AN 4.192 — Thana Sutta: Traits

English translation by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

"Monks, these four traits may be known by means of four [other] traits. Which four?

"It's through living together that a person's virtue may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.

"It's through dealing with a person that his purity may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.

"It's through adversity that a person's endurance may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.

"It's through discussion that a person's discernment may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.

[1] "'It's through living together that a person's virtue may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning': Thus was it said. And in reference to what was it said?

"There is the case where one individual, through living with another, knows this: 'For a long time this person has been torn, broken, spotted, splattered in his actions. He hasn't been consistent in his actions. He hasn't practiced consistently with regard to the precepts. He is an unprincipled person, not a virtuous, principled one.' And then there is the case where one individual, through living with another, knows this: 'For a long time this person has been untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered in his actions. He has been consistent in his actions. He has practiced consistently with regard to the precepts. He is a virtuous, principled person, not an unprincipled one.'

"'It's through living together that a person's virtue may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning': Thus was it said. And in reference to this was it said.

[2] "'It's through dealing with a person that his purity may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning': Thus was it said. And in reference to what was it said?

"There is the case where one individual, through dealing with another, knows this: 'This person deals one way when one-on-one, another way when with two, another way when with three, another way when with many. His earlier dealings do not jibe with his later dealings. He is impure in his dealings, not pure.' And then there is the case where one individual, through dealing with another, knows this: 'The way this person deals when one-on-one, is the same way he deals when with two, when with three, when with many. His earlier dealings jibe with his later dealings. He is pure in his dealings, not impure.'

"'It's through dealing with a person that his purity may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning': Thus was it said. And in reference to this was it said.

[3] "'It's through adversity that a person's endurance may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning': Thus was it said. And in reference to what was it said?

"There is the case where a person, suffering loss of relatives, loss of wealth, or loss through disease, does not reflect: 'That's how it is when living together in the world. That's how it is when gaining a personal identity.[1] When there is living in the world, when there is the gaining of a personal identity, these eight worldly conditions spin after the world,

and the world spins after these eight worldly conditions: gain, loss, status, disgrace, censure, praise, pleasure, & pain.' Suffering loss of relatives, loss of wealth, or loss through disease, he sorrows, grieves, & laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. And then there is the case where a person, suffering loss of relatives, loss of wealth, or loss through disease, reflects: 'That's how it is when living together in the world. That's how it is when gaining a personal identity. When there is living in the world, when there is the gaining of a personal identity, these eight worldly conditions spin after the world, and the world spins after these eight worldly conditions: gain, loss, status, disgrace, censure, praise, pleasure, & pain.' Suffering loss of relatives, loss of wealth, or loss through disease, he does not sorrow, grieve, or lament, does not beat his breast or become distraught.

"'It's through adversity that a person's endurance may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning': Thus was it said. And in reference to this was it said.

[4] "'It's through discussion that a person's discernment may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning': Thus was it said. And in reference to what was it said?

"There is the case where one individual, through discussion with another, knows this: 'From the way this person rises to an issue, from the way he applies [his reasoning], from the way he addresses a question, he is dull, not discerning. Why is that? He does not make statements that are deep, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise. He cannot declare the meaning, teach it, describe it, set it forth, reveal it, explain it, or make it plain. He is dull, not discerning.' Just as if a man with good eyesight standing on the shore of a body of water were to see a small fish rise. The thought would occur to him, 'From the rise of this fish, from the break of its ripples, from its speed, it is a small fish, not a large one.' In the same way, one individual, in discussion with another, knows this: 'From the way this person rises to an issue, from the way he applies [his reasoning], from the way he addresses a question... he is dull, not discerning.'

"And then there is the case where one individual, through discussion with another, knows this: 'From the way this person rises to an issue, from the way he applies [his reasoning], from the way he addresses a question, he is discerning, not dull. Why is that? He makes statements that are deep, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise. He can declare the meaning, teach it, describe it, set it forth, reveal it, explain it, & make it plain. He is discerning, not dull.' Just as if a man with good eyesight standing on the shore of a body of water were to see a large fish rise. The thought would occur to him, 'From the rise of this fish, from the break of its ripples, from its speed, it is a large fish, not a small one.' In the same way, one individual, in discussion with another, knows this: 'From the way this person rises to an issue, from the way he applies [his reasoning], from the way he addresses a question... he is discerning, not dull.'

"'It's through discussion that a person's discernment may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning': Thus was it said. And in reference to this was it said.

"These, monks, are the four traits that may be known by means of these four [other] traits."

Notes

1.

atta-bhava, literally "self-state".

See also: AN 3.78. For another presentation of the same topic, see Ud 6.2.