

MN 143: Anāthapiṇḍikovāda Sutta

The Exhortation to Anāthapiṇḍika

Translated by Suddhāso Bhikkhu

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvatti, in Jeta's Grove, at Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. On this occasion the householder Anāthapiṇḍika¹ was sick, in pain, severely ill. Then Anāthapiṇḍika addressed a certain man: "Hey, man, go and approach the Blessed One, venerate him with your head at his feet, and [address] him using my words: 'Bhante, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika is sick, in pain, severely ill. He venerates the Blessed One with his head at the Blessed One's feet.' Then approach Venerable Sāriputta, venerate him with your head at his feet, and [address] him using my words: 'Bhante, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika is sick, in pain, severely ill. He venerates Venerable Sāriputta with his head at Venerable Sāriputta's feet.' Then say, 'Bhante, it would be good if Venerable Sāriputta came to the householder Anāthapiṇḍika's dwelling, out of compassion.'"

"Yes, sir, that man replied to the householder Anāthapiṇḍika. He approached the Blessed One, paid respects to him, and sat down at one side. When he was seated at one side, that man said to the Blessed One: "Bhante, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika is sick, in pain, severely ill. He pays homage to the Blessed One with his head at the Blessed One's feet." Then he approached Venerable Sāriputta, paid respects to him, and sat down at one side. When he was seated at one side, that man said to Venerable Sāriputta, "Bhante, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika is sick, in pain, severely ill. He venerates Venerable Sāriputta with his head at Venerable Sāriputta's feet. He also says, 'Bhante, it would be good if Venerable Sāriputta came to the householder Anāthapiṇḍika's dwelling, out of compassion.'" Venerable Sāriputta silently consented.

Then Venerable Sāriputta dressed, took his bowl and robe, and approached the householder Anāthapiṇḍika's dwelling, with Venerable Ānanda as his accompanying contemplative². When he arrived, he sat on the designated seat. After sitting down, Venerable Sāriputta said to the householder Anāthapiṇḍika, "Householder, are you enduring? Are you able to keep going? Are your painful feelings subsiding and not increasing? Is their decrease discernible and not their increase?"

"Bhante Sāriputta, I am not enduring, I am not able to keep going. Severe painful feelings increase for me, they do not decrease. Their increase is discernible, not their decrease. Bhante Sāriputta, extreme currents³ [of pain] disturb my head, just as if a strong man was cutting open my head with a sharp blade.

"Bhante Sāriputta, I am not enduring, I am not able to keep going. Severe painful feelings increase for me, they do not decrease. Their increase is discernible, not their decrease. Bhante Sāriputta, there are extreme feelings [of pain] in my head, just as if a strong man was crushing my head with a leather vice.

1 Anāthapiṇḍika was one of the Buddha's foremost lay disciples, particularly renowned for his generosity. He donated the land for the monastery at Jeta's Grove, which is why it is called "Anāthapiṇḍika's Park."

2 *Pacchā-samaṇa*. Lit. "the contemplative [who comes] behind."

3 *Vātā*. Lit. "winds." This is presumably a metaphor for physical sensation.

“Bhante Sāriputta, I am not enduring, I am not able to keep going. Severe painful feelings increase for me, they do not decrease. Their increase is discernible, not their decrease. Bhante Sāriputta, extreme currents [of pain] slice through my belly, just as if a skilled butcher or his apprentice was slicing open my belly with a butcher's knife.

“Bhante Sāriputta, I am not enduring, I am not able to keep going. Severe painful feelings increase for me, they do not decrease. Their increase is discernible, not their decrease. Bhante Sāriputta, there is extreme fever in my body, just as if two strong men took a weaker man by his limbs and roasted him over a charcoal pit.

“Bhante Sāriputta, I am not enduring, I am not able to keep going. Severe painful feelings increase for me, they do not decrease. Their increase is discernible, not their decrease.”

[Venerable Sāriputta's reply]

“Therefore, householder, this is how you are to train: 'I will not cling to the eye, and my consciousness will not be dependent on the eye.' Householder, this is how you are to train.

“Therefore, householder, this is how you are to train: 'I will not cling to the ear... the nose... the tongue.. the body... the mind, and my consciousness will not be dependent on the mind.' Householder, this is how you are to train.

“Therefore, householder, this is how you are to train: 'I will not cling to visible objects... sounds... fragrances... flavors... tangible objects... thoughts, and my consciousness will not be dependent on thoughts.' Householder, this is how you are to train.

“Therefore, householder, this is how you are to train: 'I will not cling to eye-consciousness... ear-consciousness... nose-consciousness... tongue-consciousness... body-consciousness... mind-consciousness, and my consciousness will not be dependent on mind-consciousness⁴.' Householder, this is how you are to train.

“Therefore, householder, this is how you are to train: 'I will not cling to eye-contact... ear-contact... nose-contact... tongue-contact... body-contact... mind-contact, and my consciousness will not be dependent on mind-contact.' Householder, this is how you are to train.

