AN 3.2 — Lakkhaṇa Sutta (Characteristic Feature)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

2. Lakkhaṇa Sutta (Characteristic Feature) Bhikkhus, the fool is identified through the characteristic features of his actions, just as the wise person is identified through the characteristic features of his actions. Therefore, wisdom itself is demonstrably clear in the feature of one’s very behavior, manifested through the actions one commits.

In this manner, the fool is to be recognized in the presence of three things.

What are these three?

The evil actions one commits through the body. The evil deed one commits through one’s speech. And the evil thoughts one keeps pondering and conjuring up in one’s mind.

These are the three qualities that expose the fool, making him thus easily identifiable. On the other hand, Bhikkhus, the wise person is to be recognized in the presence of three things.

What are these three?

The good and skillful actions one commits through the body. The good and skillful ways of using one’s speech while communicating, along with the good and skillful thoughts one reflects upon and ponders in one’s mind.

These are the three qualities that manifest the person who is wise, making him thus easily identifiable.

Therefore, Bhikkhus, it is in this manner that you must train yourselves, by reflecting:

‘We will fully relinquish and abandon all those qualities that designate one as a fool, those qualities with which a fool is identified. And instead, we will continuously develop and cultivate within us those qualities that transform us into wise individuals, chiseling for ourselves those bright characteristic features that make one be recognized as truly skillful and wise!’

It is in this manner, O Bhikkhus, that you must all train yourselves!