Dhamma, prospers only for his own destruction, like the bamboo bearing fruit." The Blessed One declared that although such a person secures those endeavors, that very prosperity arises solely for his own destruction.

Here we can see that the reason this Elder developed a fear and jealousy regarding her listening to the Blessed One's sermon was due to a selfish view: if that lay disciple inclined toward the side of Nibbāna—toward that deep side—the support and service rendered to him would be lost. This stinginess is called *kula-macchariya* (clannish stinginess)—stinginess regarding families, stinginess regarding one's own supporting families. There are various types of stinginess.

On many occasions, the Blessed One clearly enjoined his style of teaching upon the Order of Monks (*Saṅgha*) in the same manner. Furthermore, the ultimate purpose is to direct the minds of those disciples, the listeners, progressively higher and higher towards increasingly subtle Dhamma, in the manner described as *uttaruttariṃ paṇītapaṇītaṃ* (higher and higher, more and more sublime). The Blessed One delivered an excellent discourse on this to Ven. Ānanda while residing at the

Ghositārāma monastery in Kosambī. At that time, there was a monk named Udāyī. In fact, Udāyī was one of the most unrestrained, immoral, and shameless monks in this Dispensation. Because of this monk Udāyī, the Blessed One even had to lay down many disciplinary rules (*Vinaya*). However, this monk Udāyī was very popular among the lay devotees—extremely popular.

So, one day, this Ven. Udāyī was preaching Dhamma to a large gathering of laypeople. Seeing this, Ven. Ānanda came and said to the Blessed One, "Revered Sir, the venerable Udāyī is preaching the Dhamma to a large gathering of laypeople." Without saying anything else about it, the Blessed One declared: "Ānanda, preaching the Dhamma to others is no easy task. It is a very difficult and demanding task. The person who preaches must first develop and establish five qualities within themselves. One must preach the Dhamma holding five factors in mind. First: the intention to give a gradual discourse (*anupubbikatha*). Intending to outline the points briefly first and explain them in detail later; delivering the Dhamma sermon as a gradual, step-by-step discourse; this is the first factor. Second factor: delivering the Dhamma sermon showing causes and examples according to the occasion. Third factor: preaching the Dhamma with a heart full of loving-kindness and compassion for the listeners. Fourth factor: delivering the sermon without expecting the four requisites, without expecting offerings and hospitality. Fifth factor: preaching the Dhamma without harming one's own virtues or the virtues of others. This is in brief."

To explain in detail, we have pointed out the gradual discourse to you, lay devotees, on previous occasions too. A series of words is mentioned in this Dhamma regarding the Blessed One's style of preaching: *dāna-kathaṃ, sīla-kathaṃ, sagga-kathaṃ, kāmānaṃ ādīnavaṃ, okāraṃ saṅkilesaṃ* (talk on giving, talk on morality, talk on heaven, the danger, degradation, and corruption of sensual pleasures). First, this gradual discourse begins with the talk on giving (*dāna-kathā*); saying that giving is a good practice, and morality (*sīla*) is a good practice. Next, that as their fruit, birth in heaven is obtained—*sagga-kathā* (talk on heaven); stories of those who received the blessings of being born in heaven. Then, He does not stop there. Again, as if falling from the sky, there comes *kāmānaṃ ādīnavaṃ* (the danger of sensual pleasures). Whether in this world or in the heavenly world, all sensuality is *Anicca* (Impermanent); hence, *kāmānaṃ ādīnavaṃ*—their dangerous aspect, their bad results, and *okāraṃ saṅkilesaṃ*. *Okāra* means baseness, the lowliness of defilements. These are pointed out. Even if one enjoys happiness in this world, the next world, or heaven by performing acts of charity and merit, one cannot be satisfied with that. Their dangers are such; the five-fold sensual pleasures are base things.

Next, if at any point the Blessed One perceives that the disciple's mind is fit to be directed towards the deep Dhamma, it is at that moment that the Blessed One declares the benefits of renunciation (*nekkhamma*). In that manner, the dangerous aspect of the five-fold sensual pleasures, their base aspect, their nature of producing defilements, and also the benefits of renunciation—the benefits of leaving the

household life to ordain—are declared. If by that time the disciple's mind has matured well, at that very moment He delivers the sermon on the Four Noble Truths—*Dukkha* (Suffering), *samudaya* (origin), *nirodha* (cessation), and *magga* (path)—which are discovered and introduced to the world by the Buddhas themselves. This is the sequence.

