

Ven. Anuruddha Thera

by

Radhika Abeysekera

A Gift of Dhamma

Anuruddha has the divine eye – the ability to see beyond the range of the physical eye. He could survey one thousand world systems. (each world system contained 31 planes of existence)

Introduction: Presents here are two versions of Anuruddha Thera.

Lesson No. 1 - The Anuruddha sutta is a great pathway to practice Vipassana by first establishing jhanas and then to Vipassana for Nibbana.

Lesson No. 2 - All who have adequate spiritual development in the past lives could develop this spiritual achievement through Jhana meditation. Ven. Anuruddha has developed this divine eye even before he attained the first stage of sainthood – **Sotapanna**. The divine eye can be developed by one who has reached the fourth stage of mental absorption (Jhana). He was foremost among the monks who had developed the divine eye.

His aspiration to be the foremost to develop the divine eye started at the time of Padumuttara Buddha. So, if one of us had that aspiration in the past, then, he/she could develop this in a short time. The divine eye is different from what we often heard – (The psychic power of seeing the invisible beings - *Ah Myin Theikdi*)

We can learn much from the Dhamma lessons given in the Anuruddha Sutta:

1. *"This Dhamma is for one who is modest, not for one who is self-aggrandizing.*
2. *This Dhamma is for one who is content, not for one who is discontent.*
3. *This Dhamma is for one who is reclusive, not for one who is entangled.*
4. *This Dhamma is for one whose persistence is aroused, not for one who is lazy.*
5. *This Dhamma is for one whose mindfulness is established, not for one whose mindfulness is confused.*

6. *This Dhamma is for one whose mind is centered, not for one whose mind is uncentered.*
7. *This Dhamma is for one endowed with discernment, not for whose discernment is weak."*

This hand-on teaching of the lessons given to Ven. Anuruddha are very familiar with one written in the book – Anapana Practice to Viassana by Pa Auk Sayadaw. We assured us that the teaching of Pa auk Sayadaw is in line with the Buddha teaching to attain Arahantship by establishing first the four Jhanas in stages and to Vipassana – Arahantship.

Anuruddha was one of Prince Siddhattha's cousins. His father, who was named Amitodana, was a younger brother of King Suddhodana. Amitodana had two consorts. Anuruddha, his brother, Mahanama and his sister, Rohini, were born from one consort. Ananda, who later became the Buddha's personal attendant, was the son of the other consort. As such Ananda was Anuruddha's step-brother.

Anuruddha was brought up in immense luxury. His mother, who adored him, ensured that all his wishes were fulfilled. The following story illustrates the luxury he enjoyed. One day Anuruddha, who was playing marbles with his friends, decided to bet on his winning the game. He promised fresh cakes to whoever could beat him at marbles. Luck was against him. Again and again he lost to his friends. Each time he sent a message home to his mother asking for cakes, which she lovingly provided. Finally the message came back that there was no cake. Anuruddha, who had always had everything he wanted, thought that this was a new type of cake and sent a message back asking his mother to send the no-cake to pay off his debt.

When Sakyan princes began giving up their royal lineage to follow the Buddha, Mahanama, the older of King Amitodana's sons, felt that either Anuruddha or he should follow in the footsteps of their Great Cousin. He called his younger brother and asked him if he would like to be ordained under the Buddha. Anuruddha, however, was too attached to sense pleasure. He was well-known for his love of dance, music and luxuries. Anuruddha felt that the homeless life would be too harsh for someone brought up in the lap of luxury. Mahanama, however, convinced his brother by describing the trials he would face when conducting the duties and responsibilities he had as a nobleman. When Anuruddha realized that he would have many responsibilities to fulfill if he were to take the place of his older brother and endless rounds of rebirth in **samsara** where he would toil embroiled in suffering, he decided to renounce his life of luxury. He went to his mother and asked her permission to be ordained under the Sakyan Sage.

His mother, who wanted to keep both her sons with her, refused. Thinking that his friend who was heir to the throne would never give up his royal heritage, she informed Anuruddha that he could go if his friend **Bhaddiya** went with him.

