Pahankanuwa Sermon #168

English Translation

Translated from Sinhala

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Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

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

Pali Stanza:

"Pamaādaṃ appamādena, yadā nudati paṇḍito,

Paññāpāsādamāruyha, asoko sokiniṃ pajaṃ,

Pabbataṭṭho'va bhummaṭṭhe, dhīro bāle avekkhati."

From:

Dhammapada Verse 28 (Appamāda Vagga)

Dear Listeners,

Although the Buddha's Dispensation arose in India (*Jambudīpa*), it took deep root in our island of Lanka. Having considered the future, we generally believe that the great Arahant Mahinda Thera entrusted the grave responsibility of protecting the Buddha's Dispensation to our small island on a Poson Full Moon Poya day like today. However, we must constantly remind ourselves of the ultimate core values of the Buddha's Dispensation. The verse we have chosen as our theme today is directly related to that.

The Blessed One preached this Dhamma verse while residing at Jetavana monastery, concerning the great Arahant Mahā Kassapa. At that particular time, the great Arahant Mahā Kassapa was staying in the Pipphalī Cave in Rajagaha. One day, having gone for alms-round in Rajagaha, he returned to Pipphalī Cave, finished his alms-meal, and projected the light of his knowledge. With his divine eye, he was observing how beings who had fallen into negligence, as well as those who were diligent, pass away from this world and are born on this earth, in water, and so forth.

While the Blessed One was at Jetavana, he wondered: "In what manner of dwelling is my son Mahā Kassapa residing today?" Looking with his divine eye, he saw that the Arahant Mahā Kassapa was observing beings with his divine eye in this manner. Projecting a ray of light, the Blessed One said: "Mahā Kassapa, as you watch, you can

see only a very small fraction of passing away and arising (*Jāti*). That is truly the domain of Buddha-knowledge—belonging only to the Buddhas. It is such a complex and profound matter. For there are countless instances where those born in a mother's womb pass away without even letting the parents know. Such is the extremely marvelous and mysterious nature of passing away and arising (*Jāti*)." However, expressing a certain praise for the dwelling of the Arahant Mahā Kassapa, he uttered the verse mentioned in our theme. In terms of meaning, it says:

Pamādaṃ appamādena yadā nudati paṇḍito…

When the wise person dispels negligence by means of diligence, and ascending the palace of wisdom, sorrowless, looks upon the sorrowing crowd, just as one standing on a mountain—the steadfast, wise individual looks down upon those on the ground, the fools and the ignorant. That is the meaning of the verse.

The word *dhīra* used here is special. According to the Dispensation and the Dhamma, a *dhīra* is one endowed with wisdom. What is described here is not just a physical sight seen with the physical eyes, like someone who climbs a mountain—even today, people climb the Ārādhanā Gala at Mihintale and look around—but this is a vision of knowledge (*ñāṇa-dassana*). It is a vision of knowledge through the divine eye. Today, we have various technological means thanks to physical science. According to modern science, through different instruments and various light media, microscopes magnify unseen things, and telescopes show distant objects like planets. But all of these are done with the physical eye, relying on the physical eye and external light media. The divine eye mentioned here is something special. It is a vision obtained by projecting the light of absorption (*jhāna*). Indeed, on one occasion, the Blessed One explained this light of absorption to the Sangha, asking: "Monks, what is the development of concentration (*samādhi-bhāvanā*) that is conducive to the vision of knowledge?" This is how it is briefly stated:

"Here, monks, a person attends to the perception of light. They resolve upon the day-perception: 'As by day, so by night; as by night, so by day.'" This means that to such an extent that there is no difference between the two, even at night a light is perceived when the eyes are closed. In this way, they develop the perception of light. It is further described: in this way, one develops a luminous mind. That means this luminous mind is not shrouded by anything. One develops an open, uncovered, unobstructed mind that is luminous (*sappabhāsaṃ cittaṃ*). This refers to an internally generated light.

In fact, this is the state of the fourth absorption (*catuttha jhāna*). Having stabilized oneself in it, when one directs the divine eye and thinks, "Let me see the beings in hell," focusing that vision on hell, they become visible. Next, taking that base absorption (*pādaka jhāna*) as the foundation and directing the mind to it, when one thinks about the nature of the karma of those beings, that too is understood. The divine eye is such a marvelous thing. It is by relying on this divine eye that one sees

hell or heaven. It is specifically mentioned that the great Arahant Moggallāna possessed extraordinary strength in seeing with the divine eye in this manner.

This story speaks of the process of being born and dying. Indeed, when viewed from this perspective, the entirety of *saṃsāra* is like a tragedy—a tragic film. Thus, the great Arahant Mahā Kassapa, in the realization that he had brought an end to birth (*Jāti*) in *saṃsāra*, ascended the palace of wisdom, sorrowless. Here, the "palace of wisdom" must be understood as the Arahant's knowledge that destroys the taints (*āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*). The divine eye is also a kind of light. It makes it easy to see beings being born here and there, dying in one place and being born in another. However, the underlying principle that governs this is embedded in dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). The understanding of this comes along with what we ultimately call the knowledge of the destruction of the taints (*āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*).

