Pahankanuwa Sermon #152

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.52)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

"Yo ca vassasataṃ jīve,

apassaṃ udayabbayaṃ;

Ekāhaṃ jīvitaṃ seyyo,

passato udayabbayaṃ."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 113 (Sahassa Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

The value of a human life should not be decided by the length of time one lives. It is not decided by the wealth accumulated or the titles and positions obtained during one's lifetime. It is decided by the extent to which one has uncovered the reality, the vision of truth, of life, and drawn closer to deliverance from Saṁsāra. When one considers it in this way, even a life that appears worldly unfortunate and unsuccessful can, according to those essential values, be described as highly fortunate, blessed, and successful. Today's theme-verse and the story will provide evidence for this.

In the city of Sāvatthī, a certain multimillionaire merchant (*seṭṭhi*) had an extremely beautiful daughter. When she was about sixteen years old, for her protection, her parents made her reside on the topmost floor of a seven-storied palace. No matter what protection was provided, she developed an intimacy—an illicit relationship—with a male servant who was in their service. Meanwhile, when her parents proposed to marry her to a young nobleman of an equal merchant family, she said to that young man, "Now, my parents are going to marry me off like this. If that happens, we will never get to meet again. If you truly have affection for me, take me and elope as quickly as possible." When she said this, the young man designated a place, saying,

"If so, come to such-and-such a place at the city gate tomorrow morning." Early in the morning, disheveling her hair and making her appearance untidy, preparing as if she were going to fetch water with the servants, she somehow slipped out and secretly went to the designated place. That young man, taking this merchant's daughter with him, went to a village in a distant region and began to earn a living by farming in a field near a forest. The merchant's daughter too, like an ordinary woman, began to do all the cooking and other household chores.

As time went on, she became pregnant. When the pregnancy matured, she said to her husband, "Now, there is no one to assist me when this child is born. Parents generally have affection for their children. Therefore, take me to my parents' home." This husband said, "Oh no, if I take you there, they will certainly punish me. They will kill me. Therefore, I cannot go." Even after she asked several times, he refused. So what did she do? While her husband had gone to the forest, she told the neighbors, "If he asks, tell him I went to my parents' home," and set off. Then, when the husband returned and looked, she was not there. Next, learning of it from the neighbors, he pursued her. However, even though he caught up with her on the way, she did not wish to return. As they were going along like this, severe birth pains arose in this woman. Informing her husband, she gave birth to the child in that very thicket of the forest amidst great suffering and hardship. Thereafter, thinking, "Since the purpose for which I intended to go to my parents' home has now been fulfilled," they returned to their own home.

While some time passed in this way, when she conceived her second child, she made the same request to her husband to take her to her parents' home. When he refused, for the second time, she let her husband go to work, informed the neighbors, and set off to go to her parents' home with the first child on her hip. The husband, upon finding this out, quickly pursued her. This time too, she did not wish to turn back. Signs of a torrential downpour appeared, accompanied by lightning and claps of thunder. Meanwhile, as she felt severe birth pains, she told her husband, "Please prepare a shelter for me." The husband, taking a billhook and looking around, began to cut a large bush near an anthill. While he was cutting it, a cobra that was inside came out and bit the man; his body turned blue and he fell down dead right there. Meanwhile, a great torrential rain was falling. She kept waiting for her husband to return, but he did not come. In the midst of this, she gave birth to that child with great difficulty. In this heavy rain, both children were crying and wailing. She was helpless. Kneeling on all fours, shielding the two children under her body, she spent the entire night. By morning, her body had become completely pale, like that of a patient with jaundice. In the morning, taking the newborn baby and holding the other child by the finger, saying, "Son, didn't father go this way?", she went to look. When she went, she saw her husband lying dead upon the anthill. Falling into immense grief, crying and lamenting, "Alas, because of me, I lost my husband!", she set off to go to her parents' home.

Due to the rain that day, the Aciravatī River had flooded, and was filled with water up to about neck-deep. Crossing it with both children became a problem for her. What did she do? Leaving the elder child on this bank, she crossed to the other bank with the infant, laid the baby on a bed of leaves on the riverbank, and started to return. While returning, she looked back again to check on the safety of the child. Then she saw a hawk swooping down, thinking the child was a piece of meat, to snatch him. She shouted, "Shoo, shoo!" to drive the hawk away. But it did not succeed. The hawk took the small child and rose into the sky. Meanwhile, the child on this bank thought, "Mother must be calling me to come," ran into the river, fell, and was swept away by the river. Now she had neither of her two children, nor her husband. Crying and lamenting in extreme sorrow, she then walked towards the city of Sāvatthī. On the way, seeing someone coming from Sāvatthī, she asked, "Where are you coming from?" When he replied, "Sāvatthī," she asked, "Do you know of that merchant family on such-and-such a street?" He said, "Yes, I know them. But do not ask about them. Ask about anything else." She told the man, "I have no use for other things. Just tell me that information." The man said, "Well, then, if you won't let me go without saying it, I will tell you. You experienced the rain last night, didn't you?" "Oh, there is no need to speak of that. That rain was indeed upon me. I will tell you that story later. Tell me right now the news of that merchant's house." Then the man said, "In yesterday's great rainstorm, the merchant's house collapsed, and the merchant, his wife, and their son—all three died trapped under that house, and are currently burning on the same funeral pyre. That smoke visible in the distance is from it."

