MN 107 — Ganakamoggallana Sutta: The Discourse to Ganaka-Moggallana

English translation by I.B. Horner.

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved; source ellipsis or repetition-omission statement retained. Canonical repetitions were not reconstructed.

Text

Thus I have heard: At one time the Lord was staying near Savatthi in the palace of Migara's mother in the Eastern Monastery. Then the brahman Ganaka-Moggallana approached the Lord; having approached he exchanged greetings with the Lord; having conversed in a friendly and courteous way, he sat down at a respectful distance. As he was sitting down at a respectful distance, Ganaka-Moggallana the brahman spoke thus to the Lord: "Just as, good Gotama, in this palace of Migara's mother there can be seen a gradual training, a gradual doing, a gradual practice, that is to say as far as the last flight of stairs,[1] so, too, good Gotama, for these brahmans there can be seen a gradual training, a gradual doing, a gradual practice, that is to say in the study [of the Vedas];[2] so too, good Gotama, for these archers there can be seen a gradual... practice, that is to say in archery; so too, good Gotama, for us whose livelihood is calculation[3] there can be seen a gradual training, a gradual practice, that is to say in accountancy. For when we get a pupil, good Gotama, we

first of all make him calculate: 'One one, two twos, three threes, four fours, five fives, six sixes, seven sevens, eight eights, nine nines, ten tens,' and we, good Gotama, also make him calculate a hundred. Is it not possible, good Gotama, to lay down a similar gradual training, gradual doing, gradual practice in respect of this dhamma and discipline?"

"It is possible, brahman, to lay down a gradual training, a gradual doing, a gradual practice in respect of this dhamma and discipline, Brahman, even a skilled trainer of horses, having taken on a beautiful thoroughbred first of all gets it used to the training in respect of wearing the bit. Then he gets it used to further training — even so brahman, the Tathagata, having taken on a man to be tamed, first of all disciplines him thus:

Morality

"'Come you, monk, be of moral habit, live controlled by the control of the Obligations, endowed with [right] behavior and posture, seeing peril in the slightest fault and, undertaking them, train yourself in the rules of training.' As soon, brahman, as the monk is of moral habit, controlled by the control of the Obligations, endowed with [right] behavior and posture; seeing peril in the slightest fault and, undertaking them, trains himself in the rules of training, the Tathagata disciplines him further saying:

Sense-control

"'Come you monk, be guarded as to the doors of the sense-organs; having seen a material shape with the eye, do not be entranced with the general appearance, do not be entranced with the detail; for if one dwells with the organ of sight uncontrolled, covetousness and dejection, evil, unskillful states of mind, may flow in. So fare along controlling it, guard the organ of sight, achieve control over the organ of sight. Having heard a sound with the ear... Having smelt a smell with the nose... Having savored a taste with the tongue... Having felt a touch with the body... Having cognized a mental state with the mind, do not be entranced with the detail. For if one dwells with the organ of mind uncontrolled, covetousness and dejection, evil, unskillful states of mind, may flow in. So fare along controlling it; guard the organ of mind, achieve control over the organ of mind.'

Moderation in eating

"As soon, brahman, as a monk is guarded as to the doors of the sense-organs, the Tathagata disciplines him further, saying: 'Come you, monk, be moderate in eating; you should take food reflecting carefully, not for fun or indulgence or personal charm or beautification, but taking just enough for maintaining this body and keeping it going, for keeping it unharmed, for furthering the Brahma-faring,[4] with the thought: Thus will I crush out an old feeling, and I will not allow a new feeling to arise, and then there will be for me subsistence and blamelessness and abiding in comfort.'

Vigilance

"As soon, brahman, as a monk is moderate in eating, the Tathagata disciplines him further, saying: 'Come you, monk, dwell intent on vigilance; during the day while pacing up and down, while sitting down, cleanse the mind of obstructive mental states; during the middle watch of the night, lie down on the right side in the lion posture, foot resting on foot, mindful, clearly conscious, reflecting on the thought of getting up again; during the last watch of the night, when you have arisen, while pacing up and down, while sitting down, cleanse the mind of obstructive mental states.'

