

The Pañcānantaryāṇi of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*

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I **Question 1:** What is meant by the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra* statement: “*pañcānantaryāṇi...yānyadhyāpadya...anavīciko* bhavati*”? (“Those five grave sins, committing which no one gets hell-abiding.” *LS* III Nanjio p. 138, 2-4)

*Nanjio version, “*avīciko*”; Guṇabhadra: “不入無択地獄 (*anavīcikaḥ*)” *Taisho* 16, No. 670, 498a.

The sutra cites two kinds of *pañcānantaryāṇi*: (a) *adhyātmikāni* (“internal”) and (b) *bāhyāni* (“external”).

(a) “The internal five grave sins”:

Here the victims are compared to something that represent practitioners' unauthentic ways of being, something they should be freed from for their authentic way of being.

i. “Thirst for further existence (*īṣṇā*), accompanied by vehement desire for joy, occurs as mother (*mātytvenottiṣṭhate**);”

ii. “Ignorance (*avidyā*) gives rise to the field of perception as father (*pītytvena*);”

“Radical destruction of these two is called killing the mother and the father.” (N138, 11-14) (*N Fn. 7)

The sutra presents this kind of killing as the ultimate way of being of Awakened ones, as is easily seen from the context of the passage in this chapter. This third chapter on “*Anityatā*” deals with the essential nature of Awakened ones and criticism of unauthentic ways of being. The same is true of the other three internal grave sins.

iii. “Sleeping passions (*anusāya*) resemble enemies (*ari*); they tend to cause violence like poisons given to rats. Exterminating them is called killing the most respected follower-disciple of the Awakened One (*arhadvadha*).” (N138, 14-16)

iv. “Radically destroying the close union of the constituents of a human being (*skandhasamghāta*) is called causing schism in the monastic order (*saṅgha-bheda*)”. (N138, 16-18)

v. “The collection of sevenfold perception (*saptānāṃ* vijñānakāyānām*) is not aware (*anavabodhakānām***) that what is external to itself is nothing but its own mind appearing as such (*svacitta-dṛśya-mātra*). This being radically hurt with the wicked alternative which is free from passion, namely, with the threefold emancipating method (*vimokṣa-traya-anāsrava-duṣṭa-vikalpena*), is called a grave sin committed against the Awakened One of discriminative mind (*vijñāna-buddha*) by shedding blood on his body with wicked mind.” (N138, 18-N139, 3)

*N., *aṣṭānām*; Guṇabhadra: “七識身...七種識仏。”

**N., *avabodhakānām*; G.: “不覺外自共相自心現量。”

(b) “Those external five grave sins”:

This is an ordinary interpretation of the theme in which cases of injurers are taken up as inviting ultimate cure from their transgression. It is mentioned that no transgressor of any of the grave sins can realize any of the three methods of emancipation except when they get influences from an Awakened one to attain liberation. (Cf. N139, 9-11)

The sutra never explains why it had to cite the “internal” five grave sins as the ultimate way of being of Awakened ones. From the context it is presumed that exposition of them is what an Awakened one applies to healing transgressors of their deep remorse. It is something that only an Awakened one can deal with. Considered from the wider context, however, this must be taken to play a far more positive part in advocating the mahāyāna standpoint.

II. Sources for the “external grave sins”:

(1) The *Sāmaññaphala-suttam*, PTS *THE DĪGHA NIKAYA* vol. 1, ii, pp. 85-86, § 99- § 102, refers to “killing the father”:

§ 99: Hearing this, Ajātasattu, King of Magadha, Vedehi's son, said to the World-honoured One: “... Now I take shelter in you, the Worldhonoured One, in

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the truth expounded by you, and in the congregation of mendicants led by you; please accept me lifelong from now on as a lay supporter who has taken refuge in you.

“Transgression overcame me, so foolish, confused, and evil; because of sovereignty I took away life from the father, the virtuous king of justice. You, the World-honoured One, may pardon me of the transgression which I shall keep in restraint hereafter.”

