Pahankanuwa Sermon #142

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.54)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

"Nidhīnaṃ va pavattāraṃ,

yaṃ passe vajjadassinaṃ;

Niggayhavādiṃ medhāviṃ,

tādisaṃ paṇḍitaṃ bhaje;

Tādisaṃ bhajamānassa,

seyyo hoti na pāpiyo."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 76 (Paṇḍita Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

A person who hopes to steer their life on the right path should make an effort to seek the help of wise spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*). One must fashion one's conduct and attitudes in a manner that allows one to receive the assistance of spiritual friends. What we mean by assistance here is the help to correct one's shortcomings and faults. Generally, one does not see one's own faults. They are visible only to the wise spiritual friends one associates with. That is why the Buddha compared a wise person who points out faults to someone pointing out a hidden treasure, and gave a simile. This is what is expressed in the verse we have chosen as our theme. The Buddha preached this verse with reference to a monk named Rādha, who was a pupil of Venerable Sāriputta.

In his lay life, Venerable Rādha was an extremely poor brahmin in the city of Sāvatthī. Since he had no means of livelihood, he came to the Jetavana monastery, attended upon the Sangha, swept and cleared the premises, and sustained himself

with whatever he received. As time went on, this man developed a great desire to ordain. However, the Sangha was not keen on ordaining him. Perhaps they felt he was seeking ordination merely for a livelihood. Be that as it may, due to this man's genuine desire and because his hope was not being fulfilled, his body became emaciated. One day, when the Buddha was scanning the world with his attainment of great compassion (*mahākāruṇika-samāpatti*) as was his daily custom, this man at the Jetavana monastery came into the net of his wisdom-vision.

When the Buddha investigated this, he saw that this man possessed the supportive merits to attain Arahatship. As a general custom, the Buddha would occasionally go on walking tours of the monastery to see how the monks were doing and whether their work was progressing well. That evening, while walking around the Jetavana monastery in this manner, he approached this brahmin and asked, "Brahmin, what are you doing here?" He replied, "Venerable Sir, I am attending upon the Sangha and earning my livelihood." "Do the monks show you any hospitality in return for your services?" "Yes, Venerable Sir, I get food and drink. However, they do not ordain me," he said.

Thereupon, the Buddha assembled the Sangha and, introducing a discussion centered on this man Rādha, asked: "Is there any monk among the Sangha who remembers receiving any special help from this brahmin?" Venerable Sāriputta immediately spoke up: "Venerable Sir, I remember this brahmin once placing a spoonful of rice in my bowl when I was on alms-round." Then the Buddha asked: "Sāriputta, is that not enough to help someone escape the *Dukkha* (Suffering) of *saṃsāra*?" Venerable Sāriputta replied: "Very well, Venerable Sir, then I shall ordain him," and he ordained the man.

Despite being ordained, he did not receive any special attention from the Sangha. One can understand why. He sat at the very end of the seats and did not even get proper food and drink. He was somewhat marginalized. Venerable Sāriputta, noticing this, and with the compassionate intention of paying special attention to this new Venerable Rādha, went on a wandering tour accompanied by Venerable Rādha. During this journey, he pointed out his faults and gave him advice and admonition. This monk Rādha was extremely obedient, gentle-spoken, never showed any anger, corrected his faults, and by practicing meditation, attained Arahatship very quickly.

Thereafter, Venerable Sāriputta came with Venerable Rādha to see the Buddha. The Buddha asked, "How is it, Sāriputta, is your pupil obedient?" "Oh yes, Venerable Sir, he is very obedient. Whenever a fault was pointed out to him, he never got angry." Then the Buddha asked, "Sāriputta, if you could get pupils like this, would you like to have many?" "Oh yes, as many as possible. I like such pupils very much," Venerable Sāriputta praised. Similarly, a talk arose among the monks: "Venerable Sāriputta is an extremely grateful person. Merely for a spoonful of rice, he ordained this man. Also, Venerable Sāriputta is someone who constantly seeks advice, and he has found a pupil who is willing to receive advice." Hearing this, the Buddha praised Venerable Sāriputta's quality of gratitude and then said: "Monks, a bhikkhu should be gentle-

spoken (*suvaca*) like this Rādha. If someone points out one's faults, one should think that they are pointing out a hidden treasure." Expressing this idea, he uttered this verse:

> *Nidhīnaṃva pavattāraṃ, yaṃ passe vajjadassinaṃ;*
>
> *Medhāviṃ tādisaṃ paṇḍitaṃ bhaje, tādisaṃ bhajamānassa seyyo hoti na pāpiyo.*

