Pahankanuwa Sermon #138

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.48)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

"Dūre santo pakāsenti,

himavanto'va pabbato;

Asant'ettha na dissanti,

ratti khittā yathā sarā."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 304 (Pakinnaka Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

Today, on this Poson Full Moon Poya day, we must all bring to mind that historic event where the legacy of the Buddha-Sāsana was received by our island through the grace of the Great Arahant Mahinda. Although Emperor Dharmashoka sent emissaries to other countries, he sent the Great Arahant Mahinda, specifically his own son, to our island due to a special affection towards us and our country. Furthermore, it is in this country that the Dispensation of the Supreme Buddha properly took root, and since the Buddha also visited Lanka, for all these numerous reasons, even being born in this country should be considered a highly fortunate gain. Even though the Triple Gem has appeared in the world, the blessing of the Triple Gem is not received by everyone. It is not something that can be obtained casually or haphazardly. For that, a certain power of merit, a wealth of supporting conditions, and a wealth of sufficing conditions (*upanissaya-sampatti*) are required. This aforementioned power of merit is often referred to in the Dhamma by the name of 'virtue of the virtuous' or 'the quality of a true person' (*sappurisa-guṇa*). Within this quality of a true person, there lies an attractive power that falls within the range of the Buddha's knowledge and draws His attention. A verse of Dhamma that reveals this, along with an introductory story that clearly illustrates it, is what we are presenting for today's Dhamma sermon.

Between Anāthapiṇḍika the Treasurer of Sāvatthī and Ugga the Treasurer of the city of Ugga, a great friendship had existed since childhood. This was because both of them studied arts under the same teacher in the same teacher's clan. At that time, in their youth, the two of them made an agreement: when they reached the proper age, married, and had children, if the time came to marry off the son of one, and if the other had a daughter, she should be given in marriage to him. They established this as a sort of pact. Thus, with the passage of time, both of them were appointed to the position of Treasurer (*Setthi*) in their respective cities. One day, Treasurer Ugga came to Sāvatthī with five hundred carts for trade and stayed at the mansion of his old friend, Treasurer Anāthapiṇḍika. Treasurer Anāthapiṇḍika entrusted all the hospitality duties to his second daughter, Cūla Subhaddā. Cūla Subhaddā was a stream-enterer (*Sotāpanna*) lay woman, extremely well-mannered. She, with great care and courtesy, personally prepared food and drinks for Treasurer Ugga and performed all the necessary duties exceptionally well. Her perfect conduct and polite manner generated a great deal of appreciation in Treasurer Ugga. On one occasion, while conversing with Treasurer Anāthapiṇḍika, he reminded him, saying, "Do you remember the agreement we made in our youth?" and proposed Cūla Subhaddā for his son. However, no matter how close a friend he was, Treasurer Anāthapiṇḍika could not immediately give his consent because Treasurer Ugga was a staunch wrong-believer.

In any case, Treasurer Anāthapiṇḍika informed the Buddha about this matter. We can understand that a noble female disciple is a daughter of the Buddha. Somehow, permission was received from the Buddha. He must have seen some inherent law of the Dhamma (*dhammatā*) in this. Therefore, the Buddha had no objection to giving her in marriage, even to a family of wrong view. Accordingly, Treasurer Anāthapiṇḍika returned home, secured his wife's consent, set a date, and, with great hospitality and honor, gave his daughter in marriage to the son of Treasurer Ugga. In the past, parents of high-class families, when sending their daughter to her in-laws' home, would appoint eight reputable noblemen to reside in that area to resolve any issues that might arise. Such a story is also seen regarding Visākhā. Here too, it is mentioned that Treasurer Anāthapiṇḍika sent eight noblemen along with his daughter.

Since Treasurer Ugga was of wrong view, on the auspicious days of the wedding, just as people nowadays invite the Sangha and offer alms, he invited the *Acelakas* (naked ascetics) whom he regarded as ascetics (*samaṇas*) for an alms-giving. If we explain '*Acelaka*' in words we can understand, they were the unclothed *Nigaṇṭhas* (naked ascetics). Thus, Treasurer Ugga was a disciple of those *Nigaṇṭhas*. So, when inviting these *Nigaṇṭhas* to the house to give them alms, he invited his daughter-in-law to come and pay respect to those ascetics. As soon as she arrived and saw these *Nigaṇṭhas* naked, she exclaimed, "These are shameless people!" and returned in embarrassment. Even though messages were sent repeatedly asking her to come, she did not return. The Treasurer felt angry about this. His anger grew to the extent of

throwing her out of the house. Then, when this matter—this lawsuit—was presented to the aforementioned eight noblemen, they decided that it was not even a minor fault on her part. Although the Treasurer was silenced by this, he told his wife, "This daughter-in-law insults our ascetics as 'shameless people'." Then the mother-in-law asked Cūla Subhaddā: "What kind of ascetics are those whom you praise so much?" At that moment, Cūla Subhaddā beautifully described the perfect conduct and noble attitude of the Buddha and his disciples through a series of verses.

"Santamānasā santaṃ, tesaṃ gataṃ ṭhitaṃ;

Okkhittacakkhū mitabhāṇī, tādisā samaṇā mama."

My ascetics are like this: they possess peaceful minds, peaceful senses, with downcast eyes, speaking in moderation; such are my ascetics. Their going and standing, all their movements and postures, are extremely peaceful. Moreover, their physical deeds, verbal deeds, and mental deeds are all pure. Furthermore, in the face of the eight worldly conditions—gain and loss, disrepute and fame, blame and praise, pleasure and pain—they do not swell with favorable conditions; that is, they do not get puffed up by gain, nor do they let their minds weaken in times of loss, staying free from pride in favorable situations and from dejection in unfavorable ones. Thus, she expressed the vast store of virtues of the Buddha and those Arahants.

