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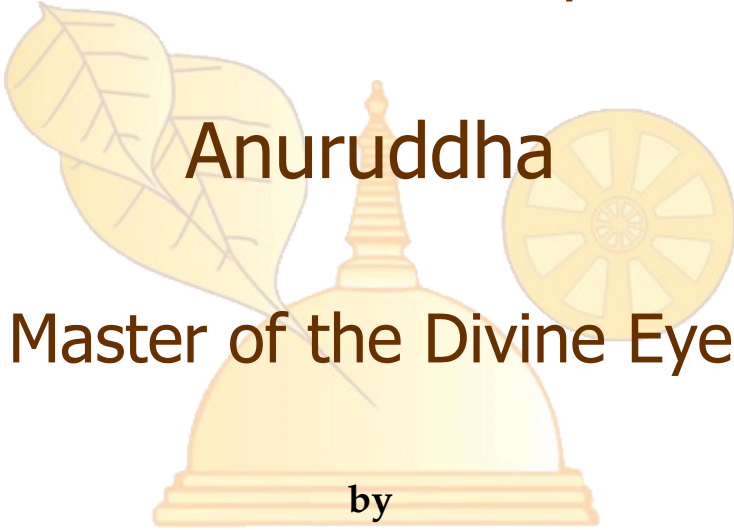
# Anuruddha

*Master of the Divine Eye*

*Hellmuth Hecker*



# Lives of the Disciples



## Anuruddha

## Master of the Divine Eye

by

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## Of Related Interest

# Abbreviations of Source References

AN	Aṅguttara Nikāya
DN	Dīgha Nikāya
J	Jātaka
MN	Majjhima Nikāya
SN	Saṃyutta Nikāya
Th	Theragāthā

Quotations from the Theragāthā are mostly adapted from the translation by C. A. F. Rhys Davids, *Psalms of the Brethren* (London: Pali Text Society, 1913; reprinted, 1964).

# ANURUDDHA

## Master of the Divine Eye

### 1. Early Life and Ordination

The Buddha's father, King Suddhodana, had a brother, the prince Amitodana, who had five children. Among them was Ānanda, who was later to be the Buddha's faithful attendant, and Mahānāma, heir to the Sakyan throne. A third brother was Anuruddha. Anuruddha briefly tells of his youth:

Then was I born within the Sakyan clan, As  
Anuruddha known; by dance and song Attended  
and by clang of cymbals waked.

(Th 911)

From this we gather that during his youth in the Sakyan capital of Kapilavatthu, in the foothills of the Himalayas, he lived amidst the luxuries of an Indian prince, in the company of dancers, actors and artists. Thus he passed his time in joyful pursuit of fleeting pleasures. Enchanted with life, he gave little thought to the meaning and purpose of existence, though the ancient hymns and myths which he

must have heard did moot these questions. There came, however, a day that was to be the turning-point of his life.

His brother Mahānāma, had been thinking about the fact that many members of the Sakyan clan had joined the Sangha, the Buddha's Order of Monks, while so far none had done so from his own family, though there were four vigorous young brothers. Mahānāma, however, did not have a strong enough urge and initiative to take that step himself and thus set an example for the others. Rather, he went to his brother Anuruddha and told him about his thoughts. He ended by saying that either he or Anuruddha should leave home and join the Buddha and his Sangha. At first Anuruddha was not at all ready to have his brother's decision thrust upon him. He replied that he felt himself to be too delicate physically to withstand the rigours of an ascetic life.

Mahānāma, then vividly described to him the burdens of a householder's life that he would have to shoulder. There was ploughing to be done, and planting, watering, digging, taking care of crops, harvesting and managing, and all that year in and year out. Anuruddha said that this was all right since all that hard work served a purpose, namely, to enable one to enjoy the pleasures of the five senses. Yet, he admitted, all this work left one with hardly any time for enjoyment. Mahānāma, agreed: many are the fetters that bind one to duty endlessly. Their father and their grandfather had done the same, and they themselves would have to lead the same kind of life.

This thought of the endless cycles of rebirth into a life of never-ending toil took hold of Anuruddha's mind. Again and again he saw himself bound to live and struggle and die in an endless round. When he saw this, his present life appeared to him stale and devoid of meaning. So he decided to follow the Buddha and try to break through the cycle of continuous becoming. Immediately he went to his mother and asked her for permission to become a monk, but she refused, as she was not willing to be separated from even one of her sons. But when Anuruddha repeatedly entreated her, she told him that if his friend, Prince Bhaddiya, viceroy and successor to the Sakyan throne, would be willing to enter the Order, then she would give him her permission. She may have thought that Bhaddiya would not wish to give up his chance to be the next king, and that Anuruddha would then not choose to part from his friend.

Anuruddha next went to Bhaddiya and told him that his ordination depended on Bhaddiya's joining him. Bhaddiya said: "Whether it depends on me or not, there should be ordination. I with you..." Here he stopped in the middle of the sentence. He had wanted to say, "I shall come with you," but he then felt regret. His wish for worldly power and enjoyment overtook him and he said: "Go and be ordained, according to your wish." But Anuruddha asked him again and again: "Come, friend, let both of us go forth into the homeless life of a monk." When Bhaddiya saw the sadness in his friend's face, he softened and said that seven



years from now he would be ready. Anuruddha replied that this was too long to wait, and by his repeated entreaties Bhaddiya reduced the time, step by step, to seven days. He would need at least this time to settle his worldly affairs and instal his successor. He was true to his word, and so Anuruddha was free to go with him. This decision naturally caused much disturbance in the royal family, for Anuruddha's example led other princes, too, to follow the great son of the Sakyas and join the Buddha's fraternity of monks.

