Pahankanuwa Sermon #165

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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(Pahankaṇuwa Sinhala Audio Dhamma Sermon No.161)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

"Sumuttiko sumuttiko,

sāhu sumuttikomhi tīhi khujjakehi;

Asitāsu mayā naṅgalāsu,

mayā khuddakuddālāsu mayā.

Yadi pi idham-eva idham-eva,

atha vā pi alameva alameva;

Jhāya sumaṅgala jhāya sumaṅgala,

appamatto vihara sumaṅgalā'ti."

From:

Verse 43 Theragāthā in the Khuddaka Nikāya (Venerable Sumaṅgala Thera)

Dear Listeners,

Wisely reflecting on the nature of *Dukkha* (Suffering) within the existence of life is the very first step that directs one towards Nibbāna. The Buddha explained to us that because of the darkness of delusion, which masquerades *Dukkha* as happiness, beings are repeatedly born and die in *saṃsāra*. In order to bring out and consolidate that concept of *Dukkha*, it is necessary to constantly reflect on the nature of suffering within the continuation of life. How a bhikkhu who was about to disrobe and return to the lay life aroused his energy through such reflection and finally attained Arahantship is revealed in the background story of the verses of our theme.

The parents of a child born to a poor family in a certain village near Sāvatthī named him Sumaṅgala. When this Sumaṅgala reached youth, just like his parents, he scraped by a difficult living with farming implements—namely a plow, a sickle, and a spade. On one occasion, when King Pasenadi of Kosala was offering a great almsgiving to the Saṅgha led by the Buddha, Sumaṅgala went there carrying a pot of curd along with the people who brought the requisites for the almsgiving, and he witnessed the honor and hospitality shown to the Saṅgha. Seeing this, he thought: "These bhikkhus wear fine robes, receive good food and drink, and reside in comfortable lodgings. I too should ordain." Having thought thus, he approached a certain elder monk and expressed his desire to ordain. Out of compassion, that elder ordained Sumaṅgala, gave him a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*), and sent him to the forest. However, after some time, Venerable Sumaṅgala grew weary of this solitary life in the forest and decided to return to lay life. While traveling back to his relatives' village with this intention, he saw on the way farmers in the blazing sun, sweaty and covered in dust, wearing dirty clothes, and working hard with plows and sticks. A great sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) arose in him as he saw how much suffering they undergo just to sustain their lives. Through that very sense of urgency, the meditation subject Venerable Sumaṅgala had previously practiced began to appear to him with great clarity. He went under a nearby tree, sat down, and began to meditate. There, it is subsequently mentioned, he attained the fruit of Arahantship through the successive stages of the path.

After attaining Arahantship in this manner, he uttered a certain verse of joy (*udāna*) summarizing his life's story. That verse of joy is what we have taken as our theme. Indeed, though not highly stylized, a very valuable idea is expressed there. What does Venerable Sumaṅgala declare?

Sumuttiko sumuttiko, sādhu sumuttikomhi tīhi khujjakehi

"Thoroughly freed, thoroughly freed! Well and truly freed am I from three crooked things."

Asitāsu mayā naṅgalāsu mayā, khuddakhuddakulāsu mayā

"From sickles, from plows, and from small spades—from these I am thoroughly freed."

Yadapi idhaveva idhaveva, atha vāpi alameva alameva

"Even though these farming tools are right here, right beside me, yet indeed, enough of them, enough of them!"

Sumaṅgala, jhāyassu sumaṅgala, appamatto viharа sumaṅgala

"Meditate, Sumaṅgala, meditate, Sumaṅgala! Dwell heedfully, Sumaṅgala!"

The final line shows how he admonished himself. Thus, we can see that if one reflects on the nature of *Dukkha* (Suffering) in this life's existence and arouses a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*), that itself becomes a helper to Nibbāna. You devotees may have heard many times about the eight bases of urgency (*saṃvega-vatthu*) mentioned in this Dispensation: *Jāti* (Birth), *jarā* (decay/aging), sickness, death (thus, *Jarāmaraṇa*—decay and death), the suffering of the plane of misery, the suffering experienced in the past cycle of *saṃsāra*, the suffering to be experienced in the future cycle of *saṃsāra* if one does not attain Nibbāna in this life, and finally, eighthly, the toil of seeking food in this life—the struggle of maintaining a livelihood through employment and so on. From this, we can see that it was by taking support of this eighth base of urgency that Venerable Sumaṅgala, who was about to disrobe, became an Arahant. This is an excellent point for us to ponder. Why? Because, as mentioned earlier, we cover up the nature of *Dukkha* inherent in this life's existence and hold the perception of it as pleasure. Therefore, to uncover this again, we must deeply reflect on their true nature through insight (*vipassanā*).