Impressed by those words, the mother-in-law asked, "Is it possible for you to show us those ascetics?" Then Subhaddā said, "I can." Subhaddā was residing in a region very far away from Sāvatthī. But what did she do, relying on the power of faith and the strength of determination? She ascended to the upper terrace of the mansion, offered fragrant flowers, and turning towards Jetavana Monastery, invited the Buddha, saying: "May the Blessed One, along with the Sangha, visit this house tomorrow for alms." After making this invitation, she threw eight handfuls of jasmine flowers into the sky. The eight handfuls of jasmine flowers travelled through the air across many leagues (*yojanas*) and appeared like a canopy of flowers above where the Buddha was delivering a Dhamma sermon at Jetavana Monastery at that moment. The Buddha understood this from that sign. At that very moment, Treasurer Anāthapiṇḍika, at the end of a Dhamma discussion, invited the Buddha and the Sangha for alms the following day. Then the Buddha said, "Treasurer, we have already received an invitation." Then he asked, "I did not see anyone coming, Blessed One; who made that invitation?" "It was your own Cūla Subhaddā," He replied. When he asked, "How could she invite you when she is so many leagues away?" the Buddha answered that question with the aforementioned verse.

"Dūre santo pakāsenti, himavanto'va pabbato;

Asant'ettha na dissanti, ratti khittā yathā sarā."

"Treasurer, even if true persons (*sappurisā*) are far away, they are visible; they appear to the Buddha-eye." *Dūre santo*. '*Santo*' means that even if true persons are far away, they are manifest like the Himalayan mountain. The Buddha gives a

beautiful simile there. No matter how far away they may be, true persons appear to the Buddha-eye just like the Himalayan mountain. No matter how far away the Himalayan mountain is, even if one does not go near it, it is visible from afar as if it were close. Next, He gives the other simile: '*Asant'ettha na dissanti, ratti khittā yathā sarā*'. Untrue persons (*asappurisā*) do not appear, are not revealed, and are not manifest, even if they are close by. What is the simile given for that? When an arrow is shot in a pitch-black dark night, the arrow might pass right by one's face or ear. Yet, it is not seen because of the darkness. Just like an arrow shot in the night, untrue persons do not appear and are not manifest. Having delivered this verse, it is mentioned that many people settled their minds with confidence and attained states of meditation.

Thereafter, according to that invitation, the Buddha, along with five hundred Arahants, travelled through the air to the city of Ugga. On that occasion, Cūla Subhaddā properly attended to the Buddha and the Sangha, performing all duties, and it is mentioned that she conducted a great alms-giving for seven days. Having heard the Dhamma preached by the Buddha in that city, thousands of people in the city of Ugga became disciples of the Buddha. Because of this, it is mentioned that when the Buddha was returning from the city of Ugga, he instructed a great Arahant to remain and reside in this very city, supported by the patronage and sponsorship of Cūla Subhaddā. Looking briefly at this narrative, we can consider this as an event showing how the Buddha-Sāsana spread to the city of Ugga during the lifetime of the Buddha. Now we must direct our minds to certain points within this that are of doctrinal (*dhammatā*) importance to us. As for the story, if considered briefly, that is all.

Now, we must especially contemplate that such an event occurred due to the power of merit of Cūla Subhaddā. These psychic powers and miracles (*iddhi-pāṭihāriya*) are things done through direct knowledge (*abhiññā*) from a concentrated mind. However, on one hand, it is mentioned that when there is intense faith, there is a miraculous power inherent in that very faith. Moreover, on another hand, there is also what is called 'psychic power born of merit' (*puṇṇa-iddhi*); there is a psychic power that comes from merit itself.

Let us pay special attention to this word '*sappurisa*' (true person). In this society, a 'true person' is referred to in a very limited sense. We think that those who are not untrue persons are true persons. But in the Dhamma, a much deeper meaning is shown. A true person is one filled with great merit, possessing past merits and wholesome actions. Moreover, those highly fortunate and meritorious individuals who, having made certain aspirations before Buddhas, have received definite predictions (*niyata-vivaraṇa*) that they will attain such-and-such states at such-and-such times, are called true persons. Then, untrue persons are the opposite of that. Those who do not possess such power of merit, those who lack the wealth of sufficing conditions (*upanissaya-sampatti*)—and this wealth of sufficing conditions is itself

the past power of merit that leads to Nibbāna. Those who do not have such a thing are called untrue persons.

Now, how do all of you, pious devotees, usually conclude even the offering of a flower or a lamp?

> *"Iminā puñña-kammena mā me bāla-samāgamo;*
>
> *Sataṃ samāgamo hotu, yāva nibbāna-pattiyā."*

This is a verse that everyone recites. In this, there is a highly valuable essence of meaning. Because, what is expected and aspired for here? It is the association with true persons (*sappurisa-samāgama*) that is being sought. *Iminā puññakammena*—by this meritorious deed; *mā me bāla-samāgamo*—may I not have the company of fools; *sataṃ samāgamo hotu*—may I have the company of the wise/virtuous; *yāva nibbāna-pattiyā*—until the attainment of Nibbāna. Instead, may I have the company of true persons until Nibbāna! Many of you, pious devotees, are life-long members (*yāvajīva*) of various societies. What is spoken of here is not 'life-long' (*yāvajīva*), but what is aspired for is 'until Nibbāna' (*yāva-Nibbāna*). This is something extremely deep. Until I attain Nibbāna, may I not have the association of those foolish, ignorant, and untrue persons! Instead, may I have the association of wise, meritorious, and noble beings like the Buddha and other Aryas who are supreme through the majesty of their merit! It is such a great aspiration that is being made.

