

Pacalā Sutta

or, Pacalāyamāna Sutta

The Discourse on Nodding Off

Or, **Moggallāna Sutta** (The Discourse to Moggallāna)

[Eight ways of overcoming drowsiness]

(Aṅguttara Nikāya 7.58/4:85-91)

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2003

1 Introduction

The title Pacala Sutta¹ is found in the colophon (*uddāna*) of the PTS edition. The Siamese texts call it the **Moggallāna Sutta**, and the Burmese and the Siamese World Tipiṭaka, **Pacalāyamāna Sutta** (*pacalāyamāna* means “nodding off”). This sutta records the efforts of Mahā Moggallāna, the second chief disciple of the Buddha, to attain spiritual liberation during the week after his ordination in the second year of the Ministry. For his intensive training, Moggallāna went to live near a village called Kallavāla,putta or Kallavāla,putta (“liquor-dealer’s son”)² in Magadhā. On the seventh day of his ordination, when he was engaged in meditation, he was troubled by fatigue and torpor. According to the Aṅguttara Commentary, he had been walking up and down vigorously in meditation for seven days, so when he sat down for his meditation, drowsiness overcame him (AA 4:41).³

While listening to the Buddha expounding these teachings on the meditation of the elements (*dhātu, kamma-ṭ, thāna*), Moggallāna won the three higher paths and the apex of a chief disciple’s perfection by attaining arhathood (A 4:85 f; AA 4:42).

Moggallāna’s struggle for arhathood here is recounted *dhyana by dhyana* in the first nine discourses of the **Moggallāna Saṃyutta** (S 40.1-9),⁴ that is, on the four dhyanas, the four formless attainments, and the signless meditation. Historically, it is likely that the Pacalā Sutta records Moggallāna’s meditation struggle just before that recorded in the **Paṭhama Jhāna Pañha Sutta** (S 40.1).⁵ Another possibility is that both the discourses—the Pacalā Sutta and the Paṭhama Jhāna Pañha Sutta—are recounting the same event. While the Aṅguttara reciters records how the Buddha admonished Moggallāna on overcoming drowsiness (and teachings on letting go), the Saṃyutta reciters recounts only the meditation practice itself, and in nine discourses describe his gaining of the form dhyanas and the formless attainments.

2 Liberated both ways

Like Sāriputta, Moggallāna was an arhat “liberated both ways” (*ubhato, bhāga, vimutta*). All arhats are perfectly liberated in the same way from ignorance and suffering, but are distinguished into two types on the basis of their proficiency in concentration. Those who can attain **the eight liberations** (*aṭṭha, vimokkha*),⁶ which include the four formless attainments and the attainment of cessation, are called “liberated

¹ Due to editorial oversight in the PTS Pali ed, this sutta and the following (Puñña) Mettā S (A 7.58a) are treated as one. For (Puñña) Mettā S, see Sutta Discovery 2003:2,11.

² In the Thera, gāthā Comy on Moggallāna’s verses, it is called Kalla, vāla (ThaA 2:162).

³ Cf Soṇa Koḷivisa who walked up and down in meditation until his feet bled (V 1:179-185; Tha 632-644; AA 1:233 f; Tha:RD 275 f). A shorter text, the **Soṇa S** (A 6.55/3:374-379) records the Buddha’s instruction on the middle way (simile of the lute) to Soṇa Koḷivisa. He is foremost of the monks who exert effort (A 1:24).

⁴ S 40.1-9/4:262-269 = SD 24.11-19.

⁵ S 40.1/4:262 f = SD 24.11.

⁶ Briefly, the 8 liberations are: (1) the liberation of one with physical form sees physical forms (*rūpī rūpāni passati*); (2) that of one who does not see physical form internally, but sees physical forms externally (*ajjhataṃ arūpa, saññī bahiddhā rūpāni passati*); (3) that of one liberated after contemplating the idea of the beautiful (*subhan’ t’eva adhimutto hoti*); (4) that of the sphere of the infinity of space; (5) that of the sphere of the infinity of consciousness; (6) that of the sphere of nothingness; (7) that of the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; (8) that of the cessation of perception and feeling (Pm 2:38-40). Comy on **Mahā Sakuludāyi S** (M 77.22/2:13) says that

both ways,” that is, liberated from the physical body by means of the formless dhyana, and from all defilements by the path of arhathood.

Those who have destroyed the defilements but lack the mastery over the eight liberations are called “liberated by wisdom” (*paññā, vimutta*). The differences between the two types of liberation are given in **the Mahā, nidāna Sutta** (D 15/2:70 f) and **the Kīṭāgiri Sutta** (M 70/1:477 f). Within the same week of striving, Moggallāna had not only mastered the successive planes of meditative concentration but also won the “paths of spiritual power” (*iddhi, pāda*), and thus gained higher knowledge (*abhiññā*).

