Pahankanuwa Sermon #136

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.17)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

Appamatto pamattesu, suttesu bahujāgaro;

abalassaṃva sīghasso, hitvā yāti sumedhaso ti.

From:

Dhammapada 29 (Appamādavagga)

Dear Listeners,

Poson Poya day is that noble day on which our country received the heritage of the Buddha-Sāsana. We have all heard that on this Poson Full Moon day, the great Arahant Mahinda Thero brought the Buddha-Sāsana and established it in this country during the reign of King Devanampiyatissa. This is something we all know. However, it appears that most people do not have a very clear understanding of the term "Buddha-Sāsana."

The primary meaning of the word *Sāsana* is "message." So, when we reflect roughly, the Buddha-Sāsana is not some message given to the world by a Buddha that is passed from hand to hand or mouth to mouth. It is something to be practiced by oneself, implemented by oneself, and carried from heart to heart; it is not something deposited in buildings, stūpas, or temples. It is something connected to human lives. Thus, in the Dhamma, this is mentioned in brief through three words: *Sīla*, *Samādhi*, and *Paññā*. The Buddha presented that message through those three words. What is presented through this message of *Sīla*, *Samādhi*, and *Paññā* is about escaping as quickly as possible from this extremely terrible and fearful *saṁsāra* (cycle of existence) and realizing the noble Dhamma of Nibbāna. In this world, there is a class of messages called "urgent messages." There are messages in the world that must be carried out without delay (with heedfulness), implemented without delay, and fulfilled. Today, everyone knows about them. The Buddha too has shown that this message of *Sīla*, *Samādhi*, and *Paññā* is indeed an urgent message that must be

fulfilled without delay—the message of Nibbāna. What is the reason for this? The period of a Buddha's arising (*buddhōtpāda*) is extremely rare. Similarly, obtaining a human existence during a period of a Buddha's arising is also extremely rare.

Next, although we speak of human existence, you, meritorious listeners, know well how short human life is, and how quickly a life can be destroyed. Therefore, when reflecting on the shortness of life, this extremely rare message given by the Buddhas must be fulfilled as quickly as possible, without delay (with heedfulness). This is why it is shown that the Buddha, as his daily advice (*sugatōvāda*), addressed the Saṅgha and exhorted them: *"Appamādena, bhikkhave, sampādetha"*—"Monks, strive with heedfulness to accomplish what needs to be done for Nibbāna." Similarly, the last words of the Buddha spoken before his Parinibbāna (final passing away) were: *"Vayadhammā saṅkhārā, appamādena sampādetha"*—"All Preparations (saṅkhāras / preparations) are of a decaying nature; therefore, accomplish your tasks for Nibbāna with heedfulness." When reflecting in this way, this word *appamāda* (heedfulness) is as important in the Buddha-Sāsana as the letter 'A' (the first letter of the alphabet). Thus, the stanza of Dhamma we have taken as our topic today is also about *appamāda*. The occasion that led to the preaching of this Dhamma stanza is mentioned in the scriptures, specifically in the Dhammapada Commentary (*Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*), as follows.

While the Buddha was residing at the Jetavana monastery, two friendly monks obtained subjects of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) from the Buddha and went to a forest monastery to spend the rainy season (*vassa*). Although both of them went having obtained subjects of meditation in this manner, one monk spent the rainy season like this: early in the evening, he would gather firewood, make a fire-pan, and sit warming himself by the fire with the novices, spending the first watch of the night in this way. While he lived in this manner, the other monk, who was acting diligently (heedfully), advised his friend: "Doing things like this is not right; Buddhas cannot be deceived with trickery. We have come after obtaining subjects of meditation from a living Buddha. We must do this work diligently." Although he advised and admonished him in this way, that monk did not accept it. Instead, when the diligent monk, who had worked very hard practicing walking meditation and meditating during the first watch of the night, retired to his hut to rest during the middle watch of the night as permitted by the Buddha, the other monk would come and mock him. To disparage him, he would say: "Great lazy one! Why have you come after obtaining subjects of meditation from the Buddha only to sleep like this?" Slandering him as a lazy person, he would then go and sleep soundly himself.

In this way, these two monks spent the rainy season in two different manners. Before the end of the rainy season, the monk who acted diligently attained the state of Arahantship with the four analytical knowledges (*paṭisambhidā*). However, the other monk was unaware of this. After the rainy season, both of them went to the Buddha. The Buddha asked: "Monks, how was the rainy season? Did you fulfill the purpose of your ordination? Did you live diligently?" Then, the monk who had fallen into

negligence spoke first, using disparaging words: "Where is there any diligence in this monk? He just went and slept there!" The Buddha saw all of this clearly. Therefore, the Buddha accused that monk, saying: "Having fallen into negligence yourself, you are disparaging this member of the Saṅgha, my son, who has acted diligently."