If one sees a wise person who points out one's faults as if pointing out hidden treasures, one should associate with such a wise and learned person. Associating with such a person brings progress, not decline. This is the meaning of this verse. Here we should especially consider the value of this simile given by the Buddha. Whenever the Buddha gave a simile, it carried a very deep meaning. Normally, people of the world do not like having their faults pointed out; they dislike criticism or fault-finding. Since the Buddha knew this attitude, he placed a completely new concept before the world, taking this gentle-spoken bhikkhu as an example. To call advice a hidden treasure is because in those days, gold coins and such were deposited in pots and vessels and hidden in the jungle or by riverbanks. Just as someone goes and points out those treasures buried under the earth, a wise person points out the treasures hidden beneath one's faults. What are these treasures? Hidden beneath one's faults are one's skills and abilities. It is pointing out these skills that is referred to here as pointing out a hidden treasure. Just as treasures emerge when the earth is removed and cleared away, when one's faults are unearthed and removed, one's wholesome qualities, skills, and abilities emerge from within. That is the fundamental value of the simile in this verse.

Furthermore, this story illustrates a noble quality of the Buddha's life. A major part of the daily routine of the Great Compassionate One is to scan the world during the dawn with his unique wisdom—which is considered an extraordinary knowledge exclusive to a Buddha—to find the person most suitable to receive his assistance. They could be far away, or close by. At this time, this helpless person living right nearby in Jetavana monastery appeared. This net of wisdom is truly wonderful. It is something that demonstrates the Buddha's quality of equality. Setting aside all other work, he went to that person, visited him, and showed him the way to find help. Although this man may have attended upon all the monks, the Buddha asked about anyone who had received a special favor from him because he wanted to draw special attention to him.

This gratitude was a special characteristic of Venerable Sāriputta. Until his parinibbāna, he showed great respect towards Venerable Assaji, who had given him the Dhamma. Similarly, on various occasions, incidents revealing Venerable Sāriputta's quality of gratitude are mentioned. Here too, it was the incident of a spoonful of rice. It seems like a very small thing. But it was on that basis that he helped that man. Venerable Sāriputta's quality of gratitude shines through here.

Venerable Rādha, too, did not have the common weakness of getting angry when someone points out a fault. When his faults were pointed out to him, he accepted them with great diligence and obedience, as if being shown a hidden treasure, as we mentioned earlier. That is why he was able to reach the state of Arahatship. There are lessons for us to reflect upon and adopt from each of these points. There is a word in this verse that might be somewhat unappealing to the mind: *nigayhavādiṃ medhāviṃ*—one who reproves or censures.

Generally, no one likes to be censured or reproved. But this censuring is also necessary at times to point out the gravity of a fault. To show someone a fault in a way that sticks in their mind, censuring is sometimes required. This is especially a task assigned to a teacher. The teacher has to give some punishment—not in a deep and severe manner disproportionate to the mistake, but in an appropriate way so that the pupil remembers. Sometimes through words, sometimes through other courses of action. Therefore, we must reflect on this wisely. The matters contained in this verse help us in our daily personal lives, at home, in institutions, in schools, and everywhere else.

Let us first consider the greatest teacher in the world. It is through the Buddha's own life that we can understand this word *nigayhavādī* (reproving). Two qualities of the Buddha are mentioned: *anuttaro purisadammasārathī* (the incomparable charioteer of men to be tamed) and *satthā devamanussānaṃ* (the teacher of gods and humans). These two qualities demonstrate the responsibility assigned to the Buddha as a teacher. *Anuttaro purisadammasārathī* means he is like a charioteer in taming tamable humans. We know that this is not like the drivers of today. In those days, when driving a horse-chariot, one had to train the horse. Sometimes, even a whip had to be used. Similarly, the Buddha, as the teacher of gods and humans, had to use words of censure according to the situation. Thus, this characteristic of the Buddha's character became a problem for some people.

There is a good illustration of this in the Dhamma. Seeing the Buddha's fame spreading, there were Niganthas (Jains) who became jealous. Other sectarians and adherents of other religions always looked for ways to defame and take revenge on the Buddha. On one occasion, when Prince Abhayarāja visited the religious teacher Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta said: "The fame of the ascetic Gotama is spreading widely. Prince, if you can present an argument to the ascetic Gotama that he cannot answer, then your fame will spread too." When asked, "What is the argument I should present?" he said: "Present this double-horned dilemma (*ubhathokoṭika-pañha*) to the ascetic Gotama. What is it? First ask, 'Venerable Gotama, do you speak words that are displeasing and disagreeable to others?' If he says he does use disagreeable words, then say the conclusion is: 'Then what is the difference between the Buddha and an ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*)? An ordinary worldling also speaks displeasing and disagreeable words.' On the other hand, if he says he does not use them, then ask: 'If so, why did you censure the Venerable Devadatta by saying he is destined for hell for an aeon? Devadatta was enraged by

that.' In this way, there is a mismatch there too, isn't there? That is to say, whichever of the two answers he gives, present this argument. Then the ascetic Gotama will be left speechless." Niganṭha Nātaputta gave a simile for this: "Just like an iron hook stuck in one's throat, the ascetic Gotama will be left with nowhere to turn. Therefore, present this argument."

