

**Part Five:**

**THE PERFECTION OF DHYĀNA  
MEDITATION**

**(Chapter 28)**



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 (*araṇā-samādhi*), the knowledge arising through resolution (*praṇidhi-jñāna*), the summit-reaching dhyāna (*prāntakoṭika-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*.”

7. QUESTION: WHICH PRACTICES BRING ABOUT THE FIRST DHYĀNA?

**Question:** You stated earlier that, if one renounces the five desires, gets rid of the five hindrances, and cultivates five dharmas, then one gains the first dhyāna. Precisely which endeavors does one actually cultivate and which path does one base oneself on so that one then becomes able to reach the first dhyāna?

8. RESPONSE: IMPURITY, BREATH, ETC., PER THE *DHYĀNA SUTRA* VERSE

**Response:** One relies upon the contemplation of impurity, the *ānāpāna* mindfulness (of respiration), and other such methods of

access to absorption. This is as set forth in the *Dhyāna Sutra's* verse on the meaning of dhyāna:

One leaves behind desire as well as evil dharmas.  
 There exist "ideation" as well as "mental discursion."  
 This abandonment generates "joy" and "bliss" which are realized.  
 This person gains entry into the first dhyāna.

When one has already succeeded in leaving behind the fire of lust,  
 Then one gains this clear and cool "concentration,"  
 Just as if a person oppressed by great heat,  
 On entering a cool water pool, then enjoys bliss.

This is just as when a poor person gains a treasury of jewels:  
 "Ideation" full of great delight moves his mind.  
 As he proceeds with discriminations, that is "mental discursion."  
 Entering the first dhyāna is just like this.

One realizes that these two dharmas bring chaos to the mind  
 And that, although wholesome, they, too, must be abandoned,  
 This is just as with a large pool of still and clear water:  
 When waves wash across it, one cannot see down into it.

It is analogous to a person who, greatly exhausted,  
 Once safe and secure, lays down to sleep:  
 If then there is the noise of someone calling out to him,  
 His mind feels greatly tormented and chaotic.

When one focuses one's mind and enters dhyāna,  
 One takes "ideation" and "mental discursion" to be tormenting.  
 Therefore one eliminates this ideation and mental discursion,  
 And succeeds in reaching the station of singular consciousness.

Because, inwardly, one's mind is pure,  
 "Concentration" arises and one gains "joy" and "bliss".  
 When one succeeds in entering the second dhyāna,  
 The joy is intensely strong and one's mind is greatly pleased.

Focusing the mind, one enters the foremost level of concentration,  
 One abides in stillness and has nothing of which one thinks.  
 One sees "joy" as calamitous and desires to eliminate it,  
 Just as one has done with "ideation" and "mental discursion."

It is through feeling that one experiences "joy."  
 If one loses "joy," then one falls prey to distress.  
 One abandons "joy" and experiences "physically-based bliss."  
 One relinquishes thoughts as well as that which facilitates them.

Āryas may acquire it and still maintain equanimity towards it,  
But other persons find it difficult to relinquish.

If one is able to realize the calamity inherent in “bliss,”

One may then experience the great peace of immovability.

Having already eliminated both distress and “joy,”

One now also severs both suffering and bliss.

One relinquishes thought and, with a mind which is pure,

One enters into the fourth dhyāna.

As for the bliss experienced in the third dhyāna,

Since one is moved by its impermanence, it involves suffering.

As for what exists in the desire realm, one severs their distress.

As for aspects of the first and second dhyāna, one eliminates “joy.”

It is for these reasons that the Buddha, the Bhagavan,

Expounded [the Dharma] from within the fourth dhyāna.

Having earlier cut off both distress and joy.

There, one now eliminates both “suffering” and “bliss.”

#### a. THE FIRST DHYĀNA

Moreover, when one has upheld the precepts purely, dwells in leisure in a solitary place, guards and draws in the sense faculties, endeavors exclusively and precisely in the cultivation of contemplative thought during both the earlier and later periods of the night, abandons external pleasures, finds one’s pleasure in dhyāna, and abandons all of the unwholesome dharmas associated with desire, basing one’s practice on the preliminary ground (*anāgamya*), one then proceeds to gain the first dhyāna.

The first dhyāna is as discussed in the Abhidharma. Dhyāna may fall into any of four general categories: The first is that experienced as “enjoyable” [due to intense bliss] (*āsvādana*); the second is pure (*suddhaka*); the third is free of all outflow-impurities (*anāsrava*); the fourth is the five aggregates gained in the first dhyāna [heavens] as karmic retribution (*vipākaja*). Among these, the practitioner strives for entry into those which are “pure” and “free of outflow-impurities.” The [categorizations and aims] are the same with respect to the second dhyāna, the third dhyāna, and the fourth dhyāna.

According to the explanation set forth by the Buddha:

If there is a bhikshu who abandons the desires as well as evil and unwholesome dharmas, while possessing “ideation” (*vitarka*) and possessing “mental discursion” (*vicāra*), this abandonment generates “joy” (*prīti*) and “bliss” (*prasrabdhi-sukha*). Thus it is as he gains entry into the first dhyāna.<sup>7</sup>

As for “the desires,” this refers to those five objects of sensual desire to which one is affectionately attached. They are inclusive of “visible forms,” and so forth. The contemplation, analysis, and renunciation of desire are as discussed earlier. The “evil and unwholesome dharmas” refers to the five hindrances which include sensual desire and the other [four hindrances]. Because one leaves these behind these issues both inwardly and outwardly, one then succeeds in gaining the first dhyāna.

The characteristics of the first dhyāna are that there exist “ideation” (*vitarka*), “mental discursion” (*vicāra*), “joy” (*prīti*), “bliss” (*prasrabdhi-sukha*), and “single-mindedness” (*citta-eka-agratā*). As for “possessing ‘ideation’ and possessing ‘mental discursion,’” upon entering the first dhyāna, on account of realizing the qualities of those good never before experienced, one’s mind is profoundly startled and awakened. [Heretofore], one has constantly been subjected to being burned by the fires of desire. Then, on gaining the first dhyāna, it is like entering a clear and cool pool of water. This circumstance is also analogous to the experience of a poor person suddenly gaining a treasury full of jewels.

