

Chapter 12: We See What We Have Within

Whenever we think of Buddha, our thoughts also turn to the opposite of a Buddha—the sentient beings who suffer in the world. Most people imagine Buddhas as bright, pure, holy beings with devotion. Sentient beings, by contrast, are considered less developed. People pray to Buddhas or Jesus, kneeling before icons for blessings, but ordinary people are rarely revered in this way.

Enlightened beings, however, see ordinary beings differently.

The Story of Su Dong Po and Fo Yin

In the Song dynasty, scholar Su Dong Po was both a literary figure and a student of Buddhism. He learned much from his friend Fo Yin, a Zen master. One day, they sat meditating together in dark brown robes.

Su Dong Po asked, “How do I look when I meditate?”

Fo Yin replied, “You look like a Buddha.”

Pleased, Su asked in return, “What about me? How do I look?”

Su, ever playful, laughed and said, “You look like a pile of cow dung!”

Fo Yin smiled without reply. Later, Su boasted to his sister, Su Xiao Mei, that he had finally “won” in their exchanges. But she shook her head:

“A Buddha came out of Fo Yin’s mouth, and dung came out of yours. Fo Yin has a Buddha in his heart, so he sees Buddhas. Your heart holds crude thoughts, so you see crudely.”

The story holds a core Zen lesson: we see according to what is in our hearts.

1. Everybody Can Be a Buddha

Buddhahood is a level of cultivation anyone can achieve. All beings have Buddha nature within. As one sutra says:

“ The heart, Buddha, and sentient beings are a single entity.

A Buddha is a sentient being fully enlightened, manifesting inner brightness. A sentient being is a Buddha whose nature is obscured.

When free from cravings and desires, the heart finds tranquility, and virtue shines forth to brighten others. When lost in desire, the false self governs, and the original brightness fades.

Saints and Buddhas come to guide beings back to their inner Buddha nature. True cultivation is not about seeking Buddha outside, but discovering and manifesting the Buddha within.

A Buddhist verse says:

“ Buddha is at the spiritual mountain—do not seek from afar.

The spiritual mountain lies within one’s heart.

Everybody has a pagoda within the spiritual mountain;

Go and cultivate yourself there.

Receiving Dao gives us the “key” to unlock the Buddha within. With the door open, cultivation and truth bring tranquility, and we extend help so others may also awaken to their Buddha nature.

2. With a Buddha in Our Heart, We See Buddhas Everywhere

Fo Yin had Buddha in his heart, so he saw Buddha in Su Dong Po. The *Amitabha Sutra* says:

“ The water, the birds, and the forest all chant and cultivate.

The mountains, rivers, and great earth are all transformations of the Tathagata.

Buddha exists everywhere; every land can be pure land—if we have Buddha in our hearts. With this essence, compassion naturally arises, for all beings have Buddha nature waiting to be uncovered.

Predecessors guide people to receive Dao, organize learning, and create opportunities for awakening. As compassion grows, we naturally want to help free others from suffering.

Buddha said:

“As the heart is pure and tranquil, the land of Buddha will be tranquil.

We first establish pure land in our hearts by removing illusions, deviant thoughts, and desires, and cultivating Dao. An enlightened saying puts it:

“With no deviant thoughts, every place is like the South Seas.

Aspire to cultivate Dao, then your home will be a paradise.

With Buddha in our hearts, our homes, communities, and travels become places where darkness turns to light.

“With Buddha in our hearts, we see Buddhas everywhere.

With a pure land in our hearts, every place is a pure land.

3. Beauty Exists Everywhere

Nothing in the physical realm is absolutely perfect or flawed; perspective determines beauty or ugliness. The peacock is beautiful yet imperfect; the seemingly ugly may hold beauty.

An old woman with two sons—one in the noodle business, the other selling umbrellas—worried constantly: sunny weather hurt umbrella sales, rainy weather hurt noodle drying. A friend advised her to rejoice for one son’s gain in sun, and the other’s in rain. Her worries vanished.

Attitude shapes experience. As with Su Dong Po and Fo Yin: see through the heart’s beauty, and you see a Buddha; see through ugliness, and you see dung.

Bodhisattvas strive to save beings because they see the precious brightness in everyone. By seeking beauty in all things, each day becomes a good day—especially in Dao cultivation.

Conclusion

All have Buddha nature; all can be Buddhas. Our Heavenly Mother has given us this chance—do not waste it. Receiving Dao, cultivating, discovering the Buddha within, maintaining the Buddha heart, and adopting the concerns of a Buddha all serve one purpose: to let our true nature shine.

When we do this, we create pure lands wherever we go, and everything becomes beautiful. In this beauty, life gains true meaning and joy.

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