In short, what did the great Arahant who had attained Arahantship watch sorrowless, like a wise, steadfast person standing on a mountain looking down upon the fools below? He watched the sorrowful populace. Because he was freed from it, he was sorrowless. Here, passing away and birth (*Jāti*) were mentioned. Indeed, even in this era, many people talk about this question. Actually, it is not about the intermediate state (*antarābhava*) that we should think about, but rather about the suffering (*dukkha*) of becoming (*Bhava*) and becoming (*Bhava*) itself. However, many scholars today are trapped in the questions of the intermediate state. Our Buddhists are trapped in theories put forward by many Western psychologists, based on psychological evidence, hypnotism, and various artificial devices or media that lead to speculative ideologies. Because of this excessive attention on the intermediate state, they forget about becoming (*Bhava*) and the suffering (*dukkha*) of becoming (*Bhava*). These scholars have no understanding of how to comprehend this matter of birth (*Jāti*) according to the analysis of dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) taught by the Blessed One.

We generally think of the death we see as passing away (*cuti*). But in reality, we do not know how many times we have been conceived and have passed away in a mother's womb in that manner. Today, many people like to take photographs. They take photos of various stages of their lives, from childhood onwards. They might be color photographs, pasted in beautiful albums. If we think for a moment about what our very first photograph is, what indeed is it? The very first form (*rūpa*) that arises in the mother's womb is called the *kalala* form. *Kalala* means mud. We can call it a mud stain. Thus, the mud stain formed in the mother's womb is our first photograph. How many times has this negative of a mud stain been washed away, and for how long, before this final photograph is printed? There is such a state of becoming (*Bhava*). Then, the next question is how this photograph was cast. Indeed, those psychologists we mentioned are those who hold onto the soul-view according to the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). They cannot comprehend this profound matter shown by the Blessed One regarding the relationship of causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*).

What happens here is that when a certain consciousness (*viññāṇa*) slips away from here, before it slips away, a certain vision appears as a sign—in terms of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). That vision is the first image cast in the mother's womb. Based on that image, a grasping (*gahaṇa*) occurs. *Gabbha* (womb) means grasping or holding on. Thus, a dying being grasps a mother's womb. That grasping can also pass away. That too is through karma itself. Truly, it is because of craving (*taṇhā*) that this prompting arises. In beings who have not eliminated craving (*taṇhā*)—that is, craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*)—because they wish for becoming (*Bhava*), karma shows them a matching place. Because of craving (*taṇhā*), that place is perceived as good. It could be a flame of fire, or even an impure place like a mother's womb, yet it appears as a good place.

So, whatever that image objectified by consciousness (*viññāṇa*) may be, that slipping consciousness (*viññāṇa*) connects there. As soon as it connects, it begins to grow in dependence on the four elements of the mother's body. This is how it happens. At one stage, in a strange way, it takes on bizarre shapes like a tadpole, and finally, it is born as a beautiful child. If each of these stages were photographed, using modern methods available today, indeed, those too should be included in that photo album we mentioned. That is how we must understand it. That image is what supports the continuation of our becoming (*Bhava*).

The Blessed One has shown us how that image can be made to cease. Until one develops a consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that does not cast such an image, one goes from becoming (*Bhava*) to becoming (*Bhava*) in this *saṃsāra*. The Blessed One himself has shown this on one occasion when a wanderer named Vacchagotta presented various questions to him. The Blessed One clearly says in the very first sentence: "Vaccha, I say that birth (*Jāti*) occurs only when there is grasping (*upādāna*)—for one who has grasping (*upādāna*). For one who has no grasping (*upādāna*), there is no birth (*Jāti*). Birth (*Jāti*) belongs only to one who has grasping (*upādāna*); when grasping (*upādāna*) is absent, there is no birth (*Jāti*)." Then, as an illustration, he says, "Just as, Vaccha, a fire burns only when there is grasping (*upādāna*), and when there is no grasping (*upādāna*), the fire goes out." They call it fire. What is meant by "something to grab" (fuel) is wood or whatever else helps the fire to burn. Only where there is such fuel/grasping (*upādāna*) does a fire exist. The moment there is nothing to grab, the fire goes out. It is here that the word grasping (*upādāna*) emerges.

From that point, we orient this Dhamma analysis in relation to dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Generally, we have all heard that we are born because of craving (*taṇhā*). The nature of craving (*taṇhā*) is analyzed in various ways. It is said of craving (*taṇhā*): *taṇhā ponobhavikā* (craving that leads to renewed becoming). The word *ponobhavikā* means it produces renewed becoming (*Bhava*), again and again, repeatedly. There is a power within craving (*taṇhā*), thirst, desire, to generate repeated existence. Another characteristic of it is *tatratatrābhinandinī*—finding delight here and there. Craving (*taṇhā*) is very fickle. At one moment it is in one place; at another moment, in another place. That is why it slips away from the

mother's womb. It entered a womb, but then it leaped to another place. This is why craving (*taṇhā*) is said to be fickle. It has these two characteristics.