The practitioner then contemplates and makes analytic discriminations regarding the faults of desire-realm existence and thus realizes that the benefits of [having moved beyond it into] the first dhyāna are extremely numerous. Consequently his mind experiences profound delight. This is what is intended when [the scriptures] speak of being possessed of ideation and being possessed of mental discursion therein.

1) QUESTION: ARE “IDEATION” AND “DISCURSION” ONE OR TWO?

**Question:** Are “being possessed of ideation” and “being possessed of mental discursion” references to a single dharma or are they instead references to two [distinctly separate] dharmas?

2) RESPONSE: THEY ARE TWO DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT PHENOMENA

**Response:** They are two dharmas. The coarse mind’s first thought is referred to as “ideation.” [Subsequent] analytic discriminations made by the subtle mind are referred to as “mental discursion.” They are analogous to when one strikes a gong. At the beginning, when the sound is most loud, this corresponds to what is referred to as “ideation.” Afterwards, when the sound has become more faint and subtle, this corresponds to what is referred to as “mental discursion.”

## 3) CHALLENGE: ABHIDHARMA CLAIMS THEY EXIST IN ONE THOUGHT

**Question:** According to the Abhidharma, within the desire realm, up to and including the first dhyāna, ideation and mental discursion correspond to one single thought. Why then do you now claim that the coarse mind's first thought is referred to as "ideation" and that analytic discriminations performed by the subtle mind are referred to as "mental discursion"?

## 4) RESPONSE: THOUGH PRESENT IN ONE THOUGHT, THEY ARE DISTINCT

**Response:** Although the two dharmas may indeed exist within the course of a single thought, those two characteristics are not simultaneously present therein. At the time of ideation, mental discursion is not completely and clearly manifest. At the time of mental discursion, ideation is not completely and clearly manifest. This is analogous to the circumstance which occurs when the sun comes up and the many stars then no longer manifest their appearance. All mind dharmas and dharmas belonging to the mind receive their designation in accordance with the time in which they manifest in just such a fashion.

This is exemplified by the Buddha's saying, "If you cut off one single dharma, I will certify that you have attained the station of the *anāgāmin*, [the third-stage arhat]. As for that one dharma, it is the so-called 'miserliness' (*mātsarya*)."<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, one should say that, when one brings to an end the five lower increments of the fetters, it is then that one attains the station of an *anāgāmin*. Why then did he say that he needed to cut off only one single dharma? It is because this one person's miserliness was especially excessive. All of his other fetters were arising from it. Therefore, once the miserliness had been brought to an end, the other fetters would also be cut off.

In this very same way, ideation and mental discursion receive their designations in correspondence to [their relative prominence at] any given time.

## b. THE SECOND DHYĀNA

The practitioner should realize that, although this ideation and mental discursion may be [devoted to] wholesome dharmas, still, they disturb and bring chaos to a mind [focused on gaining] meditative absorption.

Because one's mind wishes to abandon them, one renounces these ideations and mental discursions and takes up mindful contemplations such as this: "Ideation and mental discursion disturb

and move the mind immersed in dhyāna. This is analogous to a clear pool of water. If it becomes agitated by the rippling action of waves, then one cannot see anything [contained in it]. This is also just the same as when an extremely fatigued man gains the opportunity to take a nap and is on the verge of falling asleep, but then is subjected to all manner of torment and disturbance by someone else who starts yelling and calling out to him."

The circumstance is the same in the case of the disturbance and agitation inflicted by ideation and mental discursion upon the mind focused inwardly on meditative absorption. It is for all manner of reasons such as these that one renounces ideation and mental discursion.

[According to the explanation set forth by the Buddha]:

When ideation and mental discursion are caused to cease and one is "possessed of inward purity" (*adhyātma-samprasāda*), one is able to "anchor the mind in a single place" (*citta-eka-agratā*). With no ideation and no mental discursion, there exist "joy" (*prīti*) and "bliss" (*sukha*) which are generated by this concentration. Thus it is that one gains entry into the second dhyāna.<sup>8</sup>

When one reaches the second dhyāna, one gains the incomparably delightful bliss of the second dhyāna which is such as one has never achieved before. As for "the cessation of ideation and mental discursion," because one realizes the faults inherent in ideation and mental discursion, one therefore causes them to cease.

As for being "inwardly pure" (*adhyātma-samprasāda*), when one enters deep dhyāna absorption, one possesses the faith that the benefits of relinquishing the ideation and mental discursion of the first dhyāna are of great importance, that those things lost thereby will be but few whereas one's gains will be extremely numerous. It is through being able to anchor the mind on a single objective condition that one refers here to the gaining of "inward purity."

### C. THE THIRD DHYĀNA

The practitioner's contemplation of the faults of joy is just the same as was his contemplation of ideation and mental discursion. Wherever one experiences joy, there is both an abundance of joy and an abundance of distress. Why is this the case? This is analogous to when a poor person obtains a treasure and consequently experiences an immeasurable amount of joyfulness, but then finds one day that he has lost it. In such a circumstance, his distress is also profound. It is simply through the sudden reversal of joy that

one thereby creates distress. Hence one should establish oneself in equanimity and abandon one's indulgence of joyfulness.

Consequently, [according to the Buddha's explanation]:

One develops: "equanimity in the sphere of the formative-factors aggregate" (*saṃskāra-upekṣa*); "mindfulness" (*smṛti*); "discerning knowing" (*saṃprajñāna*); and "physically-based bliss" (*sukhā-vedanā*). As for this "bliss," āryas are able to acquire it and are able to maintain equanimity towards it. In a state of "single-mindedness" (*citta-eka-agratā*) and abiding in bliss, one enters the third dhyāna.<sup>9</sup>

As for "equanimity," one maintains equanimity with respect to the [the absence of the recently-abandoned] "joy" and thus the mind does not return to it with a feeling of regretfulness.

As for "mindfulness," and "discerning knowing," [these are the factors by which], having now gained the bliss of the third dhyāna, one does not allow oneself to experience calamitous distress associated with such bliss [at those times when it does not happen to be manifesting].

