Thag 16.4 — Raṭṭhapāla

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Text

Verses of the Senior Monks 16.4

The Book of the Twenties

Chapter One

Raṭṭhapāla

“See this fancy puppet,

a body built of sores,

diseased, obsessed over,

in which nothing lasts at all.

See this fancy figure,

with its gems and earrings;

it is bones swathed in skin,

made pretty by its clothes.

Rouged feet

and powdered face

may be enough to beguile a fool,

but not a seeker of the far shore.

Hair in eight braids

and eyeshadow

may be enough to beguile a fool,

but not a seeker of the far shore.

A rotting body all adorned

like a freshly painted makeup box

may be enough to beguile a fool,

but not a seeker of the far shore.
The hunter laid his snare,
but the deer didn't spring the trap.
I've eaten the bait and now I go,
leaving the trapper to lament.
The hunter's snare is broken,
but the deer didn't spring the trap.
I've eaten the bait and now I go,
leaving the deer-hunter to grieve."
"I see rich people in the world who,
because of delusion, give not the wealth they've earned.
Greedily, they hoard their riches,
yearning for ever more sensual pleasures.
A king who conquered the earth by force,
ruling the land from sea to sea,
unsatisfied with the near shore of the ocean,
would still yearn for the further shore.
Not just the king, but others too,
reach death not rid of craving.
They leave the body still wanting,
for in this world sensual pleasures never satisfy.
Relatives lament, their hair disheveled,
saying 'Ah! Alas! They're not immortal!'
They take out the body wrapped in a shroud,
heap up a pyre, and burn it there.
It's poked with stakes while being burnt,
in just a single cloth, all wealth gone.
Relatives, friends, and companions
can't help you when you're dying.

Heirs take your riches,
while beings fare on according to their deeds.
Riches don’t follow you when you die;
nor do children, wife, wealth, nor kingdom.
Longevity isn’t gained by riches,
nor does wealth banish old age;
for the attentive say this life is short,
it’s perishable and not eternal.
The rich and the poor feel its touch;
the fool and the attentive one feel it too.
But the fool lies stricken by their own folly,
while the attentive don’t tremble at the touch.
Therefore wisdom’s much better than wealth,
since by wisdom you reach consummation in this life.
But if because of delusion you don’t reach consummation,
you’ll do evil deeds in life after life.
One who enters a womb and the world beyond,
will transmigrate from one life to the next.
While someone of little wisdom, placing faith in them,
also enters a womb and the world beyond.
As a bandit caught in a window
is punished for his own bad deeds;
so after departing, in the world beyond,
people are punished for their own bad deeds.
Sensual pleasures are diverse, sweet, delightful;
appearing in disguise they disturb the mind.
Seeing danger in sensual stimulations,
I went forth, O King.
As fruit falls from a tree, so the sons of Manu fall,

young and old, when the body breaks up.
Seeing this, too, I went forth, O King;
it's a sure bet that the ascetic life is better."
"I went forth out of faith
joining the victor's dispensation.
My going forth wasn't wasted;
I enjoy my food free of debt.
I saw sensual pleasures as burning,
gold as a cutting blade,
conception in a womb as suffering,
and the hells as very fearful.
Knowing this danger,
I was struck with a sense of urgency.
I was stabbed, but then I found peace,
attaining the end of defilements.
I've served the Teacher
and fulfilled the Buddha's instructions.
The heavy burden is laid down,
the leash to existence is eradicated.
I've attained the goal
for the sake of which I went forth
from the lay life to homelessness—
the ending of all fetters."