Furthermore, if we are to speak about grasping (*upādāna*), it is that very craving (*taṇhā*) itself which ultimately becomes grasping (*upādāna*) at the moment of death. This is a very profound matter. Some people have misunderstood this and have fabricated a story about an intermediate state (*antarābhava*). In the very discussion with the wanderer Vacchagotta, Vacchagotta first asks a question like this: "Master Gotama, when a flame is swept away by the wind, what is its grasping (*upādāna*) at that time? Since the word grasping (*upādāna*) has been introduced, what does the flame grasp there?" "Vaccha, I say that the wind (air) is the grasping (*upādāna*) on that occasion, for it is blown by the wind and goes further." Similarly, at the moment of death, it is through craving (*taṇhā*) itself that the catch called grasping (*upādāna*) occurs. Many people have misunderstood this point. This is how the Buddha explains it: "When a being lays down this body and arises in another body, I declare craving (*taṇhā*) to be the grasping (*upādāna*)." It is connected by that. Now, let us take an analogy to understand this.

Let us further consider the Dhamma principles regarding this. We have often mentioned the analogy of the deer. In that context, we usually recollect only the eye. One does not think that the other senses are also a mirage. The Blessed One compared the entire aggregate of perception (*saññā-kkhandha*) to a mirage. What is a mirage? Indeed, it is a complex phenomenon arising due to the four elements of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). Yet, to the deer, it appears as water, as flowing water. The deer takes its stand on that. Why does it take its stand? Because from where the deer stands, it appears as a mirage (as water). Therefore, let us suppose the deer runs. It runs in expectation of water. With every step it takes in its running, that vision recedes. But it does not know; it does not know that it is receding. It is an illusion shown by the deer's own consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

Here, we bring out the connection between consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). In short, the explanation given by the Blessed One regarding rebirth can be understood accordingly. The object is perceived by consciousness (*viññāṇa*) in terms of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Now, "Form" (*rūpa*) there refers to the four elements of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). Due to a certain combination of causes, a shimmering vision arose, which we designate as a mirage. The deer thinks that it is in such-and-such a place; the place it thinks of is one extreme. It distinguishes, saying, "Where I am is different." That very act of distinguishing is consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

The Blessed One has stated that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) always exists in dependence on something. There is no such thing as consciousness (*viññāṇa*) on its own. This is illustrated in the analogy of fire. A fire that burns due to firewood is called a wood-fire. When it burns due to rubbish, it is called a rubbish-fire. When it burns due to straw, it is called a straw-fire. There is no fire on its own. Likewise,

there is no consciousness (*viññāṇa*) on its own. Here, therefore, the deer's consciousness (*viññāṇa*) exists in dependence on that perception of a mirage. That is one extreme. That extreme is present as the object. If we speak of that object as Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), as we said before, Form (*rūpa*) is the combination of the four elements.

Next, how does the deer recognize this as a mirage? It recognizes it through the mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*): feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). Due to craving (*taṇhā*), a certain feeling (*vedanā*) arises, and the perception (*saññā*) arises that "this vision is water." Thereupon, the intention (*cetanā*) arises with the thought, "If I go there, I can drink some water." Next, going there and in the thought of coming together is where attention (*manasikāra*) lies—the reflecting upon it.

But the closer one gets, the further away everything recedes. This is the nature of the mirage. As the deer runs, it too recedes. Here is the illusory nature of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is said to be an illusion because the objects that come to consciousness (*viññāṇa*) are always receding. Until one sees through it, its true nature does not appear. To see through it means to realize its true nature with wisdom, through the eye of wisdom. That is what the Blessed One brought to light through the vision of dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Why does this appear as a physical form? This needs to be explained further. The ordinary world thinks that these four elements of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*) exist separately. In this Dhamma, the four elements are described as the four great primary elements (*mahābhūta*).

So, what are the great primaries (*mahābhūta*)? People think that these four exist separately. As we all know, when we say "earth" (*pathavī*), immediately a picture of soil, a stone, a brick, or a mountain comes to mind. When we say "water" (*āpo*), we think of an ocean or a river. A flame of fire comes to mind when we say "fire" (*tejo*). A great storm comes to mind when we say "air" (*vāyo*). But not one of these exists separately. They are mixed everywhere. Thus, none of the four has the strength to stand alone. It is precisely because they lack individual strength that the Blessed One showed them to be void (*suñña*). But the world does not perceive this voidness. Instead, there is a mental fabrication. When "earth" (*pathavī*) is mentioned, a picture arises in the mind, an illustration appears—an illustration of hardness. Indeed, it is based on the quality of hardness that we recognize the element of earth (*pathavī*). The fire element (*tejo*) is recognized through the quality of heat and cold.

That is how they are described when defining the elements. But how does the ordinary world perceive them? As if the four exist separately. So, that is also just the haunting of ghosts (elements/primaries). Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) displays these hauntings. The world is deceived by these hauntings. Within that itself, in dependence on that, mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*) exist. It is because of the deer's initial grip of "water" that the rest of the process is activated. Intention

(*cetanā*) says, "I must run there and grab this somehow; when I get there, I will catch it." It grasps that perception (*saññā*). Those are mental phenomena. Then, physical phenomena (*rūpa-dhamma*) are also void there, and mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*) are also void. This very point is illustrated in ancient texts by a certain analogy.