As for "experiencing physically-based bliss," this bliss of the third dhyāna is experienced everywhere throughout the body. As for "āryas are able to acquire it and yet are still able to maintain equanimity towards it," this bliss is of the sort which is most able to cause those who abide in the world to become mentally attached to it. Among common people, only a few are able to maintain equanimity towards it. Therefore the Buddha said, "As for the retribution gained as an effect from the practice of kindness, that enjoyed at the station of universal purity is supreme."

#### d. THE FOURTH DHYĀNA

The practitioner's contemplations of the faults inherent in experiencing this [physically-based] bliss (*sukhā-vedanā*) are just the same as were his [earlier] contemplations of [the faults of] "joy" (*prīti*). He realizes that the mind's establishment in the station of immovability is the most supreme priority. [He also realizes that], if one has a circumstance wherein one may be moved, then one is bound to be afflicted with suffering. On account of being moved by the bliss of the third dhyāna, the practitioner seeks a station at which he is not subject to being moved.

[According to the explanation set forth by the Buddha]:

Through cutting off both suffering and bliss and having earlier put an end to both distress and joy, one consequently enters

into the fourth dhyāna wherein “one experiences neither suffering nor bliss” (*aduḥkha-asukha*) and abides in “pure equanimity” (*upekṣa-pariśuddhi*) and in “pure mindfulness” (*smṛti-pariśuddhi*).<sup>10</sup>

In this fourth dhyāna, there is neither suffering nor bliss. There is only unmoving wisdom. It is therefore said that, in the fourth dhyāna, one abides in “pure equanimity” and “pure mindfulness.” Because the bliss of the third dhyāna causes one to be moved, one speaks of its being associated with suffering. Therefore, in the fourth dhyāna, one speaks of having cut off both suffering and bliss.

#### 9. THE FOUR FORMLESS ABSORPTIONS

##### a. THE BOUNDLESS SPACE ABSORPTION

As the Buddha stated, “One transcends [the perception of] all characteristics of physical forms and thus does not bear in mind any such distinguishing characteristics. One ceases [any perception of] the marks of duality (as with the subject-object duality of sense faculties versus sense objects) and succeeds then in entering ‘the station of boundless space.’”

The practitioner takes up this contemplation, “If there is no physical form, then neither do there exist any of its associated sufferings involving hunger, thirst, cold, or heat. This physical form is coarse, heavy, base, bound up with evil, false, deceptive, and unreal. It is as retribution from the coming together of previous life causes and conditions that one gains this body. It is the abiding place for all manner of suffering and torment. How can one succeed in avoiding these physical calamities?”

One should contemplate the empty space within this body. One constantly contemplates the body as being empty like a basket or clay pot. When one constantly carries on this mindfulness without relinquishing it, one then succeeds in going beyond form so that one no longer perceives a body. Just as it is with the emptiness of one’s own body, so too it is with respect to objective form.

At this point, one becomes able to contemplate immeasurable and boundless space. Once one has developed this contemplation, there is neither suffering nor bliss and, as a result, one’s mind gains enhanced capacities. This is comparable to the circumstance of a bird which has been confined in a vase when the vase is finally broken and it makes its escape. This is referred to as “the absorption associated with the station of [boundless] space (*ākāśa-anantya-āyatana-samāpatti*).” The space herein is immeasurable and unbounded.

When one employs consciousness to take [boundless space] as an objective condition. If one's focuses on it extensively, one may tend toward [having one's absorption] becoming scattered. This is a circumstance that has the capacity to destroy one's meditative absorption. As the practitioner is contemplating empty space, he then takes the feeling, perception, formative-factor, and consciousness [aggregates] as objective conditions and contemplates them as being like a sickness, like a boil, like an ulcer, like thorns, as impermanent, suffering, empty, and devoid of self, as deceptive, as existing [only] through the conjunction of [conditions], and as being inherently unreal.

b. THE BOUNDLESS CONSCIOUSNESS ABSORPTION

After having borne those [objective conditions] in mind in this manner, he relinquishes the practice of taking empty space as an objective condition. He then takes only consciousness itself as the objective condition which is contemplated.

How then is it that one can take the presently manifest consciousness as the objective condition and also take the immeasurable and boundless consciousness of the past and the future as objective conditions? This consciousness is immeasurable and unbounded. In fact, it is just as immeasurable and unbounded as was the case with the empty space [taken as the focus of the previous absorption]. This is referred to as "the absorption associated with the station of [boundless] consciousness (*vijñāna-anantya-āyatana-samāpatti*)."

This consciousness is immeasurable and unbounded. When one employs one's consciousness to take consciousness as an objective condition, since these [manifestations of] consciousness are many, one then tends towards [having one's absorption] become scattered. This is a circumstance which has the capacity to bring about the destruction of one's meditative absorption.

The practitioner contemplates this taking of consciousness as the objective condition [as well as the aggregates of] feeling, perception, formative factors and consciousness [regards them all as being] like a sickness, like a boil, like an ulcer, like thorns, as impermanent, suffering, empty and devoid of self, as deceptive, as existing [only] through the conjunction of conditions, and as being not really existent.

c. THE NOTHING-WHATSOEVER ABSORPTION

After having engaged in this contemplation, he then demolishes the distinguishing characteristics of consciousness. This renunciation

of the station of [boundless] consciousness and the praising of the station of nothing whatsoever—this demolition of the distinguishing characteristics of consciousness and the anchoring of the mind in nothing whatsoever—this is referred to as “the absorption of the station of nothing whatsoever (*akiṃcanya-āyatana-samāpatti*).”

In the station of nothing whatsoever, one takes as objective conditions [the aggregates of] feeling, perception, formative factors, and consciousness and regards them as being like a sickness, like a boil, like an ulcer, like thorns, as being impermanent, suffering, empty and devoid of self, as deceptive, as [only] existing through the conjunction of conditions, and as not being really existent.

d. THE NEITHER-PERCEPTION-NOR-NONPERCEPTION ABSORPTION

He contemplates them in this manner, thinking, “Stations characterized by non-perception are like a boil. Stations wherein perception does exist are like a sickness, like a boil, like an ulcer, and like thorns. The most sublime of stations is the station of neither perception nor non-perception (*naiva-saṃjñā-nāsaṃjñā-āyatana*).”

