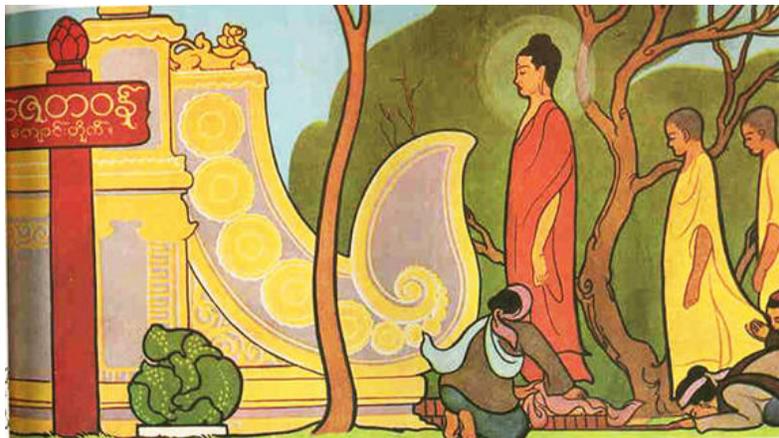


# Anathapindika



While in Rajagaha on business, the wealthy banker Anathapindika from Savatthi went to visit his brother-in-law, whom he found so preoccupied with arranging a feast that he failed to welcome Anathapindika in his usual manner. Asked what the big occasion was, the brother-in-law replied that he was preparing a meal for Buddha and his monks. When Anathapindika heard the word Buddha, he was filled with such joy that he wanted to go and see him immediately. The next morning, he set out before dawn. This painting, depicting Anathapindika meeting Buddha is from the modern Sri Lankan temple in Savatthi.



Dedication ceremony of the Jetavana monastery by Anathapindika, the millionaire

**Introduction:** The most well known lay disciple of Buddha Anathapindika for most of us, could possibly be our role model. From his performance we have learn how we could take a rebirth in the Deva world:

1. *How to obtain - (long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heavenly realm...*

*He said that one obtains these (long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heavenly realm.) not by prayer but by perfection of confidence (in the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha), perfection of virtue, perfection of generosity and perfection of wisdom*

2. **How to attain the Stream winner – Sotapanna.**

Buddha explained to Anathapindika the attainment of Sotápanna, the first stage of sainthood. He explained that when the five fearsome evils have completely disappeared in a person, the four attributes of stream entry are present, and the noble method is wisely understood, a person could regard himself as a Sotápanna...*Sotapanna is the status that one attains a definite seven more rebirths before one could enter Nibbana.*

3. Giving charities assure you at least to take rebirth in the Deva world. as attested by the performance of Anathapindika millionaire.

## **Anathapindika** (Ana Tapan the htay Gyi)

**Sudatta**, a wealthy merchant, (better known as **Anathapindika** because of his generosity to the destitute), was visiting his brother-in-law in Savatthi when he noted that a celebration was being organized. When he inquired as to whom they were honoring, he was informed that the Buddha was visiting Savatthi and that the celebrations were in honor of the Exalted One. Upon hearing the name Buddha, Anathapindika became transformed with fervor and vowed to see the Blessed One.

Early next morning he set off to see the Buddha. The Buddha, realizing that His chief lay disciple was on his way to see Him, went to meet Sudatta. Seeing Sudatta in the distance, the Buddha greeted him by name. Realizing that he was in the presence of the Blessed One, Sudatta fell down at the Buddha's feet and honored Him. Then, overwhelmed by the Buddha's presence, Anathapindika inquired if the Blessed One had slept well. Anathapindika glimpsed the real stature of the Buddha when he heard His reply to this question of courtesy. The Buddha replied:

*"Always indeed He sleeps well,  
The **Brahmin** who is fully quenched,  
Who does not cling to sensual pleasure,  
Cool at heart is that acquisition.  
Having cut off all attachment,  
Having removed desire from the heart,  
The Peaceful One indeed sleeps well,  
For he has attained peace of mind."*

The Buddha then introduced Anathapindika to the Dhamma by using the method of graduated teaching known as anupubbikatha. He started with generosity and the benefits of giving. He then moved on to virtue and the benefits of virtue, and followed this with the bliss found in the heavenly realms. The Buddha then advised Anathapindika on the perils of vanity and the dangers of sense pleasures and introduced him to renunciation. Then, sensing that Anathapindika's mind was uplifted and serene, the Buddha taught him the Four Noble Truths, which are the unique Teaching of every Buddha. On hearing the Buddha, Anathapindika, who was spiritually advanced, reached the first stage of sainthood, Sotápanna. Inspired and wanting to hear more, Anathapindika invited the Buddha to his brother-in-law's house for His noonday meal.



