CHAPTER 5
ANŒTHAPIªDIKA AND VISŒKHŒ

5.1. AnŒthapiÓÉika

5.1.1. Introduction

After the accounts of the Noble monks (bhikkhus) and the Noble nuns (bhikkhunÊ) have been mentioned in the second chapter and third chapter, the account of AnŒthapiÓÉika will be mention in this chapter. T AnŒthapiÓÉika means one who gives alms (piÔÉa) to the helpless (anŒtha). He was the richest merchant in SÈvatthi. He was the donor of Jetavana monastery. He supported the Buddha and the Sangha with the four things, robe, food, monastery and medicine. That’s why the Buddha conferred the title of the foremost donor among men. In this chapter his account will be mentioned in detail.
The following account of AnÈthapiÓÉika, the foremost donor among men is taken from A~guttara NikÈya, its commentary, SaÑyutta NikÈya, its commentary, Kuddaka NikÈya, its commentaries such as Dhammapada commentary, TherÊghÊthÊ commentary.

5.1.2. The Meaning of AnÈthapiÓÉika

“Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at SÈvatthi, in Jetavana, the monastery of AnÈthapiÓÉika” Numerous discourses of the Buddha begin with these words, and hence the name of that great lay devotee, AnÈthapiÓÉika, is well known to readers of Buddhist literature. His name means “one who gives alms (piÖÉa) to the helpless (anÈtha),” and is the honorific of the householder Sudatta of the city of SÈvatthi. Who was he? How did he meet the Buddha? What was his relationship to the Teaching? The answers to these questions may be found in the man references to him that occur in the traditional texts.\(^{200}\)

5.1.3. Meeting the Buddha and Attaining SotÈpanna

AnÈthapiÓÉika’s first encounter with the Buddha took place shortly after the Master’s third rains retreat following his Enlightenment. In this early period of his ministry the Buddha had not laid down any regulations regarding dwelling places. The bhikkhus lived wherever they wished—in the woods, at the roots of trees, under overhanging rocks, in ravines, caves, charnel grounds, and the open air. One

\(^{200}\) MN 1. P 61.
day a wealthy merchant of Rëjagaha, capital of the kingdom of Magadha, became a faithful lay follower of the Buddha. Seeing how the monks lived, he suggested to them that they ask their Master whether he would allow them to accept a permanent residence. When the Buddha gave his permission, the merchant at once set about to erect no fewer than sixty dwellings for the monks, explaining that he need to gain merit. With the building of that first Buddhist monastery, the foundation was laid for the spread of the Dhamma, for now there would be a training center for the Order.

This merchant had a brother-in-law, named Sudatta but always called AnÈthapiÓÉika, who was the richest merchant in SÈvatthi. One time, when AnÈthapiÓÉika was traveling on business in the neighboring state of Magadha, he came to Rëjagaha. As usual, his way led him first to his brother-in-law, to whom he was bound by a warm friendship. When he entered the house he found to his astonishment that the household hardly noticed him. Previously he had been accustomed to his brother-in-law’s full attention and to a rousing welcome from the other residents of the house. But now he saw that they were all very busy, eagerly making elaborate preparations. He asked his preoccupied brother-in-law what this meant: “A wedding? A major sacrifice? A visit from the king?” But the brother-in-law explained: “I have invited the Enlightened One and the order of monks here for tomorrow’s meal.”

AnÈthapiÓÉika became attentive: “Did you say ‘the Enlightened One? “Indeed,” answered the brother-in-law, “tomorrow the Enlightened One is coming.” And AnÈthapiÓÉika, hardly able to believe his ears, asked a second and a third time: “Did you say ‘the
Enlightened One’?‖ Then, breathing a deep sigh of relief, he said, “Even the sound alone of these words is indeed rare in this world-the Enlightened One. Can one really see him?” His brother-in-law answered: “Today would not be suitable, but you can go early tomorrow morning.”

That night, as AnÈthapiÔÉika lay down to sleep, he was moved by tumultuous thoughts and feelings. So strong was his anticipation of the next day’s meeting that he woke up three times in the night, thinking it was already daytime. Finally, he arose even before dawn and went out of the city toward the monastery. In the darkness, fear overcame him, doubt and uncertainty stirred within his heart, and all his worldly instincts told him to turn back. But an invisible spirit named SÊvaka urged him to continue on: “A hundred thousand elephants, a hundred thousand horses, a hundred thousand mule-drawn chariots, and a hundred thousand maidens adorned with jewelry and earrings are not worth a sixteenth part of a single step forward.”

“Go forward, householder! Go forward, householder! Going forward is better for you, not turning back again.” And so through the rest of the night AnÈthapiÔÉika walked resolutely on. After a while he saw in the misty dawn a figure walking silently back and forth. AnÈthapiÔÉika stopped. Then the figure called to him in an indescribably melodious voice: “Come, Sudatta!”

AnÈthapiÔÉika was startled at being addressed in this

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201 Vi.4. P. 301.
202 Vi.4. P. 301.
manner, for no one there addressed him by his given name. He was known only as AnÈthapiÓÉîka, and besides, he was unknown to the Buddha and had come unexpectedly. Now he was certain that he was in the presence of the Enlightened One. Overwhelmed by the gravity of the encounter, he fell at the Master’s feet and asked him in a stammering voice: “Did the Enlightened One sleep well?” With his answer to this conventional question the Buddha gave AnÈthapiÓÉîka a glimpse of his real stature:

“The brahmin who is fully quenched, does not cling to sensual pleasures, cool at heart, without acquisitions always indeed sleeps well.”

“Having cut off all attachments, having removed care from the heart, the peaceful one indeed sleeps well for he has attained peace of mind.”

Then the Blessed One, leading AnÈthapiÓÉîka step by step, spoke to him of giving, of virtue, of the heavens; of the perils, vanity, and defiling nature of sensual pleasures; of the benefits of renunciation. When he saw that AnÈthapiÓÉîka was ready in heart and mind-pliant, unobstructed, uplifted and serene-he explained to him the teaching that is unique to the Enlightened One: the Four Noble Truths of suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the path. With that, the dust-free, stainless eye of truth (dhammacakkhu) opened for AnÈthapiÓÉîka: “Whatever has the nature of arising all that has the nature of cessation.” AnÈthapiÓÉîka had understood the truth of the Dhamma, had overcome all doubts, and was without any

203 Vi.4. P. 301.
wavering; certain in his mind, he was now self-dependent in the Master’s Dispensation. He had realized the path and fruit of stream-entry (Sotëpatti).

5.1.4. The Meaning of Sotëpanna

The first noble person is a Sotëpanna individual (Thotëpan in Burmese). A stream-enterer (Stream-winner) has cut off the three sañyojanas (fetters): false view (diÔÔhi-sañyojana), skeptical doubt (viciikkicchÈ-sañyojana), and adherence to rites and rituals (sÈlabbata- parÈmÈsa- sañyojana)\(^\text{204}\). “According to the commentaries, he also cuts off envy (issÈ- sañyojana) and avarice (micchariya- sañyojana). He has freed himself as well from all degrees of defilements strong enough to lead to rebirth in the four woeful planes.\(^\text{205}\) In addition, he has unbrokenable confidence or belief in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, and unbroken sÈla (the five precepts) with the scrupulous attitude in morality; he is free from the rebirth in any of the four woeful realms (}

\(^{204}\) In PÊÄi canonical texts, there are the two different lists of the ten fetters (sañyojanas). One is according to the Suttanta method and the other is according to the Abhidhamma method. First, according to the Suttanta method, the ten fetters are KÈmarÈga-sañyojana (sensual lust), RiparÈga-sañyojana (attachment to fine-material existence), AriparÈga-sañyojana (attachment to immaterial existence), PaÈligha-sañyojana(aversion), mÈna-sañyojana(conceit), DiÔÔhi-sañyojana (wrong view), sÈlabbatapa- rÈsa-sañyojana(adhere), ViciikkicchÈ-sañyojana(doubt), Uddcça-sañyojana (restlessness) and AvijjÈ-sañyojana(ignorance). Second, according to the Abhidhamma method, the ten fetters are KÈmarÈga-sañyojana(sensual lust), BhavarÈga-sañyojana (greed), IssÈ-sañyojana( greed), PaÈligha-sañyojana(aversion), mÈna-sañyojana(conceit), DiÔÔhi-sañyojana(wrong view), sÈlabbataparÈsa-sañyojana (adhere), ViciikkicchÈ-sañyojana(doubt), Macchariya-sañyojana(restlessness) and AvijjÈ-sañyojana (ignorance). Abh, 117-118;

\(^{205}\) Ac-Ab, p. 359.
apâya) and he will not be reborn more than seven times in the human world and celestial worlds\(^{206}\).

