Pahankanuwa Sermon #159

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.123)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

"Na tāvatā dhammadharo, yāvatā bahu bhāsati;

Yo ca appam pi sutvāna, dhammaṃ kāyena passati,

Sa ve dhammadharo hoti, yo dhammaṃ nappamajjati."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 259 (Dhammaṭṭha Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

In this dispensation, the one who is known by the name ‘Dhamma-dhara’ is the person who bears or holds the Dhamma. Generally, the ordinary world considers the state of being highly learned (*bahu-ssuta*)—having a vast store of learning and possessing a wide, comprehensive knowledge of the Dhamma—as the necessary qualification to become a Dhamma-dhara. Be that as it may, today's thematic verse and its corresponding background story reveal that there is a far deeper meaning to the term ‘Dhamma-dhara’. The Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Supreme Buddha, delivered this verse at the Jetavana monastery concerning an Elder named Ekudaniya. This Arahat Elder lived alone in the forest. He also had a habit: on every Uposatha day, he would invite the deities and deliver a single verse as his Dhamma sermon. As soon as that single verse of the Dhamma sermon concluded, the deities residing in that forest would raise a great roar of appreciation (*Sādhu*), so loud that it made the entire forest echo.

On one Uposatha day, two monks who were masters of the Three Pitakas (*Tipitakadhara*) visited this Elder's forest hermitage, each accompanied by a retinue of five hundred monks. Upon their arrival, the Arahat Elder welcomed them with great joy and said, "We are indeed fortunate today to have the opportunity to hear a Dhamma sermon from you." Then, those visiting monks asked, "But friend, there is no audience here to listen to a sermon." The Elder replied, "There is, Venerable Sirs.

The deities in this forest raise a great cry of *Sādhu* in appreciation of my sermons." Thus, the two visiting monks agreed to deliver the Dhamma sermon. One monk presented the Dhamma text, and the other expounded upon it. In this manner, they delivered a very grand and extensive Dhamma sermon. However, when the sermon ended, not a single deity uttered a word of *Sādhu*.

So, these two Theras asked, "How is this, friend? Did you not say that the deities shout *Sādhu* when a sermon ends?"

"Indeed, Venerable Sirs. Usually, on the days I deliver sermons, they raise such a cry of appreciation. I know not why they did not do so today."

"In that case, friend, you deliver a Dhamma sermon," they said.

Thereupon, this Arahat Elder took his fan, ascended the Dhamma-seat, and delivered his Dhamma sermon using that same single verse. Just as before, the deities raised a massive roar of *Sādhu*.

At this, a critical discussion arose among the five hundred accompanying monks: "The deities of this forest act with partiality, looking at faces. Our master-monks delivered such a grand sermon, yet they did not even utter a single *Sādhu* or make any sound. But when this old monk uttered just one verse, they raised such a loud cry of appreciation!"

When these monks visited the Buddha at the Jetavana monastery, they related this matter to Him.

Then the Buddha declared, "No, monks, one does not become a Dhamma-dhara merely because one has learned much or preaches much. If a person understands even a single verse of the Dhamma properly, practices it, and realizes the Four Noble Truths—it is him that I call a Dhamma-dhara."

It was to clarify this matter that the Buddha uttered the verse we mentioned earlier:

> *Na tāvatā dhammadharo yāvatā bahubhāsati,*
>
> *Yo ca appampi sutvāna dhammaṃ kāyena passati,*
>
> *Sa ve dhammadharo hoti yo dhammaṃ nappamajjati.*

One is not a bearer of the Dhamma merely because he speaks much. If someone, having heard even a little, touches the Dhamma with his body—that is to say, if he sees it, if he directly experiences and realizes the Dhamma with his body—and does not neglect the Dhamma, that monk indeed is the true bearer of the Dhamma. This is the meaning contained in that verse.

Next, let us look at the verse uttered by the Elder known as Ekudaniya. He is called Ekudaniya Thera because he was a monk who delivered only a single exultation (*udāna*) as his Dhamma sermon. An exultation, dear devotees, is an utterance of joy.

A person makes an exultation of joy because they have directly realized the matter of which they speak. Let us now examine the verse that this Arahat constantly delivered as his Dhamma sermon. What is that verse?

Adhicetaso appamajjato munino monapathesu sikkhato,

Sokā na bhavanti tādino upasantassa sadā satīmato.

Adhicetaso appamajjato: the term *adhicitta* is generally applied to a mind in concentration (*samādhi*). Here, it refers to the concentration of the fruit of Arahatship (*arahatta-phala-samādhi*), which is the highest level of concentration. For the sage (*muni*) who possesses that concentration, who is diligent (*appamajjato*), who trains in the paths of the sage (*monapathesu sikkhato*), who is unwavering (*tādī*—a word used for one who is unshakeable and unperturbed in the face of the eight worldly conditions), who is completely peaceful (*upasanta*), and is ever-mindful (*sadā satīmato*)—for him, there are no sorrows. This is the meaning of that verse. For that sage who is endowed with the concentration of the fruit of Arahatship, who dwells diligently, who trains in the paths of the sage, who is unshakeable in the face of the eight worldly conditions, and is endowed with the quality of unwavering stability (*tādī*), there are no sorrows.

