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(Pāsāda,kampana) Moggallāna Sutta

The Discourse on Moggallāna (Shaking up the Mansion) | S 51.14

Theme: Using psychic powers to discipline others

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2008

Introduction

The (Pāsāda,kampana) Moggallāna Sutta (S 51.14) relates how the Buddha instructs Moggallāna to use his psychic power to literally *shake up* some unmindful monks into a sense of spiritual urgency (*samvega*).¹ [§§1-7]

While the story is unique to this Sutta, the rest of the Sutta closely parallels **the (Iddhi) Moggallāna Sutta** (S 51.31).² This section briefly defines the 4 *iddhi,pāda* and closes with the definition of the various psychic powers [§10], with an elision (*peyyāla*) implying the other 4 mundane superknowledges (*abhiññā*), and the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes [§11], referring to Moggallāna's arhat-hood.³

This discourse should be studied with **the Uṭṭhāna Sutta** (Sn 2.10). The first part of the preamble to this Sutta is found in its Commentary (SnA 336-338), followed by the teaching of **the (Pāsāda,kampana) Moggallāna Sutta**. The Uṭṭhāna Sutta probably forms the closing verses of the whole teaching.

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(Pāsāda,kampana) Moggallāna Sutta**The Discourse on Moggallāna
(Shaking-up the Mansion)**

S 51.14

1 Thus have I heard.

The undisciplined monks

At one time the Blessed One was residing in the mansion of Migāra's mother in Eastern Park [Pubb'ārāma] near Sāvattihī.

2 Now, at that time, some monks were dwelling on the ground floor. They were restless, arrogant, vain, sharp-tongued, rambling in talk, muddle-headed, without clear knowing, lacking concentration, scatter-brained, loose in faculty.⁴

¹ On *samvega*, see **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16), SD 9 (7.6).

² S 51.31/5:288 f (SD 27.7).

³ For his attaining of arhat-hood, see **Sāriputta Moggallāna S 1** (A 4.167), SD 46.17; also SD 24.11 (12).

⁴ *Uddhatā unnalā capalā mukharā vikiṇṇa,vācā abhijjhālu kāmesu tibba,sārāgo, byāpanna,citto paduṭṭha,mana,-saṅkappo, muṭṭha-s,sati asampajāno asamāhito vibbhanta,citto pākat'indriyo*. This list also in **Jantu S** (S 2.25/1:61

Moggallāna's psychic powers

3 Then, the Blessed One addressed the venerable Mahā Moggallāna,
 “Moggallāna, these fellow brahmacharis dwelling on the ground floor [270] of the mansion of Migāra's mother are *restless, arrogant, vain, sharp-tongued, rambling in talk, muddle-headed, without clear knowing, lacking concentration, scatter-brained, loose in faculty.*”

3.2 Go, Moggallāna, inspire these monks with a sense of urgency!”

“Yes, bhante,” the elder Mahā Moggallāna replied to the Blessed One.

Then, he performed an act of psychic wonder, so that with his big toe, he caused the mansion of Migāra's mother to shake, quake and tremble.⁵

The monks shaken up

4 Then, those monks, shocked and terrified, stood at one side and said,

“It's terrible indeed, sirs! It's amazing indeed, sirs!

There is no wind, and this mansion of Migāra's mother has a deep foundation, well-founded, unshakable, immovable. Yet, it shook, quaked and trembled!”

5 Then, the Blessed One approached the monks and said this to them:

“Bhikshus, why are you standing at one side, shocked and terrified?”

“It's terrible indeed, bhante! It's amazing indeed, bhante!

There is no wind, and this mansion of Migāra's mother has a deep foundation, well-founded, unshakable, immovable. Yet, it shook, quaked and trembled!”

6 “Bhikshus, the mansion of Migāra's mother was made to shake, quake and tremble by the monk Moggallāna with his big toe, out of his desire to arouse a sense of urgency in you.

What do you think, bhikshus, by having cultivated, having developed what things has the monk Moggallāna become so powerful, so mighty?”

