

# 4

## (Arahatta) Anuruddha Sutta

The Discourse on Anuruddha | A 3.128 [A:B 3.130]  
or, **Dutiya Anuruddha Sutta**, the Second Discourse on Anuruddha  
Theme: Anuruddha's awakening  
Translated by Piya Tan ©2005

### 1 Anuruddha

**1.1** 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*),<sup>1</sup> for which he is declared to be foremost amongst the monks (A 1:23). At this point, the Aṅguttara Commentary<sup>2</sup> on **the Anuruddha Mahā, vitakka Sutta** (A 8.30)<sup>3</sup> essentially reports the events of **the (Arahatta) Anuruddha Sutta**, where Sāriputta admonishes Anuruddha to overcome his conceit, restlessness and worry.

**1.2** Evidently, it is at this point that Sāriputta teaches Anuruddha the eight thoughts of the great man (*mahā, purisa, vitakka*).<sup>4</sup> 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.

**1.3** Anuruddha then leaves for Pācīna, vaṃsa, dāya in the Cetī country, to practise this meditation. Here The Aṅguttara 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,”<sup>5</sup> 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,<sup>6</sup> the Buddha visits him (in a holographic form, Tha 901) and teaches him the eighth. Thereupon Anuruddha develops insight and realizes full-fledged arhathood.

### 2 Anuruddha's awakening

#### **2.1 HOW ANURUDDHA AWAKENED**

##### **2.1.1 Anuruddha's meditation problems**

2.1.1.1 The nature of Anuruddha's awakening is very instructive in terms of meditation. **The (Arahatta) Anuruddha Sutta** (A 3.128), records how Sāriputta helps solve Anuruddha's meditation problem. Anuruddha reports to Sāriputta that he is able to see the thousandfold world with the divine eye. Of his meditation, he explains: “I have put forth effort, and established myself in unflinching unconfused mindfulness, my body is unexcited, bright with faith, the mind is concentrated in oneness.” Still, he complains, he is unable to attain arhathood.

2.1.1.2 Sāriputta gives a very insightful analysis as follows:

- (1) Anuruddha's notion (not the fact) that “I see the thousandfold world with the divine eye, purified and superhuman”—this is due to **conceit** (*māna*).
- (2) Anuruddha's view, “Moreover, I have put forth effort, established myself in unflinching mindfulness, unconfused, my body is unexcited, bright with faith, the mind concentrated in oneness”—this is due to **restlessness** (*uddhacca*). (Note that Anuruddha states that he is “unexcited.”)
- (3) Anuruddha's remark, “But my mind is not released, through not clinging, from the influxes”—this is due to **worry** (*uddhacca*).

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

<sup>2</sup> AA 4:117 f.

<sup>3</sup> A 8.40/2:228-235 (SD 19.5).

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

<sup>5</sup> *So padhāna, vega, nimmāthitattā kilanta, kāyo* (AA 4:118).

<sup>6</sup> Anuruddha is probably unable to recall the eighth and last thought.

“Then,” recounts the Sutta, “the venerable Anuruddha, in due course, abandoned these three states, not attending to them, but directed the mind to the death-free element.” In due course, he attains arhat-hood.<sup>7</sup>

### **2.1.2 Sāriputta’s analyses**

2.1.2.1 Sāriputta’s analysis and feedback on Anuruddha’s meditation difficulties may be explained as follows (the numbering follows Anuruddha’s remarks above):

(1) Anuruddha’s ability to see the whole galaxy (the thousandfold world) psychically is not the issue here. The problem is that seems to view this experiences as an integral part of his spiritual progress. From Sāriputta’s feedback, we may surmise that Anuruddha thinks that he has developed his psychic powers in a more advanced manner than many others. This view is based on **conceit**: this is a fetter (*samyojana*).

(2) Anuruddha’s view that he has asserted himself to the extent of gaining deep dhyana—he is even “unexcited” about it. The point is that he has expected that such a profound state *should* have brought him awakening. He is goal-oriented. This is **restlessness**, and this is a fetter.

(3) Anuruddha’s third remark confirms his notion that his psychic power and dhyana attainment *should* have brought him arhat-hood. He has been very scrupulous in method but fails to get into the right mood, so to speak—like rookie concert pianist who has mastered the techniques of piano playing perfectly, but he does not lose himself in his playing: he has yet to see himself becoming the music he is playing.

This **worry** is not strong enough to be a fetter, but it is certainly a **hindrance** (*nīvaraṇa*) to his meditation. It’s just like the same rookie concert pianist who is worried even after he has mastered the playing techniques—that worry is a hindrance, despite his abilities and genius.

2.1.2.2 This analyses makes good sense when we reflect on them in the light of two related texts; **the (Dasaka) Cetanā’karaṇīya Sutta** (A 10.12) and **the (Ekādasaka) Cetanā’karaṇīya Sutta** (A 11.2). Essentially, the Suttas teach that if we are diligent in keeping the precepts (that is cultivating moral virtue)<sup>8</sup> and cultivating the mind without being goal-oriented<sup>9</sup>—our meditation will progress naturally so that we attain awakening in this life itself.