You devotees have heard about *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). In the Dispensation, the word *saṅkhāra* is often used with the meaning of "concocting" or "constructing". There is a vast range of meanings in this word *saṅkhāra*, such as processing, plotting, preparing, and making ready. A drama, after all, is a delusion of the audience. The dressing up, make-up, and disguises that actors and actresses put on behind the scenes to delude the audience were historically called *saṅkhāra*. In the exact same way, the continuation of our life is a grand masquerade. It is presented to us under various names such as jobs, positions, and titles. Why is all this being done? To put it briefly in old parlance, it is "to save the span of the stomach"—to sustain this belly which is just a span wide. Obtaining this food is the primary matter.

Just like food, laypeople also have to find the other four requisites that support life's continuation: clothing, food, medicine, and shelter. These do not come on their own. Therefore, one has to exert effort for them. How this effort is made can be understood from the Buddha's own words in the Mahā (Dukkhandha) Sutta. The Buddha has pointed out the turmoil and effort made for a livelihood in this world as the disadvantage (*ādīnava*) of sensual pleasures. Consider the immense amount of preparation involved in farming, which was mentioned here as a livelihood. A farmer goes to sleep thinking, "Today's work is done," but already planning tomorrow's work. In this manner, there is an endless series of tasks. These are *saṅkhāras*—preparations—and there is no end to preparing them. It is a mass of endless preparations, a multitude of plottings. This acting is indeed what we perform as *saṃsāra*.

Whether it is farming, cattle-rearing, trade, accounting, civil service, or military service, the Buddha mentions in the Mahā Sutta how much a human being has to toil for it. Suffering from heat and cold, bothered by flies, mosquitoes, and snakes, "*khuppipāsāhi mīyamāno*"—nearly dying of hunger and thirst, one exerts great effort and striving in various occupations. In those occupations, while protecting

oneself, protecting one's job, and additionally trying to stand out above others, how much toil does one undergo day and night through a multitude of concerns!

Furthermore, if despite such toil, one's effort somehow becomes fruitless, the Buddha describes the wide range of reactions to that. That person weeps, laments, beats their breast, swoons, and falls into utter confusion, grieving: "My effort has been in vain; it was of no use." That is one aspect. Next, suppose that effort somehow succeeds. Having succeeded, one accumulates a wealth of possessions. The Buddha then describes the *Dukkha* (Suffering) one undergoes to protect that accumulated wealth.

That person experiences a heap of pain and grief, keeping a heavy load of suffering inside their mind, worrying: "May my acquired wealth and heap of possessions not be confiscated by kings! May they not fall into the hands of thieves! May they not be destroyed by floods or fire! May unloved heirs not take possession of them!" Then, if despite such protection, they are confiscated by kings, stolen by thieves, caught in fire, swept away by floods, or taken by unloved heirs, the Buddha describes their reaction thus: "*Yam pi me ahosi, tam pi me natthi*"—"What I once had, even that I have no more." Such reactions are found in the Buddha's own words. It is in this manner that the Buddha has shown the nature of *Dukkha* (Suffering) within that existence.

Those of you who own vehicles know that you buy a new vehicle at a great expense. How long does that newness last? Before long, it has to be taken to the garage. Parts have to be assembled and it has to be serviced. The vehicle is run amidst a multitude of other hassles. Thinking of how many troubles arise because of this, the Buddha points to this vehicle of ours, received from Māra, as "*catucakkaṃ navadvāraṃ*"—a vehicle with four wheels and nine openings. What is this vehicle? It is this body. The "four wheels" refer to the four postures. You devotees know them: standing, sitting, walking, and lying down. Within these four postures, in order to maintain this body, we have to take food, drink, and so on. Furthermore, you devotees know what the "nine openings" are. That is the vehicle. So, this vehicle received from Māra also occasionally has to be "garaged" in hospitals, and its parts have to be repaired. Such is the situation. Even if that were not the case, you devotees well know that something called in-breathing and out-breathing occurs within the body. We breathe in, and the breath taken in must be breathed out. That is why the Buddha has pointed to in-breathing and out-breathing as the most subtle level of *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). It is the minimal bodily action, designated as bodily formation (*kāya-saṅkhāra*). We know how much effort and pain must be taken just to protect this breath, this wave of breath.

The same applies to food and drink. After taking food, how long does it remain inside this body? The same is true of clothing and the houses used as dwellings. They must be constantly repaired and prepared. The Buddha declares that this very preparation is *Dukkha* (Suffering). In the phrase "*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*" (all Preparations are

impermanent), the impermanence of all preparations is fully contained. Thus, this very preparation is *Dukkha*. Within this impermanence, there is change, alteration, and other-wiseness (*vipariṇāma-aññathābhāva*). To analyze further, the mature state which we fancied to be in good condition, without our even knowing it, undergoes change (*vipariṇāma*). It changes in ways we do not expect, becoming otherwise, not remaining as it was. Just as we think, "It is in this state," when we look later, it has become otherwise.