He then invited the Blessed One for a meal the next day at the home of his brother-in-law, and the Master accepted. After the meal, Anãthapiõëika asked the Buddha if he might build a monastery for the Order in his hometown of SÈvatthi. The Buddha answered: “The Enlightened One love peaceful places.”

“I understand, O Master, I understand,” answered Anãthapiõëika, overjoyed with the acceptance of his offer\(^{207}\).

### 5.1.5. Offering of Jetavana Monastery

When Anãthapiõëika returned to SÈvatthi, he encouraged the people along the route to receive the Buddha in a respectful manner. Once he arrived in SÈvatthi, he immediately searched for an appropriate location for the monastery. The site had to be neither too close to the city nor too far; it should not be overrun by people in the daytime or noisy at night; it should be accessible to devoted visitors and also fit for those bent on seclusion. At last, in the chain of hills surrounding the city, he found a beautiful forest glade, ideal for the purpose. This was Jetavana-Jeta’s Grove—a glade belonging to Prince Jeta, a son of King Pasenadi.

Anathapindika visited Prince Jeta in his palace and asked if the forest were for sale. The prince answered that he would not sell it even for the appropriate price of eighteen million gold coins. “I will give you that much, right now,” replied Anãthapiõëika, but they

\(^{206}\) Di-N Vol I, 148-149; Ac-Ab, 358-362; Ab-B-T, 563-564; 718-723.

\(^{207}\) Vi.4. P. 301.
were not able to come to terms and went to an arbitrator. The arbitrator ruled that the price should amount to as many gold coins of the eighteen million as could be laid next to each other on the land, and on this basis an agreement of sale was drawn up.

AnÈthapiÕÉika brought many carts filled with gold coins and had the coins spread out upon the site. Finally only one small patch of ground at the entrance remained bare. He gave instruction for more gold to be brought, but Prince Jeta announced that he was prepared to build a mighty gate and tower on that spot at his own expense. This imposing bastion and gate protected the monastery from the outside world, shielding it from the noises of the road and emphasizing the dividing line between the sacred and the mundane. AnÈthapiÕÉika then spent another eighteen million hall, a dining hall, storerooms, walkways, latrines, wells. And lotus ponds for bathing as well as a large surrounding wall. Thus the forest glade was transformed into a monastery and stood apart as a religious sanctuary. To honor both parties to its establishment, the texts always refer to it by two names: “Jeta’s Grove” and “AnÈthapiÕÉika’s monastery.”

When all the preparations had been completed, the Buddha and his monks came to SÈvatthi to take up residence at the new monastery. On their arrival AnÈthapiÕÉika invited them for a meal, after which he asked the Buddha: “How should I proceed with the offering of this Jetavana?” “You may dedicate it to the Sangha of the four quarters, present and future.” And so AnÈthapiÕÉika did. Then the Buddha expressed his appreciation to him:

“They ward off cold and heat and beasts of prey, creeping things,
gnats and rains in the wet season. When the dreaded hot wind arises, that is warded off. To meditate and obtain insight in a shelter and at ease, a dwelling place is praised by the Awakened One as chief gift to an Order. Therefore a wise man looking to his own weal and dwelling places should have built so that learned ones can stay therein. To these food and drink, raiment and lodgings, He should give, to the upright, with mind purified. Then these will teach him Dhamma dispelling every ill. Knowing that Dhamma, he attains NibbÈna, cankerless here.²⁰⁸

The alms meal for the monks was followed by a sumptuous celebration for the laity, with gifts for everyone. This cost another eighteen million, so altogether AnÈthapiÓÉika spent fifty-four million on the headquarters for the Order. Therefore the Buddha declared him to be the foremost patron of the Sangha.²⁰⁹

5.1.6. The Rich Supporter

After establishing the monastery AnÈthapiÓÉika was assiduous in his support for the resident Sangha. He provided the monks dwelling there with all necessities. Each morning he sent rice gruel, and each evening he supplied all the requirements of clothing, almsbowls, and medicines. All repairs and upkeep in Jetavana were undertaken by his servants. Above all, several hundred monks came daily to his home—a seven-story mansion—to receive the forenoon meal. Every day at mealtime his home was

²⁰⁹ AN 1. P. 27. its Comy P. 295.
filled with saffron robes and the ambiance of saintliness.

When King Pasenadi learned of AnÈthapiÔÉika’s generosity, he wished to imitate him, and so he supplied alms for five hundred monks daily. One day, as he was on his way to talk to the monks, he learned from his servants that the monks were taking the food away with them and giving it to their supporters in the city, who would offer it back to them. The king was mystified, for he had always provided very tasty food, and so he asked the Buddha about the reason for the monks’ behavior. The Buddha explained to the king that in the palace the courtiers distributed the food without any inner feeling, just following orders as if they were cleaning out a barn or taking a thief to court. They lacked faith and had no love for the monks. Many of them even thought the monks were parasites living by the labor of the working population. When anything was given in that spirit, no one could feel comfortable accepting it—even when the meal was made of the most delicious food. In contrast, the faithful householders of the city, like AnÈthapiÔÉika and VisÈkhÈ, welcomed the monks and regarded them as spiritual friends who lived for the welfare and benefit of all beings. A humble meal provided by a friend would be worth much more than the most sumptuous meal offered by someone who did not give in the right spirit.210

AnÈthapiÔÉika and VisÈkhÈ were not only the foremost donors in SÈvatthi but their help was frequently solicited by the Buddha whenever something needed to be arranged with the lay community. Yet even AnÈthapiÔÉika’s wealth was not

210 Khu JÈt Comy 3. P. 130-133.
inexhaustible. One day treasures worth eighteen million were swept away by a flash flood and washed into the sea. Moreover, he had lent about the same amount of money to business friends who did not repay him, and he was reluctant to ask for the money back. Since his fortune had amounted to about five times eighteen million, and he had already spent three-fifths of millionaire, had become poor. Nevertheless, despite the hardship, he still continued to provide some food for the monks, even though it was only a modest serving of thin rice gruel,

At that time a spirit lived in AnÈthapiÔÉika’s seven-storied palace above the gate. Whenever the Buddha or a holy disciple entered the house, the spirit, following the law of his realm, was obliged to step down from his place in order to honor them. This, however, was very inconvenient for the spirit, and so he tried to think of a way to keep the monks out of the house. He appeared to a servant and suggested stopping the almsgiving, but the servant paid no attention. Then the spirit tried to turn the son of the house against the monks, but this also failed. Finally, the spirit appeared in his supernatural aura to AnÈthapiÔÉika himself and tried to persuade him that since he was now so impoverished it would be prudent to stop giving alms. The great donor replied that he knew of only three treasures: the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. He said he was intent on looking after these treasures, and he told the spirit to leave his house as there was no place in it for enemies of the Buddha.

Thereupon, the spirit, again following the law of his realm, had to abandon that place. He went to the deity, who was the divine
protector of the city of Sëvatthi and requested an assignment to a new shelter. The deity referred him to a higher court, that of the Four Divine Kings, the deities who collectively ruled over the lowest heaven. But these four also did not feel qualified to make a decision and sent the homeless spirit to Sakka, the king of the devas.

