Pahankanuwa Sermon #156

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.82)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

"Vāṇijo va bhayaṃ maggaṃ,

appasattho mahaddhano;

Visaṃ jīvitukāmo va,

pāpāni parivajjaye."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 123 (Pāpa Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

The Buddha, the Teacher of the Three Worlds, explained demerit and merit to the world based on the far-reaching understanding he gained regarding existence in *saṃsāra*. Due to a lack of foresight, the Buddha saw how living beings fall into Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) in *saṃsāra*. The Buddha points out how, by acting as slaves to one's whims based on a narrow philosophy of life limited only to this life, one undergoes bitter Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) in *saṃsāra* for an infinite length of time. Today's thematic verse is one that illustrates this very point. The Buddha preached this Dhamma verse at the Jetavana monastery to a group of monks, addressing a disastrous situation faced by a certain wealthy merchant.

About five hundred thieves had been watchfully waiting for a very long time to break into the house of a very wealthy merchant living in the city of Sāvatthī. But they did not get the opportunity. On a certain occasion, this merchant set out to trade in a distant region, preparing five hundred carts. In those days, there was a custom where merchants travelling to such distant regions would inform the monks, inviting them to accompany them if they also wished to travel in that direction, because they had to travel through vast forests. Likewise, this merchant told the monks, "I am going to

trade in such-and-such a region. If you, venerable sirs, are also planning to go there, please come with me. Then there will be no trouble regarding alms-food (*piṇḍapāta*), etc." Hearing that the merchants were leaving, those thieves hid in the forest along that path to rob them when they passed by. Meanwhile, the merchant set out with the group of monks, and exactly at the entrance to the forest, they stopped at a village for two or three days to organize the carts and oxen.

Knowing that the journey was delayed, the thieves, who were waiting for the merchant, sent a thief to a villager friend of his to find out the reason for the merchant's delay. When he asked the villagers when this wealthy merchant would depart, the villager replied, "Perhaps in two or three days. Why do you ask?" He replied, "Our group is ready and waiting for these merchants." Thereupon, the villager said, "Then the merchants will come soon," and after sending his friend away, he thought, "Should I side with the merchant, or should I side with these thieves?" Then he reasoned, "Because of this merchant, a group of monks is receiving alms and other requisites. Therefore, even though he is my friend, I will side with the monks instead of the thieves." This villager then went to the merchant and asked, "When do you intend to leave? When are you departing?" When the merchant said it would be on the third day, the villager replied, "Then listen to my word. Do not go on that journey. If you go, such-and-such a thing will happen." When asked, "How did you know?" he replied, "I have a friend in that gang of thieves. It was from him that I got this tip." The merchant thought, "Now it is dangerous for me to go through that forest. Therefore, I must return to the village." Having thought so, he was preparing to do so.

Meanwhile, the thief again sent that man to find out about the merchant's delay. Then the villager said, "Now those merchants are preparing to return." Next, they prepared to rob them on their return journey. The merchant received information from the villager that there were dangers even on the return journey and that the thieves were lying in wait. Because of this, the merchant was at a complete loss as to what to do. He went to the monks and said, "Now I cannot go on this planned journey, nor can I return to my village. Thieves are waiting to rob me. Therefore, if any of you, venerable sirs, wish to remain right here, please do so. Do as you wish. I will be delayed for some days due to this situation." The monks said, "In that case, we will return to Sāvatthī." When they returned to the Buddha, the Buddha asked, "Monks, why did you not go with that wealthy merchant?" The monks then related the news: "We went like this, but because of this danger of thieves, a dilemma arose for the merchant, and he remained there. We returned because of this."

Using that as an illustration, the Buddha then addressed the monks: "Monks, consider that this entire *Bhava* (Becoming) is like a place fraught with the danger of thieves." Knowing this, he gave another simile: "Just as someone who wishes to live avoids poison, and just as a merchant avoids a dangerous path, one must quickly escape from this *Bhava* (Becoming)." Giving advice in this manner, he delivered a discourse. He delivered a discourse that would even help those monks attain the

fruits of the path (*magga-phala*). The verse related to that sermon is what we have set as today's topic. It is a very simple verse:

Vāṇijo va bhayaṃ maggaṃ,

appasattho mahaddhano;

visaṃ jīvitukāmo va,

pāpāni parivajjaye.

Just as a merchant with a small caravan—a "caravan" refers to the groups of carts that went on trading journeys in the past; meaning a small group of carts—but with great wealth, avoids a dangerous path; and just as one who wishes to live, *visaṃ jīvitukāmo va*, one who desires to live avoids poison, a deadly poison; so too, *pāpāni parivajjaye*, one should avoid evil deeds (sins). This is the instruction mentioned in that verse.