1) QUESTION: “NEITHER PERCEPTION NOR NON-PERCEPTION”?

**Question:** In the station of neither perception nor non-perception, there exist [the aggregates of] feeling, perception, formative factors, and consciousness. How then can it be said that there is “neither perception nor non-perception”?

2) RESPONSE: PERCEPTION IS SUBTLE AND NOT UTTERLY NON-EXISTENT

**Response:** It is because there exists therein a perception which is so faint, subtle, and difficult to be aware of that it is commonly referred to as not having any perception, [hence the designation “neither perception...”]. It is because perception actually does exist, [albeit feebly], that it is also referred to as not being devoid of perception either, [hence the designation “...nor non-perception”].

[When this absorption develops in] the mind of a common person, he believes that he has gained reality-concordant realization of the true character of dharmas and that this constitutes nirvāṇa. Within the Dharma of the Buddha, although we are aware that perception does exist there, because [that absorption] already possesses this designation, we [acquiesce in] referring to it as “the station of neither perception nor non-perception.”

3) QUESTION: HOW MAY ONE BE DEEMED “DEVOID OF PERCEPTION”?

**Question:** How is it that someone may be [deemed to be] devoid of perception?

## 4) RESPONSE: “NON-PERCEPTION” IS OF THREE TYPES, AS FOLLOWS:

**Response:** Being free of perceptive thought is of three types: The first is the no-thought absorption (*asaṃjñī-samāpatti*); the second is the cessation-of-[both-perception-and-] feeling absorption (*saṃjñā-vedayita-nirodha-samāpatti*); and the third is the no-thought heaven (*asaṃjñi-deva*). Common people wish to extinguish perceptive thought and enter the no-thought absorption. The disciples of the Buddha wish to cause cessation of perceptive thought and enter into the cessation-of-[both-perception-and-] feeling absorption.

## III. IMPORTANT ISSUES INVOLVED IN CULTIVATION OF DHYĀNA

## A. OUTFLOW VERSUS NON-OUTFLOW CULTIVATION: DETAILS AND IMPLICATIONS

All of these dhyāna absorptions fall into two categories: those possessed of outflow-impurities (*sāsrava*) and those devoid of outflow-impurities (*anāsrava*). Those possessed of outflow impurities are just those which are practiced by the common person and are as previously discussed. Those which are devoid of outflow-impurities are those corresponding to the sixteen practice-aspects of the [four truths as realized by] āryas.

If one is on the outflow path, then one depends upon the preliminary concentration of the immediately superior station in order to be able to renounce desires associated with the lower station [upon which one abides]. In the case of the non-outflow path, one renounces the desires associated with one’s own station and then goes on from there to reach the immediately superior station. It is for this reason that, at the summit of existence, the common person becomes unable to renounce the desires [associated with the station on which he then abides]. This is because there are no more preliminary concentrations associated with an immediately superior station.

In the case of the disciples of the Buddha, they seek to renounce the desire-realm desires and the desire-realm afflictions. In the course of the practice of meditative discipline, they must sever nine grades [of these defilements] which are of relatively major, intermediate, and minor grade. Specifically, they are: major-major; intermediate-major; minor-major; major-intermediate; intermediate-intermediate; minor-intermediate; major-minor; intermediate-minor; and minor-minor.

Because one must sever these nine [grades of defilements],<sup>11</sup> if a disciple of the Buddha based in the “path of outflows” (*sāsrava-mārga*) wishes to succeed in reaching the first dhyāna, he must

proceed from the “preparatory station concentration” (*anāgamyā*) to implement nine [successive acts of “counteractive abandonment” (*prahāṇa-pratipakṣa*)] associated with the “uninterrupted path” (*ānantarya-mārga*) and must also implement eight [corresponding successive acts of “counteractive conservation” (*adhāra-pratipakṣa*)] associated with the “path of liberation” (*vimukti-mārga*), cultivating during the present via the path of outflows, and cultivating them in the future via either the outflow path or via the non-outflow path.

As for the ninth [of the acts of counteractive conservation] associated with the path of liberation, it is cultivated initially in the preparatory station concentration (*anāgamyā*) via the outflow path and then later it may be cultivated in the preparatory station concentration via either the outflow path or via the non-outflow path. One’s reaching of the preliminary concentration (*sāmantaka*) of the first dhyāna, [otherwise known as the “preparatory station” (*anāgamyā*)], it is accomplished via the outflow path.

In the case of one wishing to succeed in gaining the first dhyāna via the non-outflow path, it is also done in this same manner.

In the case of one who relies upon the non-outflow path to abandon the desires associated with the first dhyāna, in the preliminary concentration of the second dhyāna, implementing nine [acts of abandonment] associated with the uninterrupted path and eight [acts of conservation] associated with the path of liberation, he cultivates the preliminary concentration of the second dhyāna in accordance with the outflow path. Later, he cultivates the preliminary concentration of the second dhyāna in accordance with the outflow path, and also cultivates the first dhyāna and its concomitants in accordance with the non-outflow path.

In implementing the ninth [of the acts of conservation] associated with the path of liberation, in the preliminary concentration of the second dhyāna, he initially cultivates the preliminary concentration of the second dhyāna according to the outflow path. Later, he cultivates the preliminary concentration of the second dhyāna and the first dhyāna according to the non-outflow path and, as for the concomitants of the second dhyāna, he cultivates them via the pure or non-outflow paths.

In the case of one who, in accordance with the non-outflow path, abandons the desires associated with the first dhyāna, in implementing the nine [acts of abandonment] associated with the uninterrupted path and the eight [acts of conservation] associated with

the path of liberation, he initially cultivates the station on which he currently abides in accordance with the non-outflow path and in the future cultivates the first dhyāna and its concomitants via the outflow path or the non-outflow path.

In implementing the ninth of the mental actions associated with the uninterrupted path, he initially cultivates the station on which he abides in accordance with the non-outflow path and then later cultivates the first dhyāna and its concomitants according to the outflow path or the non-outflow path. Then, as for the cultivation of the second dhyāna, that is in accordance with the pure or non-outflow paths.