In the meantime, however, the spirit had become aware of his wrong conduct and asked Sakka to seek forgiveness on his behalf. Sakka required that as a penance the spirit help AnëthapiÓÉika to regain his fortune. First the spirit had to retrieve the sunken gold; then he had to procure unclaimed buried treasure; and finally he had to persuade AnëthapiÓÉika’s debtors to repay their debts. With a great deal of effort the spirit fulfilled these tasks. In doing so, he appeared to the debtors in dreams and demanded repayment. Before long AnëthapiÓÉika again had fifty-four million and was able to be as generous as he was formerly.

The spirit appeared now before the Buddha and asked forgiveness for his malevolent behavior. He received forgiveness, and after the Enlightened One had explained the Dhamma to him he became a disciple. The Buddha taught him, moreover, that a person who strove for perfection in giving could not be kept from it by anything in the world, neither by spirits, nor gods, nor devils, nor even by threat of death.

After AnëthapiÓÉika had regained all his wealth, a brahmin became jealous of his good fortune and decided to steal from him what, in his opinion, had made him so wealthy. He wanted to abduct the manifestation of SirÊ, the goddess of fortune, because he thought that fortune would then leave AnëthapiÓÉika and come to
him, bound to do his bidding. This strange perception was based on the idea that the so-called favors of fate, while a reward for earlier food deeds, are nevertheless dispensed by deities dwelling in the beneficiary’s house, who draw such favors to their master.

So the brahmin went to AnÈthapiÓÉika’s house and looked around to see where the goddess of fortune might be found. Like many Indians of his day he had clairvoyant powers and he saw Fortune living in a white cock which was kept in a golden cage in the mansion. He asked the master of the house to give him the cock to waken his students in the morning. Without hesitation the generous AnÈthapiÓÉika granted his wish. However, just at that moment, Fortune wandered into a jewel. The brahmin requested this too as a present and received it. But then the spirit hid in a staff, a weapon used for self-defense. After the brahmin had successfully begged this, the manifestation of SirÈ settled down on the head of PuÒålakkhaÓÈ, AnÈthapiÓÉika’s wife, who was truly the good spirit of this house and therefore had the protection of the gods. When the brahmin saw this, he recoiled in fright: “His wife I cannot request from him!” He confessed his evil intentions, returned the presents, and, deeply ashamed, left the house.

AnÈthapiÓÉika went to the Enlightened One and told him of this strange encounter, which he had not understood. The Buddha explained the connection to him-how the world is changed through good works and how, for those with right insight through moral purification, everything is attainable, even NibbÈna.211

Every time the Buddha stayed in SÈvatthi, AnÈthapiÓÉika

211 Khu JÈt Comy 2. P. 367-368.
visited him. At other times, however, he felt bereft without a tangible support for worship. Therefore, one day he told Ēnanda of his wish to build a shrine. When Ēnanda reported this to the Enlightened One, the latter declare that there were three types of shrines: the corporal, the memorial, and representations. The first type was a corporeal relic, which, after the Buddha’s Parinibbāṇa, was to be deposited in a stūpa; the second was an object which had a connection with the Enlightened One and had been used by him, such as the almsbowl; the third was a visible symbol. Of these three supports for worship, the first was not yet a possibility as long as the Blessed One was still living. The third would not be appropriate for those who could not content themselves with a mere picture or a symbol. There remained only the second.

The Bodhi tree in Uruvelā seemed the best object to serve as a memorial to the Blessed One. Under it he had found the door to the Deathless, and it had provided him with shelter during the first weeks after his Enlightenment. So it was decided to plant a small shoot of this tree in Sāvatthī. Mahēmoggallāṇa brought a cutting from the original tree, which was to be planted at the gate of Jetavana in the presence of the court and the most distinguished of the monks and laity. Ēnanda presented the sapling to the king for the ceremonial planting. But King Pasenadi replied, with princely humility, that he served in this life merely as a steward for the office of the king. It would be far more appropriate for someone with a closer relationship to the Teaching to consecrate the tree. So he presented the shoot to Anāthapiṇīka, who was standing next to him.
The tree grew and became an object of devotion for all the pious laity. At the request of Ēnanda, the Buddha spent a night sitting under the tree in order to bestow on it another more distinguished consecration. AnĒthapiŌÉika often sought out the tree and used the memories associated with it and the spiritual upliftment which he received there to focus his thoughts on the Blessed One.²¹²

5.1.7. AnĒthapiŌÉika’s Family

AnĒthapiŌÉika was happily married. His wife, PuŌÒalakkhaŌa, lived up to her name, which means “one complete with the mark of merit,” and as the good spirit of the house she took care of the servants and of the monks who came at midday. She, too, was devoted to the Dhamma, as was her brother, who had been one of the Buddha’s first lay disciples.

AnĒthapiŌÉika had four children, three daughters, and a son. Two of the daughters, elder SubhaddĒ and younger SubhaddĒ, were steeped in the Dhamma like their father and had attained stream-entry. And just as they took after their father in spiritual matters, so they did in worldly affairs; they were both happily married. But the youngest daughter, Sumana, surpassed even the rest of her family in her deep wisdom. Upon hearing a discourse from the Buddha she had quickly attained the second step of purification, becoming a once-returner. She did not marry, but not because she had renounced marriage. In fact, when she saw the

happiness of her two sisters, she became sad and lonely. Her spiritual strength did not suffice to overcome her depression. To the deep sorrow of her family, she wasted away, eating nothing, starving to death. She was reborn in the Tusita heaven, one of the highest heavens in the sensual realm, and there she had to purge herself of the residue of dependency on other people, her last desire directed outwardly.  

The only son of AnÈthapiÓÉika, KÈla the Dark One, was at first a strain on his father's house. He did not want to know anything of the Dhamma but immersed himself completely in his business affairs. Then one day, his father urged him to observe a holy day, offering him one thousand pieces of gold if he would keep the Uposatha. KÈla consented, and soon found it relaxing to take one day of the week off from business to enjoy himself in the company of his family. Because of this, the fasting regulations of the Uposatha did not weigh too heavily on him. Then his father made a second request and offered him another thousand if he would go to the monastery and learn a stanza of Dhamma by heart in the presence of the Master. KÈla gladly agreed. This became the turning point of his life. Each time that KÈla learned a verse, the Buddha made him misunderstand it, so that he had to listen repeatedly with keen attention. While attending to the meaning he suddenly became profoundly inspired by the Teaching and attained to stream-entry right on the spot. Thereby, his daily life became richly ennobled, just as in his father's case, and he also became a major benefactor of the Order, known by the name of “Little

213 Khu Dhamp Comy 1. P. 97-98.
AnÈthapiÓÉika.\textsuperscript{214}

5.1.8. The Teachings by the Buddha

Of the forty-five rainy seasons of his life as a teacher, the Buddha spent nineteen in SÈvatthi in AnÈthapiÓÉika’s monastery in the Jeta Grove. Whenever he spent the three or four months of the rainy season there, AnÈthapiÓÉika would usually visit him twice a day, often just to see him but frequently to hear a discourse. AnÈthapiÓÉika was reticent about asking the Blessed One questions. As the most generous benefactor of the Order, he did not want to create the impression that he was merely bartering his contributions for personal advice. The donations were for him a matter of the heart, given without any thought of reward—the sheer joy of giving was in itself sufficient reward for him. He thought that the Buddha and the monks would not regard the instruction as an obligation or a compensation for the benefactor but would share the gift of the Dhamma as a natural expression of their kindness and compassion.

Therefore, when AnÈthapiÓÉika came to the Buddha, he would sit quietly to one side and wait to see whether the Blessed One would give him any instruction. If the Awakened One said nothing, AnÈthapiÓÉika would sometimes relate one of the episodes of his life, of which several have been recounted. He would wait to see whether the Blessed One had any comments to make, approving or criticizing his behavior, or whether he would use

\textsuperscript{214} Khu Dhp Comy 2. P 132-124.
that incident as a point of departure for a discourse. In this way, he connected all that he experienced in his everyday life with the Teaching.