Next, as a simile, he uttered this Dhamma stanza. That is to say, conveying the idea: "When compared to my true son, you are like a weak horse next to a fast-running horse," he uttered the Dhamma stanza we mentioned earlier.

"Appamatto pamattesu, suttesu bahujāgaro;

abalassaṁva sīghasso, hitvā yāti sumedhaso."

"Heedful among the heedless, wide awake among those asleep, the wise man advances, leaving them behind like a swift horse leaving a weak horse behind" — this is the meaning of that stanza. Thus, through this Dhamma stanza, the Buddha showed the world the beneficial side of diligence (*appamāda*). Now let us try to understand this word *appamāda*, which is specifically mentioned in this stanza.

The world analyzes *appamāda* (heedfulness) in various ways as it relates to daily worldly life. However, in this Dispensation (*Sāsana*), in the explanations of this stanza, this word is explained by equating *appamāda* to *sati*—to the virtue of *sati*. *Sati* means mindfulness. In short, in this Dhamma, *appamāda* and *sati* are presented as almost synonymous, to the extent that they can be shown as an equation. Similarly, sleeping and being awake are not shown in the Dhamma in the same sense that the world matches them. Now, worldly people would think that the monk warming himself by the fire-pan was awake. But that is not true wakefulness. Developing the virtue of *sati* within oneself and remaining mindful is the true wakefulness. The words used in the Dhamma are often used in a deep sense. The Buddha himself sometimes says that the world is "blind." There are so many people here whose physical eyes can see. But why does he say they are blind despite having eyesight? Because they lack the eye of wisdom (*paññā-cakkhu*). In the same way, no matter how awake they seem to us, even if they have their eyes wide open, they are asleep if they lack mindfulness, if they lack *sati*. This is the kind of situation we have to point out when analyzing the meaning of these words in accordance with the Dhamma.

The Buddha has shown through a simile how important this virtue of *sati*, and also the word *appamāda*, is: just as the footprint of any other animal can be contained within the footprint of an elephant because there is enough room, so too all wholesome qualities (*kusala dhamma*) are encompassed within the word *appamāda*. From this, we can understand that everything in this path of Dhamma is gathered into this very word, *sati*. It is that primary a thing. Furthermore, it is this *appamāda*, this quality of heedfulness, that is the root of every wholesome state.

When we consider the meaning of *appamāda* in the context of the Sāsana, we see that a certain urgency (speed) is required to act with heedfulness. There are various

things in the world that arouse speed and force. You, meritorious listeners, may have heard that the Buddha has pointed out eight factors that generate the force and urgency helpful for the journey of the Sāsana, known as the grounds for urgency (*saṁvega-vatthu*): *Jāti* (Birth), *jarā* (decaying/aging), *vyādhi* (sickness), and then *maraṇa* (death). *Jāti* means birth. *Jarā* is decaying, becoming old, or rather, the decaying process that begins from the very moment of birth. Then *vyādhi*, falling ill. Then *maraṇa*, decay and death / aging and death. Similarly, reflecting in accordance with the Buddha's words on the saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*) experienced in the past, in past *saṁsāra*, one can arouse urgency regarding that too. Furthermore, the suffering (*dukkha*) and hardships one will have to undergo in *saṁsāra* in the future if one does not put an end to this saṁsāric suffering. Next, the suffering (*dukkha*) one experiences directly in this very life to obtain a meal, to maintain life. It is shown that one must constantly feel urgency reflecting on such sufferings (*dukkha*) that come upon beings in *saṁsāra*. It is through such an attitude of urgency (*saṁvega*) that momentum (force) is generated. But in implementing it, it is *sati* (mindfulness) that helps.

What is *sati*? What are the functions of *sati*? How is *sati* maintained? The Buddha has explained these matters in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*). The virtue of Right Mindfulness (*Sammā-sati*) shown in the Noble Eightfold Path, and the quality we generally refer to as *sati*, are analyzed and understood with reference to the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. The Buddha points out thirty-seven factors contributing to enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*). At the very beginning, he places the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. It is that fundamental and primary a thing. The true objects for establishing mindfulness are shown as: *kāyānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna* (contemplation of the body), *vedanānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna* (contemplation of feeling / sensation), *cittānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna* (contemplation of the mind), and *dhammānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna* (contemplation of mind-objects). In the ordinary world, we speak of being "unconscious" or "mindless." But here, the Buddha has pointed out the four objects on which mindfulness must be properly established as Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) in accordance with the Dhamma. Establishing mindfulness by contemplating the body is *kāyānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*. Next, establishing mindfulness by contemplating feeling / sensation (*vedanā*) is *vedanānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*. Establishing mindfulness by contemplating the mind, looking at the states of the mind, is *cittānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*. Establishing mindfulness by contemplating the thoughts, the mind-objects (*dhammārammaṇa*) that come to the mind, is *dhammānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*. It is a mindfulness (*sati*) that goes progressively deeper in this manner that the Buddha showed must be developed.

