# MN 31 — MN 31 The Shorter Gosiṅga Sāla-tree Discourse | Cūḷagosiṅgasāla Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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## Text

The Shorter Gosiṅga Sāla-tree Discourse

Cūḷagosiṅgasāla Sutta (MN 31)

Introduction

According to the Commentary, the events reported in this discourse follow on the events of a discourse in the Final Fifty of the Majjhima Nikāya, by which it obviously means MN 128. There is a fair amount of overlap between this discourse and that, but as the Commentary notes, in that discourse the three monks mentioned here were still run-of-the-mill people, trying to find their way. After putting into practice the Buddha’s teaching given in that discourse, they all became arahants, a fact that is reported and

celebrated here.

* * *

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Nādikā in the Brick Hall. And on that occasion, Ven. Anuruddha, Ven. Nandiya, & Ven. Kimbila were staying in the Gosiṅga [Cattle-horn] Sāla-tree Forest Park.

Then, emerging from his seclusion in the late afternoon, the Blessed One went to the Gosiṅga Sāla-tree Forest Park. The park warden saw him coming from afar and, on seeing him, said to him, "Contemplative, don't enter the park. There are three sons of good families living there, apparently desiring their own (welfare). Don't disturb them."

Ven. Anuruddha heard the park warden conversing with the Blessed One and, on hearing him, said to the park warden, "Friend park warden, don't stand in the way of the Blessed One. It's our Teacher, the Blessed One, who has arrived!"

Then Ven. Anuruddha went to Ven. Nandiya & Ven. Kimbila and, on arrival, said to them, "Come out, venerables! Come out, venerables! It's our Teacher, the Blessed One, who has arrived!"

Then Ven. Anuruddha, Ven. Nandiya, & Ven. Kimbila went out to greet the Blessed One. One received his robe & bowl. Another laid out a seat. Another set out water for washing his feet. The Blessed One sat down on the seat laid out and, seated, washed his feet. They, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, the Blessed One said to Ven. Anuruddha, "Is it tolerable for you, Anuruddhas?1 Are you getting by? Are you weary from going for alms?"

"It's tolerable, O Blessed One. We're getting by, O Blessed One. And we're not weary, lord, from going for alms."

"But, Anuruddhas, are you living harmoniously, cordially, & without dispute, blending like milk & water, looking at one another with eyes of affection?"

"Yes, lord, we're living harmoniously, cordially, & without dispute, blending like milk & water, looking at one another with eyes of affection."

"But, Anuruddhas, how are you living harmoniously, cordially, & without dispute, blending like milk & water, looking at one another with eyes of affection?"

"Here, lord, the thought occurs to me, 'It's a gain for me, a great gain, that I'm living with companions like this in the holy life.' I'm set on bodily acts of goodwill with regard to these venerable ones, to their faces & behind their backs. I'm set on verbal acts… mental acts of goodwill with regard to these venerable ones, to their faces & behind their backs. The thought occurs to me, 'Why don't I, having cast aside my own mind, conduct myself in line with the mind of these venerable ones?' So, having cast aside my own mind, I conduct

myself in line with the mind of these venerable ones. We are separate in body, lord, but one—as it were—in mind."

Ven. Nandiya & Ven. Kimbila said to the Blessed One, "Here, lord, the thought occurs to me also, 'It's a gain for me, a great gain... We are separate in body, lord, but one—as it were—in mind."

[Ven. Anuruddha:] "This, lord, is how we are living harmoniously, cordially, & without dispute, blending like milk & water, looking at one another with eyes of affection."

"But, Anuruddhas, do you remain heedful, ardent, & resolute?"

"Yes, lord, we remain heedful, ardent, & resolute."

"But, Anuruddhas, how do you remain heedful, ardent, & resolute?"

