Pahankanuwa Sermon #155

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.114)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

"Yassa selūpamaṃ cittaṃ,

ṭhitaṃ nānupakampati;

Virattaṃ rajanīyesu,

kopaneyye na kuppati;

Yassevaṃ bhāvitaṃ cittaṃ,

kuto taṃ dukkhamessati. "

From:

Udāna (Udāna 4.4: Juṇha Sutta)

Dear Listeners,

As the practice for ending suffering (*Dukkha*), the Blessed One, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, pointed out to the world the path of meditation to systematically develop the mind. A mind that has freed itself from attachments and conflicts and is concentrated in equanimity attains liberation, unshaken by the eight worldly conditions. What is revealed by the verse we have chosen as our topic today, and the background story related to it, is the miracle of such a developed mind.

At one time, when the Blessed One was residing at the Veluvana Monastery in Rājagaha, the two chief disciples, Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Mahā Moggallāna, were residing at a place called Kapota Kandara (Pigeon Glen). On the night of the day Venerable Sāriputta had shaved his hair and beard, he sat entered into a certain concentration under the moonlight. Two *yakkhas* (demons), who were friends, were traveling through the air from north to south, and they saw Venerable Sāriputta seated in concentration. Seeing him, one *yakkha* said to the other, "Friend,

I feel like giving a blow to the head of that recluse." Then the other *yakkha* said, "No, friend, do not do that. He is a great, highly psychic, and powerful recluse. Do not do that." For the second time, that *yakkha* said, "I really feel like striking him." The second time too, he was told not to. A third time he said so, and even for the third time, he did not listen. That *yakkha* delivered a blow. How powerful was that blow? It was strong enough to fell an elephant of seven or eight cubits, strong enough to split a mountain peak—such was the mighty force of the blow. Venerable Mahā Moggallāna, with his divine eye, saw that *yakkha* striking Venerable Sāriputta on the head. He approached Venerable Sāriputta and asked, "How is it, Friend Sāriputta, are you well? Are you comfortable? Are you free from pain, trouble, and distress?" In the Dhamma, there is a customary way of exchanging pleasantries upon meeting. He asked in that manner. Venerable Sāriputta replied, "I have no such deficiency or trouble. However, my head hurts just a little." Then Venerable Mahā Moggallāna said, "How wonderful, how mighty and powerful is Venerable Sāriputta! A *yakkha* gave him such a powerful blow, strong enough to fell an elephant of seven or eight cubits, strong enough to split a mountain peak. Even after being struck with such a blow, Venerable Sāriputta says only, 'My head hurts just a little'!"

Then Venerable Sāriputta said, "How marvelous is this Venerable Mahā Moggallāna! I cannot even see a mud-goblin (*pāṁsu-pisācaka*), yet Venerable Moggallāna has seen the *yakkha* striking me!" In the Dhamma, it is mentioned regarding this incident that when the Blessed One heard this conversation of mutual praise between these two great elephant-kings of the Dispensation with his divine ear, the Blessed One uttered a verse of solemn utterance at that moment. That verse is what we have taken as our topic today:

Yassa selūpamaṁ cittaṁ, ṭhitaṁ nānukampati;

virattaṁ rajanīyesu, kopaneyye na kuppati;

Yassevaṁ bhāvitaṁ cittaṁ, kuto taṁ dukkhamessatīti.

"Whose mind stands like a rock, firm and unshaken, unattached to things that excite attachment, unprovoked by things that provoke anger—how can suffering (*Dukkha*) come to one whose mind is thus developed?" Thus, the Blessed One uttered this solemn utterance. So, from this brief story, we can understand both the danger of an undeveloped mind—a mind not cultured through meditation—and the miraculous power of a mind developed through meditation. We can see both of these through this.

If we first speak about the former point, it is mentioned that as soon as the *yakkha* struck the blow, he went and was reborn in the Great Hell (*Mahā Niraya*). Venerable Sāriputta suffered no harm from the *yakkha*'s blow. The *yakkha* fell, screaming "I am burning, I am burning!" and was reborn in the Great Hell. That is how he suffered. Thus, the *yakkha*, who possessed the strength to split even a rock, committed a great act of foolishness with his own power. In fact, he did it as if for

fun. People who have physical strength sometimes do such things for fun or play, to let off steam, often ignoring the advice of their spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*). That is the kind of thing this *yakkha* did. His friend told him, "Do not do this. He is a person of such great power." He said it as if knowing the consequences. But that demon did not listen. He struck Venerable Sāriputta on the head. Immediately, it is said, he fell into the Great Hell, screaming "I am burning, I am burning!"

In the Dhamma, a kamma called *Āryopavāda* (insulting the Noble Ones) is mentioned. *Āryopavāda* means that even insulting, mocking, or abusing those noble beings who have attained supramundane states is a grave unwholesome act (*akusala*). There is no need to speak of striking them. Even though it was not to settle a grudge, the volition (*cetanā*) that arose during that striking was itself sufficient to cause rebirth in hell. That is what we have to reflect upon. True, Venerable Sāriputta felt a slight headache after arising from his concentration, but since he was in concentration, the *yakkha*'s act was like striking his own head against a rock. The suffering was caused to himself. But we can imagine the consequence of this: not only for that *yakkha*, but anyone who does such demonic deeds will receive such severe consequences. Because that is a law of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*), it is something connected to the nature of reality (*dhammatā*). It is also shown as the law of Dhamma (*dhamma-niyāma*).