Many of the occasions when the Buddha gave instructions to AnÈthapiÓÉika have been in the Pali Canon. These teachings form a comprehensive code of lay Buddhist ethics, and by eliciting them from the Blessed One AnÈthapiÓÉika has also become a benefactor to countless generations of Buddhist laypeople conscientiously trying to follow the Dhamma. The discourses, which are contained in the Anguttara NikÈya, range from the simplest message to the most profound. A few are mentioned here, beginning with the basic words of advice to the laity:

(1) The noble disciple supports the Order of monks with the robe, almsfood, lodging, and medicines for use in sickness. If he does so, he will be in good repute, happiness and in the next life will attain to heaven.215

(2) There are these four kinds of bliss to be won by the householder: the bliss of ownership, the bliss of wealth, the bliss of debtlessness, the bliss of blamelessness.

What is the bliss of ownership? A man has wealth acquired by energetic striving, gathered by the strength of his arm, won by the sweat of his brow, justly obtained in a lawful way. At the thought: “Wealth is mine acquired by energetic striving...lawfully gotten,”216 bliss comes to him, satisfaction comes to him. This, householder, is called the bliss of ownership.

215 AN 1. P 375.
216 AN 1. P. 380.
What is the bliss of wealth? A man by means of wealth acquired by energetic striving, both enjoys his wealth and does meritorious deeds. At the thought: “By means of wealth acquired...I both enjoy my wealth and do meritorious deeds,” bliss comes to him, satisfaction comes to him. This, householder, is called the bliss of wealth.

What is the bliss of debtlessness? A man owes no debt, great or small, to anyone. At the thought: “I owe no debt, great or small, to anyone,” bliss comes to him, satisfaction comes to him. This, householder, is called the bliss of debtlessness.

What is the bliss of blamelessness? The noble disciple is blessed with blameless action of body, blameless action of speech, blameless action of mind. At the thought: “I am blessed with blameless action of body, speech, and mind,” bliss comes to him, satisfaction comes to him. This, householder, is called the bliss of blamelessness.

Such are the four kinds of bliss to be won by the householder.

(3) There are five desirable, pleasant, and agreeable things which are rare in the world. What are those five? They are long life, beauty, happiness, fame, and (rebirth in) a heaven. But of those five things, householder, I do not teach that they are to be obtained by prayer or by vows. If one could obtain them by

\[\text{\textsuperscript{217}}\text{AN 1. P. 380.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{218}}\text{AN 1. P. 380.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{219}}\text{AN 1. P. 380.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{220}}\text{AN 1. P. 380.}\]
prayer or by vows, who would not do so?

For a noble disciple who wishes to have long life, it is not befitting that he should pray for long life or take delight in so doing. He should rather follow a path of life that is conducive to longevity. By following such a path he will obtain long life, be it divine or human.

For a noble disciple, who wishes to have beauty, happiness, fame, (rebirth in) a heaven, it is not befitting that he should pray for them or take delight in so doing. He should rather follow a path of life that is conducive to beauty, happiness, fame, (rebirth in) a heaven. By following such a path he will obtain beauty, happiness, fame, and (rebirth in) a heaven.

(4) There are five reasons for getting rich. What five?
A noble disciple with riches gotten by work and zeal, gathered by the strength of his arm, won by the sweat of his brow, justly obtained in a lawful way, makes himself happy, glad, and keeps that happiness; he makes his parents happy, glad, and keeps them so; so likewise his wife ad children, and his servants.
When riches are thus gotten, he makes his friends and companions happy, glad, and keeps them so.
When riches are thus gotten, ill-luck is warded off, and he keeps his goods in safety.
When riches are thus gotten, he makes the five oblations to kin, guests, spirit, kings, and deities.
When riches are thus gotten, the noble disciple instituted offerings of lofty aim, celestial, ripening in happiness, leading heavenward, for all those recluses and brahmins who abstain from pride and
indolence, who bear all things in patience and humility, each mastering self, each calming self, each perfecting self.

Now if the wealth of that noble disciple, heeding these five reasons, comes to destruction, let him consider thus: “At least I’ve heeded those reasons for getting rich, but my wealth has gone!” thus he is not upset. And if his wealth increases, let him think: “Truly, I’ve heeded those reasons and my wealth has grown!”-thus is not upset in either case.

One morning AnÈthapiÓÈika wanted to visit the Buddha, but because it was still too early he went to the monastery of some wandering ascetics. Since they knew him as a follower of the Buddha, they asked him what views the ascetic Gotama held. He replied that he did not know all the views of the Blessed One. When they asked him what views the monks held, he replied again that he did not know all their views. Thereupon he was asked what view he himself held. He replied: “What view I hold, honorable sirs, would not be difficult for me to explain what kind of view I hold.”

The ascetics explained their notions of the world. One held it to be eternal, another held it not to be eternal; one held it to be finite, another held it to be infinite; one believed that body and life were identical, others supposed them to be distinct; some believed that Enlightened Ones endured after death, others said that they were destroyed.

Then AnÈthapiÓÈika spoke: “Whichever of these views one

\[221\] AN 2. P 38.
\[222\] AN 2. P 38.
\[223\] SN 3. P. 331-338.
held, it could come only from one of two sources: either from one’s own unwise reflections, or through the words of another. In either case, the view has arisen conditionally. Conditioned things, however, are transitory; and things of a transitory nature involve suffering. Hence, one who holds views and opinions clings to suffering, succumbs to suffering.”

Then the ascetics wished to know what views Anathapindika held. He answered: “Whatever arises is transitory; the transitory is of the nature of suffering. But suffering does not belong to me, that is not I, that is not my self.”

Seeking a rebuttal, they argued that he himself was involved in clinging as he clung to the view he just expressed. “Not so,” he replied, “for I have perceived these things in accordance with reality, and besides, I know the escape from this as it really is”—in other words, he used the view only as a means and in time would also discard it. Thereupon the wanderers were unable to respond and sat in silence, aware they had been defeated.

AnÈthapiÓÉika went quietly to the Blessed One, reported the conversation to him, and received the Buddha’s praise: “You were right, householder. You should guide those deluded ones more often into harmony with the truth.” And then the Master delighted and encouraged him with a discourse. After AnÈthapiÓÉika had left, the Blessed One said to the monks that even a monk who had lived one hundred years in the Order would not have been able to reply

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224 SN 3. P. 331-338.
225 SN 3. P. 331-338.
to the wanderers better than AnÈthapiÔÉika the householder had done.

Finally, two other incidents may be reported: AnÈthapiÔÉika was ill and requested a visit from a monk in order to receive consolation. Because AnÈthapiÔÉika had done so much as a benefactor of the Order, there was no question that his request would be fulfilled. The first time, the Venerable Ñnanda came to him; the second time, the Venerable Sariputta. Ñnanda said that one of untrained mind was afraid of death and of the afterlife because he lacked four things: he did not believe in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, nor did he possess the virtues dear to the noble ones. But AnÈthapiÔÉika replied that he had no fear of death. He possessed unshakable trust in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, and as for the precepts for householders, he knew of none which he was still violating. Then Ñnanda praised him and said that he had just declared the fruit of stream-entry.