Cover the entire garden with 100,000 gold coins.

After the meal Anathapindika questioned the Buddha on a suitable place for His residence. On hearing that the Buddha was seeking a quiet place for His retinue and Himself to spend the rainy season, Anathapindika looked for a suitable park to make available to Him.



Anathapindika invited Buddha and his monks to spend the next rains retreat in Savatthi, so it was necessary to provide a proper place. There was a lovely park outside the city owned by Prince Jeta, but the prince had no intention of selling it. When Anathapindika kept insisting, the prince, in exasperation, asked for enough gold to cover the entire grounds. Anathapindika agreed without hesitation. Here you can see workers spreading the gold on the ground. The astonished prince accepted only part of the price, so that the rest could be used to build the monastery. He also offered all the trees as his own donation.

The park, which Anathapindika chose for the Buddha was the lush garden of Prince Jeta (King Pasenadi Kosala's son). The Prince, however, was not selling his beautiful park. When the persistent Anathapindika would not relent from his request to buy the park, the exasperated Jeta said, "Cover the entire garden with 100,000 gold coins." This was an unreasonably high price even for a park as beautiful as his. To his surprise, Anathapindika accepted and soon carts arrived bearing thousands and thousands of gold coins that he strew all over the garden. His curiosity now aroused, Jeta asked Anathapindika the reason for which he needed the park. On hearing that it was for the Buddha and His retinue he relented and handed over the park to Anathapindika.

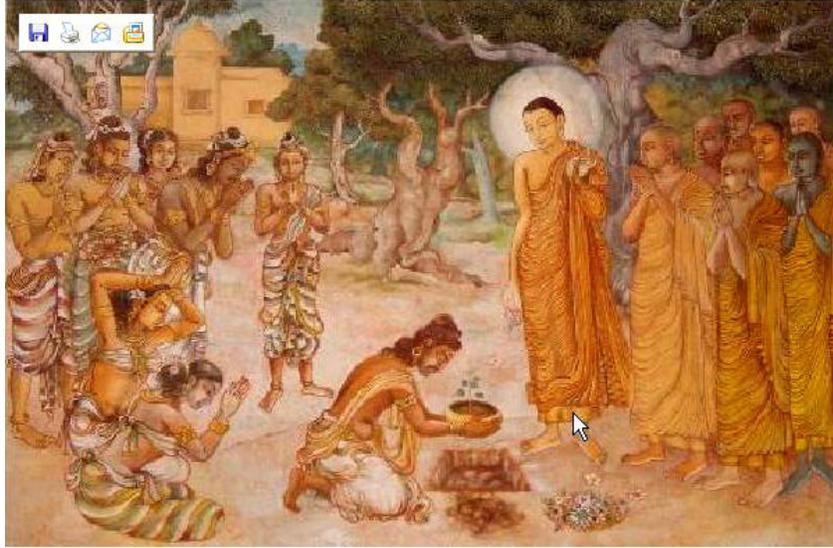
The Vinaya Pitaka describes the quarters Anathapindika built as a vast complex with monasteries, attendance halls, meditation cells, bathrooms, lotus ponds and walkways - a beautiful complex that would be worthy of the Buddha. In honor of the two men responsible for the compound, it was named **Jetavana Anathapindikarama** (Anathapindika's monastery)

in Jeta's grove ). Anathapindika asked the Buddha the appropriate way to gift the monastery to Him. The Buddha then requested Anathapindika to donate the park by dedicating it to the Sangha of the present and the Sangha of the future. The Buddha then encouraged others in the building of monasteries by highlighting the benefits of such a gift to the Sangha. He said:

*"They (monasteries) ward off cold and heat and beasts of prey,  
Creeping things, gnats, and in the wet season, rain.  
When the dreaded hot wind arises, it is warded off.  
To meditate and obtain insight in a shelter, at ease  
A dwelling place is praised by the Awakened One,  
As a chief gift to the Order.  
Therefore a wise man looking for his own weal,  
Should have dwelling places built, so that  
Learned Ones can stay therein.  
To the upright, with mind purified,  
Food, drink, robes, and lodging, he should give,  
Then they will teach him Dhamma, dispelling every ill,  
He, knowing the Dhamma attains Nibbána - canker free."  
-- (Vinaya Pitaka)*

Anathapindika then provided the Sangha with rice gruel, alms bowls, robes and medicine and invited the monks to his seven-story mansion daily, to partake in the noonday meal. He also provided food and gifts for the townsfolk as part of the great donation. His mansion was thus a blaze of saffron robes enveloped by the soothing and calming Dhamma.