So one day six Sakyas together with Upāli, the court barber, and an armed escort, set out from their homes intending to enter the Sangha. They were the Sakyas Bhaddiya, Anuruddha, Ānanda, Bhagu (Th 271–274), Kimbila (Th 118, 155–156) and Devadatta. To avoid arousing suspicion over the purpose of their departure, they left as if on their usual outing to the pleasure gardens. Having gone a long distance, they then sent the escort back and entered the neighbouring principality. There they took off their ornaments, tied them into a bundle and gave it to Upāli, saying, "This will be enough for your livelihood. Now return home!" But the barber Upāli, while already on his way back, stopped and thought: "The Sakyas are a fierce people. They will think that I have murdered the princes, and they might kill me." He hung the bundle on a tree and hurried back to join the princes. He told them of his fears and said, "If you, O princes, are going forth into the homeless life of monkhood, why should I not do the same?"

The young Sakyans, too, thought Upāli was right in not going back and allowed him to join them on their way to see the Blessed One. Having arrived where the Master dwelt, they asked him for ordination and added: “We Sakyans are a proud people, O Lord. Here, this is Upāli, the barber, who had attended on us for a long time. Please, Lord, give him ordination first. Since he will then be our senior, we shall have to salute him and do the duties proper to his seniority. Thus will the Sakyan pride be humbled in us.” The Buddha did as requested and thus these seven received ordination, with Upāli, as the first. (Vinaya, Cullavagga, Ch.VII)

Within one year most of them had achieved some spiritual attainment. Bhaddiya was the first to attain Arahantship (*arahatta*), as one liberated by wisdom (*paññā-vimutta*) and endowed with the three knowledges. [1] Anuruddha attained to the divine eye, Ānanda, to the fruit of Stream-entry, and Devadatta to ordinary (i.e. mundane) supernormal powers. Bhagu, Kimbila and Upāli became Arahants later, as did Ānanda, and Anuruddha. But Devadatta’s reckless ambition and misdeeds led him to hell.

## 2. The Divine Eye

Among those who were pre-eminent in a particular skill was the venerable Anuruddha, who was praised by the Buddha as being foremost in developing the divine eye (AN 1, Ch.19). Once, when a number of eminent monks were

living together in the Gosīṅga Forest, the question arose among them as to which kind of monk could lend brilliance to that forest. Anuruddha replied that it was one who, with the divine eye, could survey a thousand world systems, just as a man standing on a high tower could see a thousand farmsteads (MN 32). On another occasion Anuruddha said that it was through his cultivating the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) that he obtained the divine eye (SN 52:23). He also helped his own pupils to attain the opening of the divine eye (SN 14:15) . His verses relate his experience:

In fivefold concentration rapt, The mind in peace and unified,  
Inner tranquillity I gained  
And thus was purified my eye divine. In fivefold  
*jhāna* standing firm,  
I knew the passing and rebirth of beings, Their  
coming and their going I perceived, Their life in this  
world and beyond.

(Th 916–917)

The divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) is the ability to see beyond the range of the physical eye, extending in Anuruddha’s case to a thousandfold world system, which may perhaps be identified with a galaxy in modern astronomy. This faculty can be obtained by one who has reached the fourth meditative absorption *jhāna* and takes this meditation as the basis for further development as described in *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*. [2] The divine eye is of a

mundane (*lokiya*) character. It can be obtained by an unliberated worldling (*puthujjana*) as well as by those on the four stages of emancipation. Anuruddha attained it before he became an Arahant.

The Buddha himself used this faculty during his daily routine, when, in the early morning, he would survey the world for beings who could be helped by the Dhamma. Through his divine eye he also saw when one of his disciples experienced difficulties in his progress on the path. Seeing this, he often went to that disciple to give him advice and encouragement. As one of the three higher knowledges (*tevijjā*) the divine eye has the name and the function of “the knowledge of the passing away and re-appearing” of beings (*cutūpapātañāṇa*).

### 3. Anuruddha’s Road to Arahantship

Having acquired the faculty of the divine eye, the venerable Anuruddha made use of his meditative skill to further his progress towards Arahantship. But before reaching that height, he had to face many a battle within his mind. Three reports tell of it.

Once the venerable Anuruddha lived in the Eastern Bamboo Park together with his cousin Nandiya (Th 25) and the Sakyan noble Kimbila (Th 118; AN 5:201, 6:40, 7:56; SN 54:10). These three monks were so mature in the practice of the teaching that each of them could live alone for himself, devoted to his spiritual practice. Only every fifth night

would they meet to discuss the Dhamma, undisturbed by things or people. The harmony existing between these three forest hermits has become legendary and stands in sharp contrast with the quarrelsome monks of Kosambi.