At that moment, unable to bear that grief, her mind became deranged, and she began to wander the streets wailing like a madwoman. At that time, she did not even realize that her clothes had slipped off. Then, thinking she was a naked madwoman, people began to pelt her with stones and clods of earth. As she was wandering in this manner, the Blessed One was delivering a Dhamma sermon at the Jetavana monastery in Sāvatthī. Seeing this woman—who had received a definite prophecy from Padumuttara Buddha and had fulfilled the perfections for a hundred thousand eons (*kalpas*) aspiring for the foremost position among the female experts in the Vinaya in the Dispensation—approaching like a madwoman, the Blessed One resolved that she should come towards Him. Then, by the power of the Buddha’s resolution, when this woman tried to come there, the crowd present tried to chase her away, saying, "Oh, do not let the madwoman come in!" The Blessed One said, "No, let her come." When she came near, the Blessed One said, "Regain your mindfulness, sister." No sooner were those few words spoken than, by the very power of the Buddha, she regained her mindfulness. At the same time, realizing that her clothing was missing, she sat down in a squatting position. A wise man threw her an upper garment. Having worn it, she then expressed her grievance to the Blessed One: "My husband was killed by a snake bite like this. One son was carried away by a hawk. My other son was swept away by the flood. My parents and brother were crushed in a rainstorm and are burning on the same funeral pyre," she lamented in this manner. At that moment, what did the Blessed One do to assuage her grief? The Blessed One preached a valuable discourse called the *Anamatagga Sutta*, which He

had preached on previous occasions as well. When He delivered that sermon, stating, "The tears you have shed in this Saṁsāra for your relatives are more than the water in the four great oceans," her grief was largely assuaged by that very teaching. Meanwhile, this woman also came to be called by the name "Paṭācārā".

Next, the Blessed One said, "Now, in this way, you aspire for protection from parents and children. But in reality, none of those relatives can stand as a refuge for oneself. That is not the true refuge. The true refuge is the Dhamma, Nibbāna." Showing this, the Blessed One uttered two verses:

Na santi puttā tāṇāya, na pitā na pi bandhavā;

Antakenādhipannassa, natthi ñātisu tāṇatā.

Etamatthavasaṁ ñatvā, paṇḍito sīlasaṁvuto;

Nibbānagamanaṁ maggaṁ, khippameva visodhaye.

The meaning of those verses: *Na santi puttā tāṇāya na pitā na pi bandhavā* — neither sons, nor father, nor kinsmen can stand for one's protection; *antakenādhipannassa... natthi ñātisu tāṇatā* — when death presents itself, when Māra presents himself, none of these kinsmen can stand as a refuge for oneself. *Etamatthavasaṁ ñatvā paṇḍito sīlasaṁvuto* — the wise person, understanding this fact and restrained by virtue (*sīla*), *nibbānagamanaṁ maggaṁ khippameva visodhaye* — should quickly clear and purify the path leading to Nibbāna. When the Blessed One preached this, having heard that sermon, Paṭācārā was established in the noble fruit of stream-entry (*Sotāpatti-phala*). It is mentioned that many others in that assembly also attained the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*).

Next, she requested ordination from the Blessed One. The Blessed One sent her to the nunnery and arranged for her ordination. She received the novice and higher ordination (*upasampadā*). Thereafter, she practiced meditation diligently to attain Arahatship. Once, while washing her feet, when she first poured some water, she saw it flow a short distance and dry up right there. When she poured a little more water, it went a little further. When she poured water for the third time, it went even further and dried up right there; the water evaporated. She contemplated this: "Is not the life of human beings also like this? Some die in their first stage of life. Some die in middle age. In the final stage of life, in old age, everyone certainly dies." In this manner, a succession of thoughts inclined towards insight (*vipassanā*) arose in her stream of thoughts. At that moment, the Blessed One, remaining in the Perfumed Chamber (*Gandhakuṭī*), projected a light and appeared before her. In order to complete the path of insight that Paṭācārā had initiated, He preached that valuable verse of Dhamma which we have taken as our theme.

Yo ca vassasataṁ jīve, apassaṁ udayabbayaṁ,

Ekāhaṁ jīvitaṁ seyyo, passato udayabbayaṁ.

Even if one lives for a hundred years without seeing the arising and passing away—called *udayabbaya*—of the five aggregates, living for a single day having developed this insight-comprehension of arising and passing away, *ekāhaṁ jīvitaṁ seyyo passato udayabbayaṁ*, is far more valuable. Hearing that sermon of the Blessed One, Paṭācārā was established in the noble fruit of Arahatship (*arahatta-phala*).