The journey of these two, Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), is described there as being like a blind man who can walk carrying a lame man who has sight on his shoulders. The one on the shoulders can see but cannot walk, as his legs are crippled. He points out, "Go this way or that way." Physical phenomena (*rūpa-dhamma*) and mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*) cannot go alone either. They proceed by helping each other. It is from those phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) that the image of those forms is cast in our consciousness (*viññāṇa*). When "earth" is mentioned, we get a perception (*saññā*) of the ground accordingly. But that is not its true nature. It must be penetrated with wisdom. It is because of the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) that the world perceives it in this way.

Thus, the Blessed One shows that everything must be viewed through the perception of impermanence (*anicca-saññā*). The deer has no realization that with every single step it takes while running, it is changing. That is why it is said that due to ignorance (*avijjā*), Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) arise. The ordinary world has no understanding of those Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) which exist in layers upon layers; they grasp them tightly. The Blessed One compared Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) to the trunk of a banana tree. At first glance, the ordinary world grasps and holds onto a banana trunk as something having a core or heartwood. But the Blessed One teaches us to inspect them through insight (*vipassanā*) without grasping tightly. Inspection (*sammasana*) is like stroking. If one gently peels and examines the banana trunk, one understands that it is just a pile of sheaths. But if one grabs it all at once, the impression is that it is something with a core. From this, we see that it is through wisdom that this is understood. What the Blessed One called the "palace of wisdom" is the wisdom obtained when attaining that profound state of Arahantship. It is through that wisdom that the true nature of these elements is understood.

In this era, which gives great prominence to knowledge, the world thinks that "ascending the palace of wisdom" means climbing a multi-story library. Scholars of this era might think that the palace of wisdom refers to ascending a library of many floors. It is not such an accumulation. This wisdom shown by the Blessed One is actually present within us in a subtle way, embedded deep inside. The Blessed One expressed this when describing the light of absorption (*jhāna*), speaking of a luminous mind. It is by directing that luminous mind that the places where those beings reside become visible. But even more wonderful than that is the light of wisdom (*paññā-āloka*).

Regarding that light of wisdom, the Blessed One states: "Monks, this mind is luminous (*pabhassara*). The mind is naturally radiant. But it is covered by visiting

defilements (*āgantuka upakkilesa*)—defilements that come from outside. It is soiled by them." The person who lacks knowledge of the Dhamma does not know this. That is why they have no interest in meditation. But the noble disciple (*ariya-sāvaka*) knows that this mind is luminous, luminous within, and that there are only visiting defilements in it. As soon as those impurities are removed, this luminous mind shines forth. To use an analogy for what the person with Dhamma-knowledge does: suppose a copper or brass vessel is covered in rust. One way is to paint over it in layers to make it look beautiful. That is not what should be done properly. As soon as the accumulated rust is removed using certain substances, its natural luster emerges. It is something like that which the Blessed One describes.

The mind has the capacity to spontaneously understand the true nature of the world. But it is covered by defilements. The Blessed One has shown the Noble Eightfold Path as a means of ascending the palace of wisdom. It is a systematic transformation, like climbing a flight of stairs, which must be achieved through systematic effort. We know that to remove rust, a systematic procedure is required. This is briefly mentioned as virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). One has to systematically remove that rust, layer by layer. Only when it is removed does the true luminosity emerge.

Regarding this point about knowledge and wisdom, let us examine the story of Venerable Cūḷapanthaka, which you all have heard many times. The novice monk Cūḷapanthaka could not memorize a single verse even after four months, so his brother monk expelled him, telling him to return to lay life. But the Blessed One stopped him, stroked his head, and gave him a piece of clean white cloth, telling him to rub it while repeating, "*rajo-haraṇaṃ, rajo-haraṇaṃ*" (dirt-remover, dirt-remover). Indeed, as he rubbed it, what happened? It became soiled with sweat. Next, instead of rubbing the cloth, what did he do? He began to contemplate those Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). Regarding the nature of these Preparations (*saṅkhāra*), he realized, "Are not all these impermanent (*anicca*)?"

In truth, it is through the contemplation of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) that wisdom arises. At the moment he realized their impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*) nature, the Blessed One, seeing the opportune moment, said, "It is not that rust on the cloth you should think about. As soon as the rust of lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) is removed, realization comes." In this way, the true nature of this mind is covered by the rust of lust, hatred, and delusion. Thus, to bring out that truth, it is said, *paññā-pāsādam-āruyha* (having ascended the palace of wisdom). When that truth is brought out, what is seen is the true nature of passing away and birth (*Jāti*).

In the past, there were sages (rishis). Today, such people are very rare. Some yogis who lived before the appearance of the Blessed One could see even hundreds of thousands of past lives. They saw that a certain individual died in one place and was born in another. Yet, the connection was not visible to them. They could not

understand how it happened. That is precisely what the Blessed One brought to light through the teaching of dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). This is an extremely subtle matter.

We generally think that after someone dies, something goes from here. Any physical scientist, or certain people who lack the Buddhist outlook, try to explain the idea of someone dying and going to another place through physical laws. Something has to go from here, they think. A strong blow to that argument is mentioned in the Pāyāsi Sutta. Venerable Kumāra Kassapa lived during the Buddha's time and also lived after the Buddha's passing away, as he had a long lifespan. That great Arahant Kumāra Kassapa was foremost in this Dispensation in preaching the Dhamma in a diverse and colorful manner (*vicitra-kathika*).