When the Venerable Sariputta visited, he told AnÈthapiÔÉika that unlike the untrained worldling for whom hell was imminent, he had faith in the Three Jewels and had not broken the precepts. If he were now to concentrate very strongly on his faith in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, and on his own virtue, then his sickness might disappear through this meditation. He did not, like those who were untrained, have wrong views, wrong intentions, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, wrong concentration, wrong knowledge, or wrong liberation. If he would consider the fact that he, as a stream-enterer, was in possession of the ten noble factors, flowing in the direction of
right liberation, then through this meditation his illness would vanish. Through the strength of this contemplation, AnÈthapiÔÉika recalled his great fortune to be a noble disciple, and by the power of this excellent spiritual medicine the disease disappeared immediately. He stood up, invited the Venerable Sariputta to partake of the meal prepared for himself, and carried on a further discussion with him.²²⁸

Some discourses to AnÈthapiÔÉika have been briefly recounted. Some discourses were given at the Blessed One’s instigation; one arose when AnÈthapiÔÉika posed a question; in another he reported how he had taught others; and in two he was instructed by Œnanda and SÈriputta. These eighteen discourses reveal how the Buddha made the Teaching clear to the laity and inspired them to joyful endeavors.

5.1.9. The Final Day of AnÈthapiÔÉika

The death of the great patron is related in the AnÈthapiÔÉika Sutta, Advice to AnÈthapiÔÉika. The householder fell ill for third time with very strong pains which were getting worse and not abating. Again he asked the Venerable SÈriputta and the Venerable Œnanda for assistance. When Sariputta saw him, he knew that AnÈthapiÔÉika was nearing death and gave him the following instructions: “Do not cling, householder, to the six sense faculties and do not attach your thoughts to them. Do not cling to the six types of consciousness, to the six sense contacts, to the six feelings, to the six elements, to the

²²⁸ SN 3. P. 331-338.
five aggregates, to the four formless realms. Do not cling to anything that is seen, heard, sensed, thought, perceived, and investigated in the mind, and do not attach your thoughts to this.”

229 AnÈthapiÓÉika must have followed this detailed presentation with his heart, so that even as he listened he was already practicing in the way the wise and holy Sariputta had instructed him. At the end of the instructions, tears came to AnÈthapiÓÉika’s eyes. CÈnanda turned to him compassionately and asked if he were sinking. But AnÈthapiÓÉika replied: “I am not sinking, O worthy CÈnanda. I have served the Master and the spiritually accomplished monks for a long time, yet I have never before heard such a profound discourse.”

Then SÈriputta said such profound talk, householder, will not be clear enough for white-clad lay followers; it is clear enough for renunciants.”

AnÈthapiÓÉika answered: “Venerable SÈriputta, let such talks on the Dhamma be given to white-clad lay followers, too. There are those with just a little dust on their eyes. If they do not hear such teachings they will be lost. Some may be able to understand.”

231 The difference from the previously presented teaching of the Buddha is significant. Here we are concerned with ultimate questions, with the highest deliverance, not just on a theoretical basis but as practice. As a disciple who possessed the fruit of stream-entry, AnÈthapiÓÉika was aware of the transitory nature of

229 MN 3. P. 304
230 MN 3. P. 304
231 MN 3. P. 305
the five aggregates of clinging, and he himself had spoken on the three characteristics of existence: impermanence, suffering, and non-self. But there is a great difference as to whether one merely hears these things and ponders them, or whether one actually practices and applies them to oneself. In this distinction lies the essential difference between the methods the Buddha used to teach householders and those he used to teach monks.

For the laity, insight into the nature of existence was presented as a matter of knowledge, and this teaching was given at first to the monks as well. But for the many monks who had progressed further, the Buddha introduced the practice that would lead to complete liberation even in this life. Only if one sees that Sīriputta’s exposition was a practical step-by-step approach to Nibbāna can one understand that Anāthapiṇīka had never heard the core of the Teaching presented in quite such a matter. In his dying hour he was already far removed from worldly concerns and, while thinking of the Dhamma, had renounced attachment to worldly possessions as well as his body; thus he found himself in a situation comparable to that of the most advanced monks. Under these circumstances Sīriputta was able to give him such instructions as would have the most far-reaching effects.

After advising Anāthapiṇīka in this way, the two elders left. Shortly thereafter the householder Anāthapiṇīka died and was reborn in the Tusita heaven, where his youngest daughter had preceded him.\(^\text{232}\)

\(^{232}\) MN 3. P. 305
5. 1. 10. Propagation of Buddhism by Devotees

Buddha’s Sasana should have many monasteries to dwell for the Sangha

(1) Monasteries are very important for the monks. Monasteries ward off cold heat, beasts of prey, creeping things, gnats and rains in the wet season. When the dreaded hot wind arises, that is ward off.

(2) Robe is also very important for monks. Robe wards off cold, heat, beasts of prey, creeping things, gnats. When the dreaded hot wind arises, that is ward off.

(3) Food is also very important for monks. Food makes life long and energetic.

(4) Medicine is also very important for monks. It makes life saved and the various kinds of diseases free.

If monks have the four requisites, they can meditate and obtain insight easily. They can get Magga and Phala. After that, they can propagate the the Buddha’s Sasana. They can perform the welfare of people. To do so, monks need the supporters such as AnÈthapiÓÉika, VisÈkhÈ. The more supporters are, the more can perform the welfare of people and propagate the Buddha’s Sasana.

This is how monks depend on the devotees.

5.1.11. Conclusion

Buddha’s Sasana has four kinds of disciple namely Bhikkhu (monk), BhukkhunÈ (nun), UpÈsaka (lay man), and UpÈsika (lay woman). Everybody, who practices the Buddha’s Dhamma can get
Magga (path) and Phala (fruit). Though AnÈthapiÓÉika was only a lay man, he practiced the Buddha’s Dhamma. So he became a stream-winner. Stream-winner means a person who never goes to the woeful planes. After seven lives, he will attain NibbÈna. In the Buddha’s SÈsana, there are the four kinds of noble person, namely SotÈpanna, SakadÈgÈmi, AnÈgÈmi and Arahanta. Among them, AnÈthapiÓÉika has attained the first level, SotÈpanna. SotÈpanna has complete belief in the triple gems, namely the Buddha, the Dhamma and the SaÑgha. So he supported the Buddha and the Sangha with the four requisites, such as monastery, robe, food and medicine too much. Therefore the Buddha declared him to be the foremost patron of the Sangha. Through the above said account, we know The Buddha always confers the special title not only to monks and nuns but also lay men. When AnÈthapiÓÉika supported the Buddha and the Sangha with the four kinds of thing, the Buddha and the SaÑgha also supported him with Dhammanuggaha. Let us take an example.

A sickbed sermon given by the SÈriputta to AnÈthapiÓÉika, the Buddha’s chief patron, is preserved in SotÈpatti SaÑyutta\(^ {233} \). In this discourse, given when AnÈthapiÓÉika was afflicted by such a severe pain that he felt as if his head was being crushed, SÈriputta consoled the great lay disciple by reminding him that as a stream-enterer he was utterly free of the bad qualities that lead to rebirth in states of woe and that he possessed the four factors of stream-entry (SotÈpattiyaÓga): (1) unwave- ring confidence in the Buddha, (2)

\(^ {233} \) This Samyutta mentions the meaning of Sotappanna, the qualities of Sotapanna, how to attain potapanna. SN 3. P. 257.
the Dhamma, and (3) the Saṅgha, and (4) “the virtues dear to the noble ones.” Moreover, he was securely established on the Noble Eightfold Path and thus was certain to reach the fruits of the path, enlightenment and deliverance. As Anāthapiṇīka listened to him, his pains subsided and right on the spot he recovered from his illness. As a mark of gratitude he then offered Śāriputta the food that had been prepared for himself.

As to the above said, the Buddha’s Sīraṇā cannot propagate without lay men who support with the four kinds of thing. The lay men cannot be without the Buddha and the Saṅgha. They are depending on each other as the proverb of “Mutual Reliance; symbiotic relationship”.