Although this is a story, the Buddha used it to direct the minds of the monks to a far deeper matter. This is an ordinary event that happens in the world. However, even from this small story, we can reflect on something. The merchant's life was saved—the opportunity for the merchant to escape danger arose—because that villager pondered whether to side with his close friend or with the merchant. At that moment, due to the merchant's faithful nature, because of his quality of faith (*saddhā*), and because he was helping the monks, protection was afforded to him, and he received that tip. That faithful merchant had the opportunity to save his life because of his faith (*saddhā*). Thus, based on the discourse given by the Buddha, and using this story, this incident as a starting point, the Buddha gives a certain "tip" to the world. What is this tip? This journey in *saṃsāra* is a journey undertaken on a path fraught with great danger. Therefore, the sooner one puts an end to this journey in *saṃsāra*, the greater the peace one has. One can reach a safe haven. One can reach the safe haven of Nibbāna. This is the idea given here.

The Buddha constantly speaks about avoiding evil deeds (sins). Why does the Buddha tell us to avoid such sins? We know that we have to perform various actions to carry on with life. The actions that seem easiest for maintaining and sustaining life are what appear as the five sins (five precepts violations). Living by killing, stealing, lying, and in other ways mentioned among the five sins, is easy. Yet, the Buddha describes them as unwholesome deeds (*pāpa-kamma*). Not only that, there is also a category called the ten unwholesome courses of action (*dasa-akusala*). Thus, the Buddha tells us to abstain from these because they carry severe consequences (*vipāka*). This is due to his far-sighted point of view. If we look at it daily from a narrow angle limited only to this life, it might seem that there is nothing wrong with carrying on with life in whatever way possible. But according to the far-sighted vision of *saṃsāra* shown by the Buddha, according to this perspective, the shortcomings in the short-term plans of worldly beings begin to appear. Worldly beings make those

plans without any thought about *saṃsāra*, without knowing about it. Worldly beings only see this world visible to the physical eye. Many people doubt the four woeful states (*catu-apāya*), etc., shown by the Buddhas and those with higher direct knowledges—especially when it comes to worlds other than the animal realm, even if they might accept the animal world.

Yet, the Buddha points out that it is these unwholesome deeds that cause birth in hells and other such places. Therefore, he tells us to abstain from them. The simile of poison is shown here. A person who wishes to live does not knowingly drink poison. Similarly, one who desires happiness and dislikes Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) should not commit sins—this is the Buddha's advice. Indeed, the question of livelihood has always been a great challenge to the world. What action should be taken in the face of the question of survival? At that point, the Buddha introduces to the world two things: wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) and right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). Indeed, if one recognizes wrong livelihood, abstaining from it itself is considered right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) for laypeople. To briefly introduce wrong livelihood, it is presented in five terms in the Sutta discourses, stating that one should abstain from five types of trade. What are they? *Sattha, satta, maṃsa, visa, majja* (weapons, living beings, meat, poison, and intoxicants). *Sattha* means weapons—the trade in weapons, living by it. Likewise, *satta* refers to living beings—indeed, here it means human beings, living beings; it refers to humans. Next, *maṃsa*, the trade in meat. Next, the trade in poison (*visa*). Next, the trade in intoxicants (*majja*).

Why these are shown as wrong may also be a question to some. The trade in weapons—the trade in weapons of war—contains the quality of instigating war and conflict to satisfy hatred. Because of this production and trade of weapons, it is a form of trade that leads to violence towards others. The trade in weapons is shown as something that should not be done by a faithful Buddhist lay disciple.

Similarly, although the word *satta* (written as *satata* in the transcription) is there, it means selling men and women into slavery or for immoral purposes—the selling of a life, and other such forms of trade. These lead to social corruption and cause harm to others. Next is the trade in meat. Regarding this, there are certain controversies in this day and age. Speaking of the trade, as some point out, wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) exists only at the back of the butcher shop, while right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) is at the front. This is because the killing of animals is done only at the back, while at the front, the meat of those dead animals is kept for use and consumption by those who seek health. Thus, they think that the front part is right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). But if we think deeply, we can see the trade itself as wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*). Within it, there is a quality of making humans crave, get addicted to, and become greedy for the taste of meat.

Even in these times, when lay disciples who have an understanding of society talk about food, there is a tendency to expect fresh meat just as one buys fresh vegetables.

"Fresh meat" means something like killing and eating on a daily basis. Likewise, warm food is considered superior. In some hotels, at that moment, the customer or guest chooses the animal they like, and it is brought to the table, killed, and eaten while the blood is still warm—we even get to hear of such things. What is seen from this is greed for the tongue. To please the tongue, to satisfy the greed for the taste of meat, even the tongue of a cow is cut, cooked, and eaten, to such an extent that the beastly, demonic qualities in the human mind-stream (*citta-santāna*) are brought out. Thus, when we think about hotel life, the only difference between the food eaten by a beast and the food eaten by a human is the use of spoons and forks. To that extent, since this meat trade habituates society to certain wrong habits, beastly habits, we can see that there is a disadvantageous side to the meat trade. It is difficult to consider it as right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*).