Prince Abhayarāja then went to see the Buddha to present this argument. When he went and looked around, it was a bit late in the evening. He thought, "I should invite the Buddha to the palace itself and ask him on that occasion." So, he invited the Buddha and three other monks to his house, the palace, for the next day. The next day, after the Buddha had finished his meal, Prince Abhayarāja asked the Buddha: "Blessed One, do you use words that are displeasing and disagreeable to others?" Then the Buddha said: "Prince, I do not give a one-sided answer to this. This is an answer that must be analyzed." Thereupon, Prince Abhayarāja realized that the argument would not work. "Ah, then the Niganṭhas have failed!" muttered Prince Abhayarāja. When the Buddha asked, "Why do you say that?" he told the whole story: "I was taught like this. That is why I asked."

At that moment, Prince Abhayarāja had his infant son on his lap. The Buddha drew a simile from that very situation: "Now, prince, if this young child on your lap, due to the negligence of his nurse or your own negligence, were to put a pebble or a splinter into his mouth, what would you do?" "Venerable Sir, I would hold his head with my left hand, crook my right finger, and pull it out. Even if it meant drawing blood, I would pull it out. Why? Because I have great compassion for the child." Thereupon, the Buddha declared: "It is the same with me. Because I have compassion for beings, if a word is true and beneficial, even if it is displeasing and disagreeable, I speak it to that person according to the occasion. The word is true. It is beneficial to that person. But it is displeasing and disagreeable. That is, a word of censure or blame. Yet, I speak it because I want to correct him." In this way, on that occasion, the Buddha resolved that double-horned dilemma. Similarly, lay devotees, you may have heard this stated in the Dhamma itself:

Garahā va seyyo viññūhi, yañce bālappasaṃsanā.

"Censure by the wise is indeed better than praise by fools." This idea is a wonderful motto. Mothers who raise children know how to discipline their children according to the occasion. The same happened with the Buddha. He had to use various skillful means (*upāya-kosalla*) to deliver the worldlings, who are burdened with defilements, from *saṃsāra* according to the occasion. Going hand in hand with great compassion is this skillful means. To speak a word of censure that leaves a lasting impression, without any hatred in the heart but out of compassion for beings according to the occasion, belongs to that skillful means. This is how the concept of censuring should be understood.

Next, let us look at this quality of being gentle-spoken (*suvaca*). *Suvaca*, in a general sense, is called obedience. Obedience means doing as told. But the real meaning of

the word *suvaca* is that one can be given advice without fear. *Duvvaca* (difficult to speak to) means one is afraid to say anything to them. Suppose there is some fault in someone, but one is afraid to mention it. One does not want to, because that person will get angry, scold, and rage over it. To the person who does not get enraged in this way, one can speak without fear. That is why they are called *suvaca*—someone who is easy to speak to, someone to whom a fault can easily be pointed out. A *duvvaca* or *dubbacajātiya* (of difficult speech) person is one who gets angry the moment something is said and causes a great deal of trouble. Therefore, people say nothing; they stand aside and watch, thinking, "Let them do whatever they want." So, we must understand the difference between these two words, *suvaca* and *duvvaca*.

We get excellent illustrations of this from the Sasana itself. The greatest example, which you lay devotees must have heard many times in Dhamma sermons, is Venerable Sāriputta himself, the Chief Disciple of the Sasana. His humility was truly wonderful. Going hand in hand with humility and patience is the quality of being gentle-spoken (*suvaca*), obedience—the ability to listen to whatever is said, whether harsh or bitter, and the ability to listen when faults are pointed out. It is precisely because of this that, as you know, in the verses on blessings (*Maṅgala Sutta*), it is said: *khantī ca sovacassatā, samaṇānañca dassanaṃ*. *Khantī ca sovacassatā*—patience and being gentle-spoken. Being gentle-spoken goes hand in hand with patience. Thus, a valuable quality of Venerable Sāriputta is mentioned. On one occasion, a seven-year-old novice monk, newly ordained and cute like a child, noticed a corner of Venerable Sāriputta's undergarment (*antara-vāsaka*) hanging down and pointed it out to him. Venerable Sāriputta adjusted it, came back, clasped his hands as if worshipping, and uttered a verse:

Tadahupabbajito santo, jātiyā sattavassiko;

So pi maṃ anusāseyya, sampaṭicchāmi muddhane.

"Even if a seven-year-old novice ordained today points out a fault in me, I accept it on my head." This is a valuable illustration of the gentle-spoken (*suvaca*) nature in Venerable Sāriputta's life.