When the Buddha visited the three monks, he asked Anuruddha how it was that he lived in peace and harmony with his two companions. Anuruddha replied: "In deeds, 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 am minded to do and do only what they are minded to do?' And I act accordingly. We are different in body, venerable sir, but only one in mind."

After the Buddha had inquired about their life in concord, he asked Anuruddha whether they had gained any spiritual attainment transcending average human capacity. Then Anuruddha told of a difficulty they had experienced in a very sublime meditation they had practised. They had perceived an inner light and radiance [3] and had a vision of sublime forms. [4] But that light and vision of forms disappeared very soon, and they could not understand the reason.

The Buddha explained that one who wanted to experience these subtle states of mind in full and have a steady perception of them should free himself from eleven imperfections (*upakkilesa*). The first is *uncertainty* about the reality of these phenomena and the significance of the inner

light, which might easily be taken for a sensory illusion. The second imperfection is *inattention*: one no longer directs one's full attention to the inner light, but regards it as something unremarkable or inessential, and thus dismisses it as unimportant. The third imperfection is *lethargy and drowsiness*: the fourth, *anxiety and fright*, which occurs when threatening images or thoughts arise from the subconscious regions of the mind. [5] When these imperfections have been mastered, *elation* may arise, which excites body and mind. Such exultation is often a habitual reaction to any kind of success. When that elation has exhausted itself, one may feel drained of that happy emotion and fall into *inertia*, a heavy passivity of mind. To overcome it, one makes a very strong effort, which may result in an *excess of energy*. On becoming aware of this excess, one relaxes and, in a repeated alternation of extremes, falls again into *sluggish energy*. In such a condition, when mindfulness is weak, *strong longing* may arise for desirable objects of the celestial or the human world, according to the focusing of the inner light which had been widened in its range. This longing will reach out to a great variety of objects and thus lead to another imperfection, a large *diversity of perceptions*, be it on the celestial or the human plane. Having become dissatisfied with that great diversity of forms, one chooses to contemplate one of them, be it of a desirable or undesirable nature. Concentrating intensely on the chosen object will lead to the eleventh imperfection, the *excessive meditating* on these forms.

Addressing Anuruddha and his two companions, the Buddha thus described vividly, from his own experience, the eleven imperfections that may arise in the meditative perception of pure forms, and he explained how to overcome them (MN 128).

When Anuruddha had perfected himself more and more in the jhānas and in those refined meditative perceptions, he one day went to see the venerable Sāriputta and said: “Brother Sāriputta with the divine eye, which is clarified and supernormal, I am able to perceive a thousandfold world system. My energy is strong and inflexible; my mindfulness is alert and unconfused; my body is calmed and unexcited; my mind is collected and unified. Yet my mind is still not freed, without clinging, from the defiling taints (*āsava*).”

Thereupon Sāriputta replied: “When you think, brother Anuruddha, that with your divine eye you can perceive a thousandfold world system, that is self-conceit in you. When you think of your strenuous energy, your alert mindfulness, your calmed body and your concentrated mind, that is agitation in you. When you think that your mind is still not liberated from the cankers, that makes for scruples in you. It will be good if the revered Anuruddha would discard these three things, would not pay attention to them and would instead direct his mind towards the Deathless-element (*Nibbāna*).”

Having heard Sāriputta's advice, Anuruddha again resorted

to solitude and earnestly applied himself to the removal of those three obstructions within his mind (AN 3:128).

On another occasion, Anuruddha lived in the country of the Cetiya people, in the Eastern Bamboo Grove. There it occurred to him in his contemplations that there were seven thoughts that should be cherished by a truly great man (*mahāpurisavitakka*), namely: that the Buddha's Teaching will suit only one who is frugal, contented, bent on seclusion, energetic, mindful, concentrated and wise, and that it will not suit one who lacks these qualities. When the Buddha perceived in his mind the thoughts of his cousin and pupil, he appeared before Anuruddha and approved of his thoughts thus: "Good, Anuruddha, good. You have well considered seven thoughts of a great man. You may now also consider this eighth thought of a great man: "This teaching is only for one who inclines to the Non-diffused; this teaching is not for one who inclines to worldly diffuseness and delights in it."" [6]

The Buddha said that when Anuruddha contemplates these eight thoughts, he will be able to attain at will the four meditative absorptions. He would then no longer be affected by worldly things, but would regard the four simple requisites of a monk [7] in the same way as a lay person would enjoy his luxuries. These requisites would make his mind joyous and unperturbed, and thus be helpful to his attainment of Nibbāna. In parting, the Buddha advised Anuruddha to stay on at the Eastern Bamboo Grove. The venerable Anuruddha did so, spending the



rainy season there. It was during this time that he attained the consummation of his striving: he gained Arahantship (*arahatta*), which is the state of Nibbāna during life (AN 8:30).

At the hour of his attainment he uttered the following verses:

He knew my heart's intent, the Master, he Whose  
peer the world has not, he came to me By mystic  
power with body wrought by mind. To me, when  
further truths I wished to learn, The Buddha (the 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.

(AN 8:30; Th 901–03)

## 4. Anuruddha's Cultivation of Mindfulness

The venerable Anuruddha's spiritual path is marked by two prominent features: first, his mastery of the *divine eye* and other supernormal faculties, and second, his cultivation of the *four foundations of mindfulness* (*satipaṭṭhāna*). He often stressed the wide-ranging potency of an arduous practice of mindfulness.

