

**Part Five:**

**THE PERFECTION OF DHYĀNA  
MEDITATION**

**(Chapter 28)**



# THE PERFECTION OF DHYĀNA MEDITATION

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## Chapter 28: The Perfection of Dhyāna Meditation

**Sutra text:** It is through being neither mentally distracted nor indulging of enjoyment that one should perfect dhyāna *pāramitā*.

### Exegesis text:

#### I. INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

##### A. QUESTION: WHY DOES THE BODHISATTVA MEDITATOR ABANDON BEINGS?

**Question:** The Dharma of the bodhisattva takes the spiritual liberation of all beings as the work to be done. Why then does he sit at leisure in forests or marshes, or abide, still and silent in the mountains, solely benefiting himself, casting aside and forsaking beings?

##### B. RESPONSE: TO GAIN WISDOM VIA ABSORPTIONS, WITH ALTRUISTIC INTENT

**Response:** Although the bodhisattva may be physically far apart from beings, still, his mind never forsakes them. Residing in a quiet location, he strives to develop the meditative absorptions and thus obtain actual wisdom, this in order to [eventually] deliver everyone to liberation.

##### 1. ANALOGY: LIKE TAKING MEDICINE TO CURE A MALADY

This is analogous to when one takes medicine to tend to the body and, as an expedient, sets aside household responsibilities. When one's energy and strength return to their normally healthful state, then one takes up one's work again just as before. The bodhisattva's indulgence in stillness is just like this. He employs the power of dhyāna absorption to ingest the medicine of wisdom and then gains the power of the superknowledges.

He then returns to be among beings, becoming perhaps a father, mother, wife, or son, perhaps a master, student, or lineage elder, perhaps a god, perhaps a human, or on down even to becoming an animal. He employs all manner of speech and skillful means to instruct and lead.

##### 2. BODHISATTVA PRACTICES THREE MERIT-GENERATING ALTRUISTIC GATEWAYS

Furthermore, the bodhisattva practices giving, observance of the moral precepts, and patience. These three endeavors are known as "the gateways to meritorious qualities." During the course of an incalculable number of lifetimes, he then becomes a heavenly king, a Śakradevendra, a wheel-turning sage king, the king of Jambudvīpa.

He constantly makes gifts to beings of the seven precious things, clothing, and the objects of the five desires.<sup>1</sup> In the present life and in future lives, he insures that they are all abundantly available. As it says in a scripture, “The wheel-turning sage king teaches the ten good deeds to the people.<sup>2</sup> In future lives they are all reborn in the heavens.”

In life after life, he works for the benefit of beings and causes them to experience bliss. This bliss, however, is impermanent and so they come back yet again and are forced to undergo suffering. Because of this, the bodhisattva generates thoughts imbued with the great compassion and wishes then to benefit beings with the constant bliss of nirvāṇa. This constant bliss of nirvāṇa is born of actual wisdom. Actual wisdom is born of single-minded dhyāna absorption.

### 3. ANALOGY: A LANTERN BECOMES BRIGHT IN A STILL ROOM

This is analogous to a burning lantern. Although the lantern is capable of providing illumination, it cannot be useful in a stiff breeze. However, if one places it in a closed room, its usefulness then becomes completely manifest. Wisdom in the context of a scattered mind is just like this. Although one may possess wisdom, without the still room of dhyāna absorption, its usefulness is incomplete. If one gains dhyāna absorption, then genuine wisdom comes forth.

It is on this account that, even though he is apart from beings and far away in a quiet place, the bodhisattva is nonetheless striving to gain dhyāna absorption. It is by virtue of purity in dhyāna absorption that his wisdom becomes pure as well. This is analogous to an oil lamp. Because it is clean, its brightness is also immaculate. Because of this, one who wishes to gain pure wisdom cultivates this dhyāna absorption.

### 4. THE NECESSITY OF MENTAL FOCUS

Furthermore, even when one is merely striving at worldly endeavors close at hand, if he is unable to focus his mind, then such endeavors will not be successful. How much the more so would this be the case where one wishes to realize the extremely profound path of the Buddha while failing to avail himself of dhyāna absorption.

#### a. SIMILES FOR UNFOCUSED THOUGHT: DOWN; WIND; MONKEY; LIGHTNING

Dhyāna absorption refers to the focusing of thought which has become chaotic. Chaotic thoughts float lightly about even more readily than goose down. They gallop along and scatter ceaselessly, moving faster than a swift wind. Their uncontrollability

and unstopability are more extreme than that of monkeys. [The suddenness of] their momentary appearance and disappearance exceeds that of lightning bolts.

b. THE NECESSITY OF EMPLOYING DHYĀNA TO FOCUS THOUGHT

It is the characteristic of thought to be unrestrictable and unstopable like this. If one does wish to bring it under control, then, in the absence of dhyāna, one will be unable to achieve absorption. This is as stated in a verse:

5. THE BENEFITS OF DHYĀNA MEDITATION

a. A VERSE ON THE BENEFITS OF DHYĀNA MEDITATION

Dhyāna is the treasury for the retaining of wisdom  
And the field of merit for qualities which are worthy.  
Dhyāna serves as the waters which are pure.  
It is able to wash away the dusts of the desires.

Dhyāna is the armor made of *vajra*.  
It's able to ward off the arrows of affliction.  
Although one's not yet reached [nirvāṇa] "without residue",  
A share in nirvāṇa nonetheless has been attained.

One succeeds in gaining the *vajra* samādhi,  
Smashing then and shattering the mountain of the fetters.  
One attains the power of six superknowledges,  
And is able to deliver a number of people beyond count.

Dust raised by tumult may obscure the sky and sun,  
Yet a heavy rain may soak it all away.  
The winds of ideation and deliberation scatter the mind,  
Nonetheless, dhyāna absorption is able to extinguish them.

b. THE NECESSITY OF VIGOROUS EFFORT TO MEDITATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Furthermore, dhyāna absorption is difficult to attain. Only if the practitioner single-mindedly and exclusively strives without stint will he attain it. Even the gods and spirits and rishis are unable to attain it, how much the less lazy-minded ordinary fellows.

c. STORY: MĀRA'S DAUGHTERS INTERVIEW THE BUDDHA

When the Buddha was sitting in dhyāna beneath the *nyagrodha* tree, the three daughters of the King of the Māras set forth a question in verse, saying:

Sitting alone amongst the forest trees,  
The six-fold faculties always still and quiet—  
It seems as if you've lost a precious jewel,  
Yet are free of pain from suffering wrought by anguish.

In all the World, your visage has no peer,  
 And yet you always sit with your eyes closed.  
 The thoughts of each of us possess a doubt:  
 “What do you seek by dwelling in this place?”

At that time, the Bhagavan replied with a verse:

As I have found the flavor of nirvāṇa,  
 I don’t find pleasure dwelling in tainted love.  
 Within, without, the thieves have been expelled.  
 Your father too: destroyed and sought retreat.

I have discovered the flavor of sweet-dew ambrosia (*amṛta*),  
 In peace and bliss, I sit within the forest.  
 As for the beings immersed in fond affections—  
 For all their sakes, I raise compassionate thoughts.

At this time, the three daughters felt ashamed and said to themselves, “This man has transcended desire and cannot be moved.” They then disappeared and showed themselves no more.

