

The Hundred Parables Sutra

The Woman Who Wished For A Second Child

In the past, there was a woman who had a son. She wanted another child, and asked other women, "Who could bring me another child?"

An old woman told her, "I can help you get another child; but you must make a sacrifice to heaven."

The woman asked the old woman, "What kind of sacrifice should I offer?"

The old woman told her, "Kill your son and make a sacrifice of his blood to heaven. Then you will certainly be blessed with many more children."

The woman followed the old woman's advice and was about to kill her own son when an intelligent bystander laughed and chastised her, saying, "How could you be so stupid and ignorant? You're not sure whether you will get another child; yet you intend to kill the one you already have."

Stupid people act in the same way. Desiring the bliss of a future, they leap into a fiery pit, exposing themselves to all sorts of harm, thinking that this is the way to attain rebirth in the heavens.

Getting Sink-In-Water Incense From The Sea

Once, an elder's son went to search for sink-in-water incense* from under the sea. After searching for many years, he finally managed to bring home a cartload of it. When he went to market to sell his wares, he could not find any buyer because of the high price that he asked for the incense. After several days he grew tired and was afflicted. He saw that the charcoal merchants were able to sell their wares very quickly and thought to himself, "Why don't I burn the incense into charcoal and then I'll be able to dispose of it quickly!"

Thereupon he burned the incense until it became charcoal, and went to sell his wares at the market. But the price he got for the burned incense did not even come up to that of half a cartload of charcoal!

So are the stupid people of the world. With countless expedients they diligently cultivate, aspiring towards Buddhahood. But upon encountering difficulty, they retreat. They think, "I might as well seek the fruition of Sound Hearers, quickly cast off birth and death, and become an Arhat."

The Thief Who Stole Embroidered Satin To Wrap His Rags In

Once, a thief entered the house of a rich family and stole a piece of embroidered satin. Then he used it to wrap up his old rags and sundry effects. He was scoffed at by the wise.

Stupid people of the world are like this, too. Although they bring forth faith in Buddhism and cultivate wholesome dharmas and meritorious acts, nonetheless, due to their greed for profit they break the pure precepts and lose their merit. They will also be laughed at by those of the world.

Planting Cooked Sesame Seeds

Once there was a fool who ate raw sesame. He found that it was not as tasty as cooked sesame. Then he came to the following conclusion, "I should plant cooked sesame seeds. Then I will reap a tasty harvest." Thereupon he cooked the sesame and planted them in the ground. Of course, the sesame never sprouted.

People of the world act in the same way. Because they are discouraged by the idea that Bodhisattvas have to throughout many aeons engage in ascetic discipline that is hard to practice, they arrive at this notion, "I should become an Arhat and swiftly put an end to birth and death. To practice this path is quite easy." But, afterwards, when they try to pursue the Bodhisattvas' fruition, they never attain it, just as cooked sesame seeds could never grow. Stupid people commonly act this way.

* a valuable fragrant wood found at the bottom of the sea. Because of its density, it sinks in water, hence its name.