Frequently, the venerable Anuruddha was asked how he gained proficiency in the “great direct knowledges” (*mahābhiññatā*), which includes the five mundane supernormal types of knowledge and, as sixth, Arahantship. He always replied that it was through the constant practice of the four foundations of mindfulness (SN 47:28; SN 2:3,6,11), mentioning in particular the supernormal powers (*iddhividha*; SN 52:12) and his recollection of former lives extending to a thousand aeons (SN 52:10). He also said that the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) enabled him to gain that perfect control of emotive reactions called the “power of the Noble Ones” (*ariya-iddhi*), by which one can regard the repulsive as non-repulsive, and the non-repulsive as repulsive, or view both with equanimity. (SN 52:1) [8] He further stresses the importance of that practice by saying that whoever neglects it is also neglecting the Noble Eightfold Path (SN 52:2), and that this fourfold mindfulness leads to the end of craving (*taṇhakkhaya*; SN 52:7). Just as the river Ganges would not deviate from its course to the ocean, in the same manner a monk who practises the four foundations of mindfulness could not be deflected from his life as a monk and made to return to the worldly life (SN 52:8).

Once, when Anuruddha was ill, he surprised the monks by his equanimity in bearing pain. They asked him how he was able to bear up as he did, and he replied that his composure was due to his practice of the fourfold mindfulness (SN 52:10). Another time the venerable Sāriputta came to see

Anuruddha in the evening and asked him what he now regularly practised so that his facial expression was always one of happiness and serenity. Anuruddha again said that he spent the time in the regular practice of the four foundations of mindfulness, and that this was the way in which Arahants live and practise. The venerable Sāriputta thereupon expressed his joy at having heard Anuruddha declare his attainment in such a way (SN 52:9). Once, when questioned by Sāriputta and Mahā Moggallāna about the difference between those who are still “in training” toward Arahantship (*sekha*) [9] and an Arahant who is “beyond training” (*asekha*), he said that they differ in the practice of the fourfold mindfulness: while the former accomplishes it only partly, the latter does so completely and perfectly (SN 52:4–5). Anuruddha also professed to possess those lofty qualities called the “ten powers of a Tathāgata” (*dasa tathāgatabala*), though as the Commentary remarks, he possessed them only in part and to a lesser degree than a Buddha (SN 52:15–24).

## 5. Anuruddha and Women

While most of Anuruddha’s talks cited so far dealt with topics of meditation, there are also quite a number of texts concerning women whom Anuruddha had met: There is, for instance, a text in which the following incident is told.

Once, when Anuruddha lived alone in a forest, a female deity from the realm of the Thirty-three gods, Jālinī by

name, appeared before him. In Anuruddha's previous existence, when he was Sakka, the ruler of that celestial realm of the Thirty-three gods where she still lived, she had been his wife and chief queen. Out of her old attachment to him, she longed to be reunited with him in that heavenly world where they had lived together. So she urged him now to aspire for rebirth into that world. But Anuruddha replied:

“On bad course, truly, are those celestial maidens  
Who, in attachment, cling to selfhood and desire. On  
bad course likewise are those beings  
Who would be husbands of these celestial maidens.

But that deity had no understanding for words and ideas such as these and thus she replied:

“They do not know of happiness  
Who have not seen the 'Joyous Pleasance,' Which is  
the mighty gods' abode,  
The glorious gods of Thirty-three.”

Anuruddha:

“You do not understand, O fool, The words declared  
by Arahants: 'Impermanent are all conditioned  
things, Subject to rising and decay.  
Having arisen, they will disappear, Their ceasing is  
happiness.'  
No longer shall I dwell, O Jālinī, In deities' realms.  
For me Rebirth has come to end.”

On another occasion, many female deities called “the Graceful Ones” appeared before him, and having saluted him, they told him all the marvellous things they could do. They could instantly assume any colour they wanted; they could produce any sound or voice at will; and third, they could obtain instantly any pleasurable feeling they wanted. To test them, Anuruddha mentally wished that they would become blue; and so they became blue, as they could read his thoughts. When he wished them to change into other colours, they did that too. Now these female deities thought that Anuruddha was pleased with their presence and they started to sing and dance very beautifully. But the venerable Anuruddha turned his senses away from them. When the deities noticed that Anuruddha did not find pleasure in their performance, they instantly left (SN 9:6).

If we remember how Anuruddha had spent his youth as a prince, enchanted by the arts and music, we may understand better how this scene could still belong to him. Had he not listened to the Buddha’s words, he might quite possibly have taken rebirth among these deities who were superior in rank to the Thirty-three Gods.

Anuruddha must have thought this experience worth telling, for when he saw the Buddha in the evening he recounted it to him. He then raised the question: What attributes should a woman have to be reborn in the realm of those graceful spirits? His thirst for knowledge made him

wish to know the moral level of these deities. The Buddha replied willingly and said that eight qualities were needed in order to be reborn in that realm. First, the wife has to show willingness and friendliness towards her husband. Second, she should be courteous and hospitable towards people her husband holds dear, such as his parents and certain ascetics and priests. Third, she should do her housework carefully and with diligence. Fourth, she was to care for and guide the employees in a purposeful manner. Fifth, she should not squander her husband's possessions, but should guard them well. Sixth, she should not be given to alcoholic drinks and should not be a cause for her husband's ruin. Seventh, as a lay follower, she should take refuge in the Triple Gem and should observe the five moral precepts. And last, she should find joy in sharing and be generous in giving, showing concern for those in need (AN 8:46).