To the noble objects in the world—here, Venerable Sāriputta, who had attained a living supramundane state—it was he who was harmed. Indeed, when he was dwelling in concentration, he was like a statue. Therefore, not only to a living noble object, but history has recorded instances where people harmed or destroyed Buddha statues—which are inanimate symbols of noble dispensational or Dhamma ideals—and suffered the consequences. From this we can understand that although fun and play are good, there are times when play becomes disastrous. If one goes to insult or harm those noble objects just because one has physical strength, the consequences are for oneself. That aspect of the fruition of kamma (*kamma-vipāka*) is revealed by this.

Next, the other side: here is the power of a developed mind. Some people, based on this story, say that only Venerable Moggallāna had psychic powers and that Venerable Sāriputta had no psychic powers, because of his words, "I cannot see even a mud-goblin." But there is a lesson to be taken there as well. Within those great noble beings, instead of boasting of their own talents, there was the quality of highlighting and praising the virtues and skills of the other. That is why Venerable Mahā Moggallāna, who indeed was foremost among those possessing psychic powers, had his greatness highlighted there by Venerable Sāriputta. However, it was not that Venerable Sāriputta lacked psychic powers. The specialty here is the concentration in which he was dwelling at that time; we have to understand it as a state of being detached from the world, called the concentration of the fruition of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samādhi*). With the mind stilled in Nibbāna, he was detached from the world. In certain Dhamma stories and Jātaka stories, there are

accounts of piling up wood to burn a Paccekabuddha who was entered into the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*), as mentioned when discussing the past kamma of Queen Sāmāvatī. I am not going to tell those long stories. But such incidents exist. Those people thought they had burnt the Paccekabuddha. However, after they left, the Paccekabuddha shook off the ashes and rose into the air without any harm. But the fruition of kamma remained, because of that volition (*cetanā*). They set the fire with the intention of killing the Paccekabuddha. The consequence of that remained. From such incidents, we see that when one reaches a certain level of concentration (*samādhi*), there is a power that can liberate both mind and body from the harms that come from the world. This is a very wonderful thing in this Dhamma.

Two types of meditation, development of the mind (*citta-bhāvanā*) and development of the body (*kāya-bhāvanā*), are mentioned in the Dhamma. On one occasion, Saccaka the Nigantha-putta came to meet the Blessed One. Saccaka the Nigantha-putta, mentioned in the Dhamma, was someone who debated very strongly with the Blessed One. On one occasion, when the Blessed One was residing at the Kūṭāgāra Hall in Vesāli, he presented a topic of debate to the Blessed One: "Ascetic Gotama, it seems to me that the disciples of the ascetic Gotama develop the mind (*citta-bhāvanā*) but do not develop the body (*kāya-bhāvanā*)." Then the Blessed One asked, "Saccaka, what is this development of the body (*kāya-bhāvanā*) that you speak of?" Then Saccaka the Nigantha spoke of the difficult vows of the Niganthas.

Among those Niganthas, there was the practice of severe vows such as fasting and inflicting pain on the body. They held the view that pleasure can only be obtained through pain. Therefore, they tortured the body as much as possible. He mentioned several of those practices. Then the Blessed One said, "Saccaka, you do not even know development of the body (*kāya-bhāvanā*); how can you understand development of the mind (*citta-bhāvanā*)? According to the Discipline of the Noble Ones (*ariya-vinaya*), that is not development of the body. Listen then," and the Blessed One explained what development of the body and development of the mind are in this Dispensation. First, he showed the opposite side. An undeveloped body (*abhāvita-kāya*)—what kind of person is defined as one with an undeveloped body, or one who has not developed the body? The Blessed One first showed the nature of the ordinary untaught worldling (*puthujjana*) who lacks knowledge of Dhamma and has not heard the Dhamma. When a pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) arises in such a person, they develop lust and attachment towards it. Then, after that pleasant feeling ceases, a painful feeling (*vedanā*) comes. When that painful feeling comes, this person weeps, laments, faints, beats their breast, and falls into delusion. Such a person, because they have not developed the body through development of the body (*kāya-bhāvanā*), falls into distress. Therefore, it is shown there that when painful feeling (*vedanā*) comes, that person is perturbed. Development of the body (*kāya-bhāvanā*) there means not being overcome by lust regarding pleasant feeling through sense-restraint (*indriya-saṁvara*), etc. Not falling into lust. So, because of that, when painful feeling comes, that person is perturbed.

Next, the Blessed One showed development of the mind (*citta-bhāvanā*). That person, when pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) comes, gets caught up in it because their body is undeveloped through sense-restraint, etc. Then, when pain and distress come, they are overcome by it because of the mind. That is a somewhat deep matter. Having given such an explanation of the undeveloped body (*abhāvita-kāya*) and undeveloped mind (*abhāvita-citta*), he clarified it further. How does a developed body (*bhāvita-kāya*) and a developed mind (*bhāvita-citta*) arise in someone? A developed body means developed through meditation (*bhāvanā*). It does not mean building muscles and flesh, which is what 'body development' means nowadays. That is not the meaning intended here. Then he spoke of the positive side: the noble disciple (*ariya-sāvaka*), when a pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) arises, does not develop attachment or lust towards it because their body is developed. 'Body developed' means they have practiced bodily restraint, etc. Then, when painful feeling (*vedanā*) comes, that person does not weep, lament, or beat their breast. They direct their mind towards equanimity (*upekkha*) through development of the mind (*citta-bhāvanā*), having understood its futility because they have developed the mind.