So, that is the story. Even without detailed elaboration, all of you devotees have heard this story as one of the most poignant tales in Buddhist literature. Therefore, we must contemplate this as a valuable story through which one can understand the nature of this Saṁsāra and the nature of life. For, having been born as the daughter of an extremely wealthy, multimillionaire merchant, Paṭācārā had to face a multitude of physical and mental sufferings (*dukkha*) and pressures, running along the high road as a helpless madwoman. But in the end, by the greatness of the Blessed One's quality of great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*), she regained her normal mindfulness, was ordained in the Dispensation, and attained the fortune of the noble fruit of Arahatship. Accordingly, as we mentioned earlier, though it appeared to be an unsuccessful life, in the end, when considered in terms of the Dhamma and true essential values, we can describe it as an extremely fortunate life.

Next, since it is relevant to this, let us contemplate some facts the Blessed One preached regarding the nature of the world. The Blessed One has preached that, in terms of the world's nature, sentient beings pass through three stages, or that there are three phases: namely, gratification (*assāda*), danger (*ādīnava*), and escape (*nissaraṇa*). Gratification means enjoying and taking delight in the fivefold sensual pleasures. Gratification is how we generally think of and understand the experiencing of pleasure. Danger means the various undesirable consequences arising from those very things. Next, escape means deliverance from this Saṁsāra, from this mass of Suffering (*dukkha*); it is the departure from it. The Blessed One declared that there is indeed an aspect of gratification in the world, it is not that there is none. That is why beings cling to the fivefold sensual pleasures in the world. That is natural. But similarly, there is also an aspect of danger. The Blessed One declared that the aspect of gratification is little, whereas the danger is abundant. Therefore, at some point, a multitude of undesirable consequences called danger naturally emerges from within them. Next, due to them, a person becomes reflective, applies wisdom, and at some point strives and attains escape, which is the deliverance of departing from this Saṁsāra. It is because there is such a thing as escape in the world that Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, and Great Arahants arise in the world.

Even if we contemplate Paṭācārā's life, we can see that her journey in search of gratification ultimately ended in a vast magnitude of danger. She had to face an unspeakably terrible mass of Suffering (*dukkha*) and a series of tragedies. It was through the helpless feeling of having no refuge, which arose within her from those tragedies, that she became a madwoman. We know that being a madwoman—or going mad, becoming insane—means that a forgetting of the world occurs there. Becoming trapped, confined, and oppressed in one's own world, one thinks that this

has happened to oneself alone. This is what happened to Paṭācārā at first too. She thought that this fallen mass of Suffering was something that had occurred to her alone. That is why she fell into this state of insanity, forgot the world, and began to run along the high road in that manner. The medicine the Blessed One gave for that was like sharing this grief. How is grief shared? He made her align it with the world through the *Anamatagga* (Sutta).

That *Anamatagga Sutta* is an extremely valuable discourse. The Blessed One preached it to the monks. It is said that by the end of that discourse, all the monks who were listening attained Arahatship. It is such an extraordinarily wondrous sermon. If we state it briefly, its essence is this:

"Monks, in this infinitely long Saṁsāra where no beginning or end is visible, if you were to collect the tears shed and wept by you over the Suffering (*dukkha*) of the death of a mother alone, the death of a father alone, the death of a son alone, the death of a daughter alone, and so forth, the drops of tears thus shed would be greater than the waters of the four great oceans." He delivered the discourse in that manner. In each instance, the Blessed One asked questions and received answers from the monks, presenting the sermon in a way that deeply penetrated their minds. When this discourse was presented to Paṭācārā on this occasion, she contemplated, "This is not something that has come to me alone. This is a universally applicable reality (*dhamma*)," and thus she shared her grief with the world. Through that, her grief was assuaged. Even when physical afflictions befell her, and finally when her husband and children were lost, Paṭācārā went in search of her parents. But the Blessed One, in the second instance, presented the idea that none of those are a refuge, through the verses beginning with *Na santi puttā tāṇāya na pitā na...*

When Māra presents himself, there is no refuge in any of these things. In truth, at the moment of death, what remains as a refuge is the noble Dhamma of Nibbāna that one has attained. The direct realization that one will not be born in Saṁsāra again is what assists one. That is what the Blessed One showed in those two verses. Having heard that, Paṭācārā arrived at the fruit of stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*). Accordingly, we can understand that what the Blessed One did here was, in a way, to gradually soften the mind of a person who was mentally deranged, assuage that grief, and then infuse the Dhamma into it. Furthermore, we must contemplate the verse the Blessed One uttered as a theme to assist her in attaining Arahatship. That too is a deep verse.