Thus, we can understand why the deities raised their cry of *Sādhu* for that exultation of joy. Since that verse described what the Arahat Elder had directly realized, it was deeply meaningful and highly valuable. It was this very fact that the Buddha confirmed: the true value lies in directly realizing the Dhamma. It is there that the quality of a Dhamma-dhara exists. This is indeed a point that is forgotten by the world in this day and age. Usually, both in the past and today, the ordinary world uses the term "Dhamma-dhara" for someone who has memorized the Tipitaka and holds it in mind. With today's technological advances, if someone receives computer training, puts the Tipitaka into a computer, and carries it in their hand, they too are a "Dhamma-dhara". It is very easy to be a Dhamma-dhara in this era! If you carry the digitized Tipitaka in your hand, you are a Dhamma-dhara, for you can retrieve whatever is in it at any moment. But that is not what the Buddha constantly pointed out to us. Seeing is far greater than mere knowing. One can accumulate as much knowledge as one likes. But what is more valuable is seeing, the vision—the internal realization of that Dhamma. That is what the Buddha gave prominence to.

Often, there may be the flavor of sound (aesthetic beauty) in Dhamma sermons. But to receive the flavor of meaning (the essence), that Dhamma must be enriched by directly realizing it through practice (*paṭipatti*) and penetration (*paṭivedha*), which are meditative in nature. Thus, we can understand that the deep meaning of the word ‘Dhamma-dhara’ is holding the Dhamma through direct realization. The Dhamma is not a digitized machine-concept, nor is it something held externally through rote memorization; only the one who has directly realized the Dhamma internally can correctly expound and explain it. No matter how many commentaries, sub-commentaries, word-by-word translations, glossaries, and dictionaries exist, it is

only the person with direct realization who can convey a true understanding of that Dhamma to another.

Here, let us specifically highlight the Buddha's declaration regarding the Four Noble Truths. Indeed, in this dispensation, what was originally referred to as the "Dhamma" was none other than the Four Noble Truths. Although the Buddha's teachings contain gradual instructions such as discourses on giving (*dāna-kathā*), virtue (*sīla-kathā*), and so forth, the most valuable Dhamma revealed to the world by the Buddhas themselves is ultimately the Dhamma of the Four Noble Truths. Within this Truth-Dhamma, the profoundly deep phenomenon of Dependent Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) is also embedded. If we were to mention the Four Noble Truths briefly, the Buddha has introduced Himself as an incomparable physician, a master surgeon, a physical physician. The Four Noble Truths are structured exactly in accordance with the principles of this medical science: *Dukkha* (Suffering), *Samudaya* (Origin), *Nirodha* (Cessation), and *Magga* (Path). Dukkha is the disease; Samudaya is the diagnosis/cause of the disease; Nirodha is health (absence of disease); Magga is the treatment, the medicine.

Ordinary people usually think of suffering (*Dukkha*) in simple terms as birth (*jāti*), decay and death / aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), sickness, and death, separation from the loved, association with the unloved, and so forth. Even if a Buddha did not arise to declare this, the ordinary world already knows it. However, the concluding part of the analysis of the Truth of Dukkha is not known to many. Even if they know it, they very easily forget it. What is it? The Buddha has declared: *saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā*. In short, the five aggregates of grasping / holding / fuel are suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress. The five heaps of grasping are suffering. Thus, if grasping / holding / fuel is suffering, what is its cause, its diagnosis? It is craving / thirst (*taṇhā*).

The Truth of Origin (*Samudaya-sacca*) is often presented as craving / thirst (*taṇhā*). In some places, it is also presented as the Dhamma of Dependent Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). That too is meaningful because you know that in Dependent Arising, it is stated: *taṇhāpaccayā upādānaṃ*—conditioned by craving / thirst is grasping / holding / fuel. Thus, the cause of the disease, which is grasping, is craving. That is why craving is presented as the second truth, the Truth of Origin.

Next is health, the state of being free from disease. That is the diagnosis. The Buddha's method is not to treat the symptoms of the disease, but to treat the very cause of the disease. Thus, the cause of the disease is craving. Nibbāna is the Mind Stilled / Extinction / Extinguishment, which is described as *taṇhakkhayo*—the destruction of craving. The Mind Stilled is right where craving is destroyed. It is not some strange, alien world; it is the cooling, the extinguishment of the burning and distress caused by that disease, just as a leper or a fever-patient is cured of their illness. That is why the term *taṇhakkhayo* is used. Right where craving is destroyed, grasping / holding / fuel (*upādāna*) naturally slips away. There is no need for anyone

else to come and push it away. Along with the cessation of craving, grasping is destroyed.