## II. THE MEANS BY WHICH ONE SUCCEEDS IN DHYĀNA MEDITATION

### A. QUESTION: WHAT MEANS ARE USED TO SUCCEED IN DHYĀNA MEDITATION?

**Question:** What skillful means does one implement in order to achieve dhyāna *pāramitā*?

### B. RESPONSE: RENOUNCE DESIRES; ELIMINATE HINDRANCES; ADOPT PRACTICES

**Response:** One renounces five classes of phenomena (the five sense objects),<sup>3</sup> eliminates five dharmas (the five hindrances), and adopts five practices.

#### 1. RENUNCIATION OF THE FIVE DESIRES

What is meant by “renouncing five phenomena”? This means that one should condemn the five desires. How pitiful! Beings are constantly afflicted by the five desires and yet they still continue to seek after them endlessly.

#### a. FAULTS INHERENT IN PURSUING DESIRES: TEN ANALOGIES

As for these five desires, one obtains them and they become more severe. This is just as when one uses fire to cauterize an itch. Pursuing the five desires is a useless endeavor comparable to a dog’s gnawing away at a bone. Pursuing the five desires increases disputation, just as when birds fight with each other over carrion. The five desires burn people in the same way as happens when carrying a torch into an opposing wind. The five desires harm a person just as when one steps on a poisonous snake. The five desires are insubstantial like

something obtained in a dream. Satisfaction from the five desires is short-lived and is as if borrowed for only an instant. Worldly people deludedly lust for and attach to the five desires, not forsaking them even unto death. On account of them, in later lives, they undergo immeasurable suffering.

This is analogous to a stupid person greedily attached to a type of fine fruit who climbs up the tree and feasts upon them, but cannot bring himself to descend in time. Someone then chops down the tree, causing the tree to tilt over whereupon he falls, his body and head are mangled, and he then dies an agonizing death.

Moreover, these five desires, when attained, are blissful only for a moment. When lost, there is great suffering. This is comparable to when a person licks away at a honey-smear on a blade. In his greed for the sweetness, he is unaware of injuring his tongue. The rituals involved in pursuing the five desires are held in common with animals. One who is wise is well aware of this and thus is naturally able to distance himself from them.

b. STORY: THE MOUNTAIN SPIRIT TESTS THE TRAVELING LAYMAN

This is illustrated by the tale told of an *upāsaka* who, together with a group of traders, traveled afar in the course of their business. It happened to be cold and snowy at the time. When they were traveling along at night, he lost touch with his companions and took shelter in a stone cave. A mountain spirit, desirous of testing him, then transformed into a maiden who appeared in his presence. She uttered this verse, saying:

The white snow covers the mountainous ground.  
 The birds and beasts all hide themselves away.  
 I, alone, have no one to indulge my needs.  
 I pray only to experience your kindness in my plight.

The *upāsaka* covered his ears with both hands and replied with a verse in which he said:

You shameless and base person—  
 You speak to me these words about impure actions.  
 Would that water could rinse or fire burn them away.  
 I have no desire to further hear your voice.  
 I have a wife, but my mind does not course in desire.  
 How much the less would I engage in sexual misconduct.  
 The bliss afforded by all desires is extremely shallow,  
 The calamity brought by its great suffering is extremely profound.

All the desires, once gained, then bring no satiation.  
 When one loses them, this makes for great suffering.  
 When not yet obtained, one prays that one might obtain them.  
 Once one's obtained them, one becomes tormented by them.  
 The bliss afforded by all of the desires is extremely slight.  
 The poison of distress and suffering is so very much.  
 For the sake of them, one may lose one's body and life.  
 Just like the moth which casts itself into the lantern fire.

Once the mountain spirit had listened to this verse, she immediately lifted him up in her arms and transported him back into the midst of his companions. This is a case of one with wisdom renouncing desires, [realizing that] one cannot indulge attachment to them.

#### C. RENUNCIATION OF VISIBLE FORMS

As for the five desires, they refer to pleasing visible forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and touchables. All who desire to seek dhyāna absorptions should reject them.

##### 1) THE CALAMITOUS NATURE OF ATTACHMENT TO PLEASING FORMS

How does one renounce [these pleasing] visible forms? One contemplates the calamity inherent in [the pursuit of] visible forms. If a person becomes attached to such visible forms, the fire of all the fetters blazes up furiously, burning and injuring his person.

##### 2) TWO ANALOGIES: MOLTEN GOLD OR SILVER; BOILING HONEY

This is just as when one uses fire to melt gold or silver and just as when one brings hot honey to the boil. Although those substances still manifest their typical appearance and flavor, they sear the body and ruinously scorch the mouth. Then one is compelled to immediately cast them aside. If a person has developed a defiling attachment to marvelous visible forms and fine flavors, the circumstance is just the same.

##### 3) NON-INHERENCY OF BEAUTY AND UGLINESS

Moreover, [perceptions of] "beauty" and "ugliness" are such as reside with the person. Visible forms themselves are unfixed in this regard. How does one know this? Take for instance when one sees from afar a person of whom one is fond: One immediately brings forth thoughts of delight and fondness. If, on the other hand, one sees from afar an evil person who is one's adversary, one immediately generates hateful thoughts inclined towards inflicting injury. When one observes a person towards whom one's feelings are neutral, one experiences neither rage nor delight.



## 4) RENUNCIATION OF ERRONEOUS THOUGHT AND MISTAKEN PERCEPTION

If one wishes to renounce [this tendency to respond with either] “delight” or “rage,” then one must get rid of the erroneous thoughts as well as the [perceptions imputed on their corresponding] forms, simultaneously relinquishing them both entirely.

## 5) ANALOGY: AVOIDING BOTH FIRE AND MOLTEN METAL

This is analogous to an instance wherein one exposed to molten metal which burns the body. If one wishes to get rid of that circumstance, it will not do to simply seek the rejection of the fire alone while still retaining that [molten] metal. It is essential then that one should cast aside both the [molten] metal and the fire as well.

## 6) CITATIONS: DANGERS RISKED THROUGH ATTACHMENT TO FORMS

[The negative effect of attachment to pleasing visible forms] is exemplified by the case of King Bimbisāra who, on account of such visible forms forms, personally went into an enemy country where he remained, unaccompanied, in the room of the courtesan Āmrāpālī. [Additionally, there was the case of] King Udayana who, on account of being mentally defiled by [attachment to] such visible forms, cut off the hands and feet of five hundred rishis. All sorts of causes and conditions such as these serve to illustrate what is meant by renouncing the desire for “forms.”

## d. RENUNCIATION OF SOUNDS

## 1) THE NATURE OF ATTACHMENT TO SOUNDS AND THE LIABILITIES

Why must one renounce sounds? It is the characteristic of sounds that they do not abide. One hears them only momentarily and then they immediately disappear. Because foolish people do not understand a sound’s characteristic of being impermanent and disappearing, they erroneously develop fondness for and pleasure in sounds. They retain in their minds sounds which have already passed and then generate attachment to them.

## 2) STORY: THE KINNARA MAIDEN’S SINGING DISTURBS THE RISHIS

This is illustrated by the the five hundred rishis who dwelt in the mountains. The *kinnara* maiden was bathing in a pool in the Snow Mountains. When they heard the sound of her singing, they immediately lost their dhyāna absorptions. Their minds became drunken, crazed, and so unrestrained that they were unable to control themselves. It was as if a great wind had begun to blow through the forest trees. When they heard this subtle and marvelous voice so soft and pure, they thought indecent thoughts. Because of this, without their even being aware of it, their minds became deranged.