The others are clear. In the trade of poison, what is present is helping to destroy someone's life. Today, mass slaughter of animals often takes place; sometimes there is no understanding of the environmental pollution within it. However, the trade in poison that aids in the mass killing of insects, denying their right to live, can also be included in this. When we think deeply, these are things that defile one's mind-stream (*citta-santāna*) and harm the world. Demerit (*akusala*) was described as that which leads to self-harm and harm to others.

When we think deeply, self-harm means the defilement of one's own mind—the defilement of the mind-stream (*citta-santāna*). If one drinks poison, either life is destroyed immediately because of it, or after that poison enters the body, one has to suffer its consequences after some time. Such is the case with poison that enters the physical body (*rūpa-santāna*). But through the poison that arises as unwholesome deeds (*akusala*) entering the mind-stream (*citta-santāna*), it either yields results in this very life as *diṭṭhadhammavedanīya* (to be experienced in this life), or as *upapajjavedanīya* (to be experienced in the next life), or as *aparāpariyavedanīya* (to be experienced in subsequent lives) in a future life; through that poison added to the mind-stream (*citta-santāna*), one has to undergo painful, bitter Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*) in hells (*apāya*) and other such places. That is why the Buddha showed that such things should not be done.

There is nothing new to tell you lay disciples about the trade in intoxicants mentioned last. There, too, is that which completely deranges the mind, makes one forget human existence, and reduces one to a beastly state. Next is the addiction to drinking. The trade in intoxicants leads to that addiction. The Buddha indicates that a true faithful Buddhist lay disciple must withdraw from such trading methods. This question of livelihood is a problem for many people, especially in this day and age, because support and encouragement for wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) are received from all sides. A person who desires a righteous livelihood has to face dilemmas just like that merchant. Facing dilemmas means facing great problems of whether to go forward or backward. When we look at occupations and employment,

almost everything contains things that incline towards such wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*).

Solving that problem is indeed a matter left to each individual. However, a valuable Dhamma discourse that may help in this regard is mentioned in the Majjhima Nikāya by the name of the Dhanañjāni Sutta. It is a long Sutta discourse, but I will try to present it briefly. On one occasion, while the Buddha was residing at the Veluvana monastery in Rājagaha, the chief disciple Ven. Sāriputta wandered in the region of Dakkhiṇāgiri with a group of monks. Meanwhile, a certain monk who had spent the rains retreat (*vassa*) with the Buddha in Rājagaha arrived in the Dakkhiṇāgiri region and met Ven. Sāriputta.

First of all, Ven. Sāriputta asked this monk, "How is it, is the Blessed One dwelling in good health?" When the monk replied, "Yes," Sāriputta asked, "Is the community of monks in good health?" When the monk replied, "Yes," he next asked, "Is the Brahmin Dhanañjāni, who lives in the village of Taṇḍulapāla, in good health?" After the monk replied, "Yes," Ven. Sāriputta asked, "Is that Brahmin Dhanañjāni diligent (*appamāda*)?" Diligent here means diligent in wholesome deeds (*kusala*). That is, whether he is leading a righteous life without committing sins. It was then that the monk declared, "Friend Sāriputta, what diligence is there for Dhanañjāni? The Brahmin Dhanañjāni exploits brahmins and householders in the name of the king, and exploits the king in the name of brahmins and householders. He lives by corrupt practices. Furthermore, Dhanañjāni's former faithful wife has passed away, and he is now married to a woman who lacks faith." Hearing this, Ven. Sāriputta expressed his sadness: "Indeed, this is very bad news we have heard, that the Brahmin Dhanañjāni has fallen into negligence (*pamāda*). If only I could meet Dhanañjāni someday. It would be good if an opportunity to speak with him arose." Thus he made a mental note.

Sometime later, Ven. Sāriputta returned to Rājagaha and, while residing at the Veluvana monastery, went on his alms round in Rājagaha one morning. At that time, the Brahmin Dhanañjāni was engaged in milking his cows outside the city. Ven. Sāriputta, having finished his alms round and eaten his meal, walked to the place where the Brahmin Dhanañjāni was. Seeing Ven. Sāriputta from afar, the Brahmin Dhanañjāni invited him, saying, "Venerable Sāriputta, come and have some milk." Ven. Sāriputta replied, "No, there is no need. I have finished my meal. Come to such-and-such a tree. I will be resting there under that tree during the daytime. Come there." Accordingly, while Ven. Sāriputta was under that tree, the Brahmin Dhanañjāni, having finished his meal, came to Ven. Sāriputta. Ven. Sāriputta, after exchanging friendly greetings, straightaway asked, "How is it, Dhanañjāni, are you diligent?"

Now, the answer given by the Brahmin Dhanañjāni is the very answer many people give nowadays. What did the Brahmin Dhanañjāni say? "Venerable Sāriputta, what diligence is there for us? We have parents to support. We have a wife and children to

support. We have servants and workers to support. We have to perform duties towards friends and companions. We have to perform duties towards relatives. We have to perform duties towards guests. Next, we must perform offerings (*preta-pūjā*) to our departed relatives (*preta*). We must perform offerings to the deities (*deva-pūjā*). We must perform duties for the king. Not only that, we must also gratify and maintain this body. When there is such a heavy burden of duties, what diligence can there be for us?"