It is this that is directly experienced by the one who realizes the Four Noble Truths for the first time through the path of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti-magga*). Because of that very realization, they fall into Nibbāna. The concentration of the path (*Magga-samādhi*) is called the immediate concentration (*ānantarika-samādhi*). When that path is fulfilled, disenchantment with the five aggregates of grasping arises. When the development of the three characteristics of impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*), suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), and not-self / non-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*) taught by the Buddha is brought to its peak, enough to attain the path and fruit, grasping slips away along with the subsiding of craving, and that person falls into the Mind Stilled. It is said that they touch the element of Nibbāna,. In whatever words we describe it, what occurs there is the sublime peace within letting go. It is not a bliss of feeling / sensation (*vedanā*), but a sublime peace—or to put it in another way, the cessation of becoming / existence (*bhava-nirodha*). At that moment, that person directly experiences a wondrous peace of being freed from the world, freed from these five aggregates of grasping. Along with that direct experience, they realize: "It is through this path—the Noble Eightfold Path starting with Right View and ending with Right Concentration—that I reached this." This is how the Four Noble Truths are directly experienced.

It is this very story that is briefly described in many places when defining a Stream-enterer (*Sotāpanna*). Even if they are not a great scholar, even if they cannot eloquently recite *avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā* (conditioned by ignorance are preparations / Preparations / volitional activity) like academics do, and even if they are an extremely poor beggar—the Dhamma states that at the moment of direct realization, they directly experience the law of Dependent Arising, its basic principle.

That is why the brief description of a Stream-enterer is: *yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ* ("whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to cease"). Understand this principle. Here, "whatever" refers to the five aggregates of grasping: the aggregate of form, the aggregate of feeling / sensation (*vedanā*), the aggregate of perception(*saññā*), the aggregate of preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), and the aggregate of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Until then, if they had thought there was a soul or a permanent self residing inside this, the Stream-enterer instead understands: "These are mere heaps, there is a collection here. It is not a solid/compact entity (*ekaghana*). It is not a soul-like entity." When this is let go, at the moment of letting go, even consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is let go. At that moment, that entire heap of grasping / holding / fuel is let go. Through this, they understand that this entire set of five aggregates of grasping, including consciousness, is subject to the nature of arising and ceasing. That is a vital realization—subject to the nature of arising and ceasing. That is what is meant by saying they understood Dependent Arising: "The

Noble Method is well-seen with wisdom (*ariyo ñāyo paññāya sudiṭṭho*), well-penetrated (*suppaṭividdho*)." This is how a Stream-enterer is described.

Indeed, this matter is so significant that in modern terms, there are eight titles or qualifications mentioned in the Dhamma regarding a Stream-enterer. What are these eight titles? They are: *diṭṭhadhammo, pattadhammo, viditadhammo, pariyogāḷhadhammo, tiṇṇavicikiccho, vigatakathaṅkatho, vesārajjappatto, aparappaccayo satthusāsane*. Let us try to understand these titles briefly.

Diṭṭhadhammo means one who has seen the Dhamma. This refers to the arising of the Dhamma-eye. Through this, they saw Dependent Arising and also saw cessation, Nibbāna. *Pattadhammo* means they reached the Dhamma. *Viditadhammo* means they understood the Dhamma—in modern academic terms, we could call them a "Dhamma-vedi" (Graduate of Dhamma), though no one seems to use that term today. Today, such titles are given based on academic studies, but they can truly be called a "Dhamma-vedi". *Pariyogāḷhadhammo* means they plunged into the Dhamma, not just skimming the surface but diving deep. *Tiṇṇavicikiccho* means they crossed over doubt. Previously, they had doubts: "Did I exist in the past, or did I not?" and based on the standpoint of "I", they engaged in various arguments. As is mentioned regarding other sectarians, they debated whether they existed in the past or not. Now they realize: "If there was a past, it was just these five aggregates of grasping. If there is a future, it too is nothing but the five aggregates; there is no 'I' or 'person' here." Thus, there is no doubt. *Vigatakathaṅkatho* means "How, how?" has gone—there is no longer any perplexity or questioning of "How, how?". A Stream-enterer does not go around asking "How is this? How is that?". They have understood the matter. Next is *vesārajjappatto*—a very profound word—meaning they attained self-confidence and fearlessness. Finally, *aparappaccayo satthusāsane*: in the Teacher's dispensation, they are independent of others. This is a word with a very deep meaning: without needing another's assistance, they can complete the remaining work of liberation. That is why they are called a *Sekha*—one in training. "Now, I have entered the university proper; hitherto I was in preschool." The simile used for a Stream-enterer is like a log thrown into a river that flows straight to the ocean. Because of the arising of the Dhamma-eye, if they develop it without negligence, they can reach the Mind Stilled in that very life; if not, they will do so within seven births at most. If they receive the specific guidance and help of the Buddha, they can do so even faster. That is what is meant by *aparappaccayo satthusāsane*. What a valuable set of titles!