“Therefore, householder, this is how you are to train: 'I will not cling to feelings produced by eye-contact... feelings produced by ear-contact... feelings produced by nose-contact... feelings produced by tongue-contact... feelings produced by body-contact... feelings produced by mind-contact, and my consciousness will not be dependent on feelings produced by mind-contact.' Householder, this is how you are to train.

4 This statement makes it clear that, in this series of training injunctions, “consciousness” (*viññāṇa*) is being used in a broader sense than its usual meaning of sense-consciousness. Rather it appears to mean awareness that is not bound to any one of the six senses. We find “consciousness” used in this broader sense only on rare occasion throughout the Suttas.

“Therefore, householder, this is how you are to train: ‘I will not cling to the earth-element⁵... the water-element... the fire-element.. the air-element... the space-element... the consciousness-element, and my consciousness will not be dependent on the consciousness-element.’ Householder, this is how you are to train.

“Therefore, householder, this is how you are to train: ‘I will not cling to the body... feelings... recognition... mental formations... consciousness⁶, and my consciousness will not be dependent on consciousness.’ Householder, this is how you are to train.

“Therefore, householder, this is how you are to train: ‘I will not cling to the dimension of infinite space... the dimension of infinite consciousness... the dimension of nothingness.. the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, and my consciousness will not be dependent on the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.’ Householder, this is how you are to train.

“Therefore, householder, this is how you are to train: ‘I will not cling to this world... another world, and my consciousness will not be dependent on another world.’ Householder, this is how you are to train.

“Therefore, householder, this is how you are to train: ‘I will not cling to anything that is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought, pursued, or investigated by the mind, and my consciousness will not be dependent on that.’ Householder, this is how you are to train.”

When this was said, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika cried out and burst into tears. Then Venerable Ānanda said to the householder Anāthapiṇḍika, “Householder, are you losing momentum? Householder, are you subsiding?”

“Bhante Ānanda, I am not losing momentum, and I am not subsiding. However, for a long time I have visited the Teacher⁷ and [other] well-respected monks, and I have never before heard a Dhamma talk like this.”

“Householder, Dhamma talks like this are not given to white-clad householders. Dhamma talks like this are given to renunciates.”

“Therefore, Bhante Sāriputta, give Dhamma talks like this to white-clad householders! Bhante, there are clansmen who have little dust in their eyes, who are wasting away because they do not hear the Dhamma. There will be some who understand the Dhamma.”

Then, after giving this exhortation to the householder Anāthapiṇḍika, Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Ānanda rose from their seats and left. Not long after they left, the

5 *Dhātu*. There are usually either four or six “elements” listed in the scriptures. These are not objective components of reality, but rather descriptions of our subjective experiences – earth is the experience of solidity, water is the experience of fluidity, fire is the experience of heat, etc.

6 In this context (the five aggregates), “consciousness” refers specifically to “sense-consciousness” - that is, the awareness of a sensory world, as listed above – eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, etc.

7 *Satthā*. An epithet of the Buddha.

householder Anāthapiṇḍika died, and reappeared as a Tusita⁸ deva. Then, late in the night, Anāthapiṇḍika, as a young deva of surpassing beauty, illuminated the entire Jeta's Grove and approached the Blessed One. After approaching and venerating the Blessed One, he stood to one side. While he was standing to one side, the young deva Anāthapiṇḍika spoke to the Blessed One with poetic verses:

“This is Jeta's Grove, frequented by a community of sages,
Inhabited by the King of Dhamma, producing rapture for me.
Activity, knowledge, Dhamma, and virtue - the ultimate livelihood.
By means of this mortals are purified, not by ancestry or wealth.
Therefore a wise person, seeing one's own benefit,
Should wisely investigate the Dhamma, where one may be purified in this way.
A monk who has gone beyond can, at best, only be the equal of Sāriputta
In wisdom, virtue, and peacefulness.”

This is what the young deva Anāthapiṇḍika said. The Teacher approved. Then the young deva Anāthapiṇḍika, thinking “The Teacher has approved of me,” venerated the Blessed One. Having done what was appropriate, he disappeared right there.

Then at the end of the night, the Blessed One addressed the monks: “Monks, late last night a certain young deva of surpassing beauty illuminated the entire Jeta's Grove and approached me. After approaching and venerating me, he stood to one side. While he was standing to one side, that young deva spoke to me with these poetic verses:

'This is Jeta's Grove... in wisdom, virtue, and peacefulness.'

“Monks, this is what the young deva said. Then, thinking 'The Teacher has approved of me,' he venerated me. Having done what was appropriate, he disappeared right there.”

When this was said, Venerable Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Bhante, that young deva was definitely Anāthapiṇḍika. Bhante, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika had deep faith in Venerable Sāriputta.”

“Excellent, excellent, Ānanda! Ānanda, you have attained what can be attained by thought. Ānanda, that young deva was Anāthapiṇḍika.”

This is what the Blessed One said. Satisfied, Venerable Ānanda delighted in the Blessed One's speech.

8 Lit. “contented.”