It was the same with Venerable Rāhula. Venerable Rāhula was in a position where he could easily have become *duvvaca* (difficult to speak to), because he was the son of the Buddha in his lay life. As you know, children of those with high positions and wealth, when corrected even slightly, sometimes threaten, "I will tell my mother" or "I will tell my father." Though he was the son of the Buddha in his lay life, how humble and gentle-spoken was Venerable Rāhula! It is said that every morning he would take a handful of sand, throw it up, and say, "May I receive as many admonitions from the Buddha, my teachers, and preceptors as there are grains of sand here!" He would say this as a game, throwing the grains of sand. This shows Venerable Rāhula's humble, gentle-spoken, and obedient nature. There are many other stories told about Venerable Rāhula's attitude and gentle-spoken nature.

There is another valuable story. On one occasion, five hundred monks led by Venerable Yasoja came to see the Buddha at the Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthī. Coming as guests, they exchanged greetings with the resident monks and arranged their bowls and robes, which created a great noise. The Buddha asked Venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, who is making this noise? It sounds like fishermen shouting at a fish market. What is this racket?" he asked Venerable Ānanda. Venerable Ānanda replied: "Venerable Sir, a group of five hundred monks led by Venerable Yasoja has arrived, and that is why there is this noise." "Tell them to come to me," the Buddha assigned to Venerable Ānanda.

Then Venerable Ānanda brought Venerable Yasoja and the group. The Buddha asked why they were shouting like in a fish market. They explained the matter: "Coming as guests, when we were putting away our bowls and robes, we made this noise." "Do not stay near me. I do not wish to keep you here. Depart from here," the Buddha said. Venerable Yasoja and the group had come with great desire to see the Buddha that day. But the Buddha dismissed them. Having no choice, he departed with his group, went on a tour, and arrived in the Vajjī country.

Then the rainy season (*vassa*) arrived. They built huts near the river called Vaggumudā and entered the rains-retreat with this group of five hundred. On the first day of the rains-retreat, Venerable Yasoja gave advice to his group, saying: "Friends, we have been dismissed by our Teacher, who is highly benevolent, desires our progress, and has compassion for us. Now, let us live in a certain way. In what way? Let us correct our shortcomings now, so that the Buddha, the Tathāgata, will be pleased when he sees us." The group agreed to this and began to practice meditation. Within the rains-retreat itself, all these monks attained the noble state (of Arahatship) accompanied by analytical insights and supernormal powers (*abhiññā*).

Now, the next news. After the rains-retreat, the Buddha traveled from Sāvatthī to the Gabled Hall (*Kūṭāgāra-sālā*) in the Great Forest of Vesālī. Having arrived, he looked into Venerable Yasoja and his group. In such events, the Buddha would search again. He examined the minds of Venerable Yasoja and his group with his own mind. He saw that everything was complete. All of them were Arahats.

Then he said to Venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, the direction where the bhikkhus on the banks of the Vaggumudā live is as if radiating light. I have no aversion to going in that direction. Even to contemplate it is very pleasing to me. Send a messenger, send a courier: 'The Teacher wishes to see you. I wish to see you. Tell Yasoja and his group to come.'" This was the invitation the Buddha made. Venerable Ānanda went to a certain bhikkhu and expressed the permission received from the Buddha. That bhikkhu—he was a bhikkhu possessing supernormal powers—as it is said in the books, as quickly as a strong man might stretch his bent arm or bend his stretched arm, vanished from the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest and appeared where the bhikkhus on the banks of the Vaggumudā were. In an instant. In a flash. Then he gave this news: "The Buddha is inviting you." Thereupon, that group too arrived by psychic power (*iddhi-bala*) to where the Buddha was at the Gabled Hall.

By the time they arrived, the Buddha was seated in concentration. He was seated in the imperturbable concentration (*āneñja-samādhi*), a silent concentration. Venerable Ānanda was standing to one side. The Buddha was in concentration. Then this group arrived. Having arrived, Venerable Ānanda worshipped the Buddha and said: "Venerable Sir, the guest monks who were invited have arrived. May the Blessed One exchange friendly greetings with them." The Buddha remained silent. The first watch of the night passed. Then, Venerable Yasoja and his group examined with their own power what kind of concentration the Buddha was in. Seeing that he was in that silent concentration, they too sat down in that very concentration. Thus, the Buddha was sitting on one side, and Venerable Yasoja and his group were sitting in concentration on the other side. This was a problem for Venerable Ānanda. When guests arrive, should they not be attended to? The Buddha himself invited them, and yet he is just sitting there.

Then the first watch passed. After the first watch ended, Venerable Ānanda reminded him again: "Venerable Sir, much of the night has passed. The guest monks have also arrived and have been waiting for a long time. May the Blessed One exchange friendly greetings." No, he was still silent. The second watch passed. Then, the third watch passed, and it was the time of dawn. Once again, for the third time, he invited him in that manner. Still, the Buddha was silent. Finally, he said to the Buddha: "Now, Venerable Sir, the night has passed, and it is dawn. This group is still sitting here. May the Blessed One exchange friendly greetings!" Then the Buddha said: "Ānanda, if you knew the matter as it really is, you would not have spoken even this much. Both I and this group, both parties, were in the imperturbable concentration (*āneñja-samādhi*)." And he uttered a verse as an utterance of joy:

> *Yassa jito kāma-kaṇṭako,*
>
> *akkoso vadho ca pabbato va jito;*
>
> *Anejo navedati so bhikkhu.*

"The bhikkhu who has conquered the thorn of sensuality, abuse, and physical harm, stands unshaken like a mountain; he is imperturbable and does not tremble." He uttered that verse.