Therefore, what is expressed here is that when any member of the *Saṅgha* delivers a Dhamma sermon, they should keep these matters in mind and gradually direct the minds of the listeners towards Nibbāna. In the same way, one must show reasons and examples fittingly as relevant to the Dhamma talk. That is the second factor. You, lay devotees, can understand this easily. The third factor is that one must deliver the sermon with a strong compassion and kindness, having generated compassion and faith towards the listeners, thinking, "Oh, these people who are fallen in this *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *Saṃsāra* must somehow be rescued."

The fourth factor is that it is improper to think, "Hearing this sermon, let them honor and attend on me well, let them bring me the four requisites." One does not preach the Dhamma expecting offerings and baskets of gifts. Next is the fifth factor. Why is it said "without harming one's own virtues or the virtues of others"? To harm one's own virtues is called *attukkaṃsana*—self-exaltation, praising oneself, showing oneself off as high, saying, "I am such-and-such a person, holding titles and honors, a degree holder," or "a person endowed with such-and-such virtuous qualities." One does not say such things in Dhamma sermons. Similarly, one does not disparage the virtues of others. One does not target others critically to diminish their virtues, nor destroy the qualities of the virtuous. It is meant there that one should preach the Dhamma keeping these factors firmly in mind.

Also on another occasion, the Blessed One introduced to the *Saṅgha* what impure Dhamma-preaching and pure Dhamma-preaching are. Indeed, the member of the *Saṅgha* whom the Blessed One praised the most in the entire Dispensation was the Great Elder Mahākassapa, the Arahant. Numerous discourses praising Ven. Mahākassapa are found in the Kassapa Saṃyutta. This too is one such occasion. Before praising the noble qualities of the Great Elder Mahākassapa, the Blessed One asked the monks this question: "What do you think, monks? The sermon of what kind of monk is pure?" Then the monks requested: "Revered Sir, we learn all this Dhamma from the Blessed One. The Blessed One is our refuge. We do not understand this. If the Blessed One himself explains this, we can bear it in mind accordingly."

Then the Blessed One analyzed it. The monk with impure Dhamma-preaching is described thus: "If a monk thinks: 'May these people listen to my Dhamma sermon and be pleased with it! Being pleased, let them make rich offerings and services to me in a manner fitting their pleasure!'—that Dhamma-preaching is impure." But another Dhamma-preacher thinks: "This Dhamma preached by the Blessed One is well-proclaimed, visible here-and-now, timeless, inviting one to come and see, onward-

leading, to be personally realized by the wise." You, lay devotees, know this phrase of the qualities of the Dhamma. It is a Dhamma well-proclaimed, well-shown, and preached by the Blessed One. A Dhamma whose fruits can be seen in conformity with the practice; giving fruits without delay, immediately productive, endowed with the quality of "come and see," possessing a great power that leads from one stage of practice to another, a Dhamma to be personally realized by the wise within their own minds.

Contemplating those qualities of the Dhamma, he then thinks: "Oh, may this audience listen to this well-proclaimed, visible here-and-now Dhamma of the Blessed One! Having heard it, may they understand it! Having understood it, may they practice accordingly!"—having absolutely no regard for gains and offerings, thinking, "May they practice!"—recollecting this sublime nature of the Dhamma, this supreme quality of the Dhamma, and bringing forth compassion, kindness, and sympathy for the listeners, he preaches the Dhamma. The Blessed One pointed out such a preacher and the Dhamma sermons of such a monk as pure Dhamma-preaching.

Furthermore, there are other discourses relevant to this theme, also in that section called the Kassapa Saṃyutta. In the end, the Blessed One points out: "Kassapa preaches such pure Dhamma sermons." The sermon was aimed at that. He says, "Kassapa, it is in this manner that the Dhamma should be preached." Next, in another discourse, He asks the monks: "Monks, what kind of monk is suitable to approach lay households, to go to lay households?" We might think that anyone is fit to go. "But what kind of monk is suitable to go to lay households?" There too, the monks said, "Revered Sir, we listen to this Dhamma from the Blessed One. We do not understand this. If the Blessed One himself explains it, we shall bear it in mind."

What did the Blessed One do first on that occasion? He waved his palm in the air. Waving his palm in the air, He said, to give a small simile: "Monks, just as this palm does not stick to the air, is not caught anywhere in the air, and is not bound to it, in the same way, if a monk's mind does not stick to lay households, is not caught by lay households, and does not linger there while on morning almsround, then such a monk is suitable to go to lay households." It is also mentioned that this monk thinks in this way: "May those who should receive gains receive them! May those who wish to perform meritorious deeds perform them!" He is as happy about the gains received by another monk as he is about the gains received by himself. He does not think, "May he go before me and get this, it should come only to me." He does not think thus. "Such a monk is fit to approach lay households for alms. Kassapa is like that," the Blessed One said next.