Now, who received this set of titles in this Dhamma? Was it kings, wealthy merchants, scholars, or those who graduated from the Takkasila University of that era? There is a beautiful story you may have heard before.

Once in the city of Rājagaha, the Buddha was delivering a Dhamma sermon near a street. A man saw a crowd gathered from afar. He thought, "This must be a place where food is being distributed," and approached. "No, it is the Ascetic Gotama

delivering a Dhamma sermon. Never mind if I do not get food, I must at least listen to some of the Dhamma," he thought, and sat at the edge of the crowd.

While delivering the sermon, the Buddha scanned the crowd to see who was ready to understand the deep Dhamma. He saw the poor, leprous Suppabuddha. He directed the sermon specifically at him. By the end of the sermon, the leper Suppabuddha directly experienced that fundamental principle: *yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*, and attained the fruit of Stream-entry. In that Sutta, the Buddha bestowed all eight of those prestigious titles upon Suppabuddha the leper! Can you imagine? All eight of those titles were applied to Suppabuddha the leper. This is the true value of the Dhamma. It shows us that one does not become a Dhamma-dhara through external retention, but through direct realization.

Likewise, the Buddha is the incomparable, supreme surgeon. Those Noble disciples who learned the lesson well from Him took the medicine, cured their own illness, and were thus able to explain it to others. We sometimes use an analogy—though it is not explicitly found in the texts, everyone knows there are four path-knowledges: Sotāpatti, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi, Arahatta. Through these four path-knowledges, one reaches the four fruits and realizes Nibbāna,. Likewise, everyone knows there are eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path. In terms of a medical analogy, it is like drinking four doses of a decoction made of eight ingredients to attain perfect health. The advice to cure this disease of Saṃsāra can be given in this manner. The Buddha always praised this specialist medical method rather than quack/folk medicine. No matter how many quack doctors there are treating symptoms, if someone can directly realize the Dhamma and, as a specialist, cure the disease of Saṃsāra, it is to that person that the Buddha gave the title "Dhamma-dhara".

There is also a verse in the Dhammapada—I will not recite the whole thing due to lack of time, but you have probably heard it before. The Buddha gives a satirical simile about memorizing the Dhamma without directly realizing it, comparing such a person to a cowherd who minds other people's cows. In ancient India, there were wealthy cow-owners with large herds. The owners could not watch the cows themselves, so they hired a laborer. The hired hand would take the cows out in the morning, feed them grass all day, and count them in the evening to hand them back without any missing. But even though he minded them and fed them all day, he did not get to enjoy the five products of the cow (*pañca-gorasa*): milk, curd, butter, buttermilk, and ghee. The Buddha used this simile to describe one who memorizes and recites the Dhamma without practicing it or directly realizing it. These numerous similes show the immense value of the arising of the Dhamma-eye. Only one whose eyes are opened can open the eyes of others.

This story of the Dhamma-eye is beautifully illustrated in the Māgandiya Sutta.

There, the Buddha used the simile of a man born blind (*jātyandha*) during a Dhamma discussion with the wanderer Māgandiya to inspire faith in him. The wanderer Māgandiya held the wrong view that Nibbāna is physical health. He went

around saying, "Health is the supreme gain, Nibbāna is the supreme bliss" (*āroggyā paramā lābhā, nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ*). Through this, he thought Nibbāna meant physical health. The Buddha showed him that the health of this disease-ridden body is not true health. True health is the cessation of the disease of Saṃsāra, the cessation of suffering taught by past Buddhas, which is Nibbāna.

To explain this, the Buddha gave a simile. There are several similes in that discourse, but to mention the relevant one: there is a man blind from birth. He cannot see black or white, red, blue, or yellow. He cannot see the sun or the moon. This man hears someone with eyesight say, "This clean, spotless white cloth is so beautiful, so pleasant." Hearing this, the blind man thinks, "Even though I have no eyes and cannot see it, others can see me. I must get a good white cloth to wrap around myself." So he goes around searching for a clean, pure white cloth. A deceitful man comes along and says, "Here, this is a white cloth," and hands him a dirty, stained, oil-soiled piece of rag.

The blind man happily wears this rag for a few days. Then, the blind man's relatives—the Buddha describes the details of the relatives and friends—bring a skilled surgeon, a physician complete in both aspects. The physician treats the patient born blind with emetics, purgatives, nasal therapy, ointments, etc., and restores his sight. As soon as the blind man gains his sight, he looks down and sees: "What on earth am I wearing? Oh no, this is a dirty, oil-stained, utterly repulsive rag!" He becomes extremely angry with the deceitful man who cheated him. "All this time, this man deceived me, giving me this and calling it a white cloth!" He might even feel like killing him; he despises it that much.