So, what does this demonstrate? As shown in the Dhamma, the mind is also freed from lust, and the mind is also detached from hatred. Because of painful feeling (*vedanā*), a person develops aversion (*paṭigha*), which is hatred. The Blessed One showed this in another place in this way: "The world says there is an abyss (*pātāla*) in the great ocean. But the real abyss is physical painful feeling (*vedanā*)." Physical painful feeling (*vedanā*) is the real abyss. Now, an abyss is a bottomless pit. So, this painful feeling (*vedanā*) is compared to an abyss. This painful feeling is such a terrifying thing. But the person who does not know the Dhamma, when faced with that painful feeling, falls into the abyss and, finding no footing or support, sinks. They cannot come up; they weep and lament. But the noble disciple overcomes those painful feelings (*vedanā*) and brings the mind to neutrality. Standing up from the abyss is said there regarding that painful feeling.

In another place, the Buddha gave a discourse to the Sangha, starting like this: "Monks, the ordinary untaught worldling (*puthujjana*) experiences pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), experiences painful feeling (*vedanā*), and experiences neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), which is neutral feeling. The taught noble disciple (*ariya-sāvaka*) too experiences pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), experiences painful feeling (*vedanā*), and experiences neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (*vedanā*). What is the difference between these two?" he asked the Sangha. There were occasions when Dhamma discourses were delivered in such a question-and-answer format. The Sangha at that moment said, "Bhante, we cannot answer this. What we know is also what we have to learn from the Blessed One," and they requested the explanation from the Blessed One himself.

Then, to explain it, the Blessed One declared: "Monks, when the ordinary untaught worldling (*puthujjana*) is touched by painful feeling (*vedanā*), they weep, lament, and beat their breast, thereby increasing that pain." He showed this with a simile:

"Suppose a man is struck by an arrow. Right after being struck by that arrow, another arrow comes and strikes him, a second arrow. In the same way, the ordinary untaught worldling feels both bodily pain and mental pain. The weeping and lamenting is shown as the second arrow." When physical painful feeling (*vedanā*) comes, if one starts weeping and lamenting, it is like being struck by a second arrow, and the person who lacks Dhamma knowledge suffers further distress.

But regarding the noble disciple (*ariya-sāvaka*), when painful feeling (*vedanā*) comes, without being perturbed by it, they endure it and bring the mind to neutrality. That is like being struck by only one arrow. They do not experience mental suffering (*Dukkha*). What is meant by this is not clinging to pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) and keeping the mind neutral there, and not colliding with painful feeling (*vedanā*) and extricating the mind from there as well. Next is equanimity (*upekkha*). That is why we spoke of a mind concentrated in equanimity. Indeed, equanimity, neutrality, is a state where the mind's power is highly developed. That is to say, even when looking at concentration (*samādhi*) in the absorptions (*jhāna*), by the time one reaches the fourth absorption (*jhāna*), there arises the pleasure of equanimity (*upekkha-sukha*). A wonderful, peaceful bliss is obtained through equanimity. Ordinary people see pleasure only in pleasant feeling (*vedanā*). Because of that very reason, they develop intense hatred towards pain, and because of that, they run around seeking pleasure, as declared by the Blessed One.

As an escape from painful feeling (*vedanā*), the door that the ordinary person sees is pleasure. Therefore, they go in search of pleasure. By seeking extreme pleasant feelings (*vedanā*), they try to cover up suffering (*Dukkha*). To eliminate the suffering that might come in the future and the suffering that has already come, they run after sensual pleasure (*kāma-sukha*). The Blessed One declares that the noble disciple (*ariya-sāvaka*), at that moment, brings the mind to neutrality, which has the true peaceful bliss called pacification (*upasama*). It is through that that realization is obtained. Thus, even when looking at the absorptions (*jhāna*), the mind fashioned with equanimity is the most powerful. It is by obtaining those absorption powers called the fourth absorption (*jhāna*) that special abilities like direct knowledges (*abhiññā*) can be brought forth. But a deeper equanimity than that is what the Blessed One in this Dispensation calls the concentration of the fruition of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samādhi*), which is unique to Arahants—experiencing the bliss of Nibbāna in this very life. That is like being detached from the world. Therefore, we have to understand that at that moment, Venerable Sāriputta was dwelling in the concentration of the fruition of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samādhi*). That is why he did not feel anything happening in this world. There are such wonderful things, like the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*). There too, the Blessed One expresses the value of keeping the mind neutral.

Now, even though we speak about these concentrations (*samādhi*) and absorptions (*jhāna*), someone might think that in daily life these are just words. But if we are walking on that path, even while sitting, what can we use as help from the Buddha's

teaching? We know very well that the Blessed One has shown the meditation on foulness (*asubha-bhāvanā*) to subdue lust and attachment. Why did both laypeople and monastics in the past, and even these meritorious people now, develop meditations such as the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), loving-kindness (*mettā*), foulness (*asubha*), and the mindfulness of death (*maraṇānussati*)? Because if the powerful forces of lust go to extremes, they lead to various crimes. Therefore, the meditation on foulness is used as a remedy for lust. If one has developed the perception of foulness (*asubha-saññā*) or the perception of repulsiveness (*paṭikūla-saññā*) to some extent, one does not fall into extreme attachments of lust and ruin oneself like a moth jumping into a fire, due to those attachments, due to the desire for pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), due to sensual pleasure. One does not fall into dangerous disasters.