Let us try to understand one of these, to some extent at least, as time permits: *kāyānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*. It is also called mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatāsati*). That is, mindfulness gone along with the body, or establishing mindfulness by contemplating the body. We can also briefly mention what is meant

by "contemplating." When a carpenter planes a piece of wood, he casts a certain special look at it to inspect its actual condition and see if it has been planed properly. That is to say, without any sense of ownership like "this is something I planed," he looks at it in a special way to understand its nature of reality, its actual nature. It is with such a look that one must look at one's body. One must look at one's feeling / sensation (*vedanā*). One must look at one's mind. One must look at the thoughts that come to the mind. To understand the actual state objectively, without creating a greed based on likes or a hatred based on dislikes. This is what is meant by contemplation of the body—establishing mindfulness by contemplating the body.

If we express a few examples for this according to the occasion, we know that the most basic aspect of the body is *ānāpāna*—in-breathing and out-breathing. From the moment we are born, we breathe in this air in this world, and then breathe it out. Because this process is connected with life, we call it "breath of life" (*prāṇaya*). Even though such an important process takes place, we ignore it in our daily lives. We let it happen automatically. It is within this automatically occurring process that delusion is hidden; *moha* (delusion) is hidden; defilements (*kilesa*) are hidden, like a dark cave. That is why lack of mindfulness leads to defilements, whereas mindfulness (*sati*) brings out wholesome qualities (*kusala dhamma*). Such is the nature of things.

Bringing out wholesome qualities is the function of mindfulness, the function of Right Mindfulness (*Sammā-sati*). Thus, in this process of in-breathing and out-breathing, one directs full attention to that in-breath. Complete attention is applied to this in-breath. Then, when breathing out, with the feeling and understanding of "this is the out-breath, I am breathing out," one breathes in—that is, one establishes mindfulness on the in-breath and establishes mindfulness on the out-breath. This is something that must be done with effort. What is the main obstacle to this? The ordinary nature is for thoughts (*vitakka*) to flood the mind. Thoughts keep flooding in. We think about other things. In-breathing and out-breathing are left to happen automatically on their own. But what is done here is an exercise in cutting off these thoughts (*vitakka*). The energy of the mind is scattered on thoughts. Due to the multitude of thoughts running to the past and future in pursuit of the fivefold sensual pleasures, one does not recognize the power of one's own mind. Worldly people use only a very small amount of the mind's power in daily life. Therefore, in the effort to gain wisdom (*paññā*), one has to develop *sati*. For someone living a daily worldly life, establishing this mindfulness requires a great deal of effort and exertion. But the effort applied for this does not go to waste. In fact, it is a great saving—a huge saving.

We can understand this even through events that occur in daily life. This is given as an illustration: someone asks us to pour some coconut oil into a small-necked vial. If we do this without mindfulness, how much oil will be spilled? One cannot pour it while trembling. But what happens when mindfulness is well established? One directs it precisely to the mouth of the bottle and begins to pour. Without breaking the stream of oil, it is poured beautifully inside without even a single drop going astray. The Buddha has often used this simile regarding someone who has

established mindfulness well: *"Siniddhā teladhārāva ahosi iriyāpatho"* — even the maintenance of physical postures is as smooth as a stream of oil. It flows very smoothly without jolts and bumps.

We have understood here that properly establishing *sati* even in daily life is a great saving in that moment. As meditation masters (*kammaṭṭhānācariya*) instruct, by cutting off distractions systematically with great effort, one gradually brings mindfulness (*sati*) completely to the in-breath. Then, the mind stays within that in-breath and does not wander outside. When the out-breath occurs, the mind is established within that out-breath. It is by doing so that *sati* is gradually developed. Thereafter, what was previously done with effort happens effortlessly. It happens spontaneously without exertion. Such a state is called *upaṭṭhita-sati* (established mindfulness). *Satipaṭṭhāna* means the establishing of mindfulness. That is an exercise. When mindfulness is firmly present, it is called *upaṭṭhitā sati*—mindfulness that is present. It means that mindfulness is with you at all times.

If a servant in a house is far away, we have to call them constantly to come and do this or that work. But if the servant is right next to us, they do the work the moment we make a slight sign. That is the benefit of established mindfulness (*upaṭṭhitā sati*). Thus, establishing mindfulness on the in-breath and out-breath is something that must be done with effort and exertion. Similarly, maintaining the postures in daily life is also a good exercise for establishing *sati*. The Buddha states in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* regarding postures (*iriyāpatha*): when walking, one understands "I am walking"; next, when standing, one understands "I am standing"; when sitting, one understands "I am sitting"; next, when lying down, one understands "I am lying down." It might seem as if there is not much to this. But everything is contained within this. What is done by this is cutting off thoughts (*vitakka*) and establishing the mind—which otherwise wanders and is scattered and distracted—on one single object. This is what is called mindfulness, *sati*. This is how postures are maintained—these are the major postures.

