AN 4.6 — A Little Learning

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Text

Numbered Discourses 4.6

1. At Wares Village

A Little Learning

“Mendicants, these four individuals are found in the world. What four? They may have:

Little learning and not get the point of learning.

Little learning but get the point of learning.

Much learning but not get the point of learning.

Much learning and get the point of learning.

And how has an individual learned little and not got the point of learning? It’s when an individual has learned little of the statements, mixed prose & verse, discussions, verses, inspired exclamations, legends, stories of past lives, amazing stories, and elaborations. And with the little they’ve learned, they understand neither the meaning nor the teaching, nor do they practice in line with the teaching. That’s how an individual has learned little and not got the point of learning.

And how has an individual learned little but has got the point of learning? It’s when an individual has learned little of the statements, mixed prose & verse, discussions, verses, inspired exclamations, legends, stories of past lives, amazing stories, and elaborations. But with the little they’ve learned, they understand the meaning and the teaching, and they practice in line with the teaching. That’s how an individual has learned little but has got the point of learning.

And how has an individual learned much but hasn’t got the point of learning? It’s when an individual has learned much of the statements, mixed prose & verse, discussions, verses, inspired exclamations, legends, stories of past lives, amazing stories, and elaborations. But even though they’ve learned much, they understand neither the meaning nor the teaching, nor do they practice in line with the teaching. That’s how an individual has learned much but hasn’t got the point of learning.

And how has an individual learned much and has got the point of learning? It’s when an individual has learned much of the statements, mixed prose & verse, discussions, verses, inspired exclamations, legends, stories of past lives, amazing stories, and elaborations. And with the large amount they’ve learned, they understand the meaning and the

teaching, and they practice in line with the teaching. That's how an individual has learned much and has got the point of learning.

These are the four individuals found in the world.

If you don't learn much,

and aren't steady in ethics,

they'll criticize you on both counts,

for your ethics and your learning.

If you don't learn much,

and you are steady in ethics,

they'll praise your ethical conduct,

since your learning has succeeded.

If you learn much,

but aren't steady in ethics,

they'll criticize your ethical conduct,

for your learning hasn't succeeded.

If you learn much,

and you are steady in ethics,

they'll praise you on both counts,

for your ethics and your learning.

A wise disciple of the Buddha

who is learned and has memorized the teachings;

like a pendant of Black Plum River gold,

who is worthy to criticize them?

Even the gods praise them,

and by the Divinity, too, they're praised."