Anuruddha spoke to his friend to convince him to join the order. Bhaddiya refused, as the glory of being a future king was more appealing to him. Anuruddha did not give up. Little by little he broke down the defences of his friend. First Bhaddiya agreed to join the Holy Order in seven years. On further insistence and pleading, Bhaddiya reduced the time until finally he agreed to leave in seven days as it would take that long for him to settle his affairs and hand over the succession of the position of viceroy to his successor. On hearing of their decision Anuruddha's step-brother, Ananda, their cousin, Devadatta, and two other Sakyan princes, **Kimbila** and **Bhagu**, decided to join them. The princes, together with the court barber, **Upali**, left the palace under the pretence of going to the pleasure gardens.

After travelling for some distance the princes handed their royal jewels and rich clothes to Upali and donned the simple robes of ascetics. They then instructed Upali to return to the palace with the message that the Sakyan princes had left to join the order of the Noble Ones under the great Sakyan Sage, the Buddha. Upali, however, was afraid that the Sakyans, who were a very fierce warrior race, would not believe him. He felt that he would be killed, as the Sakyans would think that he, Upali, had robbed and killed the young princes. He asked permission to go with them to be ordained under the Buddha. The princes agreed.

Together, they proceeded to where the Buddha was residing and asked to be ordained. The Sakyan princes, who were well-known for their pride and arrogance, asked the Buddha to ordain Upali (14), the barber who had attended them for a long time, first, so that he would then be senior to them. As such they would have to pay obeisance and respect to Upali, which would help to subdue their Sakyan pride. The Buddha complied to their request.

Before long, Anuruddha developed the divine eye – the ability to see beyond the range of the physical eye. He could survey one thousand world systems (the Buddha could see, and spoke of ten thousand world systems). These world systems could be compared to modern-day galaxies. **The Buddha said that each world system contained 31 planes of existence (15)** in which there were 31 different life forms, and of such world systems He viewed ten thousand. Anuruddha, however, developed his divine eye only to the extent where he could view one thousand world systems. He also had the ability to see into the past births of others and to see their place of rebirth after death.

The development of the divine eye is mundane in character. It can be developed without reaching any of the four stages of spiritual development – **Sotapanna, Sakadagami, Anagami** or **Arahanthship**. In fact, Anuruddha achieved it prior to obtaining the first stage of sainthood. As such it can be achieved by an unliberated worldling. The divine eye can be developed by one who has reached the fourth stage of mental absorption (Jhana) and takes this meditation further as described in The Path of Purification (Visudhimagga). Anuruddha often taught this skill to his students. His verses relate his experience thus:

**"In fivefold concentration rapt,
The mind in peace and unified,
Inner tranquillity I gained
And thus was purified my eye divine.**

**In fivefold Jhanas standing firm
I knew the passing and rebirth of beings,
Their coming and their going I perceived,
Their life in this world and beyond.**

Theragatha (916-917)

Despite this achievement Anuruddha had difficulties in reaching Arahanthship. His spiritual development, however, helped him to live in harmony with two other monks, [Kimbila](#) and [Nandiya](#). These three lived alone in concentration in the Eastern Bamboo Park and met every fifth night to discuss the Dhamma. The harmony that existed between these monks became legendary. The Buddha once asked Anuruddha how he lived in peace and harmony with his two companions. Anuruddha replied, "In deed, words and thoughts I maintain loving kindness towards these venerable ones in public and in private thinking. Why should I not set aside what I want to do and do only what they want to do? We are different in body, Venerable Sir, but one in mind". The Buddha praised their harmony and held them as an example to other monks to strengthen the unity of the Sangha.

The Buddha then questioned Anuruddha on his difficulties in obtaining liberation. Anuruddha explained that he had reached a higher state of concentration in which [he perceived an inner light and radiance but that the vision of light and radiance disappeared very soon and he did not understand the reason](#). Describing from His own experience the Buddha then explained the eleven imperfections (16) or hindrances that may arise and how to overcome them. Anuruddha followed the Buddha's advice and developed further and further in refined meditative perceptions. He did not, however, reach Arahanthship.

