

The Hundred Parables Sutra

44. Eating Half a Cake

Once there was a man who was so hungry, he ate seven pancakes. By the time he had finished eating six and a half pancakes, he was full. Remorseful and upset, he slapped his own hand and said, "Half a pancake filled me up. The other six were wasted. If I had known that this half a pancake could fill me up, I would have eaten it first."

Worldly people are like this, too. They have never experienced bliss, and yet they convince themselves with their stupid delusion that there is such a thing as bliss, just like that foolish man who was convinced he got full by eating half a pancake. Worldly ignorant people think that wealth and honor are bliss. And yet the pursuit of wealth and honor entails much suffering. To guard them after having obtained them is also suffering. And, having lost them, pining and fretting over them is even more suffering. Throughout those three periods of time, one is never blissful.

This is also like people who delude themselves into thinking that food and clothing are pleasure. Therefore the Buddha says, "The three realms have no peace. They are all suffering." But because they are upside down, ordinary people cling on to their mistaken notions of bliss.

45. The Slave Guarding the Door

Once a man was about to go on a long trip. He instructed his slave, "Watch the door carefully, and keep an eye on the donkey and the rope."

After the houseowner left, the neighbor started to play music, which attracted the slave. He attached the rope to the door and put it on the donkey's back, and went over to the neighbor's to listen to the music. After the slave left, the house was robbed by thieves.

On his return the master asked the slave, "Where is my wealth?"

The slave answered, "You entrusted me with the door, donkey and rope. I know nothing about the rest."

The master further questioned him, "The whole purpose of your watching the door was to watch over my property. Now that the property is stolen, of what use is the door?"

Foolish people undergoing birth and death, acting as slaves to love, are the same way. The Thus Come One teaches them to always guard the gates of their sense faculties, not to become distracted by the six defiling objects, and to watch over the donkey of ignorance and the rope of love. And yet the Bhikshus do not follow the Buddha's instructions. Greedy for benefit and offerings, they feign the appearance of purity as they sit in meditation, and yet their minds are racing greedily after the five desires. They are

confused by sights, sounds, smells, and tastes. Ignorance covers over their minds and they are fettered by the rope of love. As a result, the wealth of proper mindfulness, thoughts of enlightenment and the shares of the Path are all lost.

46. Stealing a Yak

Once upon a time, the people of a certain village together stole a yak and ate it. The owner of the yak traced their tracks and came to that village. He called out to the villagers saying, "Do you live in this village?"

The villagers said, "We know of no village."

The owner further asked, "There is a pond in your village. Did you eat the yak together on the side of the pond?"

The villagers replied, "We know of no pond."

The owner again asked, "Is there a tree near the pond?"

"No, we know of no tree," answered the villagers.

"Were you on the east side of the village when you stole my yak?"

"We know of no eastern direction."

"Wasn't it at noon that you stole my yak?"

"No, we know of no noon time."

"Although it is possible that there is no village and no tree," said the owner, "How could it be possible that there is no direction and no time in all the world? This proves you have been lying and that I can't believe you at all. Did you steal my yak and eat it?"

The villagers finally admitted; "We ate your yak."

Those who break the precepts are this way, too. They cover up their offenses and refuse to admit them. Upon death they enter the hells. Under the scrutiny of the good spirits and gods, these people are unable to conceal their offenses, just like the villagers who could not but admit that they stole the yak for food.

47. The Poor Man Who Feigned the Crow of a Mandarin Duck

Once upon a time, in a certain foreign country, the people were celebrating one of their special holidays. All the women wore blue lotus flowers on their hair as ornaments. A

woman said to her husband, a poor man, "If you can find me a blue lotus, I will remain your wife. Otherwise, I will leave you."

The husband was skilled at crowing like a mandarin duck. He then went to the king's pond and started to crow like a mandarin duck, intending to steal a blue lotus. He was caught by the warden of the pond, who asked him, "Who are you?"

With a slip of the tongue, the poor man answered, "I'm a duck." Thereupon he was arrested and brought before the king. On his way the poor man again crowed like a duck. The warden said to him, "You didn't crow properly before. What's the use of crowing now?"

Stupid people of the world are like this, too. Throughout their lives they cruelly harm others with many evil deeds, refusing to regulate their minds to do good. Only at the end of their lives do they claim, "I wish to cultivate good acts." But the guardians of the hells will take them before King Yama. Even if they wish to cultivate good they are too late, just like that foolish man who crowed like a duck when he was on his way to see the king.

48. The Jackal Hit by a Snapped Twig

Once a jackal stood beneath a tree. When the wind blew, a twig fell and hit the jackal's back. He then closed his eyes, not wishing to see the tree. Afterwards he went to an open place and would not return even when nighttime fell. From afar he could see the wind blowing the large tree until its branches were moving up and down. Then he said,

"That must be the tree calling out to me."

Ignorant disciples are this way, too. Having set forth from the home-life they are able to draw near a teacher, but they run away at the slightest remonstrance. Afterwards they encounter evil friends who get them into a lot of trouble. Only then do they begin to think of returning to their teacher. It is stupid of them to come and go like this.

49. Two Young Boys' Argument over Feathers

Once two boys were diving in a river and found a bunch of feathers at the bottom of the river. One boy said it was the beard of an immortal, while the other insisted that it was bear's fur. An immortal happened to be by the river's shores, and so the two boys went to him asking for a settlement of their debate. The immortal took some rice and sesame seeds into his mouth and chewed them for a while, then he spat them into his hand and told the boys, "What I have here seems to be peacock droppings."

It is clear from his reply that the immortal did not answer the question that was put to him. Ignorant people of the world are like this, too. When discussing Dharma, they bring up idle theories and do not answer questions with proper principles. They are like the

immortal whose answer made him the laughing stock of all people. The same idea applies to those who engage in empty, frivolous discussions.

50. Curing a Hunchback

Once a man who suddenly became a hunchback went to a doctor for treatment. The doctor treated him with some kind of ointment, and then squeezed the hunchback in between two pieces of wooden planks. He squeezed so hard that the hunchback's eyes popped out.

Stupid people of the world are like this, too. Wishing to make money, they engage in many trades and professions, not stopping at any kind of illegal method. The profit they gain will not make up for the injuries they create. In the future they will fall into the hells and be like the hunchback whose eyes popped out.