Thus, this Brahmin was leading an unrighteous, uneven life, inclining towards unrighteousness. Ven. Sāriputta declared, "But Brahmin, if you live unrighteously and lead an uneven life, and upon death are born in hell (*niraya*), can you escape by telling the wardens of hell (*yamapalla*), 'I did these things for the sake of my parents, to look after my parents; do nothing to me'? Can you escape thus?" The Brahmin replied, "No, that would not be possible." Ven. Sāriputta then asked, "Can those parents step forward and say, 'It was for our sake that our child behaved unrighteously and led an uneven life, so do not do anything to him'? Can they save him thus?" The Brahmin replied, "No, they cannot save him. The hell-wardens will drag him away and inflict various kinds of Suffering / Unsatisfactoriness / Stress (*dukkha*)."

In the same way, to make that matter clearer, Ven. Sāriputta questioned him about each of those groups of people: "If you behave unrighteously and lead an uneven life for the sake of wife and children, or for servants and workers..." In this way, he questioned him step-by-step so that it would sink deep into the Brahmin's mind. Finally, Ven. Sāriputta asked, "What do you think, Brahmin? If someone supports their parents righteously and evenly (*dhamma-cārī samacārī*), and another supports their parents unrighteously and unevenly (*adhamma-cārī visamacārī*), who between the two is the better person?" The Brahmin replied, "Indeed, the practice of supporting parents righteously and evenly is the better one." Then Ven. Sāriputta declared, "Brahmin, there are livelihoods in society through which one can live righteously, support one's parents, and perform meritorious deeds. This is a possible thing." Thus he convinced the Brahmin Dhanañjāni, and Dhanañjāni accepted it with joy.

Next, what we find in that Sutta discourse is the final period of the Brahmin Dhanañjāni's life. Being extremely ill and near death, the Brahmin Dhanañjāni sent a message through a servant to pay respects to the Buddha and to Ven. Sāriputta, and to invite Ven. Sāriputta, saying that the Brahmin Dhanañjāni was gravely ill and asking him to visit out of compassion. Ven. Sāriputta visited the house of the Brahmin Dhanañjāni. Having arrived, he began a Dhamma talk. Gradually, he delivered a Dhamma talk of a nature that would elevate the Brahmin's mind from lower worlds to higher worlds, and at the very end, he spoke about the four divine abodes (*brahma-vihāra*): loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

Ven. Sāriputta thought, "These brahmins desire to be born in the Brahma world. Therefore, I must tell him the path to the Brahma world." He then explained how to develop the four divine abodes (*brahma-vihāra*). Having explained this, he rose from his seat and returned. At that time, as his final words, the Brahmin Dhanañjāni said, "Pay homage to the Blessed One in my name." A short while after Ven. Sāriputta had left, that Brahmin passed away and was reborn in the Brahma world. When Ven. Sāriputta went to the Buddha and related this news, the Buddha admonished Ven. Sāriputta: "Why, Sāriputta, did you establish him in the inferior Brahma world when there was more to be done, when he could have gone much higher?" Thus he expressed a certain blame toward Ven. Sāriputta.

From this, we can understand that the strength of the wholesome potential (*kusala-shakti*) developed by that Brahmin near his death was so great that, if Ven. Sāriputta had in some way turned him toward insight (*vipassanā*) and preached the Dhamma, the Buddha was indicating that he could have realized the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*). "Why did you stop him at the inferior Brahma world when he could have been led higher?"—this was the admonition given to Ven. Sāriputta. We can learn many things from this incident. Although the story itself is brief, it is highly valuable as a Sutta discourse. On one hand, we see the wonderful compassion of Ven. Sāriputta. Indeed, the Brahmin Dhanañjāni was not even someone who had taken refuge in the Triple Gem. But because his former wife was extremely faithful, Ven. Sāriputta had a special compassion for this lay Brahmin. That is why, after inquiring about the Buddha's well-being and the Sangha's well-being, he asked the monk about the Brahmin Dhanañjāni.

Then, having visited him specifically for this purpose, instead of asking casual questions like "How are you? Where are you living?", Ven. Sāriputta asked, "Brahmin, are you diligent?" That is the real question. That is the correct question to ask lay disciples. "How is it, are you now leading your life diligently?" Based on the answer given to that question, Ven. Sāriputta convinced the Brahmin Dhanañjāni through that long discourse that an unrighteous life, an uneven life, uneven behavior is very dangerous, and that its consequences (*vipāka*) are extremely severe. It was because he understood this at the end that the Brahmin Dhanañjāni developed his mind so much at the moment of death. He developed it to such an extent that, by establishing himself in the four divine abodes (*brahma-vihāra*) of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity, he even attained birth in the Brahma world. Ven. Sāriputta brought about a massive transformation in his life at that moment. Otherwise, had he continued with that unrighteous life, the Brahmin Dhanañjāni would have fallen into hell (*apāya*) after death. We can learn something from this. Indeed, as stated earlier, everyone thinks that the easiest way to live is through those unrighteous methods. Why did the Buddha reject them? As we constantly remind you, today more place is given to the economy than to righteousness. Therefore, they try to inflate the economy to such an extent that there is no place for a righteous life. But the Buddha points out its result. When we think far-sightedly, the Buddha highlights the disadvantageous side (*ādīnava*) of it.

