AN 3.30 — Upside-down

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Text

Numbered Discourses 3.30

3. Individuals

Upside-down

“These three individuals are found in the world. What three? One with upside-down wisdom, one with wisdom on their lap, and one with widespread wisdom.

And who is the individual with upside-down wisdom? It’s an individual who often goes to the monastery to hear the teaching in the presence of the mendicants. The mendicants teach them Dhamma that’s good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, meaningful and well-phrased. And they reveal a spiritual practice that’s entirely full and pure. But even while sitting there, that person doesn’t apply the mind to the beginning, middle, or end of the discussion. And when they rise from their seat, they don’t apply the mind to the beginning, middle, or end of the discussion. It’s like when a pot full of water is tipped over, so the water drains out and doesn’t stay. In the same way, an individual often goes to the monastery to hear the teaching in the presence of the mendicants. The mendicants teach them Dhamma that’s good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, meaningful and well-phrased. And they reveal a spiritual practice that’s entirely full and pure. But even while sitting there, that person doesn’t apply the mind to the discussion in the beginning, middle, or end. And when they rise from their seat, they don’t apply the mind to the beginning, middle, or end of the discussion. This is called an individual with upside-down wisdom.

And who is the individual with wisdom on their lap? It’s an individual who often goes to the monastery to hear the teaching in the presence of the mendicants. The mendicants teach them Dhamma that’s good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, meaningful and well-phrased. And they reveal a spiritual practice that’s entirely full and pure. While sitting there, that person applies the mind to the discussion in the beginning, middle, and end. But when they rise from their seat, they don’t apply the mind to the beginning, middle, or end of the discussion. It’s like a person who has different kinds of food crammed on their lap— such as sesame, rice, sweets, or jujube— so that if they rise from the seat without mindfulness, everything gets scattered. In the same way, an individual often goes to the monastery to hear the teaching in the presence of the mendicants. The mendicants teach them Dhamma that’s good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, meaningful and well-phrased. And they reveal a spiritual practice that’s entirely full and pure. While sitting there, that person applies the mind to the discussion in the beginning, middle, and end. But when they rise from their seat, they

don’t apply the mind to the beginning, middle, or end of the discussion. This is called an individual with wisdom on their lap.

And who is the individual with widespread wisdom? It’s an individual who often goes to the monastery to hear the teaching in the presence of the mendicants. The mendicants teach them Dhamma that’s good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, meaningful and well-phrased. And they reveal a spiritual practice that’s entirely full and pure. While sitting there, they apply the mind to the discussion in the beginning, middle, and end. And when they rise from their seat, they continue to apply the mind to the beginning, middle, or end of the discussion. It’s like when a pot full of water is set straight, so the water stays and doesn’t drain out. In the same way, an individual often goes to the monastery to hear the teaching in the presence of the mendicants. The mendicants teach them Dhamma that’s good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, meaningful and well-phrased. And they reveal a spiritual practice that’s entirely full and pure. While sitting there, they apply the mind to the discussion in the beginning, middle, and end. And when they rise from their seat, they continue to apply the mind to the beginning, middle, or end of the discussion. This is called an individual with widespread wisdom.

These are the three individuals found in the world.

A person with upside-down wisdom,

is a simpleton and cannot see,

and even if they frequently

go into the mendicants’ presence,

such a person can’t learn

the beginning, middle, or end

of the discussion,

for their wisdom is lacking.

the individual with wisdom on their lap

is better than that, it’s said;

but even if they frequently

go into the mendicants’ presence,

such a person can only learn

the beginning, middle, and end

while sitting in that seat;

but they’ve only grasped the phrasing,

for when they rise their understanding fails,

and what they've learned is lost.
The person with widespread wisdom
is better than that, it's said;
and if they, too, frequently
go into the mendicants' presence,
one such can learn
the beginning, middle, and end
while sitting in that seat;
and when they've grasped the phrasing,
they remember it with the best of intentions.
That peaceful-hearted man,
practicing in line with the teaching,
would make an end of suffering."