Yo ca vassasataṁ jīve, apassaṁ udayabbayaṁ,

Ekāhaṁ jīvitaṁ seyyo, passato udayabbayaṁ.

The Blessed One declared that rather than living a hundred years without seeing the nature of the arising and passing away of the five aggregates, living for a single day seeing that arising and passing away is noble. As we mentioned earlier, the Blessed One uttered that verse when a group of thoughts accustomed to insight (*vipassanā*)

arose in Paṭācārā. Therein lies a valuable point that you must contemplate. There is a certain meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) that assists each of us in Nibbāna. Especially, the Blessed One possesses eight extraordinary, unique knowledges of a Buddha (*asādhāraṇa-ñāṇa*), such as the knowledge of the inclinations and underlying tendencies (*āsayānusaya-ñāṇa*) and the attainment of great compassion (*mahākaruṇāsamāpatti-ñāṇa*). Particularly, through the knowledge of inclinations and underlying tendencies (*anusaya*), the Blessed One sees each succession of thoughts, the things embedded within the mind, the manner of those thoughts, and everything else. Now, the meditation subject that assists someone in Nibbāna is often connected to an occasion when the reality of Suffering (*dukkha*) has deeply penetrated one's mind. Now, here too, Paṭācārā's mind was the background to her series of tragedies. Her husband was lost in that torrential rain. Next, her two children were lost in the river flood, on the two banks of the river. Next, her parents and brother were lost by being crushed in the rainstorm. Thus, water was a symbol of Suffering in Paṭācārā's life. Generally, someone might think, "Who can attain Arahatship by seeing water while washing feet?" Rationalists might think in that manner about this story. Or someone else might think, "Well then, according to this, if we go home and wash our feet, we can attain Arahatship." That is not what is happening here. Certain factors relevant to each individual's temperament sink deep into their mental continuum (*citta-santāna*). That is why we often say these are blessings in disguise. All these things—the hardships and difficulties we receive, these physical and mental pressures, this suffering of separation from the loved (*piyehi vippayogo dukkha*)—Paṭācārā had to face this suffering of separation from the loved in an unspeakably terrible manner. But through all of those, something that assists in Nibbāna sank deep. It is there that we said danger emerges from within gratification. When that danger emerges, one must derive a benefit from it. What is the real benefit? It is to contemplate them deeply and connect with the thought: "This is the nature of the world, a common reality in this Saṁsāra; there is no other way to escape this. One can escape only by crossing over from Saṁsāra." Then, that very event becomes a meditation subject for that person.

Now, having entered the Dispensation and obtained that state of stream-entry, that collection of thoughts, the succession of thoughts of Paṭācārā, always operated towards the comprehension of Suffering (*dukkha*). Something that assisted in that was that water which had become a symbol to her. It was upon seeing it that Paṭācārā began to think in that manner: "In life, death occurs either in the first stage, or it occurs in middle age, or in any case, it certainly occurs in old age." At that moment, the Blessed One projected a light and uttered that verse to make that path of insight (*vipassanā-vīthi*) even deeper. What is expressed there is that the thought-succession Paṭācārā initiated was conceived by thinking of a person's entire life—first stage of life, middle age, and final stage of life. The Blessed One compressed that matter into a single day. Indeed, within a single day itself, within this single day itself, the arisings and passings away in this world can be seen. How can they be seen? Now, the path of insight arises for the meditating practitioner (*yogāvacara*)

who is attuned to insight through this very impermanence (*anicca*)—the arising and passing away called *udayabbaya* mentioned here. There are two words we use daily: *udaya* (arising/sunrise) and *astaya* (setting/sunset). We have all heard that the sun rises and the sun sets. Truly, between these two lies the fundamental principle of this insight: arising and passing away. We must contemplate that this sun rising every day teaches us a certain lesson. What is the lesson it teaches? This grand, majestic sun says, "For me too, there is a morning, a midday, as well as an evening. Similarly, for you too, there is this kind of arising, persisting, and passing away of life." This is the fact it explains. This sun reminds us that it is not time that is passing; it is you who are passing away. You are indeed passing away. The Buddhist poet Bhartṛhari who lived in India composed a valuable verse, two lines of which are as follows:

Kālo na yāto, vayameva yātā;

Tṛṣṇā na jīrṇā, vayameva jīrṇā.

"It is not time that has gone; we ourselves have gone. It is not Craving (*taṇhā*) that has decayed; we ourselves have decayed." That is the reality of the world. Therefore, through this sun, we must understand that, just like the rising and setting of the sun within this single day, there is also an arising, persisting, and passing away in our lives. It was through that very point that the Blessed One sharpened and deepened Paṭācārā's path of insight, leading it up to the highest fruit of Arahatship.