“Bhante, our teachings are rooted in the Blessed One, guided by the Blessed One, have the Blessed One as refuge. It would be good indeed if the Blessed One were to explain its meaning.⁶ Having heard the Blessed One, the monks would remember it.”⁷ [271]

7 “Then, listen, bhikshus, pay close attention to it, I will speak.”

f), where its Comy explains as follows: “**restless**” (*uddhatā*) means of a restless temperament due to perceiving unallowable as allowable, what is blameworthy as blameless (in accordance with the Vinaya), and conversely; “**arrogant**” (*unnaḷā*) means puffed up with empty conceit like a fat reed; “**vain**” (*capalā*) means vain on account of robes, bowl, adornment, etc; “**sharp-tongued**” (*mukharā*) means rough in speech; “**rambling in talk**” (*vikīṇṇa, vācā*) means unrestrained in speech, rambling aimlessly all day; “**muddle-headed**” (*muṭṭha-s, satino*) means bereft of mindfulness, without mindfulness, forgetting what has been done right here; “**without clear knowing**” (*asampajānā*) means lacking in wisdom; “**lacking concentration**” (*asamāhitā*) means lacking access and full concentration, like a ship caught in strong currents; “**scatter-brained**” (*vibbhanta, cittā*; Comy *vibbhanta, cittā*) means with wandering minds, like foolish deer caught in the path; “**loose in faculty**” (*pākat'indriyā*) means with open faculties due to non-restraint like when they were still laymen. (SA 3:257 = 1:115)

⁵ Comy says that he entered into the water-kasina meditation, emerged, and determined that the ground on which the mansion stood should become water. Then he rose into the air and struck it with his toe (SA 3:257). Majjhima Comy, however, says that Moggallāna cultivated the water-kasina and then resolved, “Let the foundations of the palace be like water!” (MA 2:304,3-10): see **Cūḷa Tanhā, saṅkhaya S** (M 37,14), SD 54.8.

⁶ On this line, see SD 54.3e (2.1.3.2).

⁷ *Bhagavam, mūlakā no bhante dhammā, bhagavaṃ nettikā, bhagavaṃ paṭisaraṇā. Sādhu vata bhante bhagavatañ-ñ'eva paṭibhātu etassa bhāsitassa attho. Bhagavato sutvā bhikkhū dhāressantī ti.* This is stock (M 1:309 f, 317, 465, 3:115; S 2:80 f; A 1:199, 4:158, 351, 5:355).

“Yes, bhante!” the monks answered the Blessed One in assent.

The 4 paths of spiritual power

The Blessed One said this:⁸

8 “Here, bhikshus, the monk Moggallāna has cultivated **the basis of success** [the path to spiritual power] *endowed with concentration gained through desire [will to act] (chanda) and through striving.*

He has cultivated the basis of success *endowed with concentration gained through energy (vīriya) and through striving.*⁹

He has cultivated the basis of success *endowed with concentration gained through the mind (citta) and through striving.*

He has cultivated the basis of success *endowed with concentration gained through mental investigation (vīmaṃsā) and through striving.*

(1) ENTHUSIASM-BASED CONCENTRATION. Here, bhikshus, the monk Moggallāna has cultivated the basis of success *endowed with concentration gained through desire¹⁰ (**chanda**) and through striving*, thinking,

‘Thus my **desire** will be neither too slack nor too tense, and it will neither be constricted internally nor distracted externally.’

And he is one who dwells perceiving what is after and what is before, thus:

‘As before, so after; as after, so before. As below, so above; as above, so below. As by day, so at night; as at night, so by day.’

Thus with a mind that is open and unshrouded, he cultivates a mind filled with light.¹¹

(2) ENERGY-BASED CONCENTRATION. He has cultivated the basis of success *endowed with concentration gained through energy (vīriya) and through striving*, thinking,

‘Thus my **energy** will be neither too slack nor too tense, and it will neither be constricted internally nor distracted externally.’

And he is one who dwells perceiving what is after and what is before, thus:

‘As before, so after; as after, so before. As below, so above; as above, so below. As by day, so at night; as at night, so by day.’