Thus it is that one may lose one's meritorious qualities in the present life and even become bound in later lives to fall into the wretched destinies.

3) SOUNDS AS PERCEIVED BY THE WISE

A person possessed of wisdom contemplates sounds and perceives that, in every new thought-moment, they are produced and destroyed, that the prior and latter sounds are not mutually inclusive, and that they do not even extend to reach each other. If one is able to develop such an understanding, then one does not develop defiling attachments [rooted in imputing meaning onto adjacent but unrelated sound vibrations]. Whoever becomes like this is unable to become disoriented even by the music of the gods, how much the less by the voices of humans. All sorts of causes and conditions such as these serve to illustrate what is meant by renouncing the desire for sounds.

e. RENUNCIATION OF FRAGRANCES

1) THE LIABILITIES INVOLVED IN ATTACHMENT TO FINE FRAGRANCES

Why must one renounce fragrances? People are of the opinion that having an attachment to fragrances is but a minor offense. However, a defiling attachment to fragrances may open the door to the fetters. Then, although one may have accumulated a hundred years in the observance of the moral precepts, one is nonetheless able to ruin it all in a single moment.

2) STORY: FRAGRANCES PULL A NOVICE AWAY FROM THE PATH

Take for instance the arhat who regularly entered the dragon palace. After eating, he took his bowl and gave it to his *śramaṇera* [attendant], ordering him to wash it. There were a few leftover grains of rice in the bowl. The *śramaṇera* smelled them, found them magnificently fragrant, and then ate them, finding them to be extremely delectable.

He then devised a clever technique through which he inserted himself in the under part of his master's rope-mesh sedan chair. By gripping the legs of the rope-mesh sedan chair with his two hands, when his master went forth, he entered the dragon palace right along with the rope-mesh sedan chair.

The Dragon later asked him, "Why did you bring along this person who has not yet realized the Path?"

The Master said, "I did not realize [he came with me]."

The Śramaṇera thus obtained some of that rice and ate it. He also became able to lay eyes on the daughter of the dragon whose body

was beautiful and whose perfume was incomparably marvelous. His mind then developed an immense defiled attachment for her. He then immediately made a vow, "I should create enough merit that I will be able to seize this dragon's dwelling and then live here myself."

The Dragon requested, "In the future, when you come here, do not bring this *śramaṇera* along with you."

After the *Śramaṇera* had returned, he single-mindedly devoted himself to the practice of giving and to observance of the moral precepts. He sought exclusively to bring about that result which he had vowed to obtain. He wished to soon become a dragon. Then, whenever he performed his circumambulations in the monastery, water gushed forth from beneath his feet. He knew then that he would certainly be successful in becoming a dragon.

He next went directly to the place alongside the great pond where his master had originally entered it. He then covered his head with his *kāśāya* robe and plunged in. He immediately died and changed into a great dragon. Because his accumulated merit was so abundant, he was then able to quickly slay the other dragon. At that point, the entire pond turned red in color.

Before the situation had come to this, all of his masters and the other members of the Sangha had scolded him. He had replied, "My mind has already become fixed on this and the characteristic features of the desired result have already begun to manifest in my mind."

The Master then led the assembly of Sanghans to the edge of the pool to observe this. Even such causal circumstances such as these may be brought about on account of an attachment to fragrances.

### 3) STORY: A SPIRIT REBUKES A BHIKSHU FOR ENJOYING FRAGRANCES

Additionally, there was a bhikshu who was walking next to a lotus pool in the forest. When he smelled the fragrance of the lotus blossoms, his mind was pleased and so experienced a feeling of enjoyment. Having passed on by, his mind developed a fondness for it.

The pond spirit then spoke to him, saying, "Why is it that you have forsaken that spot beneath the trees where you sit purely in dhyāna meditation, preferring instead to come forth and steal these fragrances of mine? It is on account of attachment to fragrances that dormant fetters may be influence to manifest again."

Then, yet another person came along. He went right into the pool and pulled up many of its flowers. He then started digging, pulling

forth roots and stems, created a disorderly mess, and then left. The pond spirit remained silent, not saying anything at all.

The Bhikshu then said, "This person destroyed your pond and took your flowers. Yet, you didn't say anything to him. However, when I merely passed by the pond bank, I suffered your rebuke and a scolding wherein you claimed I had stolen your fragrances."

The pond spirit said, "The evil people of the world constantly immerse their heads in the excrement of offense-related defilement. I do not even bother to speak to them. You, however, are a fine person who engages in the practice of dhyāna meditation. Thus, when you become attached to these fragrances, it destroys your fine endeavors. This is why I scolded you.

"This is analogous to a white cloth which is fresh and pure but then gets a spot where it has become stained by something black. Everyone observes it. In the case of those who are evil persons, it is comparable to an already blackened robe becoming spotted with some ink. It is such as people would not even notice. So, who would even bother to bring it up?"

All sorts of causal circumstances such as this demonstrate what is meant by renouncing the desire for fragrances.

f. RENUNCIATION OF TASTES

1) THE LIABILITIES INVOLVED IN ATTACHMENT TO FINE FLAVORS

Why must one renounce tastes? One ought to realize that, "Solely on account of desirous attachment to fine flavors, I may become bound to undergo a multitude of sufferings, may have molten copper poured down my throat, and may be forced to consume burning hot iron pellets."

If one fails to observe the Dharma in its applications to eating, and if one's thoughts of particular fondness become solidly attached, one may even fall down amongst the worms which abide in the midst of impurities.

2) STORY: A NOVICE FALLS AWAY DUE TO ATTACHMENT TO TASTES

Such a situation is exemplified by the case of a particular *śrāmaṇera* whose mind became obsessively fond of curds. Whenever the *dānapati* benefactors made an offering of curds to the Sangha, the portion which was left over would always be passed on to that *śrāmaṇera*. His thoughts became affectionately attached to its flavor, taking such pleasure and delight that he was unable to let go of it.

When his life came to an end, he was reborn in this vase which held the leftover curds. The guru of that *śrāmaṇera* had gained

the way of arhatship. When the Sangha divided up the curds, he said to them, "Be careful, be careful. Don't injure the curd-loving *śrāmaṇera*."

Everyone said, "But this is just a worm. Why do you refer to it as 'the curd-loving *śrāmaṇera*'?"

He replied, "Originally, this worm was my *śrāmaṇera* [attendant]. Because he only sat there immersed in a gluttonous affection for leftover curds, he came to be reborn in this vase. When the master received his share of the curds, the worm came along with it. The master said, "Curd-loving fellow. Why did you come here?" He then gave it the curds.

### 3) STORY: A PRINCE'S FATAL ATTACHMENT TO FINE FLAVORS

This [issue of attachment to fine flavors] is also illustrated by the case of a king known as "Partial Moon King" (Candrabhāga). He had a son who was a prince affectionately attached to delectable flavors. Every day the royal gardener brought fine fruits. There was a large tree within the garden. Up in the top of the tree, there was a bird carrying on with raising its young. It often flew off into the Fragrant Mountains from which it brought back a type of fine, aromatic fruit as nourishment for its young. The clutch of young birds happened to struggle over one of them so much that a fruit came tumbling on down to the ground.