3 Modes of spiritual progress

There is a whole chapter (*vagga*) in the Aṅguttara Nikāya dealing with **modes of spiritual progress** (*paṭipadā*) (A 4.161-170), of which there are four, namely:⁷

- (1) painful progress with slow insight (*dukkhā paṭipadā dandhābhiññā*).
- (2) painful progress with quick insight (*dukkhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā*).
- (3) pleasant progress with slow insight (*sukhā paṭipadā dandhābhiññā*).
- (4) pleasant progress with quick insight (*sukhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā*). (A 2:149-152, 154 f)

Of the suttas in the chapter, two are called **Sāriputta Moggallāna Sutta** (A 4.167-168). In **the Sāriputta Moggallāna Sutta 1** (A 4.167), Sāriputta visits Moggallāna and on being asked by Sāriputta, Moggallāna tells him that his (Moggallāna’s) mode of spiritual progress was painful but with quick progress. In **the Sāriputta Moggallāna Sutta 2** (A 4.168), Moggallāna visits Sāriputta who says that his own mode of spiritual progress was pleasant with quick insight.

Moggallāna attained arhathood by swift realization (*khippābhiññā*), that is, in a week, but his progress was difficult (*dukkha, paṭipadā*) and needed the Buddha’s help, hence the swiftness in his insight. Sāriputta, on the other hand, took only slightly longer in his progress (two weeks), but his progress was smooth (*sukha, paṭipadā*) and he swiftly gained insight while listening to the Buddha exhort Dīgha, nakha (**Dīgha, nakha Sutta**, M 74). While Moggallāna had the Buddha’s personal guidance in his progress, he had a lesser range in insight, whereas Sāriputta was not only independent in his progress but had a wider range of insight. Hence, Sāriputta’s supremacy in wisdom.

This sutta is helpful in giving the methods of priming one’s meditation practice. It is put in the Book of Sevens (*sattaka, nipāta*) of the Aṅguttara Nikāya because it lists seven ways of dispelling drowsiness. The eighth factor, not exactly a “solution” for drowsiness, is to take a rest.

4 Problem reading

The Pali of the first method of overcoming drowsiness [§2] given by the Buddha poses a problem in translation as there are two variant reading that apparently contradict one another, that is, (a) the PTS and Siamese (Se) readings, and (b) the Sinhalese (Ce) and Burmese (Be) readings:

PTS: *yathā saññissa te viharato taṃ middham okkamati, taṃ saññam manasākāsi taṃ saññam bahulam akāsi.*

Se: *yathā saññissa te viharato taṃ middham okkamati, taṃ saññam manasi, kareyyāsi, taṃ saññam bahulam kareyyāsi.*

Ce: *yathā saññino te viharato tam middham okkamī ti taṃ saññam mā manasikāsi taṃ saññam mā bahulam akāsi;*

Be: *yathā saññissa te viharato tam middham okkamati, taṃ saññam mā manasākāsi, taṃ saññam mā bahulam-akāsi.*

Bodhi (1999) following the Sinhalese (Ce) reading has: “At whatever thought drowsiness befalls you, you should not give attention to that thought.” (A:B). As does Ṭhānissaro (2002): “...whatever perception you have in mind when drowsiness descends on you, don’t attend to that perception, don’t pursue it.”

these liberations are the mind’s full (but temporary) release from the opposing states and its full (but temporary) release by delighting in the object (*ārammaṇa*) (MA 3:255, cf 255-259). For details, see SD 15.17(10).

⁷ See (**Vitthāra**) **Paṭipadā S** (A 4.162/2:149 f) = SD 18.3, esp Introd.

However, I have followed the PTS and Siamese (Se) readings: “...when you perceive that drowsiness is descending upon you, you should make a mental note of that perception; frequently make that perception. It is possible that when you do so, that drowsiness would go away.”

From a practical angle, both readings—although they appear to contradict one another—are valid. When trying to rid oneself of drowsiness or any distracting thought, one could either (a) simply note it at the sense-door as an objective experience (“drowsiness...”) ⁸ or (b) simply disregard it and go on with one’s meditation. ⁹

5 Cūḷa Tanhā,saṅkhaya Sutta

In the second section of the Sutta, Moggallāna asks the Buddha this question [§11a]:

“In what way, bhante, in brief, is a monk liberated through the destruction of craving, that is, one who has reached total perfection, the total security from bondage, the total holy life, the total consummation, the highest amongst gods and humans?”

