Pahankanuwa Sermon #164

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.145)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

"Dhīrassa vigatamohassa,

pabhinnakhilassa vijitavijayassa,

Anīghassa susamāhitacetaso,

vuddhasīlassa sādhupaññassa,

Vessantarassa vimalassa,

bhagavato tassa sāvakohamasmi."

From:

Upāli Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya (MN 56)

Dear Listeners,

When we examine how various religions spread across the world, historians today accept without dispute that Buddhism spread in an extremely peaceful and tolerant manner. It was on such peaceful and tolerant principles that the Arahant Mahinda, the son of Emperor Dharmāśoka, acted to establish the Buddha's Sāsana in this island on a Poson Full Moon Poya day like today. How the Teacher of the Three Worlds, the Buddha, introduced these principles to the world through His own example is clearly shown in various places in the Tipiṭaka literature. The Upāli Sutta, which contains the verse we have chosen as our theme today, is an excellent proof of this.

At a time when the Buddha was residing in the Pāvārika Mango Grove in Nālandā, Niganṭha Nātaputta was also living in Nālandā with a large following of disciples. One day, Dīgha Tapassī, a prominent disciple of Niganṭha Nātaputta, came to see the

Buddha, exchanged pleasant greetings, and sat to one side. The Buddha asked this Niganṭha, Dīgha Tapassī:

"Tapassī, how many kinds of deeds does Niganṭha Nātaputta prescribe for committing an evil deed, for the performance of an evil deed?" Then Dīgha Tapassī said: "Venerable Gotama, Niganṭha Nātaputta does not use the terminology of 'kamma' (action). He uses the term 'daṇḍa' (rod/punishment)." Then the Buddha asked: "Well, Tapassī, how many kinds of daṇḍa does Niganṭha Nātaputta prescribe for committing an evil deed?" Dīgha Tapassī replied: "Three kinds of daṇḍa."

Here, *daṇḍa* is generally understood in the sense of punishment or an instrument of harm. These are the bodily rod (*kāya-daṇḍa*), the verbal rod (*vacī-daṇḍa*), and the mental rod (*mano-daṇḍa*). Then the Buddha asked: "Are these three rods distinct from one another, or are they one and the same?" He replied, "They are distinct from one another."

Next, the Buddha asked: "Tapassī, of these three rods, which is the most blameworthy (*mahāsāvaṇjjatara*), that is, the one with the gravest fault?" Then Dīgha Tapassī replied: "The bodily rod is the most blameworthy; it is the bodily rod that must be taken as the primary and gravest of faults." To confirm and establish this, the Buddha asked: "Do you say 'bodily rod', Dīgha Tapassī?"

"Yes." "Do you say 'bodily rod'?" "Yes." In this manner, the Buddha confirmed it three times, verifying that this was indeed his true assertion. Now, it was Dīgha Tapassī's turn. Dīgha Tapassī asked the Buddha: "Friend Gotama, how many kinds of rods do you prescribe for committing an evil deed, for the performance of an evil deed?" The Buddha replied: "Tapassī, the Tathāgatas do not use this talk of 'daṇḍa'. The Tathāgatas use the term 'kamma' (action)." "Well then, how many kammas are there under evil deeds?" The Buddha said: "There are three kinds of kamma, distinct from one another: bodily action (*kāya-kamma*), verbal action (*vacī-kamma*), and mental action (*mano-kamma*)."

Then Dīgha Tapassī asked: "Of these three actions, which is the most blameworthy (*mahāsāvaṇjjatara*), the one with the gravest fault?" While Dīgha Tapassī had asserted the bodily rod, the Buddha declared: "Mental action (*mano-kamma*)." Then the ascetic, too, sought to confirm the Buddha's statement, asking: "Friend Gotama, do you say 'mental action'?" "Yes, I say mental action." "Do you say 'mental action'?" In this manner, he confirmed it three times, and then got up and left. He went in search of Niganṭha Nātaputta. At that moment, Niganṭha Nātaputta was discussing with a large lay gathering, headed by his very famous disciple, the householder Upāli. Seeing Dīgha Tapassī coming from afar, he asked:

"Where are you coming from, Tapassī, in the middle of this day?" "I am coming from the presence of Ascetic Gotama." "Was there any conversation or discussion there?" Dīgha Tapassī then related the entire discussion he had had with the Buddha to Niganṭha Nātaputta.

Then Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta said: "Excellent, Tapassī! You have well presented your teacher's words. How can that extremely low and insignificant mental rod even be compared to the coarse, gross bodily rod? The bodily rod itself is the most blameworthy. The gravest faults lie there, not in the mental rod." Thus, he confirmed Tapassī's view. Hearing this, the householder Upāli also said to the Nigaṇṭha ascetic: "Sādhu! Excellent is the way you presented your teacher's view." Next, Upāli asked permission from Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta: "Venerable Sir, if you permit, I shall go and debate with Ascetic Gotama on this matter. If Ascetic Gotama stands firm on what he said, I will pull him back and forth, dragging him around in debate just like a man who grabs a long-haired she-goat by her hair and drags her this way and that."