In another discourse, it is mentioned: "Monks, what kind of monk becomes an intimate of families (*kulūpaga*)? Or what kind of monk is fit to approach families, and what kind of monk is unfit?" The meaning of the word *kulūpaga* is that, just like the Elder Kāla mentioned here, some monks in the past used to visit certain faithful households frequently. There was a custom of going to those places and partaking of meals. The idea there too is approaching a family. That means going to a lay house.

Who is fit to be such a monk? There too, the monks said in the same way, "We do not understand. May the Blessed One explain." Thereupon, the Blessed One pointed out five factors on that occasion as well.

"If a monk, while going for alms, thinks: 'They must give me this alms-food; they cannot avoid giving it. And when they give, they must give in abundance; they cannot give just a little. Furthermore, what they give must be delicious, sweet, and choice food; they cannot just give coarse food haphazardly. Then, when they give, they must give it quickly; they cannot delay. And also, they must give with great respect, hospitality, and honor, in a well-prepared manner; they cannot give without hospitality and honor.'"

Now, the Blessed One declares that the monk who goes with such thoughts, who goes planning his almsround in this way, does not receive alms-food from a certain house. Thereupon, he falls into *Dukkha* (Suffering), dejection, and distress of mind. Even if they do give, if they give only a little, or if they give food that is not choice, or if they give with such shortcomings, this monk's mind becomes upset. Therefore, a true intimate of families is like this: without such thoughts and plans, he reflects, "How can this be? In other families, how can one receive things exactly as one wishes?" and keeping his mind balanced, he goes with an equanimous heart. "How can one expect such things from other families, like 'they must definitely give, they must give in abundance, they must give delicious food, they must prepare it well'? How can one think in this way?" When he goes with such an equanimous mind, it is all the same to him however he receives it.

Thus, contentment with whatever is received (*yathālābha-santuṭṭhi*) is shown there. In other places, this is illustrated with a simile: one goes to a tree expecting fruits. Going there, one looks at the fruits with equanimity. It is just the same when going to a lay house. Whether one receives or does not receive, if there is something, let it be received. The Blessed One declared that a true intimate of families is like that.

What is mentioned here is the issue of material things (*āmisa*). There are indeed many other discourses related to this that the Blessed One delivered in an extremely powerful manner. In numerous discourses, the Blessed One has preached using an amazingly powerful collection of words regarding the nature of gains, offerings, fame, praise, honor, and respect: "*Dāruṇo, bhikkhave, lābhasakkārasiloko kaṭuko pharuso antarāyiko*." Declaring that gains, offerings, fame, and praise are extremely dreadful, bitter, harsh, and hazardous to Nibbāna, He then presents several similes. One is the simile of the fisherman. Just as an angler, a fisherman, having fixed a bait, casts his hook into a pond or lake; a fish that keeps its eye on the bait swims up and swallows it. As soon as it swallows it, the fisherman gets the opportunity to pull the fish out and kill it as he pleases. In the same way—how is the simile completed? The fisherman is Māra. The bait is gains, offerings, fame, praise, and honor. The disaster resulting from this is shown there. Having spoken in that manner, He concludes by saying, "Monks, gains, offerings, and fame are dreadful, bitter, and harsh like this."

In the very next discourse, He gives a similar simile: a long-haired she-goat enters a thorny thicket. Having entered, she gets stuck here and there in the thorny thicket, gets bound to it, and is caught by it. In the same way, a certain monk, having robed himself in the morning, goes on almsround without any restraint. He goes and gets stuck, bound, and caught in those households, because of gains, offerings, fame, and praise. There too, the simile was given to show the danger of gains and offerings.

There is another simile of the Blessed One of this nature: what happens when a strong man binds someone's calf with a horsehair rope and pulls it, is described thus: above one's skin is the epidermis! It cuts through the epidermis and cuts the skin; having cut the skin, it cuts the flesh; having cut the flesh, it cuts the tendons; having cut the tendons, it cuts the bone; and having cut the bone, it strikes against the bone marrow. This simile shows that offerings, fame, praise, and honor destroy one's spiritual virtues in the very same manner.