If we consider the easy methods, we have to take economic principles from the great ocean and the forest. This is because in the ocean there exists a very easy way of life. In ancient terms, this is called *mātsya-nyāya* (the law of the fish). *Mātsya-nyāya*, lay disciples, means the large preying on the small—the tuna preying on the sprat. Throughout the great ocean, there is only the large animal preying on the small animal. That is the easiest way of life. Next, in the forest, too, there is the strong preying on the weak. This natural law is expressed in the Buddha's words as follows:

In a Sutta discourse where this is mentioned, it is said that if one is born in the animal world, it is extremely difficult to obtain a good rebirth again. Taking a small amount of dust on his fingernail, the Buddha made a statement to the monks. The Buddha used this simile on many occasions. When asked, "Is the dust on the fingernail greater, or is the soil of the great earth greater?" the monks replied, "The soil of the great earth is much greater, while the dust on the fingernail is very little." The Buddha then told the monks, "Just so, monks, once someone is born in an animal womb, it is extremely difficult to rise out of it. It is like the dust on the fingernail; only a very few rise out of it. What is the reason for this? What are the two terms that describe the natural law in this animal world? *Aññamaññabhādikā ettha vattati, dubbalabhādikā*. *Aññamaññabhādikā* means devouring one another. The principle of devouring one another and the principle of oppressing the weak exist in the animal world." Indeed, it is those natural laws of the animal world that have gradually entered human society today.

The word "exploitation" (devouring / grabbing) that we mentioned in society is indeed a word taken from the animal world. Now, you lay disciples also occasionally get to see a kingfisher or a hawk perched on a tree, turning its head and watching for a while, as if deeply pondering some profound economic theory. After watching for a while, it dives down onto its prey with the speed of an arrow; that is "grabbing" (exploiting). That is the kind of thing happening in today's society. You know that this is done not only out of poverty; it is not only the poor, but also the rich who do this—grabbing/exploiting. What is seen through this is, just as the Brahmin Dhanañjāni did earlier, carrying on with one's livelihood through lying, fraud, theft, and various forms of corruption. The Buddha points out the severe consequences (*vipāka*) of these. We must learn something from this.

Thus, if we look at it according to that economic theory, there are indeed countless easy paths. Yet, the Buddha designates these five as wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) with a deep meaning. Life does not end there. When poison enters this physical body (*rūpa-santāna*), it affects only this life. But how do these enter the mind-stream (*citta-santāna*)? Through the defilement of mind, body, and speech—by their becoming corrupted. They become corrupted by greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dvesha*), delusion (*moha*), and other various defilements (*kilesa*). In particular, after a person's mind-stream (*citta-santāna*) is corrupted, not only by the unwholesome deeds of killing and stealing, but also by those things shown as the ten unwholesome courses of action (*dasa-akusala*), the next *Jāti* (Birth) is received as a result. Neither

parents nor relatives and friends can step forward and save a person from hells (*niraya*) and other such places. The Buddha shows this through the natural law of kamma.

You lay disciples have often heard the law of kamma expressed in words such as *kammasako'mhi kammadāyādo kammayoni kammabandhu kammapaṭisaraṇo*. Kamma is the only thing one takes from here. Only the kamma one has done, whether good or bad, is what one owns: *kammasako'mhi*—one is the owner of one's kamma. Likewise, what one has as one's inheritance is kamma: *kammadāyādo*—heir to one's kamma. Where one goes and is born, how one's birth is determined is kamma: *kammayoni*—born of one's kamma. What stands as one's relative is kamma: *kammabandhu*—related to one's kamma. What serves as one's refuge is kamma: *kammapaṭisaraṇo*—supported by one's kamma. Therefore, according to that word of the Buddha, we must reflect on the danger of those easy paths. What appears from this is the way we must practice equanimity (*upekkhā*) on certain occasions. Just as that merchant stopped for a while, unable to go forward or backward, when we face certain paths that seem easy, we must consider whether they are righteous or unrighteous, think whether they are even behavior or uneven behavior, and think deeply. If they fall on the uneven side, the unrighteous side, we must practice equanimity (*upekkhā*). That means we should not act rashly. For, by acting quickly, we get entangled in a severe unwholesome deed (*akusala*) without even knowing it. One will have to pay for it for a long time in *saṃsāra*.

