AN 8.30 — Anuruddha and the Great Thoughts

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Text

Numbered Discourses 8.30

3. Householders

Anuruddha and the Great Thoughts

At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Bhaggas at Crocodile's Bellow, in the deer park at Bhesakaḷā's Wood. And at that time Venerable Anuruddha was staying in the land of the Cetīs in the Park of the East-Raftered Hall. Then as Anuruddha was in private retreat this thought came to his mind:

"This teaching is for those of few wishes, not those of many wishes. It's for the contented, not those who lack contentment. It's for the secluded, not those who enjoy company. It's for the energetic, not the lazy. It's for the mindful, not the unmindful. It's for those with immersion, not those without immersion. It's for the wise, not the witless."

Then the Buddha knew Anuruddha's train of thought. As easily as a strong person would extend or contract their arm, he vanished from the deer park at Bhesakaḷā's Wood in the land of the Bhaggas and reappeared in front of Anuruddha in the Park of the East-Raftered Hall in the land of the Cetīs, and sat down on the seat spread out. Anuruddha bowed to the Buddha and sat down to one side. The Buddha said to him:

"Good, good, Anuruddha! It's good that you reflect on these thoughts of a great man: 'This teaching is for those of few wishes, not those of many wishes. It's for the contented, not those who lack contentment. It's for the secluded, not those who enjoy company. It's for the energetic, not the lazy. It's for the mindful, not the unmindful. It's for those with immersion, not those without immersion. It's for the wise, not the witless.' Well then, Anuruddha, you should also reflect on the following eighth thought of a great man: 'This teaching is for those who don't enjoy proliferating and don't like to proliferate, not for those who enjoy proliferating and like to proliferate.'

First you'll reflect on these eight thoughts of a great man. Then as far as you want, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskillful qualities, you'll enter and remain in the first absorption, which has the rapture and bliss born of seclusion, while placing the mind and keeping it connected.

You'll enter and remain in the second absorption, which has the rapture and bliss born of immersion, with internal clarity and mind at one, without placing the mind and keeping it connected.

You'll enter and remain in the third absorption, where you'll meditate with equanimity, mindful and aware, experiencing for themselves the bliss of which the noble ones declare, 'Equanimous and mindful, one meditates in bliss.'

With the giving up of pleasure and pain and the disappearance of former happiness and sadness, you'll enter and remain in the fourth absorption, without pleasure or pain, with pure equanimity and mindfulness.

First you'll reflect on these eight thoughts of a great man, and you'll get the four absorptions—blissful meditations in this life that belong to the higher mind—when you want, without trouble or difficulty. Then as you live contented, your rag robe will seem to you like a chest full of garments of different colors seems to a householder or householder's child. It will be for your enjoyment, relief, and comfort, and for alighting upon extinguishment.

As you live contented, your scraps of almsfood will seem to you like boiled fine rice with the dark grains picked out, served with many soups and sauces seems to a householder or householder's child. It will be for your enjoyment, relief, and comfort, and for alighting upon extinguishment.

As you live contented, your lodging at the root of a tree will seem to you like a bungalow, plastered inside and out, draft-free, with door fastened and window shuttered seems to a householder or householder's child. It will be for your enjoyment, relief, and comfort, and for alighting upon extinguishment.

As you live contented, your grass mat for lodging will seem to you like a couch spread with woolen covers—shag-piled, pure white, or embroidered with flowers—and spread with a fine deer hide, with a canopy above and red pillows at both ends seems to a householder or householder's child. It will be for your enjoyment, relief, and comfort, and for alighting upon extinguishment.

As you live contented your rancid urine as medicine will seem to you like various medicines—ghee, butter, oil, honey, and molasses—seem to a householder or householder's child. It will be for your enjoyment, relief, and comfort, and for alighting upon extinguishment. Well then, Anuruddha, for the next rainy season residence you should stay right here in the land of the Cetīs in the Park of the East-Raftered Hall."

"Yes, sir," Anuruddha replied.

After advising Anuruddha like this, the Buddha—as easily as a strong person would extend or contract their arm, vanished from the Park of the East-Raftered Hall in the land of the Cetīs and reappeared in the deer park at Bhesakaḷā's Wood in the land of the Bhaggas at Crocodile's Bellow. He sat down on the seat spread out and addressed the mendicants: "Mendicants, I will teach you the eight thoughts of a great man. Listen …

And what are the eight thoughts of a great man? This teaching is for those of few wishes, not those of many wishes. It's for the contented, not those who lack contentment. It's for the secluded, not those who enjoy company. It's for the energetic, not the lazy. It's for the mindful, not the unmindful. It's for those with immersion, not those without immersion. It's for the wise, not the witless. It's for those who don't enjoy proliferating and don't like to

proliferate, not for those who enjoy proliferating and like to proliferate.

