Thag 20.1 — Mahāmoggallāna

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Text

Verses of the Senior Monks 20.1

The Book of the Sixties

Chapter One

Mahāmoggallāna

“Living in the wilderness, eating only almsfood,

happy with the scraps in our bowls,

let us tear apart the army of death,

while remaining serene within.

Living in the wilderness, eating only almsfood,

happy with the scraps in our bowls,

let us crush the army of death,

as an elephant a hut of reeds.

Living at the foot of a tree, persistent,

happy with the scraps in our bowls,

let us tear apart the army of death,

while remaining serene within.

Living at the foot of a tree, persistent,

happy with the scraps in our bowls,

let us crush the army of death,

as an elephant a hut of reeds.”

“You hut, made of a chain of bones,

sewn together with flesh and sinew;

curse you mortal frame, you stink,

you cherish the parts of others!
You sack of dung swathed in skin!
You demoness with horns on your chest!
O body, you have nine streams
that are flowing all the time.
With its nine streams,
your body stinks, full of dung.
A monk seeking purity
would avoid it like excrement.
If they knew you
like I do,
they'd keep far away,
like a cesspit in the monsoon."
"So it is, great hero!
As you say, ascetic!
But some founder here
like an old bull stuck in a bog."
"Whoever might think
of making the sky yellow,
or some other color,
would only trouble themselves.
This mind is like the sky:
serene inside itself.
Evil-minded one, don't attack me,
you'll end up like a moth in a mass of fire."
"See this fancy puppet,
a body built of sores,
diseased, obsessed over,
in which nothing lasts at all.

See this fancy figure,
with its gems and earrings;
it is bones swathed in skin,
made pretty by its clothes.
Rouged feet
and powdered face
may be enough to beguile a fool,
but not a seeker of the far shore.
Hair in eight braids
and eyeshadow
may be enough to beguile a fool,
but not a seeker of the far shore.
A rotting body all adorned
like a freshly painted makeup box
may be enough to beguile a fool,
but not a seeker of the far shore.
The hunter laid his snare,
but the deer didn't spring the trap.
I've eaten the bait and now I go,
leaving the trapper to lament.
The hunter's snare is broken,
but the deer didn't spring the trap.
I've eaten the bait and now I go,
leaving the deer-hunter to grieve."
"Then there was terror!
Then they had goosebumps!
When Sāriputta, endowed with many fine qualities,
became quenched.
Oh! Conditions are impermanent,

their nature is to rise and fall;
having arisen, they cease;
their settling is such bliss.”
“Those who see the five aggregates
as other, not as self,
penetrate a subtle thing,
like a hair-tip with an arrow.
Those who see conditions
as alien, not as self,
pierce a fine thing,
like a hair-tip with an arrow.”
“Like they’re struck by a sword,
like their head was on fire,
a mendicant should wander mindful,
to give up sensual desire.
Like they’re struck by a sword,
like their head was on fire,
a mendicant should wander mindful,
to give up desire for rebirth.”
“Urged by the developed one,
who bore his final body,
I shook the stilt longhouse of Migāra’s mother
with my big toe.”
“Not by being slack,
or with little strength
may this be realized—extinguishment,
the release from all ties.”
“This young monk,
this best of men,

bears his final body,
having vanquished Māra and his legions.”
“Lightning flashes down
on the cleft of Vebhāra and Paṇḍava.
But in the mountain cleft he is absorbed in jhāna—
the son of the Buddha, inimitable and unaffected.”
“Calm and still,
the sage in his remote lodging,
the heir to the best of Buddhas,
is honored even by the Divinity.
Calm and still,
the sage in his remote lodging,
is heir to the best of Buddhas:
Brahmin, you should honor Kassapa!
Even if someone were to be born again and again
a hundred times in the human realm,
and always as a brahmin,
a student accomplished in the Vedas;
and if he were to become a reciter,
a master of the three Vedas:
honoring such a person
isn’t worth a sixteenth of that.
One who attains the eight liberations
forwards and backwards
before breakfast,
and then goes on almsround—
don’t attack such a mendicant!
Don’t ruin yourself, brahmin!
Let your heart have trust

in the perfected one, the unaffected;
quickly venerate him with cupped palms:
don’t let your head explode!”
“If you prioritize transmigration,
you don’t see the true teaching.
You’re following a twisted path,
a bad path that will lead you down.
Like a worm smeared with dung,
he is besotted with conditions.
Consumed by gain and honor,
Poṭṭhila goes on, hollow.”
“See Sāriputta coming!
It is good to see him;
he is freed in both ways,
serene inside himself;
free of thorns, with yoking ended,
master of the three knowledges, conqueror of death;
worthy of offerings,
a supreme field of merit for the people.”
“These many gods,
powerful and glorious,
all 10,000 of them,
are priests of Divinity.
They stand with cupped palms
honoring Moggallāna:
‘Homage to you, O thoroughbred!
Homage to you, supreme among men!
Since your defilements are ended,
you, good fellow, are worthy of teacher’s offerings.’