He had the ability to make things clear to people by giving highly wonderful analogies. This great Arahant Kumāra Kassapa had to engage in a long debate in the city of Setavyā with a chieftain named Pāyāsi. A chieftain (*rājaññ*a) is like a crown prince, an uncrowned king. This king held a wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), a nihilistic view (*nātthika-diṭṭhi*) to the effect that when a being dies, there is no rebirth (*Jāti*), no spontaneous rebirth (*opapātika*), and no fruit or result of karma. In a discussion with Kumāra Kassapa to dispel this view, this chieftain Pāyāsi revealed an experiment he had conducted as an argument. Today, too, people might perform such experiments. What was his experiment?

Let's say his guards bring a subject who has committed some crime to the chieftain Pāyāsi, saying, "Your Majesty, here is a criminal fit for punishment." He then uses that person for his experiment. What does he do? He tells the men to put that man alive into a large pot. Having placed him in the pot, they cover it with a wet hide, seal the mouth with clay so that nothing can escape, and place it on a stove. They put it on a fire, on a hearth. They leave it there to heat up and boil. When he thinks the person must be dead, the chieftain slowly opens the pot to see if the soul (*jīva*) escapes. Surely the soul (*jīva*) must escape to be born elsewhere. But the soul does not escape; it does not come out. Presenting this argument to Venerable Kumāra Kassapa, he says, "Where is it then? The soul should have escaped, but this person died while sealed inside. I did not see any soul escaping. Therefore, I say there is no rebirth (*Jāti*)."

The analogy given by Venerable Kumāra Kassapa on that occasion is very important for our subject. That is why we bring it up. Venerable Kumāra Kassapa asks as a question, "Chieftain, do you remember on certain occasions going to sleep during the daytime? Having gone to sleep, did you dream various dreams? Do you remember dreaming of beautiful parks and lotus ponds?" When he replies "Yes," Kumāra Kassapa says, "Well, on that occasion, the mind had gone out to see those things, the soul (*jīva*) had gone. At that time, did any of your bodyguards—whoever they were, including the women—who were around you while you slept during the day, see your soul (*jīva*) leaving?" "No," he replies.

So what does that mean? What happens at the moment of death is just like what happens in a dream world. It would be good for you pious devotees to contemplate deeply on this analogy presented by the great Arahant Kumāra Kassapa. In the dream world, the object that comes to the mind may be something far away. If, based on that object, someone thinks, "My consciousness (*viññāṇa*) went there," that is where they go wrong. Now, to remind you, we colloquially say, "I saw in a dream that I went to such-and-such a place, and I saw various sights." We say, "I went." Because of this, one thinks that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) undertook a journey at that time. Indeed, in the past, even the brahmins who held the soul-view thought like this—that during sleep, the soul goes out, roams around as it pleases, and returns. What the Blessed One teaches here is not such a thing. According to Buddhist philosophy, the object that comes to consciousness (*viññāṇa*) cannot be connected to the concept of movement in the way the world thinks. Whether the object perceived by the mind is far or near, it cannot be physically or materially connected.

Therefore, according to the Dhamma, we cannot conceive of a soul (*jīva*) leaving after the man inside the pot dies. If that were so, regarding a person born from here in the heavenly world or the Brahma world, to explain it in modern terms, some kind of ray would have to travel from here to connect there. One thinks of such a physical connection. This happens because of thinking in terms of physical laws. Every pious devotee who reads the Dhammapada knows the very first verse: *manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā*. There is nothing wrong with thinking that Buddhism begins and ends with that verse, because its meaning is that profound. *Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā*. What is the meaning? "Dhamma" here means things. What is objectified by the mind is called things (*dhammā*). That means things. Form (*rūpa*) is objectified by the eye. Sound is objectified by the ear. Going on like this, what is objectified by the mind, the sixth sense, is described there as *dhammā*.

In the Dhamma, the word *dhamma* does not mean the doctrine (teachings) as we usually say, but rather the object. A certain object, the objects that come to the mind. So, what the Blessed One is stating here is that mind precedes everything we consider as a "thing." But if we try to adjust the Dhammapada according to physical science, how would we have to correct it? *Dhammapubbaṅgamo mano*—things exist first, and the mind comes later. But the Blessed One says that the mind precedes, and things (*dhammā*) come later. There is a very profound point here. For it is precisely because it is objectified by the mind that it becomes a "thing."

That is why it is said: *manasikārasambhavā sabbe dhammā* (all things arise from attention). Everything arises for the mind. It is born in the mind itself; it is mind-centric, mind-rooted. In short, Buddhist philosophy is mind-centric. Accordingly, passing away and birth (*Jāti*) must be explained through a mind-centric analysis, not a matter-centric one. If we go by a matter-centric approach, we go wrong. The soul-perception, the vital-principle-perception is contained within it. What is the nature of the mind? *Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā*, and not only that, *manoseṭṭhā*—the mind is

supreme. Nay, even *manomayā*. Pious devotees know that *manomayā* means mind-made, created by the mind itself. What we call a "real thing" is something created by the mind itself.