That is precisely why, as you pious devotees know, when speaking of rare things, '*sappurisa-saṃsevo*'—association with true persons—is mentioned. The association with true persons; that is to say, the association with noble ones like the Buddhas is absolutely essential to realize Nibbāna. Likewise, where the four factors of stream-entry (*sotāpatti-aṅga*) that help one become a stream-enterer are shown, four factors are listed: *sappurisa-saṃsevo* (association with true persons), *saddhamma-savanaṃ* (hearing the true Dhamma), *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention), and *dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti* (practice in accordance with the Dhamma). The association with true persons. It is by relying on those true persons that one listens to the Dhamma: *sappurisa-saṃsevo*. Consequently, *saddhamma-savanaṃ*—hearing the true Dhamma. After hearing the Dhamma, one practices the wise reflection called *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention). Reflecting wisely, *dhammānudhamma-paṭipatti*—one practices in accordance with the Dhamma. Thus, the primary aid to practicing in accordance with the Dhamma is the association with true persons. True persons are those who have not merely known and learned the Dhamma, but have put it into action, brought it into practice, and personally realized it. They are able to help others at any given time. That is why those true persons are so extremely important in these matters of the Dispensation. Therefore, what everyone hopes for and aspires to through that kind of verse is indeed that association with true persons.

Now, let us next contemplate how one becomes a true person. To do that, we must keep in mind two pairs of words. Everyone knows them. There are two words called

'wholesome' (*kusala*) and 'unwholesome' (*akusala*). There are two words called 'merit' (*puñña*) and 'demerit/sin' (*pāpa*). Of these, the unwholesome is easy, while the wholesome is difficult. It is difficult to turn away from the unwholesome; that is to say, one must turn away from the unwholesome and enter the path of the wholesome.

For example, in analyzing the wholesome and unwholesome, it is shown that taking life (*pāṇātipāta*) is unwholesome. Abstaining from taking life is wholesome—*pāṇātipātā veramaṇī kusalaṃ*. That is to say, abstaining from killing animals or destroying the life of others is wholesome. These words, wholesome and unwholesome, are the first pair. The other pair of words is merit and demerit. These are two words familiar to everyone's ears, which we use frequently. Within this lies the secret of becoming a true person. What we must do is, at every possible opportunity, turn away from unwholesome actions and incline towards the path of wholesomeness—doing wholesome deeds. If we look at the meaning of this word, *kusala* means skillfulness. However, according to worldly standards of skillfulness, the world calls various cunning activities 'skillful'. Or else, there is a certain worldly level of skillfulness in mechanical works.

When speaking of these virtues of the Dispensation, what is skillfulness? In this extremely terrifying saṃsāra, turning away from those unwholesome deeds of mind, body, and speech that lead to the path of the lower realms, and walking on the right path—this is what is meant by turning away from the unwholesome and turning towards the path of the wholesome. In one way, it can be stated like that. To explain it in another way, if this saṃsāra is a wilderness, then wholesomeness is that which helps one from getting lost in this wilderness of saṃsāra. Furthermore, it is something that helps one draw closer to the safe haven of Nibbāna. It is abstaining from things that defile one's mind, and properly directing one's mind, body, and speech. For the vast majority of the time, being wrong-believers, associating with untrue persons of wrong views, and acting on wrong understanding out of ignorance and foolishness—as well as out of *Taṇhā* (Craving) that follows foolishness—we have developed various unwholesome habits in our minds. A certain power is needed to free ourselves from those habits.

Now, it is for this very reason that you, pious devotees, have at this moment observed various levels of precepts, from the *Ājīva-Aṭṭhamaka-Sīla* (Eight Precepts with Pure Livelihood) to higher moral virtues. What is done through this is taking a determination to abstain, even with difficulty, from taking life, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and so forth. Behaving wisely according to the understanding that "this is what must be done" is called *sīla* (morality), which means taming and discipline. In that manner, what begins with moral virtue goes all the way to Nibbāna. Accordingly, if we look at what is called *kusala* (wholesomeness) ultimately, it is the skillfulness that helps one cross over this entire suffering of saṃsāra and realize Nibbāna. We have to be responsible for the things we do through mind, body, and speech. If we are not skillful in regard to them, if we are unskillful,

we will have to be reborn in terrifying places like the hells. We will have to spend a long time in saṃsāra. Therefore, if we are to quickly end this suffering of saṃsāra (*saṃsāra-dukkha* (suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress)), we must apply our minds to that aforementioned wholesome side.

Next, a pair of words very close to this is indeed 'merit and demerit' (*puñña* and *pāpa*). These are words that run almost parallel to each other. Merit is also a certain power that we generate, that we obtain, through that wholesome skillfulness. The result of that power is what is called meritorious results, pleasant results. Its opposite is called demerit/sin. The terms 'merit and demerit' are more familiar to our tongues.