Not only that, the householder Upāli issued his challenge with three other similes: "In this manner will I defeat Ascetic Gotama in debate." Hearing this, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta said: "Well then, Upāli, go. It is either I or Tapassī who should debate with Ascetic Gotama, but you are the most suitable. Therefore, go." However, Dīgha Tapassī did not agree. Dīgha Tapassī said: "Venerable Sir, it does not please my mind that Upāli should go to meet Ascetic Gotama. Ascetic Gotama is a magician. He knows a converting magic (*āvaṭṭanī māyā*) with which he converts and pulls in the disciples of other sects. Ascetic Gotama knows this converting magic. Therefore, I do not wish for Upāli to go there." But Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta said: "No, under no circumstances will the householder Upāli become a disciple of Ascetic Gotama. If anything happens, Ascetic Gotama will become a disciple of the householder Upāli." Although Dīgha Tapassī warned him three times in this manner, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta dismissed it, saying, "No, no," and sent Upāli on his way.

So, the householder Upāli went in search of the Buddha. Out of some sense of faith or customary respect, he paid homage to the Buddha and sat down. Sitting to one side, he asked the Buddha: "Did Dīgha Tapassī come this way?" "Yes," replied the Buddha. "Was there any conversation between you?" The Buddha then related the entire discussion. Thereupon, Upāli, seeking to start the debate, said: "Ah! Indeed, that is true. How can mental action be compared to bodily action? Bodily action is the most blameworthy. That logic is absolutely correct." The Buddha replied: "Householder, are you prepared to discuss this standing on the truth?" Upāli promised: "Yes, I am."

"Very well, then, if you stand on the truth," the Buddha said, and proceeded to present arguments to refute that view. "Suppose there is a Nigaṇṭha disciple. The Nigaṇṭhas hold the view that there are living beings in cold water. Therefore, they only use warm water. Now, suppose a certain Nigaṇṭha falls seriously ill and needs cold water. However, to preserve his vow, he drinks warm water and passes away. According to Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta's view, where would that Nigaṇṭha disciple be reborn?" Then the householder Upāli said: "There is a class of devas called *Manosattā* (mind-bound deities). Such a person is reborn in that realm of *Manosattā* devas. The reason is that his passing away was bound to a mental state." Then the Buddha said: "Pay attention, householder! Your earlier statement and what you have just said do not agree. Why? There you claimed the bodily rod was primary,

but here you give supremacy to mental action." Despite this, Upāli said: "Whatever you say, in truth, the bodily rod is the most blameworthy." Upāli did not accept the logic.

Next, the Buddha gave another illustration. "Out of fear of committing even the subtlest harm, Niganṭhas practice the fourfold restraint (*cātuyāma-saṁvara*). While walking, such a Niganṭha accidentally steps on and kills small insects. In such an instance, what kind of kamma does Niganṭha Nātaputta say it is? Is it highly blameworthy?" Upāli replied: "It is not considered highly blameworthy because it was not done intentionally; it was unintentional (*asañcetanika*). Since it happened accidentally, it is not highly blameworthy." Then the Buddha asked: "Well, to which rod does intention (*cetanā*) belong? Does it belong to the bodily rod, the verbal rod, or the mental rod?" Upāli had to admit: "It belongs to the mental rod." Once again, the Buddha said: "Pay attention, householder! Are you not speaking standing on the truth? Does this not contradict what you said earlier?" Then the Buddha presented another illustration.

"Now, this Nālandā is a very prosperous area. It has a large population. Suppose a man comes with a sword and says, 'In a single moment, I will kill everyone in Nālandā and turn them into one heap of flesh.' What do you say, householder? Can a single man with a sword do such a thing?" "Venerable Gotama, he cannot do it. Even if fifty men came, they could not do it." Then the Buddha asked: "Well, suppose a contemplative or brahmin of great psychic power came and said, 'With a single thought of anger/hate, I will reduce this Nālandā to ashes.' Can it be done?" "Oh, indeed it can be done. He could reduce even fifty Nālandās to ashes." Then the Buddha stated again: "Now, pay attention. Does this not contradict what you said earlier?" Here, the Buddha was demonstrating the supreme power of the mind.