5.2. VisÈkhÈ

5.2.1. Introduction

After the account of AnÈthapiÓÉika has been mentioned, the account of VisÈkhÈ will be mentioned in detail in this chapter. When VisÈkhÈ was seven years old, she was established in the fruit of stream-entry (SotÈpanna). She was a noble disciple of the Buddha when she was very young. She was a girl who possessed the five beauties. She herself lived to the remarked VisÈkhÈ high age of 120, but all her life she retained the appearance of a sixteen-year-old girl. VisÈkhÈ was the daughter of DhanaÒjaya234 and his wife Sumanadevi235. She descended from the richest family in the Bhaddiya city. She was the donor of PubbÈrÈma monastery. She supported the Buddha and the Sangha with the four requisites, robe, food, monastery and medicine. That’s why the Buddha conferred the title of the foremost donor among women i.e. In this chapter her account will be discussed in detail.

The following account of VisÈkhÈ, the foremost donor among women is taken from A~guttara NikÊya, its commentary, SaÑyutta

234 He is a very rich householder of Baddiyanagara; He was the son of MeÔÉaka and Candapadumasiri. His wife was Sumanadevi. His children were VisÈkhÈ and Sujata. Pali Propername 1. 1146.
235 She was VisÈkhÈ’s mother and DhanaÒjaya’s wife. Pali Propername 2. 1254.
Nikèya, its commentary, Kuddaka Nikèya, its commentaries such as Dhammapada commentary, Theràghàthà commentary.

5.2.2 The Previous Life of Visàkhà

In the city of Bhaddiya, in the country of Aṣāga there lived a rich man named MeÓÉaka. In an earlier, at time of famine, MeÓÉaka had given the last provisions belonging to him and his family to a paccekabuddha, a privately enlightened one. For this sacrifice, this self-conquest, he obtained supernatural merit in his present life: the provision in his house were never exhausted, however, much he consumed them or gave them away, and his fields carried a rich harvest without interruption.

It was not MeÓÉaka alone who possessed supernatural merit. His wife, his son and daughter-in-law, and his slave had all shared in the same past deed of self-abnegation in that earlier life, and as a result they has all acquired miraculous powers in their present life. Their shared participation in that noble deed had become a bond uniting them in successive existences as they transmigrated through the round of rebirths. MeÓÉaka’s son, DhanaÔjaya and his wife SumanÈdevÊ had a young daughter named VisÈkhÈ, who was also a repository of past merits. In a previous life, one hundred thousand aeons earlier, she had formed the aspiration at the feet of

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236 He is a very rich householder of Baddiyanagara in Aṣāga. He was the father of DhanaÔjaya, Therefore, the grandfather of VisÈkhÈ. He was one of the five treasurers of Bimbisara. Pali Propername 2. p 664.

237 He attained enlightenment himself without teacher. But he never teaches the Dhamma to people. Whenever he appears in the world, the Buddha never appears. Dictionary of Pali Propername.2.p.105.
the Buddha Padumuttara to become the chief patroness of the Buddha and his Sangha. To fulfill this goal she had performed virtuous deeds under the guidance of many previous Buddhas, accumulating the spiritual perfections required of a great disciple. Now that merit had matured and was about to yield its fruit.²³⁸

5.2.3. Attaining SotÈpatti

One day, when VisÈkhÈ was seven years of age, the Buddha arrived in the city of Bhaddiya accompanied by a great retinue of monks. When MeÔÉaka heard that the Awakened One had come, he sent for his beloved granddaughter and said to her: “Dear girl, this is a happy day for us, for the Teacher has arrived in our own city. Summon all your maid-servants and go out to meet him.”²³⁹

VisÈkhÈ did as she was told. She approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, and stood at one side. The Buddha then taught the Dhamma to her and her entourage, and at the end of the discourse VisÈkhÈ and all her five hundred maid-servants were established in the fruit of stream-entry. MeÔÉaka too listened to the Dhamma-along with his wife, his son and daughter in-law, and his slave-and all attained to stream-entry.²⁴⁰

²³⁸ khu. paOi comy 2. p. 301.
²³⁹ AN comy 1.p 311.
²⁴⁰ Khu dhp comy 1.p.242.
5.2.4. VisÈkhÈ and City, SÈketa

At that time the country of A~ga241 belonged to the kingdom of Magadha242, which was ruled by the devout King BimbisÈra. When King Pasenadi of Kosala heard that five people of supernatural merit were living in the neighboring kingdom, he requested King BimbisÈra, his friend and brother-in-law, to send one of these people to his own country, the state of Kosala, so that his subjects would have the opportunity to witness a shining example of virtue. Thus MeÓÉaka’s son DhanaÒjaya, along with his family, moved to the country of Kosala and built a beautiful city named SÈketa near the capital SÈvatthi. There VisÈkhÈ grew up in the midst of this saintly family where the Buddha was highly venerated and his monks were frequently invited to receive alms and to preach the noble Dhamma.243

5.2.5. VisÈkhÈ‘s Married Life

In SÈvatthi, the capital of Kosala, there lived a wealthy householder named MigÈra, who had a son named PuÓÓavaddhana. When the son reached manhood his parents urged him to marry, but PuÓÓavaddhana insisted that he would take as wife only a girl who possessed the “five beauties”-

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241 It means one state belongs to the kingdom of Magadha, which was ruled by the devout King Bimvis Èra.
242 It is one of the four chief Kindoms of India, which was ruled by the devout King Bimvis Èra. Pali Propername. 2. p. 412.
(1) Beauty of hair,
(2) Beauty of flesh,
(3) Beauty of teeth,
(4) Beauty of skin, and
(5) Beauty of youth. His parents employed team of brahmins to explore the entire country looking for a girl who could meet their son’s stringent requirements. The brahmins traveled all the great towns and cities, searching diligently, but they could not find a single maiden endowed with all five kinds of beauty. On their return journey, when they reached SÈketa, they saw VisÈkhÈ, who at that time was fifteen or sixteen years of age. They were struck immediately by her beautiful features, which measured up to four of their young lord’s expectation; the one feature they could not see was her teeth. To obtain a glimpse of this, they decided to engage her in conversation.

When they spotted her, VisÈkhÈ and her companions were on their way to the river to bathe. Just then a thunderstorm burst. The other girls ran away hastily to avoid getting wet, but VisÈkhÈ continued to walk with great dignity and poise. The brahmins approached her and asked why she did not run for shelter like the others. She answered: “Just as it is unbecoming for a king to run from the rain like and ordinary man, so it is unbecoming for a young girl of good family to run from the rain. Besides, as an unmarried girl I have to take care of myself, as if tending merchandise offered for sale, so that I may not suffer damage and become useless.” The brahmins were so impressed by their conversation with this girl that

244 Khu dhp comy 1.p.242.
they went to her father and asked for her hand in marriage for their lord’s son. DhanaÒjaya agreed to the proposal, and soon afterwards the householder MigÈra with his son PuÓÓavaddhana and his whole family went to fetch the bride. When King Pasenadi of Kosala heard of it, he joined the group together with his entire court.

All these people were entertained joyfully and lavishly in SÈketa by the bride’s father. Meanwhile goldsmiths were manufacturing the jewelry for the bride. After three months the jewelry was not yet completed, but the firewood was used up cooking meals for so many guests. For two weeks old houses were demolished and wood used for cooking. The jewelry was still not complete. The people of SÈketa then took clothes out of their wardrobes, soaked them with oil, and used them to kindle the cooking fires. After another two weeks the jewelry was complete, and the whole splendid assembly began the return journey.

5.2.6. DhanaÒjaya’s instructions to VisÈkhÈ

DhanaÒjaya gave to his daughter as dowry many hundreds of carts laden with silk, gold, silver, and servant girls. He also gave her a herd of cattle so large that all the roads in the city were choked. When these cattle left the stables, the remaining cows also tore their ropes and joined the traveling herd. People from fourteen villages belonging to DhanaÒjaya wanted to follow VisÈkhÈ to her new home, so much was she liked everywhere. Such abundant wealth and such a large retinue VisÈkhÈ had obtained through acts of merit in many earlier lives, since she had already served the Buddha Padumuttara countless aeons ago.
When VisÈkhÈ took leave of her father, he gave her ten maxims of advice in metaphorical form and admonished her always to keep the virtue of generosity in high regard. He also appointed eight confidential advisers to examine carefully any complaint that might be raised against his daughter. The ten maxims her father gave her are as follows:

(1) Do not carry outside the indoor fire, (The wife should not speak ill of her husband and parents-in-law to others; neither should their short-comings or household quarrels be reported elsewhere)

(2) Do not take inside the outdoor fire, (a wife should not listen to the reports and stories of other households) and

(3) give only to those that give, (things should be lent only to those who return them) and so on.