This does not reject the account of the four elements. But even those elements, as we know, are great primaries (*mahābhūta*); they are just haunting spirits. It is to these four great primary elements—which cannot stand alone and are void of a self—that we refer as the elements of earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). What the world thinks of as great things are only these hauntings. These primary elements haunt consciousness (*viññāṇa*) as real things. *Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā, manomayā*. That is why they are said to be mind-made.

These "things" are what we have fashioned in our minds. Because mind precedes, because mind is supreme, because they are mind-made, if one speaks, acts, or thinks with a corrupted mind, or directs the mind in that way, a mass of suffering in hell is created by them. That is *manomayā* (mind-made). Now, hell and such places do not just exist passively or get created automatically; the Blessed One declared how they arise according to karma. Next, heavenly worlds and divine mansions are created if the mind is wholesome, if the mind is pleasant—as mentioned in the story of Maṭṭakuṇḍalī regarding divine mansions. No carpenters went and built them there. They are created spontaneously. That is how it is shown according to this Dhamma: *manomayā*. It is a wonderful state.

This is precisely what we said when speaking of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Being mind-centric, those phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), like the vision seen by the deer, are entirely just an image. They are only a delusion, an illusion. But this can be understood directly only when the three characteristics—impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*)—are properly realized. The path to that is called insight (*vipassanā*). The purpose of insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) is to deeply understand, to directly realize, the impermanence (*aniccatā*) taught by the Blessed One. When we say impermanence (*aniccatā*), the idea of two extremes arises. What are the two extremes? There is arising, and there is passing away. It is called *udayabbaya*—arising (*udaya*) and passing away (*vaya*). There is an arising and a wearing away. As one constantly contemplates these two extremes, as this process becomes faster and faster, finally a state of penetrating through what we thought of as a "thing" is reached. When a stage is reached where one can see through something, like looking through glass, the state of there being a "real thing" there vanishes. As long as one does not see through it, one takes it to be a thing.

In the Dhamma, there is a certain passage regarding the wisdom gained through insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*): *udayatthagāminiyā paññāya samannāgato ariyāya*. *Udayatthagāminī* refers to this very matter of arising and passing away. It is *nibbedhikā*—a wisdom that penetrates. So, what does the practitioner of insight (*vipassanā*) do? They first develop that understanding regarding Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*).

Mind (*nāma*) and Form (*rūpa*) do not exist separately. Because of Form (*rūpa*)—as we said in the case of the deer—because of Form (*rūpa*), Mind (*nāma*) exists: feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*phassa*), and attention (*manasikāra*). Next, it is in dependence on that Mind (*nāma*) that Form (*rūpa*) is distinguished and recognized. In this way, the phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) are connected there as well. There is nothing here that can be taken as a soul, nothing substantial, other than the phenomena of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). These are just a heap of Preparations (*saṅkhāra*). With every single step taken, that vision recedes, but the deer does not understand. That which is not understood by the deer, the truth that has deceived it, the practitioner of insight (*vipassanā*) gradually brings to light. That is why, wherever the practitioner of insight looks, they gradually see only movements. This is not something fabricated anew. Its true nature had been covered up until now. That nature of movement was covered up precisely by that perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*). That is why the Blessed One said that this is a perverted, distorted state (*vipallāsa*).

What we think of as real in the world is completely upside down. To the Blessed One, the world appeared as if standing on its head. That must be why he was at first hesitant even to preach the Dhamma. "Who will understand this?" It is that profound. When one practices insight (*vipassanā*) with good concentration, applying mindfulness in accordance with the foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), and sees arising and passing away, the perception of permanence (*nicca-saññā*) is penetrated and shattered. This is directly seen through this insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). True wisdom is what is called *udayatthagāminī paññā*—the very seeing of arising and passing away. As this process gradually becomes faster, instead of what we previously thought existed, we see only a series of movements. Only a series of movements that can be designated as Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). Only an appearance.

Through that understanding, eventually disenchantment (*nibbidā*) arises, leading to dispassion (*virāga*) and liberation (*vimutti*). The arising of that liberation means the image cast in consciousness (*viññāṇa*) ceases. It was a mud stain in the mother's womb—cast as a mud stain. Whether in a mother's womb or any other place, it is a stain cast in terms of Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). But when illuminated by wisdom, when Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) is seen through, that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is liberated from it. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) becomes non-manifestative (*anidassana*). No more images are cast in it. After that voidness is understood, a state of mind where earth (*pathavī*) brings to mind the physical ground, or water (*āpo*) brings to mind water, does not arise for that person.

That is why the Blessed One declared that there is nothing to grasp. That is why he said that where there is no grasping (*upādāna*), there is no becoming (*Bhava*). Only where there is grasping (*upādāna*) is there continuation. Where there is no grasping (*upādāna*), there is no continuation. Why does grasping (*upādāna*) occur? Because something is presented as an object matching one's craving (*taṇhā*). For that to

cease, that insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) we mentioned must arise. What is done through insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) is the understanding of impermanence (*aniccatā*). The Blessed One stated that impermanence (*aniccatā*) is understood to some extent by the ordinary world. Although people say "impermanent, impermanent" (*aniccaṃ, aniccaṃ*) about everything, the moment it is directly realized comes only in insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*). One gradually and deeply understands that "here there is only a mass of arisings and passings away." Then one might wonder, "Where then does this wisdom exist? Does it fall from the sky?" The Blessed One declared that the seed of this wisdom exists within us. It only needs to be developed. What is that? It is mentioned in this Dhamma as the seed of wisdom under the name wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*).

Wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) means reflecting upon something according to how it arises. In short, it is reflecting by looking at this near end. If one reflects by looking at the far end, it only goes further and further, without any stopping. Here, recall the story of the deer again.

Now, the deer is running, thinking only of the water far away. The deer does not understand the reality here—how mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*) are projected, or how through feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), and intention (*cetanā*) created by the mind, this Form (*rūpa*) is perceived as a real thing. So, the Blessed One points this out as wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). How is its true nature understood? By reflecting on the place from where they arise. The place from where they spring. The deer lacks the understanding that this vision it sees arose precisely due to the delusion within its own mind.

Only when that understanding comes is the delusion that existed up to then realized. The deception regarding it ceases. That is why in this Dhamma, ignorance (*aviijjā*) is shown as the root—unknowing. Because of unknowing, a certain preparation is made. Preparations (*saṅkhāra*) mean karma and so forth. Because of them, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) arise, which means dividing them into two. Just as the deer runs endlessly into the distance based on that grip of "I am here, and the water is over there," the journey of *saṃsāra* is also like that. The Blessed One shows that as long as one tightly grasps consciousness (*viññāṇa*) as a soul, grasping it as "my consciousness," one takes the object cast upon it as real, as a real thing, and runs after it with craving (*taṇhā*)—with craving (*taṇhā*) and grasping (*upādāna*). Because of that very Form (*rūpa*) that is cast, the very power derived regarding those four elements is what is called mind-made (*manomayā*).

That is a great wonder. You have heard that things arise in accordance with karma. There is also the word *kammaja*—arising from karma. What is karma? The Blessed One declares: "Karma is intention (*cetanā*)." Intention (*cetanā*) is also a matter of the mind. So, if certain things arise from intention (*cetanā*), it refers to that state of

being mind-made (*manomayā*). When speaking of arising from karma, it is the very same point expressed as *manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā, manomayā*.

Karma is the collection of wholesome and unwholesome mental impulses generated by the grip of "I" and "mine" arising out of ignorance (*aviijjā*). This material world changes in a marvelous way. Although the ordinary world thinks highly of achievements made with hammers and saws, far more wonderful than all of them is the way birth (*Jāti*) occurs according to what is perceived by the mind at the moment of death. Think about it: is it not through the power of karma (*kamma-vegam*) that the *kalala* form cast in a mother's womb develops into a child? We generally think that a mother and father created it. But when we think truly, it is that karma-energy that gives life. You must have heard how much they tried to kill Prince Ajātasattu while he was in the womb? They could not do it because of that karma-energy.

Thus, when viewed in that way, there too lies *manomayā*. The Blessed One brings to light the natural principle of *manopubbaṅgamā dhammā... manomayā*. It is precisely because of this that an end to it can be seen. The division previously held as "consciousness" (*viññāṇa*) is ultimately transcended by the Blessed One through that very wisdom we spoke of. Wisdom means complete understanding, full realization. When full realization comes, one cannot present two extremes in that manner. The grip taken by the deer was wrong; the grip of "I am here, and the water is there" was wrong. As long as that is present, one runs endlessly. The Blessed One, therefore, declares realization here. Here it is not a running but a stopping—stop and see. What do you stop and look at? At your own five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*).

Concerning this world, we travel from country to country. Moreover, we go in search of other planets. We pursue truth and values along those paths. But the Blessed One showed: "Within this very fathom-long body, endowed with perception and mind, I declare the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world." So, this too has to be understood in reliance on the matter we described. Everything happens through the mind itself; the mind is supreme. Therefore, this is a truth that must be seen right here. Until one sees it, until one realizes this matter, one goes from becoming (*Bhava*) to becoming (*Bhava*), playing a part in that tragic, comic, and terrifying drama. This is what is meant by wandering in the becoming (*Bhava*) of *saṃsāra* for an infinite time. Thus, the great Arahant Mahā Kassapa saw that vision through the state of birth (*Jāti*) and rebirth. In dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), it is shown that due to craving (*taṇhā*), the catching called grasping (*upādāna*) occurs. Within grasping (*upādāna*), within the very concept of grasping, there is a grasper and a thing grasped—two extremes. It is precisely because of this that there is existence/becoming (*Bhava*).

Existence/becoming (*Bhava*) is what proceeds according to two extremes. The moment it is measured according to two extremes, it is taken as a "thing," as existence. That running deer thinks, "Now, I am here, and the water is over there." The existence between those two is what is in the deer's running. We must

understand that our running is also like that. What do we do throughout this entire life? We run along the objects—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, and mind-objects—that come to these six doors: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, just as that deer ran.

The Blessed One did not describe only what is seen by the eye as a perception (*saññā*), as a mirage. The Blessed One showed the entire aggregate of perception (*saññā-kkhandha*), the whole pile of perception, as a mirage. But we do not realize this. We think only that deer was deceived (shrouded). We must understand that we are all deceived (shrouded) by these. Thus, just like the mirage seen by the eye, the mirage heard by the ear, the mirage smelled by the nose, and the other sensory objects were also shown by the Blessed One as mirages. For as one runs after them, there is no end.