§ 100: (The World-honoured One said in response:) “Truly you, Great King, had yourself overcome by transgression, so foolish, confused, and evil, and took away life from that father of yours, the virtuous king of justice. But since you, Great King, see transgression as such, and make amends for the sin according to justice, we accept it for you. Indeed, Great King, seeing transgression as such and making amends for it according to justice means prosperity in the noble precepts.”

§ 102: Not long after the king left, the World-honoured One said this to his mendicants: “You see, mendicants, that king is depressed; that king is hurt, Should he not have taken away life from the father, the virtuous king of justice, he might have had the faultless, stainless truth-eye come out on this very seat.”

(2) “Killing (actually, going to kill) the mother” is a theme taken up in such sutras as the *Āṅgulimāla* (『鶡掘摩經』 *Taisho* 2, No. 118, tr. by Dharmarakṣa, A.D. 239-316) and the *Guan-wu-liang-shou jing* (『觀無量壽經』 *Taisho* 12, No. 365, tr. by Kālāyaśas during A.D. 424-53). In the latter sutra, Prince Ajātaśatru of Magadha, was enticed by Devadatta, a cousin of Śākya-muni’s, to put his father, King Binbisāra, to death from hunger, but was interrupted by the king’s ministers from killing the mother, Vaidehī, who had kept feeding her husband.

(3) Committing the other three grave sins is traditionally ascribed to Devadatta:

The *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya* II (Buddhist Sanskrit Texts No. 16, Bagchi, ed. pp. 187-8; a Chinese translation by Yijing, 義淨, T24, No. 1450. Chapt. 10, pp. 147-8), in the chapter named “Saṅghabhedavastu,” mentions that Devadatta beat a female mendicant Utpalavarṇa on the head and caused her death. He is said to have reflected on his transgressions thus:

“Against the World-honoured One I have repeated bold acts of grave transgression three times: with a rock I caused a blood-shed on the World-honoured One, which was the first grave sin; I had his monastic order split, which was the second grave sin; I had the nun Utpalavarṇa’s life rooted out, which was the third grave sin. And yet the all-knowingness has not been attained; no achievement of any other result has been made. I shall attain no other rebirth but in hell.” Knowing thus, resting his chin in his hand, he remained lost in thought. The so-called external five grave sins seem to have something to do with these sources on Ajātaśatru and Devadatta.

III. Sources for the internal five grave sins other than the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*:

(1) The *Avaivarta*-(or, *Avaivartika*-) *cakra sūtra*, T9, No. 266, tr. Dharmarakṣa, 214c-215a; No. 267, translator not recorded, 241b-242; No. 268, by Zhiyuan, 智嚴, 271c-273b:

In response to Ānanda’s request Mañjuśrī says to the effect:

Avidyā is mother; a never-fundamental comprehension (*ayoniśomanaskāra*) with thirst for further being (*trṣṇā*) is father. Realizing them to be ultimately non-existent is meant by their killing. Getting free from arhatship is meant by killing the arhat. Knowing the true nature of manifold forms and getting free from them is meant by breaking the saṅgha unity. Getting free from the thought of tathāgatas is meant by shedding blood on the tathāgata’s body.

(2) The *Supraṭiṣṭhitamati-devaputra-praśna-kathā*, tr. Dharmagupta, *Raṅnakūṭa* 36, T11, No. 310, 589a, where Mañjuśrī tells the devaputra to the effect:

“If you could blaspheme buddhas, their dharmas, and their saṅghas, then you would be in religious practices. The reason is that you cannot be attached to the essential nature (*dharmadhātu*) of the true reality (*tathatā*), to the calmness of all (*vivikta-dharma*), or to the noble saṅgha, and that is how you can blaspheme the buddhas, their Awakened truths (*saddharma*), and their saṅghas. Should anyone see the buddha, the dharma, or the saṅgha, that person will be attached to them. Really the buddha-dharma-saṅgha is unobtainable.”

(3) The *Mañjuśrīparivarta-āparaparyāya Saptasatikā Prajñāpāramitā* (Bud-

dhist Sanskrit Texts No. 17, Vaidya ed., p. 349, 9–15) has Mañjuśrī make this remark:

“Awakening (*bodhi*) is anothe expression for the five grave sins. The reason is: those five grave sins are those which give birth to Awakening (*bodhi-prakṛtikāni*) because of their nothingness (*abhāvatvāt*). Thus this Awakening is that which gives rise to the five grave sins (*ānantarya-prakṛtikā*); Awakening keeps attending the five grave sins. But Awakening is no such thought as sees things before the eyes, because eveything that has its own characteristics is ultimately imperceptible (*apratyakṣa*)...”