You, pious devotees, have heard a great deal about what are shown as merits, such as the ten bases of meritorious deeds (*dasa-puñña-kiriya-vatthu*). Generosity (*dāna*), morality (*sīla*), meditation (*bhāvanā*), as well as sharing merit (*pattidāna*), rejoicing in others' merit (*pattānumodanā*), rendering service (*veyyāvacca*), showing reverence to those worthy of reverence (*apacāyana*), teaching the Dhamma, listening to the Dhamma. Next, although one may have right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), there can often be shortcomings in it. Straightening one's view (*diṭṭhijukamma*). That is to say, until one reaches the noble state of stream-entry and so forth, the view one obtains by reading books and listening to the Dhamma is not completely pure. It is crooked. One must make an effort to purify it as well. Every single time we do so, wholesome thoughts, or merits, are generated in our minds. Thus, through these, we become complete in wholesomeness; we become complete in merit. It is to that extent that the previously mentioned virtue of a true person (*sappurisa-guṇa*) grows within us. If we contemplate this virtue of a true person, we can see that other things have come to the forefront in place of those values and noble ethics (*sāradharma*) that our Sinhalese people of the past held regarding merit and demerit. In fact, if we think about it, this merit is like an inexhaustible gold coin.

In this present age, the value of various currencies, money, gold, silver, and so forth decreases due to temporary economic inflation and various other reasons. Their purchasing power is worn away. Nowadays, even though various things are said to be very expensive, sometimes money itself is extremely cheap, because its value has depreciated. Thus, due to economic revolutions and transPreparations in the world, the value of the currencies and coins we use changes. But the value of this merit—the value of *puñña*—is never lost. It is something with an eternal and timeless value. That is why you, pious devotees, have heard so much in Dhamma sermons about the merits we accumulate. As the Buddha declared in a sermon:

"Acoraharaṇo nidhī, kayirātha dhīro;

puññāni yo nidhī anugāmiko"

He shows it as a wealth that is not shared with others—meaning others cannot take possession of it—which cannot be destroyed or lost to thieves, rulers, fire, or floods. An un-stealable treasure (*acoraharaṇo nidhī*), and a treasure that follows one

(*anugāmika*), like a shadow. Such is the value of those merits. So one must contemplate these things, especially if one hopes to become a true person.

By drawing close to the Triple Gem and developing an understanding of this Dhamma, one must remain mindful of wholesomeness and unwholesomeness at every moment of one's life. The clue to whether something is wholesome or unwholesome is shown by the Buddha: all unwholesome states spring from the three things in our minds called greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). Everyone recognizes these. Everything done through mind, body, and speech that arises from attachment (*lobha*), aversion (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) is unwholesome. The opposite of this—meaning if we make an effort to move away from greed, if we make an effort to move away from hatred, if we make an effort to move away from delusion—all of those are wholesome. In brief, that is how it is.

From another angle, considering their results, actions that lead to the downfall of oneself and others are shown. Killing animals, stealing, and so forth are all harmful to oneself and to others. They are harmful to oneself because they defile the mind. Moreover, they cause remorse and regret. One has to go to terrifying places like the lower realms. And there is no need to emphasize that after a being is killed, it suffers pain because of it. So, it has been analyzed in that manner as well. The Buddha has categorized and presented these moral precepts (*sīla-sikkhāpada*) so that one can understand them for oneself and abstain from those harmful actions. He has grouped them into five, eight, or ten, giving them to us to say, "Here, take this and try to practice it; take this and try to practice it." After taking the Five Precepts and practicing them for some time, one says, "I have a bit more strength now. Next, I should observe the *Ājīva-Aṭṭhamaka-Sīla*, or the Eight Uposatha Precepts on Poya days. Next, I must observe the Ten Precepts." Going on in this way, a life transformation might occur, and one might even enter the ordained life. In this manner, the Buddha shows that everything is based on this wholesome and unwholesome. This saṃsāra is a terrifying place. Crossing over from it is true skillfulness. Whatever helps one cross over is wholesome. Thus, concerning the wholesome and unwholesome, it is through them indeed that a true person is formed.

Let us contemplate the other side, using other events in this story. Here, it is mentioned that Cūla Subhaddā generated faith in her father-in-law, mother-in-law, and others by describing these virtues of the Sangha. The virtues of ascetics (*samaṇa-guṇa*). That too is an important thing. The perfection of conduct (*ākappa-sampatti*) is something that helps a Dispensation endure for a long time. The Buddha has declared that ascetics, bhikkhus, must not have the attitudes or conduct of laypeople. In the *Dasa-dhamma Sutta*, it is stated that a monastic must constantly reflect: "*Aññho me ākappa karaṇīyo*" — My conduct must be different from that of a layperson. I must conduct myself differently from the layperson. Pious devotees, that perfection of conduct is a matter regarding one's physical postures and deportment. Here, it is said that Treasurers like Ugga had developed faith in those *Nigaṇṭhas*.

The behavior and attitude of the *Nigaṇṭhas*, however, were extremely low. Among those unclothed *Nigaṇṭhas* called *Acelakas*, some observed the canine vow, behaving like a dog. For instance, Seniya, who had taken the canine vow (*kukkura-vata*), came to see the Buddha, conversed nicely with Him, and sat down exactly like a dog circles around and curls up to sit. They did these things believing that through them, they could become a god, achieve a high state, or realize Nibbāna. The Buddha declared that if one develops the behavior and attitude of a dog, in the next existence, one will end up as a dog. It would in no way help toward Nibbāna.

