AN 3.60 — Saṅgārava Sutta (Discourse to Saṅgārava)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

60. Saṅgārava Sutta (Discourse to Saṅgārava) Once, the young brahmin Saṅgārava approached The Blessed One, and after exchanging friendly greetings with Him, he sat down to one side and said:

“Venerable Sir, I have considered this:

‘We brahmins should make sacrifices and make others do sacrifices too. The reason for this, of course, is that it is our conviction that those who do the sacrifices and those who participate in such sacrifices, engage in accruing numerous merits that extend to more individuals than just themselves.

But those who go forth from this or other sect and become thus homeless, they would be merely taming, controlling, and extinguishing their own passions, leading only to their own liberation, at best. Hence, by going forth, they are only seeking wisdom for themselves and therefore making merits for only themselves.’

And The Blessed One replied by saying:

“Well, brahmin, I will now question you on this, and you may reply as you wish.

“Here, brahmin, The Tathāgata arises in the world, an Arahant, Perfectly Awakened, endowed with true knowledge and conduct, The Fortunate One, The Knower of existence, The Matchless Tamer of those to be tamed, The Teacher of both Devas and humans, The Awakened and Blessed One.

“He then declares:

‘Come! This is the Path. This is the method. It is by coming to this Path and method that I have understood the noble end of the Holy Life and therein abide, Myself having realized it with direct knowledge.

‘Come! And if you also practice diligently as I did, then this Path and method will allow you to reach the noble end of The Holy Life as well, which you too, through your own direct

experience and full understanding, will come to know and realize, for yourself!'

"In this manner, The Teacher teaches and others come to that Path and method. Now, with this being the case, is this not then for the benefit of hundreds, for the benefit of thousands, itself? Is it not, therefore, for the benefit of countless other beings?

"And with this being the case, then, would the merits to be gained by the deliberate act of going forth, amount to be only for the benefit of a single individual, or for innumerable and countless other beings as well, besides oneself?"

The brahmin Saṅgārava then replied by saying:

"Venerable Sir, given the way you have just explained it, I must admit that the merits to be gained by the deliberate act of going forth are truly for the benefit of innumerable and countless more beings!"

When this was said, the Venerable Ānanda said to the brahmin Saṅgārava:

"Brahmin, of these two methods, which one is less prominent, less troublesome, while the other being more fruitful and more effective?

And the young brahmin Saṅgārava replied to the Venerable Ānanda by saying:

"As I revere and applaud Master Gotama, so also I revere and applaud Venerable Ānanda."

For the second time, the Venerable Ānanda said:

"Brahmin, I do not ask you which one of us here is revered and applauded. Instead, brahmin, I ask you which of these two methods is less prominent, less troublesome, while the other being more fruitful and more effective?"

And for the second time, the young brahmin Saṅgārava said to Venerable Ānanda:

"As I revere and applaud Master Gotama, so also I revere and applaud Venerable Ānanda."

And for the third time, the Venerable Ānanda said:

"Brahmin, I do not ask you which one of us here is revered and applauded. Instead, brahmin, I ask you which of these two methods is less prominent, less troublesome, while the other being more fruitful and more effective?"

And for the third time, the brahmin Saṅgārava repeated to Venerable Ānanda:

"As I revere and applaud Master Gotama, so also I revere and applaud Venerable Ānanda."

At this, the thought occurred to The Blessed One:

‘The brahmin Saṅgārava is evading this legitimate question put to him by Ānanda. What if I release him from this tense situation?’

So, The Blessed One asked the young brahmin Saṅgārava another question:

“While attending the meeting at the royal palace in the presence of the Great King today, what was the topic of discussion, brahmin?”

“Venerable Sir, the topic of conversation was this:

‘In the past, although there were fewer Bhikkhus, yet more of them displayed superhuman and psychic powers. But today, even though there are many more Bhikkhus, only a few among them are able to display superhuman and psychic powers.’

“This, Venerable Sir, was the topic of discussion as I sat at the meeting held at the royal palace today, in the presence of the Great King.”

“Brahmin, there are these three types of miracles. What three?

“The miracle of psychic powers; the miracle of knowing the hearts and minds of others, along with their intentions; and the miracle of instruction.

a. “And what, brahmin, is the miracle of psychic powers?

“Here, brahmin, someone uses various forms of psychic powers such as, while being one, he becomes many, and becoming many he reverts back to being one; he appears and disappears without any obstructions, moving through walls unhindered, through solid embankments and rocks, as though passing through space; he dives into the earth and comes out of it as though it were liquid; he walks on water as though it were solid ground; while sitting cross-legged, he travels in space like a small or a large bird; with his bare hand, he touches the moon and the sun that are so powerful, and goes on exercising and wielding his powers, unobstructed, as far as the Brahmā world.