Not only that. The Buddha has exhorted us to be even more effortful and maintain *sati* regarding minor bodily movements as well. The purpose is to bring automatic actions under the control of mindfulness—gradually bringing automatic movements under the control of mindfulness. For this, it is said: *"Abhikkante paṭikkante sampajānakārī hoti"* — in going forward and returning. This does not mean going a long distance, like going to a town; even moving a little away from where one is standing. In going forward, one has the awareness of going forward, doing it well. The other word that goes hand in hand with *sati* is clear comprehension (*sampajañña*). We practice *sati* with mindfulness and also act with awareness—not unconsciously. Thus, one goes forward with awareness and returns with awareness. Next, *"ālokite vilokite"* — in looking ahead and looking aside, or in casting a glance and withdrawing it, one does so with proper awareness. Next, in bending and stretching the limbs, one must strive to do those actions as much as possible with awareness. That is *"sammiñjite pasārite"*. Not only that, in other postures—in eating,

drinking, and even in evacuating feces and urine—in all of them, by applying mindfulness to every action one performs, one gradually prevents even those minor movements from happening automatically, making it possible to perform those movements with *sati*.

The Buddha has shown the benefit of *sati* developed in this way, and the disadvantage (*ādīnava*) of not developing it—that is, of unmindfulness—through various kinds of similes. When a simile is told, a person can digest it well. It can be recalled constantly. If a single simile is well deposited in the mind, it is like reading a large book; when one's mindfulness slips, one can recollect it accordingly.

The Buddha has declared concerning this *sati*: *"Sati ārakkha-sārathī"*. Meritorious listeners, *"ārakkha-sārathī"* means: *"sārathī"* is the charioteer, and *"ārakkha"* means protective or guarding. The guarding charioteer. Now, whether the animal pulling such a chariot is a horse or an ox, one has to guard and protect that animal in some manner. Thus, that phrase *"sati ārakkha-sārathī"* shows that both guarding and directing belong to this *sati*.

Next, in connection with that very topic, a good exemplary story uttered by the Buddha on one occasion is mentioned in the Dhamma. On one occasion, the Buddha went for alms to the place where a brahmin named Kasi Bhāradvāja was plowing, at the time they were having their meal. Since this brahmin had no faith, he challenged the Buddha:

"Ascetic, I plow and sow. Having plowed and sown, I eat. Ascetic, you too plow and sow! Having plowed and sown, eat!" Then the Buddha replied: "Brahmin, I too plow and sow. Having plowed and sown, I eat." Then the brahmin asked: "Where is it? This ascetic Gotama says he plows and sows, but I do not see any implement of farming." At that moment, the Buddha, through a series of stanzas, pointed out the set of implements connected to his farming. This is a very striking simile for anyone.

"Saddhā bījaṁ, tapo vuṭṭhi,

paññā me yuga-naṅgalaṁ,

hirī īsā, mano yottaṁ,

sati me phāla-pācanaṁ."

If we put this into English, we can also express it generally as a poem:

Faith is the seed,

Austerity is the rain,

Wisdom is my yoke and plow,

Shame (conscience) is the pole,

Mind is the rein-rope,

Mindfulness is my plowshare and goad.

Faith, then, is the seed paddy. Next, austerity is the rain—rainwater. *"Saddhā bījaṁ tapovuṭṭhi."* Next, wisdom (*paññā*) is the yoke and the plow. *Hirī* means the quality of shame towards sin; that is the pole of the plow: *"hirī īsā"*. *"Mano yottaṁ" — mano* means the mind. The mind is the rein-rope. Then, finally, comes what we need: *"sati me phāla-pācanaṁ"*. The virtue of mindfulness (*sati*) is the plowshare and the goad. They are the ones engaged in guarding, protecting, and directing during activities like plowing. In this simile, the virtue of mindfulness is equated to them.

On another occasion, a certain lay devotee named Sunakkhatta asked a series of questions from the Buddha. In that Dhamma discussion, the Buddha spoke of himself in this manner: "I am the supreme surgeon in the world. This is my task: there is a poisoned dart, a poisoned thorn of craving (*taṇhā*) pierced within this heart. I pull out that thorn and heal the patient. What is the instrument, the forceps, I use to pull out that thorn? It is *sati* (mindfulness). Next, to cut open the wound and remove the thorn, I use the scalpel of wisdom (*paññā*)—scalpel means the weapon. Thus, it was with wisdom that it was completely pulled out and discarded. And it was with *sati* that it was brought to a head and extracted." In that way, *sati* has the nature of bringing things to the surface. From all of these, we can understand the value of *sati*.