Now, there is a valuable sutta in the Dhamma that illustrates this nature of *Dukkha* (Suffering). It is a deep sutta. We do not intend to discuss all of it, but will mention only a part. On one occasion, Venerable Kumāra Kassapa, who had not yet attained Arahantship, went to the Andhavana forest near Sāvatthī to dwell in solitude. During the night, a certain deity approached Venerable Kumāra Kassapa and uttered a series of riddles in the form of highly astonishing similes. The deity did not give the answers to them. Instead, he said, "No one else can solve these riddles; go and ask the Tathāgata himself." Thus, we will only mention the part where the Buddha solved these riddle-like phrases when they were presented to him, and even of that, only a few, as the rest lead to very deep levels. That sutta is the Vammika Sutta. Devotees, "*vammika*" means an anthill. Everyone knows what an anthill is; it is where cobras and such take up residence. However, it does not belong to the cobra; it is built by termites.

So, what was the first phrase uttered by the deity? Addressing Venerable Kumāra Kassapa, he said: "Monk, monk, this anthill here fumes by night and blazes by day." In Pali terms: "*Bhikkhu bhikkhu, ayaṃ vammiko rattiṃ dhūmāyati, divā pajjālati.*" Next, he says, "Shatter this anthill! Wise man, take a tool and shatter it!" Thus, it goes on as a long story. If we were to explain all of it, it would take hours for you devotees to understand. Let us extract this portion. When Venerable Kassapa asked the Buddha the next morning, the Buddha explained it in this way. The simile given by the deity is as follows: What is the anthill (*vammika*)? This anthill is a name for this very body, which is composed of the four great elements, born of mother and father, nourished on boiled rice and gruel, subject to *Anicca* (Impermanent), and which constantly needs to be maintained by rubbing, massaging, bathing, and cleaning, and is bound to break up and scatter (*aniccauccādana-parimaddana-bhedana*).

Next, he explains why this anthill "fumes by night". Planning without sleep during the night, thinking about the activities to be done during the day—pondering: "Is it better if I do it this way? Is it better if I do it that way? What will happen if I do it like this?"—this planning during the night is "fuming by night". Next, what is meant by "blazing by day"? Having planned like that during the night, it is the engagement in those activities during the day by mind, body, and speech, like a blazing fire. From this too, through the idea of the anthill, its fuming by night, and its blazing by day, the nature of *Dukkha* in our life's continuation is clearly visible. Furthermore, if we contemplate, since every simile has a depth, an anthill is something built with the

great toil of termites. Although we perceive it as a single unit, when we see an anthill, because it is extremely strong, some people do not even realize that it was built by termites. This anthill is something built day and night by billions of termites exerting a massive amount of labor. In the same way, this body, which people decorate, show off, and enter into beauty contests to win prizes, claiming "I" and "mine", contains the essence of lorry-loads of rice. When we think of how many beings' help was needed to produce just a single grain of rice, there is no greater foolishness than claiming "I" and "mine" regarding this body. Yet, it is within that delusion that the world remains in *saṃsāra*. This is called *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (View of existing group/body). Taking this entire heap as a single unit, taking it as one through the perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*), they grasp it through view as: "*Etaṃ mama, eso'hamasmi, eso me attā*"—"This is mine, this I am, this is my self."

And it is on the basis of that form (*rūpa*) itself that *Vedanā* (Feeling), perception (*saññā*), *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and *Viññāṇa* (consciousness) all arise. You devotees have heard of how these should be reflected upon. The Buddha has stated that if one wishes to attain the fruits of the path, if one wishes to attain the fruits of Stream-entry and so on, whether one is a layperson or a monk, one must reflect on them in eleven ways: as *aniccatō* (impermanent), *dukkhatō* (painful), *rōgatō* (diseased), *gaṇḍatō* (as a boil), *sallatō* (as a dart), *aghatō* (as calamity), *ābādhatō* (as an affliction), *paratō* (as alien), *palokatō* (as disintegrating), *suññatō* (as empty), and *anattatō* (as not-self). The Buddha has declared that we must reflect on all these—not just form, but the others as well—which we fancied as "I" and "mine", in these eleven ways: as *Anicca* (Impermanent), as *Dukkha* (Suffering), as a boil, as a dart, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as empty, and as *Anattā* (Not-self).