In the **Cūḷa Tanhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 37.15/1:255 f), the same question is asked, on the instigation of Moggallāna, by Sakka, the king of the devas, and the Buddha’s answer is identical to the passage here. It is possible that this passage originally belongs to the Cūḷa Tanhā,saṅkhaya Sutta, but is added here by the Aṅguttara reciters for a more complete Sutta. ¹⁰

The events of the Cūḷa Tanhā,saṅkhaya Sutta are clearly later than those of the Pacalā Sutta since the Cūḷa Tanhā,saṅkhaya Sutta records the awakened Moggallāna as using his psychic powers to visit Sakra in his heaven. In the Pacalā Sutta, Moggallāna is still struggling in his meditation.

6 “Nothing is worth clinging to”

In the conclusion of the Pacalā Sutta, Moggallāna asks the Buddha how one is awakened [§11a]. The Buddha begins by answering that the awakened one has learned that “nothing is worth clinging to” [§11b]. The whole section [§11] is well known as “the brief advice on liberation through the destruction of craving,” ¹¹ and runs thus: ¹²

11b Here, the monk has learned [heard] that nothing is worth clinging to. And a monk has learned that nothing is worth clinging to, thus: he directly understands all things [he directly understands the nature of the all]. ¹³ Having directly understood all things, he fully understands ¹⁴ all things.

⁸ **Māluṅkyaputta S**: “When, Māluṅkyāputta, regarding what is seen, heard, sensed and cognized by you, | in the seen will be only the seen; | in the heard there will only be the heard; | in the sensed there will only be the sensed; | in the cognized there will only be the cognized...” (S 35.95.13/4:73).

⁹ **Vitakka,saṅṭhāna S**: “(3) f, monks, while the monk is examining the dangers of those thoughts, there still arises in him evil unskillful thoughts connected with desire, hate or delusion, then **he should not mind them, disregard them** (*asati amanasikāra*). (M 20.5/1:120).

¹⁰ Requests for brief instructions are found elsewhere in the Canon, eg V 1:39 (Sāriputta to Assaji); S 22.1/ 3:1-5 (Nakula,piṭā to the Buddha).

¹¹ *Saṅkhittena tanhā,saṅkhaya,vimutto (ovādo)*.

¹² M 37.3/1:251 = A 7.58.11/4:88. The vocatives have been omitted. For nn on key terms, see sutta §11 below.

¹³ “He directly understands all things,” *so sabbam dhammam abhijānāti*, alt tr, “he directly understands the nature of the all.” Here the “all” (*sabba*) refers to the 6 senses and their respective sense-objects (**Sabba S**, S 35.23/-4:15 = SD 7.1).

¹⁴ “He fully understands,” *parijānāti*, here meaning “he comprehends, knows fully for certain.” This spiritual knowledge is called “**full understanding**” (*pariññā*), of which there are 3 kinds: (1) Full understanding of the known (*ñāta,pariññā*), ie the discernment of the specific characteristics of a phenomena (“Form as the characteristic of being oppressed’ feeling has the characteristic of being felt, etc”); (2) Full understanding by investigating (*tīraṇa,pariññā*), ie insight wisdom (*vipassanā,pariññā*) which as the 3 universal characteristics (impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, not-self) as its objects, and which arises when attributing a universal characteristic to a physical and

11c Having fully understood all things, he knows whatever feelings there are, whether pleasant, painful or neither painful nor pleasant.

As regards to those feelings, he dwells contemplating impermanence in them; he dwells contemplating dispassion [fading away of lust] in them; he dwells contemplating ending [of suffering] in them; he dwells contemplating letting go [of defilements].

When he dwells contemplating impermanence in them, contemplating dispassion [fading away of lust] in them, contemplating ending [of suffering] in them, contemplating letting go [of defilements], he does not cling to anything in the world; not clinging, he is not agitated; not agitated, he attains nirvana for himself.

He understands. ‘Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, done what had to be done, there is no more for this state of being.’ (M 37.3/1:251 = A 7.58.11/4:88)

This whole famous “brief advice on liberation through the destruction of craving” forms the main theme of the **Cūḷa Tapāhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 37), where the Buddha gives this teaching to Sakra, leader of the devas, in the presence of Moggallāna.¹⁵ To find out whether that Sakra remembered and understood the Buddha’s admonition, Moggallāna then visits the heaven of the Thirty-three, where by a skillful means, Moggallāna reminds Sakra and the celestial king Vessavaṇa of the Buddha’s “brief advice” that nothing is worth clinging to.¹⁶ Moggallāna then returns to the Buddha to recount the incident to him.¹⁷ At that time, Sakra is already a streamwinner.¹⁸

Passage 11b of the Pacalā Sutta is very close to that in the **Avijjā Pahāna Sutta 2** (S 35.80).¹⁹ The ensuing passage [S 35.80.6b], however, is very different only in wording, but same in spirit, applying the teaching of “the all” (*sabba*):²⁰

6a Here, the monk has learned [heard] that nothing is worth clinging to. And if a monk has thus learned that nothing is worth clinging to, he directly knows²¹ all things. Having directly known all things, he fully understands²² all things.