The three texts: the *Avaiivarta*, the *Supraṭiṣṭhitamati*, and the *Mañjuśrī Prajñāpāramitā*, agree in that they expound the internal five grave sins as the ultimate way of being of Awakened ones. Then a doubt comes to us as the second question:

IV. Question 2: Why was the concept “*vadha* (killing)” applied where “*śūnya*” is in place? Was it really necessary? Mañjuśrī in the *Ratnakūṭa* 36 says to the devaputra:

(588c–9a) “Suppose now you can take a condemned person, grasp a sharp sword, and cut off the head, I shall allow you to consider that such is the religious practice. ...you should kill greed, kill wrath, kill delusion.... With this kind of killing, killing is at once giving birth.”

(588b) “I always use that sharp sword of wisdom and practise killing. On practising killing I grasp the wisdom sword this way, kill this way, and yet have no thought of grasping or killing.”

The concept of the so-called “Mañjuśrī’s wisdom-sword” seems to originate with the idea expressed in these passages. But they do not and cannot clarify any positive reason for using the term to “kill.” No religion can justify itself by advocating killing even in an analogical sense.

V. Question 3: Can we not think that the internal five grave sins stand for the mahāyāna standpoint, which involves the emancipation of women from male-domination, and for criticism against powers, both worldly

and religious?

(1) In other words, the first two internal grave sins may mean criticism against worldly powers including socio-political ones. Ajātaśatru was to blame for his patricide not only because of the graveness of the sin but because of its being motivated by his ambition for worldly powers as well. His conduct never worked as criticism against them. But his remorse shown and insight gained upon his meeting with Śākyamuni seem to have offered Buddhist practitioners a chance to reflect upon the ultimate meaning of being mother and father, not only in a personal sense but also in a socio-political one.

The *Avaiartacakra sūtra*, which takes up the *pañcānantaryāṇi*, has a girl named Sinhī (私休 Sixiu, No. 266; 師子 Shizi, Nos. 267 & 268), together with Ānanda, ask Śākyamuni what kind of view on women will ensue from his basic standpoint expressed in the present teaching. The Buddha answers to the effect:

Women can get free from their self-afflicting passions; Sinhī, as well as other five hundred girls, out of compassion for the future women, so as to get them freed from being women, have manifested themselves as women and entered the world of men; originally they are free from being women; they are free from being men as well. They never get caught by the attachment to the characteristics of either women or men, in which sense they rightly grasp the meaning of the present teaching.

Hearing this, first, five thousand nuns, and then, five hundred housewives, express their desire for emancipation from being women, and the Buddha encourages them, saying that their desire will be fulfilled (T9, No. 266, 223b-224b; No. 267, 251-252; No. 268, 282-283).

This shows how the first two of the internal five grave sins, which was expounded in the same sutra, had something to do with the arising of critical consciousness among women.

(2) Devadatta's transgression against the latter three grave sins may have caused reflection upon the ultimate meaning of arhat, saṅgha, and buddha. Where these three turn out to be powers, Buddhism might appear

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flourishing because practitioners seem to get their shelters secured. But this goes against the truth of each of the three; there must be radical criticism of this point, according to the viewpoint expressed through the internal grave sins. For this view Devadatta, it seems, has offered a good chance for the radical reflection. It may have been in this sense that Devadatta in the *Saddharmapūṇḍarīka sūtra* (Chapter on Stūpasamdarśana) is treated as a close friend in this life and a precious teacher in a previous life for Śākyamuni.

VI. Question 4: Can we not conclude that the internal interpretation of the five grave sins stands for the view which, while offering true cure to transgressors of the external ones, positively advocates radical criticism of powers both worldly and unworldly, but that hereafter the internal five grave sins should find new expressions so as to avoid confusion and misunderstanding?

〈Key words〉 “internal five grave sins”

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