Having given the simile, the Buddha connects it to the meaning: "Similarly, Māgandiya, if the Dhamma-eye arises in you while I preach the Dhamma, a similar revolution of attitude will take place in you."

Let us look at the elements of the simile. The "white cloth" refers to these five aggregates of grasping / holding / fuel—form, feeling / sensation (*vedanā*), perception, preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—which he had been holding onto all this time as a self/soul. As soon as the Dhamma-eye arises, he sees: "How troublesome and repulsive this is! It deceived me, didn't it?" Here, it is said, "My own mind deceived me." My own mind (*citta*), through wrong understanding, had been holding onto and clinging to these five aggregates of grasping all this time.

You have heard of *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (the dogma of self-illusion / view of existing group/body). I thought this existed as a permanent entity. Now, through the insight (*vipassanā*) highlighted by the Buddha, one sees that there is no solid, true, permanent entity here—there is only a constant stream of arising and ceasing, a heap of arising and ceasing, whether we look at form, feeling / sensation (*vedanā*), perception, preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*), or consciousness (*viññāṇa*). That is why this is called a heap of grasping / holding /

fuel. It is just a heap of graspings, a heap of attempts to grasp. In the end, nothing is caught. This is what happens. This is the simile for the arising of the Dhamma-eye. Through the arising of the Dhamma-eye, the aggregates of grasping are understood as suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*). That realization comes when craving / thirst for them is eliminated.

According to the principle given by the Buddha, by developing insight-knowledges to the highest level through the three characteristics of impermanent / inconstant (*anicca*), suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), and not-self / non-self / unsubstantial (*anattā*), seeing them as arising and ceasing, and seeing how they perish—when a deep disenchantment (*nibbidā*) with Saṃsāra arises, at that moment, this is let go. Along with the letting go, one touches Nibbāna; one falls into the Mind Stilled. This is the story of the Dhamma-eye.

We also mentioned that Dependent Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) is embedded within the Four Noble Truths. In the explanation of Dependent Arising, you may have heard of twelve factors, starting with *avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā* (conditioned by ignorance are preparations / Preparations / volitional activity). These twelve factors connected by conditionality are usually presented as the Dhamma of Dependent Arising. But that is not the core principle. Before listing the twelve factors, the core principle is shown in some places. The Buddha states this principle in a wondrous way:

> *Imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti,*
>
> *imassuppādā idaṃ uppajjati;*
>
> *imasmiṃ asati idaṃ na hoti,*
>
> *imassa nirodhā idaṃ nirujjhati.*

Hearing this, one might feel amazed. Translated into Sinhala, it means: "When this is, this is; with the arising of this, this arises. When this is not, this is not; with the cessation of this, this ceases." Looking at it, it seems like a big riddle.

These things cannot be grasped by logic. That is why the Dhamma is called *atakkāvacara* (beyond the sphere of logic). In logic, if something is one thing, it is that; another thing is different. But here, the Buddha points out a mutual, reciprocal relationship. That is the fundamental meaning of the word *paccaya* (condition/requisite)—mutually. None of these exist in isolation. You have heard the word *paṭiccasamuppāda* many times. In Sinhala, we have to translate it as "dependent co-arising" or "arising because of," not independently.

There is a place where this is clearly illustrated. Once, when the Buddha was preaching on Dependent Arising, Ven. Moliya-phagguna asked several questions. These questions help us grasp the deeper side of Dependent Arising. Having listened to the description of each of the twelve factors, Ven. Moliya-phagguna asked, "Venerable Sir, who touches (makes contact)?" The word *phassa* (contact) is there.

The Buddha said, "The question itself is wrong. That is not how the question should be asked. The question should be: 'Conditioned by what is contact?' There is no talk of 'who' or 'whom' here." If the question is asked thus, the answer is: *saḷāyatana-paccayā phasso* (conditioned by the six sense-bases is contact). The six sense-bases are eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Contact is because of these six sense-bases.

He does not stop there: *saḷāyatana-paccayā phasso, phassa-paccayā vedanā* (conditioned by the six sense-bases is contact, conditioned by contact is feeling / sensation). There is something striking here. Ven. Moliya-phagguna did not even ask about feeling / sensation (*vedanā*). Yet, the Buddha presents three terms here: conditioned by the six sense-bases, contact arises; conditioned by contact, feeling / sensation arises. What does this show?

We will give a small analogy. Consider a chain. Each link in a chain is connected to the other two links on either side. To recognize it as a piece of a chain, one link is connected to another link on one side, and to another link on the other side. Think of this principle. When Ven. Moliya-phagguna asked about contact—"who touches?"—the Buddha also spoke of the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*) which condition contact, and also of feeling / sensation (*vedanā*) which arises conditioned by contact.