From this story too, we see the gentle-spoken (*suvaca*) quality of Venerable Yasoja. When there is a group of five hundred, one does not need that many people these days—even over a small word, people start a big campaign to show their power. But Venerable Yasoja very humbly accepted his fault. That is a great quality. Accepting his fault, he brought forth that hidden treasure. The words spoken there are truly wonderful. He started by saying: "We have been dismissed out of compassion by the Buddha, who is kind, great in compassion, benevolent, and compassionate towards us. He dismissed us out of compassion. Now, let us live in such a way that the Buddha is pleased with us." That is how they began the rains-retreat. And they brought forth that treasure, the treasure of Arahatship. Here, Venerable Yasoja's

character is extraordinary. Similarly, we see the Buddha's skillful means (*upāya-kosalla*). He dismissed them having seen a certain reason. It was fully accomplished.

Next, there is an even deeper point. You lay devotees might be surprised. We all know that when someone comes, we should welcome them. Everyone knows about hospitality to guests. Here, after sending an invitation himself, when those monks arrived, the Buddha just sat there in silence. There is a very deep meaning here. You know that if a guest arrives while you are having a meal, you pull up a chair and let them join the meal. The Buddha did something similar. The Buddha was consuming food in his own pasture. Perhaps within the concentration on the fruit of Arahatship (*arahatta-phala-samādhi*). He was absorbed in the fruit-attainment (*phala-samāpatti*), the concentration of realizing Nibbāna that he had attained. The monks who arrived were also suitable to consume that food. Venerable Ānanda, however, was not yet there. That is why it was a problem for Ānanda. So those monks too looked at what the Buddha was consuming, and thinking, "We too must consume this," sat in that very concentration the whole night. That is the real welcome. This is good to depict in a painting. Two paintings could be drawn. The first time they came, those monks were shouting like in a fish market, causing a great racket. When they came this time, how was it? The Buddha's welcome was appropriate to that. There is a very deep example and model for the world to take from this story. In this way, on one hand, we must understand the value of being gentle-spoken (*suvaca*).

Next, on the other hand, there are also illustrations of being *duvvaca* (difficult to speak to). Not everyone in the Buddha's Sasana was gentle-spoken like this. The monk Devadatta, whom you all know, was such a stubborn person that he even tried to take the life of the Buddha, precisely because of the *duvvaca* nature that arose from a slight disagreement. Similarly, there is another incident. Mention is made of a group of monks called the *Chabbaggiya* (the group of six). These monks, consisting of six factions led by six leaders, lived in an extremely stubborn and disobedient manner, repeatedly breaking the disciplinary rules (*vinaya*) laid down by the Buddha. They also reaped the consequences of their actions. On some occasions, the Buddha dismissed them from those places. He had to censure them according to the circumstances.

Similarly, another special incident regarding censure is mentioned in the Dhamma. You all know about Minister Channa, who was a minister of the Buddha. He was the minister who accompanied Prince Siddhārtha when he renounced the lay life. Unlike Venerable Rāhula, he developed pride due to his close connection with the Buddha. Because of that conceit, he behaved in an extremely disobedient manner. He would not allow the monks to point out any fault in him. Due to this disobedience, although the Buddha laid down various disciplinary rules, he could not be tamed. Finally, even on his parinibbāna bed, the Buddha had to direct his attention to this. That night, before his parinibbāna, the Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, after my passing, impose the Brahma-punishment (*brahma-daṇḍa*) on the monk Channa." When asked, "What is the Brahma-punishment?"—it was a rule that had not been

laid down in the *vinaya* until then, which is why Venerable Ānanda asked, "What, Venerable Sir, is the Brahma-punishment?" The Buddha declared: "Let the monk Channa say whatever he wants. The monks should neither advise nor admonish him." It was an outright boycott. The permission to impose such a complete boycott was given by the Buddha before his parinibbāna. Thus, the final punishment given by the Buddha for that stubbornness (*duvvaca-bhāva*) is called the Brahma-punishment. It is a very severe punishment. *Brahma* means the highest, doesn't it? A most severe punishment. It is said that as soon as Venerable Ānanda declared this matter after the Buddha's parinibbāna, the monk Channa fainted and fell due to the shock. Due to the very shock that arose from this, the monk Channa later meditated and somehow became an Arahat. There too, through that punishment, the monk Channa was tamed in one way or another and attained Arahatship.