This process continues thus even on up to the station of nothing whatsoever, with instances of abandoning desires involving the same approach as has been described here.

At the station of neither perception nor non-perception, in abandoning desires, when implementing the nine [acts of abandonment] associated with the uninterrupted path and when implementing the eight [acts of conservation] associated with the path of liberation, one can cultivate all of these only in accordance with the non-outflow path.

When it comes to implementing the ninth [act of conservation] associated with the path of liberation, one's cultivation avails itself of the roots of goodness developed in the three realms and in accordance with the non-outflow path. [This is the manner in which] one dispenses with the no-thought absorption.

## B. ANALYTIC DISCUSSIONS OF THE MEDITATION-PRACTICE PATH

### 1. TWO BASIC CATEGORIES OF MEDITATION CULTIVATION

There are two categories of cultivation [involved in acquiring and consolidating stations gained through dhyāna meditation]. In the case of the first, that is "acquisition-based cultivation." As for the second, that is "practice-based cultivation."

"Acquisition-based cultivation" simply refers to now gaining the realization of [stations] one has not already realized earlier. In future lives, one cultivates one's own naturally acquired [meditation-related] circumstances and then will also cultivate other [meditation-related] circumstances as well.

"Practice-based cultivation" refers to cultivating in the present the practice of [those meditation stations] one has already gained while proceeding in the future in the same manner, refraining from cultivating other topics.

One thus proceeds in this manner with the cultivation of all different sorts of dhyāna absorptions.

## 2. GENERAL TYPES AND SUBTYPES OF MEDITATIVE CONCENTRATIONS

Additionally, there are in general twenty-three types of meditative concentrations. Of these, eight of them belong to the category of those which are focused on enjoyment (*āsvādana*), eight of them belong to the category of those which are pure (*śuddhaka*), and seven of them belong to the category of those which are devoid of outflow-impurities (*anāsrava*).

## 3. THE SIX TYPES OF CAUSES ASSOCIATED WITH THE STAGES OF MEDITATION

Additionally, there are six types of causes. They are: associated causes (*saṃprayuktaka-hetu*); coexistent causes (*sahabhū-hetu*); similar causes (*sabhāga-hetu*); universal causes (*sarvatraga-hetu*); retributive causes (*vipāka-hetu*); and nominal causes for existence (*kāraṇa-hetu*, a.k.a.: *nāma-hetu*). Each and every one of the non-outflow [dharma], the seven non-outflow causes, are themselves “similar” causes. [Actions taken on] the very station on which one abides may serve to increase associated causes and coexistent causes [for continuing to abide on that station].

Hence abiding on the first of the concentrations focused on “enjoyment” may serve as the cause for [continuance of] that very first of the concentrations focused on enjoyment. This may also be the case on forward even to the circumstance where abiding in the very last of the concentrations focused on enjoyment may serve as the cause for [continuance of] that very last among the concentrations focused on enjoyment. This would also equally be true in the case of the category of concentrations referred to as “pure” (*śuddhaka*) concentrations.

## 4. THE FOUR CONDITIONS

There are four types of conditions (*pratyaya*). They are: conditions serving as causes (*hetu-pratyayatā*); equal and immediately antecedent conditions (*samanantara-pratyayatā*); conditions serving as objective conditions (*ālambana-pratyayatā*); and predominant conditions (*adhipata-pratyayatā*).

### a. CONDITIONS SERVING AS CAUSES

As for “conditions serving as causes,” this is as discussed earlier.

### b. EQUAL AND IMMEDIATELY ANTECEDENT CONDITIONS

[As for “equal and immediately antecedent conditions”], the first dhyāna in the non-outflow path may serve as the equal and

immediately antecedent condition for the generation of six different types of concentrations. These are, first, the “pure” first dhyāna, second, the “non-outflow” first dhyāna, and, in the same manner, [the “pure” and “non-outflow” concentrations associated with] the second dhyāna and [the “pure” and “non-outflow” concentrations associated with] the third dhyāna.

The second dhyāna may serve as the equal and immediately antecedent condition for the generation of eight different types of concentrations. These are: the pure and non-outflow concentrations associated with its own station; the pure and non-outflow concentrations associated with the first dhyāna; and, similarly, [the pure and non-outflow concentrations associated with] the third dhyāna and the fourth dhyāna as well.

The third dhyāna in the non-outflow path may serve as the equal and immediately antecedent condition for the generation of ten different types of concentrations. These are: the two associated with its own station; the four associated with the [two] immediately inferior stations; and the four associated with the [two] immediately superior stations.

The circumstances are the same for the fourth dhyāna and for the concentration associated with the station of limitless space.

The non-outflow concentration associated with the station of limitless consciousness may serve as the equal and immediately antecedent condition for the generation of nine kinds [of concentrations]. They are: the two associated with its own station; the four associated with the [two] immediately inferior stations; and the three associated with the [two] immediately superior stations.

The non-outflow concentration associated with the station of nothing whatsoever may serve as the equal and immediately antecedent condition for the generation of seven kinds [of concentrations]. They are: the two associated with its own station; the four associated with the [two] immediately inferior stations; and the one associated with the immediately superior station.

The pure concentration corresponding to the station of neither perception nor non-perception may serve as the equal and immediately antecedent condition for the generation of six mental states. They are: the two associated with its own station and the four associated with the [two] immediately inferior stations.

The scenarios are the same with respect to each of the pure concentration stations as well.

Additionally, in every case, [each of these concentrations serves as the equal and immediately antecedent conditions for generation of] an increase in [the quality of the concentrations focused on] enjoyment associated with their own stations. Hence the concentration focused on enjoyment (*āsvādana*) associated with first dhyāna serves as the equal and immediately antecedent condition for the generation of the two categories of dhyāna consisting in the concentration focused on enjoyment and the pure (*śuddhaka*) concentration. And so it goes on up to the concentration focused on enjoyment associated with the station of neither perception nor non-perception for which the circumstances are also just the same.