Every time the Buddha visited Savatthi, Anathapindika visited Him. At times, however, the Buddha was in residence elsewhere or was away helping another in distress. Anathapindika approached Ánanda and informed him of the disappointment of other devotees and himself who came to visit the Buddha. He informed Ánanda that he would like to build a shrine so that devotees would have a symbol of the Buddha to use to strengthen their minds.



Anathapindika asked Buddha how people could pay their respects to him when he was absent. Buddha suggested that they could place their offerings at a Bodhi Tree. A seed was brought from the Bodhi Tree at Bodhgaya. Anathapindika offered it to Buddha, and Ananda planted it.

When Ananda reported this to the Buddha He said that there were three types of shrines that could be used as a symbol of the Buddha. The first type was generally built after the Buddha's Parinibbána and was a stupa that contained relics of the Blessed One. The second was an object that had a connection with the Enlightened One and had been used by Him such as a robe or an alms bowl. The third was a visible symbol of the Buddha such as a picture or a statue. The first was not appropriate during the lifetime of the Buddha and so it was decided to use an object that had helped the Enlightened One. Statues of the Buddha seem only to have become popular as a symbol worthy of reverence about 300 years after His Parinibbána.

The Bodhi tree in Uruwela, Buddha Gaya, seemed appropriate and so it was decided that a sapling of the tree would be brought and planted in Savatthi. Maha Moggallana, using astral travel, brought the sapling and Anathapindika planted it at the Jetavana Park. Devotees at the time of the Buddha as well as present-day devotees honor the Bodhi Tree as they would honor the Buddha and use this object to strengthen their minds. It should be noted, however, that it is only saplings or branches that are offshoots of the original Bodhi tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment that are worthy of respect. Buddhists, however, have extended this to other trees of the same species, and made the

**Bodhi Tree (Religiose Faicaso tree), a symbol of the Buddha and His enlightenment.**

**Anathapindika** and his wife **Punnalakkhana** had three daughters and one son. Two of his daughters, **Big Subhadda** and **Little Subhadda**, followed in their parents' footsteps and were devoted disciples of the Buddha. They were both happily married and, like their father, had attained the first stage of sainthood, **Sotápanna**. Their youngest daughter **Sumana** surpassed the others in wisdom and attained the second stage of sainthood, **Sakadagami**. She did not marry but this was not because she had renounced the lay life. In fact when she saw the happiness of her two elder sisters she was overcome by depression and her spiritual strength could not sustain her. She wasted away, eating hardly anything, and passed away at a young age. She was reborn in the Tushita heaven as a goddess amidst great comfort and pleasures. The text did not specify why she had problems in finding a suitable partner. As arranged marriages were the norm it should not have been difficult to find a suitable partner for one who was so wealthy and spiritually advanced.

Anathapindika's only son, **Kala**, was known as the dark one. He did not care for the Dhamma but immersed himself completely in affairs of business. He was completely absorbed in accumulating wealth. Anathapindika decided to trick his son into listening to the Buddha. He offered **Kala** one thousand gold pieces if he would observe the religious holiday with his family. **Kala** consented and soon found that it was relaxing to take one day off from business in the company of his family to observe religious rites. Then his father offered him another thousand gold pieces if he would visit the Buddha at the monastery, listen to the Dhamma, and learn a stanza of the Dhamma.

**Kala** agreed. He went to the monastery, saluted the Buddha respectfully and sat down to listen to the Dhamma. The Buddha, realizing that **Kala** was spiritually ready for the Dhamma; used His powers to make him misunderstand what he had learned. Just as **Kala** thought that he had mastered the teaching he had a doubt. He listened repeatedly with keen attention. Before long, **Kala** was inspired by the Dhamma. He listened, enraptured by the teaching, and attained **Sotápanna**. After this he too, like his father, was absorbed in the practice of generosity and the Dhamma and was often called **Little Anathapindika**.