Early in the morning, the gardener noticed it, was amazed by its unusual appearance, and so immediately took it to the King. The King valued this fruit for its unusual fragrance and appearance. The Prince noticed it and asked to have it. The King loved his son and so immediately gave it to him. The Prince ate the fruit, experienced its bouquet and flavor, and was overcome with thoughts tainted by profound attachment. Consequently he sought to receive it again, day after day.

The King immediately summoned the gardener and asked into its origins. The gardener said, "This fruit has no seed. It was obtained from off of the ground. I do not know from whence it came." The Prince wailed and cried and stopped eating. The King forced upon the gardener the responsibility for this, saying, "We look to you to find more of it."

The gardener went to the place where he had found the fruit, saw that there was a bird's nest, and realized that the bird had carried it hence. He camouflaged himself up in the tree and waited with the intention of seizing one [of the fruits]. When the mother

bird arrived, he immediately forcibly seized one of the fruits so as to deliver it forth.

This happened every day in the same way. The mother bird became furious at this and so returned with a poisonous fruit from the Fragrant Mountains which in fragrance, flavor, and appearance was identical to the previously delivered variety. The gardener seized it and took it forth as tribute to the King. The King gave it to the Prince. Not long after [the prince] had eaten it, the flesh of his body rotted away and he died.

In just such a manner, attachment to tastes possesses the [potential] to precipitate the suffering of losing one's life. All sorts of causal circumstances such as these illustrate what is meant by renouncing the desire involved in attachment to tastes.

g. RENUNCIATION OF TOUCHABLES

1) THE NATURE OF ATTACHMENT TO TOUCHABLES AND ITS LIABILITIES

Why must one renounce touch? This touch is the cause for the production of the fire of the fetters and is the root of the bondage of the mind. How is this so? The other four sense faculties each occupy their own particular area. This one, however, involves a consciousness which pervades the entire body. Because the area from which it may arise is extensive, it more commonly [serves as the basis for] generating defiled attachment.

This attachment is difficult to abandon. How does one know this? Take for example a person attached to [sensual] forms. [Ordinarily], if one contemplates the thirty-six categories of impurity in the body, one generates a mind of renunciation. If, however, one has developed an attachment to touch, even though one may then become aware of the impurity, one may nonetheless continue to crave its [sensations of] subtle softness. At this point, contemplation of impurity may not provide any benefits. It is for this reason that it is difficult to relinquish.

Additionally, because it is so difficult to relinquish, one may continue on this account to regularly generate grave karmic transgressions. If one falls into the hells, those hells have two regions: The first is known as "cold ice." The second is known as "blazing fire." In both of these hells, [sensations associated with] physical touch are employed to cause one to undergo punishments inflicting a myriad forms of suffering-generating cruelty. This "touch" is known as the place of the great darkness. It is a precipitous path attended by danger and difficulty.

## 2) STORY: YAŚODHARĀ AND THE BUDDHA

## a) SUBSTORY ONE: YAŚODHARĀ'S DIFFICULTY PREGNANCY

Then again, this is as described in the *Sutra on the Previous Lives of Rāhula's Mother*. As the Bodhisattva, Shakyamuni had two consorts. The first was named Gopiyā. The second was named Yaśodharā. Yaśodharā was the mother of Rāhula. Because Gopiyā was a barren woman, she did not become pregnant with child. It was on the night that the Bodhisattva left behind the home life that Yaśodharā realized that she was pregnant.

The Bodhisattva [Shakyamuni] engaged in ascetic practices for six years. For six full years, Yaśodharā remained pregnant without giving birth. All of the Shakyans inquired of her, "The Bodhisattva has left behind the home life. How is it that this could occur?"

Yaśodharā said, "I have committed no offenses with others. The child with which I am pregnant is truly a scion of the Prince."

The Shakyans said, "How is it then that it has now been so long and yet it still has not been born?"

She replied, "This is a matter not even I understand."

The Shakyans assembled and conferred on the matter. When she heard that the King wished to carry out a lawful punishment of offenses, Gopiyā addressed the King, "I pray that, out of sympathy for her, you will be lenient. I have dwelt together with Yaśodharā constantly. I can certify for her that I know she is free of transgressions. Wait for her child to be born. Then you will be able to know if it resembles the father or not. It would not be too late then to carry out punishments."

The King then allowed leniency. When the Buddha's six years of ascetic practices had been fulfilled, on the very night when he achieved buddhahood, she gave birth to Rāhula. The King observed that he resembled his father, felt affection and delight, and forgot his worries. He spoke to the group of ministers, saying, "Although my son has gone away, I have now gained his son. It is no different than if my son was here."

Although Yaśodharā had avoided the punishment of being cast out, she had nonetheless acquired a bad reputation which spread throughout the country. Yaśodharā wished to get rid of the stain on her reputation.

After the Buddha had gained realization of the Path, he returned to Kapilavastu in an attempt to cross over the sons of the Shakyans to liberation. At that time King Śuddhodana and Yaśodharā regularly

invited the Buddha to come to the palace for meals. At one such time Yaśodharā took a bowl of “hundred-flavored delightful dumplings,” handed it to Rāhula, and then directed him to take it up and offer them to the Buddha.

The Buddha then resorted to his spiritual powers to transform all five hundred arhats so that they all appeared identical to the Buddha, showing no differences at all. The seven-year-old Rāhula carried the delightful dumplings forward, went straight before the Buddha himself, and then offered them up to the Bhagavan.

[The Buddha] then withdrew his spiritual powers whereupon all of the bhikshus were restored to their original physical appearance. They were all sitting there with empty bowls. Only the Buddha’s bowl was full of delightful dumplings. Yaśodharā then addressed the King, saying, “Let this serve as verification that I have remained free of any transgressions.”

b) SUBSTORY TWO: ORIGINS OF YAŚODHARĀ’S DIFFICULT PREGNANCY

Yaśodharā then inquired of the Buddha, “What is the causal basis behind my remaining pregnant for a period of six years?”

The Buddha said, “Long ago, in a lifetime far off in the past, your son Rāhula was the king of a country. There was a rishi possessed of the five superknowledges who came at that time and entered that king’s country. He spoke to the King, saying, “It is the royal law to punish thieves. I request that you punish me for my offenses.”

The King said, “But what offenses have you committed?”

He replied, “I entered the King’s country and transgressed by taking what had not been given. I have repeatedly drunk the King’s water and used the King’s willow branches [as tooth brushes].”

The King said, “But I have already given those things [to the people]. What transgression could there be in this? When I first ascended to the position of king, I bestowed the use of both water and willow branches universally on everyone.”

The Rishi said, “Although the King has already made a gift of them, my mind is nonetheless afflicted by doubts and regrets. Thus the offense is not yet expiated. I pray that I will now undergo corrective measures so as to prevent being subjected to [karmic] punishments later.

The King said, “If you must insist, wait a little bit for me to go on in and come back out again.”

The King then entered the palace. Even after six days, he still had not emerged again. The Rishi stayed in the King’s garden enduring



hunger and thirst for those six days. The Rishi thought to himself, "This King is just now using this situation to punish me."