Thus with a mind that is open and unshrouded, he cultivates a mind filled with light.

⁸ Here, instead of the abridged passage, I have listed §8.1 as the summary of the 4 *iddhi,pāda*, followed by the full statement [§8(1)-(4)] to the end as listed in **the (Iddhi) Moggallāna S** (S 51.31/5:288 f), SD 27.7.

⁹ *Chanda,samādhi,padhāna,saṅkhāra,samannāgataṃ*: see SD 27.7 Intro.

¹⁰ Here, it has a neutral, even positive, sense; alt tr: “will to act; enthusiasm.”

¹¹ Here, “a mind filled with light” (*sappabhāsaṃ cittaṃ*), clearly refers to the attaining of dhyana. This para is stock: *Pacchā,pure,saññī ca viharati – yathā pure tathā pacchā, yathā pacchā tathā pure; yathā adho tathā uddhaṃ, yathā uddhaṃ tathā adho; yathā divā tathā rattim, yathā rattim tathā divā. Iti vivaṭṭena cetasā aparīyonaddhena sappabhāsaṃ cittaṃ bhāveti*: **Pubba S** (S 51.11/5:263 i2), **Maha-p,phala S** (S 51.12/5:267 f), **(Iddhi,pāda) Vibhaṅga S** (S 51.20/5:277 i2, 278), **Magga S** (S 51.21/5:281), **(Iddhi) Moggallāna S** (S 51.31/5:288 i4), **Tathāgata S** (S 51.32/-5:289 i2). Simply, “as before, so after,” refers to evenness and thoroughness of practice, while “as above, so below,” refers to meditation on the 31 body-parts. On the meaning of terms here, see **(Iddhi,pāda) Vibhaṅga S** (S 51.20/-5:277) = SD 28.14. Cf *Idh’āvuso, bhikkhu āloka,saññaṃ manasi karoti, divā,saññaṃ adhiṭṭhāti yathā divā tathā rattim, yathā rattim tathā divā. Iti vivaṭṭena cetasā aparīyonaddhena sappabhāsaṃ cittaṃ bhāveti*: **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,1.-11(5)/3:223, where it is one of the 4 cultivations of concentration, *samādhi bhāvanā*); **Samādhi Bhāvanā S** (A 4.44/-2:44), SD 24.1, for context of the meditation; **(Anussati-ṭ,ṭhāna) Udāyi S** (A 6.29/3:322, SD 24.8. Cf Pm 1:114.

(3) MIND-BASED CONCENTRATION. He has cultivated the basis of success *endowed with concentration gained through the mind (citta) and through striving*, thinking,

‘Thus my **mind** will be neither too slack nor too tense, and it will neither be constricted internally nor distracted externally.’

And he is one who dwells perceiving what is after and what is before, thus:

‘As before, so after; as after, so before. As below, so above; as above, so below. As by day, so at night; as at night, so by day.’

Thus with a mind that is open and unshrouded, he cultivates a mind filled with light.

(4) INVESTIGATION-BASED CONCENTRATION. He has cultivated the basis of success *endowed with concentration gained through mental investigation (vīmaṃsā) and through striving*, thinking,

‘Thus my **investigation** will be neither too slack nor too tense, and it will neither be constricted internally nor distracted externally.’

And he is one who dwells perceiving what is after and what is before, thus:

‘As before, so after; as after, so before. As below, so above; as above, so below. As by day, so at night; as at night, so by day.’

Thus with a mind that is open and unshrouded, he cultivates a mind filled with light.

The various psychic powers

9 Bhikshus, it is by having cultivated, having developed these 4 bases of success that the monk Moggallāna has become so powerful, so mighty.

10 Indeed, bhikshus, it is by having cultivated, having developed these 4 bases of success that the monk Moggallāna has the various psychic powers, that is to say,¹²

(1) Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one.

(2) He appears and disappears.

(3) He goes unhindered through walls, through ramparts, and through mountains as if through space.

(4) He dives in and out of the earth as if it were water.

(5) He walks on water without sinking as if it were earth.