In that way, we can understand that, on one hand, the perception of foulness (*asubha-saññā*) and also the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*) help in this. The perception of impermanence (*anicca*) is developed within the feeling that everything is impermanent (*anicca*). Because of that pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), we forget the impermanence of this. Deceived by external luster, thinking that this is permanent and will last forever, we are even tempted to commit grave crimes for its sake. But as soon as impermanence (*anicca*) is highlighted, when we reflect for a moment, we see the true state of things. Then, that grasping (*grahana*) is removed. Next is the attention to elements (*dhātu-manasikāra*). That is to say, no matter how polished and beautiful our bodies and external things are, they are shown in the Dhamma as being made of the four great elements (*mahā-bhūta*): earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*). Earth, water, fire, and wind are what we usually identify as these four elements. So, we must bear in mind that our external things and the food we eat are all made of these elements. Even when these meritorious people take food, what is called reflection (*paccavekkhaṇā*) is reflecting with wisdom (*paññā*). Or they reflect on it as repulsive: "What happens to this food after it goes inside?" Right there, the craving for taste (*rasa-taṇhā*) is destroyed.

The Blessed One removed those cravings (*taṇhā*) and desires from the mind in such a wonderful way that, regarding the Blessed One, it is mentioned: *"Rasa-paṭisaṁvedī bhagavā hoti, no ca rasarāga-paṭisaṁvedī"* — "The Blessed One experiences taste, but he does not experience lust for taste (*rasa-rāga*)." Such is the powerful strength of concentration (*samādhi*). The sensitive systems connected to taste, the tongue, and the nerves were fully intact in the Blessed One. In fact, they were cleaner than in others. He experienced taste, but there was no lust (*rāga*) for it, because he had developed the mind. Based on that, we can think of the power of the development of the body (*kāya-bhāvanā*) in those who have developed the mind. They have developed the body to such an extent that it does not yield to those things. That is why meditations like the meditation on repulsiveness (*paṭikūla-bhāvanā*) and foulness (*asubha-bhāvanā*) are shown.

Similarly, the attention to elements (*dhātu-manasikāra*). The mind directed towards the four elements turns towards equanimity (*upekkha*). Here too, there are earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*). Inside the body, there are the very same. In the plate of rice, there are the very same. When developing in this way as meditation (*bhāvanā*), gradually, the power to reduce those attachments is obtained. Next, on the other side, in situations where conflicts arise, when anger and irritation arise, these meritorious people know very well the methods to appease them. You have heard of them. The meditation on loving-kindness (*mettā-bhāvanā*) rises in the mind. Just like the meditation on loving-kindness, impermanence (*anicca*) can also be targeted at our anger. "I and all these people are impermanent (*anicca*). We will face death." Thinking in this way, one can conquer anger and reduce conflicts. The perception of elements (*dhātu-saññā*) also helps in this.

In this way, various methods are shown in the Dhamma. This side of Nibbāna, as we develop our practice to that extent according to the levels of meditation (*bhāvanā*), according to the progress of meditation, we can gradually bring the mind to neutrality. Because if we analyze the Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) taught by the Buddhas to the world in terms of feeling (*vedanā*), this is where it leads. The Niganthas, believing that pleasure must be sought through pain, tortured the body. But then, the Blessed One, during his time as Prince Siddhartha in the royal palace, experienced the devotion to sensual pleasures (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*), sensual pleasure. He tried to find satisfaction through it. No satisfaction is obtained through that either. Now, in the middle of those two is this neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (*adukkham-asukha vedanā*). Ordinary people do not recognize its value. Its value is almost unknown to them. But it is through this that the meditator (*yogāvacara*), the attainer of absorption (*jhāna*), brings forth a pleasure: neither-painful-nor-pleasant (*adukkham-asukha*). That concentration (*samādhi*) of the mind is a very secure place. When it is said "it stands like a rock, unshaken," "unshaken like a rock," that supreme state of mind, the highest state, is the concentration of the fruition of Arahantship (*arahatta-phala-samādhi*) mentioned earlier. We have to think that Venerable Sāriputta was enjoying that bliss of Nibbāna, detached from the world. Indeed, the moment of crossing over from the world exists within that concentration of the fruition of Arahantship. It was while he was enjoying that that the demon came and struck him.

So, from this, we can imagine how great the miracle of this developed mind is. Next, there are many other factors that help in this. We must constantly think about impermanence (*anicca*). Indeed, if in our meditations we expect to free the mind from these defilements (*kilesa*), what helps us extremely is the insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) on impermanence (*anicca*). Regarding that, there is a very wonderful and valuable discourse of the Blessed One: that this world, the entire world, has arisen from these six sense-bases (*āyatana*). There are six sense-bases: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Sometimes these are shown as twelve. That is because there must also be objects for the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Those objects are forms (*rūpa*), sounds (*sadda*), smells (*gandha*), tastes (*rasa*),

tangibles (*phoṭṭhabba*), and mind-objects (*dhamma*). 'Dhamma' means things understood by the mind. So, those are sometimes shown as the twelve sense-bases (*āyatana*). Where they are shown as twelve, they are shown as two parts: internal sense-bases (*ajjhattika-āyatana*) and external sense-bases (*bāhira-āyatana*). The internal sense-bases are eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—the six sense-bases connected to oneself, to one's body. Their objects are, in the external world, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles (*phoṭṭhabba*)—things to be touched—and mind-objects (*dhamma*), things understood by the mind, objects that come to the mind. The Blessed One declared that the world exists within this. The entire world arises here. All connections of the entire world exist within these six, within that contact (*phassa*). So, it is through the realization of this that one can draw close to Nibbāna.