"Here, lord, whichever of us returns first from going to the village for alms lays out the seats, sets out water for drinking & using, and sets out the refuse bucket. Whoever returns afterwards from going to the village for alms eats the leftovers—if there are any and if he wants to—and if not, he throws them out in a place where there are no crops or dumps them into water without living beings in it. He puts away the seats, puts away the water for drinking & using, puts away the refuse bucket after having washed it, and sweeps the meal hall.

"Whoever sees that the drinking-water jar, using-water jar, or rinsing-water jar [in the bathroom] are low or empty refills it. If it occurs to him, 'It's too much for me,' he calls another by waving—using hand signals—and they refill the drinking-water jar or using-water jar by joining hands. But we don't for that reason break into speech.

"And every five days we sit together for the whole night to discuss the Dhamma. That's how we remain heedful, ardent, & resolute."

"Excellent, Anuruddhas. Excellent. But, remaining heedful, ardent, & resolute in this way, do you have a comfortable abiding where a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, has been attained?"

"Why wouldn't we, lord? There is the case where, whenever we want, quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, we enter & remain in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. This is our comfortable abiding where a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, has been attained while remaining heedful, ardent, & resolute."

"Excellent, Anuruddhas. Excellent. But having transcended & calmed that abiding, do you have another comfortable abiding where a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, has been attained?"

“Why wouldn’t we, lord? There is the case where, whenever we want, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, we enter & remain in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. Having transcended & calmed that abiding, lord, this is another comfortable abiding where a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, has been attained.”

“Excellent, Anuruddhas. Excellent. But having transcended & calmed that abiding, do you have another comfortable abiding where a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, has been attained?”

“Why wouldn’t we, lord? There is the case where, whenever we want, with the fading of rapture, we remain equanimous, mindful, & alert, and sense pleasure with the body. We enter & remain in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’ Having transcended & calmed that abiding, lord, this is another comfortable abiding where a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, has been attained.”

“Excellent, Anuruddhas. Excellent. But having transcended & calmed that abiding, do you have another comfortable abiding where a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, has been attained?”

“Why wouldn’t we, lord? There is the case where, whenever we want, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of joy & distress—we enter & remain in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. Having transcended & calmed that abiding, lord, this is another comfortable abiding where a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, has been attained.”

“Excellent, Anuruddhas. Excellent. But having transcended & calmed that abiding, do you have another comfortable abiding where a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, has been attained?”

“Why wouldn’t we, lord? There is the case where, whenever we want, with the complete transcending of perceptions of (physical) form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not attending to perceptions of multiplicity, (perceiving,) ‘Infinite space,’ we enter & remain in the dimension of the infinitude of space. Having transcended & calmed that abiding, lord, this is another comfortable abiding where a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, has been attained.”

“Excellent, Anuruddhas. Excellent. But having transcended & calmed that abiding, do you have another comfortable abiding where a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, has been attained?”

“Why wouldn’t we, lord? There is the case where, whenever we want, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, (perceiving,) ‘Infinite

consciousness,' we enter & remain in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. Having transcended & calmed that abiding, lord, this is another comfortable abiding where a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, has been attained."

"Excellent, Anuruddhas. Excellent. But having transcended & calmed that abiding, do you have another comfortable abiding where a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, has been attained?"

"Why wouldn't we, lord? There is the case where, whenever we want, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, (perceiving,) 'There is nothing,' we enter & remain in the dimension of nothingness. Having transcended & calmed that abiding, lord, this is another comfortable abiding where a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, has been attained."

"Excellent, Anuruddhas. Excellent. But having transcended & calmed that abiding, do you have another comfortable abiding where a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, has been attained?"

"Why wouldn't we, lord? There is the case where, whenever we want, with the complete transcending of the dimension of nothingness, we enter & remain in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. Having transcended & calmed that abiding, lord, this is another comfortable abiding where a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, has been attained."

"Excellent, Anuruddhas. Excellent. But having transcended & calmed that abiding, do you have another comfortable abiding where a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, has been attained?"