After six days had gone by, the King came out and released the Rishi, saying, "I completely forgot about this. Do not hold it against me." On account of this causal circumstance, he underwent five hundred lifetimes of punishment in the three wretched destinies and then for five hundred lifetimes always remained in his mother's womb for a period of six years. On account of this verifying evidence, [we should realize that] Yaśodharā was free of transgressions.

c) SUBSTORY THREE: YAŚODHARĀ'S ATTEMPT TO BRING BACK THE BUDDHA

At this time, after he had finished his meal, the Bhagavān departed. Yaśodharā's thoughts were full of regret, "Such a fine man as this, rare in all the world—I succeeded in encountering him, but now have lost him forever."

When the Bhagavān sat down, she gazed at him intently without even blinking. When the Bhagavān departed, her gaze followed along after him so intently that only when [his silhouette] sank away on the horizon did she finally desist. Her thoughts were full of grief and regret. Every time she thought of it, she would collapse and go into a faint. Her attendants would sprinkle her with water. Only then did she revive and breath normally again.

She constantly remained alone, pondering, "Who in all the world is so good at the skill of casting spells that he might be able to turn [the Buddha's] mind around, causing him to return to his original state of mind, thus allowing us to once again be as delighted and happy as before?" She then placed the seven precious things and other rare jewels into a gold tray and, taking it up, went forth to enlist the services of someone [who could help her do this].

There was one *brahmacarin* who responded to her by saying, "I am able to cast a spell upon him which will cause his mind to turn back. You must make hundred-flavored delightful dumplings in which you mix together herbs. Use the phrases of the spell to capture him. His mind will then turn around and he will certainly come. Of this there is no doubt."

Yaśodharā followed his instructions and then sent others to invite the Buddha, saying, "Pray may you, together with the assembly of Āryas, deign to bend down from your [heights of] awesome spirituality [and honor us with your presence]." The Buddha then came and entered into the King's palace. Yaśodharā immediately

sent forth the hundred-flavored delightful dumplings and had them placed in the Buddha's bowl. When the Buddha had eaten them, Yaśodharā hoped that, in accordance with her wish, they would be able to share joy together again just as before. The Buddha ate them, yet appeared no different, his mind and eyes remaining clear and quiet.

Yaśodharā said, "That he does not now move is just because the power of the potion has not yet become active, that's all. Once the strength of the potion has taken effect, events will certainly turn out just as I have wished."

When the Buddha had finished eating and had uttered the [meal-ending] mantra and prayer, he arose from his seat and left. Yaśodharā hoped the power of the potion would take effect in the late afternoon and that it would then become active, certainly causing him to return then to the palace. However, the Buddha remained then just the same as ever, no different in either body or mind.

When it came time on the next day for the Bhikshus to take their meal, they put on their robes, took up their bowls, and then went forth into the city to seek alms. They all then heard of this event and were thus moved to increased reverence, thinking, "The powers of the Buddha are immeasurable. His spirit and mind are difficult to fathom. They are inconceivable and indescribable. The power of Yaśodharā's delightful dumplings was extremely great and yet the Bhagavan ate them with no difference being effected on either his body or mind."

When the Bhikshus had finished eating and had gone forth from the city, they reported the entire matter to the Bhagavan.

d) SUBSTORY FOUR: THE BUDDHA'S PAST LIFE AS A ONE-HORNED RISHI

The Buddha told the Bhikshus, "As for this Yaśodharā, it is not just in this present life that she has used the delightful dumplings to confuse me. Once before, during a past life, she also used the delightful dumplings to confuse me."

The Bhagavan then described the past-life causes and conditions behind this, saying, "In a time long ago and far off in the past, there was a rishi in the mountains of the state of Benares who, in mid-spring was relieving himself into a basin when he observed a buck and a doe mating. Lustful thoughts suddenly arose in him, whereupon his semen flowed into the basin.

The doe happened to drink from that basin and became pregnant. When the months of pregnancy were complete, she gave birth

to a fawn with the appearance of a man. There were only [the differences of] a single horn on the head and feet like those of a deer. When the deer was about to fawn, she went to a place alongside the rishi's hut and gave birth. She saw that her fawn was a person and so entrusted it to the rishi and left.

When the Rishi came out, he saw this progeny of the deer, recalled to himself the original conditions, knew that it was his own son, and so took him and raised him. As [the son] grew to adulthood, [the Rishi] was diligent in instructing him in the topics of study so that he was able to penetrate the eighteen great classics. Additionally, [the son] studied sitting in dhyāna meditation, practiced the four immeasurable minds, and then straightaway gained realization of the five superknowledges.

Once, [once the son had grown up and become a rishi in his own right], he was climbing up the mountain and happened to encounter a great rainstorm. The mud became slippery, causing him to lose his footing, fall to the ground, damage his ewer, and injure his foot. He reacted by becoming greatly enraged. With a ewer full of water, he then cast a spell intended to cause all rains to cease. Due to the influence of the meritorious qualities possessed by this rishi, the dragons, ghosts, and spirits acted on his behalf to ensure that no more rain would fall.

Because it did not rain, the five types of grains and the five types of fruit all failed to grow. The populace became impoverished, destitute, and without any way whereby they might go on living. The king of the state of Benares was distressed, worried, and tormented by grief. He ordered all of the great officials to convene and discuss the rainfall situation.

One of the intelligent ones among them offered an opinion, saying, "I have heard it rumored that up in the Rishi Mountains there is a one-horned rishi who, on account of losing his footing, fell down as he ascended the mountain, injuring his foot. He cast a hateful spell on these rains whereby he caused them to not fall for a period of twelve years."

The King thought to himself, "If it goes twelve years without raining, my country will surely be finished. There will be no people left at all."

The King then issued an appeal, stating, "Could it be that there is someone who is able to cause a rishi to lose his five superknowledges and who will then instruct me in how to do this for the sake

of the people? I will divide the country so that each of us will then be rulers over half of it.”

In this country of Benares, there was a courtesan by the name of Śāntā who was incomparably beautiful. She came in response to the King’s appeal and asked everyone there, “Is this individual a man or is it someone who is not really a man?”

Everyone replied, “He is a man, that’s all. He was born as the son of a rishi.”

The courtesan said, “If he is a man, I will be able to destroy him.” After she had said this, she took up a tray made of gold filled up with fine and precious objects, and told the king of the country, “I will come back here mounted on the neck of this rishi.”

The courtesan then immediately sought to assemble five hundred carriages carrying five hundred beautiful maidens and five hundred deer-carts carrying all sorts of delightful morsels all of which had been admixed with many herbs. She used many different hues to color them so that they appeared like various kinds of fruits and then took all sorts of greatly powerful fine liquors which, in appearance and flavor, were identical to water.

They dressed in tree bark clothing and grass clothing and traveled into the forest, appearing thereby as if they were rishis themselves. They set up grass huts off to one side of the Rishi’s hut and then took up residence there. The one-horned rishi was wandering about and observed them. The maidens all came out and welcomed him. They used beautiful flowers and fine incenses as offerings to the Rishi. The Rishi was greatly delighted.

All of the maidens used lovely words and respectful phrases in greeting the Rishi. They took him on into their quarters and sat with him on fine bedding. They gave him fine clear liquor which he took to be pure water. They gave him delightful morsels which he took to be fruit. After he had feasted and drunk his fill, he told the maidens, “From the time of my birth on up to the present, this is a first. I have never yet had such choice fruit and such fine water.”

The maidens said, “It is because we have been single-minded in our practice of goodness that the gods fulfill our wishes to obtain these choice fruits and fine water.”