On one occasion, Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhita asked Venerable Sāriputta which things a virtuous monk should reflect upon. Venerable Sāriputta stated that he should reflect upon the five aggregates of grasping (*pañc'upādānakkhandha*) in those eleven ways, as *Anicca* (Impermanent) and as *Dukkha* (Suffering). By reflecting in this way, it is possible for that monk to realize the fruit of Stream-entry. Next, he asks, "What should a Stream-enterer monk do?" It is the same. In the same way, he should reflect even more deeply on the five aggregates of grasping in those eleven ways. When reflecting thus, that monk attains the state of a Once-returner. Next, he asks, "What should a Once-returner monk reflect upon?" It is the same. He reflects on the very same in those eleven ways. Then, it is possible for that monk to attain the state of a Non-returner. "Next, how does one become an Arahant?" For the Arahant, too, the practice is reflecting in the very same way. Thus, this demonstrates the immense value of reflecting on the five aggregates of grasping (using *Upādāna* as grasping) in these eleven ways.

Not only that, finally he asks a question which is a matter of debate for many, but since it is found in the Dhamma, let us state it: "What does an Arahant reflect upon? What should an Arahant monk reflect upon?" The answer there is highly astonishing.

There it is said that for the Arahant, there is nothing further to be done; he has already completed what had to be done. Nevertheless, for the sake of a pleasant dwelling in this very life (*sukha-vihāra*) as well as for mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*), he reflects on these five aggregates of grasping in the exact same manner.

Thus, we can see that we must develop this perception—the perception of *Dukkha* (Suffering). For that, we must understand the nature of these *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). If we recollect the similes given for the five aggregates, such as form (*rūpa*), we can understand this to a great extent. Consider how form is compared to a lump of froth. The lump of froth is just like the anthill. *Vedanā* (Feeling) is like a water bubble arising during rain. This must be taken as a heap, not as a single thing. Even this *vedanā* is a heap, not a single entity. Perception (*saññā*) is compared to a mirage. One runs after a mirage because of attachment. *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) are compared to a banana trunk. The story of the banana trunk contains this very same idea. As soon as one sees a banana trunk, a perception of compactness (*ghana-saññā*) arises, making one think it is wood with a solid heartwood. The Buddha gives the simile of a man who sees a banana tree for the first time; he cuts it at the top and the bottom, and carries it off, thinking he will split it to make a chair or a table for his house. But when he peels it later, it is just a pile of sheaths. Thus, the way the world grasps things is shown as "compactness"—a dogmatic holding in terms of misapprehension (*parāmāsa*). But the Buddha, instead of that, shows comprehension (*sammasana*)—which is like feeling it out, searching it out with the mind, recognizing them with the mind. This is called reflection. Reflecting wisely in this way is what is called *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention).

In terms of *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention), seeing things subtly in a way that brings the realization of "not one, but a heap" is what is called insight (*vipassanā*). We do not see the oppressive nature and the repetitive nature of these *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) in our daily lives. As one day ends, another day begins. Within day and night, we take all of this as a new morning, and we do not perceive the aspect of cessation (*nirodha*) in them. We often do not even realize that we have to do this over and over again.

In order to bring out the nature of *Dukkha* (Suffering) in this constant repetition, the Buddha employed various skillful means on different occasions. There is an excellent story mentioned in the Dhamma about such a skillful means. One day, the Buddha went for alms to the house of the brahmin named Udaya in Sāvatthī. Even though that brahmin had no faith, he filled the bowl and offered the alms. The Buddha returned. On the second day, He went there again. On the second day, too, the brahmin filled the bowl and offered alms. On the third day, He went again. When He went, the brahmin filled the bowl again and said, "This ascetic Gotama is greedy for taste. *Punappunaṃ*—he comes again and again, he comes again and again."

Seizing upon that word, the Buddha delivered a Dhamma sermon consisting of four verses. They were highly unusual verses.

Punappunañceva vapanti bījaṃ, punappunaṃ vassati devarājā;

Punappunaṃ khettaṃ kasanti kassakā, punappunaṃ dhaññamupeti raṭṭhaṃ.

That is the first verse. Again and again they sow the seed, again and again the king of devas rains down, again and again the farmers plow the field, and again and again grain enters the country. Next,

Punappunaṃ yācakā yācayanti, punappunaṃ dānapatī dadanti;

Punappunaṃ dānaṃ datvā dānapatī, punappunaṃ saggamupenti ṭhānaṃ.

Again and again the beggars beg, again and again the donors give, and again and again, having given gifts, the donors again and again go to the heavenly state. That is the second verse. The third verse:

Punappunaṃ khīranikā duhanti, punappunaṃ vaccho upeti mātaraṃ;

Punappunaṃ kilamati phandati ca, punappunaṃ gabbhamupeti mando.

Next, it speaks about cattle rearing. "Again and again they milk the cow." Now, you devotees know that milk does not flow instantly the moment you pull. How many times must one pull? Not only that, the calf also has to be brought near sometimes when the cow holds back its milk. So, that is what is meant by "*punappunaṃ vaccho upeti mātaraṃ*"—again and again the calf goes to its mother. Next, what happens to the calf in going there? Again and again it grows exhausted and trembles. "Again and again the foolish person (*mando*), the dull-witted one, enters the womb."