One day Anuruddha visited Sariputta and said, "Brother Sariputta, with the divine eye I am able to perceive a thousand-fold world systems. My energy is strong, my mindfulness is alert and unconfused, my body is collected and unified. Yet my mind is not freed without clinging from the defiling taints".

Sariputta replied, "When you think, Brother Anuruddha, that with your divine eye you can see a thousand-fold world systems, that is self-conceit. When you think of your strenuous energy, your alert mindfulness, your calm body and your concentrated mind, that is agitation. When you think your mind is still not liberated from taints, that is scruples in you. Discard these three things. Do not pay attention to them. Instead, direct the mind towards the deathless." Anuruddha again went into solitude and directed his mind in earnest to remove these obstructions.

The Buddha, perceiving that Anuruddha was close to enlightenment but that he needed further instruction, appeared before him in form made by mind. The Buddha's instruction to Anuruddha on the non-diffused helped him reach perfection. An hour after the attainment he proclaimed the following:

"He knew my heart's intent, the Master,
He whose peer the world has not seen.
He came to me by mystic power,
With body wrought by mind.

To me when further Truths I wished to learn,
The Buddha (this last Truth) revealed:
He who delights in freedom from diffuseness,
That freedom from diffuseness taught to me.

And I who heard the blessed Dhamma dwelt,
Constantly intent to keep His rule,
The Threefold Wisdom have I made my own,
And all the Buddha's ordinance is done."

Theragatha (901-903)

Because of Anuruddha's development of the divine eye the Buddha declared that **he was foremost among the monks who had developed the divine eye**. Anuruddha had aspired to be foremost in the development of the divine eye one hundred thousand world cycles ago, at the time of the **Padumuttara Buddha**. On seeing the Buddha Padumuttara appoint one of His monks as foremost in the divine eye and being inspired by the character and qualities of the monk, Anuruddha decided that he would like to have such a position under a future Buddha. With this in mind he performed many meritorious deeds and aspired to be foremost in the divine eye under a future Buddha. The Padumuttara Buddha, seeing that Anuruddha's aspiration would be fulfilled, announced that he would be foremost in the divine eye at the time of the Gotama Buddha.

After the passing away of the Padumuttara Buddha, Anuruddha approached the monk and asked him what meritorious acts he should perform to attain such a position. **The monk then instructed him to light many lamps in the shrine that held the relics of the Padumuttara Buddha** and to aspire that as these lamps dispelled the darkness, shedding light to the surrounding area so that others could see, may he develop the divine eye to view the many world systems and divine beings. The Theragatha states that at the time of the Buddha Kassapa, Anuruddha had lit butter lamps to honor the grave of the Kassapa Buddha and had renewed his aspiration. These and many other meritorious acts that Anuruddha performed led to the fulfillment of his aspiration at the time of the Gotama Buddha.

Twenty-three accounts of Anuruddha's past lives have been documented in the Jataka (birth stories of the Buddha). Fifteen of these births were in the celestial realms, thirteen(17) of which were as **Sakka**, the leader of the Tavatimsa heaven. It was Anuruddha as Sakka who dressed up as an old Brahmin to test the Bodhisatta further by asking for His wife, the princess Maddi, in the Vessantara Jataka. Twice as Sakka, Anuruddha saved the Bodhisatta's life when He was in danger. It was also Anuruddha as Sakka who showed the Bodhisatta the celestial and hellish worlds in the Guttila Jataka. In the seven(18) earthly past life stories he was often an ascetic. Only one past life story documents birth as an animal (wood pigeon). Anuruddha's strength of character, his loyalty and his compassion to others are illustrated over and over again in these stories. In many births he had been of help to the Bodhisatta. The Theragatha also documents some of his former lives. Anuruddha, who could see into his past births, described some of them as follows:

"I know my former lives, and where and how
I lived in years gone by: among the Gods
of the Thirty-Three (Tavatimsa heaven)
I stood of Sakka's rank.

Seven times a king of men I held my sway,
Lord of the earth from end to end foursquare,
A conqueror, of **Jambudipa** (India) chief,
Using no force or arms I ruled by right.

Thence seven . And another seven spans of life,
Fourteen former births I recognize,
Even then in the worlds of gods reborn."