#### C. OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS AND PREDOMINANT CONDITIONS

The “pure” and “non-outflow” categories of dhyāna take the “enjoyment-focused” concentrations as objective conditions on all of the stations. They take the enjoyment-focused concentration associated with their own stations as an objective condition and also take the craving for purity (*viśuddha-trṣṇā*) as an objective condition. Because there are no non-outflow states which serve as conditions for them, they do not take non-outflow states as objective conditions.

The pure concentrations, the non-outflow concentrations, and the basic formless absorptions do not take any of the lower outflow-associated stations as objective conditions.

Nominal cause and predominant conditions are operative in regard to all of the four immeasurable minds, three of the eight liberations, the eight bases of ascendancy, and eight of the [ten] universal bases. In every case, [these concentrations] take as conditions five of the superknowledges as operative in the desire realm. So, too, do they take the desire realm and the form realm as conditions. As for the rest, these vary in accordance with what might be taken as conditions.

The absorption involving cessation of feeling and perception has nothing which it takes as an objective condition.

#### 5. THE DHARMA OF REFINEMENT

All four of the dhyānas involve dharmas of “refinement” (*vardhana-dharma*). Through employing that which is characterized by the absence of outflow-impurities to refine that which possesses outflow-impurities, one succeeds in gaining sovereign independence of mind in the four dhyānas. One is able to employ the non-outflow fourth dhyāna to refine the fourth dhyāna associated with outflow-impurities. Subsequently, one proceeds similarly with the third, the

second, and the first dhyānas, in all cases employing any given station's non-outflow concentration to refine that same station's concentration which is associated with outflow-impurities.

**Question:** What is meant by "refining" (*vardhana*) dhyāna?

**Response:** All of the Āryas are pleased by whatsoever is free of outflow-impurities and are not pleased by that which is associated with outflow-impurities. In their renunciation of desires, they are not pleased by those concentrations which, though categorized as "pure," are nonetheless still "associated with outflow-impurities." Still, these are "naturally acquired." Consequently, they now strive to eliminate the associated defiling impurities, employing [concentrations] free of outflow-impurities to refine them away.

This is analogous to the process of smelting gold whereby one does away with any impurities it might contain. The resorting to non-outflow concentrations to refine those associated with outflow-impurities is a process of this very same sort. They arise from non-outflow dhyāna and enter directly into the corresponding "pure" dhyāna, performing this same action many times. This is what is meant by "refinement."

#### 6. THE SUMMIT-REACHING DHYĀNA

Additionally, among all of the dhyānas there is that known as the "summit-reaching dhyāna" (*prāntakoṭika-dhyāna*). Why is it referred to as "summit-reaching"? There are two categories of arhats, those whose dharmas makes them "vulnerable to suffering a loss" (*parihāṇa-dharma arhat*) and those whose dharmas make them "invulnerable to suffering a loss" (*aparihāṇa-dharma-arhat*).

Those arhats who are invulnerable to suffering a loss have gained sovereign independence in their cultivation of all of the deep dhyāna absorptions. They are able to generate the "summit-reaching dhyāna." One who has gained this "summit-reaching dhyāna" is able to transform lifespan into wealth and is able to transform wealth into lifespan.

#### 7. KNOWLEDGE VIA RESOLVE, UNIMPEDED KNOWLEDGES, NON-DISPUTATION

Additional topics to be considered include the knowledge generated through resolve (*praṇidhi-jñāna*), the four types of unobstructed knowledge (*pratisaṃvid*), and the non-contention samādhi (*araṇā-samādhi*).

As for "knowledge generated through resolve" (*praṇidhi-jñāna*), if one wishes to know matters associated with the three periods of time, whatsoever one wishes to know, one then knows it. This

“knowledge generated through resolve” is subsumed within two stations, namely the desire realm and the fourth dhyāna.

As for the four types of unobstructed knowledge, unobstructed knowledge of dharmas (*dharmā-pratiṣamṇā*) and unobstructed knowledge in all aspects of speech (*nirukta-pratiṣamṇā*) are subsumed within two stations, namely the desire realm and the first dhyāna. The other two types of unobstructed knowledge—[the one with respect to the meanings of things (*artha-pratiṣamṇā*) and the other with respect to eloquent expression (*pratibhāna-pratiṣamṇā*)]—they are common to nine stations, namely the desire realm, the four dhyānas, and the four formless absorptions.

As for the non-contention samādhi, it is that by which one causes others’ minds to not generate disputation. It is subsumed within five stations, namely the desire realm and the four dhyānas.

#### 8. ADDITIONAL DHYĀNA-RELATED DHARMAS

**Question:** Are there yet more dharmas associated with the realization of the dhyānas?

**Response:** In the case of the concentrations focused on enjoyment (*āsvādana*), they may also be gained either through rebirth or through retreat [from superior stations]. The pure concentrations (*śuddhaka*) may be gained through rebirth or through renunciation of desires. As for those which are free of outflow-impurities (*anāsrava*), they may be gained through renunciation of desires or through retreat [from superior stations].

One may cut off fetters in non-outflow concentrations associated with any of the nine grounds, namely the four dhyānas, three of the formless absorptions, the preparatory station (*anāgāmya*), and the “intermediate dhyāna” (*dhyāna-anantara*).

The preparatory station and the intermediate dhyāna are states associated with the faculty of equanimity (*upekṣā-indriya*) [in relation to the feeling aggregate].

If one perfects a given dhyāna, he perfects the transformation-generating mind in relation to lower stations as well. For instance, if one perfects the first dhyāna, then that involves two types of transformation-generating mind: first, the first dhyāna; and second, the desire realm. Hence there are three types corresponding to acquisition of the second dhyāna, four types corresponding to the third dhyāna, and five types corresponding to the fourth dhyāna.

In an instance where one abides in the second dhyāna, the third dhyāna, or the fourth dhyāna, when one wishes to hear, see, or

touch, in every case, one may avail oneself of the Brahmaloка consciousness [corresponding to a first dhyāna realm]. When that consciousness disappears, then [such abilities] cease functioning.