While on both these occasions female deities materialised before Anuruddha, there are other reports in which Anuruddha directs the power of his divine eye to understand how women are born in heaven or in hell. He also once asked the Buddha which qualities led a woman to hellish worlds and he was told that there were primarily five: lack of spiritual faith, lack of shame and moral scruples, anger, and lack of wisdom; further, such qualities as revengefulness, jealousy, avarice, committing adultery, immorality, sloth and lack of mindfulness would also lead to rebirth in hell. Only those with the opposite qualities

would be reborn in a heavenly world (SN 37:5–24). Another time Anuruddha reported to the Buddha that he had often seen how a woman after her death was reborn in a lower world, even in hell. The Buddha replied that there are three harmful qualities which will lead a woman to hell: if in the morning she is full of avarice, at noon full of envy, and in the evening full of sensual desire (AN 3:127).

Reports of Anuruddha's past lives also refer to his relation to women. There is only one instance that mentions his rebirth as an animal. Once, when he was reborn as a wood pigeon, his mate was seized by a hawk. Tormented by passion and grief, he decided to fast until he had overcome his love for her and the grief of separation.

Once full of greediness my mate and I Sported like  
lovers both about this spot. Her a hawk pounced on,  
and away did fly. So, torn from me, she whom I  
loved was not! In various ways my cruel loss I know;  
I feel a pang in everything I see; Therefore to fasting  
vows for help I go, That passion never may come  
back to me.M

(J 490; trans. R. A. Neil)

Other rebirth stories tell us the following: Once when Anuruddha was born as a king he saw a lovely fairy woman in the forest, fell in love with her and shot at her husband in order to possess her. Full of the pain of sorrow, she cried out and denounced the king's cruelty. Hearing her accusations,

the king sobered up and went his way. At that time Anuruddha was the king, Yasodharā was the fairy woman, and her husband was the Bodhisatta, who was now Anuruddha's Master and whom in that past life he had almost killed out of lust for a woman (J 485).

In a divine form of existence, as Sakka, king of the gods, he helped the Bodhisatta to regain his reputation when he was the famous musician Guttīla. As a test three times he made appear on earth three hundred celestial maidens who danced when Guttīla played on his lute. Then Sakka invited Guttīla into his heavenly world at the request of the heavenly nymphs who wanted to hear his music. After he had played to them, he asked them to tell him which good deeds had brought them to this heavenly world. They told him that in the past they had given small gifts to monks, heard their discourses, shared what they had with others, and were without anger and pride. Hearing this, the Bodhisatta rejoiced in the benefit he had thus gained in his visit to Sakka's heaven (J 243).

In Anuruddha's life as a monk, there was one incident which led to the promulgation of a disciplinary rule by the Buddha. Anuruddha and his brother Ānanda were the only ones among the close circle of the Buddha's disciples who occasioned the setting forth of a Vinaya rule. In both cases it concerned women. [10]

Once the venerable Anuruddha was wandering through the kingdom of Kosala towards Sāvattihī. In the evening he



reached a village and found that there was no place in it where wandering ascetics and monks could stay. At the village inn, which was managed by a woman, he asked for a night's lodging and this was granted. Meanwhile more travellers began to arrive at the inn to stay for the night, and the dormitory where Anuruddha was to stay became crowded. The inn hostess, seeing this, told the venerable Anuruddha that she could prepare his bedding in an inside room where he could spend the night peacefully. Silently Anuruddha agreed. She, however, had made this suggestion only because she had fallen in love with him. She now perfumed herself, put on her jewellery and thus approached Anuruddha, saying: "You, respected sir, are handsome, you are graceful and good looking. And so am I. It will be good if the respected sir will take me as his wife."

Anuruddha, however, remained silent. Then the inn hostess offered him all her riches. Anuruddha still remained silent. Then the woman took off her upper garment and danced in front of him, sat down, lay down in front of him. But Anuruddha had his senses well under control and paid no attention to her. Seeing that none of her allurements moved him, she exclaimed: "Astonishing it is, dear sir, extraordinary! So many men have offered me hundreds and thousands to win me. But this ascetic whom I myself have asked does not desire my wealth or me!"

The woman then put on her upper garment again, fell at Anuruddha's feet and asked for forgiveness for having tried to seduce a venerable ascetic. He now opened his mouth for

the first time to pardon her, exhorting her to guard herself in the future. She then left. On the next morning she brought him his breakfast as if nothing had happened. Anuruddha then proceeded to give her a talk on Dhamma which so touched her that she became a devout lay follower of the Buddha.

Anuruddha, however, continued his journey and when he reached the monastery at Sāvattthī he told the monks about his adventure. The Buddha called him and reproached him for having spent the night in a woman's quarters. He then proclaimed a rule which prohibited this (Vinaya, Sutta Vibhaṅga, Pācittiya 6).