From the disciplinary rules of the monks and the customs of the Sasana, lay devotees too can learn many things. Especially, something that helped the survival of this Sasana was pointing out the faults of others. This is a custom of the Sasana. Even in society, we know that if no one points out the faults of others, this society would become far more dangerous than it is now. But sometimes, the person pointing it out does not do so out of compassion. Instead of pointing out a hidden treasure, if they act as if digging a pit for the other, then the effort fails. Without any compassion for that person, some people point out faults with highly dangerous and malicious intentions, such as character assassination. Not so the wise; they do so with the intention of correcting the person in the right way, and even if they use words of censure according to the situation, it becomes a help. There is a custom in the Sangha regarding the disciplinary rules of the monks, where they point out each other's weaknesses. This is called *aññamañña-vuṭṭhāpana*—rehabilitating one another from offences by helping each other. They point out the fault. When one says out of compassion, "Friend, such a fault has occurred," the other corrects it.

After spending the rains-retreat, the monks have a custom called *pavāraṇā*. You lay devotees may have heard of this as performing the *uposatha*. There is a special significance in the *pavāraṇā* of the Sangha. It is the disciplinary act performed at the end by a group of monks who have lived together during a rains-retreat. Here, they invite the Sangha: "If there is any fault of mine that you have seen, heard, or suspected, please speak out! Out of compassion, please point it out to me!" Thus, they make an invitation to the group. We must understand from this that when someone points out a fault, one should not get angry. When teachers and others say something with good intentions, one should feel that they are pointing out a hidden treasure and say, "If there are any other faults, please point them out to me." That is a special invitation. It is this invitation—to point out any fault of mine seen, heard, or suspected so that I may correct it, and if I see it as a fault, I will correct it—that is done through this monastic custom.

But nowadays, especially in educational institutions, and in other institutions almost everywhere, over a very small incident, merely because a small fault is pointed out, a

host of strikes, threats, insults, disagreements, and crises arise. These arise from a very small thing. Why? Because if we had taken the feeling of "pointing out a hidden treasure" into our minds, our reaction would be different. We would say with even more enthusiasm, "Please tell me with facts what the fault is, so that I can correct it." Instead, the moment a word is said, people get angry and develop deep-seated hatred. That is the wrong attitude. Instead, we must understand from these stories the value of advice in steering our lives on the right path. According to the treasure-simile shown by the Buddha, we see that sometimes it is necessary to speak with censure. The Buddha too, according to the situation, laid down some disciplinary rules in an extremely strict and severe manner. If the fault is severe, they are expelled altogether. Sometimes, remedies are applied right there to tame them again. This re-taming is also a valuable quality.

Let us say we did not see that fault in the first instance. But if we saw it at least in the second instance, we should go to the person who pointed out the fault and sincerely express our gratitude. Such incidents too exist in the Sasana. We should take some example from them as well. To give one example, when the Buddha laid down the training rule regarding eating at improper times (*vikāla-bhojana*), a monk named Bhaddāli became displeased and protested. There is no need to explain this further. Even nowadays, when speaking about eating at improper times, there are more people who dislike it than those who like it. In those days too, there were such groups of monks; when the Buddha laid down the training rules on eating at improper times, they criticized it severely and stood aside. But later, when they saw the benefits of the training rule, they came and confessed their fault. There too, a highly valuable phrase is used to accept the fault: *accayo maṃ bhante accagamā yathā bālā yathā mūḷhaṃ yathā akusalaṃ* and so on, which is a wonderful sentence spoken when coming to confess one's fault.

"Venerable Sir, a transgression overcame me"—nowadays people say "a mistake happened to me." That is the kind of thing said there. "A transgression overcame me, through my foolishness, through my delusion, through my unwholesomeness. That is why this happened." Thus, humbly confessing the fault that happened through oneself, one says: *accayaṃ accayato paṭiggaṇhātu āyatiṃ saṃvarāya*—"May the Blessed One accept this as my transgression for the sake of my future restraint." The Buddha also forgives it: "Very well, that is how it is. *Vaddhi h'esā ariyassa vinaye yo accayaṃ accayato passitvā yathādhammaṃ paṭikaroti*..."—and so on. He declares: "In the discipline of the Noble Ones, it is a sign of growth, a factor of progress, when one sees one's transgression as a transgression, confesses it according to the Dhamma, and undertakes restraint for the future." This too is a valuable custom of the Sasana. I do not know whether such things happen in lay society today, but these are extremely valuable things.