6b ²³Having fully understood everything, he sees all signs differently.²⁴

mental state, eg “Form is impermanent; feeling is impermanent, etc”; (3) Full understanding as overcoming (or abandoning) (*pahāna,pariññā*), ie the insight-wisdom that has the universal characteristics as its objects, and arises after one has overcome the idea of permanence, etc”. (Nm 52; Vism 20.3/606 f). Comy says that “full understanding” here refers to *tīraṇa,pariññā* (AA 4:43). The contemplation of impermanence (*aniccānupassanā*), etc, are given in the final tetrad (*Dhammānupassanā*, contemplation of mind-objects) of the breath meditation of the **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118.21/3:83).

¹⁵ M 37.2-3/1:251.

¹⁶ M 37.11-13/1:254 f.

¹⁷ M 37.15/1:255.

¹⁸ **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21.2.10/2:289).

¹⁹ S 35.80.6/4:50.

²⁰ Here the “all” (*sabba*) refers to the 6 senses and their respective sense-objects (**Sabba S**, S 35.23/4:15 = SD 7.1), here the respective consciousnesses are also included.

²¹ “He directly knows,” *abhijānāti*, ie through personal experience by way of spiritual insight. See sutta §11b n on **abhijānāti**.

²² “He fully understands,” *parijānāti* here, meaning “he comprehends, knows fully for certain.” See sutta §11b n on **parijānāti**.

²³ *Sabbam dhammam pariññāya sabba,nimittāni aññato passati; cakkhum aññato passati, rūpe aññato passati, cakkhu,viññānam aññato passati; ...yam p’idaṃ mano samphassa,paccayā uppajjati vedayitam sukham vā dukkham vā adukkam asukham vā. Tam pi annato passato.*

²⁴ Comy: “He sees all signs differently” (*sabba,nimittāni aññato passati*) means that he sees the signs of formations (*saṅkhāra,nimittāni*) differently from those who have not fully understood the worldly inclinations (*abhinivesā*). For such people see all signs as self, but one who has fully understood the worldly inclinations, sees them as not-self, not as a self. Thus is the characteristic of not-self discussed in this sutta (SA 2:370). On “sign” (*nimitta*), see SD 19.7.

He sees the eye differently; he sees forms differently; he sees eye-consciousness differently. Whatever feeling—whether pleasant, or painful, or neutral—that arises with eye-contact as condition, that, too, he sees differently.

He sees the ear differently; he sees sounds differently; he sees ear-consciousness differently. Whatever feeling—whether pleasant, or painful, or neutral—that arises with ear-contact as condition, that, too, he sees differently.

He sees the nose differently; he sees smells differently; he sees nose-consciousness differently. Whatever feeling—whether pleasant, or painful, or neutral—that arises with nose-contact as condition, that, too, he sees differently.

He sees the tongue differently; he sees tastes differently; he sees tongue-consciousness differently. Whatever feeling—whether pleasant, or painful, or neutral—that arises with tongue-contact as condition, that, too, he sees differently.

He sees the body differently; he sees touches differently; he sees body-consciousness differently. Whatever feeling—whether pleasant, or painful, or neutral—that arises with body-contact as condition, that, too, he sees differently.

He sees the mind differently; he sees mind-objects differently; he sees mind-consciousness differently. Whatever feeling—whether pleasant, or painful, or neutral—that arises with mind-contact as condition, that, too, he sees differently.

7 Monk, when a monk knows and sees thus, ignorance is abandoned by him and true knowledge (*vijjā*) arises. (S 35.80/4:50)

7 Related suttas

There are a number of suttas, like the Pacalā Sutta, giving practical steps in overcoming distractions to meditation and spiritual development. **The (Thīna,middha) Tissa Sutta** (S 22.84) also deals with overcoming sloth and torpor, but through the application of insight.²⁵

The **Vitakka,saṅṭhāna Sutta** (M 20)²⁶ teaches five methods of “stilling the mind,” that is, ridding of distracting thoughts, namely: (1) applying a different meditation sign (thought displacement); (2) examining the dangers of the distracting thought (aversion therapy); (3) disregarding the distracting thought (sublimation); (4) identifying the causes of the distraction (thought analysis); and (5) sheer will-power (M 20/1:118-122).

In regards to method (3), the Majjhima Commentary suggests 5 other methods: (1) Occupy oneself with something else; (2) recite some work explaining a doctrine; (3) read a Dharma text (like a pūjā book); (4) examine the parts of an object from his bag, like fire-sticks (“this is the upper stick; this is the lower stick”); (5) carefully and reflectively examine his requisites (“this is the awl; this is a pair of scissors; this is the nail cutter; this is the needle”); (6) darn the worn-out parts of the robe. (MA 3:90 f).