Next, the fourth verse contains a special meaning:

Punappunaṃ jāyati mīyati ca, punappunaṃ sīvathikaṃ haranti;

Maggañca laddhā apunabbhavāya, na punappunaṃ jāyati bhūripaññho.

So, just like entering the womb, what happens next? Again and again one undergoes *Jāti* (Birth) and dies. Again and again they carry one to the cemetery. Now, what do the last two lines say? "*Maggañca laddhā apunabbhavāya*"—devotees, *apunabbhava* (non-renewed existence) is a name for Nibbāna where there is no rebirth. Having found the path to non-renewed existence, "*na punappunaṃ jāyati bhūripaññho*"—the one of vast wisdom (*bhūripaññho*) does not undergo *Jāti* (birth) again and again. That is all the Buddha declares. By the time He finished uttering these four verses, the brahmin gained a certain understanding, went for refuge to the Triple Gem for life, and became a lay disciple.

Accordingly, it was to bring out that word *punappunaṃ* according to the occasion that the Buddha went to that brahmin's house three times—not because He had nowhere else to go, but to favor the brahmin with the Dhamma. Therefore, we must take these as lessons. This repetitive nature of *Dukkha* is inevitably present in *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). There is a multitude of preparing and renewed organizing that never sees an end. If you ask a person at the moment of death, "Is the work you need to do finished now?" there will still be at least one more thing left. Even if one lives for a hundred years, or eighty-four thousand years, this preparing and renewed organizing never ends. Then, what happens to make it appear to us as if they have ended? There are two things called day and night. "For today, the work is done; it's fine for today." One comes and sleeps. Fine, then tomorrow comes. Then it appears like a new task. Tomorrow is a new morning. Another morning.

Although this is not a story mentioned in the Dhamma, the concept of time that existed among ancient people is revealed in this story from the Rigvedic era. Even though it is a mythological story, we are mentioning it because we can derive something from it. Do not take it as a literal truth. Among them, there is a story like this. You have heard of King Yama. The concept of Yama exists in those texts as well. Yama has a wife named Yamī. When Yama died, Yamī was weeping constantly: "Oh, he died just today! He died just today! He died this very day! He died this very day!" At that time, a certain Brahma, like a creator Brahma, created the night. This is how they say the night came to be. He created the night. Yamī had been saying, "Today, today," because there was no night. Once the night had passed, Yamī thought, "Ah, he died yesterday. Yama died yesterday." Thus she forgot. You devotees know that such things happen in this world. That is why we speak of these two—day and night. The sun and the moon must be laughing at this multitude of *Saṅkhāra* (preparations) and planning we do. Thus, time passes within a disguise. So even if years, a hundred years, or eighty-four thousand years pass, this spinning does not end.

That is why the Buddha revealed the true nature of these spinnings. That, devotees, is the main subject of insight (*vipassanā*): *samudaya* (arising) and *vaya* (passing away). The two words *samudaya* and *atthaṅgama* (disappearance/setting) are closest to the story of the day. You devotees know the rising of the sun. *Samudaya* also means rising. *Atthaṅgama* means the setting of the sun. Words like *samudaya* and *uppāda* point to the side of the arising of *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). Words like *vaya* and *atthaṅgama* point to the side of cessation (*nirodha*).

So, it is those two aspects that the Buddha revealed in every *Saṅkhāra* (formation). If we further analyze "*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*" (all Preparations are impermanent), it breaks down into two. That is why we call them the two petals of impermanence. When impermanence is further developed in meditation, that is what is called the knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*). Arising, passing away; arising, passing away. It arises and ceases, arises and ceases. But the world forgets this passing away. It is a new morning. They keep waiting until tomorrow morning.

This evening, they forget the side of cessation (*nirodha*). That is why the Buddha has declared:

Ye ca rūpūpagā sattā, ye ca arūpaṭṭhāyino;

Nirodhaṃ appajānantā, āgantāro punabbhavaṃ.

Beings who have reached the form realm, and those established in the formless realm, everyone—not just humans, but even devas and Brahmas—because of not understanding cessation (*nirodha*), return again and again to renewed existence (*punabbhava*).

The Buddha brings out this very side of cessation (*nirodha*). Nibbāna is also called cessation (*nirodha*). Thus, the Buddha uncovers for the world this hidden cessation. Just as said in the story of Yamī, once a night passes, it is finished. In this manner, forgetting that cessation, people make a kind of knot. That is what *Upādāna* (grasping/holding/fuel) is—grasping. They grasp only the side of arising (*samudaya*). We have shown this on other occasions through a different simile, which we also brought out in our sermons. The Buddha has compared *Taṇhā* (Craving) to a seamstress (*sibbanī*). What does a seamstress do? Even if we think of a sewing machine today, it works through grasping. The bobbin thread connects as the needle moves. Furthermore, when knitting, there is an eye in the knitting needle too. Indeed, *Taṇhā* is also called an eye/lead: "*bhavanetti*" (the lead to becoming). Thus, this very craving stands as *Upādāna* (grasping/fuel) at the moment of death. That craving is never satisfied. The cause for this multitude of preparations is this craving—in the form of craving for sensual pleasures (*kāma-taṇhā*), craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*), and craving for non-becoming (*vibhava-taṇhā*). The Buddha calls that craving "the seamstress". It can be understood in that way.