Regarding this, there is another valuable discourse with similes that is very helpful to meditators. When the Blessed One was residing at Jetavana Monastery, Great Pajāpatī Gotamī Therī came to the Blessed One and made a special request on behalf of the bhikkhunīs: "May a monk come on every Uposatha day to give us a sermon." The Blessed One gave permission for that. Since then, those elders went in turn to the bhikkhunī monastery called Rājakārāma and delivered a Dhamma discourse. Although the other elders went, Venerable Nandaka did not go. He did not like to. When his turn came, he avoided it for some reason. One day, the Blessed One asked the monks, "Whose turn is it today to preach the Dhamma to the bhikkhunīs?" "It is Venerable Nandaka's." "Then why?" When asked, they said, "Venerable Nandaka does not wish to go." Then the Blessed One told Venerable Nandaka, "Nandaka, go and deliver a discourse to the bhikkhunīs." So, Venerable Nandaka went and delivered a valuable discourse to the bhikkhunīs regarding these six sense-bases (*āyatana*) we mentioned. A great discourse. Since meditators can benefit by deeply reflecting on those similes, we decided to present it at this moment.

Venerable Nandaka first said to those bhikkhunīs, "My discourse will proceed as a question-and-answer session. Now, while I am preaching, if anyone has a question, you must ask. If you understand, you must say you understand. If you do not understand, you must say you do not understand. You must ask me where it is not understood." Saying so, he began the discourse. Thus, step by step, he expected a response from those bhikkhunīs. He started like this. Often in the Dhamma, the discourse on impermanence (*anicca*) or the three characteristics (*ti-lakkhaṇa*) is presented first. The address used there is "Sisters." "Sisters, what do you think? Is this eye permanent (*nicca*) or impermanent (*anicca*)?" "Impermanent (*anicca*), Bhante." "Then, if something is impermanent, is it pleasure (*sukha*) or suffering (*dukkha*)?" "Suffering (*dukkha*), Bhante." "Next, if something is suffering (*dukkha*), impermanent (*anicca*), and subject to change, is it proper to regard it as self (*attā*), 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self'?" "No, Bhante." In this way, he questioned them regarding the eye, as well as the six internal sense-bases (*ajjhattika-āyatana*): ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

Having questioned them thus, when he asked, "Why do you say so? Why do you say so?" those bhikkhunīs replied, "Because we have understood their impermanence (*anicca*)." He asked similarly about the external sense-bases (*bāhira-āyatana*). "Is form (*rūpa*) permanent or impermanent?" "Impermanent." "If it is impermanent, is it pleasure or suffering?" "Suffering." "If it is impermanent and subject to change, is it proper to regard it as 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self'?" "No." Thus, the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*) were presented in a question-and-answer format regarding the six internal sense-bases (*ajjhattika-āyatana*)—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—and the six external sense-bases (*bāhira-āyatana*)—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, and mind-objects. Next, Venerable Nandaka asked about eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*). "Now, when we see something, we say there is an eye and there is a form, because we have the power to distinguish them. That is eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*). Is that eye-consciousness permanent or impermanent?" "That too is impermanent, Bhante," they said. In this way, regarding the six sense-bases such as eye and ear, he asked about the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that helps to obtain knowledge through our senses, such as eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, etc. They declared that those too are impermanent (*anicca*).

Next, he asked, "Is the contact (*phassa*) arising because of these permanent?" "No, that too is not." "Is feeling (*vedanā*) permanent?" "No, that too is not permanent." Then, he explained the reason for that in each place. Feelings (*vedanā*) arise due to causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*) that arise in each instance. With the cessation of those, those feelings cease. Therefore, feeling cannot be taken as self (*attā*). We think of feeling as something continuous, as something that exists. But when wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) is applied according to the Dhamma, one understands that it too arises due to causes and conditions along with contact (*phassa*). On another occasion, in another place, a monk named Moliya Phagguna asked the Blessed One, "Who experiences feeling?" The Blessed One replied, "The question 'Who experiences feeling?' itself is wrong. Feeling arises due to contact (*phassa*), due to a certain condition (*paccaya*)." That is what the Blessed One pointed out. Instead of the feeling of self, 'I' and 'mine', feeling arises due to a contact (*phassa*); he asked him to direct the mind to that. By directing the mind to contact (*phassa*), realization can be obtained. "It is not that 'I' experience feeling. Due to this contact, these feelings arise." Those bhikkhunīs understood that matter gradually.

Next, to demonstrate that feeling (*vedanā*) should not be taken as self (*attā*), he gave this simile: "The oil in a lamp is impermanent (*anicca*). The wick is impermanent. The flame is impermanent. If someone says that the light of the lamp is permanent, is that correct?" Then the bhikkhunīs said, "That is incorrect, because since the conditions (*paccaya*) that caused the light are impermanent, the light of that lamp must also be impermanent. It should not be taken as self (*attā*)." Similarly, Venerable Nandaka declared, "Whether it is pleasant feeling (*vedanā*), painful feeling (*vedanā*), or neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) arising due to that contact (*phassa*), it is not permanent. That too is impermanent. Why? Because of

those impermanent conditions (*paccaya*)." 'Condition' (*paccaya*) means cause—that which helps something to arise is called a condition (*paccaya*) in the Dhamma. So, various things arise due to various causes and conditions. Since the various causes from which feeling (*vedanā*) arises are impermanent, feeling too is impermanent. There is no nature that can be taken as 'I' or 'mine'. In that manner, he showed the six internal sense-bases—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—through the simile of the lamp.

Next, if feelings (*vedanā*) arise in connection with forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, and mind-objects, they too are impermanent. To show that there too they cannot be taken as self, he gave another simile: "The root of a large growing tree is impermanent, the trunk is impermanent, the branches and leaves are impermanent. If someone says that the shadow cast by it is permanent, is that correct?" he asked. The bhikkhunīs said, "That is incorrect." "What is the reason? If there are causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*) for the shadow to arise, they are impermanent. Since the causes and conditions are impermanent, the shadow itself must also be impermanent."