Venerated by the lordly god,
he has arisen, the master of death.
He is unsmeared by conditions,
as a lotus-flower by water.”
“The mendicant by whom the galaxy
with the age of the Divinity are known in an hour—
that master of psychic ability sees the gods
at the time they pass away and are reborn.”
“Sāriputta is full of wisdom,
ethics, and peace.
Even a mendicant who has crossed over
might at best equal him.
But in a moment I can create the likenesses
of ten million times 100,000 people!
I’m skilled in transformations;
I’m a master of psychic powers.
A member of the Moggallāna clan, attained to perfection and mastery
in immersion and knowledge, wise in the teachings of the unattached,
with serene faculties, has burst his bonds
like an elephant bursts a vine.
I’ve served the Teacher
and fulfilled the Buddha’s instructions.
The heavy burden is laid down,
the leash to existence is eradicated.
I’ve attained the goal
for the sake of which I went forth
from the lay life to homelessness—
the ending of all fetters.”
“What kind of hell was that,

where Dūsī was roasted
after attacking the disciple Vidhura
along with the brahmin Kakusandha?
There were 100 iron spikes,
each one uniquely painful.
That's the kind of hell
where Dūsī was roasted
after attacking the disciple Vidhura
along with the brahmin Kakusandha.
Dark One, if you attack
a mendicant who directly knows this,
a disciple of the Buddha,
you'll fall into suffering.
There are mansions that last an eon
standing in the middle of a lake.
Sapphire-colored, brilliant,
they sparkle and shine.
Dancing there are nymphs
shining in all different colors.
Dark One, if you attack
a mendicant who directly knows this,
a disciple of the Buddha,
you'll fall into suffering.
I'm the one who, urged by the Buddha,
shook the stilt longhouse of Migāra's mother
with his big toe
as the Saṅgha of mendicants watched.
Dark One, if you attack
a mendicant who directly knows this,

a disciple of the Buddha,
you'll fall into suffering.
I'm the one who shook the Palace of Victory
with his big toe
owing to psychic power,
inspiring deities to awe.
Dark One, if you attack
a mendicant who directly knows this,
a disciple of the Buddha,
you'll fall into suffering.
I'm the one who asked Sakka
in the Palace of Victory:
'Respectable sir, I hope you recall
the one who is freed through the ending of craving?'
And I'm the one to whom Sakka
admitted the truth when asked.
Dark One, if you attack
a mendicant who directly knows this,
a disciple of the Buddha,
you'll fall into suffering.
I'm the one who asked the Divinity
in the Hall of Clear Right before the assembly:
'Respectable sir, do you still have the same view
that you had in the past?
Or do you see the radiance
surpassing the realm of divinity?'
And I'm the one to whom the Divinity
admitted the truth when asked.
'Good fellow, I don't have that view

that I had in the past.
I see the radiance
surpassing the realm of divinity.
So how could I say today
that I am permanent and eternal?’
Dark One, if you attack
a mendicant who directly knows this,
a disciple of the Buddha,
you’ll fall into suffering.
I’m the one who touched the peak of Mount Neru
using the power of meditative liberation.
I’ve visited the forests of the people
who dwell in the land east of Videha.
Dark One, if you attack
a mendicant who directly knows this,
a disciple of the Buddha,
you’ll fall into suffering.
Though a fire doesn’t think,
‘I’ll burn the fool!’
Still the fool who attacks
the fire gets burnt.
In the same way, Māra,
in attacking the Realized One,
you’ll only burn yourself,
like a fool touching the flames.
Māra’s done a bad thing
in attacking the Realized One.
Wicked One, do you imagine that
your wickedness won’t bear fruit?

Your deeds heap up wickedness

that will last a long time, terminator!

Give up on the Buddha, Māra!

And hold no hope for the mendicants!”

That is how, in the Bhesekaḷā grove,

the mendicant warned Māra.

That spirit, downcast,

disappeared right there.

That is how these verses were recited by the senior venerable Mahāmoggallāna.

The Book of the Sixties is finished.