Next, the Buddha asked further: "Householder, have you heard of the forests of Kaliṅgārañña, Mataṅgārañña, Mejjharañña, and Daṇḍakārañña? Have you heard how these became wildernesses?" "Yes, Venerable Gotama. As I have heard, it was done by the mental anger/hate of the sages (ṛṣis)." It is said that the sages, with a mind of anger, destroyed those cities, and subsequently, they became wildernesses. Here, too, the Buddha pointed out: "Now, this does not agree with what you said before." At this point, the householder Upāli said: "Venerable Gotama, I was convinced of this matter by the very first analogy. However, I pretended to disagree because I wanted to hear the Blessed One's brilliant wit and skillful use of metaphors." Upāli expressed this with great faith. There is a passage often found in the suttas where someone declares their faith: "Excellent, Venerable Sir! It is as if one were to set upright what had been knocked down, or to reveal what was hidden, or to show the way to one who was lost, or to hold an oil lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms. Even so has the Blessed One clarified this matter. I go to the Blessed One, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha for refuge. I take refuge in the Triple Gem."

Then the Buddha said: "Householder, householder, it is good to act after careful consideration. For well-known people like you, Upāli, it is better not to make a decision all at once, but to investigate and contemplate further before becoming a disciple." Thereupon, the householder Upāli became even more pleased and said:

"I am even more delighted by this statement of the Blessed One. If other sectarians had converted me, they would have paraded banners around Nālandā, saying, 'The householder Upāli has become our disciple!' But Venerable Gotama tells me to think and investigate further before taking refuge." Expressing his delight, the householder Upāli took refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha for a second time. Then the Buddha said: "Householder, for a long time, your house has been like a public watering-place or a hall of alms for these Nigaṇṭhas. Therefore, even though you have converted, you should continue to give alms to the Nigaṇṭhas in the future." Thereupon, Upāli was even more deeply pleased that the Blessed One advised him to continue giving alms to the Nigaṇṭhas. "I had heard that Ascetic Gotama says alms should only be given to him, and not to other religionists; that alms should only be given to his disciples, and not to others. But because the Blessed One has instructed me in this way, I am even more delighted." Thus, he took refuge in the Buddha for the third time.

At that moment, the Buddha delivered a progressive discourse (*anupubbikathā*)—as these pious devotees have often heard—consisting of talk on giving (*dāna*), virtue (*sīla*), and heaven (*sagga*), in accordance with the Buddha's style of teaching the Dhamma. Finally, when the householder Upāli's mind was prepared, the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths. Having heard it, on that very seat, the householder Upāli attained the fruit of Stream-entry (*Sotāpanna*). Although the Buddha told him to give alms, Upāli said: "I know how to do that." It might not have been exactly as the Buddha had said, but because the Buddha had said it, he would do it. He also explained how he would do it. Having become a Stream-enterer, he paid homage to the Buddha, departed, went to his house, and told his gatekeeper: "Friend, from today, do not even allow those Nigaṇṭhas to enter. Tell them that henceforth, the householder Upāli is a disciple of the Buddha. Do not give them entry. But this door is open to the fourfold assembly: bhikkhus, bhikkhunīs, upāsakas, and upāsikās. For the Nigaṇṭhas, this door is closed. However, let them stand outside. If they need alms, bring it and give it to them there." Thus he commanded the gatekeeper.

Meanwhile, Dīgha Tapassī heard that the householder Upāli had become a disciple of the Buddha. He went to Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta and told him this news. Yet Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta did not accept it. "I do not believe that. It is more likely that Ascetic Gotama has become a disciple of the householder Upāli, but under no circumstances would the householder Upāli become a disciple of Ascetic Gotama." Then Dīgha Tapassī said: "Very well, then, I shall go and confirm this story." He went towards Upāli’s house.

As he approached the house, the gatekeeper said: "Stand there, Venerable Sir, we will bring you alms. Do not enter." "I do not need any alms," said Dīgha Tapassī, and he departed to return to Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta. He told him: "The news is true. I went there, and this is what happened." Still, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta did not accept it: "This cannot be." Although told three times, he did not believe it. Finally, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta said: "I will go myself and verify this," and went to the house of Upāli with a large following of Nigaṇṭhas. As they arrived, the gatekeeper said from afar: "Venerable Sir, stand there. If you want alms, we will give it. Do not enter." Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta said: "Very well, tell the householder Upāli that I wish to see him and speak with him a little." When the gatekeeper went and informed him of this, what did Upāli do? He had a large hall prepared inside the central gateway of the house and ordered seats to be arranged.

After the seats were arranged, the householder Upāli went and sat on the largest seat and told the gatekeeper: "Go and tell them they may enter if they wish." Then Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta entered with his followers. According to what is said, in the past, whenever Upāli saw Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, he would rise from his seat, wipe it, and invite him to sit. But now, he himself sat on the large seat. At this, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta became extremely angry: "Are you mad? Did you not go to debate? And now you have returned caught in his converting magic, caught in his trap of debate!" Thus, expressing severe displeasure, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta insulted him using several crude metaphors. Then the householder Upāli said: "That converting magic is an extremely noble magic. I would be glad if all my relatives and friends were caught in this converting magic. I would be glad if all the laymen, kṣatriyas, contemplatives, and brahmins of this Nālandā were caught in it. If they were caught in this converting magic, it would lead to their long-term welfare and happiness."

Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta had nothing to say in reply. There is a long story about the subsequent conversation with Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta; it did not end there. This householder Upāli was highly skilled in metaphors. On that occasion, he presented a highly sarcastic parabolic story. To relate it in full would take a long time. What was the meaning of that story? It meant that Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta's teaching is suitable only for fools, whereas the teaching of the Blessed Gotama is suitable for the wise. On that occasion, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta asked: "Well, now all the people of this region, including the king, know that the householder Upāli is a disciple of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta. Now, whose disciple do you declare yourself to be?" he asked Upāli. Then the householder Upāli rose from his seat, arranged his upper robe over one shoulder, and said: "Listen to whose disciple I am!" He then proclaimed the Buddha’s qualities in ten verses containing about a hundred epithets of praise. The very first of those verses is the one we chose as our theme today.

Dhīrassa vigatamo hassa… Dhīra means wisdom—the highly wise. *Vigatamohassa*—one who has dispelled delusion. *Pabhinnakhilassa*—this is a somewhat difficult word—one who has shattered the mental obstructions to concentration (barrenness of mind). *Vijitavijayassa*—victorious, one who has won

the battle against the defilements and Māra. *Anīghassa*—one who has destroyed the suffering of defilements. *Susamāhitacetaso*—one whose mind is perfectly stilled and concentrated. *Vuddhasīlassa*—one of mature virtue. *Sādhupaññassa*—one of excellent wisdom. As we explain it: *tassa sāvakohamasmi*—"I am a disciple of that Blessed One." In this manner, he proclaimed the Buddha's qualities through ten verses filled with such profound meanings.

Then Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta asked: "When did you compose so many verses, householder Upāli? When did you do this?" Even then, Upāli gave a simile: "Just as a skilled garland-maker, when presented with a vast heap of diverse flowers, selects and weaves them into garlands as he pleases, so the Buddha has various epithets of praise. I merely collected them and made this. Who, Venerable Sir, would not praise and honor the one who is worthy of praise and honor?"

It is said at the end of the sutta that because of the jealousy that arose in Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta and the grief of losing his chief disciple, hot blood gushed from his mouth. What we must take from the Upāli Sutta here is the Buddha's attitude. When the householder Upāli first took refuge in the Triple Gem, the Buddha told him to investigate further. He told him not to be in a hurry. Furthermore, He told him to continue giving alms to the disciples of the Nigaṇṭhas. It is there that we find the peaceful, tolerant principle we mentioned. Likewise, what He did there was to give understanding to a wise person, and through that understanding, clarify a matter of Dhamma.

As an additional point, we can extract from this an answer to a question many people ask even today. According to Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta's philosophy, bodily action is the most blameworthy, yielding the greatest results. But according to the Buddha's teaching, it is mental action. The analysis of wholesome and unwholesome states in the Dhammapada begins with the famous verse: *Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā*... (Mind precedes all mental states, mind is their chief, they are mind-made). From this verse, one can understand how the Buddha gave primacy to the mind, to mind-centric action. Furthermore, in this Dhamma, mental action is taught as something that occurs in accordance with the law of dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), and not as a punishment or a vow as the Nigaṇṭhas believed. Thus, the matter of kamma is also an important lesson we can glean from this sutta.

Let us next consider how Arahant Mahinda established the Buddha's Dispensation (Sāsana) in this island of Sri Lanka based on that peaceful and tolerant principle. As we mentioned at the beginning of the sermon, and as these pious devotees have often heard, Arahant Mahinda was the son of Emperor Dharmāśoka. However, in the verse through which Arahant Mahinda introduced himself, we can see that same tolerant principle:

> *Samaṇā mayaṁ mahārāja, dhammarājassa sāvakā,*
>
> *Taveva anukampāya, jambudīpā idhāgatā.*

He did not come presenting himself as the son of an emperor. He came as a disciple of the King of Dhamma. Furthermore, *taveva anukampāya*—out of compassion for you. He did not come to amass power or plunder anything; "out of compassion for you, we have come from Jambudīpa." In that manner he replied. Likewise, when Arahant Mahinda arrived at Ambastala and met the King, he conducted an intellectual test before preaching the Dhamma. Why? It is stated in various places in the Dhamma: *dhammo ayaṁ duppaññassa*... "This Dhamma is for the wise, not for the unwise." It is not for those lacking wisdom. Indeed, those lacking wisdom are the majority. But this Dhamma is for the wise.

Therefore, as an intellectual test, these pious devotees have heard how Arahant Mahinda assessed the King's wisdom and intelligence through the mango riddle and the relative riddle. To put it briefly, pointing to a mango tree, he asked: "What tree is this?" "A mango mango tree," replied the king. "Are there other mango trees besides this one?" "Yes, there are many other mango trees." "Are there other trees besides this mango tree and those other mango trees?" "Yes, there are trees that are not mango trees." "Well, are there any other trees besides those mango trees and those that are not mango trees?" "Yes, this very tree." Thus, he arrived right back at the starting point. This is precisely what wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) is: the ability to trace back to the very point of origin.