Likewise, *bhavanetti* (the lead to becoming). At the moment of death, there is a certain lead. Now, if you devotees cut a slope in a mountain and leave a lead (overhang), it will collapse in the next rain. In the same way, the craving called the lead to becoming has a certain lack. That is why the Buddha declared on one occasion: "*Ūṇo loko atitto taṇhādāso*"—the world is insufficient, insatiable, a slave to craving. There is a certain lack in this world. Even if you ask the richest billionaire in the world, "Is everything fine now? Are you happy? Is it complete? Is everything one hundred percent fine?" they would say, "No, there is some lack." That is it: "*Ūṇo loko atitto*". The world is insatiable, there is no satisfaction; "*taṇhādāso*"—even if one thinks of oneself as a master, whatever one may be a master of, one is a slave to craving. That is what we must understand. Thus, it is because of craving itself that this massive stream of preparations continues.

Now, the reason we do not see it is because through ignorance (*avijjā*), we forget cessation (*nirodha*). Not only us, but even devas and Brahmas remain in this ignorance until a Buddha arises in the world. That is the special task of a Buddha: to show the deep side of impermanence—not merely saying "*Anicca, anicca*", but seeing

much deeper. Through suttas like the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, we must go to the deep side. That is what meditators aim for. In the suttas like the Satipaṭṭhāna, there is the phrase: "*samudayadhammānupassī, vayadhammānupassī, samudayavayadhammānupassī*" (contemplating the nature of arising, contemplating the nature of passing away, contemplating the nature of both arising and passing away). This is a puzzle to many. Devotees who put the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta into practice know that the Buddha has shown how to take this body, feelings, mind, and mental objects as objects of meditation under various topics such as contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), contemplation of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*), contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā*), and contemplation of mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā*), using breathing, postures, bodily parts, and so forth as meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*).

Developing them in a way that concentration (*samādhi*) grows, and while progressing through mindfulness, it is through the understanding of clear comprehension (*sampajañña*) that one can go deep into this path. Ultimately, it is said that regarding each of these, one must look at both *samudaya* (arising) and *vaya* (passing away)—to see the side of arising and to see the side of passing away. Let us take in-breathing and out-breathing as an example—mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). It is said to watch how it arises, and to watch how it passes away. Then, the next riddle is that both arising and passing away (*samudaya-vaya*) are also presented together. That is a puzzle to many: dwelling contemplating the nature of arising, dwelling contemplating the nature of passing away, and also contemplating both arising and passing away at once. There is something quite special there.

Right there lies the penetration of this insight (*vipassanā*). The yogi who watches arising and passing away, which is called the knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*), as he practices it for a long period and goes deeper and deeper, sees that they break up right then and there. That is called the knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*). To explain this a bit further, we can understand it like this: the Buddha has stated that prepared things are generally called *saṅkhata* (the prepared/conditioned) in the Dhamma. *Saṅkhata* means prepared or concocted. If we say it in simple Sinhala, they are made-up things. Now, the Buddha points out three characteristics of these prepared things: "*Uppādo paññāyati, vayo paññāyati, thitassa aññathattaṃ paññāyati*". In every prepared thing, an arising is apparent—which means it can be seen. There is an arising; that is one end. "*Vayo paññāyati*"—a passing away is apparent. And the third one is the deepest: "*Thitassa aññathattaṃ*". Learned scholars translate this in various ways because it is difficult to understand. Devotees, if we think of *ṭhiti* as stability, *ṭhiti* means existing. It is the idea that something exists, persists—*ṭhiti*. *Ṭhiti* carries the concept of staying unmoved.

But what does the Buddha declare? "*Thitassa aññathattaṃ*"—in that which we fancied to be stable, there is other-wiseness. It is changing. This is not just a verbal

description. The moment of direct experience (*paccakkha*) is different. Direct experience means that as soon as it arises, one sees: "this arising occurs only to cease." The moment this is deeply understood is called the knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*)—it dissolves. The mind grasps at everything, but whatever object the mind grasps dissolves right then and there. That is what is meant by "*thitassa aññathattaṃ*". It is when the other-wiseness of this stability, its changing nature, is directly experienced that one truly enters the path to Nibbāna. In advanced insight, this is designated as the knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*). Beings grasp everything with the mind. When one realizes that they have grasped with the mind, one sees that each and every object that comes to the mind dissolves. When one sees them dissolving right then and there, a great fear (*bhaya*) arises: "So this is how *Bhava* (Becoming) is constructed! This is what we grasp as existence and life, isn't it?"

