

# Chapter 12

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## Translation

The five colors blind the eye.

The five tones deafen the ear.

The five flavors dull the palate.

Racing and hunting madden the heart.

Rare goods lead one astray.

Therefore the Sage nourishes what is within,  
not what the eye desires.

He lets go of that and holds to this.

## Word Notes

- □ — "**blind**": The eyes go blind.
- □ — "**deaden**": Quick, sharp — here meaning the palate loses its sense of taste.
- □□ — "**racing**": Chasing, driving at full speed.
- □□ — "**hunting**": Hunting birds and beasts.
- □ — "**lead astray**": To harm, to impede.

## Chapter Explanation

When the eyes are greedy for the five colors, they go blind. When the ears are greedy for the five tones, they go deaf. When the mouth is greedy for the five flavors, it loses all sense of taste. When the heart delights in racing about and hunting, it is driven to madness. Rare and precious goods lead people into harmful conduct. Therefore **the Sage nourishes what is within** and **does not chase what the eye desires**. He **lets go of that** outward pursuit and **holds to this** inward keeping.

## Discourse

This chapter teaches that sounds, colors, goods, and profit are all things external to the self. Greedy, insatiable pursuit of them injures one's life and destroys one's nature. Therefore the Sage

abandons the external and cultivates the internal. Confucius said: "Look not at what is contrary to propriety; listen not to what is contrary to propriety; speak not what is contrary to propriety; act not contrary to propriety." The Bodhisattva Guanyin speaks of "no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind." All of these express the same meaning.

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