Theragatha 913-915

Anuruddha outlived the Buddha and was instrumental in ensuring that the wishes of the divine beings were met at the Buddha's funeral. When the Buddha passed away Maha Brahma (the Brahmin creator God) and Sakka (ruler of the Tavatimsa Heaven) honored the Buddha in verses evoking the law of impermanence to console the grieving Brahmas and Devas. The third to speak was Anuruddha, who consoled the grieving with the following words:

"No movement of breath, but with steadfast heart,
Desireless and tranquil comes the Sage to His end.
With heart unshaken by any painful feelings,
Like a flame extinguished, His mind released."

Anuruddha also encouraged and helped Ananda to attain Arahantship prior to the First Sangha Council. Anuruddha was in charge of the Anguttara Nikaya at the first council. He passed away at Veluva in the Vajjian land with the following prediction of his oncoming death:

"The Buddha has my loyalty and love,
And all of the Buddha's Law is done.
Low have I laid the heavy load I bore,
Cause for rebirth is found in me no more.

In Veluva, in Vajjian land, it will be
That life will reach its final term for me;
And I beneath the bamboo-thicket's shade that day,
Free from all taints shall wholly pass away."

Theragatha 918-919

14. Upali attained Arahantship and was declared by the Buddha as the monk foremost in disciplinary rules (Vinaya) for the monks.

15. The thirty-one planes of existence include the four unhappy planes of existence, the human world, six Deva planes of existence with sense pleasures, sixteen Brahma realms of form with pleasures of the mind and four formless Brahma realms.

16. Uncertainty, inattention, lethargy and drowsiness, anxiety and fright, elation, inertia, excess of energy, sluggish energy, strong longing, diversity of perceptions and excessive meditation on these forms.

17. Jataka 194, 243, 347, 429, 430, 480, 494, 499, 537, 540, 541, 545, and 547.

18. Jataka 423, 488, 509, 522, 485, 276, 515.

Anguttara Nikaya VIII.30

Anuruddha Sutta

To Anuruddha

Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
For free distribution only.

Once the Blessed One was staying among the Bhaggas in the Deer Park at Bhesakala Grove, near Crocodile Haunt. And at that time Ven. Anuruddha was living among the Cetis in the Eastern Bamboo Park. Then, as he was alone in seclusion, this line of thinking arose in Ven. Anuruddha's awareness:

"This Dhamma is for one who is modest, not for one who is self-aggrandizing. This Dhamma is for one who is content, not for one who is discontent. This Dhamma is for one who is reclusive, not for one who is entangled. This Dhamma is for one whose persistence is aroused, not for one who is lazy. This Dhamma is for one whose mindfulness is established, not for one whose mindfulness is confused. This Dhamma is for one whose mind is centered, not for one whose mind is uncentered. This Dhamma is for one endowed with discernment, not for whose discernment is weak."

Then the Blessed One, realizing with his awareness the line of thinking in Ven. Anuruddha's awareness -- just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm -- disappeared from among the Bhaggas in the Deer Park at Bhesakala Grove, near Crocodile Haunt, and re-appeared among the Cetis in the Eastern Bamboo Park, right in front of Ven. Anuruddha. There he sat down on a prepared seat. As for Ven. Anuruddha, having bowed down to the Blessed One, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there the Blessed One said to him, "Good, Anuruddha, very good. It's good that you think these thoughts of a great person:

'This Dhamma is for one who is modest, not for one who is self-aggrandizing. This Dhamma is for one who is content, not for one who is discontent. This Dhamma is for one who is reclusive, not for one who is entangled. This Dhamma is for one whose persistence is aroused, not for one who is lazy. This Dhamma is for one whose mindfulness is established, not for one whose mindfulness is confused. This Dhamma is for one whose mind is centered, not for one whose mind is uncentered. This Dhamma is for one endowed with discernment, not for one whose discernment is weak.'

Now then, Anuruddha, think the eighth thought of a great person: 'This Dhamma is for one who enjoys non-complication, who delights in non-complication, not for one who enjoys & delights in complication.'

"Anuruddha, when you think these eight thoughts of a great person, then -- whenever you want -- quite withdrawn from sensuality, withdrawn from unskillful qualities, you will enter & remain in the **first jhana**:

rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation.

