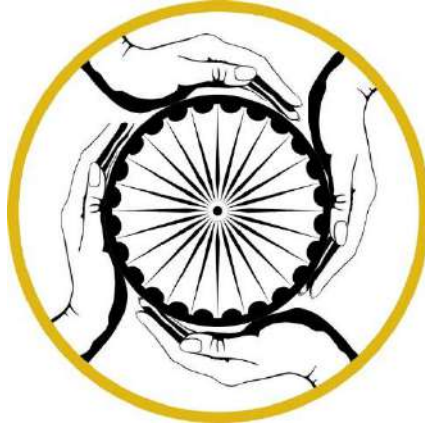


Aging and Death

As aging and
death are rolling
in on us ~what
should be done?



Rev.Thalangalle Rathana Thero



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Pabbatopama Sutta-(Kosala Samyuthtaya)

Buddhist Followers

Rev.Thalangalle Rathana Thero

Today, I would like to discuss with you, an another sutra and this sutra is called Pabbathupama sutra – this is found in Kosala Sumyuthaya in Samyutha Nikaya. So, before I begin, I would prefer to mention the reason why exalted one preached this sutra to King Pasenadi Kosala.

The reason is clearly mentioned in the Atta Katha, which had been written to elaborate the original scriptures or the canon or Thripitaka.

According to Atta Katha, King Kosala had a habit to visit Buddha twice a day. On his way to visit Buddha, sometimes he travelled with all his security guards who were soldiers, but sometimes there were only few guards. This news was passed on to a group of criminals or thieves and they planned and discussed this among each other. According to Atta Katha, there were 500 thieves and they were fully organised themselves to kill the king in order to get the kingdom into their control. This gang was in a forest called Andawanaya. This forest was quite close to the Jethawanaramaya where the exalted one lived during this time.

However, even though they planned to kill the king, the king had an expanded unit of surveillance. He managed to get this news via the intelligence forces and announced his forces to capture all of them. There were actually more than 500 thieves they had captured and brought in to the city. Finally, without any hesitation, King Kosala ordered to kill them all with severe (strict or harsh) punishment.

Later, Lord Buddha heard of this terrible incident and wanted to explain about the results of this unwholesome act to King Kosala and those all who were involved with this wrong doing.

According to the Attakatha, this is the reason why Lord Buddha preached this sutra to King Kosala and everyone who gathered at the Jethavanaramaya monastery.

So, now we are clear about the story behind the Sutra right? Okay, let's discuss about the sutra now; actually this story was only explained in atta katha, however it didn't mention in the sutra anyway.

Now meaning of pali terms are as follows;

Pabbatha means – massive stone according to the sutra; great mountain as high as clouds “මහන්තං පබ්බතං අබ්බසමං” upama means- illustration or parable.

Then pabbathupoma means – parable of Great Mountain and its' one of analogies to explain about death and life. Let's talk about this sutra now.

On one particular day in the past when great Buddha lived at Savatthi, King Pasenadi Kosala approached the blessed one in the middle of the day and, on arrival, after bowing down, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the blessed one said to him: "Well now, great king, where are you coming from in the middle of the day?"

Then he said;

Dear my lord, I was engaged in the sort of royal affairs typical of head- noble-warrior kings, intoxicated with the intoxication of sovereignty, obsessed by greed for sensual pleasures, who have attained stable control in their country, and who rule having conquered a great sphere of territory on earth."

Dear my lord, there are so much work for us as to overlook
Specially as a king

After King Kosala's reply the exalted one, Lord Buddha softly said to him;

“නං කිං මඤ්ඤසී, මහාරාජ, ඉධ තෙ පුරිසො ආගච්ඡෙය්‍ය පුරත්ථිමාය දිසාය සද්ධාසිකො පච්චසිකො. සො නං උපසඬකමිත්වා එවං වදෙය්‍ය - ‘යග්ඤ, මහාරාජ, ජාතෙය්‍යාසී, අහං ආගච්ඡාමි’”

Anyway dear king "What do you think? Suppose a man, trustworthy and reliable, see here, Buddha used two words which is as follows;

“සද්ධායිකො පච්චයිකො” Saddaika means – trustworthy one / paccaika means someone who doesn't lie, were to come to you from the east, and on arrival would say;

'If it please your majesty, you should know that I came from the east. “තෙ පුරිසො ආගච්ඡෙය්‍ය පුරන්ථිමාය දිසාය සද්ධායිකො පච්චයිකො.” Their I saw a great mountain as high as clouds, “මහන්තං පබ්බතං අබ්භසමං” coming this way, crushing and destroying all living beings and everything on its' path.

Then a second man were to come to you from the west. “අඵ දුනියො පුරිසො ආගච්ඡෙය්‍ය පච්ඡිමාය දිසාය” and on arrival he would say; “If it please your majesty, you should know that I came from the west. Their I saw a great mountain as high as the clouds, “මහන්තං පබ්බතං අබ්භසමං” coming this way, crushing and destroying all living beings and everything on its' path.