The Āghāta Paṭivīnaya Sutta (A 5.161) gives five methods for putting away ill-will: (1) by cultivating lovingkindness (towards the person); (2) by cultivating compassion; (3) by cultivating equanimity;²⁷ (4) by simply disregarding the person; (5) by applying the thought that one is the owner of one’s karma, the heir to one’s karma, karma is the source (“womb”) of one’s being, karma is one’s real relations, karma is one’s refuge, and that one is responsible for one’s deeds. (A 5.161/3:186).

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²⁵ S 22.84/3:106-109 = SD 32.12.

²⁶ See **Vitakka,saṅṭhāna S** (M 20/1:118-122) = SD 1.6.

²⁷ Comy: Altruistic joy is omitted here since it is very difficult for such a person to cultivate it at this point. (AA 3:294).

The Discourse on Nodding Off

(A 7.58/4:85-88)

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1a Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying in the Deer Park in the Bhesakaḷā Forest²⁸ at Sunsumāra,-giri²⁹ in the Bhaggā country.³⁰

MAHĀ MOGGALLĀNA'S DROWSINESS

1b At that time the venerable Mahā Moggallāna was sitting and nodding [while trying to meditate] in the village of Kallavāḷa,mutta³¹ in Magadha. Through the divine eye [clairvoyance],³² purified and surpassing the human, the Blessed One saw the venerable Mahā Moggallāna sitting and nodding in the village of Kallavāḷa,mutta in Magadha.

Then, just as a strong man would stretch his bent arm or would bend his stretched arm, the Blessed One disappeared from the Deer Park in the Bhesakaḷā Forest at Sunsumāra,giri in Bhaggā country and immediately appeared before the venerable Mahā Moggallāna sitting and nodding in the village of Kallavāḷa,mutta in Magadha.

The Blessed One sat down on the prepared seat.

The 8 ways of overcoming drowsiness

1c Having sat down, the Blessed One said this to the venerable Mahā Moggallāna:

“Are you nodding, Moggallāna? Are you nodding, Moggallāna?”

“Yes, bhante.”

2 (1) NOTING. “In that case, Moggallāna, when you perceive that drowsiness is descending upon you, you should make a mental note of that perception; [86] frequently make that perception.³³ It is possible that when you do so, that drowsiness would go away.

3 (2) REFLECTION. If, Moggallāna, that drowsiness still would not go away, then, Moggallāna, you should think about, ponder over, mentally attend to a teaching that you have learned,³⁴ that you have mastered. It is possible that when you do so, that drowsiness would go away.

4 (3) RECITATION. If, Moggallāna, that drowsiness still would not go away, then, Moggallāna, you should recite in detail a teaching that you have learned. It is possible that when you do so, that drowsiness would go away.

²⁸ So called because it is the home of the yakshini Bhesakaḷā (SA 2:249). The house of Nakula,pitā and Nakula,-mātā is nearby.

²⁹ *Sunsumāra,giri*: see **Nakula,pitā S** (S 22.1) = SD 5.4 Intro (1).

³⁰ For details regarding Bhaggā, see **Nakula,pitā S** (S 22.1) = SD 5.4 Intro & Appendix.

³¹ See Intro above.

³² *Dibba,cakkhu*, clairvoyance, not to be confused with the Dharma-eye (*dhamma,cakkhu*) (D 2.95/1:82), which is an advanced form of clairvoyance, but it is inferior to the wisdom eye (*paññā,cakkhu*) which is the wisdom of the arhat. The Cūḷa Niddesa mentions **5 kinds of eyes**: (1) the physical eye (*māṃsa,cakkhu*); (2) the divine eye (*dibba,-cakkhu*); (3) the wisdom eye (*paññā,cakkhu*) of the arhats; (4) the Buddha eye (*Buddha-cakkhu*); and (5) the universal eye (*samanta,cakkhu*), the omniscience of the Buddhas (Nc 235; nos 1-2 are found at It 52).

³³ “When you perceive...of that perception,” PTS *yathā saññissa te viharato taṃ middham okkamati, taṃ saññaṃ manasākāsi taṃ saññaṃ bahulam akāsi*. Se *yathā saññissa te viharato taṃ middham okkamati, taṃ saññaṃ manasi,kareyyāsi, taṃ saññaṃ bahulam kareyyāsi*. But there are variants: *Ce yathā saññino te viharato tam middham okkamī ti taṃ saññaṃ mā manasikāsi taṃ saññaṃ mā bahulam akāsi*; *Be yathā saññissa te viharato tam middham okkamati, taṃ saññaṃ mā manasākāsi, taṃ saññaṃ mā bahulam-akāsi*. Bodhi, 1999: “At whatever thought drowsiness befalls you, you should not give attention to that thought.” (A:B). Ṭhānissaro, 2002: “Whatever perception you have in mind when drowsiness descends on you, don’t attend to that perception, don’t pursue it.”