Next, on another occasion, it is mentioned in the Dhamma that the Buddha was compared to an elephant. Having compared himself to an elephant, his own inner virtues or the virtues taught by him are shown through the parts of the elephant. Even if we do not mention all of them, the elephant's trunk is compared to faith (*saddhā*). Its tusks are compared to equanimity (*upekkhā*). Its head is compared to wisdom (*paññā*). *Sati* is compared to the elephant's neck. Now, when reflecting a little, even you, meritorious listeners, might wonder, "Why is *sati* compared to the elephant's neck?"

To give an illustration of that, although rarely, some people get to see a fight between a wild elephant and a lion in the forest. The lion is generally regarded as the king of beasts. But on some occasions, the elephant also wins. How does the elephant win? The lion always tries to jump onto the elephant's temples (*kumbhasthala*) without being seen or caught by the elephant. But the way the elephant's body is built and functions is so wondrous that the elephant cannot turn its neck alone. It turns its entire torso along with its neck. Then, its whole attention, full attention, is directed towards the lion at all times. There is no way for the lion to jump then. With great speed, very rapidly, the lion tries to somehow jump onto the elephant's temples. But the elephant very rapidly turns its entire body, not just the neck, and because of this, the elephant wins in such situations. When you look at a macaque or a monkey, they always show a very distracted nature, a scattered mind, turning their heads this way and that. Regarding the elephant, like its other noble qualities, it is said that if the

elephant wants to look back, it turns its entire torso. It is mentioned that this quality was specifically present in the Buddha. It is called the "elephant-look" (*nāgāvalokita*); the Buddha turned fully when looking back.

From that, we can understand the reason for comparing *sati* to the elephant's neck. This *sati* means directing full attention to something in an undispersed, undistracted manner. Now, as we said, when maintaining the in-breath, one does not think of anything else. It is within the in-breath itself. Or within the out-breath. Or, in the maintenance of various postures, it is about those specific activities. There is no distinction of big or small for *sati*. *Sati* can be brought out even through minor things. Thus, the Buddha declared that *sati* must be practiced to generate such an undistracted mind. What is the reason for this? When *sati* is well established, concentration (*samādhi*) naturally follows. That is why in the Noble Eightfold Path, concentration (*samādhi*) is placed right after mindfulness (*sati*). For one who develops the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the *sati* developed with effort arises effortlessly in the course of time. Effortlessly, *sati* is always right next to one. At such a time, one can generate a well-concentrated mind. The nature of a concentrated mind is *sati*; the nature of an unconcentrated, distracted mind is lack of mindfulness. By understanding it in this way too, we can see that this virtue of *sati* holds a primary place among the virtues of the Sāsana.

Thus, in that manner, the Buddha showed the beneficial side of *sati*. It is indeed not a waste. It becomes a protection for oneself—the protection of the mind. It was called *"ārakkha-sārathī"* because it brings protection to the mind, providing guard to the mind. It is this *sati*, this quality of *sati*, mindfulness, that guards the mind. Without stopping at that, the Buddha placed before the Saṅgha amazing, wonder-inducing similes, especially regarding the importance of maintaining mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatāsati*). On one such occasion, the Buddha suddenly begins a sermon: "The Belle of the Country, the Belle of the Country (*Janapada-kalyāṇī*)"—and lo, a huge crowd gathers. Making a great noise, a large crowd assembles. This Belle of the Country is skilled in dancing and singing. Therefore, hearing that "the Belle of the Country is dancing and singing," an even larger crowd gathers there. Even today, such things happen, as you can imagine. So, a crowd is assembled in that manner. Next, the Buddha says this: to this place comes a certain man who wants to live and does not want to die, who loves pleasure and hates suffering (*dukkha*). To this man, that crowd says: "Here, we give you a bowl of oil to carry on your head. A bowl of oil filled to the brim. You must carry this on your head right through the middle, between the place where this Belle of the Country is dancing and the assembled crowd." "Belle of the Country" refers to attraction, attachment (*ælīma*). "The crowd" refers to conflict (*gæṭuma*). Where there is a crowd, there is conflict. The idea there is to go free from both attraction and conflict.

So, one must go with this bowl of oil on one's head, in between the Belle of the Country and the massive assembled crowd. But next, who would be following behind you? A man with a drawn sword follows right behind. "If even a little is spilled from

that bowl of oil, your head will be cut off right then and there." That was the illustrative story the Buddha gave. Next, the Buddha asks the Saṅgha: "Monks, what do you think? Would that man, who wants to live and does not want to die, abandon his diligence (*appamāda*), fall into negligence, and spill even a little of that bowl of oil when such a threat is following behind him?" Having given that simile, the Buddha declares: "Monks, I have given this as a simile. This bowl of oil filled to the brim is a simile for mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagatāsati*)." It was the importance of establishing mindfulness directed to the body that the Buddha expressed and taught through this. That mindfulness must be guarded by keeping the mind detached both from the attractive side of the world and from the conflicting side of the world. That is extremely difficult. This is an amazing simile that can arouse even urgency (*saṁvega*) in a person. At that moment, the mind says, "Look towards the Belle of the Country." But then, on the other hand, due to the behaviors of the people, the mind conflicts in various ways. Withdrawing from both, one carries the bowl of oil in that manner. The Buddha showed even such similes. This demonstrates the importance of this *sati*.