"Why wouldn't we, lord? There is the case where, whenever we want, with the complete transcending of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, we enter & remain in the cessation of perception & feeling. And as we see (that) with discernment, effluents are completely ended. Having transcended & calmed that abiding, lord, this is another comfortable abiding where a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, has been attained. And we don't see another comfortable abiding higher or more exquisite than this."

"Excellent, Anuruddhas. Excellent. There is no other comfortable abiding higher or more exquisite than this."

Then, having instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged Ven. Anuruddha, Ven. Nandiya, & Ven. Kimbila with a Dhamma talk, the Blessed One got up from his seat and left.

Then, after Ven. Anuruddha, Ven. Nandiya, & Ven. Kimbila had escorted the Blessed One and then turned back, Ven. Nandiya & Ven. Kimbila said to Ven. Anuruddha, "Have we ever reported to you that we have attained this or that attainment or abiding, as you declared in

the Blessed One's presence, all the way up to the ending of the effluents?"

"No, venerable sirs, you never reported to me that you had attained this or that attainment or abiding. It's just that I know, having encompassed your awareness with my awareness, that you have attained this & that attainment & abiding. And devas have reported to me that you have attained this & that attainment & abiding, as I answered when quizzed by the Blessed One."

Then the spirit Dīgha Parajana went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to the Blessed One, "It's a gain, lord, for the Vajjians, a great gain for the Vajjian people, that the Blessed One, Worthy & Rightly Self-awakened, along with these three sons of good families—Ven. Anuruddha, Ven. Nandiya, & Ven. Kimbila—stay among them!"

On hearing the voice of the spirit Dīgha Parajana, the earth devas took up the cry: "It's a gain, sirs, for the Vajjians, a great gain for the Vajjian people, that the Blessed One, Worthy & Rightly Self-awakened, along with these three sons of good families—Ven. Anuruddha, Ven. Nandiya, & Ven. Kimbila—stay among them!"

On hearing the earth devas' cry, the Devas of the Four Great Kings took up the cry… the Devas of the Thirty-three… the Devas of the Hours… the Contented Devas… the Devas Delighting in Creation … the Devas Wielding Power over the Creations of Others… the Devas of Brahmā's retinue took up the cry: "It's a gain, sirs, for the Vajjians, a great gain for the Vajjian people, that the Blessed One, Worthy & Rightly Self-awakened, along with these three sons of good families—Ven. Anuruddha, Ven. Nandiya, & Ven. Kimbila—stay among them!"

So in that moment, that instant, the cries were known right up to the Brahmā worlds.

[The Blessed One said:] "So it is, Dīgha. So it is. If the family from which those three sons of good family went forth from the home life into homelessness were to remember them with a confident heart, it would be for the long-term welfare & happiness of that family. If the clan from which those three sons of good family went forth from the home life into homelessness were to remember them with a confident heart, it would be for the long-term welfare & happiness of that clan. If the village… If the town… If the city… If the country from which those three sons of good family went forth from the home life into homelessness were to remember them with a confident heart, it would be for the long-term welfare & happiness of that country.

"If all noble warriors were to remember those three sons of good family with a confident heart, it would be for the long-term welfare & happiness of all noble warriors. If all brahmans… If all merchants… If all workers were to remember those three sons of good family with a confident heart, it would be for the long-term welfare & happiness of all workers.

“If the cosmos with its devas, Māras,  & Brahmās, this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk were to remember those three sons of good family with a confident heart, it would be for the long-term welfare & happiness of the cosmos with its devas, Māras,  & Brahmās, this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk.

“See, Dīgha, how those three sons of good family have practiced for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit,  & happiness of devas & human beings.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the spirit Dīgha Parajana delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

Note

1. It’s common in Pali, when speaking to a small group of individuals, to address them in the plural form of the name of the senior member of the group.

## Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 39–40; SN 52:9; SN 52:10; AN 3:96; AN 9:31–38; Iti 82