That is why the Buddha explained the danger of this wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*). Normally, people now consider these as minor things. There is another very famous discourse delivered on this very topic. On one occasion, the Buddha declared that there are three types of people in the world. The analysis of persons the Buddha makes there is done by grasping both the economic and the righteous aspects. There is an analysis of persons made by grasping both the economic and the righteous aspects. There are three types of people in the world. Who are the three? The blind, the one-eyed, and the two-eyed. The Buddha explains the blind person as follows: There is a person who lacks the eye of wisdom necessary to acquire unacquired wealth, or to secure, consolidate, or increase acquired wealth. Likewise, that person also lacks the eye of wisdom, the Dhamma-eye, that helps to distinguish good and bad, wholesome and unwholesome (*kusala akusala*), merit and demerit. That person is completely blind.

The second person is the one-eyed. The Buddha describes such a person as one who has the economic eye necessary to acquire unacquired wealth and to increase acquired wealth, but lacks the righteous eye. This person does not reflect on good and bad, on the wholesome and unwholesome (*kusala akusala*). That is the nature of the one-eyed. The person with two eyes—according to this, you lay disciples can straightaway understand that this is the person who is complete in both aspects. Thus, if one is a true Buddhist disciple, according to that analysis shown by the Buddha, one must strive to live with both eyes. Otherwise, if one lives as a one-eyed

person, there will be severe consequences (*vipāka*). That is, the Buddha straightaway points out that if one lives unrighteously and unevenly through lies, fraud, theft, and violence, one will eventually have to suffer the consequences in hells (*niraya*) and other such places for a long time. In that analysis of persons, too, it becomes clear to us that the Buddha directed attention to both the economic and the righteous aspects.

Next, in a similar way, in a certain place, the Buddha points out four undertakings of Dhamma (*dhamma-samādāna*). You have heard of the undertaking of virtue (*sīla-samādāna*). Undertaking virtue (*sīla-samādāna*) means accepting a certain practice of virtue, striving to live according to it, making a promise, and making a determination. What is shown here by the name of *dhamma-samādāna* is not things like the five precepts or the eight precepts. What is spoken of here is the ten unwholesome courses of action (*dasa-akusala*)—abstaining from the ten unwholesome courses of action. Most people know what the ten unwholesome courses are: abstaining from the three unwholesome deeds done by the body, namely, killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. Next, abstaining from the four unwholesome deeds done by speech. What are they? Lying, slandering, harsh speech, and frivolous talk (*sampappalāpa*)—that is, speaking useless gossip, speaking meaningless words. Next, regarding the mind, the word *abhijjhā* (covetousness) is used. That means intense, uneven greed. How is uneven greed described? Greed exists in everyone. The nature of uneven greed is that when someone has something, one thinks, "Oh, if only I could get this somehow," and out of envy for another's happiness, a greed arises to acquire it. That greed, that uneven greed, is a severe unwholesome deed developed by the mind. Similarly, hatred—a hateful mind. Next, thirdly, wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) is shown: uneven greed, a hateful mind, and wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*).

Taking up the practice of abstaining from these ten unwholesome courses of action (*dasa-akusala*) is what is meant here by *dhamma-samādāna*. The Buddha points out four types of *dhamma-samādāna*. In this brief, limited time, we do not need to mention all of those matters. It is not necessary to show them. We will highlight only the two matters relevant to this topic. One of these four is: there is a certain undertaking of Dhamma (*dhamma-samādāna*) that brings happiness in the present but yields painful consequences in the future. There is another undertaking of Dhamma (*dhamma-samādāna*) that has a painful nature in the present but yields happiness in the future. Let us first describe the one mentioned first.

The Buddha points it out in this way: Suppose someone engages in killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, etc., with great joy and pleasure. They engage in those sins with great joy. But having gone and been born in hell (*apāya*), they have to suffer severe, painful consequences (*vipāka*) of those deeds. The Buddha also gives a simile for this. The Buddha gives similes, etc., to make every single point sink deep into the mind, not as poetic ornaments. What is the simile? Suppose there is a vessel containing a good drink. That drink has a beautiful color, a good fragrance, and a

good taste. There is a drink that is colorful, fragrant, and tasty. But this drink has been mixed with poison.

A person who is interested comes there. Those standing by the vessel of drink say, "Come, come, here is a good drink. This is tasty, fragrant, and colorful. However, poison has been mixed into this. If you wish, drink it. When drinking, it is very tasty and fragrant. But after drinking it, you will either die or fall into a suffering equivalent to death." This is what those standing by the vessel of drink say. Indeed, they state the fact. Thereupon, that person drinks it without reflecting wisely. What happens when he drinks it? While drinking, it is tasty. But after drinking, he faces death in the manner described, or falls into a suffering equivalent to death. This is the simile given by the Buddha for the practice of performing unwholesome deeds with joy, which are pleasant while doing them, but eventually bring painful consequences (*vipāka*) that one must suffer.

What is the second undertaking of Dhamma (*dhamma-samādāna*) mentioned? At the time of engaging in them, it is painful. It is felt not as happiness but as pain, as displeasure. Yet, its fruit, its consequence (*vipāka*), is happiness. It is something that brings happiness. The Buddha's simile for this is briefly described as follows: Suppose someone abstains from killing, stealing, etc., with great difficulty. "With great difficulty" means that, thinking about the Buddha's words, they keep those precepts (*sikkhāpada*) and abstain from those unwholesome deeds (*akusala*) with great effort and pain. Yet, as a result of that, they eventually obtain birth in a happy realm (*sugati*).