When you think these eight thoughts of a great person, then -- whenever you want -- with the stilling of directed thought and evaluation, you will enter & remain in the **second jhana**:

rapture & pleasure born of composure, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation -- internal assurance...

with the fading of rapture, you will remain in equanimity, mindful & alert, physically sensitive to pleasure. You will enter & remain in the **third jhana**, of which the Noble Ones declare, 'Equanimous and mindful, he has a pleasurable abiding.'

When you think these eight thoughts of a great person, then -- whenever you want - - with the abandoning of pleasure & pain, as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress, you will enter & remain in the **fourth jhana**: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither-pleasure-nor-pain.

"Now, when you think these eight thoughts of a great person and become a person who can attain at will, without trouble or difficulty, these four jhanas -- heightened mental states providing a pleasant abiding in the here & now -- then your robe of cast-off rags will seem to you to be just like the clothes chest of a householder or householder's son, full of clothes of many colors. As you live contented, it will serve for your delight, for a comfortable abiding, for non-agitation, & for alighting on Unbinding.

"When you think these eight thoughts of a great person and become a person who can attain at will, without trouble or difficulty, these four jhanas -- heightened mental states providing a pleasant abiding in the here & now -- then your meal of almsfood will seem to you to be just like the rice & wheat of a householder or householder's son, cleaned of black grains, and served with a variety of sauces & seasonings... your dwelling at the foot of a tree will seem to you to be just like the gabled mansion of a householder or householder's son, plastered inside & out, draft-free, bolted, and with its shutters closed... your bed on a spread of grass will seem to you like the couch of a householder or householder's son, spread with long-haired coverlets, white woolen coverlets, embroidered coverlets, antelope-hide & deer-skin rugs, covered with a canopy, and with red cushions for the head & feet...

"When you think these eight thoughts of a great person and become a person who can attain at will, without trouble or difficulty, these four jhanas -- heightened mental states providing a pleasant abiding in the here & now -- then your medicine of strong-smelling urine will seem to you to be just like the various tonics of a householder or householder's son: ghee, fresh butter, oil, honey, and molasses sugar. As you live contented, it will serve for your delight, for a comfortable abiding, for non-agitation, & for alighting on Unbinding.

"Now, then, Anuruddha, you are to stay right here among the Cetis for the coming Rains Retreat."

"As you say, venerable sir," Ven. Anuruddha replied.

Then, having given this exhortation to Ven. Anuruddha, the Blessed One -- as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm -- disappeared from the Eastern Bamboo Park of the Cetis and reappeared among the Bhaggas in the Deer Park at Bhesakala Grove, near Crocodile Haunt. He sat down on a

prepared seat and, as he was sitting there, he addressed the monks: "Monks, I will teach you the eight thoughts of a great person. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"Yes, lord," the monks responded.

The Blessed One said, '**Now, what are the eight thoughts of a great person? This Dhamma is for one who is modest, not for one who is self-aggrandizing. This Dhamma is for one who is content, not for one who is discontent. This Dhamma is for one who is reclusive, not for one who is entangled. This Dhamma is for one whose persistence is aroused, not for one who is lazy. This Dhamma is for one whose mindfulness is established, not for one whose mindfulness is confused. This Dhamma is for one whose mind is centered, not for one whose mind is uncentered. This Dhamma is for one endowed with discernment, not for one whose discernment is weak. This Dhamma is for one who enjoys non-complication, who delights in non-complication, not for one who enjoys & delights in complication.**

"This Dhamma is for one who is modest, not for one who is self-aggrandizing.' Thus was it said. With reference to what was it said? There is the case where a monk, being modest, does not want it to be known that 'He is modest.'

Being content, he does not want it to be known that 'He is content.

' Being reclusive, he does not want it to be known that 'He is reclusive.'

His persistence being aroused, he does not want it to be known that 'His persistence is aroused.'

His mindfulness being established, he does not want it to be known that 'His mindfulness is established.

' His mind being centered, he does not want it to be known that 'His mind is centered.'