Then a third man were to come to you from the south. “අහං ආගච්ඡාමි දක්ඛිණාය දිසාය” and on arrival would say: “If it please your majesty, you should know that I come from the south. There I saw a great mountain, as high as the clouds, coming this way, crushing all living beings”.

Then a fourth man were to come to you from the north and on arrival would say: “If it please your majesty, you should know that I come from the north. There I saw a great mountain, as high as the clouds, coming this way, crushing all living beings.

Then the exalted one asking from king in this way

“යං තෙ, මහාරාජ, කරණීයං නං කරොහී’ති. එවරුපෙ තෙ, මහාරාජ, මහති මහඛිභයෙ සමුප්පන්නෙ දාරුණෙ මනුස්සක්ඛයෙ (මනුස්සකායෙ (ක.)) දුල්ලහෙ මනුස්සන්නෙ කිමස්ස කරණීය’න්ති?”

What do you think should be done?' Great king, if such a great peril should arise, it would be a terrible destruction of human life — the human state being so hard to obtain — what should be done?"

Then the king replied;

“අඤ්ඤන්තර ධම්මවරියාය අඤ්ඤන්තර සමවරියාය අඤ්ඤන්තර කුසලකිරියාය අඤ්ඤන්තර පුඤ්ඤකිරියායා”න්ති?”

"If, lord, such a great peril should arise, it would be such a terrible destruction of human life — the human life is so hard to obtain — All I can only do is Dhamma-conduct, right conduct, skilful deeds, meritorious deeds. I won't be able to do much else”.

“I would like to ask you if this kind of peril arise, so, what you can do with it? Nothing, right?”

Then budhha said;

“Dear king well said; Okay, assume that, these perils come from all four directions, North, East, West, and south representing (jathi) birth, (jara) getting old, (wyadi) illness or ailments (Marana) death;

"I inform you, great king, I announce you, great king: aging and death are rolling in on you. When aging and death are rolling in on you, great king, what should be done?"

Then king Pasenadi Kosala replied;

“Dear lord, I have very strong elephants and they can win any kind of battle but they can't do anything with this, as there is no scope for them, when aging and death are rolled in on us”.

There are cavalry battles... chariot battles... infantry battles... but there is no use for those battles, and no scope for them, when aging and death are rolled in on us.

In this royal court there are counsellors who, when enemies arrive, are capable of working on their wits; but there is no use in working on their wits, as there is no scope for them, when aging and death are rolled in on us.

In this royal court there are abundant bullion and gold stored in vaults and depositories, and with such wealth we are capable of buying enemies when they come; but there is no use for those battles of wealth, when aging and death are rolled in.

As aging and death are rolling in on me, lord, what else should be done other than Dhamma-conduct, right conduct, skilful deeds, meritorious deeds?"

Then the exalted one replied to the king;

"So it is, great king! So it is, great king! As aging and death are rolled in on you, nothing else could be done but Dhamma-conduct, right conduct, skilful deeds, meritorious deeds only remains".

This is what this sutra is about and now we will discuss further about this sutra. Anyway, some people may still believe that even when all these things are rolling in on us, money can help with it. Isn't it so true that, when you are sick, if you have money, there is a possibility to reduce sickness to a certain level using money? To see a specialist you need some money, right?. Nevertheless, I can assure you that money can't stop you from getting sick, and also, money can't stop you from getting old. Even though you have great amounts of money you are unable to stop your death isn't it?

Getting sick, aging and death is equal to everyone and beyond the all barriers, cast, skin collar, rich or poor everything isn't it?

I just remembered one of the statements made by Steve jobs before his death;

He made such a wonderful statement and he said

“At this moment, lying on the bed, sick and remembering all my life, I realize that all my recognition and wealth that I have is meaningless in the face of imminent death. You can hire someone to drive a car for you, make money for you – but you cannot rent someone to carry the disease for you. One can find material things, but there is one thing that cannot be found when it is lost – “LIFE”

Steve Jobs is a one of the most successful businessman ever, a multi billionaire with a net worth more than 7 billion and he died at the age of 56 with a cancer. See, did money helped him with not being sick, not getting old or prevent death? No; that is why king kosala explained that these materialistic things do nothing when these perils are rolling in on us.

Another example is, famous fashion blogger by the name of Kyrzayda Rodriguez, she died in September, 2018 at the age of 40 years from a cancer and before she died she wrote the following for her followers on social media.

And she said;

“I have a brand new car parked outside that can’t do anything for me, I have all kinds of designers clothes, shoes and bags that can’t do anything for me, I have money in my account that can’t do anything for me, I have a big well-furnished house that can’t do anything for me”.

“Look, I’m lying here in a twin sized hospital bed; I can take a plane any day of the week if I like but that can’t do anything for me ... So do not let anyone make you feel bad for the things you don’t have - but the things you have, be happy with those; if you have a roof over your head who cares what kind of furniture is in it... the most important thing in life is LOVE”.

See, how things can be changed money can’t do anything with it.

Assume, that you have a lot of money in your account and, when you are about to die, at that particular moment someone brings

you all these money to you and asks; what you can do with it? What will happen to these money? It is questionable isn't it?