The riddle about relatives was also similar. "Great King, do you have relatives?" "Yes, many." "Are there those who are not your relatives?" "Those who are not my relatives are even more." "Well, is there anyone else besides your relatives and those who are not your relatives?" "Yes, myself." From these answers, we can see that our Sri Lankan ancestors of that time were not foolish; they were intelligent and wise. Therefore, it was only after testing the King's intellect in this manner that the Arahant delivered the Dhamma sermon.

These pious devotees have often heard of the sermon that led the King to take refuge in the Triple Gem: the *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta*. Let us examine it. Here we come to another valuable sutta that reveals the Buddha's tolerant and peaceful principles. Due to time constraints, I will explain it briefly, without lengthy elaborations. *Hatthipada* means the footprint of an elephant. Since there are two such suttas, this one is called *Cūla*, meaning the shorter discourse on the footprint of an elephant. The sutta begins as follows:

The Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi was a very wealthy and highly respected figure of that time. One day, as he was driving out of Sāvatthi in a chariot drawn by pure white mares, he met the wanderer Pilotika coming from the opposite direction. Pilotika's ancestral name was Vacchāyana. Seeing him from afar, the Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi asked: "Where are you coming from?" "I am coming from the presence of Ascetic Gotama." Then the Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi asked: "What do you think, Vacchāyana? Is Ascetic Gotama wise? Is he a man of great wisdom?" "Oh, there is nothing more to say about that. I cannot fathom the wisdom of Ascetic Gotama. Only someone equal to him could describe his

wisdom." "Then you praise him in the highest terms, do you not?" said Jāṇussoṇi. Thereupon, the wanderer Pilotika offered an analogy:

An elephant tracker—*nāga* means elephant, and *nāgavana* means an elephant forest. A person who has a good understanding of the elephant forest is called a skilled elephant tracker (*kusalo nāgavanniko*). Now, Pilotika says: "Suppose a skilled elephant tracker enters the forest and sees an elephant footprint that is exceptionally long and wide. Upon seeing it, such a person would immediately conclude, 'This is the footprint of a great bull elephant.' Similarly, when I saw four footprints regarding Ascetic Gotama, I came to the conclusion that Ascetic Gotama is a Fully Enlightened Buddha, the Dhamma is well-expounded, and the Saṅgha is practicing well."

Pilotika describes what these four footprints are. "I have seen highly skilled, wise kṣatriyas—that is, members of royal families—who are extremely adept at debate. When they hear that Ascetic Gotama is visiting their region, they prepare themselves for debate beforehand. They plan: 'I will ask this question. If he answers in this way, we will counter-argue like this.' Thus, they prepare their arguments. But when they go there and listen to Ascetic Gotama's Dhamma discourse, far from debating or even asking those questions, they ultimately become his disciples. That is the first footprint." Here, Pilotika presents the power of taming wise kṣatriyas as the first footprint of the elephant.

"The second footprint concerns wise brahmins. Wise brahmins are also highly skilled in debate. When they hear the Buddha is coming to their area, they prepare various questions to debate him. But having heard his Dhamma discourse, they are unable to debate or even ask their questions. That is the second footprint. Seeing this, I developed faith in the Triple Gem in that manner. Now, the third footprint: wise householders, too, are highly skilled in debate. They prepare in the same way, but upon hearing Ascetic Gotama's Dhamma discourse, they become his disciples. That is the third footprint. Fourthly, wise contemplatives also go to debate him, but upon hearing his Dhamma discourse, not only do they become disciples, but they also enter the order, receive higher ordination, and ultimately attain Arahantship. In the end, they declare: 'Previously, we claimed to be contemplatives when we were not; we claimed to be brahmins when we were not; we thought we were Arahants when we were not. Now indeed we are true contemplatives, true brahmins, true Arahants.'" Hearing this, the Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi developed great faith. He got down from his chariot, arranged his upper robe over one shoulder, paid homage to the Buddha three times saying *Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa*, and said: "One day I must see Ascetic Gotama, discuss with him, and engage in conversation." Indeed, as the account goes, he went to see the Buddha that very day. He related to the Buddha the entire conversation he had with the wanderer Pilotika. Thereupon, the Buddha said: "Brahmin, although the wanderer Pilotika said so, the elephant footprint simile is not complete with just that. The correct way to present the elephant footprint simile is as follows," and the Buddha proceeded to explain:

"Just as a skilled elephant tracker enters the forest and sees a long, wide footprint. But that wise tracker—let us use that word *nāgavanika*—does not immediately conclude, 'This is the footprint of a great bull elephant.' Why? Because there are dwarf she-elephants (*vāmanikā*) that have large footprints. This might be the footprint of such a dwarf she-elephant. Therefore, he does not turn back but continues to follow the tracks. He does not jump to a conclusion all at once. As he goes further, he sees other signs. Further along, he sees that the footprints are not only long and wide, but there are also high scrapings on the trees. From this, one might infer it is a tall elephant. Yet, the skilled tracker does not conclude, 'This is a great bull elephant.' Why? Because there are tall she-elephants that can leave such high scrapings. Thinking it could be one of them, he does not make a final decision but goes even further. Following those tracks, he next sees long, wide footprints, high scrapings, and additionally, tusk marks high up on the trees. Still, he does not conclude, 'These are the tusk marks of a great bull elephant, this is indeed the one.' Why? Because there are she-elephants that have tusks—the Buddha has given names to various classes of she-elephants, showing how profound His knowledge was. Because such she-elephants also exist, the true elephant tracker does not make an immediate decision. He goes further. Finally, he sees high broken branches. Then, indeed, he sees the great bull elephant itself resting under a tree in a clearing. Only when he beholds the great elephant with his own eyes does the tracker arrive at the certain conclusion: 'This is the great bull elephant I was seeking.'"

The Buddha compares this simile to the Dhamma in this way: "When a Tathāgata arises in the world, someone hears His Dhamma, develops faith, and ordains in this Dispensation. Having ordained, he establishes himself in virtue and fulfills the training. He then attains the first jhana. Here, the Buddha refers to the first jhana as a footprint of the Tathāgata (*tathāgatapadaṁ*), a mark left by the Tathāgata, a tusk-mark of the Tathāgata. Yet, even upon attaining the first jhana, he does not immediately arrive at the final conclusion, 'The Blessed One is fully enlightened, the Dhamma is well-expounded, the Saṅgha is practicing well.' He goes further. He attains the second, third, and fourth jhanas. Each of these is a footprint of the Tathāgata. Yet, he does not conclude with just that."

"Finally, based on those jhanas, he develops insight. As you have heard, these are the threefold knowledges (*tevijjā*): first, the knowledge of recollecting past lives (*pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*). Next, the knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings (*cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*). Even when he obtains the knowledge of recollecting past lives, he does not yet conclude, 'This is a fully enlightened Tathāgata.' It is indeed a footprint left by the Tathāgata, but he does not make a final decision on that basis. Even with the knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings, he does not conclude. Ultimately, when his mind is liberated from the taint of sensual desire (*kāmāsava*), the taint of becoming (*bhavāsava*), and the taint of ignorance (*avijjāsava*), and he directly experiences this liberation, it is then that the journey taken along the Tathāgata's footprints succeeds as if seen with his own eyes. At that moment, the disciple truly concludes, 'The Blessed One is indeed fully enlightened.'"

One must contemplate why such a discourse, out of all the suttas, was presented to the people of Sri Lanka. Arahant Mahinda could have used military force or other means to force faith in the Buddha. Instead, he preached the *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta* to allow wise and intelligent individuals to investigate and examine. This is a highly valuable quality within this Dhamma, within the Buddha's Sāsana. As we said before, Arahant Mahinda presented the Dhamma to this country in accordance with a peaceful and tolerant principle, and this is revealed even through the *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta*. Various forces operate in the world regarding religions. As we stated earlier, what stands out among them is this peaceful and tolerant principle. Historians praise it precisely because it is rooted in understanding.

The Buddha points out five things: faith (*saddhā*), approval (*ruci*), oral tradition (*anussava*), reasoned thinking (*ākāraparivitakka*), and reflective acceptance of a view (*diṭṭhinijjhānakkhanti*). These can lead in two different directions. Everyone knows what faith (*saddhā*) is. Approval (*ruci*) is one's preference for something. Oral tradition (*anussava*) is hearing from someone else: "This person is like this." Reasoned thinking (*ākāraparivitakka*) is arriving at a conclusion by reflecting on external appearances. *Diṭṭhi* (view) is accepting something as correct through logical reasoning. The Buddha declares that these five things can yield two kinds of results. A person may have faith, yet the matter may be false. A person may lack faith, yet the matter may be true. A person may have an approval/preference for something—preference is a personal matter—yet despite having that preference, it may be false. That which one dislikes may turn out to be true. Oral tradition (*anussava*) is what is heard. As the wanderer Pilotika said, one hears a story about someone, about a teacher, or reads it in books. Merely because it is heard, it does not become true. It too can go either way. Reasoned thinking (*ākāraparivitakka*)—it is not suitable to arrive at a conclusion merely by reflecting on external appearances, for that too can go both ways; it can be right or wrong. Merely because something is presented logically through a view, that alone does not make it true. Thus, the Buddha showed that there are two sides, leaving room for wise investigation.

