AN 4.192 — Facts

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Text

Numbered Discourses 4.192

20. The Great Chapter

Facts

“Mendicants, these four things can be known in four situations. What four?

You can get to know a person’s ethics by living with them. But only after a long time, not casually; only when attentive, not when inattentive; and only by the wise, not the witless.

You can get to know a person’s purity by dealing with them. …

You can get to know a person’s resilience in times of trouble. …

You can get to know a person’s wisdom by discussion. But only after a long time, not casually; only when attentive, not when inattentive; and only by the wise, not the witless.

‘You can get to know a person’s ethics by living with them. But only after a long time, not casually; only when attentive, not when inattentive; and only by the wise, not the witless.’ That’s what I said, but why did I say it? Take an individual who’s living with someone else. They come to know: ‘For a long time this venerable’s deeds have been broken, tainted, spotty, and marred. Their deeds and behavior are inconsistent. This venerable is unethical, not ethical.’

Take another individual who’s living with someone else. They come to know: ‘For a long time this venerable’s deeds have been intact, impeccable, spotless, and unmarred. Their deeds and behavior are consistent. This venerable is ethical, not unethical.’ That’s why I said that you can get to know a person’s ethics by living with them. But only after a long time, not a short time; only when attentive, not when inattentive; and only by the wise, not the witless.

‘You can get to know a person’s purity by dealing with them. …’ That’s what I said, but why did I say it? Take an individual who has dealings with someone else. They come to know: ‘This venerable deals with one person in one way. Then they deal with two, three, or many people each in different ways. They’re not consistent from one deal to the next. This venerable’s dealings are impure, not pure.’

Take another individual who has dealings with someone else. They come to know: ‘This venerable deals with one person in one way. Then they deal with two, three, or many people each in the same way. They’re consistent from one deal to the next. This

venerable's dealings are pure, not impure.' That's why I said that you can get to know a person's purity by dealing with them. …

'You can get to know a person's resilience in times of trouble. …' That's what I said, but why did I say it? Take someone who experiences loss of family, wealth, or health. But they don't reflect: 'Worldly life is like that. Incarnation is like that. That's why the eight worldly conditions revolve around the world, and the world revolves around the eight worldly conditions: gain and loss, fame and disgrace, blame and praise, pleasure and pain.' They sorrow and wail and lament, beating their breast and falling into confusion.

Take someone else who experiences loss of family, wealth, or health. But they reflect: 'Worldly life is like that. Incarnation is like that. That's why the eight worldly conditions revolve around the world, and the world revolves around the eight worldly conditions: gain and loss, fame and disgrace, blame and praise, pleasure and pain.' They don't sorrow or wail or lament, beating their breast and falling into confusion. That's why I said that you can get to know a person's resilience in times of trouble. …

'You can get to know a person's wisdom by discussion. But only after a long time, not casually; only when attentive, not when inattentive; and only by the wise, not the witless.' That's what I said, but why did I say it? Take an individual who is discussing with someone else. They come to know: 'Judging by this venerable's approach, by what they're getting at, and by how they discuss a question, they're witless, not wise. Why is that? This venerable does not bring up a deep and meaningful saying that is peaceful, sublime, beyond the scope of logic, subtle, comprehensible to the astute. When this venerable speaks on Dhamma they're not able to explain the meaning, either briefly or in detail. They can't teach it, assert it, establish it, clarify it, analyze it, or reveal it. This venerable is witless, not wise.'

Suppose a person with clear eyes was standing on the bank of a lake. They'd see a little fish rising, and think: 'Judging by this fish's approach, by the ripples it makes, and by its force, it's a little fish, not a big one.' In the same way, an individual who is discussing with someone else would come to know: 'Judging by this venerable's approach, by what they're getting at, and by how they discuss a question, they're witless, not wise. …'

Take another individual who is discussing with someone else. They come to know: 'Judging by this venerable's approach, by what they're getting at, and by how they discuss a question, they're wise, not witless. Why is that? This venerable brings up a deep and meaningful saying that is peaceful, sublime, beyond the scope of logic, subtle, comprehensible to the astute. When this venerable speaks on Dhamma they're able to explain the meaning, either briefly or in detail. They teach it, assert it, establish it, clarify it, analyze it, and reveal it. This venerable is wise, not witless.'

Suppose a man with clear eyes was standing on the bank of a lake. He'd see a big fish rising, and think: 'Judging by this fish's approach, by the ripples it makes, and by its force, it's a big fish, not a little one.' In the same way, an individual who is discussing with someone else would come to know: 'Judging by this venerable's approach, by what they're getting at, and by how they articulate a question, they're wise, not witless. …'

That’s why I said that you can get to know a person’s wisdom by discussion. But only after a long time, not casually; only when attentive, not when inattentive; and only by the wise, not the witless.

These are the four things that can be known in four situations.”