The four immeasurable minds, the five superknowledges, the eight liberations, the eight bases of ascendancy, the ten universal bases, the nine sequential absorptions, the nine reflections, the ten recollections, the three samādhis, the three gates to liberation, the three non-outflow faculties, the thirty-seven wings of enlightenment and other such meritorious qualities as these are all generated from within dhyāna *pāramitā*. They should be extensively discussed herein [in the following chapters].

#### IV. THE PERFECTION OF DHYĀNA MEDITATION

**Question:** One should be discussing dhyāna *pāramitā* (the perfection of dhyāna meditation). Why then do you speak only of aspects of dhyāna meditation *per se*?

##### A. THE BODHISATTVA'S PRACTICE OF DHYĀNA MEDITATION

**Response:** [Acquisition of] the dhyānas constitutes the very root of "*pāramitā*." Having already succeeded in these dhyānas, one feels pity for beings, this because they realize that beings possess the marvelous bliss of all sorts of dhyāna absorptions right within their own minds, yet they do not know to seek for them. Consequently they seek for pleasure in the impurity and suffering associated with outward dharmas.

After one has contemplated such circumstances, one brings forth the mind of great compassion and sets forth a vast vow, declaring, "I will cause all beings to gain the inward bliss of dhyāna absorption whereby they may then separate from impure pleasures. Based on this dhyāna bliss, I will next influence them to gain the bliss of the Buddha Path." It is at this time that dhyāna absorption succeeds in qualifying as "*pāramitā*."

Moreover, when in the midst of these dhyānas, one does not indulge in those focused on enjoyment (*āsvādana*), does not seek karmic rewards, and does not allow himself to take on rebirth [in celestial realms] corresponding to such karmic rewards. It is for the sake of training the mind that one enters into the dhyānas. One avails oneself of wisdom and skillful means and so returns to be reborn in the desire realm to bring all beings across to liberation. It is at this time that dhyāna may qualify as "*pāramitā*."

Then again, when the bodhisattva enters deep dhyāna absorption, no gods or men are able to know his mind, what he relies

upon, or what he takes as an objective condition. In the midst of the dharmas of perceiving, hearing, being aware, and realizing, his mind does not move.

This is illustrated in the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* where it is explained to Śāriputra that, in the dharma of happily abiding in sitting meditation, “One does not rely on the body, does not rely on the mind, and does not rely on the three realms. In the midst of the three realms he does not apprehend the existence of either body or mind. This is what constitutes happily abiding in sitting meditation.”

Additionally, if a person hears that the bliss of dhyāna absorption is superior to the bliss of men or gods and then relinquishes the bliss of desires in order to seek dhyāna absorption, this constitutes a personal seeking for one’s own bliss and benefit and is inadequate to be considered noteworthy. The bodhisattva is not like this. It is only for the sake of beings that he wishes to cause his mind of kindness and compassion to become pure. He does not forsake beings.

As for the dhyāna of the bodhisattva, even when in the midst of the dhyānas, he in every case brings forth the mind of great compassion. Dhyāna is possessed of the most ultimately marvelous inward bliss and yet beings forsake it and then instead seek after outward pleasures.

This is analogous to an extremely rich man who is blind. Although he owns much wealth which is hidden away, he remains unaware of it, fails to see it, and so is moved then to taking up begging. The wise pity such a person because, even though he already has marvelous possessions of his own, because he is unable to be aware of or see them, he is provoked to go about begging from others. Beings are just like this. Within their own minds, they themselves already possess all kinds of bliss associated with the dhyāna absorptions. Nonetheless, they do not realize how to bring it forth. Hence, paradoxically, they then go about seeking after outward sources of pleasure.

Moreover, because the bodhisattva has realized the true character of dharmas, even though he experiences peace and security when he enters into dhyāna, still, he does not allow himself to become attached to its enjoyability. Although when all of the non-Buddhists enter into dhyāna absorption, their minds do not actually abide in peace and security, still, because they have not realized the true character of dharmas, they become attached to the enjoyment of dhyāna.

## B. WHY ARE NOT ARHAT AND PRATYKABUDDHA DHYĀNA “PERFECTIONS”?

**Question:** Both the arhats and pratyekabuddhas refrain from attachment to the enjoyment [of dhyāna]. Why then does their circumstance not qualify as “*pāramitā*”?

## C. RESPONSE: DUE TO DEFICIENT COMPASSION AND INCOMPLETE PRACTICE

**Response:** Although the arhats and pratyekabuddhas do not become attached to such enjoyment, because they do not have the mind of great compassion, they do not qualify as having reached the *pāramitā* of dhyāna. Furthermore, they are not able to completely practice all of the dhyānas. The Bodhisattva completely practices all of the dhyānas. The coarse, the subtle, the major, the minor, the deep, the shallow, those focused on inward objective conditions, and those focused on outward objective conditions—these are all thoroughly practiced by him. Therefore, as practiced within the mind of the bodhisattva, it qualifies as dhyāna “*pāramitā*,” whereas, as practiced by others, it only qualifies to be termed “dhyāna.”

Additionally, non-Buddhists, Śrāvaka-disciples, and bodhisattvas all achieve dhyāna absorption. However there are three sorts of calamitous circumstances within the dhyāna of the non-Buddhists: In some cases, they are attached to its enjoyment, in others, they hold to erroneous views, and in yet others, they are afflicted with arrogance and pridefulness.

Within the dhyāna of the Śrāvaka-disciples, kindness and compassion are but scant. They do not employ sharp wisdom to penetrate through to the true character of dharmas. They exclusively devote themselves to benefiting their own persons and so are party to severing the lineage of the Buddhas.

## D. THE KINDNESS OF THE BODHISATTVA

The dhyāna of the Bodhisattvas is free of such issues. Because they wish to accumulate the Dharma of all Buddhas, even in the midst of the dhyānas, they do not forget beings. Thus they constantly retain a lovingly-kind mindfulness regarding even the smallest insects.

## E. STORY: SHAKYAMUNI AS A BODHISATTVA RISHI

This is illustrated by Shakyamuni Buddha who, in a previous life, was the conch-haired rishi named Śaṅkhācārya who constantly cultivated the fourth dhyāna wherein breathing in and out stops completely. He was sitting, erect and unmoving, beneath a tree. A bird saw him like this, took him to be a tree, and then laid its eggs in his hair. This bodhisattva eventually came out of his dhyāna absorption and realized a bird’s eggs had been laid on his head.