Why do we develop these? Why do we do this? What the Buddha brought out through the word *appamāda* was for us to take some benefit from this rare opportunity shown by way of those grounds for urgency (*saṁvega-vatthu*). If one hopes to put an end to saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*), one cannot keep putting these things off. Meditation on *Satipaṭṭhāna* should not be restricted only to a limited setting. In daily life, whether by observing precepts (*sīla*) on a Poya day like this, or by making some quiet time in one's daily life, one must make a beginning. It is best to make a beginning by dedicating oneself specifically to this. It can be done to a certain extent in daily life too. However, especially given the current state of society and the restless environment, it is extremely difficult to practice such religious paths in daily life. Therefore, taking a rest in this manner, one must make a special start. This is because establishing this *sati* sometimes has to be done slowly, like a sick person performing physical movements with great difficulty, and often by withdrawing the mind from other activities. Otherwise, it is difficult to establish this *sati*. The mind runs to the past and the future; it runs to various other things. The nature of the mind to be distracted is what we have trained ourselves in for a long time in *saṁsāra*. We can understand this by looking at how wild animals behave. Even though we have obtained a human body, as the saying goes, *"manushya rūpena mṛgāścaranti"* (they wander as beasts in human form), in many humans there are beastly traits and beastly behaviors. Therefore, a special effort, an exertion, is needed. Even if one had developed virtues in past *saṁsāra*, without teachers one cannot derive benefit from those virtues. They are like embers hidden under ashes. Therefore, no matter what one's education is, or whatever one's age, it is mentioned that even seven-year-olds attained Arahantship; if an effort is made, and if there is merit-power from the past, one can very rapidly bring out those supramundane fruits (*lokuttara-phala*) one hopes for and escape from this terrible *saṁsāra*.

As we said before, this Dispensation (*Sāsana*) is an urgent message that must be fulfilled with diligence (*appamāda*). It is not something passed from mouth to mouth or book to book. There are three aspects: learning (*pariyatti*), practice (*paṭipatti*), and penetration (*paṭivedha*). In that way, there is also a part of teaching that Dhamma to one another. But in reality, this Dispensation must be carried forward through association with good spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*).

A spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) is one who, walking on the path of the Dhamma, can give advice to others. For such people, it is not like carrying a basket from hand to hand in the dark; they can show others with reasons how to cultivate and improve these virtues. That is why indeed every person, every Buddhist, if they are to establish the Buddha-Sāsana within themselves, must try to become a spiritual friend to the world in the truest sense of the word, by walking on this path of *Sīla*, *Samādhi*, and *Paññā*. That is indeed something done not only for others, but also for oneself. Regarding *Satipaṭṭhāna*, the Buddha states that one should practice *Satipaṭṭhāna* by reflecting on both others and oneself, keeping both sides in mind. Therefore, this is not something that goes to waste.

To obtain the maximum fruit, the true essence of one's human existence in daily life, one must develop these supramundane virtues within oneself. One must strive to walk the path of the Sāsana starting from the maintenance of *sati* (mindfulness). Then, through this word *appamāda*, we can realize what a valuable Dhamma the Buddha has brought out for us. Similarly, the *sati-sampajañña* declared by the Buddha—the two virtues of mindfulness and clear comprehension (awareness)—usually go together. Awareness along with mindfulness. The Buddha has declared a meditation that helps to develop these two matters. Similarly, regarding the feelings (*vedanā*) associated with one's body, one watches them, seeing that they come, they remain, and they pass away. It is just like watching a guest. Although these are things present with us in our own bodies, we must look at them like the carpenter looking at the wood he is planing, as if looking at something external. It is because of delusion (*moha*) that we do not look at them, thinking we already know them well. Instead, we go to watch various outdoor shows and performances. But the best show, the best dance and drama in the world, can be watched if one applies *sati* and *sampajañña* to look at the maintenance of one's own physical postures.

The Buddha, having spoken about postures, in going and coming, next states: *"Yathā yathā vā panassa kāyo paṇihito hoti, tathā tathā naṁ pajānāti"*—in whatever way his body is disposed, in that way he understands it. Generally, we very rarely reflect on how our body is disposed. But to the person who reflects with proper *sati*, when looking at themselves, they feel: "Am I not performing a play? From the moment I wake up in the morning until I go to sleep, is this not a certain performance?" Through that itself, weariness with *saṁsāra* (*nibbidā*) often arises. That is why the Buddha stated that *sati* should be applied even in the maintenance of postures—not only to the external existence of the body, but also to the feelings (*vedanā*) that arise in the body. This feeling arose, whether pleasant or painful (*dukkha*). In this way, it

came, it remained, and it passed away. It is stated that one should look at feelings in that manner to develop *sati-sampajañña*.