**Anathapindika, who was totally committed to the Dhamma, influenced many persons to follow the Buddha by his example. He did not force his ideas or beliefs on them, but seeing his devotion, kindness and generosity, many of his friends and business associates adopted his ways. His home became a center of generosity and kindness and his example spread to the surrounding areas.**

**The Buddha spent sixteen of the forty-five rainy seasons at the Jetavana Monastery in Savatthi. Because of this, many significant events took place and many discourses were dispensed by the Buddha at the Jetavana. When the Buddha was in residence Anathapindika visited the monastery twice a day to hear the Dhamma. He did not, however, feel that he should get any special treatment from the Buddha because he was His chief male lay benefactor. As such he often visited the Buddha and sat quietly awaiting instruction from the Buddha without question. If the Buddha was not forthcoming with the Dhamma he would relate an incident from his life and his response to it and wait for the Buddha to comment on the appropriateness of his actions. In this way Anathapindika related the day-to-day happenings to the Dhamma and ensured that he lived the Dhamma in all aspects of his life.**

**The Buddha often dispensed to Anathapindika teachings suitable for the lay devotees. On one occasion the Buddha dispensed a Sutta on the [four kinds of bliss to be won by a house- holder](#). He said they were:**

- The bliss of ownership: Wealth gained by hard work and energetic striving that was lawfully earned. And when he reflects on the ownership of such wealth he feels bliss and happiness.**
- The bliss of wealth: Wealth should be enjoyed by the householder and he should enjoy sharing his wealth with others. And when he does he feels bliss and happiness.**
- The bliss of debt-less-ness: He should not be in debt to anyone and as such would have no burdens or worries associated with repayment of debt. And when he reflects on his freedom from debt he feels bliss and happiness.**
- The bliss of blamelessness: He should be blameless because he is free of blameless actions of body, speech and mind.**

**And when he reflects on his blameless life he feels bliss and happiness.**

The Buddha also declared to Anathapindika that there were five desirable, pleasant and agreeable things to a householder, which are rare in this world. They are long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heaven. He then said, "But of these five things, householder, **I do not teach that they are to be obtained by prayer or by vows.** If one could obtain these by prayers and vows then who would not do so?"

"For a noble householder who wishes to have long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heavenly realm it is not befitting that he should pray for long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heaven or take delight in doing so. He should rather follow a path of life that is conducive to long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heaven. By doing so he will obtain long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heaven". (Anguttara Nikáya)

The Buddha also instructed Anathapindika on the way in which one obtains long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heavenly realm. *He said that one obtains these not by prayer but by perfection of confidence (in the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha), perfection of virtue, perfection of generosity and perfection of wisdom.*

And so we have in simple language a fundamental concept of the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha did not encourage His devotees to pray and take vows. Instead, He encouraged them to lead a moral, **virtuous, and generous life in wisdom. The householder would then receive long life, beauty, happiness, fame and rebirth in a heavenly realm.** The Buddha declared that Devas (Divine beings such as gods and angels) were compassionate beings who enjoyed helping the virtuous just as humans enjoyed doing so. They could not, however, change the kamma of any individual.

The Buddha also explained to Anathapindika the effects of gifts given carelessly and with a lack of respect. The Buddha said: "Whether one gives coarse or choice alms, if one gives without respect and politeness, not with one's own hand, gives only leftovers, and gives without belief in the result of actions, then when one is reborn, as a result of giving alms in this manner, one's heart will have no inclination for fine food and

clothing, for fine vehicles, etc. A man will find that his wife, children and servants will not obey him, nor listen to him, nor pay respect to him. And why is that so? It is because that is the result of actions done without respect."

At one time Anathapindika had given all his wealth away and due to some unexpected misfortune did not have rich food as was customary to give to the Sangha and the needy. He continued, however, to give away whatever he had. The Buddha then addressed Anathapindika, who was rich in wisdom, and encouraged him in meditation by explaining the various benefits of wholesome actions. Comparing Anathapindika to a rich merchant named **Velama** of past eras who was equally generous, the Buddha said: More beneficial than large donations to the unworthy would be a single feeding of a noble disciple who is a Sotápanna. And progressively more beneficial than a single feeding of a Sotápanna is the feeding of a noble disciple who has attained Sakadagami, Anagami and Arahantship. And even more beneficial than alms to a noble disciple who has attained Arahantship would be the feeding of a Pacceka Buddha. And even more beneficial than feeding a Pacceka Buddha would be to give alms and building of monasteries for a Supreme Buddha. Better than the gifts to the Buddha would be to take refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha in confidence and observing the five precepts to perfection. And still more beneficial than taking refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha and observing the precepts to perfection would be one moment of all-encompassing radiation of compassion and loving-kindness to all living beings. **Best of all, however, would be to cultivate, even for the time of a finger snap, insight into the impermanence of all things (insight meditation).** And thus the Buddha explained the benefits of wholesome deeds and the supremacy of meditation on insight.

This also illustrates the Buddha's graduated method of teaching where **He started a householder on generosity and moved him gradually to virtue, meditation on loving-kindness, and finally to insight.** Without first mastering generosity and virtue and the all-encompassing meditation of loving-kindness one cannot contemplate the impermanence of all phenomena, for in the peace and quiet that is required for insight, pangs of conscience and other dark thoughts may arise.

