

(Arahatta) Anuruddha Sutta The Discourse on Anuruddha

[Anuruddha's awakening]
(Āṅguttara Nikāya 3.128/1:281 f)
Translated by Piya Tan ©2005

Introduction

After joining the order, Anuruddha spends the rains residence in cultivation. Before it is over, Anuruddha has already won the “divine eye” or clairvoyance (*dibba, cakkhu*),¹ for which he is declared to be foremost amongst the monks (A 1:23). At this point, the Āṅguttara Commentary² on **the Anuruddha Mahā, vitakka Sutta** (A 8.30)³ essentially reports the events of **the (Arahatta) Anuruddha Sutta**, where Sāriputta admonishes Anuruddha to overcome his conceit, restlessness and worry.

Evidently, it is at this point that Sāriputta teaches Anuruddha the eight thoughts of the great man (*mahā, purisa, vitakka*).⁴ From here, the Anuruddha Mahā, vitakka Sutta, picks up the story, but both the suttas end by reporting Anuruddha's arhathood in the same words. Where the (Arahatta) Anuruddha Sutta ends, the Anuruddha Mahā, vitakka Sutta begins.

Anuruddha then leaves for Pācīna, vaṁsa, dāya in the Cetī country, to practise this meditation. Here The Āṅguttara Commentary says that he keeps up the practice of walking meditation (*caṅkama*) for eight months. One day, “while his body is tiring due to being oppressed by his hasty effort,”⁵ sitting under the bamboo clump, he reflects on the eight thoughts of the great man. However, when he manages to master only seven of them,⁶ the Buddha visits him (in a holographic form, Tha 901) and teaches him the eighth. Thereupon Anuruddha develops insight and realises arhathood of the highest grade.

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¹ V 2:180-183; Mvst 3:177 f. This simply means that he has attained the 4th dhyana, but not yet awakened.

² AA 4:117 f.

³ A 8.40/2:228-235 = SD 19.5.

⁴ “The great man” (*mahā, purisa*) here refers to the noble ones (*ariya*), ie, a saint on the path (AA 1:191 f).

⁵ *So padhāna, vega, nimmathitattā kilanta, kāyo* (AA 4:118).

⁶ Anuruddha is probably unable to recall the eighth and last thought.

The Discourse on Anuruddha (Anuruddha's awakening)

(A 3.128/1:281 f)

Anuruddha fails to progress

1 Then the venerable Anuruddha approached the venerable Sāriputta and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and friendly exchange [282] was concluded, the venerable Anuruddha sat down at one side. Sitting thus as one side, the venerable Anuruddha said this to the venerable Sāriputta:

“Here, avuso Sāriputta,

I see the thousandfold world with the divine eye, purified and superhuman.

Further, I have put forth effort, and established myself in unfailing unconfused mindfulness, my body is unexcited, bright with faith, the mind is concentrated in oneness.⁷

But my mind is not released, through non-clinging, from the influxes.”

Sāriputta explains

2 “Now, avuso Anuruddha, as regards this remark:

‘I see the thousandfold world with the divine eye, purified and superhuman’—
this is due to conceit (*māna*).

And, avuso Anuruddha, as regards this remark:

‘Moreover, I have put forth effort, established myself in unfailing mindfulness, unconfused, my body is unexcited, bright with faith, the mind concentrated in oneness’—

this is due to restlessness (*uddhacca*).

And, avuso Anuruddha, as regards this remark:

‘But my mind is not released, through not clinging, from the influxes’—
this is due to worry (*kukkucca*).

Avuso Anuruddha, it will be good indeed if the venerable Anuruddha abandon these three states, not attending to them, but direct the mind to the deathless element.”⁸

Anuruddha becomes an arhat

3b Then the venerable Anuruddha, in due course, abandoned these three states, not attending to them, but directed the mind to the deathless element.

And, the venerable Anuruddha, not long after he was ordained, dwelling alone, aloof, diligent, exertive, and resolute, having right here and now realized for himself through direct knowledge, after attaining, dwelt in the supreme goal of the holy life, for the sake of which sons of family rightly go forth from the household life into homelessness.

He directly knew: “Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, done what had to be done, there is no more of this state of being.”

And the venerable Anuruddha became one of the arhats.

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⁷ *Āraddham kho pana me viriyam asallīnam upaṭṭhitā sati asammutṭhā passaddho kāyo asāraddho samāhitam cittam ekaggam.*

⁸ “To the deathless element,” *amatāya dhātuyā*, ie to nirvana. See (Dhamma,yogi Jhāyī) **Mahā Cunda S** (A 6.46): *...dullābhā lokasmim ye amataṃ dhātuṃ kāyena phusitvā viharanti* = “...difficult to find in this world are those who dwell personally experiencing the deathless element.” (A 6.46.6/3:356) = SD 4.6.