MN 67 — MN 67 Near Cātumā | Cātuma Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

Near Cātumā

Cātuma Sutta (MN 67)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Cātumā in an embric myrobalan forest. And on that occasion approximately 500 monks, headed by Ven. Sāriputta & Ven. Moggallāna, had arrived in Cātumā to see the Blessed One. As these visiting monks were exchanging greetings with the resident monks, setting their lodgings in order, and putting away their robes & bowls, they made a loud racket, a great racket. Then the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, what is that loud racket, that great racket, like fishermen hauling a catch of fish?”

“Lord, those are approximately 500 monks, headed by Sāriputta & Moggallāna, who have arrived in Cātumā to see the Blessed One. As these visiting monks are exchanging greetings with the resident monks, setting their lodgings in order, and putting away their robes & bowls, they are making a loud racket, a great racket.”

“In that case, Ānanda, tell those monks in my name, ‘The Teacher calls you, friends.’”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda went to the monks and said, “The Teacher calls you, friends.”

Responding, “As you say, friend,” to Ven. Ānanda, the monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, the Blessed One said to them, “Monks, why were you making that loud racket, that great racket, like fishermen hauling a catch of fish?”

“Lord, these 500 monks, headed by Sāriputta & Moggallāna, have arrived in Cātumā to see the Blessed One. As they were exchanging greetings with the resident monks, setting their lodgings in order, and putting away their robes & bowls, they made a loud racket, a great racket.”

“Go away, monks. I dismiss you. You are not to stay in my vicinity.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, the monks got up from their seats, bowed down to the Blessed One, and left, circling him to the right. Setting their lodgings in order and taking their robes & bowls, they left.

Now, on that occasion the Cātumā Sakyans were gathered in the assembly hall on some business or other. They saw the monks coming from afar and, on seeing them, went to them and, on arrival, said to them, “Well now, where are you venerable ones going?”

“Friends, the community of monks has been dismissed by the Blessed One.”

“In that case, venerable ones, sit down for a moment. Perhaps we will be able to reconcile the Blessed One.”

“As you say, friends,” the monks responded to the Cātumā Sakyans.

Then the Cātumā Sakyans went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to the Blessed One, “May the Blessed One delight in the community of monks! May the Blessed One welcome the community of monks! May the Blessed One aid the community of monks, just as the community of monks was aided by the Blessed One in the past! Lord, there are new monks here, not long gone forth, recently arrived at this Dhamma & Vinaya. If they don’t get to see the Blessed One, there may be a change in them, there may be an alteration.

“Just as when young seedlings don’t get water, there may be a change in them, there may be an alteration; in the same way, there are new monks here, not long gone forth, recently arrived at this Dhamma & Vinaya. If they don’t get to see the Blessed One, there may be a change in them, there may be an alteration.

“Just as when a young calf doesn’t see its mother, there may be a change in it, there may be an alteration; in the same way, there are new monks here, not long gone forth, recently arrived at this Dhamma & Vinaya. If they don’t see the Blessed One, there may be a change in them, there may be an alteration.”

Then Brahmā Sahampati, having known with his own awareness the line of thinking in the Blessed One’s awareness, disappeared from the Brahmā world and—just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm—appeared in front of the Blessed One. Then, arranging his upper robe over one shoulder and placing his hands palm-to-palm in front of his heart, Brahmā Sahampati said to the Blessed One, “May the Blessed One delight in the community of monks! May the Blessed One welcome the community of monks! May the Blessed One aid the community of monks, just as the community of monks was aided by the Blessed One in the past! Lord, there are new monks here, not long gone forth, recently arrived at this Dhamma & Vinaya. If they don’t get to see the Blessed One, there may be a change in them, there may be an alteration.

“Just as when young seedlings don’t get water, there may be a change in them, there may be an alteration; in the same way, there are new monks here, not long gone forth, recently arrived at this Dhamma & Vinaya. If they don’t get to see the Blessed One, there may be a change in them, there may be an alteration.

“Just as when a young calf doesn’t see its mother, there may be a change in it, there may be an alteration; in the same way, there are new monks here, not long gone forth, recently arrived at this Dhamma & Vinaya. If they don’t see the Blessed One, there may be a change in them, there may be an alteration.”

And so the Cātumā Sakyans & Brahmā Sahampati were able to reconcile the Blessed One by means of the simile of the seedlings & the simile of the young calf.

Then Ven. Moggallāna said to the monks, “Get up, friends! Get your robes & bowls. The Blessed One has been reconciled by the Cātumā Sakyans & Brahmā Sahampati by means of the simile of the seedlings & the simile of the young calf.”

Responding, “As you say, friend,” to Ven. Moggallāna, the monks got up from their seats and, carrying their robes & bowls, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, the Blessed One said to Ven. Sāriputta, “What did you think, Sāriputta, when the community of monks was dismissed by me?”

“Lord, I thought, ‘Now that the community of monks has been dismissed by the Blessed One, the Blessed One will remain inactive, devoted to a pleasant abiding in the

here-&-now. I, too, will now remain inactive, devoted to a pleasant abiding in the here-&-now."

"Wait, Sāriputta! Wait! Such a thought should not occur to you again!" Then the Blessed One addressed Ven. Moggallāna, "What did you think, Moggallāna, when the community of monks was dismissed by me?"

"Lord, I thought, 'Now that the community of monks has been dismissed by the Blessed One, the Blessed One will remain inactive, devoted to a pleasant abiding in the here-&-now. And now Sāriputta & I will look after the community of monks."

"Excellent, Moggallāna! Excellent. For either I should look after the community of monks or Sāriputta & Moggallāna should."