(6) Sitting cross-legged, he flies through the air like a winged bird.

(7) With his hand he touches and strokes even the sun and the moon, so mighty, so powerful.

(8) He has power over his body up to as far as the Brahmā world. [289]

[...etc...]¹³

¹² *Eko’pi hutvā bahudhā hoti, bahudhā’pi hutvā eko hoti; āvibhāvaṃ tiro, bhāvaṃ tiro, kuṭṭaṃ tiro, pākāraṃ tiro, - pabbataṃ asajjamāno gacchati seyyathā’pi ākāse. Pathaviyāpi ummujj’animujjaṃ karoti seyyathā’pi uduke. Uduke’pi abhijjamāne gacchati [Ce Ke abhijjamāno] seyyathā’pi pathaviyā. Ākāse’pi pallaṅkena kamati seyyathā’pi pakkhī sakuṇo. Ime’pi candima, sūriye evam mah’iddhike evam’mahā’nu bhāve pāṇinā parāmasati parimajjati. Yāva brahma, lokāpi kāyena vasaṃ vatteti.* i Vism 12.69 takes *āvībhāvaṃ tiro, bhāvaṃ* to be a distinct power, giving a list of 8 powers. The syntax of the Nikāya, Gethin notes, might be read as suggesting only 7 distinct powers. (*The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, 2001: 82 n6)

¹³ This elision (*peyyāla*) refers to the other 5 superknowledges (*abhiññā*), only the last of which is supermundane, viz (2) clairaudience (divine ear) (*dibba, sota*), (3) mind-reading (*ceto, pariyā, ñāṇa*), (4) the knowledge of the recollection past lives (*pubbe, nivāsānussati, ñāṇa*), (5) the knowledge of death and rebirth (*cut’upapāta, ñāṇa*) or “divine eye” (*dibba, cakkhu*): see **Miracles**, SD 27.5a(9). This is confirmed by Comy to (Iddhi) Moggallāna S (S 5.1.31 @ SD 27.7), which says that in this Sutta and the one foll it in the Iddhi, pāda Saṃyutta, “the 6 superknowledges are discussed” (SA 3:261).

The destruction of the mental influxes

11 Indeed, bhikshus, it is by having cultivated, having developed these 4 bases of success that the monk Moggallāna, having realized for himself through direct knowledge, right here and now, with the destruction of the mental influxes,¹⁴ attains and dwells in the influx-free freedom of mind, freedom by wisdom!”¹⁵

— evaṃ —

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¹⁴ **“Mental influxes,”** *āsava*. The term *āsava* (lit “inflow, outflow”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as influxes, taints (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 āsavā: the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16,2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) [43] is probably older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 33.1.10(20)/3:216; M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these āsavas is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict: āsava.

¹⁵ “Freedom of mind and freedom by wisdom,” respectively, *ceto,vimutti* (or, freedom by concentration, ie through destruction of the mental hindrances) and *paññā,vimutti* (freedom through insight) (A 1:60). One who is “freed by wisdom” “may not have reached the 8 liberations (*vimokkha*) in his own body, but through seeing with wisdom, his mental influxes are destroyed” (M 70,16/1:478). All arhats are perfectly freed in the same way from ignorance and suffering, but are distinguished into 2 types on the basis of their proficiency in concentration. Those who can attain the 8 liberations (*aṭṭha,vimokkha*), which incl the 4 formless attainments and the attainment of cessation, are called “freed both ways,” ie, freed from the physical body by means of the formless dhyanas, and from all defilements by the path of arhathood. Arhats like Sāriputta and Moggallāna are “freed both ways” (*ubhato,bhāga,vimutta*). The differences between the two types of freedom are given in **Mahā,nidāna S** (D 2:70 f), **Kiṭṭā-giri S** (M 1:477 f) and esp **Jhānābhiññā S** (S 16.9,29 n), SD 50.7. For full list of the 8 liberations, see **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15,5/ 2:70 f), SD 5.17.35. See also D 3:262, 228; **Vimokkha S**, A 8.66/4:306; also M 120,37/3:103 (SD 3.4.37).