“This, brahmin, is the miracle of psychic powers.

b. “And what, brahmin, is the miracle of knowing the hearts and minds of others, along with their intentions?

“Here, brahmin, someone through the use of a sign (nimitta) as his base, understands and reveals:

‘Your mind is in such and such a state, and it is so and not otherwise; these are the thoughts you are having and pondering, and these are your intentions.’

“In this manner, he declares what he sees with accuracy and certainty, and no matter what others say to deny or conceal these facts, all that would be of no use, for his penetrating sight would still remain accurate and true.

“Furthermore, someone else without the use of a sign, but having the capacity and possibility to hear the voices or thoughts of other humans, non-humans, and even Devas, similarly makes the declaration:

‘Your mind is in such and such a state, and it is so and not otherwise; these are the thoughts you are having and pondering, and these are your intentions.’

“In this manner, he declares what he sees with accuracy and certainty, and no matter what others say to deny or conceal these facts, all that would be of no use, for his knowledge of these facts would still remain accurate and true.

“Further, someone else without the use of a sign, and without having the capacity or possibility to hear the voices of other humans, non-humans, or Devas, is one who feels the reverberations of thoughts while another is thinking and pondering them, and as this is going on, he penetrates the other’s heart and mind through his concentrated mind and thereby declares:

‘Your mind is in such and such a state, and it is so and not otherwise; these are the thoughts you are having and pondering, and these are your intentions.’

“In this manner, he declares what he sees with accuracy and certainty, and no matter what others say to deny or conceal these facts, all that would be of no use, for his seeing would still remain accurate and true.

“Furthermore, someone else without the use of a sign, without having the capacity or possibility to hear the voices of other humans, non-humans, or Devas, and without feeling the reverberations of thoughts that another is thinking and pondering, but instead, having himself attained a collected and stable state of heart that does not include thinking and pondering, directs his mind, while encompassing the other’s mind. As a result, he comes to know and understand:

‘This person is having such and such mental preparations that are priming him in this way, to the point where his next thought will be this or that!’

“In this manner, he declares what he sees with accuracy and certainty, and no matter what others say to deny or conceal these facts, all that would be of no use, for his penetrative sight and knowing would still remain accurate and true.

This, brahmin, is the miracle of knowing the hearts and minds of others, along with their intentions.

c. “And what, brahmin, is the miracle of instruction?

Here, brahmin, someone advises another:

‘Think in this manner, do not think in that manner! Pay attention and attend to these things, and do not pay attention or attend to those things, over there! Get rid of and abandon these things and develop those other qualities, and then abide in them.’

“This then, brahmin, is the miracle of instruction.

“Now, brahmin, among these three miracles, which one would you say is your favorite?

1. “Well, Venerable Sir, as far as the first miracle of psychic powers, where someone uses various forms of psychic powers such, as while being one, he becomes many, and on becoming many he reverts back to being one; where he can appear and disappear without any obstructions, moving through walls unhindered, through solid embankments and rocks, as though passing through space; where he dives into the earth and comes out of it as though it were liquid; he walks on water as though it were solid ground; while sitting cross-legged, he could travel in space like a small or a large bird; and with his bare hand, he is able to touch even the moon and the sun that are so powerful, and goes on exercising and wielding his powers, unobstructed, as far as the Brahmā world;

“Well, this to me, Master Gautama, seems like it could be a magical trick.

2. “And with the other miracle, Venerable Sir, whereby someone through the use of a sign (nimitta) as his base, understands and declares to another:

‘Your mind is in such and such a state, and it is so and not otherwise; these are the thoughts you are having and pondering, and these are your intentions.’

“In this way, declaring what he sees with accuracy and certainty, and no matter what others say to deny or conceal these facts, all that would be of no use, for his seeing would still remain accurate and true;

“Well, this too, Master Gautama, seems to me that it could be a magical trick.

3. “As for the other miracle, Venerable Sir, whereby someone else, without the use of a sign, but having the capacity and possibility to hear the voices or thoughts of other humans, non-humans, or even Devas, understands and declares to another:

‘Your mind is in such and such a state, and it is so and not otherwise; these are the thoughts you are having and pondering, and these are your intentions.’

“In this manner, declaring to others what he sees with accuracy and certainty, and no matter what others say to deny or conceal these facts, all that would be of no use, for his seeing would still remain accurate and true;

“This too, then, Venerable Sir, seems to me that it could be a magical trick.