On another occasion, there is mention of Ven. Devadatta, who was led astray by gains and offerings in this Dispensation and, because of developing jealousy towards the Blessed One, met with a great destruction, finally plunging into hell as the earth split open. Ven. Devadatta tried to wrest the leadership of the *Saṅgha* from the Blessed One and even made attempts on His life. Failing in this, he finally requested the Blessed One to hand over the Dispensation of the *Saṅgha* to him, saying: "Now the Blessed One is aged. Hand this over to me now." After the Blessed One dismissed him, he then started a separate dispensation. At the same time, using the psychic powers he possessed back then, he won over Prince Ajātasattu and gained various gains and offerings. On that occasion, the Blessed One uttered several similes close to the one mentioned in today's stanza. When the monks came and said, "Lo, Prince Ajātasattu is now sending alms and offerings to Ven. Devadatta on a large scale," the Blessed One gave several similes, which you, lay devotees, might have heard: "This prosperity Devadatta has received is solely for his own ruin, solely for his own destruction." It is stated in that stanza:

Phalaṃ ve kadaliṃ hanati,

phalaṃ veḷuṃ phalaṃ naḷaṃ;

sakkāro kāpurisaṃ hanati,

gabbho assatariṃ yathā.

That stanza shows four similes. *Phalaṃ ve kadaliṃ hanati*: the banana tree bears fruit only for its own destruction. *Phalaṃ veḷuṃ*: in the same way, the bamboo tree bears fruit only for its own destruction. *Phalaṃ naḷaṃ*: *naḷa* refers to the reed, which is also like that; once it blossoms, it dies. And *sakkāro kāpurisaṃ hanati*: similarly, gains and offerings destroy a wicked person. The fourth and final simile given is: *gabbho assatariṃ yathā*. *Assatarī* means the she-mule. When the she-mule conceives, she dies in giving birth to the offspring. What is shown by these four

similes is that the prosperity indicated by gains and offerings actually leads solely to that person's own destruction. Thus, the Blessed One showed the danger of gains and offerings in various ways through similes as a lesson for the future; as a warning for the future Dispensation of the Buddha. Otherwise, one might wonder what the point of repeating this is. It was done with a specific, meaningful purpose.

Furthermore, on another occasion, He actually gives many more similes. To mention one of them, the Blessed One declares: "Sometimes, when I look at a certain monk's mind, I see that this monk would not tell a deliberate lie even for a golden bowl filled with silver powder. Yet, later on, that very same monk, overcome by gains, offerings, and fame, tells lies for their sake." He further mentions: "I see another monk who would not tell a lie even for the sake of his mother, his father, or the most beautiful girl of the land. Yet, later on, overcome by those gains, offerings, and fame, that very same monk knowingly tells lies."

On another occasion, the Blessed One declares: "Monks, I see some people whose minds are overcome by gains and offerings going to hell, like Devadatta, who, overcome by them, committed various sins and developed jealousy. Another person goes to hell due to the lack of gains and offerings. Why? Because, lacking gains and offerings, they are tempted into sinful deeds and wrong ways. Yet another is seen to be ruined by receiving gains and offerings, and also ruined by not receiving them." Consider how, due to this issue of gains and offerings, a certain monk destroys his virtues by turning to wrong livelihood and incorrect ways of living. While receiving them, if he has desire for them, and when not receiving them, if he does not bring his mind to a state of balance, equanimity, and contentment with little, then he is also ruined.

While the Blessed One declared these in various ways, He always pointed out the Great Elder Mahākassapa, the Arahant, as the most valuable member of the *Saṅgha* as an exemplar for the monks in this regard. Indeed, even though the two chief disciples were present, considering the future of the Dispensation of practice, the Blessed One specially praised Ven. Mahākassapa. This was not out of partiality, but considering the aspect of virtue, because Ven. Mahākassapa was the foremost keeper of the ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*), a wonderfully exemplary character. That is why He delivered those discourses as praise, in order to remind the monks of that exemplar. We must understand that these four requisites are indeed indispensable to a member of the *Saṅgha*. They are called the "four requisites" precisely because they support life. Since they help to sustain a life, just like for anyone else, the Blessed One has shown how to utilize these four requisites.

You, lay devotees, have heard of the fourfold purified morality (*catupārisuddhi-sīla*) belonging to the *Saṅgha*. *Pātimokkha-saṃvara-sīla* is that connected with disciplinary rules. Next, there is restraint of the senses (*indriya-saṃvara-sīla*) regarding guarding the faculties. Next, there is purity of livelihood (*ājīva-pārisuddhi-sīla*) regarding how to obtain the four requisites without resorting to

wrong livelihoods. Next, there is morality connected with the requisites (*paccayasannissita-sīla*), which means reflecting upon and wisely considering the obtained requisites, consuming them with their true meaning in mind. This is shown as a separate meditation.

It is heard that even you, lay devotees, partake of your food after reflecting upon it. This is a very good virtue. Because one did not ordain for the sake of these four requisites. The mind is impressed with the thought that these must be used merely as an aid to the supreme liberation from *Saṃsāra*, to cross over the wilderness of *Saṃsāra*. Likewise, through the reflection on the four requisites, the mind is detached from greed towards them. To remove greed for the four requisites, they are reflected upon in terms of elements; they are wisely considered. Moreover, their true meaning, their ultimate purpose—which is merely to sustain this body—is contained in those very texts of reflection.