Thus, out of ignorance, leave alone others, even kings and treasurers, around the time the Buddha appeared in the world, were serving those wrong-believing, naked *Acelaka Nigaṇṭhas*. They were the ones considered as ascetics. Here, in order to shatter that wrong view, Cūla Subhaddā made use of the virtues of the Buddha—the virtues of the Buddha and the virtues of His disciples. She declared a long series of verses describing how even their bodily postures are highly inspiring, extremely peaceful, and that they possess deeply peaceful minds. Thereafter, as if to prove it, only after the Buddha visited with five hundred Arahants did the city of Ugga become a city completely filled with disciples of the Buddha. Therefore, we must bear in mind that, even when contemplating from the perspective of the Dispensation, what was said about that perfection of conduct is highly important. This perfection of conduct is also not something that arises spontaneously. This—such as the deportment of physical postures—is something one must develop through the fulfillment of virtues, especially through meditation practices such as Satipaṭṭhāna meditation. For the Buddha Himself has shown that this is helpful to the Dispensation. On certain occasions, when there were shortcomings among the Sangha, the Buddha promulgated those things called disciplinary rules (*vinaya-nīti*).

Two reasons are shown for this: "*appasannānaṃ vā pasādāya, pasannānaṃ vā bhiyyobhāvāya*" — for the confidence of the unconfident, and for the increase of the confident. Seeing the misbehavior of some bhikkhus, the Buddha promulgated certain disciplinary rules, saying that such behavior does not lead to the confidence of the unconfident. Furthermore, it could also cause those who already have confidence to lose it. It is clear that the Buddha considered this when promulgating disciplinary rules. From this, we can understand that the existence of this Dispensation—and its progress—consists of the development within our own minds, and the corresponding change in our physical and verbal actions. It is through this indeed that the message of the Dispensation is transmitted. So, when comparing with those other ascetics, during the time of the Buddha, the mere sight and association of the Buddha and other noble members of the Sangha were sufficient for many to develop faith. In that manner, the appreciation of wise people is not the mere blind faith of ordinary foolish persons.

The Buddha Himself has stated this: "*Garahā va viññūhi yañce bālappasaṃsanaṃ*" — Better is the censure of the wise than the praise of fools. The censure of the wise is far better than the praise of fools. Therefore, the values of this Dispensation are not

those things that are considered popular and please ignorant, foolish worldly people. The values of the Dispensation consist of behaving and conducting oneself in a manner suitable to fulfill the virtues of morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Therefore, the point shown in this story regarding the perfection of conduct is also highly important. If we look at the present state of the Buddha-Sāsana, we see a serious lack of noble values (*sāradharma*) in society. '*Sāradharma*' is a word frequently used by many people nowadays. Noble values mean the core, the heartwood, or the ultimate purpose of life. They set various goals in life, some of which are short-term. To accumulate as much wealth as possible, by hook or by crook, or to attain high positions through various irregularities. Many people set such goals in their lives.

But the noble values highlighted by the Buddha are the Seven Noble Treasures (*sapta-ariya-dhana*) shown in this Dhamma. The Buddha has revealed seven noble treasures. Whether lay or ordained, these are seven valuable treasures with which one in this Dispensation can find true solace:

"Saddhā-dhanaṃ, sīla-dhanaṃ, hiri-ottappiyaṃ dhanaṃ,

suta-dhanañca cāgo ca, paññā ve sattamaṃ dhanaṃ."

The first treasure is faith (*saddhā*). Without this treasure of faith, one cannot make this journey of the Dispensation. Faith is something that is also connected with the heart. No matter how scholarly we may be, we cannot ignore the heart. Some people, thinking in terms of rationalism, are inclined to search for truth by drowning in various debates and arguments. But when a Buddha appears in the world, the Buddha Himself declared: "I am the all-knowing supreme one of the three worlds." Thus, if someone cannot develop faith in Him, that is a serious deficiency. If one cannot establish faith where faith should be established, it is a great shortcoming. On the other hand, its importance is shown in that faith is the foundation of all activities in the Dispensation. The simile given for it is an elephant's trunk. With its trunk, an elephant can perform heavy tasks, and with the tip of its trunk, it can perform delicate tasks. The trunk is also that animal's primary organ. Likewise, among the virtues of the Dispensation, faith in the Triple Gem is primary. Faith in the enlightenment of the Buddha, and the leading-out character (*niyyānikatā*) of the Dhamma—meaning that if this Dhamma has been taught for a specific purpose, when it is put into practice, that purpose is fulfilled; it works.

Next, the Sangha. The Great Noble Sangha of eight noble persons are like eight lamp-posts on this path of practice. They are a group of people who demonstrate that one can reach the state of Nibbāna by walking along this Noble Eightfold Path. That is why we revere them as the Triple Gem: Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. The faith in that Triple Gem. It is by the power of that very faith that one, as the first step on that path, descends into the practice called *sīla* (morality). Particularly in this day and age, even though people have the external appearance of humans, it is difficult to recognize if they are truly human. Because what the sages of the past said is

becoming more true: "*manusya-rūpeṇa mṛgāścaranti*" — they roam about in human form but with the nature of beasts. Furthermore, in human form, they sometimes behave like demons (*yakṣas*) and hungry ghosts (*pretas*), even worse than beasts. They have degenerated to that extent. Thus, the deficiency here, the primary deficiency, is morality (*sīla*). Because they have not properly disciplined their physical and verbal behavior, they have drawn dangerously close to the animal world, and close to the state of demons and hungry ghosts. Therefore, the treasure of faith is developed.

Next, morality (*sīla*). In the one who protects this morality, there arises a sense of shame regarding demerit—the aforementioned *hiri* and *ottappa*. One develops a sense of shame, like a disgust, toward committing demerit. A nature where the mind shrinks away from them. Next, *ottappa* means that one develops fear by contemplating the resulting side of that demerit. Ordinary worldly people think, "I am not afraid." Considering fearlessness as a great achievement, and considering shamelessness as an achievement. You know the stories this society tells. There is a society that regards a shameless person as a very great person. What is spoken of here is that it was by regarding the shamelessness of those *Nigaṇṭhas* as an achievement that the treasurers' appreciation was generated.