Being endowed with discernment, he does not want it to be known that 'He is endowed with discernment.

' Enjoying non-complication, he does not want it to be known that 'He is enjoying non-complication.'

'This Dhamma is for one who is modest, not for one who is self-aggrandizing.' Thus was it said. And with reference to this was it said.

***"This Dhamma is for one who is content, not for one who is discontent.'* Thus was it said. With reference to what was it said? There is the case where a monk is content with any old robe cloth at all, any old almsfood, any old lodging, any old medicinal**

requisites for curing sickness at all. 'This Dhamma is for one who is content, not for one who is discontent.' Thus was it said. And with reference to this was it said.

"This Dhamma is for one who is reclusive, not for one who is entangled." Thus was it said. With reference to what was it said? There is the case where a monk, when living in seclusion, is visited by monks, nuns, lay men, lay women, kings, royal ministers, sectarians & their disciples. With his mind bent on seclusion, tending toward seclusion, inclined toward seclusion, aiming at seclusion, relishing renunciation, he converses with them only as much is necessary for them to take their leave. 'This Dhamma is for one who is reclusive, not for one who is entangled.' Thus was it said. And with reference to this was it said.

"This Dhamma is for one whose persistence is aroused, not for one who is lazy." Thus was it said. With reference to what was it said? There is the case where a monk keeps his persistence aroused for abandoning unskillful mental qualities and taking on skillful mental qualities. He is steadfast, solid in his effort, not shirking his duties with regard to skillful mental qualities. 'This Dhamma is for one whose persistence is aroused, not for one who is lazy.' Thus was it said. And with reference to this was it said.

"This Dhamma is for one whose mindfulness is established, not for one whose mindfulness is confused." Thus was it said. With reference to what was it said? There is the case where a monk is mindful, highly meticulous, remembering & able to call to mind even things that were done & said long ago. 'This Dhamma is for one whose mindfulness is established, not for one whose mindfulness is confused.' Thus was it said. And with reference to this was it said.

"This Dhamma is for one whose mind is centered, not for one whose mind is uncentered." Thus was it said. With reference to what was it said? There is the case where a monk, quite withdrawn from sensuality, withdrawn from unskillful mental qualities, enters & remains in the **first jhana**: rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thought & evaluation, he enters & remains in the **second jhana**: rapture & pleasure born of composure, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation -- internal assurance. With the fading of rapture he remains in equanimity, mindful & alert, and physically sensitive of pleasure. He enters & remains in the **third jhana**, of which the Noble Ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasurable abiding.' With the abandoning of pleasure & pain -- as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress -- he enters & remains in the **fourth jhana**: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. 'This Dhamma is for one whose mind is centered, not for one whose mind is uncentered.' Thus was it said. And with reference to this was it said.

"This Dhamma is for one endowed with discernment, not for one whose discernment is weak." Thus was it said. With reference to what was it said? There is the case where a monk is discerning, endowed with discernment of arising & passing away --

noble, penetrating, leading to the right ending of stress. 'This Dhamma is for one endowed with discernment, *not* for one whose discernment is weak.' Thus was it said. And with reference to this was it said.

"This Dhamma is for one who enjoys non-complication, who delights in non-complication, not for one who enjoys & delights in complication." Thus was it said.

With reference to what was it said? There is the case where a monk's mind leaps up, grows confident, steadfast, & is firm in the cessation of complication. 'This Dhamma is for one who enjoys non-complication, who delights in non-complication, not for one who enjoys & delights in complication.' Thus was it said. And with reference to this was it said."

Now, during the following Rains Retreat, Ven. Anuruddha stayed right there in the Eastern Bamboo Park among the Cetis. Dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute, he in no long time reached & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew: *"Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world."* And thus Ven. Anuruddha became another one of the arahants. Then, on attaining arahantship, he uttered this verse:

Knowing my thoughts,
the Teacher, unexcelled in the cosmos,
came to me through his power
in a body made of mind.
He taught in line with my thoughts,
and then further.
The Buddha,
delighting in non-complication,
taught non-complication.
Knowing his Dhamma,
I kept delighting in his bidding.
The three knowledges
have been attained;
the Buddha's bidding,
done.