This restraint regarding the four requisites is known as "restraint by wisdom" (*ñāṇa-saṃvara*). Unlike the Niganṭhas (Jains), one cannot live without food or clothing. These are necessary. But only to sustain life at a level of fewness of wishes (*appicchatā*). Regarding food, it is shown that it is used for sustenance, for survival, and to gain the strength necessary for this body to fulfill spiritual virtues. The other things are also like that. Being content with a minimal level is what is shown as restraint by wisdom. Because one consumes those four requisites reflecting wisely. By consuming them while reflecting wisely in this way, one is able to escape from those dreadful, dangerous, bitter, and harsh dangers (*ādīnava*) of gains and offerings mentioned earlier. This is called "the wisdom of seeing the danger and of escape" (*ādīnavadassāvī-nissaraṇa-paññā*). While seeing the danger in being attached to them, one constantly brings to mind that these are used for the escape from *Bhava* (Becoming), for crossing over *Saṃsāra*.

There is indeed a discourse that shows this very point briefly but in a deeply moving way, called the Ariyavaṃsa Sutta. It is a very short discourse; there are no long stories in it. The Blessed One points out to the monks and to the world that from the ancient past, there are four practices to be regarded as the noble lineage (*ariyavaṃsa*), which have not been despised, reviled, or discarded by wise ascetics and brahmins, but are accepted, valuable, and supreme.

This Ariyavaṃsa Sutta discourse—so valuable was it that it is recorded that during times when the Buddha's Dispensation flourished in this country, sermons on this Ariyavaṃsa Sutta were sometimes held throughout the entire night. It is recorded that even kings went to listen to that sermon. At that time, royal patronage was given to such valuable discourses that helped to develop the practice of the *Saṅgha*. What is said in this discourse? The three requisites—robes (*cīvara*), alms-food (*piṇḍapāta*), and lodging (*senāsana*)—are mentioned here. And fourthly, meditation is mentioned.

The first factor: a certain monk is content with whatever robe is received. The word *itarītara* (whatever is available) is used. *Itarītara* means the robe might be coarse, it might be fine—with any robe, whether coarse or fine. Sometimes it might be a rag-robe (*paṃsukūla-cīvara*); as you know, in the past Ven. Mahākassapa, the Arahant, collected scraps of cloth discarded in rubbish heaps on the road to make his robes. You have heard of rag-robes; they are the most minimal things that can be used with fewness of wishes.

In that way, with whatever is received—the words "or with that if there is no other" are used—he is content with a robe, whether coarse or fine, good or bad, high or low. This is also called contentment with whatever is received (*yathālābha-santuṭṭhi*); he is content with whatever robe is obtained. He also praises this quality of contentment. He recommends it to others, saying it is a good virtue. Furthermore, he does not employ wrong methods, improper methods, or methods contrary to discipline to obtain that robe. Next, he does not get distressed or dejected because a robe was not received. After receiving it, he does not increase defilements through greed and attachment towards it.

Similarly, pointing to the practice he maintains, he does not praise himself or disparage others. Moreover, he acts very skillfully and untiringly in maintaining that practice. In this way, a host of virtues is mentioned. Such a monk is described as one established in the noble lineage. In that manner, what was first declared was the proper practice of contentment regarding robes, as a valuable ancient practice to be undertaken by ascetics and brahmins, regarded as supreme in the noble lineage.

It is exactly the same with regard to alms-food mentioned next. In that too, the quality of being content with what is received is praised in the same way. Not resorting to improper, unsuitable, or unlawful means and livelihoods to obtain alms-food. Furthermore, if by some chance alms-food is missed due to not receiving it, he does not corrupt his mind by abusing the donors. He prepares his mind, thinking, "Even the Blessed One did not receive alms-food for three months (during the famine at Verañjā)." Next, even when receiving it, he partakes of it with the reflection on the four requisites, without generating greed for it, and without getting attached and immersed in it. Next, he does not go about proclaiming to the world that he maintains this practice, nor does he revile those who do not do so. Then, he acts untiringly, wisely, and with mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*) regarding the practice he maintains. This group of virtues concerns alms-food.

It is just the same with regard to lodging (*senāsana*). We can understand that medicine, requisites for the sick, is perhaps not mentioned because it is needed in a manner suitable for illness; otherwise, it could also be included by connecting it to alms-food.