We must resolve to gain a multitude of valuable factors for our lives through these. In our lives too, we must consider hardships of this nature as blessings in disguise. Instead of saying "the suffering that has come is sweet," we must think, "the Suffering (*dukkha*) that has come has the taste of Nibbāna." We must strive to uncover Nibbāna through that separation. It is mentioned in the Dhamma: *dukkhūpanisā saddhā*—faith arises with Suffering as its supporting condition. We have all heard that the Blessed One shows the entire five aggregates, this entire existence of life, as Suffering. Therefore, at some point, if the comprehension of Suffering has severely dawned upon someone through separation from the loved, or through other physical and mental sufferings, then faith can arise through that. But faith does not arise all at once. Before that, sometimes a person might also go mad, might become insane; the Blessed One has pointed out that fact as well. *"Dukkhavepakkamahaṁ, bhikkhave, sattānaṁ vadāmi: sammohaṁ vā pariyeṭṭhiṁ vā"*—"I say, monks, that Suffering has two results. What are they? Either bewilderment (*sammoha*), or search (*pariyeṭṭhi*)." What is meant here by "results of Suffering" is the consequences of Suffering—things that arise because of Suffering. These are two occurrences resulting from undergoing it. What are they? Either one goes mad, or one turns to searching.

This story is a good illustration of that. When this Suffering (*dukkha*) presents itself, even in this day and age, we know that many people either go mad and become insane, or they commit suicide. They are inclined to such things. The Blessed One has declared, *sabbe puthujjanā ummattakā*—all worldlings are insane. When

thinking of this, a person's mind might feel offended, wondering, "Did the Blessed One think so lowly of us?" But this is a truth. Everyone is insane as long as they do not see this matter. As was said about the sun, ordinary people do not contemplate in their daily life that there is such a thing as death. They do not reflect on or remember the impermanence (*anicca*) of this life. Therefore, they are like insane people. In that case, those who pelted that madwoman with stones were also insane. That is how we must understand it. Such is the way of things in this world. Therefore, the first reaction that arises in the face of this Suffering is falling into insanity. Unable to bear the mental pressure, one falls into insanity. That can manifest in various states. Even if they do not go to mental asylums, they behave and act in various ways as if they have gone mad. But if a person has found the right path and the association of a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), then they turn to searching. Indeed, after the Blessed One told her to regain her mindfulness, after she calmed down and regained her senses, she began to search. Starting from clothing, she found everything needed for the journey ahead. What we have to understand from Paṭācārā's life is the forward step to be taken in the face of this Suffering. If being a worldling (*puthujjana*) means insanity, it is not about remaining trapped within that insanity. Instead of being inclined to insane actions, suicide, and so forth, one must incline towards searching. "There is some deficiency here. This has not happened to me alone. This is a universally applicable reality." Thinking deeply in this manner, one must understand the true answer, the true solution. This saṁsāric being, in truth, is just like someone who does a math problem every day but without understanding the basic principle behind it; for an infinite time, they undergo Suffering such as Birth (*jāti*), Aging and Death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and sickness. They undergo Suffering and pressures. But they do not learn the lesson from this. As the Blessed One declared, most people remain only in the class of gratification. They remain in the aspect of gratification. Even if some danger arises through those gratifications, they forget them very quickly.

Perhaps Paṭācārā also had the option, without walking the path of Dhamma, of easily finding another husband, having other children, raising a family. In that manner, collecting various insurance policies, deposits, and all such things, she could have made her life successful in that worldly way. But that success is not like the one mentioned at the beginning. The true value lies in finding an absolute, clear solution to this. The woman whom we regard as a madwoman, or an unfortunate character—Paṭācārā—was in truth someone who had fulfilled perfections (*pāramīs*) for such a long period. That power of perfections was within her. But due to some karmic reason, she went down that wrong path and, through gratification itself, subsequently uncovered a great magnitude of danger, a mountain of danger. She learned lessons from it. The Blessed One, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, assisted her in learning that lesson. It was through that that Paṭācārā ultimately attained even the foremost position among the female experts in the Vinaya in this Bhikkhunī Dispensation, just as she had aspired. What is visible through this is the fact of a blessing in disguise. This life can be very roughly and crudely divided into three stages: arising (*jāti*), persisting, and ceasing. There is childhood, youth, and old age.

But at every single moment, passing away occurs in an extremely powerful manner. That is what is referred to in the Dhamma as momentary death (*khaṇika-maraṇa*). These pass away very rapidly and swiftly. This is generally not visible to the eye. It is visible only to the eye of insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*); it is not visible to the physical eye.

Even though it is said that it is visible through various instruments, it is only those instruments that see it. Instruments never attain Arahatship. Modern science and technology have developed various instruments—microscopes, telescopes, and so forth—and try to understand the true nature of these things, the true nature of the world. But that is not what is meant by developing the knowledge and vision of things as they really are (*yathābhūta-ñāṇadassana*), of understanding the truth as it is. Even if one looks through those machines, the level of defilements (*kilesa*) within the persons observing remains exactly the same. The Blessed One has declared: *paccattaṁ veditabbo viññūhi* (to be personally realized by the wise). Why is this Dhamma described as *svākkhāto* (well-expounded), *sandiṭṭhiko* (visible here-and-now), *akāliko* (timeless), and so on? Because it is something to be personally realized by oneself in this very life, without delay. It is something to be personally realized by the wise. Obtaining that direct realization is not something that can be done through machines and instruments in that manner. It is not something that can be done through logic. It is only by understanding the true nature through wisdom, by understanding it through insight, that one can be freed from this Suffering (*dukkha*). What assists in that is a concentrated mind. The first step is mindfulness (*sati*).