This story shows well the venerable Anuruddha's self-restraint which had saved him from becoming a slave to sense-impressions. His strength of character had made such a deep impression on that woman that she repented, listened to him and took refuge in the Buddha. Thus Anuruddha's self-control was not only for his own good, but also brought benefit to the woman. But when the Buddha yet reprimanded him, he did so because weaker characters could well succumb to temptation in such situations. Hence, out of compassion for them, the Buddha prescribed the rule that a monk should not expose himself to such dangers. Frequently we can observe that the Buddha wanted to prevent weaker characters from over-rating their strength and trying to emulate an ideal too high for them.

This story closely parallels a similar experience which befell

St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who resembles Anuruddha in his strength of will. One day, as a young monk, Bernard came to an inn and asked for lodgings for the night. He was offered a bench in the public room, as there was no other place available. The innkeeper's daughter had fallen in love with that handsome young Cistercian monk and went to him during the night. He, however, turned to the wall, drew his cape up and said to her, "If you are looking for a place to sleep, there is room enough!" This total disinterest in her person sobered her and she slinked away ashamed. Like Anuruddha, he too had mastered the situation, not through arguments, but simply through the strength of his purity.

## 6. Various Experiences

Once the court carpenter, Pañcakaṅga by name, invited venerable Anuruddha for an alms meal. From other texts we know that Pañcakaṅga was a person well versed in the Dhamma and devoted to its practice. So, after the meal, he asked a rather subtle question from the venerable Anuruddha. He said that some monks had advised him to practise the "measureless liberation of mind," and others recommended the "exalted liberation of mind." He wanted to know whether these two are different or the same.

Anuruddha replied that these two meditations are different. The "measureless liberation of mind" [11] is the cultivation of loving kindness, compassion, altruistic joy and equanimity. But the "exalted liberation of mind" [12] is the

meditative practice of widening the inner perception from a limited extent to a vast ocean-like extent.

After giving this instruction to Pañcakaṅga, Anuruddha spoke of a class of deities, the Radiant Gods, [13] and said that although they all belong to the same order of celestial beings, there are differences among them in their radiance, which may be limited or measureless, pure or not quite pure. He explained that these divergences are due to the different quality of the meditation that had caused their rebirth in that world. On being questioned by a monk, Anuruddha confirmed that his intimate knowledge about these deities derived from his own experience, saying that he had previously lived with them and conversed with them (MN 127).

There is yet another scene in which Anuruddha figures. Once the Buddha was sitting in the open, surrounded by many monks whom he was teaching. On the occasion he asked the venerable Anuruddha whether they all were contented in leading the ascetic life. When Anuruddha confirmed this, the Buddha praised such contentment and said:

Those who have left the home life while still young, becoming monks in the prime of their life, did not do so fearing punishment by kings, nor being motivated by loss of property, by debts, worries or poverty. Rather, they took to the ascetic life out of their faith in the Dhamma and inspired by the goal of liberation. What should such a one do? If he

has not yet gained the peace and happiness of the meditative absorptions or something higher, then he should strive to get rid of the five mental hindrances and other defilements of the mind so that he may achieve the bliss of meditation or a peace that is still higher.

In concluding his discourse, the Buddha said that when he declares the attainment and future destiny of disciples who have died, he does so to inspire others to emulate their example. These words of the Blessed One gave much contentment and joy to the venerable Anuruddha (MN 68).

Once one of the Brahma gods conceived the idea that no ascetic would be able to penetrate to the heights of the Brahma-world. When the Buddha perceived in his mind the thoughts of that deity, he appeared before him in a blaze of light. Four of his great disciples—the venerables Mahā Moggallāna, Mahā Kassapa, Mahā Kappina and Anuruddha—considered at that time where the Blessed One might then be dwelling, and with their divine eyes they saw him seated in the Brahma-world. Then, by their supernormal power, they too appeared in that heavenly world and sat down at a respectful distance from the Buddha. Seeing this, the deity was cured of his pride and acknowledged the superior power of the Buddha and his disciples (SN 6:5).

Another time the venerable Anuruddha had woken up in the middle of the night and recited verses of the Dhamma until dawn broke. A female spirit with her small son was listening devoutly to the recitation and she told her son he

should be very quiet: “It may be, if we understand the holy words and live accordingly, that it will be a great blessing for us and may free us from rebirth in the lower spirit worlds” (SN 10:6).

At the time when there was a quarrel between two groups of monks at Kosambī, the venerable Ānanda went to see the Buddha, who asked him whether that quarrel had been settled. Ānanda had to tell him that the quarrel still continued: a pupil of his brother Anuruddha insisted on creating disharmony in the Sangha, and to this the venerable Anuruddha did not say a word. This happened at a time when Anuruddha, together with Nandiya and Kimbila, had gone to the Gosīṅga Forest to devote themselves to a strictly meditative life. Ānanda’s criticism was that Anuruddha had taken on pupils and then did nothing to guide them when there was discord among them.

The Buddha, however, came to Anuruddha’s defence, saying that there was no need for Anuruddha to concern himself with that. There are others like Ānanda himself, Sāriputta or Mahā Moggallāna who are quite capable of dealing with such disputes. Besides, there are incorrigible monks who are quite pleased when others quarrel as this would divert attention from their own bad conduct and thus they could avoid being sent away (AN 4:241).