This is precisely what is described as "reasoned faith" (*ākāravatī saddhā*) "rooted in vision" (*dassanāmūlikā*). Reasoned faith is the faith developed by thoroughly investigating matters in accordance with facts and reasons. It is rooted in vision (direct realization). It is for this reason that a Stream-enterer develops unshakable faith. In contrast, the faith of those outside is described like a line of blind men holding hands: the first one does not see, the second one does not see, yet they walk holding onto one another. This Dhamma is not like that. We must recognize the Buddha through the direct realization of the Dhamma. No matter how much is written in books or spoken by others, this does not mean we discard faith; we maintain a certain degree of faith. Yet, we do not arrive at a final conclusion based on that alone, nor do we abandon the journey. We must go forward, just like that elephant tracker. He saw the footprints; they might or might not belong to the great elephant, but he had to go forward. That is entering the path of practice. As one

enters the path of practice, the Buddha shows in that sutta how, step by step, the truth of this matter is confirmed for oneself.

Thus, we return to the qualities of the Dhamma. As these pious devotees have often heard: *Svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo, sandiṭṭhiko, akāliko, ehipassiko, opanayiko, paccattaṁ veditabbo viññūhi*. This is a passage everyone recites daily. We have explained these before. *Svākkhāto* means well-expounded. It is teachings that are poorly expounded that people attempt to spread and expand through various improper means. The Buddha has well-expounded the Dhamma and has given permission to investigate it. Investigate it impartially. Examine it with wisdom, and then put it into practice. Through practice, the Dhamma of the Blessed One is *sandiṭṭhiko* (visible here and now). It is not a teaching where one is told, "You will see it later, you will see it in the next life." *Sandiṭṭhika* means in this very world, before one's very eyes, in this present life (*diṭṭheva dhamme*). When speaking of wisdom, *diṭṭheva dhamme* is frequently mentioned. Other religions do not speak of their ultimate goal in this manner; some place it after death, either in a heaven or a brahma world.

But the Buddha points out that the end of this path, Nibbāna—the expected extinguishment—is realized "in this very life, having directly realized it through one's own higher knowledge" (*diṭṭheva dhamme sayaṁ abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharati*). That is why it is *sandiṭṭhika*. *Akālika* (timeless / immediate) means that to the extent one puts this Dhamma to the test, to that extent it is directly realized. The Buddha explained this term *akālika* even to non-Buddhist brahmins: "Brahmin, when greed arises in your mind, when hate arises in your mind, when delusion arises in your mind, your mind becomes agitated, and because of that, a state of suffering (*dukkha*) arises. Do you know this?" "Yes," they reply. "Well, to the extent that greed is absent, hate is absent, delusion is absent, do you not directly experience the peace that arises there?" "Yes," they say. It is just like that. If we take *akālika* in its deep sense, in the realization of the paths and fruits, it means that the fruit follows immediately after the path in the concentration of immediate succession (*ānantarika-samādhi*). However, *akālika* can also be experienced daily within one's own mind. If there is intense greed, or lust towards someone, or hate, or delusion, and one strives according to the Dhamma through meditation methods to overcome them, then one knows: "Previously when this was present, it was like this; now it is like this." One experiences direct realization right there. That is why it is called *akālika*. Giving results without delay, giving results immediately; that is what is shown as *akālika*.

The term *ehipassiko* (inviting one to come and see) fits perfectly with this elephant footprint simile. "Come and see! Here is the footprint of the elephant!" It was a challenge posed to the elephant tracker. He did not stop there and immediately declare, "This is the great bull elephant I sought." That impartial, middle approach is what is found there. He neither rejected it completely nor accepted it fully. He went further—*ehipassika*. Such is the nature of this Dhamma. When we say "Come and

see! Come and see!", it naturally draws us into the path of practice. To directly see whether the Dhamma is indeed well-expounded by the Buddha, and whether the Saṅgha is practicing well, this principle of *ehipassika*—"Come and see"—is crucial. Next, *opanayiko* (leading onwards / leading inward) means it draws one forward step by step. No one else needs to push or give a shove. It is inherent within the Dhamma itself: *opanayiko upanayati*—the Dhamma draws one in, as if calling one forward.

We have pointed out on many occasions how this is demonstrated within the Noble Eightfold Path, where it is beautifully shown in the Dhamma:

> *Sammā-diṭṭhissa sammā-saṅkappo pahoti.*
>
> *Sammā-saṅkappassa sammā-vācā pahoti.*
>
> *Sammā-vācassa sammā-kammanto pahoti.*
>
> *Sammā-kammantassa sammā-ājīvo pahoti.*
>
> *Sammā-ājīvassa sammā-vāyāmo pahoti.*
>
> *Sammā-vāyāmassa sammā-sati pahoti.*
>
> *Sammā-satissa sammā-samādhi pahoti.*

It is stated that for one of Right View, as a result of that Right View developing, right intentions—wholesome thoughts—arise. As one develops wholesome thoughts, right speech flows. As right speech flows and one's conduct is aligned with those words, right action (*sammā-kammanta*) is established. When one practices Right Action not just occasionally on a Poya day but daily, it becomes Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). One's very livelihood becomes connected to it. This is not something easily done. As one strives to establish Right Livelihood, without even realizing it, the fourfold right effort (*saṅkhāra*) develops.