Sometimes, the moment a fault is pointed out, one does not see it as a fault, especially if it was said with censure. So, they go on harboring hatred. But as they go on with their work, they realize, "Is it not true what our parents said?" or "Is it not

true what the teacher said?" Even so, they feel ashamed to go and admit it. At that moment, they do not offer the praise due to noble ones. Thus, there is a valuable quality here. If one understands even later, one should go and confess one's fault, and say, "I was like this, but I want to improve now." There is a valuable virtue here. Therefore, we should constantly remind ourselves of this: *garahāva seyyo viññūhi yañce bālappasaṃsanaṃ* (censure by the wise is better than praise by fools). Nowadays, everyone in society likes praise. But the policy of the majority is *attukkaṃsana paravambhana*—exalting oneself and disparaging others. In many instances in society, there are those who look for faults with corrupt intentions, like the character assassination mentioned earlier. This is called "seeking the loopholes of others." One should not cultivate such an attitude. If you have to point out such faults as parents or as teachers, you must act after observing the right time and place. As the Buddha declared, one must first see whether this matter is true or false. The Buddha points out three things to Prince Abhayarāja. A matter must be true. Along with being true, it must be beneficial and useful to the person to whom it is spoken. Next is the question: is that speech pleasing or displeasing to that person? Whether it is pleasing or displeasing to that person, one has to speak it according to the occasion. That is what we must reflect on wisely.

For that, we must first prepare our inner self. We must have compassion and loving-kindness (*mettā*) within, thinking: "I must correct this person, I must correct this child, I must correct this student, I must correct this employee in this institution." One must develop the inner strength to point out, with compassion, the shortcomings not only of those below but also of those above. Why? Because often, by hiding these faults and shortcomings, society becomes further corrupted. Therefore, it is something that must be done.

You lay devotees know that a criminal who takes a knife in hand destroys a life. But a surgeon who takes that same scalpel saves a life. In the same way, one must consider the words one uses on that occasion. If one does so with the compassionate and kind intention of not merely exposing and highlighting that person's fault but removing it and bringing forth that hidden treasure we mentioned, then it is a great service to society. It is due to the lack of this service that there is decline on both sides. There is no readiness to accept advice and admonition; there is no gentle-spokenness (*suvaca-bhāva*). Similarly, the minds of those who give admonition are also often corrupted. The word *medhāvi* (wise) is explained in the Dhamma as *dhamma-paññā*—that valuable wisdom developed through the Dhamma itself. That is lacking in many people.

Three guiding principles that help a person to improve are mentioned in the Dhamma: *attādhipateyya* (self-governance / supremacy of self), *dhammādhipateyya* (supremacy of the Dhamma), and *lokādhipateyya* (supremacy of the world).

Attādhipateyya means what we normally call self-respect or acting according to one's conscience; thinking by oneself in this way: "This is not suitable for me, this is

not proper for me, this does not befit me," and refraining from doing something wrong. Placing oneself first and avoiding a fault.

Next, there is another way: *dhammādhipateyya*—placing the Dhamma first. Thinking: "The Dhamma of the Buddha that I have learned states this. I must discipline myself in this way." Developing an understanding of good and bad, wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*), and disciplining oneself accordingly.

There is another way: *lokādhipateyya*. Here, the "world" does not mean the ignorant world, not the ordinary foolish world. For other matters, be that as it may, here we should not take the common talk of the masses, nor should we take the various political meanings of today. It is the wise, the prudent, and those endowed with virtue who are considered the "world" here. Here we should consider not what the ignorant, foolish people say, but what wise people point out. That is a special matter. If such a person points out our fault, we can steer our lives through that.

Such noble characters as the life of Venerable Rāhula and the life of Venerable Sāriputta are mentioned in this Dhamma. Similarly, when monks confess their transgressions, they point out each other's faults and thereby collectively protect the Sasana, while also securing their own progress. In every institution, in every place, this very Dhamma-principle (*dhamma-tā*) helps progress. Why? Because it is a nature of *saṃsāra* that one does not see one's own faults, just as the eye does not see itself. The eye can see the nose, but the eye cannot see itself. That is why it is mentioned in the Dhamma: *Sudassaṃ vajjaṃ aññesaṃ, attano pana duddasaṃ* (Easy to see are the faults of others, but difficult to see are one's own). The faults of others are seen very clearly. But one's own fault is not seen by oneself. Be that as it may, when we see the fault of another, we must first reflect: "Is this a fault we see because of our own fault, or is it truly another's?" Reflecting wisely on whether it is indeed a fault that has occurred, we must then speak, observing the right way and the right time.

It is by speaking in this manner that one can help someone. Due to the hatred that Devadatta carried throughout *saṃsāra*, even the Buddha could not tame him. But on many occasions, the Buddha helped people and steered them on the right path through his quality of great compassion, sometimes through the very punishment he meted out. Here, the story of Venerable Yasoja was mentioned. The Buddha used his skillful means (*upāya-kosalla*) there. There is no partiality in the Buddha. When a group of pupils of Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Mahāmoggallāna behaved in that very manner, the Buddha censured them, saying it was like a fish market, and dismissed them. These were pupils of his own Chief Disciples. Yet, the Buddha dismissed them. In this way, the Buddha impartially censured the fault when it was necessary. He also told the Chief Disciples that if he did not do so, this Sasana would become a collection of sweepings and rubbish.