The Rishi asked the maidens, “How is it that your complexions and bodies are so full and flourishing?”

They replied, saying, “It is because we eat these fine fruits and drink this marvelous water that our bodies are so full and flourishing

as this." The maidens addressed the Rishi, saying, "Why don't you come and live here among us?"

He replied, saying, "I, too, could abide here."

The maidens said, "We could even bathe together." He then assented to that as well. The hands of the maidens were soft and tender. When they touched him, his mind moved. He then continued to bathe together with the beautiful maidens. Desirous thoughts began to develop and consequently he engaged in sexual intercourse. He immediately lost his superknowledges, whereupon the heavens made a great downpour of rain which went on for seven days and seven nights allowing them the opportunity to [remain indoors], devoting themselves to the delights of food and drink.

After the seven days had passed, the liquor and fruit were all gone, whereupon they continued to supply their needs with the waters of the mountain and the fruits from the trees. However, their flavors were not so marvelous, and so [the Rishi] sought more of what they had before.

She replied to him, saying, "They are already used up. We must now go together to a place, not far from here, where such things can be obtained."

The Rishi said, "We can do as you wish." They then went off together. The courtesan knew when they had come to a spot not far from the city. The maiden then lay down in the middle of the road and said, "I'm exhausted. I can't walk any further."

The Rishi said, "If it's the case that you cannot walk, sit up on my shoulders and I will carry you forth."

The maiden had already sent along beforehand a letter to the King in which she told the King, "The King will now be able to observe my intelligence and abilities."

The King ordered up his official carriage and went forth to observe them. He inquired of her, "How did you manage to bring this about?"

The maiden addressed the King, saying, "It is on account of the power of expedient means that I have now already caused the situation to develop in this way. I have no abilities beyond this. Order him to live within the city. Make fine offerings to him and pay respects to him. Keep him satisfied with the five objects of desire."

The King honored him with the status of a great official. [The Rishi] had dwelt in the city for only a short span of days when his body became haggard and emaciated. He remembered the mental

bliss of dhyāna absorptions and so grew disgusted with these worldly desires. The King asked the Rishi, “How is it that you have become so unhappy that your body has now become so haggard and emaciated?”

The Rishi replied to the King, “Although I have gained the five desires, I constantly recall the leisure and stillness in the forest, the wandering place of all the rishis. I cannot get it out of my mind.”

The King thought to himself, “If I force him to go against his aspirations, such a contravention of one’s aspirations entails suffering. If the suffering reaches an extreme, then he will die. Originally, this was on account of seeking to get rid of the calamity of drought. Now I have already succeeded in that. Why should I continue to forcibly keep him from his aspirations?” Hence [the King] then released him.

After he had returned to the mountains, he had not applied himself vigorously for so very long before he regained once again the five superknowledges.

The Buddha told the Bhikshus, “The one-horned rishi was myself. The courtesan was Yaśodharā. At that time she succeeded in deceiving me with the delightful dumplings. I had not yet cut off the fetters and so was tricked by her. Now she again wished to use the delightful dumplings to trick me but was unable to succeed.”

On account of this matter one knows that the dharma of subtle and tender touch is able to move even a rishi, how much the more would this be so of any foolish common person. All sorts of causes and conditions such as these illustrate what is meant by renouncing the desire for [sensations of] subtle smoothness. In this fashion one renounces the five desires.

## 2. ELIMINATING THE FIVE HINDRANCES

### a. ELIMINATING SENSUAL DESIRE

As for eliminating the five hindrances, again, a person who indulges sensual desire (*kāma-chanda*), departs extremely far from the Path. How is this so? Sensual desire is the abiding place of all sorts of torment and chaos. If the mind is attached to sensual desire, one has no way to approach the Path. This is as described in the verse on banishing the hindrance of sensual desire:

A person with a sense of shame and blame who’s entered the Path  
 And who holds up his bowl so as to provide blessings for beings—  
 How could he give free reign to desire for the sense objects  
 And thus become sunken down amidst the five sense faculties?

To put on the armor and brandish both sword and truncheon,  
 [Only to] retreat and run away at the sight of the enemy,  
 Such a timid and faint-hearted man  
 Is such as the entire world slights and laughs at.

The bhikshu is an almsman  
 He gets rid of his hair and dons the *kāṣāya* robe  
 If he is so controlled as this by the horse of the five sense faculties,  
 He brings on laughter in just this same way.

If he is also like an aristocratic noble  
 Who adorns himself in formal attire  
 And then goes about begging for clothing and food,  
 He thus draws forth the laughter of everyone.

The bhikshu gets rid of adornment with finery.  
 He neglects his appearance in order to focus his mind.  
 If he continues to seek for the pleasures of sensual desire,  
 He brings on laughter in just this way.

He's already forsaken the pleasures of the five desires,  
 Casting them off without looking back.  
 Why then would he still desire to obtain them,  
 Like a stupid person who feasts on his own vomit?

People such as these who engage the sensual desires  
 Do not know to contemplate their original vows,  
 Nor do they distinguish between the good and the bad.  
 They've become crazed and drunken with craving.

One with a sense of shame and blame who deeply reveres Dharma  
 Has already entirely cast aside everything.  
 That which the worthy and wise do not grow close to,  
 Is that which the foolish and stupid approach with affection.

All of the sensual desires, when sought, inflict suffering.  
 Once one's obtained them, there's much fear [they may be lost].  
 When they're lost, one is beset by agitation and torment.  
 Thus there is never a time in which one abides in bliss.

If the sensual desires bring calamities of this sort  
 How can one succeed in forsaking them?  
 If one gains the bliss of the dhyāna absorptions,  
 Then one will not be cheated by them.

If one is insatiably attached to the pleasures of sensual desire,  
 How is one able to extinguish and get rid of them?

If one succeeds in the contemplation of impurity,  
Thoughts of this sort then naturally disappear.

If one remains attached to desire without being aware of it oneself,  
How can one succeed in awakening his own mind?  
He should contemplate aging, sickness, and death.  
Doing so, he then becomes able to escape those four abysses.<sup>4</sup>

The sensual desires are difficult to put down and relinquish.  
How is one able to distance oneself from them?  
If one is able to find pleasure in good dharmas,  
This sensual desire will naturally be put to rest.

The sensual desires are difficult to untie.  
How is one able to let loose of them?  
If one contemplates the body and realizes its true character,  
Then one will not be tied up by them.

Dharmas of contemplation such as these  
Are able to extinguish the fires of the sensual desires  
Just as when, with the coming of the great seasonal rains,  
The wildfires no longer continue to burn.

All sorts of causal bases such as these illustrate what is meant by extinguishing and eliminating the hindrance of sensual desire.

b. ELIMINATING ILL-WILL

As for the hindrance of ill-will (*vyāpāda*), it is the basis for losing all good dharmas, the cause for falling into the wretched destinies, the enemy of all forms of bliss, the great thief preying on the wholesome mind, and the repository of all manner of harsh speech. This is illustrated in a verse spoken by the Buddha to instruct disciples under the influence of hatefulness:

You should be aware of and contemplate this:  
In taking on a body and dwelling in the womb,  
The suffering of confinement in defiled and fearsome straights,  
And then, once born, the intense difficulty which ensues.

If one has contemplated this and then realized its import,  
And yet still not extinguish ill-will,  
Then one should understand that those of this ilk  
Are people devoid of [humane] thoughtfulness.