These pious devotees are familiar with the fourfold effort: preventing unarisen unwholesome states from arising, abandoning arisen unwholesome states, developing unarisen wholesome states, and maintaining arisen wholesome states. One naturally falls into this fourfold effort. Through mindfulness of these four, Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) develops. When this Right Mindfulness is established so that it remains for a long time through a meditation subject, Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) is attained. Here, too, lies that quality of *opanayiko*. One is drawn from one step to the next. This is something inherent in the Dhamma itself. In this manner, you can further contemplate the "bag of tools" the Buddha left us when He passed away: the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhammā*). Within them lies a wonderful, mutual connection. As one develops the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Four Right Efforts develop. In developing the Four Right Efforts, one comes to recognize the Four Bases of Power. As one develops the Four Bases of Power, five spiritual faculties (*indriya*) arise within oneself—faculties

of faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—which were previously unrecognized and absent. Once these spiritual faculties have arisen, utilizing their strengths is what is described as the five spiritual powers (*bala*).

As one continues with these, the factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*) fall into place: mindfulness (*sati*), investigation of states (*dhamma-vicaya*), energy (*viriya*), joy (*pīti*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). When these are properly aligned, it is then that the Noble Eightfold Path comes to be fully established, with each factor linked to the next. This practice, which begins with the Four Foundations of Mindfulness within the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment, culminates in the supramundane path—the supramundane path of the Noble Eightfold Path. Following that supramundane path, the paths and fruits of liberation arise. This, pious devotees, is what is meant by *opanayiko, paccattaṁ veditabbo viññūhi*. *Viññūhi* means by the wise; *paccattaṁ veditabbo*—it must be personally realized. This is a Dhamma that must be realized individually, each according to his own wisdom. Therefore, on a day like today, you must contemplate this with wisdom.

We take various external measures claiming to protect the Buddha's Sāsana. But in the end, like an empty bubble, nothing remains within. We pass down this Sāsana of scriptures (*pariyatti-sāsana*) like a basket passed from hand to hand. The same is true of other things. But if someone diligently brings this Dhamma close to their own life, they will personally realize that the Buddha is indeed Fully Enlightened, the Dhamma is well-expounded, and the Saṅgha is practicing well. Furthermore, through that pure faith, they will provide encouragement to others to follow this Sāsana and enter this path of practice.

Today, on this precious day, we have spoken of these many Dhamma accounts not merely because you like to hear stories. There is something to be taken from them. That is why they were presented in brief. We live in an era where precious time is wasted on various unnecessary things. We must contemplate the word "diligence" (*appamāda*). Tomorrow is too late. Therefore, as taught in this Dhamma, we must be diligent. We must constantly recollect the six sublime qualities of the Dhamma through which the Buddha presented His challenge: *Svākkhāto, Sandiṭṭhiko, Akāliko, Ehipassiko, Opanayiko, Paccattaṁ veditabbo viññūhi*. This is what is meant by *Dhammānussati* (recollection of the Dhamma). Today, one must resolve to shape one's life accordingly.

Thus, for this length of time on this precious day, you have entered upon the path of practice as a form of practice-homage (*paṭipatti-pūjā*), which helps preserve the Sāsana. Whatever the troubles of your daily lay life may be, at this rare opportunity—when a Buddha's Sāsana has been encountered, when a Buddha's Dhamma is heard—if one does not direct the mind towards the task of crossing over the ocean of saṁsāra, you can imagine what would happen if this moment slips away. Today, while keeping these virtues (*sīla*), you have directed your mind towards meditation as far as possible, and you have also had the opportunity to listen to this Dhamma

sermon. By forming noble resolutions regarding your life through this, while being protected by the Sāsana, we urge you to firmly resolve to protect the Sāsana as well.

May you integrate the aspects of virtue, concentration, and wisdom gained through listening to this Dhamma into your lives, and as quickly as possible, before this Dispensation of the Buddha declines, may you end the suffering (*dukkha*) of saṁsāra through this practice. May this Dhamma sermon serve as a supportive condition for realizing the noble path-and-fruit realizations of Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship, leading to the sublime, deathless Great Nibbāna! Furthermore, from the Avīci hell to the Akaniṭṭha heaven, to whatever extent there are beings who wish to rejoice in the merit of this giving and hearing of Dhamma, through that rejoicing, may they realize the supreme, deathless Great Nibbāna through a Bodhi of their aspiration! Let us recite these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……..*"