4. “And with the other miracle, Venerable Sir, whereby someone else who, without using some kind of a sign, and without having the capacity or possibility to hear the voices of other humans, non-humans, or Devas, feels the reverberations of thoughts as another is thinking and pondering, while penetrating the other’s heart and mind through his concentrated mind, and thereby declares:

‘Your mind is in such and such a state, and it is so and not otherwise; these are the thoughts you are having and pondering, and these are your intentions.’

“In this manner, telling others of what he sees with accuracy and certainty, and no matter what others say to deny or conceal these facts, all that would be of no use, for his seeing would still remain accurate and true;

“Here, too, Venerable Sir, I think one could do this by some magical trick as well.

5. “And with the other miracle, Venerable Sir, whereby someone else without the use of a sign, without having the capacity or possibility to hear the voices of other humans, non-humans or Devas, and without feeling the reverberations of thoughts as the other is thinking and pondering, but instead, having himself attained a collected and stable state of the heart that does not include thinking and pondering, he directs his mind while encompassing the other’s mind. As a result, he comes to know and understand:

‘This person is having such and such mental preparations that are priming him in this way, to the point where his next thought will be this or that!’

“In this manner, he goes on declaring what he sees with accuracy and certainty, and no matter what others say to deny or conceal these facts, all that would be of no use, for his seeing would still remain accurate and true;

“Well, this too, Venerable Sir, seems like it could be a magical trick.

6. “However, the third miracle, Venerable Sir, where someone advises another thus:

‘Think in this manner, do not think in that manner! Pay attention and attend to these things, and do not pay attention or attend to those things, over there! Get rid of and abandon these things, and develop those other qualities, and then abide in them.’

“This happens to be it for me, Master Gautama! The miracle of instruction is my favorite, among all the three miracles.

“It is wonderful, Master Gotama! How brilliantly these words were expressed by Master Gautama! For, we are confident that Master Gautama is capable of performing each of these three miracles!

“Because, surely, Master Gautama possesses and uses the various forms of psychic powers mentioned, such as being one, He becomes many, and becoming many He reverts to

being one; He appears and disappears without any obstructions, moving through walls, embankments and rocks unhindered, as though passing through space; He dives into the earth and comes out of it as though it were water; He walks on water as though it were solid ground; while sitting cross-legged, He travels in space like a small or a large bird; He touches the moon and the sun, that are so powerful, with His bare hand, thus wielding His powers as far as the Brahmā world.

“Also, He is able to apply the miracle of knowing the hearts and minds of others, along with their intentions, through the use of a sign (nimitta) as his base, whereby he understands and declares:

‘Your mind is in such and such a state, and it is so and not otherwise; these are the thoughts you are having and pondering, and these are your intentions.’

“In this manner, He declares what he sees with accuracy and certainty, and no matter what others say to deny or conceal these facts, all that would be of no use, for His seeing would still remain accurate and true.

“Furthermore, without the use of a sign, but having the capacity and possibility to hear the voices or thoughts of other humans, non-humans or Devas, Master Gautama makes the declaration:

‘Your mind is in such and such a state, and it is so and not otherwise; these are the thoughts you are having and pondering, and these are your intentions.’

“In this manner, Master Gautama declares what He sees with accuracy and certainty, and no matter what others say to deny or conceal these facts, all that would be of no use, for His seeing would still remain accurate and true.

“Furthermore, without the use of a sign, and without having the capacity or possibility to hear the voices of other humans, non-humans, or Devas, He feels the reverberations of thoughts as another is thinking and pondering them, while penetrating the other’s heart and mind through His concentrated mind, and thereby Master Gautama can declare:

‘Your mind is in such and such a state, and it is so and not otherwise; these are the thoughts you are having and pondering, and these are your intentions.’

“In this manner, He declares what He sees with accuracy and certainty, and no matter what others say to deny or conceal these facts, all that would be of no use, for His seeing would still remain accurate and true.

“Furthermore, without the use of a sign, and without having the capacity or possibility to hear the voices of other humans, non-humans or Devas, and without feeling the reverberations of thoughts as the other is thinking and pondering them, instead, having Himself attained a collected and stable state of the heart that does not include thinking and pondering, He directs His mind while encompassing the other’s mind, and thus Master

Gautama knows and understands:

‘This person is having such and such mental preparations that are priming him in this way, to the point where his next thought will be this or that!’

“In this manner, He declares what he sees with accuracy and certainty, and no matter what others say to deny or conceal these facts, all that would be of no use, for His seeing would still remain accurate and true.