Next, he gave another simile: "Suppose a butcher, with a sharp knife—what is called a butcher's knife, used for cutting cattle—skins a cow. He separates the hide in such a way that the flesh is not cut, and the hide is not cut. He cuts only the inner tendons, only the tendon-bonds. Having done so, he covers that cow again with that same hide. If one then says, 'This is the same cow as was there before, there is no difference,' is that correct?" "No, Bhante." "Why? Because now there is only the hide on the outside, there is no tendon-bond." Now, here is how the simile is explained: the inner flesh of the cow is like the six internal sense-bases (*ajjhattika-āyatana*)—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The outer hide is like the six external objects—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, and mind-objects. These two were connected by the tendon-bonds. The butcher cut those tendon-bonds. Those tendon-bonds are what is called in the Dhamma by the word *nandī-rāga* (delight and lust), attachment, craving (*taṇhā*)—to put it briefly, craving, desire. It is through that desire that these two, the eye and the form, are connected. That is why lust called *nandī-rāga* arises from there.

Then, with what is that bond cut? What is compared to the butcher's knife? The noble wisdom (*ariya-paññā*). When one sees with wisdom at any moment as impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*), if the six internal sense-bases and the six external sense-bases are impermanent, then the contact (*phassa*) and feeling (*vedanā*) arising due to them are also impermanent. It is through the realization that there is nothing here to be attached to, nothing to be taken as 'mine', that that attachment is destroyed. That is what we have to understand there.

Regarding the remaining part of that discourse, it is mentioned in the Sutta as follows: having delivered the discourse with those similes, Venerable Nandaka said, "Very well, now it is time for us to depart. You may go," and dismissed those

bhikkhunīs, and Venerable Nandaka also returned. The bhikkhunīs, perhaps hoping that the Blessed One might add something, approached the Blessed One, paid homage, and stood there for a while, waiting to see if the Blessed One would say anything. The Blessed One said only this: "Go, sisters," and sent them away. As those bhikkhunīs were leaving, the Blessed One made a special statement to the Sangha. You all know what the full-moon Uposatha is. The fourteenth day (*catuddasī*) is the day before the full-moon Uposatha. The moon is not fully round on that day. If today is the fifteenth day (full moon), yesterday was the fourteenth day. The Blessed One said something like this to the Sangha: "Monks, just as it is obvious at first glance that the moon is not full on the fourteenth Uposatha day, even though these bhikkhunīs have felt some joy because of Venerable Nandaka's discourse, their expectations are not fully fulfilled. 'Expectations' means their expectation of Nibbāna is not fully fulfilled. Some joy has arisen; that discourse is good. But it is not fulfilled." Having said so, the Blessed One told Venerable Nandaka, "Nandaka, go and deliver this very same discourse tomorrow as well." Even in this day and age, these meritorious people listen to recorded discourses again and again. A similar wonderful event is found here. He told Venerable Nandaka to deliver the very same discourse.

Venerable Nandaka also went there the next day. Having approached, he delivered the same discourse as before, in the same manner, saying, "I am going to ask in a question-and-answer format," and in the same way, he gradually directed their minds. "Are eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body impermanent, are they not? Are their objects also impermanent, are they not? If those objects are impermanent, is not the feeling (*vedanā*) arising with them as cause and condition also impermanent?" He reminded them of those similes again and again. And to all of this, those bhikkhunīs gave their response, to show that they understood, with a certain passage: "Due to the causes (*paccaya*) that arise in those respective places, the corresponding feelings (*vedanā*) arise; with the cessation of those respective causes, those feelings also cease."

That is to say, if certain feelings (*vedanā*) arise due to certain conditions (*paccaya*), when those conditions cease, those feelings also cease. That is the fundamental principle. Since we started our discourse on this question of feeling, this is a very important passage, like a valuable meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*). What is meant by it is an indication that those bhikkhunīs understood this Dhamma. That is to say, feeling (*vedanā*) is not something that should be taken as self (*attā*), as 'I' or 'mine'. Feeling is always something that arises due to certain conditions (*paccaya*). Therefore, since those conditions are impermanent (*anicca*), feeling too must be impermanent. But it is because of taking them as permanent that attachments and conflicts arise in that manner. That is the story there. After delivering this same discourse, just like the previous day, Venerable Nandaka said, "Very well, the time is up," and returned. The bhikkhunīs also went to the Blessed One, paid homage, and stood.

To them, the Blessed One said again, "Very well, sisters, now you may go," and dismissed them. Having dismissed them, he said to the Sangha: "Monks, just as on the full-moon Uposatha day, one can easily know whether the moon is full or not, in the same way, all these five hundred bhikkhunīs have attained the fruits of the path (*magga-phala*). At the very least, some have attained the stage of Stream-entry (*sotāpanna*)." From this, we can understand something about the way Dhamma was heard in the past. Even now, these meritorious people record these discourses we deliver, and after recording, listen to them again and again. But we do not know for sure whether they listen in the way they ought to listen. If they develop the meditation reflection (*bhāvanā-manasikāra*) in the manner thought of, there is even a possibility of such a change occurring. We can understand that from this past event.