Mindfulness and clear consciousness

"As soon, brahman, as a monk is intent on vigilance, the Tathagata disciplines him further, saying: 'Come you, monk, be possessed of mindfulness and clear consciousness, acting with clear consciousness whether you are approaching or departing, acting with clear consciousness whether you are looking ahead or looking round, acting with clear consciousness whether you are bending in or stretching out [the arms], acting with clear consciousness whether you are carrying the outer cloak, the bowl or robe, acting with clear consciousness whether you are eating, drinking, munching, savoring, acting with clear consciousness whether you are obeying the calls of nature, acting with clear consciousness whether you are walking, standing, sitting, asleep, awake, talking or being silent.'

Overcoming of the five hindrances

"As soon, brahman, as he is possessed of mindfulness and clear consciousness, the Tathagata disciplines him further, saying: 'Come you, monk, choose a remote lodging in a forest, at the root of a tree, on a mountain slope, in a glen, a hill cave, a cemetery, a woodland grove, in the open, or on a heap of straw.' On returning from alms-gathering after the meal, the monk sits down crosslegged, holding the back erect, having made mindfulness rise up in front of him. He, getting rid of covetousness for the world, dwells with a mind devoid of covetousness, he cleanses the mind of covetousness. Getting rid of the taint of ill-will, he dwells benevolent in mind; compassionate and merciful towards all creatures and beings, he cleanses the mind of ill-will. Getting rid of sloth and torpor, he dwells without sloth or torpor; perceiving the light, mindful and clearly conscious he cleanses the mind of sloth and torpor. Getting rid of restlessness and worry, he dwells calmly; the mind inward tranquil, he cleanses the mind of restlessness and worry. Getting rid of doubt, he dwells doubt-crossed; unperplexed as to the states that are skilled,[5] he cleanses his mind of doubt.

Jhana

"He, by getting rid of these five hindrances,[6] which are defilements of the mind and deleterious to intuitive wisdom, aloof from pleasures of the senses, aloof from unskilled states of mind, enters and abides in the first meditation which is accompanied by initial thought and discursive thought, is born of aloofness and is rapturous and joyful. By allaying initial thought and discursive thought, his mind subjectively tranquilized and fixed on one point, he enters and abides in the second meditation which is devoid of initial thought and discursive thought, is born of concentration and is rapturous and joyful. By

the fading out of rapture, he dwells with equanimity, attentive and clearly conscious, and experiences in his person that joy of which the ariyans[7] say: 'Joyful lives he who has equanimity and is mindful,' and he enters and abides in the third meditation. By getting rid of anguish, by the going down of his former pleasures and sorrows, he enters and abides in the fourth meditation which has neither anguish nor joy, and which is entirely purified by equanimity and mindfulness.

"Brahman, such is my instruction for those monks who are learners who, perfection being not yet attained, dwell longing for the incomparable security from the bonds. But as for those monks who are perfected ones, the cankers destroyed, who have lived the life, done what was to be done, shed the burden, attained to their own goal, the fetters of becoming utterly destroyed, and who are freed by perfect profound knowledge — these things conduce both to their abiding in ease here and now as well as to their mindfulness and clear consciousness."

When this had been said, the brahman Ganaka-Moggallana spoke thus to the Lord:

"Now, on being exhorted thus and instructed thus by the good Gotama, do all the good Gotama's disciples attain the unchanging goal[8] — nibbana or do some not attain it?"

"Some of my disciples, brahman, on being exhorted and instructed thus by me, attain the unchanging goal — nibbana; some do not attain it."

"What is the cause, good Gotama, what the reason that; since nibbana does exist, since the way leading to nibbana exists, since the good Gotama exists as adviser, some of the good Gotama's disciples on being exhorted thus and instructed thus by the good Gotama, attain the unchanging goal — nibbana, but some do not attain it?"

"Well then, brahman, I will question you on this point in reply. As it is pleasing to you, so you may answer me. What do you think about this, brahman? Are you skilled in the way leading to Rajagaha?"

"Yes, sir, skilled am I in the way leading to Rajagaha."