³⁴ “That you have learned,” *yathā,sutaṃ*, lit “according to what you have heard.”

5 (4) MASSAGE. If, Moggallāna, that drowsiness still would not go away, then, Moggallāna, you should rub both your ears [in a circular manner with your palms] and massage your limbs.³⁵ It is possible that when you do so, that drowsiness would go away.

6 (5) LOOK AROUND. If, Moggallāna, that drowsiness still would not go away, then, Moggallāna, you should rise, wash your eyes with some water, look around yourself [at the surrounding] and look up at the stars and constellations. It is possible that when you do so, that drowsiness would go away.

7 (6) PERCEPTION OF LIGHT. If, Moggallāna, that drowsiness still would not go away, then, Moggallāna, you should practise the perception of light, determine the perception of daylight: just as day is, so is night; just as night is, so is day.³⁶ Thus through a mind that is open and unhindered, you should cultivate a mind of bright light.³⁷ It is possible that when you do so, that drowsiness would go away.³⁸

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8 (7) WALKING MEDITATION. If, Moggallāna, that drowsiness still would not go away, then, Moggallāna, you should, perceiving before and after, determine in walking back and forth,³⁹ *turning your senses inward, keeping your mind from straying outward.*⁴⁰ It is possible that when you do so, that drowsiness would go away.⁴¹

9 (8) REST. If, Moggallāna, that drowsiness still would not go away, then, mindful and fully aware, you should lie down lion-like on your right side, placing foot on foot, keeping in mind the time for rising; and on awaking, Moggallāna, you would rise quickly, thinking, ‘I will dwell without indulging in the pleasure of sleep, or in the pleasure of reclining, or in the pleasure of drowsiness.’⁴² It is possible that when you do so, that drowsiness would go away.

Thus, Moggallāna, you should train yourself.

³⁵ “Rub both your ears...massage your limbs,” *tato tvaṃ...ubho kaṇṇa, sotāni āvijeyyāsi pāṇinā gattāni anumajjeyyāsi.* I take *āvijeyyāsi* as pot 2nd sg of *āvijjhati*, to move in a circular motion (instead of *āvijjati*, to pull, to draw, to attract). See CPD: *āvijjhati*, etc. The word *anumajjeyyāsi*, “you should massage,” is pot 2nd sg of *anumajjati*, (a) to rub along, to stroke; (b) to beat, flog, pound (CPD). For the first phrase, the Thai tr has แต่นั้นเชอพิงซอนของหูทั้งสองข้าง, “then you should put your fingers into both ears.”

³⁶ Comy to **Iddhi, pāda Vibhaṅga S** (S 51.20.10/5:278) = SD 28.14 on the perception of light (*āloka, saññā*), gives the foll instructions: “A monk [meditator] sits in an open space [*aṅgaṇa*] attending to the perception of light, now shutting his eyes, now opening his eyes. When, having opened his eyes, he closes them and, it appears just as if he sees (*olokentassa viya*), then the perception of light has arisen. It is also called ‘the perception of day’ (*divā, saññā*), and with its arising in the night, it is said to be well mastered.” (SA 3:260).

³⁷ *Iti vivaṭena* [vl *vivaṭena*] *cetasā aparīyonaddhena sappabhāsam cittaṃ bhāveyyāsi.* Here, “**open and unhindered**” (*vivaṭena...aparīyonaddhena*) alludes to avoiding the first 2 of the “four faults” (*catu, dosa*) in meditation, ie, against being “too slack” (*atilāna*) or “too tense” (*atipaggahita*): see **Iddhi, pāda Vibhaṅga S** (S 51.20/5:276-281) = SD 28.14. See §8n below on the last 2 of the 4 faults.

³⁸ As at **Samādhi Bhāvanā S** (A 4.41.3/2:45) = SD 24.1, & **(Anussatiṭṭhāna) Udāyi S** (A 6.29/3:322-325) = SD 24.8.

³⁹ *Pacchā, pure saññī caṅkamaṃ adhiṭṭheyyāsi.* Here *pacchā, pure saññī* can have a simple spatial meaning: be mindful of what is behind you, what is in front of you. The important phrase *pacchā, pure* is also found in **Iddhi, pāda Vibhaṅga S** (S 51.20), where it simply refers to the whole practice, from beginning to end: S 51.20/5:277 f = SD 28.14. For effective practice, both senses should be applied (albeit, noting that the latter meaning prevails: see foll n).

⁴⁰ *Anto, gatehi indriyehi abahi, gatena manasena.* “Turning your senses inward” (*anto, gatehi indriyehi* [*adhiṭṭheyyāsi*]) alludes to avoiding the mind being “narrow [constricted] internally” (*ajjhataṃ saṅkhittaṃ*), and “keeping your mind from straying outwards” (*abahi, gatena manasena* [*adhiṭṭheyyāsi*]), to avoiding it from being “distracted externally” (*bahiddhā vikkhitta*): these are the last 2 of the “four faults” (*catu, dosa*) in meditation: see **Iddhi, pāda Vibhaṅga S** (S 51.20/5:276-281) = SD 28.14. See §7n above on the first 2 of the 4 faults.