Similarly, *saññā* means perception or recognition. Through eyes, ears, nose, etc., various perceptions (*saññā*) are brought to our mind. Various perceptions, mere measures of recognition, come to us. Let us assume that a sound is heard at this moment of speaking. The moment one stops at "it is heard," the sound is finished there. When I speak again, another sound comes. The external sound is also like that. Next, when watching oneself and others in this manner, it is also like a drama. Worldly people waste money in vain instead of watching the best dramas in the world. The best drama is the way this body functions—*kāyānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*. And *vedanānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*—how feelings (*vedanā*) come and go. And *cittānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*—how this mind turns red with lust (*rāga*), blue with anger (*dvesa*), like signboards. How it turns black with delusion (*moha*). The way the mind changes is like the signboards on a road. Next, the thoughts that come to the mind—these come and go! They come and go!! rapidly. How rapidly they come and go! Looking at them in this manner.

In the same way, regarding feelings (*vedanā*), one sees them coming, remaining, and passing away; one remains watching. Next, similarly, regarding thoughts (*vitakka*). Thoughts are what we call mental activity. How diverse and how amazing are the thoughts that flood into this mind in a single day! If only the world could hear them! These thoughts are mostly not spoken aloud. If they were expressed, the world would consider one a madman. The mind is that distracted. The thoughts that come to the mind are so diverse, beyond imagination. Sometimes extremely dangerous thoughts arise; foolish thoughts arise. The way those who succumb to them behave! It is only when people fail to control them that the world separates them as "mad" and puts them in an asylum. But the Buddha saw this entire world as a madhouse. Saying this might be thought of as an insult to great scholars. Just as he said *"ayaṁ loko"*—that the world is blind—the Buddha declares all these worldlings (*puthujjana*), every single one of them, to be madmen, as those who have fallen into insanity. Why is that? Because the worldling's mind is often like madness. Let us reflect in accordance with the term *appamāda*, which is extremely helpful for taming this mind. When the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, which started with the contemplation of the body, go progressively deeper, as one reflects more and more on this body, the feelings (*vedanā*) present in that body become manifest. Generally, the world lives between two types: painful feelings (*dukkha-vedanā*) and pleasant feelings (*sukha-vedanā*). The world barely knows about neutral feelings (*upekkha-vedanā*), the indifferent feeling. Worldly people are so immersed in those two.

But gradually, for the person who reflects on feelings (*vedanā*), it becomes possible to grasp not only pleasant feelings (*sukha-vedanā*) and painful feelings (*dukkha-vedanā*), but even that neutral feeling (*upekkhā-vedanā*). In that way, the understanding arises regarding feelings—that they come and go—and their actual

nature. Next, one sees how the mind behaves in accordance with feelings—how the mind acts in accordance with greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*).

Next, the thoughts that come to the mind. Paying attention to their wholesome (*kusala*) side and unwholesome (*akusala*) side, the moment an unwholesome thought arises, one has to make an effort to dispel it without delay. If they are wholesome thoughts, one must encourage and reinforce them. That is precisely why Right Effort (*Sammā-vāyāma*) is shown before Right Mindfulness (*Sammā-sati*). Indeed, one has to make an effort, an exertion. This is not something that comes automatically. We have to apply the fourfold effort called Right Effort: to prevent unarisen unwholesome states from arising, to abandon arisen unwholesome states, to bring about unarisen wholesome states, and to maintain and reinforce arisen wholesome thoughts. It is through that very effort that Right Mindfulness (*Sammā-sati*) can be obtained. Therefore, if a person has faith (*saddhā*), applying this effort in accordance with it leads to the arising of mindfulness (*sati*). If the virtue of *sati* is established in someone, that *sati* directs full attention to whatever one is doing at every moment, just like the elephant facing the lion. If the ability to direct undistracted attention is generated, the ability to maintain it continuously and uninterruptedly also arises. Often, in practicing it, *sati* comes and goes. It must be brought up at all times by making a determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*). It must be brought up through the power of determination. One must not let the mind become weak.

These cannot be obtained all at once. But let us say, "Today, at this moment in the morning, I resolve to practice this *sati*." After five or ten minutes, one does not even remember what happened. Again, sitting quietly, one must bring up that determination. Or else, one can make a determination hour by hour. Or determine every two hours. The moment one realizes that mindfulness (*sati*) has slipped, one brings it up again. It can be done in that way. One has to make a special effort in that manner regarding *sati*. When, by making such an effort, one is able to maintain continuous *sati* uninterruptedly, then, just like pouring oil into a small-necked vial, it is very easy for the mindful person to develop concentration (*samādhi*), a concentrated mind. When a concentrated mind is generated, that is a great power. If that concentrated mind, which is called Right Concentration (*Sammā-samādhi*), is arisen, then, by raising insight-knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) and deeply understanding the actual nature of the world through that concentrated mind—the impermanence (*anicca*) of arising and passing away—one can realize the noble fruit of Arahantship through the penetration of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship.