On the day she arrived in SÈvatthi, the city of her husband, VisÈkhÈ was showered with various presents sent from people of all ranks according to their status and ability. But so kind and generous was she that she distributed them among the donors themselves with a kind message and treated all the residents of the city as her own kinsfolk. By this noble gesture she endeared herself to all the people of the city on the very first day that she came to her husband’s home.

There is an incident in her life which reveals her dutiful kindness even toward animals. Hearing that her well-bred mare had given birth to a foal in the middle of the night, immediately VisÈkhÈ rushed to the stable with her female attendants bearing torches in
their hands, and attended to all the mare’s needs with the greatest care and attention.

Her father-in-law MigÈra, being a staunch follower of an Order of naked ascetics, never invited the Buddha to his house for alms, even though the master frequently dwelt at a nearby monastery. Shortly after the wedding, to obtain merit, he invited a large company of naked ascetics for alms, whom he treated with deep respect and presented with fine foods. On their arrival he told his new daughter-in-law, “Come, dear, and render homage to the arahants.”²⁴⁵ VisÈkhÈ was delighted to hear the word “arahants” and hurried to the hall, expecting to see Buddhist monks. But she saw only naked ascetics devoid of all modesty, a sight that was unbearable for such a refined lady. She reproached her father-in-law and retired to her quarters without entertaining them. The naked ascetics took offense and reproached the millionaire for having brought a female follower of the ascetic Gotama to his house. They asked him to expel her from the house immediately, but MigÈra, with much effort, managed to pacify them.

One day, while MigÈra was eating rich rice porridge mixed with honey in a golden bowl, a Buddhist monk came to the house in quest of alms. VisÈkhÈ was fanning her father-in-law. She stepped to the side so that MigÈra could see the monk and give him alms; but though the monk was in full view, MigÈra pretended not to notice him and continued with his meal. So VisÈkhÈ told the monk, “Pass on, venerable sir. My father-in-law is eating stale food.”²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Khu dhp comy 1.p.251.
²⁴⁶ Khu dhp comy 1.p.251.
MigÈra was furious at this remark and wanted to throw his daughter-in-law out of the house, but the servants-who had been brought to the house by VisÈkhÈ herself-refused to carry out his orders. The eight advisors, to whom MigÈra’s complaint against VisÈkhÈ was put, concluded on examination of the matter that VisÈkhÈ was blameless.

After this incident VisÈkhÈ informed her husband’s family that she would be returning to her parents. MigÈra asked her forgiveness, and VisÈkhÈ consented to stay, on the condition that she would be permitted to invite the Buddha and the Order of monks to the house. Reluctantly he gave his consent, but following the advice of the naked ascetics he did not serve the monks personally. Just to be polite, he appeared shortly after the meal and then concealed himself behind a curtain while listening to the Buddha’s sermon. However, the Buddha’s words moved him so deeply that, while sitting there hidden from view, he penetrated the ultimate truth about the nature of existence and attained to stream-entry. Filled with overwhelming gratitude he told VisÈkhÈ that from now onwards he would respect her like his own mother, and accordingly he called her MigÈra-mÈta, which means “Mother of MigÈra.”247 He then went up to the Buddha, prostrated at his feet, and declared his allegiance to the Triple Gem. VisÈkhÈ invited the Buddha for the next day’s meal, and on that occasion her mother-in-law too attained stream-entry248. From that time onwards the entire family became staunch supporters of the Enlightened One and his

247 DN Comy 3. p.43.
248 The meaning of stream-entry had been mentioned in above AnÈthapiÔÈika account.
community of monks and nuns.

5.2.7. The Beauty of Visakh̄ and the Foremost Patroness

In due course of time Visakh̄ gave birth to no less than ten sons and ten daughters, and all of them had the same number of descendants down to the fourth generation. Visakh̄ herself lived to the remarkably high age of 120, but all her life she retained the appearance of a sixteen-year-old girl. This was the result of her merit and her enjoyment of the Dhamma, which filled her completely throughout the day. It is also said that she was as strong as an elephant and could work untiringly looking after her large family. She found time to feed the monks every day, to visit the monasteries, and to ensure that none of the monks and nuns lacked food, clothing, shelter, bedding, and medicines. Above all she still found time to listen to the Teaching of the Blessed One again and again. Therefore, the Buddha said about her: “Visakh̄ stands foremost among my women lay supporters who serve as supporters of the Order”.

5.2.8 The Monastic Female Donor, Visakh̄

One illustration of this is specifically mentioned in the Vinaya Piṭaka. One day Visakh̄ left her valuable bridal jewelry in the hall after listening to the Dhamma, and it was taken into custody by Ānanda. She interpreted this lapse as an invitation to do good and decided not to wear this jewelry again, but to sell it and to give alms.

249 AN 1. p, 27.
to the Order from the money obtained. But in the whole city of there was no one who could buy this very precious jewelry. So she bought it herself out of her other property, and with the proceeds of the sale she built a large monastic establishment in the Eastern park (PubbarÈma)\textsuperscript{250} before, the city gate of SÈvatthi. It was called the Mansion of MigÈra’s Mother (MigÈramÈtu-pÈsÈda). It is often mentioned in the introduction to many Buddhist suttas, for the Blessed One frequently stayed there during the last twenty years of his life, just as he did in the Jetavana monastery built by his other great patron, AnÈthapiÓÉika.\textsuperscript{251}

In the PÈli Canon several episodes from the life of VisÈkhÈ are reported. Once, some noble disciples requested her to take their wives to see the Blessed one. She did so, but some of the women were drunk and behaved improperly. She asked the Blessed One how the evil of intoxicating drink originated, and he told her the Kumbha JÈtaka: In the forest a man had found the juice of fermented fruits in the hollow of a tree, tasted it, and felt wonderfully elated. Again and again he provided himself with this enjoyment, so that he soon became a drunkard; he also enticed many of his friends and relatives to drinking, and they in turn spread the bad habit to others. The whole of India would soon have become addicted to liquor if Sakka, king of the devas, had not interceded. He appeared to the humans and explained to them the evil consequences of intoxicating drink.\textsuperscript{252}

\textsuperscript{250} a large monastic building where was established by VisakhÈ in the Eastern park. DN Comy 3, 34.
\textsuperscript{252} Khu JÈt Comy 5, P, 12-21.
On another occasion, when VisĒkhÈ sent some valuable gifts to her relatives in the country of A~ga, the guards at the border wanted to levy a very high custom’s duty on them. She reported this to the king, but he left the matter unattended to, being occupied with affairs of state. VisĒkhÈ went to the Blessed One and asked his advice. The Buddha spoke only a few short verses which relieved her of her worry and anger:

“All subjection is painful. Complete control is blissful. People are troubled in common concerns. The bonds are hard to escape.”  