Think about this using the chain analogy: what does this show? None of them exist individually. There is a mutual relationship between them. This is how arising occurs. Ven. Sāriputta once expressed this by comparing it to two sheaves of reeds leaning against each other. If you pull one away, the other falls. If you pull the other away, this one falls. The Buddha was the only one to reveal that such a natural law exists in this entire universe. Until then, people were bound by logic and words, building various views: "Everything absolutely exists" or "Nothing absolutely exists". Instead of these extremes, the Buddha declared arising because of conditions—Dependent Arising.

Then, Ven. Moliya-phagguna asked the second question: "Venerable Sir, who feels (experiences) this feeling / sensation?" The Buddha said, "The question is wrong. I do not say there is one who feels." Here too, He gives the correct answer: *phassa-paccayā vedanā, vedanā-paccayā taṇhā* (conditioned by contact is feeling / sensation; conditioned by feeling / sensation is craving / thirst). He did not ask about craving / thirst (*taṇhā*), but the Buddha mentioned it anyway.

Now, recall the chain analogy. Since it had to be said, the Buddha showed that there is a conditional relationship there too. The question was about feeling / sensation (*vedanā*). Feeling / sensation is connected on one side (let's say the left) to contact, and on the other side (the right) to craving / thirst. This conditional connection was highlighted.

Next, he asked a similar question: "Venerable Sir, who grasps?" (*upādāna*). When we say "grasping", people usually think of someone who grasps. But here, there is only

grasping. That grasping is due to craving / thirst (*taṇhā*). If there was a separate person who grasps, then when craving arises, that person would have something else to do. But there is no independent entity here. Grasping / holding / fuel (*upādāna*) naturally falls away as soon as craving / thirst, which causes it, is eliminated. That is what needs to be highlighted: cause and condition (*hetu-paccaya*), which is the most valuable part of Dependent Arising.

To highlight this, when asked "who grasps?", the Buddha corrected the question: "Conditioned by what is there grasping?" How does grasping / holding / fuel exist? The Buddha corrects the question first. Then He answers: *taṇhā-paccayā upādānaṃ, upādāna-paccayā bhavo* (conditioned by craving / thirst is grasping / holding / fuel; conditioned by grasping / holding / fuel is becoming / existence). He added becoming / existence (*bhava*), which wasn't even asked. Understand it in the same way: because of craving / thirst, there is grasping; on the other side, grasping is connected to becoming / existence. Where there is craving / thirst, there is grasping; where there is grasping, there is becoming / existence. This is how it should be understood. This is enough on that. Based on this, we should understand Dependent Arising in pairs. That is what is in the principle *imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti*.

Normally, in comparison, how does the worldly mind reason? "When this is, that is. With the arising of this, that arises. When this is not, that is not. With the cessation of this, that ceases." This is how the ordinary world operates in the realm of logic. But the Buddha, in a wondrous way, uses "this, this, this" (*idaṃ, idaṃ, idaṃ*). Think of this in terms of the chain analogy. If we were to give meaning to this algebraic formulation, the Dhamma says: "Conditioned by ignorance (*avijjā*) are preparations / Preparations / volitional activity (*saṅkhāra*). With the arising of ignorance, preparations arise. When ignorance is not, preparations are not. With the cessation of ignorance, preparations cease." You can apply this Dhamma principle to any two factors of the twelve.

Thus, the law of Dependent Arising is one thing; its examples are another. We usually memorize the set of examples for convenience. But understanding the underlying core principle is what is important. Counting them like a cowherd counting cows is very easy, and nowadays we have computers to do that. But when it comes to the inner vision, the internal understanding—if someone understands the principle, that is where Dependent Arising is understood and directly realized.

According to the insight instructions given by the Buddha, when a deep disenchantment (*nibbidā*) with Saṃsāra arises through the highest understanding of the five aggregates of grasping, that grasping / holding / fuel slips away from the mind. At that very moment, through the destruction of craving / thirst, letting go occurs naturally. Through letting go, Nibbāna is realized. If the continuation of Saṃsāra in this world is a burning, then Nibbāna is the cooling. It is not an alien world, but right here in this very life (*diṭṭhe va dhamme*). That itself is called the cessation of becoming / existence (*bhava-nirodha*). If existence is grasping—all

existence is based on grasping. A person with money is a merchant (*mudalali*); a person with a vehicle is a driver. Everything exists within grasping. (The etymology of *mudalali* might not be exactly that, but we say it according to the ordinary world's understanding). We gain ownership of something based on what we grasp.

Therefore, the Buddha highlights that right where grasping is absent, there is the cooling/extinction which is Nibbāna,. This point about Dependent Arising will be useful to you.

