AN 4.191 — Followed by Ear

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Text

Numbered Discourses 4.191

20. The Great Chapter

Followed by Ear

“Mendicants, you can expect four benefits when the teachings have been followed by ear, consolidated by voice, examined by the mind, and well penetrated theoretically. What four?

Take a mendicant who memorizes the teaching— statements, mixed prose & verse, discussions, verses, inspired exclamations, legends, stories of past lives, amazing stories, and elaborations. They’ve followed those teachings by ear, consolidated them by voice, examined them by the mind, and well penetrated them theoretically. But they die unmindful and are reborn in one of the orders of gods. Being happy there, passages of the teaching come back to them. Memory comes up slowly, but then that being quickly reaches distinction. This is the first benefit you can expect when the teachings have been followed by ear, consolidated by voice, examined by the mind, and well penetrated theoretically.

Furthermore, take a mendicant who memorizes the teaching— statements, mixed prose & verse, discussions, verses, inspired exclamations, legends, stories of past lives, amazing stories, and elaborations. They’ve followed those teachings by ear, consolidated them by voice, examined them by the mind, and well penetrated them theoretically. But they die unmindful and are reborn in one of the orders of gods. Though they’re happy there, passages of the teaching don’t come back to them. However, a mendicant with psychic powers, who has achieved mastery of the mind, teaches Dhamma to the assembly of gods. They think: ‘I used to lead the spiritual life in this same teaching and training.’ Memory comes up slowly, but then that being quickly reaches distinction. Suppose a person was skilled in the sound of drums. While traveling along a road they hear the sound of drums. They wouldn’t have any doubts or uncertainties about whether that was the sound of drums or not. They’d just conclude, ‘That’s the sound of drums.’ In the same way, take a mendicant who memorizes the teaching … But they die unmindful and are reborn in one of the orders of gods. … Memory comes up slowly, but then that being quickly reaches distinction. This is the second benefit you can expect when the teachings have been followed by ear, consolidated by voice, examined by the mind, and well penetrated theoretically.

Furthermore, take a mendicant who memorizes the teaching— statements, mixed prose & verse, discussions, verses, inspired exclamations, legends, stories of past lives, amazing stories, and elaborations. They've followed those teachings by ear, consolidated them by voice, examined them by the mind, and well penetrated them theoretically. But they die unmindful and are reborn in one of the orders of gods. But passages of the teaching don't come back to them when they're happy, nor does a mendicant with psychic powers … teach Dhamma to the assembly of gods. However, a godling teaches Dhamma to the assembly of gods. They think: 'I used to lead the spiritual life in this same teaching and training.' Memory comes up slowly, but then that being quickly reaches distinction. Suppose a person was skilled in the sound of horns. While traveling along a road they hear the sound of horns. They wouldn't have any doubt about whether that was the sound of horns or not. They'd just conclude, 'That's the sound of horns.' In the same way, take a mendicant who memorizes the teaching … But they die unmindful and are reborn in one of the orders of gods. … Memory comes up slowly, but then that being quickly reaches distinction. This is the third benefit you can expect when the teachings have been followed by ear, consolidated by voice, examined by the mind, and well penetrated theoretically.

Furthermore, take a mendicant who memorizes the teaching— statements, mixed prose & verse, discussions, verses, inspired exclamations, legends, stories of past lives, amazing stories, and elaborations. They've followed those teachings by ear, consolidated them by voice, examined them by the mind, and well penetrated them theoretically. But they die unmindful and are reborn in one of the orders of gods. But passages of the teaching don't come back to them when they're happy, and neither a mendicant with psychic powers … nor a godling teaches Dhamma to the assembly of gods. But a being who has been reborn spontaneously reminds another such being: 'Do you remember, good fellow? Do you remember where we used to lead the spiritual life?' He says: 'I remember, good fellow, I remember!' Memory comes up slowly, but then that being quickly reaches distinction. Suppose there were two friends who had played together in the sand. Some time or other they'd meet. And one friend would say to the other: 'Do you remember this, my dear? Do you remember that, my dear?' They'd say: 'I remember, my dear, I remember!' In the same way, take a mendicant who memorizes the teaching … But they die unmindful and are reborn in one of the orders of gods. … Memory comes up slowly, but then that being quickly reaches distinction. This is the fourth benefit you can expect when the teachings have been followed by ear, consolidated by voice, examined by the mind, and well penetrated theoretically.

You can expect these four benefits when the teachings have been followed by ear, consolidated by voice, examined by the mind, and well penetrated theoretically."