An example of this is the story of two conceited monks who tried to outdo each other in disputations. One of them was a

pupil of Ānanda, of whom we know how carefully he concerned himself with all affairs of the Sangha; the other monk was a pupil of Anuruddha who, as we saw above, had a more detached attitude. Those two vainglorious monks just acted according to their character though they had different teachers to guide them (SN 16:6).

## 7. Anuruddha's Earlier Lives

Of Anuruddha's earlier lives, we have several stories handed down to us, especially in the Jātakas, the Birth Stories. Once when he was a poor man, he made a gift to an ascetic (Th 910) and at the time of the Buddha Kassapa he had honoured his grave by lighting oil lamps.

Anuruddha said of himself:

I know my former lives, and where and how I lived  
in years gone by; among the gods Thirty and Three 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 Jambudīpa chief,  
Using no force or arms I ruled by right.

Thence seven, and other seven spans of life, Even  
fourteen former births I recognise, Even then when in  
the world of gods reborn.

(Th 913–15)

In the Jātaka tales, there are no less than twenty-three

accounts telling us of Anuruddha's earlier lives. In most cases he was Sakka, king of the gods (J 194, 243, 347, 429, 430, 480, 494, 499, 537, 540, 541, 545, 547). Once he was Sakka's messenger, a deity called Pañcasikha, who was a celestial musician. In the seven earthly lives that are mentioned, he was most often an ascetic (J 423, 488, 509, 522), and he was twice a brother of the Bodhisatta. In three other lives of his human rebirth he was a king (J 485), a court priest (J 515) and a court charioteer (J 276). Only once his rebirth as an animal is reported, namely, as that amorous wood pigeon mentioned above (J 490). As far as is recorded in the jātakas, he was fifteen times a deity, seven times a human being, and once an animal.

The fact that he was so often a king, celestial or human, indicates the power and strength in his nature. But he was quite a different god-king than Zeus with his amorous liaisons, and different also from Jehovah, who often inflicted harsh punishment on people. As Sakka, king of the Thirty-three gods, he was rather one who always protected and helped. When the Bodhisatta was in need of help, he came to his succour. He protected him from being executed when he was defamed. On that occasion the Bodhisatta's wife had raised her voice to high heaven over this injustice:

No gods are here! They must be far away. No gods who over all the world hold sway. Now wild and violent men work their will, For here is no one who could say them nay.



Moved by her entreaty, Sakka—the future Anuruddha took action and saved the Bodhisatta.

When the Bodhisatta was a king, he had forbidden animal sacrifices in his kingdom. A bloodthirsty demon resented this and wanted to kill the king, but Sakka appeared and protected the Bodhisatta again (J 347).

In some other cases Sakka wanted to put the Bodhisatta to a test in order to strengthen his virtue. So in the last of the Jātaka tales, the Vessantara Jātaka Sakka, in the guise of an old brahmin, asked the Bodhisatta for his wife in order to test his joyful generosity (J 547). On another occasion Sakka also wanted to test whether the Bodhisatta was firm in his vow of generosity and asked him for his eyes (J 499). When the Bodhisatta was leading the life of an ascetic, Sakka wanted to test his patience and forbearance and blamed him for his physical ugliness. The Bodhisatta told him of his ugly deeds that had made him so ugly, and he praised the goodness and purity for which he was now striving. Then Sakka said that he would grant him a wish. What the Bodhisatta asked for was freedom from malice, hate, greed and lust; further he wished that he might never hurt anyone. All that, it was explained, was not in Sakka's power to grant, but has to come from one's own moral effort (J 440). Sakka also tested the Bodhisatta's frugality (J 429, 430).

In a third group of accounts, Sakka invited the Bodhisatta to

his heaven and showed him the mysteries of the celestial and the hell worlds. This was told in the story of the musician Guttala which we have already recounted (J 243). In the stories of King Nimi (J 541) and of the charitable King Sādhina (J 494), Sakka also invited them to his heaven.

From his lives as a human being, the following episodes have been chosen. When Anuruddha was a court brahmin and counsellor, the king asked him how advantageous actions and justice could be combined by a ruler. Without intellectual pride, the brahmin admitted that he could not answer that question. Instead, he went assiduously in search of one who knew, and he found him in the Bodhisatta (J 515). When he was a royal charioteer, he once wanted to avoid a heavy downpour which was threatening. To speed up the horses, he hit them with the goad. From that time on, whenever the horses came to that particular spot on the road, they would start to gallop as if aware of a danger lurking just there. Seeing this, the charioteer regretted deeply that he had frightened and hurt those noble steeds and he admitted that by having done so he did not fully observe the traditional Kuru virtues (J 276).

All these diverse and colourful stories have a common feature. They show several characteristic qualities of Anuruddha: his strong active striving for virtue, his strength of character, as well as his concern for the welfare of others. They also show that his skill in meditation and his mastery of supernormal faculties had their roots in his experiences during many lives as Sakka, ruler of the gods.

## 8. The Death of the Buddha and Afterwards

The venerable Anuruddha was present in the last hours before the Buddha's decease, recounted in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (DN 16) . When the Master knew that death was close, he entered into the full sequence of the meditative absorptions on the fine-material and immaterial levels, and then entered the state of cessation of perception and feeling (*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*).