To point out the fault according to the occasion and correct that person is what a mother and a father also have to do. If one develops hatred or a wrong attitude, if one lacks Dhamma-understanding, or if one has hypocritical thoughts within, then one cannot correct another. To point it out according to the occasion, one must generate great compassion and sympathy. It is because of the lack of this strength that conflicts often arise in society. First, one disciplines body and speech through training rules like virtue (*sīla*). One disciplines the mind through meditation. Next, reflecting by way of *attādhipateyya* and *dhammādhipateyya*, one corrects one's own shortcomings. Then, when a problem arises, we are able to make an impartial decision. If one lives with mindfulness and wisdom, without confusing the mind with intoxicants and the like, one can point out the right path to another.

Let us say someone who is about to fall into disaster goes to another seeking help. One should not assist them in what is bad, thinking they might become displeased. Always comparing it with the Dhamma, one must help in accordance with the Dhamma, impartially. Indeed, what is called "welfare" here is not merely progress in this life. It is easy to give advice for progress in this life.

You lay devotees know well that in various sectors of society, especially towards the latter part of life, there are people who can give advice to a large number of people on specific subjects. That is regarding this world. But only a very few think of both sides—this world and the next world. For the sake of progress in this life alone, through highly dangerous advice, someone can even be led to hell. I need not give you fresh examples. Therefore, we must first establish a proper Dhamma-judgment within ourselves by way of *attādhipateyya* and *dhammādhipateyya*. We must look at the world with a clear judgment regarding what the true values of life are, what should and should not be done, and what is wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*). Otherwise, the person who does what is right will appear to us as wrong.

If there is no harm in using that word, even if we look at it with an idea like "democracy" and take the majority opinion, the opinion of the majority there can also be wrong. Therefore, we must always look, keeping the Dhamma of the Buddha first. This group called the wise (*viññū*), the learned (*paṇḍita*), the intelligent (*medhāvī*) are not many in the world. There are only a very few. It is so at all times.

There is a good incident regarding this as well. When Venerable Sāriputta asked his teacher to come to the Buddha, the teacher asked, "Who are there more of in this world? Fools or the wise?" "There are only a few wise people." "Well, in that case, the wise will go to the ascetic Gotama. The crowd of fools will come to me," he replied. Similarly, there are mostly fools in the world. The person who has developed the inner knowledge of the Dhamma and has that wisdom is the one who should be taken as the "world" here by way of *lokādhipateyya*. Keeping such a standard, whether it be a low person or a high person in one's own institutions, just like one's own children and students, one must point out those faults according to the occasion. One must develop the Dhamma-strength within to do such a thing. Otherwise,

society will head further down the path of decline. It is because of this that even the Sasana falls into decline.

Furthermore, if we do not get an example for our lives, that is not a Dhamma sermon. You should think of what has been preached here as a sermon that helps you to improve. In everything, there are examples in the world showing us the good side and the bad side. Through both of these, we must understand the side of advantages (*ānisaṃsa*) and the side of disadvantages (*ādīnava*). Through the lives of Venerable Rāhula, Venerable Sāriputta, and Venerable Yasoja, we understood the good side, the exemplary side. Similarly, regarding the *Chabbaggiya* monks, Devadatta, Bhaddāli, and others, there is the bad side. Through this, we must understand the path we should take. We must walk on that path.

Therefore, on this valuable *poya* day, this devout group has undertaken a certain precept (*sīla*). What is being done there, too, is the correcting of one's own faults—the correcting of faults regarding body and speech. Next, through Dhamma sermons and meditation, we concentrate our minds and try to gain an understanding of the true nature of the world, of life. Just as the Buddha said, *bahujana-hitāya bahujana-sukhāya* (for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many), may this Dhamma sermon preached today also help for the good of the world through our Dhamma-strength and our character-strength! If this devout group has developed certain Dhamma-strengths—namely faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—by listening to this Dhamma sermon, may that also help these devotees when they aim for Nibbāna at some point.

May all those who wish to rejoice in such merit, including the guardian deities of the Sasana, and our relatives from the *Avīci* hell up to the *Akaniṭha* heaven, rejoice in the store of merit gathered by these devotees so far through listening to the Dhamma, and the store of merit gathered by us through preaching the Dhamma! Having rejoiced, may they all escape from all the suffering of *saṃsāra* as quickly as possible through their aspired Bodhi (Awakening), and reach the noble, deathless, supreme Nibbāna! Similarly, utilizing the Dhamma-strength we have gained, may we also make our own meditations successful, obeying the advice of spiritual friends to the letter, bearing even words spoken in censure, walking gentle-spokenly on this path of the Dhamma, succeeding in our meditations, and may we receive the strength, power, and blessing to realize the noble, deathless, supreme Nibbāna through the realization of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmitā*), Non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), and Arahatship!

With this aspiration, please recite these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"