The Buddha gives a simile there. The Buddha himself prescribed a medicine specifically for the monks, which is called *pūtimutta-bhesajja* (fermented urine medicine). *Pūtimutta-bhesajja* is a medicine made from cow's urine. When yellow myrobalan (*aralu*), etc., are added to it, it is a very good medicine for jaundice (*paṇḍu-roga*). That is the simile the Buddha points out here. When drinking that medicine, it smells bad, has no pleasant color, and no pleasant taste. But after drinking it, that disease is cured. A jaundice patient comes to a place where such a drink is kept. Those who are there say, "Here is a medicine. When drinking this, there is no taste or fragrance. But if you drink it, you will be cured." Having heard this, that person reflects wisely and, although it is unpalatable, takes that medicine. Having taken it, he is cured. Through this simile, the Buddha shows that for those who follow the righteous path, even though with difficulty, even though with pain, even though crying, happiness can be expected in the end.

The same kind of thing is present in this undertaking of virtue (*sīla-samādāna*). Here, the Buddha spoke about the first person. Thinking very highly of themselves, exulting over it, they engage in killing, stealing, etc., with great joy. It is only when they have to suffer the consequences (*vipāka*) of those deeds that they realize. The next person mentioned abstains from those things with great difficulty. It is very hard to abstain from them, yet, with great difficulty and displeasure, they abstain from them. But the result of that is good. Now, this is where we can connect the value

of these virtues (*sīla*), etc. For, it is through understanding that one can change one's attitude.

Now, someone might think, "Abstaining from killing, abstaining from stealing, etc., is very difficult; abstaining from these is a great trouble. There are easier methods than this"—that is wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). If someone has developed faith (*saddhā*) according to the Buddha's word, that person can derive joy from it. In keeping virtues (*sīla*), etc., reflecting on the value of the undertaking of virtue (*sīla-samādāna*), reflecting on that determination of virtue, and then reviewing (*āvarjana*) it, one derives joy. That is called blameless happiness (*anavajja-sukha*). That is a happiness belonging to a lay disciple. In particular, even extremely wealthy people do not have that blameless happiness (*anavajja-sukha*) in this day and age. What is the reason? It is because of that "exploitation" (grabbing) mentioned earlier. That is their diligence. Nowadays, what the world mostly considers as diligence is the diligence of the kingfisher, the hawk, and the vulture. They swoop down on their prey very diligently. That is not the diligence the Buddha points out here. It is one's far-sightedness. The kingfisher, the hawk, and the vulture also have a certain far-sightedness that sees only that prey. But the far-sightedness, the diligence shown by the Buddha, is different.

Now, some wealthy people do not have that blameless happiness (*anavajja-sukha*)—that faultless happiness. Even though they have gathered a vast amount of wealth, when they think about how they gathered this wealth, a great regret arises. The happiness gathered by oppressing human beings, through various forms of corruption, fraud, and exploitation. Because of this, that person has to suffer severe pain and suffering on their deathbed. Indeed, according to the Buddha's word, there is nothing new to say about having to suffer pain and suffering after death. Instead, the Buddha points out that what a wise lay disciple should do is reflect on the virtuous side of what appears to be difficult, gain that faith (*saddhā*) thinking, "This will bring me good," and derive joy through that.

Faultless happiness means the happiness derived from that virtue (*sīla*). "I have kept such-and-such a practice." In short, the recollection of virtue (*sīlānussati*) itself can be turned into a meditation (*bhāvanā*). The fact that one is virtuous. When reflecting on that again and again, that joy arises in that person, and finally, through that, the mind becomes concentrated; it becomes focused in concentration (*samādhi*). One can go that far. Because of this, some might think, "The Buddha has always preached *veramaṇī, veramaṇī*. What is this *veramaṇī*? Abstain, abstain, he says. The Buddha speaks only of things to be avoided, things to be given up. He does not tell us anything to do." Someone might say this according to economic theories. But the Buddha points out that within that giving up, one can find joy. If someone keeps the five precepts (*pañca-sīla*) properly, they can derive that joy by reviewing (*āvarjana*) each of them.