But in the person who guards morality, these virtues called *hiri* and *ottappa* are developed as divine qualities (*deva-dhamma*). It is through that indeed that one receives protection in a society, in social life. An ability to live is received, preventing society from degrading to an animal level. *Hiri-ottappiya-dhanaṃ*—the treasure of shame and fear of wrongdoing. To the extent that they arise, they become a treasure for oneself, and one draws closer to Nibbāna.

Next, a similar thing is *suta* (learning). Learning means Dhamma knowledge. One must obtain an understanding of the Dhamma, either by listening with the ear or by reading from a book. If someone thinks that he knows everything and that this will arise spontaneously through self-awakened knowledge (*svayambhū-jñāna*), that person might not even want to open his eyes from that blind wrong view for his entire life. There are such people in society. Thus, when it is said that a Buddha is born, many are inclined to go to Him out of the immense faith that arises. They are drawn to the Dhamma from Him. Even if they do not have direct contact with Him, in this present day, even in Western countries, despite whatever shortcomings there may be in books containing the Dhamma, wise people see some portion of the Dhamma that they can comprehend, and have opportunities to transform their entire lives. Such is the Word of the Buddha. Even if it is not volumes of books, sometimes a small sentence, a small word of Dhamma that touches the heart, is capable of causing a complete life transformation. Why is that? Because it is that very Buddha-power that is present there. Therefore, *suta* means Dhamma knowledge. One must make an effort to develop that as well. Nowadays, pious devotees like to listen to many things. Indeed, we do not need to elaborate on the things that these pleasure-seeking lay devotees listen to. But you must contemplate that if you hope to live a good life,

shorten this saṃsāra, and bring an end to the suffering of saṃsāra (*saṃsāra-dukkha* (suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress)) as quickly as possible, you must make an effort to gain an understanding of the Dhamma. And behave in a way where you can reflect wisely with wisdom to understand what is true and what is false.

Next, an equally valuable thing is *cāga* (generosity/renunciation). Giving up/generosity is also described in the Dhamma as a noble value, a valuable treasure. When generosity is called a treasure, one might wonder: how can this be a treasure? Now, in giving alms, a giving up is performed. So, when alms are given, what truly remains for oneself is indeed this treasure of generosity (*cāga-dhana*). When thinking about it a little, it is seen that after giving alms, some people find solace thinking, "Due to the alms I gave, I will receive such-and-such things in the future." That is merely a thought; it has not been received yet, even though it will be received in the future. But the gain received at that very moment of giving alms is indeed that aforementioned power of generosity. The power of letting go. This is shown as a treasure. Because even in daily life, the one who lacks the power of letting go often falls into disaster. To give one example, when a serious disaster or loss occurs unexpectedly, or when houses burn down, or when one's wealth is destroyed, some people drink poison. Some people, upon hearing of it, die of a ruptured heart. Such things happen because they have not accumulated that treasure of generosity (*cāga-dhana*). No matter how much wealth and treasure is deposited in banks, if the treasure of generosity is not deposited within the mental continuum (*citta-santāna*), and if there is no ability to think, "It is better that this is gone," then that person falls into ruin. That wealth is not a true treasure. That is why, when looking at the noble values of the Dispensation, this quality of generosity (*cāga*) is something that must be developed. One must practice letting go by giving to the poor, travelers, beggars, and the needy at various times according to one's own means. Because, ultimately, we will have to let go of all of this if we are to escape from this saṃsāra.

The Buddha declares that we must let go of everything we are grasping with the mind, namely the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*): form (*rūpa*), feeling (*Vedanā* (Feeling)), perception (*saññā*), Preparations (*Saṅkhāra* (Preparations)), and consciousness (*viññāṇa* (consciousness)). Prior to that, the letting go of one's external possessions is important. Even the Buddha, during His days as a Bodhisatta, began His letting go with the perfection of giving (*dāna-pāramitā*). Just as He let go of those things, next, gradually, regarding actions that are pleasant to oneself, actions done by body and speech. If one likes to lie, or likes to backbite, one lets go of those too. In that journey of letting go, finally, one descends into meditation. For meditation, one has to perform many special acts of letting go; sometimes one even has to let go of the lay life and enter the ordained life. Sometimes, depending on the situation, one even has to go to the forest. In whatever way, one must be prepared for that letting go. If one thinks that one can go along while holding on to this without letting go, that is a delusion. It will not be complete. Because it is close to that generosity, that letting go, that wisdom is found—within the power of letting go.

That is indeed what is shown ultimately: *paññā ve sattamaṃ dhanaṃ* — wisdom is the seventh treasure. Then, one must contemplate that no matter how much wealth is accumulated, if our mind is covered in ignorance and shrouded in the darkness of delusion (*moha*), that person has not taken advantage of this life. If, by drawing close to the Triple Gem, walking on this path of practice, starting with faith in the aforementioned way, bringing close this collection of noble values, and finally obtaining insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*), one then attains the noble state. Then, we cannot obtain the noble treasures without walking on the Noble Path. Without walking on the Noble Eightfold Path, the noble treasures cannot be obtained.

