

The Hundred Parables Sutra

59. Observing Urn Making

One time two people went to a potter's shop and watched him make urns with a tread-wheel. They were so delighted that they could not get enough of it. Then one left to join the great assembly where he was given delicious food and precious things. The other person stayed on to watch the urn-making and said to himself, "Let me take a good look at this." He lingered on until sunset and lost the opportunity to get food and clothing.

Deluded people are that way, too. Busily engaged in household matters, they do not awaken to impermanence. Today people are engaged in doing this; tomorrow they are busy doing something else. When the Buddhas, Great Dragons, appear, their thunderous sound pervades the world, and they send down Dharma rain without obstruction.

However, those who are stuck to trifles do not hear it. Not realizing that death could come any time, they lose the opportunity to attend the Buddhist assemblies. They do not obtain Dharma treasures, and they remain poverty-stricken in the evil paths. They turn their backs on the Proper Dharma, just like the man who got caught up in watching urn-making, lingering on without end. They lose the benefit of the Proper Dharma and never attain liberation.

60. Seeing the Reflection of Gold at the Bottom of the Pond

One time a foolish man went to a large pond where he thought he saw a glint of true gold at the bottom of the water. He uttered a cry of joy and leaped into the water, sifting through the mud in search of gold. After tiring himself out and failing to find the gold, he came out of the water. After he sat for a while, the water began to clear up, and he saw the glint of gold again. Thereupon the man dived in and stirred around in the mud, but still failed to locate the gold.

At this point, his father went to look for him and asked, "Why are you tiring yourself out like this?"

The son answered, "There is pure gold under the water. I've tired myself out searching for it, but I couldn't find it."

The father could also see the reflection of pure gold in the water, but soon he realized that the gold was in the trees, and that what appeared in the water was a mere reflection. Thereupon the father said, "A bird must have held some gold in its beak and flown up to the tree above."

The son, following his father's advice, climbed up to the tree and obtained the gold.

Foolish, ordinary people who lack wisdom are this way, too. Within the skandhas, while devoid of a self, they hold on to the thought of a self, just like the man who saw the reflection of the gold and toiled in his search for it without any success.

61. Brahma's Disciples Can Create Things

Brahmans say that the Great Brahma Heavenly Lord is the father of the world and the creator of the myriad things. One of Lord Brahma's disciples claimed, "I can also create things." He was actually stupid, but he thought he had wisdom. He said to Lord Brahma, "I wish to create the myriad things."

Lord Brahma replied, "Don't think like that. You aren't able to create things because you don't listen to what I tell you."

After seeing what his disciple had created, Lord Brahma said to him, "The head of the man that you've just made is too big, and his neck is too thin. The hands are too large, and the elbow is too small. The feet are too tiny, and the legs are too big. In fact, he looks like a Pischacha ghost!"

From these words we should realize that we ourselves are responsible for our own karma, not Lord Brahma. The Dharma spoken by the Buddhas does not cling to extremes; the Dharma of the Eightfold Proper Path falls into neither annihilationism nor permanence. But externalists cling to views of annihilationism and permanence and become attached. They deceive the world with their rituals and appearance, and also the Dharma they speak is not true Dharma.

62. The Patient Who Ate Pheasant Meat

One time there was a man who was gravely ill. A skilled physician prescribed the meat of a certain kind of pheasant as a cure. The patient found such a pheasant in the market, but after eating one, he did not eat any more.

Later, the physician asked him, "Do you feel better now?"

The patient answered, "You instructed me to eat pheasant meat. Having eaten one, I don't dare to eat any more."

The physician said, "If you finished eating the first pheasant, why didn't you continue with the cure? How could you expect to be cured with only one pheasant?"

Externalists have the same problem. They should understand the workings of their minds and intellects by listening to the words of unsurpassed physicians, such as the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. Yet externalists cling to the view of impermanence and claim that there is only one consciousness extending from the past to the present and future, and that it does not undergo change. They are like the patient who ate only one pheasant. For

this reason their illness of delusion and affliction cannot be cured. The greatly wise Buddhas teach externalists to cast out their view of permanence.