The Buddha points out, "In a world where so much killing of living beings takes place, I am living while giving this infinite, immeasurable gift of fearlessness

(*abhaya-dāna*)." Nowadays, as we constantly remind you, the gift of fearlessness (*abhaya-dāna*) has sometimes been limited to releasing a cow destined for slaughter, prepared for taking a photograph. But silently, without shouting to the world, if one, as a matter of principle, avoids causing harm and keeps the precept of abstaining from killing very purely, the Buddha declared that such a person is giving the gift of fearlessness (*abhaya-dāna*) to infinite, immeasurable living beings. By deriving joy from that and reviewing (*āvarjana*) that precept (*sikkhāpada*), that person can even attain concentration (*samādhi*). That itself can be used to help attain Nibbāna. Such a wonderful depth lies in these virtues (*sīla*), etc. That must be understood. Similarly, what was called *dhamma-samādāna* here is, just like *sīla-samādāna*, abstaining from the ten unwholesome courses of action (*dasa-akusala*). That practice of abstaining from the ten unwholesome courses of action goes even further. When reflecting on each of them, thinking, "In such a society, I am keeping such-and-such precept, or keeping such-and-such practice," joy arises. Looking at it from that perspective, it is not like drinking that fermented urine medicine (*pūtimutta-bhesajja*) unwillingly; it is a state where one can drink it willingly.

There is a deep practice, a deep meaning within these virtues (*sīla*), etc., through which one can find relief on each occasion. Thus, the fundamental factor in all of this is abstaining from sins. What the Buddha constantly declares is: just as the merchant practiced equanimity (*upekkhā*), neither going forward nor backward when there was danger on the road, if in a certain course of action one sees, "It is wrong if I do this, and it is wrong if I do not do this," on that occasion, one must practice equanimity (*upekkhā*). One must hold back for a while. It is bad to be attached to it.

Similarly, one must have the strength to reflect on these far-sightedly. A person who lives in such a principled way has fewer regrets. As the Buddha declares, there is blameless happiness (*anavajja-sukha*), faultless happiness. The mind can constantly remain in joy. When reviewing—reviewing (*āvarjana*) means looking back. Looking back and reflecting on the purity of one's life, that person experiences great joy, especially at the final moment. Although the Brahmin Dhanañjāni lived unrighteously in the first part of his life, even though the details are not mentioned at length, we see that a massive transformation took place in his life after he received Ven. Sāriputta's advice. It was as a result of that massive life transformation that this Brahmin was able to obtain birth in the Brahma world, by relying on the Dhamma heard at the final moment. Therefore, in whatever way our individual lives have been spent, if we make a determination... At the end of a year, you make various kinds of targets, determinations, connecting them with New Year customs. Even setting out for occupations is done at an auspicious time (*näkatha*). But even if done at an auspicious time, if those things belong to the inauspicious, there is no use in it. What is inauspicious? One must do what is auspicious, what is good. What is inauspicious is wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*). If one sets out for employment at an auspicious time, but sets out for that wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*), there is no use in that auspicious time.

This life transformation may not be possible in a single day or in a single moment. Yet, if wise lay disciples direct their minds to these and make an effort, it will not be impossible to bring about a transformation in their individual lives according to the Buddha's word. Worldly beings have given up things greater than this. One step in the method of doing so is, at least, observing precepts (*sīla*) on one of the four Poya days of the month. If someone engaged in such wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) withdraws from it for one day, sacrifices it, sacrifices the profit received from it, observes pure virtue (*sīla*), and spends the day in that manner, an opening is created for them there. "If I can do this for one day, why not make it two days, observing it on two Poya days?" Next, if taken to four Poya days, it is four days. Going on in this manner, gradually, they will be able to withdraw even from hereditary wrong livelihoods. If one makes no such effort but goes on, enslaved to the direction in which society is heading, one only moves further down the path of decline. As we mentioned, the tongue adapts very quickly in a way that encourages meat-eating, etc. Such is the world that exists. One must reflect wisely on wrong notions and understand the Buddha's words deeply. One's livelihood is not something limited only to this life. In this journey of *saṃsāra*, this era of a Buddha's arising (*buddhotpāda-kāla*) is an extremely rare time. Human existence (*manussa-attabhāva*) is also an opportunity. If we live as beasts, as demons, we cannot derive the true benefit of the Buddha's Dispensation (*sāsana*). Therefore, transforming our lives internally is something that belongs to each of us. Today, on account of the New Year, you have received that stream of thoughts to be added to your mind-streams (*citta-santāna*).

During this period of about one hour, this group of lay disciples, having undertaken in varying measures the eight precepts (*aṭṭha-sīla*), the ten precepts (*dasa-sīla*), or the precepts with right livelihood as the eighth (*ājīvatthamaka-sīla*), listened to the Dhamma sermon. It is through taming the three doors of action—body, speech, and mind—in our daily existence that we can attain deliverance from *saṃsāra* (*saṃsāra-vimukti*). Therefore, as we constantly remind you, may you develop those qualities of faith (*saddhā*), etc., with the strength gathered by hearing the Dhamma. May you turn the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) into spiritual powers (*bala*). Supported by association with noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), may you gain the strength and power to quickly escape all the suffering of *saṃsāra*, such as *Jāti* (Birth) and death (*maraṇa*), through the realization, the penetration of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*) of Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi, and Arahant, and by attaining the supreme, deathless Nibbāna! Similarly, if any departed relatives in one's name, or any beings from the Avīci hell to the Akanitha heaven, wish to share in the merit of this Dhamma teaching and Dhamma hearing, may they, by sharing in this merit, realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their aspiration! With this aspiration, please recite this verse:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"