‘This teaching is for those of few wishes, not those of many wishes.’ That’s what I said, but why did I say it? A mendicant with few wishes doesn’t wish: ‘May they know me as having few wishes!’ When contented, they don’t wish: ‘May they know me as contented!’ When secluded, they don’t wish: ‘May they know me as secluded!’ When energetic, they don’t wish: ‘May they know me as energetic!’ When mindful, they don’t wish: ‘May they know me as mindful!’ When immersed, they don’t wish: ‘May they know me as immersed!’ When wise, they don’t wish: ‘May they know me as wise!’ When not enjoying proliferation, they don’t wish: ‘May they know me as one who doesn’t enjoy proliferating!’ ‘This teaching is for those of few wishes, not those of many wishes.’ That’s what I said, and this is why I said it.

‘This teaching is for the contented, not those who lack contentment.’ That’s what I said, but why did I say it? It’s for a mendicant who’s content with any kind of robes, almsfood, lodgings, and medicines and supplies for the sick. ‘This teaching is for the contented, not those who lack contentment.’ That’s what I said, and this is why I said it.

‘This teaching is for the secluded, not those who enjoy company.’ That’s what I said, but why did I say it? It’s for a mendicant who lives secluded. But monks, nuns, laymen, laywomen, rulers and their chief ministers, monastics of other religions and their disciples go to visit them. With a mind slanting, sloping, and inclining to seclusion, withdrawn, and loving renunciation, that mendicant invariably gives a talk concerned only with sending them away. ‘This teaching is for the secluded, not those who enjoy company.’ That’s what I said, and this is why I said it.

‘This teaching is for the energetic, not the lazy.’ That’s what I said, but why did I say it? It’s for a mendicant who lives with energy roused up for giving up unskillful qualities and embracing skillful qualities. They’re strong, staunchly vigorous, not slacking off when it comes to developing skillful qualities. ‘This teaching is for the energetic, not the lazy.’ That’s what I said, and this is why I said it.

‘This teaching is for the mindful, not the unmindful.’ That’s what I said, but why did I say it? It’s for a mendicant who’s mindful. They have utmost mindfulness and alertness, and can remember and recall what was said and done long ago. ‘This teaching is for the mindful, not the unmindful.’ That’s what I said, and this is why I said it.

‘This teaching is for those with immersion, not those without immersion.’ That’s what I said, but why did I say it? It’s for a mendicant who, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskillful qualities, enters and remains in the first absorption … second absorption … third absorption … fourth absorption. ‘This teaching is for those with immersion, not those without immersion.’ That’s what I said, and this is why I said it.

‘This teaching is for the wise, not the witless.’ That’s what I said, but why did I say it? It’s for a mendicant who’s wise. They have the wisdom of arising and passing away which is noble, penetrative, and leads to the complete ending of suffering. ‘This teaching is for the wise, not the witless.’ That’s what I said, and this is why I said it.

‘This teaching is for those who don’t enjoy proliferating and don’t like to proliferate, not for those who enjoy proliferating and like to proliferate.’ That’s what I said, but why did I say it? It’s for a mendicant whose mind leaps forth, gains confidence, settles down, and becomes decided regarding the cessation of proliferation. ‘This teaching is for those who don’t enjoy proliferating and don’t like to proliferate, not for those who enjoy proliferating and like to proliferate.’ That’s what I said, and this is why I said it.”

Then Anuruddha stayed the next rainy season residence right there in the land of the Cetīs in the Park of the East-Raftered Hall. And Anuruddha, living alone, withdrawn, diligent, keen, and resolute, soon realized the supreme culmination of the spiritual path in this very life. He lived having achieved with his own insight the goal for which gentlemen rightly go forth from the lay life to homelessness.

He understood: “Rebirth is ended; the spiritual journey has been completed; what had to be done has been done; there is nothing further for this place.” And Venerable Anuruddha became one of the perfected. And on the occasion of attaining perfection he recited these verses:

“Knowing my thoughts,

the supreme Teacher in the world

came to me in a mind-made body,

using his psychic power.

He taught me more

than I had thought of.

The Buddha who loves non-proliferation

taught me non-proliferation.

Understanding that teaching,

I happily did his bidding.

I’ve attained the three knowledges,

and have fulfilled the Buddha’s instructions.”