The Buddha emphasized the importance of mental culture on another occasion. Anathapindika, together with one hundred noble men, had visited the Buddha at the Jetavana monastery, saluted Him, and sat respectfully awaiting His Teachings. The Buddha addressed them and said, "Be sure you householders provide the monastic community with clothing, food, shelter and medicine. But you should not be satisfied with that. May you also from time to time strive to enter and abide in the joy of (meditative) seclusion."

The Buddha also emphasized the necessity of virtue before one could embark on mental culture. He said, "If the heart is corrupted then all actions, words, and thoughts are tainted. Such a person will be carried away by his passions and will have an unhappy death just as the gables, rafters and walls of a badly roofed house, being unprotected, will rot when drenched in rain." (Anguttara Nikáya)

**On another occasion the Buddha explained to Anathapindika the attainment of Sotápanna, the first stage of sainthood. He explained that when the five fearsome evils have completely disappeared in a person, the four attributes of stream entry are present, and the noble method is wisely understood, a person could regard himself as a Sotápanna. The Buddha then elaborated on this brief statement. He explained that one who kills, steals, indulges in sexual misconduct, tells lies and takes intoxicants generates five fearsome evils both in the present and future and experiences pain and grief in mind. Whosoever keeps away from the five vices, for him the five fearsome evils are eliminated. The person possesses the four attributes of stream entry when he has unshakeable confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, observes the precepts flawlessly and has penetrated the noble method known as the doctrine of dependent origination. (Anguttara Nikáya)**

Anathapindika had a long and happy life in the Dhamma. One day when he was sick and in great pain, he requested the monks to visit him at his home. Shariputra and Ánanda, out of compassion for the great benefactor of the Sangha, visited him. Shariputra calmed Anathapindika's mind by reminding him that he was a Sotápanna, and as such on the path to enlightenment. He could not fall away from the Dhamma or obtain rebirth in one of the unhappy plains.

Shariputra said:

*"When one has confidence in the Tathágata,  
Unshakable and well established,  
And good conduct built on virtue,  
Dear to the Noble Ones and praised,  
When one has confidence in the Sangha,  
And views that have been corrected,  
They say that one is not poor,  
That one's life is not in vain.  
Therefore the person of intelligence  
Remembering the Buddha's teaching,  
Should be devoted to confidence and virtue,  
To confidence and vision of the Dhamma."  
-- (Samyutta Nikáya)*

Through the strength of this contemplation Anathapindika recalled his virtues and his confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. These thoughts relaxed Anathapindika's mind and gave him great happiness. The excruciating pain disappeared.

Anathapindika was nearing death. Having great respect for Shariputra and confidence in him, Anathapindika requested his presence out of compassion." Shariputra, accompanied by Ánanda, gave an inspiring sermon on non-attachment. Anathapindika was moved to tears by the profound discourse, the likes of which he had never heard before. Shariputra then informed him that such profound discourses were usually taught to the Sangha, not to white-clothed lay disciples. Anathapindika then urged Shariputra not to restrict the advanced teachings just to the Sangha. He said, Let such talks on the Dhamma be given to **white-clad lay disciples** also, for there are those with just a little dust in their eyes. If they do not hear such teachings they will be lost. Some may be able to understand. Shortly after Shariputra and Ánanda left, **Anathapindika died and was reborn in the Tushita heaven as a Deva**. His gratitude and reverence for the Buddha were so great that he was drawn to Jetavana where the Buddha was residing. That night he came in splendor to Jetavana to praise the glory of the Buddha, His Teaching, and His chief disciple. Saluting the Buddha he said:

*"This indeed is that Jeta's Grove,  
The resort of the Order of Seers,  
Dwelt in by the Dhamma King,*

*A place that gives joy to me.  
By action, knowledge and righteousness,  
By virtue and an excellent life,  
By this are mortals purified,  
Not by clan or by wealth.  
Therefore a person who is wise,  
Out of regard for his own good,  
Should carefully examine the Dhamma,  
Thus he is purified therein.  
Shariputra truly is endowed with wisdom,  
With virtue and with inner peace,  
Even a monk that has gone beyond,  
At best can only equal him."*

**The Buddha declared Anathapindika to be His chief lay male benefactor. His generosity, virtue and exemplary behavior are an example to all lay disciples. Many Buddhists emulate his lifestyle and use him as a role model.**

**Reference –**

**1. Relatives and Disciples of the Buddha by Radhika Abeysekera**