"What do you think about this? A man might come along here wanting to go to Rajagaha. Having approached you, he might speak thus: 'I want to go to Rajagaha, sir; show me the way to this Rajagaha.' You might speak thus to him: "Yes, my good man, this road goes to Rajagaha; go along it for a while. When you have gone along it for a while you will see a village; go along for a while; when you have gone along for a while you will see a market town; go for a while. When you have gone along for a while you will see Rajagaha with its delightful parks, delightful forests, delightful fields, delightful ponds. But although he has been exhorted and instructed thus by you, he might take the wrong road and go westwards. Then a second man might come along wanting to go to Rajagaha...(as above)... you will see Rajagaha with its delightful... ponds.' Exhorted and instructed thus by you he might get to Rajagaha safely. What is the cause, brahman, what the reason that, since Rajagaha does exist, since the way leading to Rajagaha exists, since you exist as adviser,

the one man, although being exhorted and instructed thus by you, may take the wrong road and go westwards while the other may get to Rajagaha safely?"

"What can I, good Gotama, do in this matter? A shower of the way, good Gotama, am I."

"Even so, brahman, nibbana does exist, the way leading to nibbana exists and I exist as adviser. But some of my disciples, on being exhorted and instructed thus by me attain the unchanging goal — nibbana, some do not attain it. What can I, brahman, do in this matter? A shower of the way, brahman, is a Tathagata."

When this had been said, the brahman Ganaka-Moggallana spoke thus to the Lord:

"Good Gotama, as for those persons who, in want of a way of living, having gone forth from home into homelessness without faith, who are crafty, fraudulent, deceitful, who are unbalanced and puffed up, who are shifty, scurrilous and of loose talk, the doors of whose sense-organs are not guarded, who do not know moderation in eating, who are not intent on vigilance, indifferent to recluseship, not of keen respect for the training, who are ones for abundance, lax, taking the lead in backsliding, shirking the burden of seclusion, who are indolent, of feeble energy, of confused mindfulness, not clearly conscious, not concentrated but of wandering minds, who are weak in wisdom, drivelers — the good Gotama is not in communion with them. But as for those young men of respectable families who have gone forth from home into homelessness from faith, who are not crafty, fraudulent or deceitful, who are not unbalanced or puffed up, who are not shifty, scurrilous or of loose talk, the doors of whose sense-organs are guarded, who know moderation in eating, who are intent on vigilance, longing for recluseship, of keen respect for the training, who are not ones for abundance, not lax, shirking, backsliding, taking the lead in seclusion, who are of stirred up energy, self-resolute, with mindfulness aroused, clearly conscious, concentrated, their minds one-pointed, who have wisdom, are not drivelers — the good Gotama is in communion with them. As, good Gotama, black gum is pointed to as chief of root-scents, as red sandalwood is pointed to as chief of the pith-scents, as jasmine is pointed to as chief of the flower scents — even so is the exhortation of the good Gotama highest among the teachings of today. Excellent, good Gotama, excellent, good Gotama. As, good Gotama, one might set upright what had been upset, or disclose what had been covered, or show the way to one who had gone astray, or bring an oil-lamp into the darkness so that those with vision might see material shapes — even so in many a figure is dhamma made clear by the good Gotama. I am going to the revered Gotama for refuge and to dhamma and to the Order of monks May the good Gotama accept me as a lay-follower going for refuge from today forth for as long as life lasts."

Notes

1.

A seven-storied palace is not to be built in one day [Commentary].

2.

It is not possible to learn the three Vedas by heart in one day [Commentary].

3.

Ganana. From this profession of his, the distinguishing addition to the brahman's name is derived [Ed., The Wheel].

4.

Brahmacariyam. This refers to the pure life of a celibate recluse [Ed., The Wheel].

5.

Kusala. Sometimes translated by "salutary, profitable, karmically wholesome." [Ed., The Wheel].

6.

On these, see The Wheel No. 26.

7.

Ariya refers here, according to the Visuddhimagga, to the Enlightened Ones.

8.

Accantanittha. Accanta can also mean "utmost, culminating, supreme."