“Without being goal-oriented” here means that we are not lost in thoughts during our meditation—we keep the meditation thought-free—and we do not see our meditation as any kind of attainment but simply a naturally joyful thing to do. Then, our meditation will naturally progress and we attain our spiritual goal in due course.<sup>10</sup>

## **2.2 WHEN DID ANURUDDHA AWAKEN?**

### **2.2.1 Accounts of Anuruddha’s awakening**

2.2.1.1 There are at least two sutta accounts of Anuruddha’s awakening, that is:

(1) **the Anuruddha Mahā, vitakka Sutta** (A 8.30), SD 19.15;

(2) **the (Arahatta) Anuruddha Sutta** (A 3.120), SD 19.4.

2.2.1.2 (1) **The Anuruddha Mahā, vitakka Sutta** (A 8.30) records how while Anuruddha is residing on solitary retreat in the eastern bamboo park (Pācīna, vaṃsa, dāya), reflects on 7 “thoughts of a great man,” that is, (briefly) the Dharma is for one with few wishes, contented, living in solitude, puts forth effort, mindful, mentally concentrated and wise.”

The Buddha teaches him the 8<sup>th</sup> thought: “The Dharma is for one who rejoices in the non-proliferation of the mind.” Or, more likely, the Buddha has taught him all these 8 thoughts, but he only remembers seven, and the Buddha reminds him of the eighth.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> (Arahatta) Anuruddha S (A 3.128), where he is said to have awakened in the eastern bamboo park (Pācīna, -vaṃsa, dāya), amongst the Cetī people (§§1.2, 32), SD 19.4.

<sup>8</sup> See SD 33.3b (1.2).

<sup>9</sup> See SD 33.3b (1.3).

<sup>10</sup> A 10.2 (SD 41.6) & A 11.2 (SD 33.3b).

<sup>11</sup> A 8.30 (SD 19.5).

2.2.1.3 (2) **The (Arahatta) Anuruddha Sutta** (A 3.120) records Anuruddha as having meditation problems, and he tells Sāriputta about them. Sāriputta then explains where he has gone wrong with his meditation. Following Sāriputta’s advice, Anuruddha attains arhathood in due course.<sup>12</sup>

### 2.2.2 Possible solution

The Aṅguttara Commentary (AA 4:117 ff) on the Anuruddha Mahā, vitakka Sutta essentially reports the events of **the (Arahatta) Anuruddha Sutta** (S 3.128),<sup>13</sup> where Sāriputta admonishes Anuruddha to overcome his conceit, restlessness and worry. Evidently, it is at this point that Sāriputta teaches Anuruddha the 8 thoughts of the great man (*mahā, purisa, vitakka*).<sup>14</sup>

From here, **the Anuruddha Mahā, vitakka Sutta** (A 8.30), picks up the story, but both end by reporting Anuruddha’s arhathood in the same words. Where the (Arahatta) Anuruddha Sutta account ends, the Anuruddha Mahā, vitakka Sutta account continues.<sup>15</sup>

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## The Discourse on Anuruddha (Anuruddha’s awakening)

A 3.128

### 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.<sup>16</sup>

1.2 Sitting thus at 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 surpassing the human eye.

1.3 Further, I have put forth effort, and established myself in unailing unconfused mindfulness, my body is unexcited, bright with faith, the mind is concentrated in oneness.<sup>17</sup>

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

### Sāriputta explains

**2** “Now, avuso Anuruddha, regarding this remark:

‘I see the thousandfold world with the divine eye, purified and superhuman’—

this is due to conceit (*māna*).

2.2 And, avuso Anuruddha, regarding this remark:

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

this is due to restlessness (*uddhacca*).

2.3 And, avuso Anuruddha, regarding this remark:

<sup>12</sup> A 3.128 (SD 19.4).

<sup>13</sup> S 3.128/1:281 f (SD 19.4).

<sup>14</sup> “The great man” (*mahā, purisa*) here refers to the noble ones (*ariya*), ie, a saint on the path (AA 1:191 f).

<sup>15</sup> See SD 19.5 (2), esp (2.3+2.4).

<sup>16</sup> We are not told of the location of this sutta. But see **Anuruddha Mahā, vitakka S** (A 8.30), on his awakening after receiving instructions from the Buddha himself (SD 19.5)

<sup>17</sup> *Āraddham kho pana me viriyam asallīnam upaṭṭhitā sati asammuttā passaddho kāyo asāradhho samāhitam cittam ekaggam.*

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

2.4 Avuso Anuruddha, it will be good indeed if the venerable Anuruddha abandons these three states, not attending to them, but directs the mind to the death-free element.”<sup>18</sup>

### Anuruddha becomes an arhat

**3** Then, the venerable Anuruddha, in due course, abandoned these three states, not attending to them, but directed the mind to the death-free element.

3.2 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 it, 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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<sup>18</sup> “To the deathfree element,” *amatāya dhātuyā*, ie, nirvana. See **(Dhamma,yogi Jhāyī) Mahā Cunda S** (A 6.46): ... *dullābhā lokasmim ye amataṃ dhātum 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.