The Blessed One first directed Paṭācārā towards mindfulness; mindfulness is present at various levels. He did not speak of mindfulness merely because Paṭācārā was walking naked. We must think that this advice was given to us as well. We too may have many more deficiencies. Therefore, mindfulness assists in correcting that state of insanity. Mindfulness comes first. Next, based on that, the wise person walking the path of Dhamma establishes a good restraint in virtue (*sīla*) and then walks the path to Nibbāna. What is the path to Nibbāna? *Nibbānagamanaṁ maggaṁ khippameva visodhaye*—the Blessed One first told Paṭācārā to quickly complete the path to Nibbāna. Every one of you has heard of this path to Nibbāna. It is this Noble Eightfold Path: right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*), right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*).

Therefore, this path is a path that must be uncovered from within one's own heart. The Blessed One has declared that, above all other paths in this world, *esova maggo dassanassa visuddhiyā*—"this is the only path for the purification of vision." The Blessed One has declared, *maggānaṭṭhaṅgiko seṭṭho*—"of all paths, the Noble Eightfold Path is the best." Thus, within this Noble Eightfold Path too, there are virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). To put it briefly, only these three aggregates exist. These three groups. By restraining the body and speech,

one completes virtue. Through that obtained peace, through that regret-free existence, one subsequently uncovers concentration by directing the mind to a certain meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). In that manner, after the mind is settled through concentration, one then turns it towards insight. One strives to deeply see the aforementioned arising and passing away. It is in that manner that one can bring this Saṁsāra to an end.

This is an era so abundant in everyday crises and disasters that it should urge all of us to walk this path of Dhamma declared by the Blessed One. But people do not take advantage of it. Most people do not believe in that story of a blessing in disguise. Those who were ordained and attained Arahatship in this Dispensation were not people born with a silver spoon in their mouths. They were not great merchant princes or kings. Perhaps some such people did ordain and attain Arahatship too. But not all of them were of that kind. Often, they were extremely poor, or those who, having faced various other kinds of pressures, had arrived at an unsuccessful state of life. They learned the lesson. Therefore, they did not ordain because they had nothing else to do. Sometimes someone might think, "They came and ordained in this Dispensation because they had no husband, no children, no livelihood to live on, and thus in the end obtained such a state in this Dispensation"—to think so is wrong. In truth, having learned lessons from those, and through their multitude of personal experiences, they passed those three grades of gratification (*assāda*), danger (*ādīnava*), and escape (*nissaraṇa*) and were able to attain Arahatship. In daily life, some people derive a sense of gratification and pleasure by hearing a story like this. They think only about certain striking aspects within it that touch their hearts. But the true essence of a story is the example to be taken from it. The example to be taken from the characters in that story. Here too, through the character of Paṭācārā, we must think, "This can come to us too; this can happen to us too." This is not something that happens to just one person. For an infinite time in Saṁsāra, we must have experienced things of this nature. But having learned the lesson from it, if some degree of Suffering (*dukkha*) or pressure has come to oneself, then on that occasion, within that pressure, one must understand through one's personal experience: "What is here is the Four Noble Truths."

Some Suffering (*dukkha*) has come. To contemplate that Suffering, one must apply *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention)—reflecting wisely. It is by reflecting incorrectly that one goes towards the side of gratification. Instead, one must reflect wisely: "What is the true cause of this Suffering? Is it because of losing the husband? Or is it because of losing the children?" No. Underlying these is Craving (*taṇhā*). Where there is no Craving, there is no Suffering. That is why the Blessed One has declared: *taṇhāya jāyatī soko, taṇhāya jāyatī bhayaṁ*—"from Craving arises grief, from Craving arises fear." Similarly, He has shown: *piyato jāyatī soko, piyato jāyatī bhayaṁ*—"from the beloved arises grief, from the beloved arises fear," and so forth. This grief, these hardships, all these sufferings, dejections, and lamentations come either from Craving or from the suffering of separation from the loved (*piyehi vippayogo dukkha*). That is why the Blessed One declared that for the person who is

freed from both the loved and the unloved, there is no grief. Accordingly, we must resolve to utilize these Four Noble Truths in our daily lives. These are not things that exist only in books. Within every one of our personal experiences, there are factors that assist in Nibbāna. Some Suffering has come, or some pressure has come. When contemplating, one sees that Craving and desires of the mind lie underneath this. Desires that appear in various styles, in various guises. It is as a result of those that the pressure coming from this arises. When one understands this to some extent and calms it down, that pressure completely disappears; there is calming.

