

The Sutra of 42 Sections (trans. Robert Sharf in *Religions of China in Practice*, edited Daniel Lopez, Princeton Univ. Press) 3rd-4th CE

#9. The Buddha said, “Feeding one hundred common men is not as good as feeding one good man. Feeding one thousand good men is not as good as feeding one who observes the five precepts. Feeding ten thousand men who observe the five precepts is not as good as feeding one stream-winner. Feeding one million stream-winners is not as good as feeding a once-returner. Feeding ten million once-returners is not as good as feeding one nonreturner. Feeding one hundred million nonreturners is not as good as feeding one saint. Feeding one billion saints is not as good as feeding one *pratekya-buddha* (self-enlightened, solitary). Feeding ten billion *pratekya-buddhas* is not as good as liberating one’s parents in this life by means of the teaching of the three honored ones. To teach one hundred billion parents is not as good as feeding one buddha, studying with the desire to attain buddhahood, and aspiring to liberate all beings. But the merit of feeding a good man is [still] very great. It is better for a common man to be filial to his parents than for him to serve the spirits of Heaven and Earth, for one’s parents are the supreme spirits.”

#37. The Buddha asked a group of *sramanas* (strivers for personally realized truth): “How should one measure the span of a man’s life?” [One] replied, “By the span of a few days.” The Buddha said, “You are not yet able to practice the Way.” He asked another *sramana*: “How should one measure the span of a man’s life?” [The *sramana*] replied: “By the space of a single meal.” The Buddha said, “You are not yet able to practice the Way.” He asked another *sramana*: “How should one measure the span of a man’s life?” [The *sramana*] replied: “By the space of a single breath.” The Buddha said: “Excellent! You can be called one who practices the Way.”

The Platform Sutra of Huineng (*Pao-lin Chuan*, trans. P. Hershock) 9th CE

Shenxiu: The body is the *bodhi* tree.
 The heartmind is like a bright mirror.
 Moment by moment, wipe and polish it,
 Not allowing dust to collect.

Huineng: *Bodhi* originally has no tree.
 The clear and bright mirror also has no support.
 Buddha-nature is constantly purifying and clearing.
 Where could there be dust?

The Discourse Record of Linji (*Chen-chou Lin-chi hui-chao-ch’an-shih yu-lu*, T.1985, trans. P. Hershock) 9th-10th CE

20. Followers of the Way, if you want to see things in accordance with this [Chan] teaching, just don’t be taken in by the delusions and doubts of others. Whether facing inward or outward, whatever you meet ‘kill’ it! If you meet the ‘Buddha’, kill the ‘Buddha’. If you meet the ‘patriarchs’, kill them. If you meet ‘arhats’, kill them. If you meet ‘mother’ or ‘father,’ kill them. If you meet ‘relatives’, kill them. Only then will you

attain liberation. If you don't allow things to constrain you, you will be naturally released.

Of all the students from various places who pursue the Way, there has yet to be one who has come not depending on anything. With each, I've gotten into it right at the outset and struck! If it's dependence on their hands, I whacked their hands. If it's their mouths, I hit them in the mouth. If it's their eyes, I beat them across the eyes. There has yet to be one who has come alone. They've all carted out the barricades, expedients and horizons of the men of old...

Followers of the Way, your very functioning does not differ from that of the buddhas and patriarchs. It's only that you don't believe this and so turn outward in search. Don't be mistaken. Outwardly there is no 'dharma'; inwardly you can't attain a single thing. You hold onto the words that come from my mouth, but it would be better for you to take a break and be carefree. As for what has already arisen, don't add to it. As for what has yet to arise, don't pursue it. This will be better for you than a decade long pilgrimage.

#30. Students today don't attain [Chan realization] because they declare names and written words to be knowledge. On a huge stack of bamboo slips, they copy out the words of some dead old man. Wrapping it up in three or five layers of cloth, they don't allow anyone to see it, guarding it carefully, saying, "This is the profound principle." What blundering, blind idiots. What juice are you seeking on the basis of these dried up bones!

There is a group of those who can't tell good from bad and who go into the teachings and take the measure of their meaning by deliberating on how to interpret their statements. That's like taking a pile of shit in your mouth, chewing awhile, and then spitting it out to give to someone else. Vulgar people playing teacher by mimicking others speech, they pass their whole life in a void avowing, "I have left the home life (to become a monk or nun)." But question them about the Buddha Dharma. They shut their mouths and have nothing to say. With eyes like pitch-black chimneys and mouths like sagging eaves, were people of this sort to meet Maitreya (the future Buddha), they would be banished to some far corner of the world to endure hellish suffering.