Fourthly, a special matter is shown here. We usually expect it to be about the four requisites. But having mentioned only three here, a different special matter is shown

fourthly. It is mentioned there in connection with a certain monk: the two words *bhāvanārāmo hoti pahānārāmo*. *Bhāvanārāma* means delighting in meditation. Delighting in meditation, and not in other things, is a good virtue. And *pahānārāma*. What is meant by *pahāna* (abandoning / removal)? Here it means the abandoning of defilements, the destruction of defilements. He finds delight in the abandoning of defilements. The nature of the world is not meditation; the world delights in a distracted mind—to distract the mind as much as possible and enjoy oneself. The true practitioner (*yogāvacara*) develops a love for meditation. The mind of the world is not about destroying defilements, but about growing defilements. But the practitioner is pleased to the extent that the defilements in his own mind are destroyed. That destruction is *pahānārāmatā* (delighting in abandoning).

Delighting in meditation (*bhāvanārāmatā*) and delighting in abandoning (*pahānārāmatā*) are shown as the fourth practice of the noble lineage. These two are shown together. Being devoted to meditation. Meditation means developing good qualities in the mind. Delighting in abandoning means removing the bad parts present in the mind. This is also what is contained in the fourfold effort known as Right Effort, or *sammappadhāna* (supreme efforts). Understanding the good side and the bad side within oneself, one must give encouragement to the good side. One must allow the good side to grow. *Pahāna* (abandoning) means restraint. Next, there is safeguarding of meditation. One removes upcoming unwholesome thoughts by restraining them. One abandons the unwholesome states already present within oneself. Next, one develops certain things as meditation. That is what safeguarding means—protecting the signs of meditation developed through meditation. When shown as supreme efforts, it is shown as four. In that way, through the fourth factor—delighting in meditation and delighting in abandoning—the target of Nibbāna is shown to us.

The ultimate purpose of a member of the *Saṅgha*—of a practitioner—should be to develop valuable spiritual virtues that are not yet present within oneself. Next, to abandon the bad qualities, shortcomings, and defilements present within oneself. Then, the monk who develops a love for these two is shown as the valuable monk. What was just said is the summary of the Ariyavaṃsa Sutta discourse. So there is no big story here. There are no similes and so on. But when thinking about this Dispensation, there is an amazing thing. It is mentioned in our ancient books what the monks preached throughout the entire night regarding this short discourse, which is barely even two pages long.

Perhaps in this day and age, it is hard even to imagine. Unlike what is heard nowadays, there is nothing in this Ariyavaṃsa sermon that attracts the youth, nothing that agitates the mind, or leads towards paths of entertainment. Yet, it is recorded that even those kings went and listened to these throughout the entire night, and in the end, even great offerings were made to show the faith that arose within the kings. What was the reason? Royal patronage in those times was given to the true values of the Dispensation, not to hollow things. It is seen that sermons like

the Ariyavaṃsa sermon, which show the practice of the monks and the essence of the Dispensation, were extremely popular in the past. Huge crowds were drawn to them. It is shown that huge crowds came not only in Anurādhapura, but even from distant provinces. Thus, through the popularity of the Ariyavaṃsa sermon, we can see that there was an understanding of the danger of gains, offerings, and praise as declared by the Blessed One, and also that the monks of the past respected that exemplary character of the Great Elder Mahākassapa, the Arahant.

From this, we can understand something more. Now, as expressed by these stanzas too, there were such members of the *Saṅgha* in the Buddha's time. It was by obtaining royal patronage that Ven. Devadatta finally met with decline. That is why, at a glance, a kind of prosperity was visible. Ven. Devadatta also established a separate dispensation and started on a very grand scale, but it is recorded that in the end, the earth split open and he went to hell. That is what was expressed in that stanza by *attaghaññāya phallati*. If someone, based on a wrong view, an evil view, attacks the values of this Dispensation of the Buddha, and if some prosperity arises for that monk, that prosperity is indeed for his own destruction—just like the banana tree bearing fruit, the bamboo bearing fruit, the reed bearing fruit, or the she-mule conceiving. That is the natural law (*dhammatā*) shown by the Blessed One on that occasion.

We too must understand these values of the Dispensation. The account concerning the gradual discourse is extremely important. The Blessed One shows that the disciple's mind is gradually led, starting with talks on giving, talks on morality, and so on; the benefits of the virtues at that level are shown through the talks on heaven. Birth in heaven can be obtained. But do not be satisfied with that. Because everything is *Anicca* (Impermanent), when viewed in terms of the Three Characteristics. Next, having obtained heavenly happiness, one might sometimes even go back to the plane of misery when the merit is exhausted. Similarly, having shown the baseness and the defilement-producing nature of the five-fold sensual pleasures, He then directs them towards renunciation (*nekkhamma*). Therefore, we have to understand that the Blessed One does not expect us to expand the world, but to cross over the world. To cross over this world. The Blessed One himself has declared:

Hīnaṃ dhammaṃ na seveyya, pamādena na saṃvase;

Micchādiṭṭhiṃ na seveyya, na siyā lokavaḍḍhano.