Instead, wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) means directing the mind to the place where they arise. We must contemplate what that grip of taking them as "two" is. Because of dividing them as "two," we have an impression that these two clash. A feeling of clashing arises where there is an understanding, a presupposition, of "two." The Blessed One shows that this grip is wrong. All of these are a mass of causes and conditions (*hetu-paccaya*), and not a single one can be separated. That is also what was said about the elements. Based on the characteristics presented by feeling (*vedanā*) itself, we distinguish them as earth (*pathavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyo*). Next, in dependence on them, those mental phenomena (*nāma-dhamma*) exist. There, too, is a mutual conditional relationship, proceeding in relation to each other. That is what the great Arahant Sāriputta stated in an analysis of dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) regarding this *saṃsāric* existence—that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*) are just like two sheaves of reeds propped up against each other.

Of the two sheaves of reeds propped up against each other, neither can stand alone. If one is pulled away, the other falls. If this one is pulled away, the other falls. The Blessed One explains it in that manner. According to this Dhamma, the entire *saṃsāra* exists because of the mutual relationship with Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). That is why the Blessed One declared that as far as there is any arising in the world, any passing away, aging, and rebirth, every designation and everything is contained within these two. What are they? In dependence on consciousness (*viññāṇa*), there is Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*). In dependence on Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*), there is consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

What is this Name-and-Form (*nāmarūpa*)? A Form merely in name. It is not a real Form, is it? The Form seen by that deer is not a real Form, is it? It is a Form merely in name. But we do not think so. We tightly grasp that photograph we spoke of. "This is my form. This is me when I was small. This is me when I was young. This is when I got married. This is when I received these titles and honors"—we keep those forms

and grasp them. But all of these are just a series of images. They are simply Forms merely in name. They are just those externally visible hauntings of primary elements.

In terms of ultimate reality, the Buddhas declare that here lies a state of voidness, an emptiness that cannot be grasped as a sign (*nimitta*). Not a single one can arise on its own. It is said that *saṃsāra* arises due to ignorance (*avijjā*), due to wrong grasping. Because of that wrong grasping. But within that power of intention (*cetanā-vegam*), there is a quality of projecting and creating those elements. That pile of projections is what is then called becoming (*Bhava*). However, the Blessed One, having brought to light the suffering (*dukkha*) nature within it, shows an end to it. The end is not found through an accumulation of knowledge. The palace of wisdom is not a multi-story library. It is where this rust is removed. It is a mass of rust accumulated in this *saṃsāra*. The Blessed One has shown how to systematically remove them through systematic effort—through a vast endeavor of virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), by means of the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*). As one removes them, the inherent natural light of the mind emerges, and the true nature of the world is reflected in it. It is seen through that luster. That is the state the Blessed One brought to light.

Therefore, our Buddha's Dispensation consists of these core values. Instead of being trapped in the intermediate states (*antarābhava*) by submitting to arguments presented by Western psychologists who have not eliminated the dogma of self-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), we must understand this becoming (*Bhava*) properly and be stirred by the suffering of becoming (*Bhava-dukkha*). What we have to do is to enter this path of insight (*vipassanā*) that eliminates the suffering of becoming (*Bhava-dukkha*). By relying on that wisdom called *udayatthagāminī paññā*—the seeing of arising and passing away—and the vision developed by directing the mind to the place of their arising, which is wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), we must achieve our liberation from *saṃsāra* through the light of wisdom generated from within, and understand the natural principles of the world. These valuable portions of the Buddha's Dispensation are increasingly being undervalued and discarded. They are disappearing from practice in this society. Therefore, we must be mindful to protect these core values. That is what is meant by protecting the Buddha's Dispensation.

On this precious day, despite having many other things to do, this pious crowd dedicated the day to practice (*paṭipatti*) and engaged in Dhamma discussions and meditation that support internal vision. That is why this Dhamma sermon was oriented toward insight (*vipassanā*). By wisely reflecting and observing virtue (*sīla*), and also by providing requisites to those who observe virtue, you pious devotees have accumulated further merit. Taking all of that, along with the wholesome energy accumulated through listening to the Dhamma on this occasion as a supportive condition (*upanissaya*), and relying on the association of noble friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), may you, as quickly as possible—since it is visible that this Buddha's

Dispensation is increasingly turning toward the dark side—strive individually to protect the Dispensation from within.

May the mass of merit accumulated so far serve as a supportive condition (*upanissaya*) for the success of this Dhamma practice and meditation! May this be a strength to eliminate your own *saṃsāric* suffering (*dukkha*) through the realization of the paths and fruits of Stream-entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-returning (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-returning (*Anāgāmi*), and Arahantship! Aspire in this manner. Furthermore, may all those in this universe who wish to rejoice in the merit of this Dhamma preaching and Dhamma listening, by doing so, realize the noble, great Deathless—the Mind Stilled (Nibbāna—by means of their aspired-for enlightenment (*bodhi*)! Aspire in this way and recite these verses.

"*Ettāvatā ca amhehi……*"