

DHAMMA THROUGH PARABLES

MAN WITH FOUR WIVES

Once upon a time there was a man who had four wives. Wife “A” was his favourite, and he never left her for any length of time in his whole life. His devotion to her had been so great that there never was an occasion when he did not comply with any request she made upon him.

Wife “B” was his second favourite. He had wanted to be with her at all possible times, and when she was not near him he always felt concerned. He saw wife “C” only now and then, but when she was ill or something was not right with her, he was terribly worried. As for wife “D”, he rarely paid her any serious attention, but she was always faithful to him, doing her duties well in his service.

One day, at least, he was forced to go on a long journey, never to return home. He felt that a great dismal Unknown lay ahead of him. In agony of fear and loneliness, he asked wife “A” to go with him, and she bluntly refused. “Why, I thought I had done everything for you,” he exclaimed. “I know that,” she replied, “but I can’t go with you. I simply can’t. That’s all there is to it.”

So he asked wife “B” to accompany him to the other world. “Why should I go with you?” she asked, “even your most favourite wife refused to go with you. You certainly have nerve to ask me to do such a thing.” “I have worked so hard for you all in my life,” angrily the man said to her, “I never thought you were such an ungrateful creature.” “I did not ask you to work hard for me,” she snapped. “It was your selfishness that you worked hard to satisfy yourself. You should blame yourself, not me.”

Terribly disappointed in his time of need for companionship, he made the same request of wife “C”. “You have been very good to me,” replied she, “in return I am willing to go with you up to the outskirts of the city, but beyond that, I am afraid you will have to go by yourself.”

“I am awfully sorry,” he said to wife “D”, that I haven’t treated you as I should. I know it is awfully selfish of me to ask a favour from you at this time. But I’m terribly lonely and do not want to go on this trip by myself. Won’t you please come with me?” “Of course I am going with you.” wife “D” replied, “I had decided to be with you all the time, rain or shine, and there is no reason why I should change my mind at this time.”

The Buddha used this parable in a sermon, according to Sam Yutta Agama sutra. Wife “A” signifies this man’s physical body. “B” his possessions; “C” his relatives and friends; “D” what he had said, thoughts and deeds, done in his life. The law of nature, known as the relationship between cause and effect is stern, strict and eternal.

(Suchness)