Suppose we are traveling along a mountain ridge with precipices on both sides, and we are given a handrail to hold onto. How much fear would arise the moment we realize that every single post of this handrail is rotten? It is exactly like that. Everything is rotten—whatever we grasp. It is through that very fear that the disadvantage (*ādīnava*) of these *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) is subsequently understood.

Why are ignorance (*aviijjā*) and *Taṇhā* (Craving) called our father and mother in *saṃsāra*? Ignorance is a hindrance (*nīvaraṇa*). Ignorance covers up like darkness, like a dark night. Craving glues things together. It glues things and presents them as one unit. Just like that anthill mentioned earlier. When we see an anthill, does it ever occur to us—unless we specifically think about it—that this is something built with such great toil over many days by that tiny creature, the termite? Even if we think of that, how many times a day do we remember that this skeletal cage of a body is the essence of lorry-loads of food and drink? That is the kind of thing we have here. Thus, the practitioner of insight understands this in a highly subtle manner. It cannot be explained to another; that is why it is said: "*paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*" (to be experienced individually by the wise). It cannot be put into words; it is a direct realization.

What is that realization for? Why see things as they really are (*yathābhūta*)? The Buddha has clearly declared that without disenchantment (*nibbidā*) towards this *saṃsāra*, one cannot be freed from it.

In this world, the five aggregates of grasping are the world. You devotees know this. What we are grasping is a heap of form (*rūpa*), a heap of *Vedanā* (Feeling), a heap of perception (*saññā*), a heap of *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations), and a heap of *Viññāṇa* (consciousness). In grasping these, as said earlier, one grasps them through *Taṇhā* (Craving) as: "This is mine, this I am, this is my self." Furthermore, as long as one grasps them through the view born of ignorance called *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (View of existing group/body), *Bhava* (Becoming) arises for us again and again. Just like the

mountain cut leaving a lead (overhang), at the moment of death, that very craving becomes *Upādāna* (grasping/fuel) and a lead to becoming (*bhavanetti*), and one is dropped somewhere according to kamma. It may not be where one wishes. One falls somewhere according to kamma. There, it is a strange world, a new world.

Then, the one born in that new world does not know about this newness. It is just like buying a new vehicle. Perhaps only when it starts to break down does one realize that it has been used for some time. With vehicles, at least there is some such understanding. But until a Buddha arises, we go on for so long constructing skeletal cages of bodies in this very manner, undergoing *Jarāmaraṇa* (decay/aging and death) and sickness in this very manner. That is why it was called a vehicle obtained from Māra. We do not understand this. We do not perceive this until a Buddha reveals it. Suppose a child is born to a family. When a child is born to a new couple, he is a newcomer, a stranger. That child also fancies, "I am a novel newcomer to this world." But that newcomer is the same old traveler who has come for a long time in *saṃsāra*. Yet we do not understand that. It is a mere drama we have enacted within the environment we acquired. That is why life is called a drama. That is why it is called a dream. And that is why the Buddha is called "Buddha"—the Awakened One, and His realization is called "*Sambodhi*" (Self-Awakening).

We must understand that this is not just one dream, nor seven, but an endless heap of dreams. Only the Buddha explained this correctly. Even the yogis of the past who developed higher knowledges (*abhiññā*) and such could see that they had been born thousands, sometimes hundreds of thousands of times in *saṃsāra*. But unfortunately, because of *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (dogma of self-illusion), they fancied that a soul/self travels on—that a self is journeying. Due to their attachment to that self, they were born again and again in *saṃsāra*. Only a Buddha reveals that there is no self here. There is no self in form (*rūpa*), no self in *Vedanā* (Feeling), none in perception (*saññā*), none in *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations). And finally, He mentions *Viññāṇa* (consciousness). The final trump card is *viññāṇa*. It is this invisible *viññāṇa* that even the brahmins took to be the soul. The Buddha says that it is a sheer illusion. Even that is an illusion. What is presented as these performances is subsequently designated as *Nāmarūpa* (Name-and-Form).

Name (*nāma*) means *Vedanā* (Feeling), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), *Phassa* (contact), and attention (*manasikāra*). It is based on these mental factors (*nāma-dhamma*) that we recognize form (*rūpa*) made up of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and wind (*vāyo*). So, only these things exist. The devotee who comprehends *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) understands that within every thought, there is only this much: *Vedanā*, perception, intention, *Phassa*, and attention. And the forms made of the four great elements are the objects of these. Even those things which we think of as elements are conceived by the world as solid "things". But the Buddha points out that since they are recognized through the aforementioned mental factors such as feeling, form-factors (*rūpa-dhamma*) are merely an impingement and a resistance/deformation within a heap of mental factors.