Thus, the entire mass of the virtues of the Sāsana is gathered within this word *appamāda* given by the Buddha. Its beginning, however, lies in this word of two syllables: *sati*. We must try to develop this mindfulness with effort to whatever extent possible, even in our daily lives. Similarly, on a quiet day like this, a Poya day, or by spending several days under someone who guides meditation subjects, making an

effort, even with difficulty or taking unpaid leave, one must strive to develop these virtues. The capacity to realize Nibbāna may be present within oneself. Instead of saying "I cannot, I cannot" and remaining passive, if one makes an effort, and if one has some merit-power from the past, one can develop these very quickly. It is not out of mere desire for quick results. But if one applies oneself properly, through these virtues one might perhaps obtain that noble fruit in this very life.

On this occasion, reflect on today. What was discussed here is not about anything else, but about the Buddha-Sāsana. Now, everywhere in the world, one hears about the Buddha-Sāsana. But we presented it in a different way. This message is not merely on the external side. As we said before, it is a message that goes from heart to heart; if the Dhamma does not penetrate the heart, how can we carry it forward? As it is now, these have been limited to buildings. How do we give new life to the Buddha-Sāsana? By painting some paint on the buildings, or by renovating them further. It is through these that they uplift the Buddha-Sāsana. The Buddha-Sāsana cannot be uplifted in that manner. The Buddha-Sāsana is deposited within these three virtues: *Sīla*, *Samādhi*, and *Paññā*. Thinking deeply about this, one must resolve to protect this Buddha-Sāsana with diligence (*appamāda*). The Buddha has declared that association with spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*) is extremely rare. Ven. Ānanda on one occasion expressed the value of having a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta-sampatti*) in this manner:

"It seems to me, Bhante, that half of this Buddha-Sāsana is spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇa-mitta-sampatti*)." The Buddha declared: "Ānanda, do not say so. The entire Buddha-Sāsana is indeed spiritual friendship." You too, meritorious listeners, must reflect on that. Therefore, while deriving benefit from those spiritual friends, in order to qualify oneself to also become a spiritual friend to others, one must firmly resolve to walk on this path of Dhamma. It is by doing so that a Buddha-Sāsana is protected.

Today is Poson Poya day. We see that many people observe the precepts. Dedicating a day for that and spending life in this manner engaged in Dhamma sermons and meditation is an extremely valuable virtue of the Sāsana. Similarly, even during the hearing of Dhamma in general, if one listens to that Dhamma while reflecting on it properly, if there is merit-power from the past, in the exact manner declared by the Buddha, one can generate concentration (*samādhi*) through the development of the faculties (*indriya*) of *saddhā* (faith), *viriya* (energy), *sati* (mindfulness), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom). That is to say, through faith, because of the effort and energy applied to listen to that Dhamma properly, one brings out *sati* through it. During that time, concentration arises in the mind. If, through that, one gains a deep understanding of those Dhamma matters, in such instances, just like when people attained the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) when the Buddha preached the Dhamma, one can even obtain such fruits. That is, only if one does these things properly. It happens in that way to everyone.

Reflecting in that manner, even during this short time today, during this hour, you must generate that joy, thinking, "I dedicated myself to perform this task in order to plant and cultivate these virtues within myself." This undertaking of cultivating the virtues of the Sāsana is the true cultivation—the cultivation of virtue. No matter what other cultivation there is, if there is no cultivation of virtue, there is only decline. Directing ourselves to this cultivation of the virtues of the Sāsana, and through this task, escaping as quickly as possible from this extremely terrible and fearful *saṁsāra*, may we gain the strength and power to put an end to saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*) through the realization of the noble paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship, with that noble Deathless, Great Nibbāna! In that manner, one must make such aspirations for oneself.

Similarly, let us share this mass of merit we have accumulated through this preaching and hearing of the Dhamma with the assembly of deities protecting the Sāsana, including the guardian deities of this place, and all those deities who rejoice in such virtues of the Sāsana. By rejoicing in this merit, may they provide protection to this Sāsana, and may they realize the noble, Deathless, Great Nibbāna through their wished-for Bodhi! Let us make such aspirations as blessings for the deities as well. Likewise, whatever worldly beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha expect to share in these merits, including one's own departed relatives, by sharing in these merits, may they be released as quickly as possible from states of misery and reach happy states of existence; and, obtaining the association of spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), practicing Dhamma and meditation, may they obtain the strength and power to put an end to saṁsāric suffering (*dukkha*) with this noble, Deathless, Great Nibbāna! Making such aspirations, let us now chant the stanzas and share the merit.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*"