The materialistic things are nothing to us when it comes to our death. It is true that we need a comfortable life with material things, but we must use these in a proper way with real understanding of impermanence. It is then easy for us to minimise the desire; otherwise, as you are getting successful materially, at the same time you will also enhance arrogance. This is harmful to you as well as to the society. We come to this world empty-handed and also we will depart empty hand. Isn't it?

Birth, death, aging and sickness are universal to everyone in this world, those beyond all barriers and these events are very natural in life as well. That is why in this sutra it is clearly explained, that in the seam of birth and death your life must be purposeful for yourself as well as to others. The exalted one gave us four advices in this sutra to be able to have a better life and overcome those perils.

They are;

Firstly,

“අඤ්ඤන්තර ධම්මචරියාය” - Dhamma conduct - Here the term ‘dhamma’ has few meanings in the pali language. Lets talk about the meaning of this word “dhamma” first,

Buddha said “Dhammo bikkawe desissami” here dhamma means buddha's teaching.

Dammo papethi suggathin – here dhamma means meritorious deeds.

Mano Pubbangama dhamma – Here Damma means thoughts.

Conduct means - your behaviour or properly organised manner.

Therefore, in this context, dhamma conduct means, managing or organising your behaviour according to dhamma. According to lord buddha's teaching, there is a statement;

“Dhammo have rakkhati dhammacārī “The Dhamma protects the one who lives by the Dhamma”.

This statement has a deep meaning. Someone may ask how can dhamma protects you?

The simple answer is, if you follow the Buddhist doctrine no doubt you will be protected. Assuming, that you follow the five basic precepts. If you abide by these five precepts as well as everyone else, means, we will be living in a peaceful society. On the other hand, buddha advised his followers to be mindful every moment. If you are mindful with the things you do mostly, then you are protected. Isn't it?

Dhamma also has an ability to protect you from all kinds of illness, sprits ghost, fears, and astrological obstacles. We use dhammas' Buddhist doctrine or sutra as a pirith for chanting at special blessing ceremonies. Pirith means protections (Pari samanthatho thayathi rakkatiti pariththan) which means you are protected by all directions. There are two very famous sutras, Ratana sutra and karaneeya metta sutra and so many other sutras among the buddha's doctrine to protect the people who trust the doctrine with great respect and devotion. Additionally, when you chant and listen to dhamma with an undivided mind it will heal you mentally and physically.

So finally dhamma conduct means you live according to the Buddhist teaching.

The second advice is ;

“අඤ්ඤන්ර සමචරියාය” Right conduct

“සමචරියා” according to the pali dictionary it means calm and righteousness, religious, well behaviour. Those behaviours are not affecting anyone even himself, he kept away from all kinds of bad wicked cruel dirty things.

Also, if we look at the pali word sama; it means being tranquil and quiet; soothe (gently calm). Therefore, it is clear that your conduct must be good for yourself and others. There is no any harm activities.

The third advice is “අක්කන්තර කුසලකිරියාය” - skilful deeds or we can even say wholesome activities.

According to Buddhist teaching, we must have special skills to reduce all kinds of unwholesome thoughts and enhance wholesome thoughts in our minds.

It says;

Four right exertions or efforts that means physical or mental effort to achieve a particular goal (cattāro sammappadhānā)

1. Exertion for the preventing of unskillful states to arise (simply you are not allowed to arise unwholesome thoughts in your mind) right?

02. Exertion for the abandoning or reducing of the already arisen unskillful states or unwholesome thoughts.

03. Exertion for the arising of skilful states or wholesome thoughts.

04. Exertion for the sustaining and increasing of arisen skilful states or wholesome thoughts.

On the other hand kusala kiriyaya means, develop your mind through meditation.

The final advice is “අක්කන්තර පුක්කන්තකිරියායා” meritorious deeds.

Pujna means merits. Meaning, material offering. Through these kind of offering, you can accumulate or generate such kind of inner beauty or inner strength which is called merits.

It is very clear that skilful deeds and meritorious deeds are interdependent and related. It is like the two sides of the same coin. Also another example is, if the wick of a lamp is kusala or

skilful, pujjga or merits will represent the light which illuminate the lamp.

In this way, the exalted one advised us, as aging and death are rolling in on you, what else should be done but Dhamma-conduct, right conduct, skilful deeds, meritorious deeds.

So, I wish that you would all be able to practice these four facts and we all know that in reality, three perils are already rolling in on us i.e. birth, getting old, and getting sick. The only peril that remains is death. Isn't it ? Therefore, before that peril reaches us we all must practice Dhamma-conduct, right conduct, skilful deeds, meritorious deeds.

I wish may you all able to practice these four facts which is mentioned in this sutra. And then you will be able to overcome all these perils rolling in on you. Thanks you so much. May you all be able to realize the four noble truth and May all good things come to you such as longevity, equanimity, most importantly tranquility.

I sincerely wish that you will have the courage to understand dhamma and may the triple gem bless you all.