Again, another time she went to see the Buddha in the middle of the day, in spite of the hot sun: her favorite grandchild Datta, who had always helped her to distribute alms, had suddenly passed away. When she told the Buddha of her sorrow, he asked whether she wanted to have as many children and grandchildren as there were people in the city of. She joyfully agreed. “But how many people die in every day?” asked the Blessed One. She considered and said: “O Lord, in ten or nine people, five or three, or two people, but at least one person is dying every day. is never free from dying. “Being asked whether in this case she would ever be without sorrow, she had to admit that she would feel sorry every single day. The Buddha said: “Those who have one hundred loved ones have one hundred sorrows, those who have ninety, five, four, three, two, one loved one have one sorrow, but those who have loved ones have no sorrow. These alone, I say, are without sorrow, without

253 Khu Ud P, 97.
suffering, without desperation".  

5.2.9. The Meaning of Uposatha

In three suttas in the Anguttara NikÊya the Buddha answers questions put by VisÈkhÈ. On a full-moon day she came to the monastery and greeted the Buddha. Asked why she had come, she said she was keeping the Uposatha day, the day devoted entirely to learning and practicing the Dhamma. On this unspoken request for instruction the Blessed One gave a lengthy discourse on the two wrong ways and one right way to keep the Uposatha. The Uposatha of cowherds and ordinary house holders consists of thinking about the enjoyments of tomorrow while observing ascetic rules today. The Uposatha of the Jains consists of showing loving-kindness to some people, while at the same time boasting of one’s own freedom from sense enjoyments. The true Uposatha day of the noble ones consists of observance of the Eight Precepts and reflection on the devas and one’s own virtues. The Buddha went on to describe the happy and carefree life of the gods up to the Brahma-world, concluding: “Miserable is the glory of humans compared to such heavenly bliss.”  

Another question of VisÈkhÈ concerned with the qualities in a woman that lead to her rebirth in the company of “the graceful gods”. In answer the Buddha stated eight conditions:

(1) Spective of his own conduct;

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254 Khu Ud P, 189-191.
255 The Buddha explains to her that there are various way of observing Sabbath; these he describes as herdsman’s sabbath, the Sabbath of the naked ascetics and the Sabbath of Ariyans. AN 1. P. 205-215.
(2) She honors and looks after the people who are dear to her husband—his parents and the wise men worshipped by him;
(3) In her housework she is industrious and careful;
(4) She supervises the servants well and cares for them properly, considers their health and their food;
(5) She guards her husband’s property and does not dissipate his wealth; (6) She takes refuge in the Blessed One, the Dhamma, and the Sangha;
(7) She observes the Five Precepts; and
(8) She delights in generosity and renunciation.\textsuperscript{257}

A third question was: Which qualities in a woman would enable her to conquer this world and the next? The Blessed One answered: She conquers this world by industry, care for her servants, love for her husband, and guarding his property; the other world, by faith, virtue, generosity, and wisdom.\textsuperscript{258}

The promulgation of a number of rules for the Sangha is connected with VisÈkhÈ. Thus, for instance, one of her nephews had decided to join the Order as a monk. But when he requested acceptance into the Order in not to ordain novices during the three months’ rains retreat, and therefore he should wait until the rains retreat was over. But when the rainy season had passed he had given up the idea of becoming a monk. When VisÈkhÈ came to know about this, she went to the Blessed One and said: “The Dhamma is timeless, there is no time when the Dhamma cannot be followed.” The Blessed One prescribed that ordination should not be

\textsuperscript{257} AN 3. P. 94.
\textsuperscript{258} AN 3. P. 96-98.
refused during the rainy season.\textsuperscript{259}

5.2.10. Eight Boons Asked by VisĒkhÈ for Sangha

Once when the Buddha and his monks were guests of VisĒkhÈ she requested him to grant her eight boons. He replied that the Perfect One had gone beyond the fulfilling of boons. She said that she did not wish for something blameworthy but for allowable things. The Blessed One let her mention her wishes. She requested to give gifts to the Order in eight ways:

(1) Robes for the rains,
(2) Food for arriving monks,
(3) Food for monks setting out on a journey,
(4) Medicine for sick monks,
(5) Food for sick monks,
(6) Food for monks tending the sick,
7) Regular distribution of rice gruel, and
(8) Bathing robes for nuns to bathe in the river.

The Buddha then asked her for which special reasons she made these requests. She explained in detail:

(1) Some monks were forced to walk half-naked in the streaming rain to preserve their robes and thus were mistaken for naked ascetics; therefore, she wanted to give rains’ robes;
(2) Newly arrived monks in SĒvatthi, who did not know the town yet, had difficulty obtaining food, and had to walk for alms despite

\textsuperscript{259} Vin 3. P. 212.
their weariness from their journey. Therefore all arriving monks should be sent to her to receive food;
(3) In the same way she would like to give a good meal to monks setting out on a journey;
(4) and (5) sick monks have to suffer much, and may even die, if they lack suitable food and medicine; therefore she would like to cook food for the sick;
(6) a monk tending the sick had to go on alms round for himself as well as for the sick monk; he could easily be late, and both would not be able to eat after noon because the meal time had already passed; therefore she wanted to provide food for monks tending the sick;
(7) She had also heard how many benefits were connected with rice gruel in the early morning, so she would like to provide gruel to the Order; and
(8) It was unsuitable for nuns to bathe without clothes, as had happened recently; therefore she would like to provide them with a suitable covering.

After VisKhÊ had thus explained in detail the external benefits of her wishes, the Blessed One asked her what inner benefits she expected. Her answer shows how subtly and profoundly she grasped the distinction between outward acts of virtue and inner mental training. She replied:
“As to that, Lord, bhikkhus who have spent the rains in different regions will come to see the Blessed One. They will approach the Blessed One and question him thus: “Lord, the bhikkhu named so-and-so is dead. What is his destination? What is his rebirth?”
The Blessed One will tell how such a one had reached the fruit of stream-entry, or of once-returning, or of non-returning, or of arahantship. I shall approach the bhikkhus and ask: “Lords, did that bhikkhu ever come to?” If they answer that he did, I shall conclude that surely a rains cloth will have been used by that bhikkhu or visitors’ food or food for one going on a journey or food for the sick or food for a sick-nurse or medicine for the sick or the morning rice-gruel. When I remember it, I shall be glad. When I am glad, I shall be happy. When my mind is happy, my body will be tranquil. When my body is tranquil, I shall feel pleasure. When I feel pleasure, my mind will become concentrated. That will bring the development of the spiritual faculties in me and also the development of the spiritual powers and the enlightenment factors. This, Lord, is the benefit I foresee for myself in asking the eight boons of the Perfect One."

“Good, good, VisÈkhÈ!” the Buddha replied. “It is good that you have asked the Perfect One for the eight boons foreseeing these benefits. I grant you the eight boons.”

So lived VisÈkhÈ, “MigÈra’s Mother,” a mode female lay devotee, endowed with unavering confidence in the Triple Gem, securely settled in the fruit of stream-entry, bound for a happy rebirth and, in the end, for final deliverance from suffering.260

5.2.11. Conclusion

260 Vin 3 P. 404-408.
The Buddha conferred the religious and special titles to every person who are trying to get it in His Sēsana. He conferred it to not only lay men but also lay women. Among women, VisĒkhÈ was the foremost patroness. She descended from the richest family. When she was seven years old, she listened to the Buddha’s Dhamma. After listening to the Dhamma, she was established in the fruit of stream-entry with unwavering confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. It means she become SotÈpanna. SotÈpanna never goes to the woeful planes namely, hell, animal, hungry ghost and Arakaya (one kind of Peta). VisÈkhÈ then, she supported the Buddha and the Sangha with the four requisites such as robe, food, monastery, and medicine. That’s why the Buddha declared her to be the patroness of a Buddha and the Sangha. As to the above said, we know that teacher (in this case, teacher means the Buddha and the Sangha) and supporter are depending on each other. Teacher cannot live without supporter. If teacher is far away from supporter, he has no one who will support him with the four requisites such as robe, food, monastery and medicine. That’s why he or she should have supporter and cannot live without supporter.

Likewise, supporter cannot also live without teacher. He should have teacher who can differentiate between what is good and what is bad for him or her. If he or she has no teacher, he or she cannot differentiate between what is good and what is bad him or her. As a result of it, he or she may do what he or she should do or what he or she should not do. If he or she does what is good, it is no problem for him or her. Otherwise, if he or she performs bad