Now, the Dhamma is like a basket passed from hand to hand. What happens over a long period? The words of the Dhamma have a superficial meaning. The Buddha declared that the Dhamma should be preserved *sa-atthaṃ sa-byañjanaṃ* (with meaning and with phrasing/letter). Both meaning and letter must be preserved. If a word is memorized incorrectly, the meaning is also distorted. If the meaning is given incorrectly, the word is also distorted. You can understand this, can't you? That is what is meant by *sa-atthaṃ sa-byañjanaṃ*. The Buddha said the Dhamma is protected by preserving both its meaning aspect (*artha*) and its letter/phrasing aspect (*byañjana*). The letters must be kept unchanged, and the meaning must be correctly retained.

Suppose someone doesn't even know what the Dhamma is saying, or what the meaning of a word is. They heard someone say it, and they write it down based on what they heard. Not just due to lack of language comprehension, but due to other reasons, they misunderstand the word and record it. There, the Dhamma gets marginalized/stifled because they themselves do not understand what is being said. That is why both the meaning aspect and the phrasing aspect are important.

In the past, the preservation of the Dhamma was done by lineages of reciters (*bhāṇaka*). How wondrously! We cannot even imagine it today. There were "single-hearing" (*eka-ssuta*) individuals who could memorize something after hearing it just once. In ancient times, there were people with extraordinary mental capacities that would put modern computers to shame, not only among Buddhists. They could memorize the massive Vedic texts, the Three Vedas. Even sixteen-year-old youths had the capacity to hold everything in memory. But even though that memorization aspect was there, as it passed from mouth to mouth for generations—if a pupil does not understand what the teacher is saying, confusing the aspirated and unaspirated letters (*mahāprāṇa*, *alpaprāṇa*) and adding other things to it, the Dhamma gradually becomes distorted. It becomes distorted to the point where it cannot be salvaged.

That is why the Buddha declared: "This Dhamma must be seen. One must strive to see it." It is through this that the Dhamma is protected. Not only is the Dhamma protected, but that person becomes a true "Dhamma-dhara". Otherwise, as mentioned, even a person holding a computer becomes a "Dhamma-dhara". For this to be preserved, no matter how many glossaries, dictionaries, and sub-commentaries there are, one must see the inside of the Dhamma—what is being declared by it. One

must understand the law of the Dhamma. That is what Suppabuddha the leper understood at that level, despite not having much education.

In the past, great Arahats are mentioned who attained Arahatship along with the Four Analytical Knowledges (*patisambhidā*). *Patisambhidā* is a very deep term. It means a deep fourfold understanding of the Dhamma: *Attha* (meaning), *Dhamma* (origin/law), *Nirutti* (linguistic definition/expression), and *Paṭibhāna* (perspicuity/inspiration/analytical acumen). Otherwise, one only grasps the superficial aspect.

For example, if we take suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*), the problem before us is suffering—the suffering of Saṃsāra. What is its cause or origin? That is *Dhamma*. So, *Dhamma* is craving / thirst (*taṇhā*), to use an example. The issue before us is the problem (*artha*); the underlying cause, the origin, is *Dhamma*.

Nirutti refers to the words used to explain and clarify this. Even the Buddha provided unique definitions (*nirutti*) for certain words. In discussions with brahmins, He would sometimes say: "You use it in that sense, but I use it in this sense," giving Dhamma-conforming definitions. Some Dhamma-preachers who have developed a special capacity for this are skilled in giving such definitions, a habit developed over a long time in Saṃsāra. But these truly manifest and become pure at the stage of the paths and fruits (*magga-phala*).

Paṭibhāna is usually explained as knowledge of knowledges, but deeply, it should be understood as the power of comprehension—the power of comprehension that comes directly from wisdom, from direct realization.

No one can match the similes given by the Buddha. Those similes are wondrous. The components of the simile and the meaning match perfectly. Even the simile mentioned earlier, when matched with Dhamma principles, is astonishing. Great elders like Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Mahākoṭṭhita are described as complete in these Four Analytical Knowledges, helping others understand the Dhamma. When a certain matter is presented, they have a complete, clear understanding of it. They know the underlying cause. They know the words to use to resolve it, and the similes and metaphors to apply. All these are perfectly understood. These factors are necessary for the preservation of the Dhamma.

It is also preached: *yo dhammaṃ nappamajjati* ("who does not neglect the Dhamma"). Indeed, when speaking of the Dhamma/Dispensation, it is named in three ways: the dispensation of learning (*pariyatti-sāsana*), the dispensation of practice (*paṭipatti-sāsana*), and the dispensation of penetration/realization (*paṭivedha-sāsana*). *Pariyatti* is learning. *Paṭipatti* is putting what is learned into practice. *Paṭivedha* is ultimately penetrating/seeing through the practice—meaning direct realization of the Dhamma. Thus, *pariyatti* is for the sake of *paṭipatti*, and *paṭipatti* is for the sake of *paṭivedha*. There is a mutual relationship between these three. The Buddha Himself declared that rather than learning much and not

practicing it at all, it is better to learn a little and put that little into practice. That is what the Buddha gave prominence to. That is why we said He gave prominence to seeing (realization) over knowing (mere knowledge).