Even if there were no resultant retribution for the offense,  
And, even if there were no rebuke and scolding as a result,  
One should still be able to stop it through kindness and patience.  
How much the more so, given the intensity of its bitter fruits?



One ought to contemplate aging, sickness, and death.  
 There is no one who is able to avoid it.  
 One should bring forth thoughts of kindness and compassion.  
 How could one inflict evil deeds on other beings?  
 Beings act like thieves who are enemies each to the other,  
 Hacking and stabbing each other, undergoing intense suffering.  
 How could one be a person who cultivates goodness  
 And yet still inflict even more torment and injury on others?  
 One should always embody kindness and compassion,  
 And fix one's mind on cultivating every form of goodness.  
 One must not cherish malicious intentions,  
 Whereby one attacks others and wreaks widespread harm.  
 If one diligently cultivates the dharmas of the Path,  
 Then one will not practice torment and injury.  
 The power of good and evil are incompatible,  
 Just as water and fire are opposed to one another.  
 Hatred comes and covers over the mind,  
 One doesn't know then to distinguish between good and bad,  
 Nor is one aware of what benefits or injures.  
 One doesn't know then to fear the wretched destinies.  
 One does not reckon the suffering and torment of others.  
 One does not realize the wearying effect on body and mind.  
 One first takes on the cause of suffering,  
 And then afterwards visits it upon other people.  
 If one wishes to extinguish ill-will,  
 One ought to contemplate with the mind of kindness,  
 And dwell alone in self-purifying leisure,  
 Putting aside endeavors and extinguishing its causal bases.  
 One ought to know fear of aging, sickness, and death,  
 And get rid of the nine kinds of hatred and torment.  
 If, in this manner, one contemplates with kindness,  
 Then one will succeed in extinguishing the poison of hatred.

All sorts of causal bases such as these illustrate the means for getting rid of the hindrance of ill-will.

c. ELIMINATING LETHARGY-AND-SLEEPINESS

As for the hindrance of lethargy-and-sleepiness (*styāna-middha*), it is able to destroy three features of the present existence: the happiness associated with the various desires, the happiness associated with wealth, and one's stock of merit. It is able to destroy the most

ultimate forms of bliss enjoyed in both present and future lives. It is no different from death and differs from it only in that breathing is still present. This is as illustrated by a verse spoken by a bodhisattva in scolding his sleepy disciple:

You! Get up! Don't lay there hugging that stinking body  
 That is all sorts of impurities falsely referred to as a "person."  
 It's as if you've gotten a grave illness or been shot with an arrow.  
 With the pain of suffering accumulating, how then can you sleep?  
 The entire world is being burned up by the fire of death.  
 You should be seeking means of escape. How then can you sleep?  
 Just as when someone bound and taken off for execution,  
 With grievous injury about to befall you, how can you sleep?  
 With insurgent fetters not yet quelled and harm not yet averted,  
 It's as if one were sleeping in a room with a venomous snake,  
 And is as if one had met up with the gleaming blades of soldiers.  
 At such a time, how could it be that you now can still sleep?  
 Sleep is a great darkness in which nothing is visible.  
 With every day, it invades and deceives, stealing a person's vision.  
 When sleep blankets the mind, one is not aware of anything.  
 With such great faults as these, how then can you sleep?

All sorts of causal bases such as these illustrate the need to eliminate the hindrance of lethargy-and-sleepiness.<sup>5</sup>

d. ELIMINATING EXCITEDNESS-AND-REGRETFULNESS

As for the hindrance of "excitedness-and-regretfulness," (*auddhatyakaṅkṛtyā*), it is the action of "excitedness" as a dharma that it destroys the mind of one who has left the home life. If a person focuses his mind, it may still not remain in one place, how much the less if one is excited and scattered. A person who is excited and scattered is like a drunken elephant unmanaged by [the elephant keeper's] hook and like a camel whose nose has just been pierced. He cannot be controlled. This is as set forth in a verse:

You've already shaved your head and donned the dyed robe.  
 Taking up the clay bowl, you go out on the alms round.  
 How can you delight in clinging to ways of frivolity and agitation?  
 Having gained no Dharma benefit, you lose worldly bliss as well.

As for the dharma of regretfulness, it is just as with a person who has committed a great transgression and so constantly embraces fearfulness on that account. In such a case, the arrow of regretfulness

has plunged so deeply into his mind and stuck so so firmly that it cannot be pulled out. This is as described in a verse:

One ought not to have done it and yet one did it.  
 One ought to have done it and yet one did not do it.  
 One is burned by the fire of regretful torment.  
 And in later lives falls into the wretched destinies.

If a person is able to feel regret for an offense,  
 Having regretted it, one should then put it down and let it go.  
 A mind like this abides in happiness.  
 One should not constantly remain attached to it in one's thoughts.

If one has the two kinds of regretfulness,  
 Having not done and having already done it,  
 Because this regretfulness attaches to the mind,  
 This then is the mark of a foolish person.

It is not the case that by means of the mind's feeling regret  
 That which one didn't do will still be able to be done.  
 [As for] the evil endeavors one has already committed,  
 One is unable to cause them to be undone.

All sorts of causal bases such as these illustrate the necessity of eliminating the hindrance of excitedness-and-regretfulness.<sup>6</sup>

e. ELIMINATING THE HINDRANCE OF DOUBTFULNESS

As for the hindrance of doubtfulness (*vicikitsā*), because doubtfulness covers over the mind, one is unable to achieve a resolutely fixed mind with respect to any dharma. Because one remains without any definite resolve, one's endeavors in the Buddha's Dharma are useless and one gains nothing whatsoever. This is analogous to a person who enters into a mountain full of jewels. If he has no hands, he remains unable to take anything with him. This is as set forth in a verse on the meaning of doubtfulness:

It is just as when a person on a forked road  
 Is so confused by doubtfulness that he goes nowhere at all,  
 In [seeking realization] of the true character of dharmas,  
 Doubtfulness acts in just this same way.

Because one remains doubtful, one does not seek diligently  
 [To realize] the true character of dharmas.  
 This doubt comes forth from stupidity,  
 Among those [mental factors] which are bad, it is the most inferior.

Among the wholesome and unwholesome dharmas,  
 Cyclic birth-and-death as well as nirvāṇa  
 Are definitely real and truly-existent dharmas.  
 Do not give rise to doubtfulness with respect to them.

If you give rise to thoughts of doubtfulness,  
 The King of Death's hell minions will tie you up.  
 Just as when a lion pounces on a deer,  
 You will be unable to succeed in escaping.

Although one may possess doubts as one abides in the world,  
 One should still accord with the sublime and wholesome Dharma,  
 Just as when one contemplates a road which comes to a fork,  
 One should follow the one which leads to fine benefits.

On account of all sorts of causal bases such as these, one should eliminate the hindrance of doubtfulness.

f. THE BENEFITS OF ELIMINATING THE FIVE HINDRANCES (FIVE SIMILES)

When one gets rid of these five hindrances, it is analogous to paying off a debt and being released from it, like gaining a cure for a serious disease, like leaving behind a place of famine and reaching a country of abundance, like getting out of prison, like being rescued from the midst of evil bandits so that one is peaceful, secure, and free of calamity. It is just like this for the practitioner. When he gets rid of the five hindrances, his mind becomes peaceful, secure, pure, and blissful.

g. ANALOGY: THE NEGATIVE EFFECT OF THE HINDRANCES ON THE MIND

It is just as with the sun and moon which may be obscured by five things: When they are blocked by smoke, clouds, dust, fog, or the hand of Rāhu the *asura*, they are unable to shine brightly. So too it is with a person's mind is. When it is covered over by the five hindrances, one remains unable to benefit oneself and also unable to be of help to others.