(Do not follow a low path; do not live in negligence; do not cultivate wrong views; do not be one who expands the world.)

This means that, as the world generally follows very low wrong views, do not go to follow such base views. Likewise, do not live falling into negligence (*pamāda*). *Micchādiṭṭhiṃ na seveyya*—do not associate with wrong views. Do not become one who expands the world. What is meant by "expanding the world"? What was done all this time was expanding *Saṃsāra*—the expansion of the world. That means

expanding the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *Saṃsāra*. But the world looks at this Dispensation in such a way that, in this day and age, even some members of the *Saṅgha* are afraid of directing certain groups towards the side of Nibbāna. Perhaps they are also thinking about the population problem, on one hand. In one way or another, they have developed an unfounded fear that this population will decrease. On that, we have pointed out a simile on a certain occasion.

If one thinks that patients in a certain hospital should be kept there forever in order to provide employment for the doctors and attendants working there, that would be a wrong point of view. The ultimate purpose of a hospital should be to cure the patients as quickly as possible and discharge them. It was exactly like that when the Blessed One looked at the world. This world is a crowd afflicted with a great illness—afflicted with the illness of *Saṃsāra*, the illness of defilements. Therefore, the Blessed One's ultimate purpose, through every possible effort, through whatever means or skillful device, was to bring out the past merit of these worldly beings and direct their minds towards meditation. Even the Blessed One cannot liberate anyone from *Saṃsāra* by force or carry them across. But the Blessed One possessed powers that no one else had—to see those karmic energies accumulated in the past within their minds and, helping them according to the occasion, giving them the proper meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) and the proper advice, to direct them towards Nibbāna.

That is what is meant by the Blessed One entering the attainment of Great Compassion (*mahākaruṇā-samāpatti*). To put it in modern terms, at that time in the morning, the Blessed One would see the patient most suitable to receive treatment from Him. He would see that if they did not receive treatment from Him, they might sink down in *Saṃsāra* again for a long time. It was to help at that time that the Blessed One surveyed the world with His knowledge of the attainment of Great Compassion, looking for the one fit to be helped on that day. By "helping," it meant escaping from *Saṃsāra*. Therefore, it is those of wrong views, like the brahmins, who think: "For the growth of this world, we must always keep our people restrained within the talk on giving and the talk on morality, like Kāla the Elder." If one thinks in that way, it is a wrong view, an evil view. The ultimate purpose of a Dhamma-preacher in this Dispensation should be, as we mentioned, *uttaruttariṃ paṇītapaṇītaṃ*—to direct that disciple higher and higher towards increasingly subtle Dhamma. It is not to keep them stagnant in one place. That is what is called the gradual discourse.

On certain occasions, we see from the events recorded in the Dhamma that people who have not heard even a single word of Dhamma, and who possess no education, arrive at the place where the Blessed One is preaching the Dhamma. Such was the Blessed One's style of preaching that sometimes the one who arrived was a destitute beggar. That beggar did not have anything even to give as charity. But what we have to understand is that, when He delivered the talk on giving, the beneficial aspect of giving must have impressed itself on that person's mind in a wonderful way. When He spoke on the benefits of morality—even if He did not formally administer

precepts to him—he must have resolved on that morality. That is how we have to think.

As the mind was being prepared in that manner, that was when the Blessed One delivered the discourse on the Four Noble Truths. The most valuable Dhamma introduced to the world by the Buddhas themselves is indeed the Dhamma of the Truths: *Dukkha* (Suffering), *samudaya* (origin), *nirodha* (cessation), and *magga* (path). You, lay devotees, have heard how this Truth of Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*) is described on countless occasions. Having mentioned *Jāti* (Birth), *jarā* (decay), *vyādhi* (sickness), and so on, because it could not be completed with just that, the Blessed One declared in His analysis of the Truth of Suffering, *saṅkhittena*—"in brief." Why say "in brief"? Because one cannot cover it completely by listing at length "birth is suffering, decay is suffering, sickness is suffering," and so on. However, in this day and age, some people often show only that much. Even out of that, some do not even say that *Jāti* (Birth) is *Dukkha* (Suffering).