Indeed, Nibbāna is what the Blessed One has described as *sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha* (the stilling of all preparations/volitional activity). The being in this world, in the manner mentioned, is entangled in some process through ignorance (*avijjā*) and Craving (*taṇhā*) in order to protect a "self". But the Blessed One shows that what is present here is only a fivefold aggregate—only five groups. There is a group of form (*rūpa-kkhandha*). Even that cannot be kept as one's own. No matter how much we nurse it by providing food and drink and bathing it, this bodily cage does not exist according to our wishes. There are many worms inside who own it; it is said there are millions of them. Next, there is another group outside waiting to break it down, kill it, and take revenge. Next, in that manner, there is no possibility of protecting this body as one's own. There is no possibility of looking after it as one's own. Even if it escapes such external and internal dangers, a time comes when, by nature, it undergoes aging (*jarā*), decays, and in the end, if it arose from four elements, this body dissolves back into those very four elements. That is the bodily cage.

Next, it is the same with regard to Feeling (*vedanā*). The Blessed One shows every one of these as groups. We think of them as single entities. We think of form as one, saying "this is my form." If we take a beautiful photograph of ourselves, we confidently present it as "my form." But the Blessed One says what is here is a group of form. The Blessed One has compared it to a lump of foam. Even a lump of foam, when floating down a river or a stream, can look very beautiful from afar. But what is here is a collection of bubbles arising and passing away extremely rapidly. A lump of foam is a heap formed by the accumulation of dirt and debris. This bodily cage is just like that. Right from the mother's womb, a multitude of dirt and debris accumulates here through food and drink. When we bathe, we scrub off one part as "dirt" because it is "dirt that does not belong to me." But the other part is inside the body. Those remain deposited in the same way. One claims that as "myself." Having scrubbed off the dirt and bathed, one thinks one is clean. Then one takes photos of this heap of dirt inside and shows it, saying, "This is me, this is mine." That is how it is in the world. Therefore, the Blessed One declared that this bodily cage, which arose because of parents and the four elements, is also that kind of form-group. It is like a lump of foam.

Next is this Feeling (*vedanā*). It is to escape from painful Feeling that we go in search of this pleasant Feeling. This is a heap of Suffering (*dukkha*). We understand that. Can we remain sitting in a single posture? Let us suppose that the most comfortable

seat that can be manufactured in this era has been made. If someone is told to sit in it without moving for an hour, then that person understands Suffering. That is why the Blessed One has shown that we have this Suffering—a heap of Suffering—but how do we hide it? We change postures as we please. When we cannot remain turned to this side, we turn to the other side. When even that is not possible, we turn to another side. Next, when that is not possible, we stand up. Having stood up, we walk. When even that is not possible, we lie down. In this manner, we change postures. We keep rotating this bodily cage like a cycle, like rolling a wheel.

Even if we carry it on in that way, there is never any true pleasure in it. What we call pleasure is simply the suppression of that Suffering (*dukkha*). You have heard what our Ven. Vīdāgama Thero has said in the *Lōvada Saṅgarāva*: "Is it not because of hunger that we eat tasty, mixed rice?" The food that satisfies is because of hunger. Next: "Is it not because of the bad odor that we fragrance the body?" We make this body fragrant because of its bad odor. "These are but medicine for illnesses of beings in this world." Every one of these is a medicine for an illness. "Why think of this as pleasure?" A highly valuable thought is expressed there.

Is it not because of hunger that one eats delicious rice?

Is it not because of body odor that one perfumes the body?

These are but medicines for the illnesses of beings in this world;

Why think of this as a pleasure?

These are merely medicines for an illness. But we do not contemplate that. We organize large feasts and so forth. We take food to pacify the painful Feelings (*vedanā*) in this bodily cage, to quench the pain of hunger. Next, we wear these clothes to protect ourselves from flies and mosquitoes, to escape the cold, and to escape various other dangers. But the ordinary worldling forgets this. We live in houses also to escape from them. But the worldling, thinking of all these as luxurious, imagines them to be pleasures. "These are but medicine for illnesses of beings in this world." So, in that manner, next are the perceptions arising from Feelings. It is through Feelings that we establish this recognition called perceptions. Sometimes, when a certain color is seen, why does a person's mind get upset? Because it does not belong to them; it is a color belonging to an opponent. If it is a color belonging to oneself, then pleasure arises. A bull gets agitated upon seeing the color red. We too, in that manner, determine these perceptions as "good" or "bad" based on the Feeling generated in our minds due to a color or other such things. That is the kind of process that exists. It is according to those perceptions that one acts.

Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) are what we all know to exist as some activity in this human life—through speech and body. It is in its operation that the conceptualizations of "I" and "mine" truly arise. It is for this very reason that we briefly call the group of preparations (*saṅkhāra-kkhandha*) "karma". What are regarded as karma are these very preparations. There are various other levels to it. The Blessed One declares that

Nibbāna is the stilling of all preparations (*sabba-saṅkhāra-samatha*). It is through these preparations that we construct what is called Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) or the mind. We say "my mind." The mind that was present just now is not the mind in the next moment. It changes extremely momentarily, extremely rapidly. But we use "my mind," "I, I." That too is a great delusion, because its true nature is not clearly seen. The Blessed One compared Feeling (*vedanā*) to a water bubble. He compared perception to a mirage. He compared preparations (*saṅkhāra*) to a banana trunk—like a banana trunk from which layers can be peeled but which has no core at all. Next, He compared Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) to a grand magic show. Why did the Blessed One give such similes for the five aggregates? Because each of these is a group. It is not a single entity as we think. It is not a single Feeling. Even regarding the Feeling of sitting that arises here, if one directs the mind well, if one applies meditative attention there in the manner of *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention), one understands that what is here is a vast group of Feelings—a multitude of them.

It is the same with the others. It is only when insight-wisdom is developed that every one of them is seen as a group, as a multitude. Until then, through the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*), taking this to be a single entity, one develops a Craving (*taṇhā*) and desire for it. That is the lesson we must truly derive from the character of Paṭācārā. These are things that can happen to us too. Through a single life, through a single character, this has been shown in literature. We must also take the lesson to be learned from it. "That woman, that character whom the world thought of as unfortunate and luckless in that manner, ultimately ended in Arahatship. Where are we still?" We must think in that way. When looking at it in that manner, we must consider this Dhamma story and this verse as something that truly brings an example to our lives.

Today, on this valuable full-moon day (*Poya*), this assembly of devotees observed a valuable virtue called *ājīva-aṭṭhamaka-sīla* (virtue with right livelihood as the eighth factor). Some also observed the eight precepts (*aṭṭha-sīla*) or ten precepts (*dasa-sīla*) of the Poya day. In that manner, virtue (*sīla*) is indeed the fundamental assistance for walking this path of Dhamma. In this dangerous era, indeed, this virtuousness is necessary for a person. We think of this tameness as something that can be cultivated only in animals. If an animal has no tameness, we call it a wild animal. When tamed, from that state of tameness, there is a nature of that animal that captures one's heart. No examples need to be specifically stated for that. Similarly, you must contemplate that when we, like other animals, lack tameness and turn into wild beasts, what a corrupt nature arises in this society. Therefore, virtue is what becomes primary there. There is nothing new to be said about the virtue the Blessed One showed to Paṭācārā. As soon as she turned to the path of Dhamma, she became virtuous. That is why she is called "Paṭācārā"—she became well-behaved (*ācārasampanna*).

Similarly, you too must first restrain your body and speech. Why restrain body and speech? Because this mind cannot be settled until the body and speech are restrained. By restraining them, one must establish an existence that is harmful

neither to society nor to oneself. This society, of which many people speak so highly, is made of individuals. If a single individual is corrupt inside, how can one build society? It is when oneself is reformed that a society is reformed. Thus, one must protect virtue (*sīla*) to the best of one's ability. If possible, one must always strive to protect a higher virtue. Next, based on virtue, having settled the mind, one must develop the capability to unify it in meditation. We develop machinery and instruments in this world and speak highly of them. We prepare to do with machines the things that are done by our minds. But even if we do all of that, we will never hear of a day when a machine attains Nibbāna. No matter how much machines are developed, they cannot bring our saṁsāric Suffering (*dukkha*) to an end. Therefore, it is this machine we possess—this very one—that must be developed. The formula to develop this machine is that aforementioned meditative attention—the meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). One must strive to uncover that in one's life, in accordance with the practice, through the association of a noble friend (*kalyāṇa-mitta*).

In that manner, on this valuable day, this assembly of devotees listened to this Dhamma sermon for about an hour. At this moment, as we frequently mention, I trust that certain Dhamma forces that assist the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) and powers (*bala*) which lead to Nibbāna—namely, faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*)—have been deposited in your mental continuum (*citta-santāna*). Further developing those forces, walking the path of Dhamma, cultivating virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), may this hearing of the Dhamma certainly become a supportive condition (*upanissaya-hetu*) for escaping as quickly as possible from such terrifying saṁsāric Suffering (*dukkha*) and finding peace in the noble Deathless Nibbāna! We aspire thus. Similarly, may the Dispensation-protecting deities and Brahma kings, as well as your relatives, including deceased relatives, and all beings from Avīci up to Akaniṭṭha who wish to rejoice in this merit of hearing and preaching the Dhamma—may they all rejoice in this rich store of sublime merit! Having rejoiced, may they find peace in the noble Deathless Nibbāna through their aspired Enlightenment (*Bodhi*)! With this aspiration, please recite these verses and share the merits.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"