3. PRACTICING THE FIVE DHARMAS: ZEAL; VIGOR; MINDFULNESS; ETC.

Where one is able to renounce the five desires and eliminate the five hindrances, one then takes up the practice of five dharmas, namely zeal, vigor, mindfulness, discerning knowing, and single-mindedness. If one practices these five dharmas, then one succeeds in gaining the five component aspects [of the first dhyāna] and thus proceeds to perfect one's realization of the first dhyāna.

"Zeal" (*chanda*) refers to the desire to escape from the desires of the desire realm and gain realization of the first dhyāna.

“Vigor” (*vīrya*) refers to abandoning the home life, observing the moral-virtue precepts, remaining exclusively focused and not lax in the beginning of the night and in the end of the night, being measured in eating, and focusing the mind in a way in which it is not allowed to run off and become scattered.

“Mindfulness” (*smṛti*) refers to being mindful of the bliss of the first dhyāna, being aware that the desire realm is impure, deceptive and worthy of being seen as base whereas the first dhyāna is honorable, to be esteemed, and worthy of being seen as noble.

“Discerning knowing” (*samprajñāna*) refers to contemplating, investigating, and taking the measure of the bliss of the desire realm as compared with the bliss of the first dhyāna, thus realizing then their relative importance and benefits.

“Single-mindedness” (*citta-eka-agra*) refers to constantly anchoring the mind in the midst of specific objective conditions while not allowing it to split off and become scattered.

#### 4. RENUNCIATION OF DESIRE: 43 ANALOGIES LEADING TO FIRST DHYĀNA

Moreover, one seeks exclusively to gain the first dhyāna and, in doing so, renounces the pleasures of desire. By way of analogy, it is as if one were obsessed with worry over a particular enemy and so constantly sought to eliminate him. This being the case, that enemy would have no opportunity to bring him harm.

This is illustrated by what the Buddha said to the Brahman who was attached to desire: “I originally contemplated desire and realized that desire constitutes a cause and condition for apprehensiveness, distress, and suffering. Desire brings only few pleasures, whereas its sufferings are extremely numerous.”

Desire is the net of the demons and an entangling web from which it is difficult to escape. Desire is a burning heat drying up all bliss. It is like being in a forest with flames rising on all four sides. Desire, as when approaching a fiery pit, is extremely fearsome. It is like cornering a venomous snake, like an enemy invader brandishing a knife, like an evil *rākṣasa* ghost, like deadly poison entering the mouth, like swallowing molten copper, like three columns of crazed elephants, like approaching an extremely deep abyss, like a lion blocking the path, like the Makara fish-monster opening its maw. All desires are like this and are very much worthy of being feared. The desires cause people to undergo tormenting suffering.

Those people who are attached to desire are like convicts in a prison, like deer caught in a corral-trap, like birds snared in a net,

like fish who have swallowed a hook, like a dog pounced upon by a leopard, like a crow amidst a band of owls, like a snake which has run up against a wild boar, and like a mouse among cats. They are like blind men approaching an abyss, like a fly caught in hot oil, like a peaceful man caught up in military combat, like a lame person who has entered a conflagration, like one who has entered a river of boiling brine, like one who licks a honey-smear blade, and like one [sentenced to be] sliced to ribbons in the city square.

The desires are like a thinly covered grove of knives, like flowers covering filth, like a jar of honey mixed with poison, and like a basket of venomous snakes. They are like the falseness and deception of a dream, like a debt which must be repaid, and like a conjuration which deceives a small child. In their lack of substantiality, they are like the flames of a fire. [Involvement with them] is like being drowned in a great body of water and like when a boat enters into the gullet of the Makara fish-monster.

They are like a hailstorm destroying crops, like crashing thunder and lightning striking right next to a person. The desires are just like this. They are false, deceptive, devoid of substantiality, devoid of durability, devoid of potency, possessing only few pleasures, but many sufferings. The desires constitute an army of demons smashing all of one's goodness and merit.

It is because they constantly serve to plunder and injure beings that we present all sorts of analogies such as these. If one renounces the five desires, gets rid of the five hindrances, and practices the five dharmas, one may then succeed in reaching the first dhyāna.

5. QUESTION: WHY IS "DHYĀNA" THIS PĀRAMITĀ'S DESIGNATION?

**Question:** The absorptions and samādhis such as the eight liberations (*vimokṣa*), the eight bases of ascendancy (*abhibhvāyatana*), the ten universal bases (*kṛtsnāyatana*), and the four immeasurable minds (*apramāṇacitta*)—all sorts of other absorptions such as these are not referred to here as "*pāramitā*." Why is it that one speaks only of "*dhyāna*" *pāramitā*?

6. RESPONSE: "DHYĀNA" SUBSUMES ALL MEDITATIVE PRACTICES

**Response:** The meritorious qualities of all of these absorptions in every case involve the cultivation of contemplative thought. (Ch. text note: In our language, "*dhyāna*" means "the cultivation of contemplative thought.") When one speaks of "the *pāramitā* of *dhyāna*," all of these are subsumed. Moreover, "*dhyāna*" is the greatest among them and so is like a king. When one speaks of "*dhyāna*," then this subsumes

all of them. When one speaks of any of the other absorptions, then one does not thereby subsume the rest. Why is this? Within these four dhyānas, wisdom and meditative absorption are equal and so they are blissful. At the stage of “the preliminary ground” (*anāgāmya*, a.k.a. “access concentration”), wisdom is greater and meditative absorption is lesser. In the formless realm, absorption is greater whereas wisdom is lesser. Such stations as these are not blissful. They are analogous to a carriage on which one wheel is strong and one wheel is weak. If this is the case, then one is not peaceful or secure. When wisdom and absorption do not abide in equal balance, then it is just like this.

Moreover, in the stations of these four dhyānas, there exist the four immeasurable minds (lit. “minds of equal regard”), the five superknowledges, the liberations, the bases of ascendancy, the universal bases, the samādhi of non-contention (*araṇḍā-samādhi*), the knowledge arising through resolution (*prañidhi-jñāna*), the summit-reaching dhyāna (*prāntakoṭīka-dhyāna*), the sovereign-independence absorption, the refining dhyānas, the fourteen transformation-generating mind states [contained within the four dhyānas], the *pratyutpanna-samādhi*, the samādhis of the bodhisattvas, the foremost *śuraṅgama*, and so forth. Generally-described, there are one hundred and twenty.

Generally-described, the samādhis of the Buddhas such as the “immovable” [samādhi] number one hundred and eight. These reach even to those achieved by the Buddhas when they gain realization of the Path and when they relinquish their lives. All sorts of other such marvelous absorptions possessed of meritorious qualities are contained within “dhyāna.” It is for this reason that “dhyāna” is referred to as the [emblematic designation for] the “*pāramitā*” [associated with meditative discipline] whereas the other absorptions do not serve as the basis for referring to “*pāramitā*.”