⁴¹ See Nyanadhammo, “Walking meditation in the Thai Forest Tradition,” 2003. Accessible at http://www.forestsangha.org/Ajahn_Nyanadhammo_Walking_Meditation.pdf.

⁴² “Mindful and fully aware...or in the pleasure of reclining, or in the pleasure of drowsiness,” *tato tvaṃ Moggallāna dakkhiṇena passena sīha, seyyaṃ kappeyyāsi pādena pādam accādhāya sato sampajāno uṭṭhāna, saññānaṃ manasikarivā, paṭibuddhena ca te Moggallāna khippaṃ yeva paccuṭṭhātabbānaṃ ‘na seyya, dukhaṃ na passa, sukhaṃ na middha, sukhaṃ anuyutto viharissāmi ti.’* “Reclining” here is *passa*, lit “lying on the side.”

CONDITIONS CONDUCTIVE TO CONCENTRATION

Humility

10a Therefore, Moggallāna, you should train yourself, ‘I shall not approach families [for alms] with my nose in the air.’⁴³ Thus, Moggallāna, you should train yourself.

If, Moggallāna, a monk approaches a family with his nose in the air—and Moggallāna there are families that are busy with various kinds of business who do not think about a monk who has come—then such a monk might think, ‘Who I wonder has cut me off from this family. Now these people seem to be displeased with me.’⁴⁴

Thus through not receiving [almsfood], he becomes discontented; being discontented, he becomes restless; being restless, he becomes unrestrained [in his senses]; being unrestrained, his mind will be far from attaining concentration.

Non-confrontational speech

10b Therefore, Moggallāna, you should train yourself thus, ‘I shall not speak in a confrontational manner.’⁴⁵ Thus, Moggallāna, you should train yourself.

When there is confrontational talk, there would surely be wordiness; with wordiness, there is restlessness; with restlessness, there is lack of restraint [of the senses]; when there is lack of restraint, the mind is far from concentration.

Suitable dwelling place

10c Moggallāna, I do not praise all [worldly] association,⁴⁶ but, Moggallāna, I do not [88] blame all [worldly] associations either. Moggallāna, I do not praise the association between householders and renunciants; but as regards association with dwellings with few sounds, little noise, cooled by breezes, secluded from humans, suitable for solitude⁴⁷—this I praise.”

THE REALIZATION OF INSIGHT

“Nothing is worth clinging to”⁴⁸

11a When this was said, the venerable Mahā Moggallāna said this to the Blessed One:

“In what way, bhante, in brief, is a monk liberated through the destruction of craving, that is, one who has reached total⁴⁹ perfection, the total security from bondage, the total holy life, the total consummation, the highest amongst gods and humans?”⁵⁰

⁴³ “With my nose in the air,” *uccā,soṇḍa*, lit “(of an elephant) with the trunk raised high,” ie with pride, arrogantly.

⁴⁴ “Now these people seem to be displeased with me,” *viratta,rūpā dānīme mayi manussā* (following Be).

⁴⁵ *Na viggāhika,katham kathessāmi*. On *viggāhika,kathā*, cf D 1:8; Sn 930; Nm 1:394 (which quotes this sutta). See also M 2:3; S 3:12.

⁴⁶ “[Worldly] association,” *sāmsagga*, or “contact.”

⁴⁷ This is stock: V 1:39; D 3:38; M 2:118, 3:13.

⁴⁸ This section is known as “the brief advice on liberation through the destruction of craving.” This whole section is at **Cūḷa Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S** (M 37.2-3/1:251), whose events are clearly set after those of the Pacalā S since the Cūḷa Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S records the awakened Moggallāna as using his psychic powers to visit Sakra in his heaven. §11ab is found in **Avijjā Pahāna S 2** (A 35.80.6/4:88,11-15). Their ensuing passages, however, are different. See Intro (5).

⁴⁹ “Total,” *accanta*, also “absolute.”

⁵⁰ In **Cūḷa Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S** (M 37.15/1:255 f), Sakra, the leader of the gods, on the instigation of Moggallāna, asks the same question and the Buddha’s answer is identical to the passage here. It is possible that this passage originally belongs to the Cūḷa Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S, but is added here by the Aṅguttara reciters for a more complete Sutta. Requests for brief instructions are found elsewhere in the Canon, eg V 1:39 (Sāriputta to Assaji); S 22.1/3:1-5 (Nakula,pitā to the Buddha).

