SN 51.14 — SN 51:14 Moggallāna | Moggallāna Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

Source: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/SN/SN51_14.html

Source revision: sha256:06db98f11dbe5b66e3b290b0f8bcaa44ec5f2fe3d1e1b74062fcf0baea044036

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Text

Moggallāna

Moggallāna Sutta (SN 51:14)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī in the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra’s mother. And on that occasion a large number of monks were dwelling on the lower floor of the palace: high-strung, rowdy, flighty, talkative, of loose words & muddled mindfulness, unalert, unconcentrated, their minds scattered, their faculties left wide open.

Then the Blessed One addressed Ven. Mahā Moggallāna, “Moggallāna, your fellows in the holy life dwelling on the lower floor of the palace of Migāra’s mother are high-strung, rowdy, flighty, talkative, of loose words & muddled mindfulness, unalert, unconcentrated,

their minds scattered, their faculties left wide open. Go, Moggallāna, and terrify those monks."

Responding, "As you say, lord," to the Blessed One, Ven. Moggallāna willed a feat of psychic power such that with his toe he made the palace of Migāra's mother shake, quiver, & quake.

Then those monks, standing to one side terrified, their hair on end, (exclaimed,) "How amazing! How astounding!—how, although there is no wind, the palace of Migāra's mother—deeply-rooted, well-implanted, immovable, unshakable—still shook, quivered, and quaked!"

Then the Blessed One went to those monks and, on arrival, said to them, "Why monks, are you standing to one side terrified, your hair on end?"

"It's amazing, lord! It's astounding!—how, although there is no wind, the palace of Migāra's mother—deeply-rooted, well-implanted, immovable, unshakable—still shook, quivered, and quaked!"

"Monks, wanting to terrify you, the monk Moggallāna with his toe made the palace of Migāra's mother shake, quiver, & quake. What do you think, monks? Having developed & pursued which qualities is the monk Moggallāna of such power, such might?"

"For us, lord, the teachings have the Blessed One as their root, their guide, & their arbitrator. It would be good if the Blessed One himself would explicate the meaning of this statement. Having heard it from the Blessed One, the monks will remember it."

"In that case, monks, listen: It's through having developed & pursued the four bases of power that the monk Moggallāna is of such power, such might. Which four?

"There is the case where the monk Moggallāna develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion, thinking, 'This desire of mine will be neither overly sluggish nor overly active, neither inwardly constricted nor outwardly scattered.' He keeps perceiving what is in front & behind so that what is in front is the same as what is behind, what is behind is the same as what is in front. What is below is the same as what is above, what is above is the same as what is below. (He dwells) by night as by day, and by day as by night. By means of an awareness thus open & unhampered, he develops a brightened mind.

"He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on persistence…

"He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on intent…

"He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on discrimination & the fabrications of exertion, thinking, 'This discrimination of mine will be neither overly sluggish nor overly active, neither inwardly constricted nor outwardly scattered.' He keeps

perceiving what is in front & behind so that what is in front is the same as what is behind, what is behind is the same as what is in front. What is below is the same as what is above, what is above is the same as what is below. (He dwells) by night as by day, and by day as by night. By means of an awareness thus open & unhampered, he develops a brightened mind.

“It’s through having developed & pursued these four bases of power that the monk Moggallāna is of such power, such might.

“Having developed & pursued these four bases of power, the monk Moggallāna experiences manifold supranormal powers. Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one. He appears. He vanishes. He goes unimpeded through walls, ramparts, & mountains as if through space. He dives in & out of the earth as if it were water. He walks on water without sinking as if it were dry land. Sitting cross-legged he flies through the air like a winged bird. With his hand he touches & strokes even the sun & moon, so mighty & powerful. He exercises influence with his body even as far as the Brahmā worlds.

“Having developed & pursued these four bases of power, the monk Moggallāna hears—by means of the divine ear-element, purified & surpassing the human—both kinds of sounds: divine & human, whether near or far.

“Having developed & pursued these four bases of power, the monk Moggallāna knows the awareness of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed it with his own awareness. He discerns a mind with passion as ‘a mind with passion,’ and a mind without passion as ‘a mind without passion.’ He discerns a mind with aversion as ‘a mind with aversion,’ and a mind without aversion as ‘a mind without aversion.’ He discerns a mind with delusion as ‘a mind with delusion,’ and a mind without delusion as ‘a mind without delusion.’ He discerns a restricted mind as ‘a restricted mind,’ and a scattered mind as ‘a scattered mind.’ He discerns an enlarged mind as ‘an enlarged mind,’ and an unenlarged mind as ‘an unenlarged mind.’ He discerns a surpassed mind [one that is not at the most excellent level] as ‘a surpassed mind,’ and an unsurpassed mind as ‘an unsurpassed mind.’ He discerns a concentrated mind as ‘a concentrated mind,’ and an unconcentrated mind as ‘an unconcentrated mind.’ He discerns a released mind as ‘a released mind,’ and an unreleased mind as ‘an unreleased mind.’

“Having developed & pursued these four bases of power, the monk Moggallāna recollects his manifold past lives [lit: previous homes], i.e., one birth, two births, three births, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, one thousand, one hundred thousand, many eons of cosmic contraction, many eons of cosmic expansion, many eons of cosmic contraction & expansion, (recollecting,) ‘There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.’ Thus he remembers his manifold past lives in their modes & details.

“Having developed & pursued these four bases of power, the monk Moggallāna sees—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—beings passing away and re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma: ‘These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, & mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, & mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a good destination, a heavenly world.’ Thus—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—he sees beings passing away and re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma.

“Having developed & pursued these four bases of power, the monk Moggallāna—through the ending of the effluents—enters & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now.”

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: DN 2; SN 21:3; AN 5:28