For us, a birthday is something so good that we celebrate it. The birth of a child in a home is regarded as a very great festive occasion. He is born crying. Yet, it is the parents who celebrate it greatly. But *Jāti* (Birth) itself is *Dukkha* (Suffering). The suffering of sickness—He does not end it by just saying all these. Because they cannot be fully described, the Blessed One declared: *saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā* (in brief, the five aggregates of grasping are suffering). This pile of form (*rūpa*), pile of *Vedanā* (Feeling), pile of perception (*saññā*), pile of *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *viññāṇa* (consciousness)—this pile of thoughts—within all of these lies that nature of *Dukkha* (Suffering). Due to their very *aniccata* (impermanence / inconstancy), there is no lasting happiness in them. As said in *yad aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ* (what is impermanent is suffering), there is in them the nature of suffering, the nature of change (*vipariṇāma*). For that very reason, they cannot be taken as "me" or "mine". This is purely a set of five piles.

It is precisely because of *Upādāna* (Grasping), because of this heavy burden, that this exists as *Dukkha* (Suffering) for us. The more one lets go, the more peace is felt through this lightness. That letting go does not mean grabbing with the hand and throwing away. It is something to be achieved by seeing their danger (*ādīnava*) through wisdom. That is what was meant by the benefits of renunciation (*nekkhamma*). Along with disillusionment with *Saṃsāra* comes the desire to destroy *Taṇhā* (Craving)—the desire arising for departing, escaping, and letting go of these. That is what was called *pahānārāma* (delighting in abandoning).

If at any moment, having wisely seen the *Anicca* (Impermanent) and *Anattā* (Not-self) nature of these five aggregates which were hitherto held as "me" and "mine", they are let go—that very moment is shown as the attainment of fruition (*phala-samāpatti*) and so on. Therefore, personally realizing that in this very life is what is called Nibbāna. Because that realization is a peaceful and sublime experience, it is called the supreme happiness. It is not a matter of going to a strange world, to some

strange place like a strange heaven. Even if described by a strange term like "that noble element of Nibbāna" (*nibbāna-dhātu*), which was realized in this very world by the Blessed One, by the great monks of the past, and by the monks of recent times—what is meant there is the bliss of stilling in the mind when ignorance and *Taṇhā* (Craving) are destroyed. It is not the bliss of *Vedanā* (Feeling), but the bliss of stilling. This, then, should be our ultimate purpose.

Therefore, the ultimate purpose of every Dhamma-preacher, wherever they begin—whether with the talk on giving or the talk on morality—should be to conclude by directing the listeners towards the discourse on the Four Noble Truths, which is the message we receive only from a Buddha. By directing them towards the Noble Eightfold Path through that, the ultimate purpose of every preacher should be to provide them with the opportunity to personally realize the end of this *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *Saṃsāra* by applying their own energy to achieve the path, fruit, and penetration (*magga-phala-paṭivedha*) of stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, and Arahanthood.

Therefore, you, lay devotees, should also consider that, as we have declared on many occasions, even almsgiving should be done—as said in *cittālaṅkāraṃ dānaṃ deti* (one gives alms for the adornment of the mind)—with the intention of guarding the mind, of adorning the mind for the development of serenity and insight (*samatha-vipassanā*). Not for the sake of heavenly happiness. Similarly, morality (*sīla*) too should be maintained not with an external idea of protecting these virtues in society, but with the idea of providing a foundation for one's concentration (*samādhi*), thus keeping Nibbāna as the objective. Then, if we consider both giving and morality according to that gradual discourse mentioned earlier, they must be used as aids to Nibbāna.

Today, this pious gathering performed those meritorious deeds of giving, morality, and so on. Maintaining morality, developing meditation—doing all these as special practices on this Poya day, to practice with greater effort at least on such an occasion what cannot be done in daily lay life, is what we expect through a Poya day program. Therefore, we believe that you, lay devotees, have today accumulated factors that help to develop what are shown as faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*)—namely, faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—which help to bring your lives closer to Nibbāna. This Dhamma sermon should also be used for that very purpose.

With the aid of the accumulation of merit gathered so far through the blessings of listening to this Dhamma, and with all of that, may this power of merit be a cause and support for you, lay devotees, to remove whatever obstructive states (*antarāyika-dhamma*) there may be to your Nibbāna, to acquire supportive states, to quickly secure the association of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), to escape from all *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *Saṃsāra* such as *Jāti* (Birth), *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death), sickness, and so on, and to realize the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna! May you

make this aspiration. Similarly, may whatever living beings there may be, from the Avīci hell up to the Akanittha heaven, including your own departed relatives, rejoice in this merit of preaching and listening to the Dhamma on this occasion; and through that rejoicing, may they too obtain the help of noble friends, quickly bring an end to the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *Saṃsāra* such as *Jāti* (Birth), *Jarāmaraṇa* (Decay and Death), sickness, and so on, and be appeased by the supreme, deathless, great Nibbāna! With this aspiration, recite these stanzas.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*"