This very word *ariya* (noble) is something we must contemplate as a valuable thing. To distinguish these virtues of the Dispensation, and to differentiate them from other religions, this word *ariya* is used. Two words are shown: noble (*ariya*) and ignoble (*anariya*). Through this Dhamma presented by the Buddha, at the end of the complete transformation that occurs in a person, one is freed from that mundane state and reaches the supramundane state (*lokuttara*). The supramundane means generating the power to escape from this saṃsāra within our mental continuum. Those states called stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*), once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), non-returner (*anāgāmi*), and arahant mean that the mind does not return to that saṃsāra of *jāti* (birth / arising), *jarā* (decay / aging), and sickness; and to help achieve that, cultivating and developing these aforementioned noble values, or virtues beginning with faith, in one's mental continuum is required. Developing them. Therefore, one must be particularly mindful of that.

Now, this is the Poson Poya day. A large number of people have observed valuable precepts at this moment. One must contemplate the value of each of those training rules (*sikkhāpada*). That is the greatest solace. As mentioned before, *virati* is abstaining and turning away. One has determined to abstain from those wrong actions like taking life, stealing, and so forth. Because this determination is made with one's own wisdom, one receives the power to withdraw from situations that tempt one to commit them. This is something that must be done gradually. By protecting the Five Precepts daily, and then by protecting the Eight Precepts on Poya days, one gradually becomes more and more practiced in disciplining the body and speech. Only the person who has developed morality in that way can generate a certain consoling situation, a state of quietude and leisure.

Many people say they have no leisure or time for meditation. This leisure and quietude is not something given by the government, nor is it something obtained merely by going entirely to a forest. Ultimately, if we look at it, this is mental quietude and leisure (*citta-viveka*). So, one must begin to generate that mental quietude by disciplining the body and speech. If virtues like morality are developed, allowing one to direct the mind to a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) without remorse, then that person obtains a certain quietude and leisure through that alone. Next, by calming the mind, there lies within the mind the power to understand the reality of the world. A Buddha does not speak of doing something impossible. That is

why the Buddha states on many occasions: "Monks, if it were not possible to let go of these unwholesome states, I would not tell you to let go of them. It is because it can be done that I tell you to do so." In that manner, as if urging us, the Buddha declared. Thus, in this way, there is within our mental continuum the power to understand this world. But it is covered by those aforementioned defilements—the defilements we have practiced for a long time in saṃsāra. There are many habits regarding body, speech, and thoughts; all of these must be gradually broken down, like removing rust. Thus, at the level of morality (*sīla*), one pile of rust is removed. Next, *samādhi* (concentration) means settling the mind on some wholesome object. It could be loving-kindness meditation (*mettā-bhāvanā*)—the thought, "May they be well and happy!" Or else, recollecting the Buddha (*buddhānussati*)—words like "Bhagavā", "Arahant". It means keeping the mind on some meditation subject for a long time without allowing other thoughts to enter. Because the very nature of the mind is to go about catching hold of thoughts. Through that, the power of the mind is weakened. One cannot see the power of water in a scattered lake. One cannot see the force within the water. It is when they are gathered together and directed through pipes that one understands there is a massive force in this water.

Just like that, letting go of this nature of thoughts running here and there, holding the mind on a single object—a single wholesome object—can be accomplished. For that, a certain training must be done from a young age. For anyone, considering this state of society, the word "May you be well and happy!" is easy. One trains the mind by reciting it constantly, whether audibly or silently. One tries to live in that state for as long as possible. Likewise, when various things that support hatred arise in society, one brings this to mind. In that way, one receives great solace from it. Gradually, when the mind is calmed in that way, this concentration (*samādhi*) helps one to simultaneously become awake to the reality of this world.

Next, if we consider in terms of insight (*vipassanā*), the Buddha shows that by constantly being mindfully attentive to the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*)—regarding this body, feelings, the mind, and thoughts/mental objects that come to the mind—one receives the ability to understand them. In that manner, also through insight. Ultimately, the Buddha shows that this entire saṃsāra is *Dukkha* (Suffering). To the Buddha-eye, it appears that there is nothing here worth taking. All other teachers removed a part of this and said, "This part is good." They did not understand the true nature of suffering (*dukkha-sabhāva*) in this saṃsāric existence. Only the Buddha declared a true solution—a solution that is not found in the heavens, the Brahma-worlds, or anywhere else.

Therefore, what must be done is: if we are to end all of this *jāti* (birth / arising), *jarā* (decay / aging), sickness, and death, we must eliminate repeated birth. To eliminate this, we must eliminate the desire for repeated birth. Because as long as there is *Taṇhā* (Craving), we desire everything, obtain it, and try to acquire it. Then, we must understand the dangers of *taṇhā*. The more one wishes for another *Bhava* (Becoming), the more one receives it. Then, to help eliminate that wishing, reflecting

wisely on the true nature of this life and reflecting wisely on the true nature of the body helps generate disenchantment (*nibbidā*) in the mind. Many people are afraid of this word 'disenchantment'. Particularly, lay devotees might be afraid of it. But it is through disenchantment, denoted by the Pali word *nibbidā* shown by the Buddha, that one ultimately draws close to this wisdom. If we are to bid farewell to this saṃsāra, we must make an effort to understand for ourselves the suffering-laden nature of this saṃsāra. For many people, it is only when they lose their loved ones, or when other disasters and losses occur, or when sickness and suffering strike, that they understand this as *Dukkha* (Suffering).