“In addition, Master Gautama, while using the third miracle which He obviously possesses, advises his students:

‘Think in this manner, do not think in that manner! Pay attention and attend to these things, and do not pay attention or attend to those things, over there! Get rid of and abandon these things, and develop those other qualities, and then abide in them.’

However, The Blessed One replied to the brahmin Saṅgārava’s comments, by saying:

“Brahmin, even though you have spoken words that were not heartfelt or authentic at all, through the means of your flattery, which were therefore intended to be insulting to Me, I will, nevertheless, give you the answer.

“It is indeed a fact, for I do possess and can use the various forms of psychic powers mentioned, such as while being one, I can become many, and having become many, I can revert back to being one; I appear and disappear without any obstructions, moving through walls unhindered, through solid and impenetrable embankments and rocks, as though passing through space; I dive into the earth and come out of it as though it were liquid water; I walk on water as though it were solid ground; while sitting cross-legged, I can travel in space like a small or a large bird; and with My bare hand, I can touch the moon and the sun that are so powerful, thus wielding My powers unobstructed as far as the Brahmā world itself!

“Also, I am able to apply the miracle of knowing the hearts and minds of others, along with their intentions, through the use of a sign (nimitta) as My base, whereby I understand and declare:

‘Your mind is in such and such a state, and it is so and not otherwise; these are the thoughts you are having and pondering, and these are your intentions.’

“In this manner, I declare what I see with accuracy and certainty, and no matter what others say to deny or conceal these facts, all that is of no use, for My seeing would still remain accurate and true.

“Furthermore, without the use of a sign, but having the capacity and possibility to hear the voices or thoughts of other humans, non-humans or Devas, I make the declaration:

‘Your mind is in such and such a state, and it is so and not otherwise; these are the thoughts you are having and pondering, and these are your intentions.’

“In this manner, I declare what I see with accuracy and certainty, and no matter what others say to deny or conceal these facts, all that is of no use, for My seeing would still remain accurate and true.

“Furthermore, without the use of a sign, and without having the capacity or possibility to hear the voices of other humans, non-humans, or Devas, I feel the reverberations of thoughts as another is thinking and pondering them, while penetrating the other’s heart and mind through My concentrated mind, whereby I can declare:

‘Your mind is in such and such a state, and it is so and not otherwise; these are the thoughts you are having and pondering, and these are your intentions.’

“In this manner, I declare what I see with accuracy and certainty, and no matter what others say to deny or conceal these facts, all that is of no use, for My seeing would still remain accurate and true.

“Furthermore, without the use of a sign, and without having the capacity or possibility to hear the voices of other humans, non-humans or Devas, and without feeling the reverberations of thoughts as the other is thinking and pondering them, but instead, having Myself attained a collected and stable state of the heart that does not include thinking and pondering, I direct My mind while encompassing the other’s mind, wherein I know and understand:

‘This person is having such and such mental preparations that are priming him in this way, to the point where his next thought will be this or that!’

“In this manner, I declare what I see with accuracy and certainty, and no matter what others say to deny or conceal these facts, all that is of no use, for My seeing would still remain accurate and true.

“In addition, while using the third miracle, I advise My students:

‘Think in this manner, do not think in that manner! Pay attention and attend to these things, and do not pay attention or attend to those things, over there! Get rid of and abandon these things, and develop those other qualities, and then abide in them.’”

And the brahmin Saṅgārava then exclaimed, in astonishment:

“But, Master Gotama, could there be even one other Bhikkhu, who is capable of performing all these three miracles, other than Master Gotama?”

“Brahmin, there is not just one hundred, two hundred, three hundred, four hundred, or five hundred of My disciples who are now capable of preforming these feats, but many

many more, indeed, who truly possess these miraculous abilities as well."

"But where are these Bhikkhus currently residing, Master Gautama?"

"Look around you, brahmin, they are here, in this same Saṅgha of Bhikkhus!"

Then, on hearing these words spoken to him by The Blessed One Himself, the young brahmin Saṅgārava exclaimed in total delight:

"It is truly magnificent, Venerable sir! Quite remarkable and amazing indeed, Venerable sir!

"The Blessed One has made The Dhamma clear to me in many ways! It is as though He turned upright what had been turned upside-down, and revealed to me what was hidden; showing the way to one who was lost; holding up a lamp in the dark for those with eyesight to see.

"I go to The Blessed One for refuge, and to The Dhamma, and to The Saṅgha of Bhikkhus!

"From this day forward, may The Blessed One kindly remember me as a lay disciple of His, who has taken refuge in Him, until the end of life."