That is a deep matter. Between the two, there is a highly astonishing tangle within and tangle without (*anto-jaṭā bahi-jaṭā*). That tangle is something each person must untangle for themselves. Thus, as one keeps reflecting on *Nāmarūpa* (Name-and-Form), one realizes that there is no self here. There is only a heap of *Saṅkhāra* (Preparations) that arise and cease. Then, when one understands that it is only a heap of arising and ceasing Preparations, the Buddha asks, what is this knowledge of reality (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa*) for? It is for disenchantment (*nibbidā*). This word *nibbidā* is nowadays largely pushed to the background. This is because, especially those who intend to teach the Dhamma in foreign countries, paint or whitewash this Dhamma, fearing that foreigners might see it as sheer pessimism.

But on certain occasions, the Buddha has clearly brought out the fundamental principle required to distinguish the Dhamma from what is not Dhamma (*adhamma*). He has shown why something is not the Dhamma: "*N'etaṃ ekanta-nibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya upasamāya abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya saṃvattati*". If something does not lead to absolute disenchantment (*nibbidā*), to dispassion (*virāga*), to cessation (*nirodha*), to stillness (*upasama*), to direct knowledge (*abhiññā*), to self-awakening (*sambodha*), and to extinguishment (Nibbāna, then it is not the Dhamma. Yet, in modern times, what is taught as Dhamma is shaped by fear of those very words. But there is nothing to hide in this Dhamma. The Buddha declared it openly. The Buddha revealed that which other teachers were afraid to say, or failed to understand due to lack of realization. So, that is what we are trying to bring out. Today, Nibbāna is also explained in various ways—as a part of *Bhava* (Becoming), or as a place to go after death. On certain occasions, they have turned it into a "Siyadoris Nibbāna" (a compromised or localized Nibbāna). That is why it is called a "Siyadoris Nibbāna".

Most people think of it as a place one goes to after death. Thus, in the name of Nibbāna, they are actually wishing for *Bhava* (Becoming). But the Buddha pointed to the moment of waking up from this dream. Waking up means realizing there is no self here. Now, fancying that there is a cobra inside that anthill, one is afraid to shatter it. But the deity said, "Sumedha, wise man, take the tool and shatter it!" What is the tool? Noble wisdom (*ariya-paññā*). So, even though we do not describe in detail how to shatter this anthill with noble wisdom, this much is important. It is only after shattering that anthill that the one designated as the cobra inside is revealed. Who is that? The Arahant.

Thus, an *Anattā* (Not-self) cobra resides inside it. To see that unsubstantial cobra, one must shatter this anthill. But one is afraid to shatter it. This fear of shattering is due to *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (dogma of self-illusion)—the belief that a true self resides within. This Vammika Sutta is an extremely deep sutta. We have merely touched upon it superficially, just enough for someone to contemplate and bring out its meaning further. Now, the deity said to take a tool and shatter it. But when one has shattered it and looks, there remains an Arahant, who, having been freed from the five aggregates of grasping (*pañc'upādānakkhandha*) and all other things, is worthy

of the world's offerings. Devotees, "Arahant" means one who is worthy of receiving everything. But the wonder of it is, one becomes worthy of receiving everything only when one has abandoned everything! That indeed is the state we find in this Dhamma.

Therefore, without whitewashing this Dhamma, we have presented within an hour today a tiny fraction of that profoundly deep Dhamma, rarely revealed by Buddhas, through which one can enter a practical path of tranquility (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*), realize the path-fruits, and bring an end to this suffering of *saṃsāra*. Taking cue from these signs and pointers, you devotees must experience this practically, *paccattaṃ veditabbaṃ*—to be directly experienced by yourselves. Thus, by the virtue (*sīla*) observed today—virtue, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*) are the core of the Dhamma. If you practiced any meditation with the support of that virtue, and if you can in any way take the matters expressed to that meditating mind as aids to *Yoniso manasikāra* (Wise attention) and aids to wisdom, you must make use of them. Trying to attain the liberation from *Dukkha* (Suffering) that everyone hopes for by applying a temporary plaster in some other way will not work. The liberation from the suffering of *saṃsāra* is achieved only in the manner shown by the Buddha.

Therefore, I wish that this sermon may decisively serve as a supportive condition for attaining that liberation from *saṃsāra* through the stages of path and fruit—namely Stream-entry, Once-returning, Non-returning, and Arahantship! Furthermore, may all beings from the Avīci hell up to the Akanīṭha heaven rejoice in this merit of sharing and listening to the Dhamma! Having rejoiced, may they realize the supreme, deathless Nibbāna through whichever of the three forms of Awakening they aspire to!

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"