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, "Monks, there are these four dangers to be expected by those who go down into the water. Which four? Danger from waves, danger from crocodiles, danger from whirlpools, & danger from sharks. These are the four dangers to be expected by those who go down into the water.

"In same way, there are these four dangers to be expected by certain individuals who have gone forth from home life into homelessness in this Dhamma & Vinaya. Which four? Danger from waves, danger from crocodiles, danger from whirlpools, & danger from sharks.

"And which is the danger from waves? There is the case where a son of a good family, out of conviction, has gone forth from the home life into homelessness, (thinking,) 'I am beset by birth, aging, & death; by sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs; beset by stress, overcome with stress. O, that the end of this entire mass of suffering & stress might be known!' After he has thus gone forth, his fellows in the holy life admonish & instruct him: 'This is how you should go forward. This is how you should go back. This is how you should look ahead. This is how you should look away. This is how you should flex & extend your limbs. This is how you should wear & carry your patchwork robe, your upper robe, & your bowl.'

"The thought occurs to him, 'Before, when we1 were a householder, we admonished & instructed others. But now these—who are no more than our sons & grandsons, as it were—suppose that we are to be admonished & instructed!' He disavows the training and returns to the lower life. This, monks, is called one who has disavowed the training2 frightened by the danger from waves—for 'danger from waves' is a synonym for anger & distress.

"And which is the danger from crocodiles? There is the case where a son of a good family, out of conviction, has gone forth from the home life into homelessness, (thinking,) 'I am beset by birth, aging, & death; by sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs; beset by stress, overcome with stress. O, that the end of this entire mass of suffering & stress might be known!' After he has thus gone forth, his fellows in the holy life admonish

& instruct him: ‘This you should eat; this you shouldn’t eat. This you should consume; this you shouldn’t consume. This you should savor; this you shouldn’t savor.3 This you should drink; this you shouldn’t drink. You should eat what is allowable; you shouldn’t eat what is not allowable. You should consume what is allowable; you shouldn’t consume what is not allowable. You should savor what is allowable; you shouldn’t savor what is not allowable. You should drink what is allowable; you shouldn’t drink what is not allowable. You should eat at the right time; you shouldn’t eat at the wrong time. You should consume at the right time; you shouldn’t consume at the wrong time. You should savor at the right time; you shouldn’t savor at the wrong time. You should drink at the right time; you shouldn’t drink at the wrong time.’

“The thought occurs to him, ‘Before, when we were a householder, we ate what we wanted and didn’t eat what we didn’t want. We consumed what we wanted and didn’t consume what we didn’t want. We savored what we wanted and didn’t savor what we didn’t want. We drank what we wanted and didn’t drink what we didn’t want. We ate what was allowable and we ate what wasn’t allowable. We consumed what was allowable and we consumed what wasn’t allowable. We savored what was allowable and we savored what wasn’t allowable. We drank what was allowable and we drank what wasn’t allowable. We ate at the right time and we ate at the wrong time. We consumed at the right time and we consumed at the wrong time. We savored at the right time and we savored at the wrong time. We drank at the right time and we drank at the wrong time. When householders, out of conviction, give us exquisite staple & non-staple foods at the wrong time of the day, these ones put a muzzle on our mouth, as it were.’ He disavows the training and returns to the lower life. This, monks, is called one who has disavowed the training frightened by the danger from crocodiles—for ‘danger from crocodiles’ is a synonym for gluttony.

“And which is the danger from whirlpools? There is the case where a son of a good family, out of conviction, has gone forth from the home life into homelessness, (thinking,) ‘I am beset by birth, aging, & death; by sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs; beset by stress, overcome with stress. O, that the end of this entire mass of suffering & stress might be known!’ Early in the morning, having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & robes, he goes into a village or town for alms, with his body unguarded, his speech unguarded, his mindfulness unestablished, his faculties unrestrained. He sees a householder or householder’s son going about, endowed & provided with the five strings of sensuality.

“The thought occurs to him, ‘Before, when we were a householder, we too went about, endowed & provided with the five strings of sensuality. Now, our family has enough wealth that it would be possible to enjoy wealth & make merit.’ He disavows the training and returns to the lower life. This, monks, is called one who has disavowed the training frightened by the danger from whirlpools—for ‘danger from whirlpools’ is a synonym for the five strings of sensuality.

“And which is the danger from sharks? There is the case where a son of a good family, out of conviction, has gone forth from the home life into homelessness, (thinking,) ‘I am beset by birth, aging, & death; by sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs; beset by

stress, overcome with stress. O, that the end of this entire mass of suffering & stress might be known!' Early in the morning, having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & robes, he goes into a village or town for alms, with his body unguarded, his speech unguarded, his mindfulness unestablished, his faculties unrestrained. He sees a woman scantily clothed, scantily dressed. On seeing a woman scantily clothed, scantily dressed, lust agitates his mind. With his mind agitated by lust, he disavows the training and returns to the lower life. This, monks, is called one who has disavowed the training frightened by the danger from sharks—for 'danger from sharks' is a synonym for a woman.

"These, monks, are the four dangers to be expected by certain individuals who have gone forth from home life into homelessness in this Dhamma & Vinaya."

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words.

Notes

1. This use of "we" in Pali is somewhat like the royal we in English. In this case, it indicates pride.

2. Following the Thai reading. Other editions add "and has returned to the lower life" in this and in all the parallel passages below.

3. Pali has different words to describe the act of eating different kinds of food: "To eat" is used for non-staple foods; "to consume," for staple foods; and "to savor," for delicacies such as sweets and desserts.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: SN 35:200; AN 5:114; Ud 3:3; Iti 109