At that moment Ānanda turned to his brother, the venerable Anuruddha, saying: "Revered Anuruddha, the Blessed One has passed away." But Anuruddha, an Arahant endowed with the divine eye, had been able to gauge the level of meditation into which the Buddha had entered, and he said: "Not so, friend Ānanda the Blessed One has not passed away. He has entered the state of cessation of perception and feeling."

The Buddha, however, rising from that attainment of cessation, turned his mind back to the stages of immaterial absorption in their reverse order until he reached the first *jhāna*, then rose up again to the fourth fine-material *jhāna*, and rising from it he instantly passed away into the Nibbāna-element which is without any remainder of the aggregates of existence.

When the Enlightened One had finally passed away, Brahma the High Divinity and Sakka, king of the Thirty-three gods, honoured the Buddha in verses evoking the law of impermanence. The third to speak was Anuruddha who

uttered these verses:

No movement of the breath, but with a steadfast  
heart,  
Desireless and tranquil comes the Sage to his end.  
With heart unshaken by any painful feeling,  
Like a flame extinguished, found his mind release.

Many of the monks attending the Buddha's last hours grieved and lamented over the Master's death. But Anuruddha exhorted them and told them that many deities were also present. Among them, too, there were those who lamented and others who contained their grief. But had not the Master always taught them the impermanence of all? And so, just that had happened.

The venerable Anuruddha and the venerable Ānanda spent the rest of the night near the deceased Master. In the morning, Anuruddha asked Ānanda to announce the passing away of the Blessed One to the householders living in the next village, Kusinārā. At once they gathered and prepared the funeral pyre. When, however, eight strong men tried to lift the body up to the pyre, they could not do so. They then went to the venerable Anuruddha and asked for the reason why the body could not be moved. Anuruddha told them that the deities wanted a different ceremony and explained it to them, whereupon all happened just as intended by the deities.

With regard to the procedure of burning the body, the

householders turned to the venerable Ānanda for advice. This shows the different competence of the two brothers. Anuruddha was master of otherworldly affairs, while Ānanda was well versed in matters concerning the worldly life (DN 16).

After the Buddha's demise, the guidance of the Order did not go to his next of kin, as for instance the Arahant Anuruddha. The Buddha had not nominated any formal successor, but the natural veneration of the monks and lay people concentrated on the venerable Mahā Kassapa. It was he who initiated the First Council at which five hundred Arahant monks took part in establishing a final text of the Buddha's teachings. Before the Council opened, the venerable Ānanda had not yet attained to Arahantship and this would have excluded him from participating in the Council. It was his brother Anuruddha who urged him to make a determined effort to break through the last fetters and realise final liberation. Within a short time Ānanda succeeded and so as an Arahant could join the other Arahants in the Council. During its sessions, he recited the numerous teachings which he of all monks had best retained in his memory.

In this manner Anuruddha had helped his brother to attain the goal of liberation, for the good of the Sangha and for the good of all seekers looking for a way out of the existential dilemma; and this has remained a blessing for us even today. Anuruddha himself was entrusted at the Council with the preservation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, according to

the commentary to the Dīgha Nikāya.

About the venerable Anuruddha's death nothing else is known except the serene last stanzas of his twenty verses in the "Songs of the Elders":

The Buddha has my loyalty and love, And all the  
Buddha's ordinance is done. Low have I laid the  
heavy load I bore, Cause for rebirth is found in me no  
more. In Veḷuva, in Vajjian land it will be  
That life will reach its final term for me;  
And I beneath bamboo-thicket's shade that day Free  
from all taints, shall wholly pass away.

(Th 918–19)

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# Notes

1. The three knowledges (*tevijjā*) are: remembrance of former rebirths, the divine eye, and extinction of the cankers (*āsavakkhaya*, i.e. Arahantahip).
2. Translated by Ñāṇamoli (Kandy, Buddhist Publication Society, 1979). Ch. XIII, §§ 95-101, pp. 469–471.
3. *Obhāsa-saññā*; this is the inner vision of light preparatory to fully absorbed concentration (Comy.: *parikammobhāsa*).
4. *Rūpānaī dassana*. Comy.: seeing them with the divine eye.
5. The Commentary says that this may occur when the range of the inner light is widened excessively.
6. “The Non-diffused” (*nippapañca*) is the final freedom from the vast multiplicity and complexity of phenomenal existence, i.e. Nibbāna. “Diffuseness” (*papañca*) accordingly means existence in its aspect of enormous variety.
7. The four requisites are robes, almsfood, shelter and medicine.
8. See Nyanaponika, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (London, Rider & Co. 1962), p.181 and note 45.
9. These are the stream-enterer, the once-returner and the

non-returner.

10. In the case of Ānanda it was Pācittiya Rule 83 that was proclaimed.
11. *Appamāṇā cetovimutti*. This is another name for the four sublime states (*brahmavihāra*) on the level of *jhāna*.
12. *Mahaggatā cetovimutti*. This meditation proceeds by widening the inner perception and is obtained by expanding the reflex image (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*) of the *kaṣiṇa* which arises by concentration on a limited surface of earth, water, colour disks, etc.
13. *Ābhassarā devā*. Their realm within the fine-material sphere (*rūpāvacara*) corresponds to the level of the second *jhāna*.

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