But what if we separate them? We keep *pariyatti* to ourselves, *paṭipatti* to someone else, and we are even afraid of *paṭivedha*! Nowadays, people raise various arguments: "If everyone realizes Nibbāna,, and no one is left in Saṃsāra, this population will die out." Some even ask us such questions. But the Buddha has pointed out that for *pariyatti* to be correctly preserved, it must be put into practice. To practically understand a word or a sentence, one must engage in the practice.

The Buddha's word is indeed for the sake of practice. The Dhamma is a challenge to practice; if the practice is fulfilled, the result is penetration (*paṭivedha*). Penetration means directly realizing it, seeing through it. *Pariyatti, paṭipatti, paṭivedha*—these three aspects of the dispensation are not taken as three separate things. They are all interconnected. A deficiency in one affects the others. The deities praised the Elder's exultation because there is a good lesson there for the preservation of the Dhamma. The two Tipitaka-expert elders delivered a long two-seat sermon, but the deities shouted "Sadhu" for the single-verse sermon. They appreciated it more than the sermon preached with great effort, and the Buddha approved of this.

We must learn something from this. What are we saying here? It is not just a heap of letters, a heap of words. If so, as mentioned, the dispensation would be preserved by digitizing them or writing them on gold plates and storing them. But who is going to read and understand them? Even today, after a few generations, some people distort and interpret certain words of the Karaṇīya Sutta in wondrous ways. This is not just due to a lack of language comprehension, but due to other reasons. They are led to distort because they lack internal understanding, and they do not direct their minds to that side. So, in this computer age, with modern printing facilities, there is nothing to fear about protecting the dispensation. We can print as many books as we want and build libraries to store them. But who is there to understand them? Who is going to benefit from them?

Therefore, we must reflect that the Buddha delivers a valuable lesson for this era too in this sermon. The Dhamma is not a heap of words or a heap of letters. This Dhamma is so deep that after His Enlightenment—we have heard these stories, though some might not believe them—the Buddha was hesitant to preach. "Who will understand this? How will they understand?" It is said that only after the Brahma's invitation did He resolve to preach and give His consent.

This Dhamma is *gambhīro, atakkāvacaro, duddaso, duranubodho* (profound, beyond the sphere of logic, hard to see, hard to understand). It is not easy to grasp. It is extremely deep. But those things that were described as difficult have been made all too easy nowadays. In terms of degrees, everything is passed. One can pass exams in any field of this Dhamma, passing stage after stage. But along with that, the

dispensation itself might "pass away"! Because that internal seeing is absent. Along with this, distortion also takes place very rapidly.

Ultimately, what is called a Dhamma sermon is sometimes not the Dhamma at all. Wrong views are not even needed for the decline of the Dhamma. If the meaning of the Dhamma is not grasped, and if one does not intend to practice it or benefit from it, only a mass of ordinary intellectual knowledge is highlighted. Then, one can distort and present it in any way to suit their degrees and obtain them. But there is a dangerous situation there. Understanding this, you must begin where you ought to begin, just as you have done today. That is, established in this valuable virtue (*sīla*), you have engaged to some extent in meditation according to the instructions received today. Speaking of *sīla, samādhi, paññā*, starting with virtue, restraining body and speech, you concentrated the mind through various meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*).

Moreover, if anything was mentioned in this sermon that supports your insight (*vipassanā*), using that as an aid, it is your own responsibility to protect the threefold dispensation of *sīla, samādhi, paññā* as taught by the Buddha. It is through direct realization that one becomes a "Dhamma-dhara". With that thought, we hope this Dhamma sermon has helped you to arouse those qualities of faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) which emerge as spiritual faculties and powers at the moments of the paths and fruits, through the virtue you have kept, the meditation you have done, and the Dhamma you have heard today.

May this merit acquired through hearing the Dhamma, with the help of noble friendship (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), help you to complete your practice correctly, to quickly let go of grasping / holding / fuel this terrifying heap of the five aggregates of grasping, to be freed from the suffering / unsatisfactoriness / stress (*dukkha*) of birth / arising (*jāti*), and decay and death / aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*), and sickness, and to realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna— / Extinction / Extinguishment— through the penetration of the paths and fruits of Sotāpatti, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi, and Arahatta! May this hearing of the Dhamma be a strong supportive condition (*upanissaya*) for that! Furthermore, if any deities from Avici to Akanitha wish to rejoice in this Dhamma sermon, may they, through that rejoicing, realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through their preferred Bodhi! Saying "Sadhu", recite this verse:

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi.....*"