SN 55.26 — SN 55:26 To Anāthapiṇḍika (1) | Anāthapiṇḍika Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

To Anāthapiṇḍika (1)

Anāthapiṇḍika Sutta (SN 55:26)

At Sāvatthī. Now, on that occasion Anāthapiṇḍika the householder was diseased, in pain, severely ill. Then he said to one of his men, "Come, my good man. Go to Ven. Sāriputta and, on arrival, pay homage to his feet with your head in my name and say 'Venerable sir, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder is diseased, in pain, severely ill. He pays homage with his head to your feet.' Then say: 'It would be good if Ven. Sāriputta would visit Anāthapiṇḍika's home, out of sympathy for him.'"

Responding, "As you say, lord," to Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, the man went to Ven. Sāriputta and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said, "Venerable sir, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder is diseased, in pain, severely ill. He pays homage with his head to your feet." Then he said, "It would be good if Ven. Sāriputta would visit Anāthapiṇḍika's home, out of sympathy for him."

Ven. Sāriputta acquiesced with silence.

Then early in the morning, Ven. Sāriputta—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went to Anāthapiṇḍika's home with Ven. Ānanda as his companion. On arrival, he sat down on a seat made ready. Seated, he said to Anāthapiṇḍika: "I hope you are getting better, householder. I hope you are comfortable. I hope that your pains are lessening and not increasing. I hope that there are signs of their lessening, and not of their increasing."

"I am not getting better, venerable sir. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening."

"Householder, you don't have the type of suspicion1 of the Buddha endowed with which an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person—with the breakup of the body, after death—re-appears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. You have verified confidence in the Buddha: 'Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed.' As you see that verified confidence in the Buddha in yourself, your pains may immediately grow calm.

"Householder, you don't have the type of suspicion of the Dhamma endowed with which an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person—with the breakup of the body, after death—re-appears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. You have verified confidence in the Dhamma: 'The Dhamma is well taught by the Blessed One, to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be experienced by the observant for themselves.' As you see that verified confidence in the Dhamma in yourself, your pains may immediately grow calm.

"Householder, you don't have the type of suspicion of the Saṅgha endowed with which an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person—with the breakup of the body, after death—re-appears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. You have verified confidence in the Saṅgha: 'The Saṅgha of the Blessed One's disciples who have practiced well… who have practiced straight-forwardly… who have practiced methodically… who have practiced masterfully—in other words, the four types of noble disciples when taken as pairs, the eight when taken as individual types2—they are the Saṅgha of the Blessed One's disciples: worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of respect, the incomparable field of merit for the world.' As you see that verified confidence in the Saṅgha in yourself, your pains may immediately grow calm.

“Householder, you don’t have the type of poor virtue endowed with which an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person—with the breakup of the body, after death—re-appears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. You have virtues appealing to the noble ones: untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the observant, ungrasped at, leading to concentration. As you see those virtues appealing to the noble ones in yourself, your pains may immediately grow calm.

“Householder, you don’t have the type of wrong view endowed with which an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person—with the breakup of the body, after death—re-appears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. You have right view. As you see that right view in yourself, your pains may immediately grow calm.

“Householder, you don’t have the type of wrong resolve… wrong speech… wrong action… wrong livelihood… wrong effort… wrong mindfulness… wrong concentration… wrong knowledge… wrong release endowed with which an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person—with the breakup of the body, after death—re-appears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. You have right release.3 As you see that right release in yourself, your pains may immediately grow calm.”

Then Anāthapiṇḍika’s pains immediately grew calm. So he served Ven. Sāriputta & Ven. Ānanda from his very own dish. Then, when Ven. Sāriputta had finished his meal and had rinsed his bowl & hands, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, taking a low seat, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Sāriputta gave his approval with these verses:

One whose conviction in the Tathāgata

is well-established, unshakable;

whose virtue is admirable,

appealing to the noble ones, praised;

who has confidence in the Saṅgha,

& vision made straight:

“Not poor,” they say of him.

Not in vain his life.

So conviction & virtue,

confidence & Dhamma-vision

should be cultivated by the intelligent,

remembering the Buddhas’ teachings.4

Then Ven. Sāriputta, having given his approval to Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, got up from his seat and left.

Then Ven. Ānanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "Well, now, Ānanda, where are you coming from in the middle of the day?"

"Lord, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder was instructed by Ven. Sāriputta with this & this instruction."

"Sāriputta is wise, Ānanda, & greatly discerning, in that he analyzes the four factors of stream entry into ten implications."

Notes

1. Following the Sri Lankan, Burmese, and PTS editions. The Thai edition here has aveccappsādena, "verified confidence," which is surely a mistake.

2. The four pairs are (1) the person on the path to stream-entry, the person experiencing the fruit of stream-entry; (2) the person on the path to once-returning, the person experiencing the fruit of once-returning; (3) the person on the path to non-returning, the person experiencing the fruit of non-returning; (4) the person on the path to arahantship, the person experiencing the fruit of arahantship. The eight individuals are the eight types forming these four pairs.

3. MN 117 states that the path factors of right knowledge and right release apply only to an arahant. Why they are here attributed to Anāthapiṇḍika, who is a stream-winner, the Commentary does not say.

4. In Thailand, these verses are often chanted in ceremonies for dedicating merit to those who have passed away.

See also: MN 143; SN 46:14; AN 10:60