11b ⁵¹“Here, Moggallāna, the monk has learned⁵² that nothing is worth clinging to.⁵³ And, Moggallāna, a monk has learned that nothing is worth clinging to, thus: he directly knows⁵⁴ all things [he directly knows the nature of the all].⁵⁵ Having directly known the nature of all things, he fully understands⁵⁶ all things.

11c Having fully understood all things, he knows whatever feelings there are, whether pleasant, painful or neither painful nor pleasant.

As regards to those feelings, he dwells contemplating impermanence in them; he dwells contemplating dispassion [fading away of lust] in them; he dwells contemplating ending [of suffering] in them; he dwells contemplating letting go [of defilements].⁵⁷

When he dwells contemplating impermanence in them, contemplating dispassion [fading away of lust] in them, contemplating ending [of suffering] in them, contemplating letting go [of defilements], he does not cling to anything in the world; not clinging, he is not agitated; being not agitated, he attains nirvana for himself.

He understands. ‘Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, done what had to be done, there is no more for this state of being.’⁵⁸

That, Moggallāna, is, in brief, how a monk is liberated through the destruction of craving, that is, one who has reached total⁵⁹ perfection, the total security from bondage, the total holy life, the total consummation, the highest amongst gods and humans.”

— evaṃ —

040817; rev 061023; 071208; 081228; 091117 LEG; 091202 LEG

⁵¹ This passage [11b] is also found in **Avijjā Pahāna S 2** (A 35/80). The ensuing passages, however, are different. See Intro (5) above.

⁵² “Has learned,” *suta*, lit “has heard.”

⁵³ “Nothing is worth clinging to,” *sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāyā*, lit “all things are not worthy of adhering to.” “All things” here refer to the 5 aggregates, the 12 sense-bases and the 18 elements, all of which are not fit to be clung to. These factors have to do with insight (*vipassanā*). (AA 4:43)

⁵⁴ “He directly knows,” *abhiñāṇāti*, here meaning to know for oneself by insight, ie through higher self-knowledge, or *abhiññā*. Traditionally, there are 6 **direct knowledges** (*abhiññā*): (1) psychic powers (*iddhi, vidhā*), (2) the “divine ear” or clairaudience (*dibba, sota*), (3) mind-reading, ie the ability to read the thoughts of others (*parassa ceto, pariya, ñāṇa*), (4) the recollection of one’s own past lives (*pubbe, nivāsānussati*), (5) the “divine eye” (*dibba, cakkhu*), ie the knowledge of the passing away and arising of beings, faring according to their karma, and (6) the destruction of mental influxes (*āsava-k, khaya*), ie arhathood. Nos 4-6 are known as “the three knowledges (*te, vijjā*) (D 3:281; A 3:280). Comy says that this knowledge here refers to *ñāta, pariññā* (A 4:43): see foll n.

⁵⁵ “He directly knows all things,” *so sabbaṃ dhammaṃ abhiñāṇāti*, alt tr, “he directly knows the nature of the all.” Here the “all” (*sabba*) refers to the 6 senses and their respective sense-objects (**Sabba S**, S 35.23/4:15 = SD 7.1).

⁵⁶ “He fully understands,” *parijānāti* here, meaning “he comprehends, knows fully for certain.” This spiritual knowledge is called “**full understanding**” (*pariññā*), of which there are 3 kinds: (1) Full understanding of the known (*ñāta, pariññā*), ie the discernment of the specific characteristics of a phenomena (“Form as the characteristic of being oppressed’ feeling has the characteristic of being felt, etc”); (2) Full understanding by investigating (*tīraṇa, pariññā*), ie insight wisdom (*vipassanā, paññā*) which as the 3 universal characteristics (impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, not-self) as its objects, and which arises when attributing a universal characteristic to a physical and mental state, eg “Form is impermanent; feeling is impermanent, etc”; (3) Full understanding as overcoming (or abandoning) (*pahāna, pariññā*), ie the insight-wisdom that has the universal characteristics as its objects, and arises after one has overcome the idea of permanence, etc”. (Nm 52; Vism 20.3/606 f). Comy says that “full understanding” here refers to *tīraṇa, pariññā* (AA 4:43). The contemplation of impermanence (*aniccānupassanā*), etc, are given in the final tetrad (*Dhammānupassanā*, contemplation of mind-objects) of the breath meditation of the **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 118.21/3:83).

⁵⁷ The monk effects the abandoning of the mental hindrances by the contemplations of impermanence (*aniccānupassanā*), fading away (of lust) (*viragānupassanā*), cessation (of suffering) (*nirodhānupassanā*) and of letting go (of defilements) (*paṇinissaggānupassanā*), and thus comes to look upon feelings (all experiences) with equanimity.

⁵⁸ This para describing the arhat is stock: V 1:14; D 1:84; M 2:39; S 2:82.

⁵⁹ “Total,” *accanta*, also “absolute.”