Especially, we raised this question of feeling (*vedanā*) because what affects all of us is suffering (*Dukkha*). Physical suffering is like an abyss. It is to relieve this physical suffering that we seek pleasure. To eliminate the physical suffering we have now, and to eliminate the physical suffering that might come in the future, is why the world runs this wonderful race. Sunk in it in a way that no bottom can be found, they go searching for pleasant feelings (*vedanā*). But the Blessed One points out that what is to be done here is to bring the mind to neutrality. That realization is obtained by looking at all of these as things belonging to these three characteristics: impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). Everything is impermanent. Therefore, even when taken individually, they are impermanent. These are things that arise due to causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*). Through this perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), what happens gradually?

We all know that it is by taking things as permanent (*nicca*) that a sign (*nimitta*) comes to the mind. It is by taking things as permanent that things are remembered in the mind. But when insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) is deeply developed, one understands that after taking them as impermanent (*anicca*), they are not grasped by the mind. That is called the signless (*animitta*). It becomes impossible to take a sign. We are holding the entire world with the mind. That is why the Blessed One declared that the world exists within the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). Therefore, if we are to release this grasp (*grahana*), we must bring forth this Dhamma principle highlighted by the Blessed One.

Everything—the internal eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, and everything that is their object—is impermanent (*anicca*). It changes from moment to moment. It changes with wonderful rapidity. Although we speak so much about the change of our body, and although we hear about their change through research and various instruments, it is not understood by one's own mind. It is not realized (*pratyaksha*). That is where the problem lies. Because it is not understood by one's own mind, we run after whatever we see. Therefore, at some point, the impermanence (*anicca*) declared by the Blessed One, the way these change very rapidly, is understood by oneself through insight wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*). Think about the simile of the

lamp highlighted by Venerable Nandaka. We think that the light is permanent. When a lamp is lit, we read a book with that light without any trouble. Therefore, our understanding is that this light remains just as it is. But when looking at it in terms of causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*), when the oil is finished and the wick is finished, we understand that the light decreases.

In that manner, the light arose due to certain causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*). In the same way are our feelings (*vedanā*). According to the very impermanence (*anicca*) of our sense-bases, even the form seen by our eye—when eyesight decreases or due to various other causes, other things can be seen. When eyesight decreases, we even begin to see things that do not exist in the world. The same is true of the other senses. So, one must deeply reflect on that impermanence in that manner. The simile of the tree is also like that. The shadow of the tree—we have a general feeling that the shadow is permanent, but when looking at everything, if it is subject to the law of impermanence, we cannot take only that as permanent. What happens through that realization? The attachment called *nandī-rāga*—it is after taking those two as permanent that they are connected. Just as the flesh and the hide were connected by tendons, the eye and the form are connected by that Dhamma word, *nandī-rāga*. *Nandī-rāga* means attachment characterized by delight. Running after the form caught by the eye is that attachment characterized by delight. So, just as the butcher cuts with the butcher's knife, what do we have to do? There, the butcher's knife is compared to noble wisdom (*ariya-paññā*). If we take noble wisdom at the level we can understand, insight meditators (*vipassanā-yogāvacara*) know: what is the knife, the instrument we use when we enter into this insight (*vipassanā*)? It is attention (*manasikāra*), reflection.

Insight teachers always ask their pupils, "Did you note? Did you note? Did you note quickly?" That noting is the knife. It is that noting itself that gradually develops, and at some point, when realization is strengthened, rises as wisdom (*paññā*). Wisdom is a word of great meaning, but the root seed lies in that noting. And that noting must be the proper noting called wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). It is because of improper noting that we have come so far in samsāra. Improper noting is also shown as distortion (*vipallāsa*) and perversion (*viparīta*).

We have often reminded you that there is a perverted perception (*viparīta-saññā*), a perverted view (*viparīta-diṭṭhi*), and a perverted mind (*viparīta-citta*) within the world. The general meaning of perversion (*viparīta*) and distortion (*vipallāsa*) is like this: if someone stands on their head, that is not the normal state, it is a perverted thing. In the same way, the understanding, the point of view of ordinary people, is entirely wrong according to the Buddha's word. They regard what is impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent (*nicca*). They regard what is foul (*asubha*) as beautiful (*subha*). They regard what is painful (*dukkha*) as pleasant (*sukha*). They think of what is non-self (*anattā*)—what is not theirs, what cannot be kept under their control—as theirs. That is what exists within the world as perverted perceptions, views, and thoughts. It is because of this very reason that we have traveled in this

samsāra for so long. Its result is these five aggregates of grasping (*pañc'upādānakkhandha*) we have gathered: the five groups of form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). We gathered them by such a trick. That is to say, by gathering the eye, form, ear, sound, etc., what is gathered is ultimately called "this is my group of form, this is my group of feeling, this is my group of perception, this is my group of volitional activity—which is the group of intentions—this is my group of consciousness—the group of thoughts." In this way, what is shown in the Dhamma as a "person" is the five aggregates of grasping (*upādānakkhandha*). Five groups. This is what we are holding as 'I' and 'mine' according to the Buddha's word. So, when its true nature is realized, gradually that tight bond, that tight tie, is loosened. What helps to loosen it is that attention (*manasikāra*). The proper reflection, the proper noting called wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*).

Now, we have to think that even though they did not have machines like these, after hearing that discourse on the first day, it sank well into their minds. They were very happy. But no realization of the fruits of the path occurred. During those twenty-four hours, they must have raised it to meditation reflection (*bhāvanā-manasikāra*) and energized it further. That is why the Blessed One said for the second time, "Deliver the very same discourse." Generally, people cannot listen to the same discourse; they might even have stood up and left, saying, "Isn't this what we heard yesterday?" But why did those bhikkhunīs listen with great respect to that discourse, with its similes, without any omission? Not merely listening, but with meditation reflection (*bhāvanā-manasikāra*).