Therefore, they put patches on these, somehow repair them, and try to drag this along further in saṃsāra. That is precisely why the Buddha shows that whatever suffering arises, it all arises because of *saṅkhāras* (preparations / Preparations / volitional activity). What the worldly people do is prepare and prepare, trying to remain right here. The Buddha presents the peace obtained by the very stilling of this preparing as the final goal. A word is shown in the Dhamma: *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). In this saṃsāra, there is a nature of creating kamma within our minds. According to the aforementioned greed, hatred, and delusion, various kammas are accumulated through mind, body, and speech. Through those forces of kamma, repeated births are given to us, sensations and feelings are given to us. So ultimately, the Buddha shows that going on in this way, no matter how much merit is made, one cannot experience eternal happiness in the heavens or the Brahma-worlds. As soon as the merit is exhausted, one returns to those lower realms and so forth. Since such a dangerous state exists in saṃsāra, the solution given by the Buddha is to bring the mind to the end of the entire saṃsāra. That is to say, if this suffering arises due to *Taṇhā* (Craving), then by understanding the dangers of *taṇhā*, this thirst, these desires, must be stilled. To that end, the aforementioned meditation is helpful. Gradually, one lets go of external possessions. Next, there are various other things that grasp the mind. Merely by letting go of external possessions, one's mind is not freed. It creates thoughts about them; it creates concepts (*papañca*). Gradually calming all of those, finally through insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*), one sees that all of these arise and pass away. One must make an effort to understand at one's own level that within this body's inhalation-exhalation process, the maintenance of postures, the consumption of food and drink, and all these things done throughout the day, there lies nothing but the arising and passing away shown by the Buddha. Through this arising and passing away, one must make an effort to understand the law of impermanence (*Anicca* (Impermanent)) shown by the Buddha.

So, when this matures deeply at some point, it is seen that this is extremely terrifying—it is like a dance on a burning iron plate. Let us say that nowadays foreigners like to see theatrical shows in various countries. If someone is dressed up nicely and made to stand on a heated iron plate, from afar it might appear to be a dance. This is exactly like that dancing. It is because of that pain and problem that they move their limbs here and there. But to the world, it looks like a dance. We must

realize that all this dancing we do is just like that. When we think about it, even those theatrical shows are like thrashing about in madness. That is why there is a saying deeply shown by the Buddha, which artistic people nowadays might not like very much: "*Ummatthakamidaṃ naccaṃ*" — song is like weeping, and dance is like madness. So why does the Buddha show it in this way? To the one who contemplates deeply, who develops this through insight (*vipassanā*), it is seen that every activity in the world is merely a heap of movements, a multitude of movements. According to the gratification derived from this, we call it a dance. What is actually there is a thrashing about; they thrash about because of the heated surface. That thrashing about appears from afar—and if one wishes, it can even be recorded on a camera—as looking like a dance. Thus, it is of such a nature.

Even if the world does not have this kind of understanding, one understands these things for oneself at various levels. It is through these indeed that the terrifying nature of saṃsāric existence is comprehended. According to that comprehension, that *Taṇhā* (Craving) within the mind is gradually worn away. Just as fire is never satisfied no matter how much firewood or straw is given to it, but only increases more and more, such is this saṃsāric existence. Many people, in order to satisfy *Taṇhā* (Craving), pass exams in this life, accumulate as much wealth as possible, and attain positions; yet, no matter how much they receive, there is no satisfaction in any of it. When they do something, they feel: "I need a little more, I need a little more." That is why the Buddha declared: "*Ūṇo loko atitto, taṇhā-dāso*" — The entire world is always suffering from some deficiency. *Ūṇo loko* — there is some deficiency in the world; it is never filled. Moreover, *atitto* — it never reaches satisfaction; it is a slave to *Taṇhā* (Craving). Everyone in the world is a slave to *Taṇhā* (Craving). From that point, to still that state of *taṇhā*, first of all, on a small scale, one gives away what belongs to oneself. Going on and on in this way, ultimately, by removing all those aforementioned defilements in the mental continuum, one generates the power to be freed from the five aggregates: form, feeling, perception, Preparations, and consciousness. That indeed is what is called this Dispensation. The Buddha has introduced the path that ends this entire saṃsāric journey and brings solace through the supreme, deathless Nibbāna, by the name of the Buddha-Sāsana. Therefore, if we are to carry forward this Dispensation, we must begin with morality, develop the mind with concentration, and culminate it with wisdom, in this very manner; our aspiration being the aspiration for Nibbāna.

Therefore, today, everyone has observed a valuable precept according to their own level and capacity, and has listened to the Dhamma for about an hour at this moment. We hope that through this Dhamma sermon, you were able to develop some understanding regarding those aforementioned noble values in your own mental continuums. It is in lives spent without any purpose in daily life that great, terrifying disasters occur. There is no understanding of life's purpose, noble values, and so forth. Therefore, by understanding those Buddhist noble values, and by listening to sermons and meditating in this way, you must act as good Buddhists to ensure that this Buddha-Sāsana endures for a long time. Furthermore, you must

make an aspiration: may this accumulated mass of merit, and this mass of wholesome mental states generated at this moment in terms of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), serve as a cause to bring to light your aforementioned quality of a true person (*sappurisa-guṇa*), your power of merit, and your wealth of sufficing conditions (*upanissaya-sampatti*); to make your respective meditations successful; and to realize supreme, deathless Nibbāna through the penetration of the paths and fruits of stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, and Arahantship!

Likewise, if there be any assembly of Devas and Brahmas who protect the Dispensation, may they all rejoice in this mass of merit accumulated by us through the teaching and hearing of the Dhamma! Having rejoiced, may they grant us the opportunity to continue our activities for the Dispensation! Similarly, including our departed relatives, may all beings from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha who desire merit and Nibbāna rejoice in these merits, be freed from all saṃsāric suffering, and find solace in the supreme, deathless Nibbāna! With that aspiration, recite this verse and share the merits!

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*"