These meritorious people too must learn a lesson from that. From this side story, also the way Dhamma should be heard, that it is not good to insult the Dhamma saying, "This is what is said every day." On the other hand, if through what is said every day, one sees something deeply, if one sees a new meaning in it, then one has benefited from it. That can be done by applying proper wisdom, applying mindfulness, and hearing the Dhamma in the way it should be heard.

We have mentioned before: to hear the Dhamma in the true manner is shown as how the noble disciples in the past heard the Dhamma: *"atthikaṁ katvā manasikatvā sabba-cetasā ohita-soto dhammaṁ suṇāti."* 'Atthikaṁ katvā' means "This is of use to me. There is a benefit in this for me." 'Of use' does not mean listening to go and pass an exam, but to realize Nibbāna. "This is of use for my Nibbāna, for my progress, to develop my mind." *Manasikatvā* means reflecting word by word. Not thinking, "I did not listen to this now, but it is nicely recorded in this machine; I can listen to it whenever I want." *Manasikatvā*—reflecting word by word, listening with good wisdom. *Ohita-soto*—with attentive ears, not with half the mind here and half the mind somewhere else. 'Attentive ears' means with full attention, listening with the mind fully directed; it is then that such a meditative change occurs within a person.

Because they benefited from that in the past, the Blessed One told Venerable Nandaka to deliver the very same discourse again. Then we see that change. On that fourteenth Uposatha day, and next, like the full moon of the fifteenth Uposatha day, those bhikkhunīs realized the fruits of the path (*magga-phala*). When we say "the world" in this day and age, we think of the world of the materialists as something external to us. But the Blessed One defined the world: the world itself is suffering (*Dukkha*). Suffering is the world. The world and suffering are connected to each other like two panels of a folding door. The Blessed One has defined: *"loko patiṭṭhito loko dukkhe patiṭṭhitaṁ"* — "The world is established on suffering, suffering is established on the world." Like two folding panels. Why did the Blessed One declare so? What we grasp as the world is that knowledge received from those six sense-bases (*āyatana*), is it not? There is nothing outside of that, is there? What is seen by the eye, what is heard by the ear, thinking in that way, ultimately, what is understood by the mind. What is understood by the mind is what gathers there mostly.

What is gathered from those five ultimately goes to the mind, does it not? That which is gathered in the mind is what we call the world. Saying "Things happened in such and such a place in this way," what is called globalization is going on. They think of that globe as something existing outside. That globe is right here. Because our 'globies' (worldly people) do not know that, these entanglements have occurred. So, globalization is actually right here, within those six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*).

That is why the Blessed One declared: *"chasu loko samuppanno"* — "In six the world has arisen." 'In six' means, by putting together both the eye and the form, sometimes it is shown as six. We take twelve when we separate them as internal and external. If taken so, there are twelve sense-bases (*āyatana*). But where those two connect, that is called the bases of contact (*samphassāyatana*). When those two connect and contact (*phassa*) occurs, it can also be taken as six. There, it is called the base of eye-contact (*cakkhu-samphassāyatana*), the base of ear-contact (*sota-samphassāyatana*). Contact regarding the eye is one sense-base. Contact regarding the ear is another sense-base. Taken in that way, there are six. So, it is within those six that the world is born: *"chasu loko samuppanno, chasu kubbati santhavaṁ"* — "In six the world has arisen, in six it makes its acquaintance." It is with these six that all coordination (acquaintance) is made. All coordination is within these six.

Now, in this day and age, there are various devices to connect with the world. All of these devices do not work on their own. We put them to our ear, to our eye, and through them we receive all of this. Thus, we bring those external devices close to these six sense-bases (*āyatana*). We must remember that what is still being performed is an activity of the six sense-bases. That is the world. That statement of the Blessed One is true even today: *"chasu kubbati santhavaṁ"* — "In six it makes its acquaintance." All acquaintances—'acquaintance' means associating, coordinating, and such new words—all are done within these six. Next: *"channam-eva upādāya, chasu loko vihaññati"* — "By grasping these six, the world is oppressed in the six." Grasping (*upādāna*) these six, the entire world is oppressed, is weary in these six—

this is the Buddha's word. That is why the Blessed One declared: the world is equal to suffering (*Dukkha*), suffering is equal to the world. Thus, within this very perception of the world (*loka-saññā*) that we take based on those six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*), this suffering (*Dukkha*) exists. Even if we separate it as pleasure, indeed, that is what the Blessed One declares. The true noble disciple (*ariya-sāvaka*) must see pleasure as suffering (*Dukkha*), and see suffering as a thorn. Leaving aside other things, neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (*adukkham-asukha vedanā*), though peaceful, is also impermanent (*anicca*). So, through that, what is shown to us is the impermanent nature of everything.

Through this realization, we must make an effort, if our deep aspiration is to be freed from this samsāra, to meditate basing ourselves on some such meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), and quickly bring forth that noble wisdom (*ariya-paññā*), and through the penetration (*paṭivedha*) of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*sotāpanna*), Once-returning (*sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*anāgāmi*), and Arahantship (*arahatta*), to cross over from the suffering of samsāra such as birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and death. May the discourse delivered today also be a supportive condition (*upanissaya*), a help for that! We aspire thus. Similarly, if anyone from Avīci to Akaniṭṭha wishes to rejoice in this merit of delivering and hearing the Dhamma, through that rejoicing, using that merit as a help, may it help them to realize the noble, supreme, great Nibbāna through an aspiration of enlightenment (*bodhi*) of their choice! Say this:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*"