He then thought to himself, "If I get up and move about, the mother bird will certainly not come back again. If the mother bird does not return, the bird's eggs will certainly be ruined." He then went back into dhyāna again. He remained there until the young birds had flown away. Then and only then did he get up from his meditation spot.

F. THE BODHISATTVA'S CORRECT ACQUISITION AND PRACTICE OF DHYĀNA

Moreover, with the exception of the bodhisattva, the minds of others in the desire realm are unable to sequentially enter the dhyāna absorptions. When the bodhisattva practices the *pāramitā* of dhyāna within the desire realm, his mind sequentially enters the dhyāna absorptions. How is this the case? In life after life, the bodhisattva cultivates all manner of merit [facilitating easy access to the dhyāna absorptions even when resident in the desire realm]. Because his mind consequently abides in a state of pliancy, thoughts freighted with fetters are but scant in him.

Additionally, others may gain a wisdom with respect to general characteristics whereby they are able to transcend desire through contemplation of impermanence, contemplation of suffering, and contemplation of impurity. The bodhisattva is able to distinguish the specific characteristics of all dharmas and becomes able thereby to transcend desire.

G. STORY: FIVE HUNDRED RISHIS; MAHĀKĀŚYAPA MOVED BY MUSIC

This is illustrated by the case of the five hundred rishis who, when they were flying along, heard the sound of the *kinnara* maidens singing. Their minds became attached, crazed, and so intoxicated that they all lost their foundations of spiritual power and simultaneously fell back to earth.

It is also illustrated by the case of the Śrāvakas who heard Druma, the King of the Kinnaras, strumming his lute and praising the Buddha by singing about the true character of dharmas. At this time, even Mount Sumeru and all of the trees quaked. Mahākāśyapa and the other great disciples could not remain still in their seats.

Devapuṣpāgra Bodhisattva<sup>12</sup> asked Mahākāśyapa, "You are the most senior in years and are foremost in the observance of the *dhūta* ascetic practices. Why then do you now remain unable to control your mind and remain at peace?"

Mahākāśyapa replied, "I am not even slightly moved by any of the thoughts of desire associated with men or gods. This bodhisattva possesses a sound which is the reward for an immeasurable

amount of merit. Moreover, he employs a wisdom-generated transformation to create these sounds. Hence they are such as one is unable to endure. Even if the eight winds come up, they are unable to cause Mount Sumeru to move. But at the end of the kalpa, the *vairambhavāyu* winds come and blow upon Mount Sumeru, causing it to be just as vulnerable to the winds as a blade of withered grass."

On account of this, one may realize that the bodhisattva employs a contemplation of the particular characteristics of all dharmas and so is able to transcend all desires. The practice of all other persons is only deserving of being called "dhyāna." It does not reach to the level of "pāramitā."

#### H. THE UNTRACEABLE NATURE OF THE BODHISATTVA'S DHYĀNA PĀRAMITĀ

Moreover, other persons may be able to know the mind of the bodhisattva as he enters and leaves dhyāna, but they are unable to know his mind as he dwells in dhyāna, what it takes as its objective conditions, where it goes, or its depth in knowing all dharmas. Not even arhats and pratyekabuddhas are able to know these matters, how much the less might other people be able to do so. This is analogous to when the king of the elephants crosses a body of water. When he enters and when he leaves, his tracks may be visible. However, when he is out in the water, one is unable perceive such things.

If one gains the first dhyāna, those who have had the same achievement in the first dhyāna are able to know it, but they are unable to be aware of the bodhisattva's entry into the first dhyāna. In the case of persons who have reached the second dhyāna, they may contemplate and know the mind which has gained the first dhyāna, knowing it utterly and completely. Still, they remain unable to know the bodhisattva's mind even in its entry into the first dhyāna. This continues to be just the same even on up to and including the station of neither perception nor non-perception.

#### I. THE SUPERIOR ABILITY OF THE BODHISATTVA IN "OVERSTEPPING" STATIONS

Additionally, in the "overstepping" samādhi (*vyutkrāntaka-samādhi*), one may arise from the first dhyāna and enter the third dhyāna, may arise from the midst of the third dhyāna and enter the station of limitless space, or may arise from the station of limitless space and enter the station of nothing whatsoever. Two Vehicles' practitioners are only able to leap over one station, but are not able to leap over two.

With sovereign independence, the bodhisattva may arise from the first dhyāna and leap over into the third dhyāna in accordance with the normal procedure. Alternately, he may sometimes instead enter into the fourth dhyāna or may enter into the station of limitless space, the station of limitless consciousness, the station of nothing whatsoever, or perhaps may enter even into the station of neither perception nor non-perception. Again, perhaps he may enter into the absorption of the extinction of feeling and perception and, arising from the absorption of the extinction of feeling and perception, he may enter into the station of nothing whatsoever, the station of limitless consciousness, the station of limitless space, or the fourth dhyāna, and so forth, even on down to the first dhyāna.

He may sometimes leap over one station or sometimes leap over two stations, and so forth on up to leaping over nine stations. The Śrāvaka-disciples are unable to leap over two stations. Why is this? It is because the power of their wisdom, merit, and dhyāna absorption are slight. This is analogous to two kinds of lion: the first being the yellow lion and the second being the white-haired lion. Although the yellow lion is able to leap, he is unable to compare to the white-haired king of lions in this respect. All sorts of causes and conditions such as these served to distinguish the *pāramitā* of dhyāna.

J. THE DHARMA-BODY BODHISATTVA'S ALTRUISTIC WORKS EVEN IN SAMĀDHI

Furthermore, [as stated in the scriptures], "At that time, the bodhisattva constantly enters into dhyāna absorption, focuses his mind, remains unmoving, does not give rise to either ideation or mental discursion, and yet he is still able to employ an incalculable number of sounds and voices to speak Dharma for all of the beings of the ten directions and so brings them across to liberation." This is what is referred to dhyāna *pāramitā*.

**Question:** According to what is set forth in the Sutras, one first possesses ideation, mental discursion, and the process of contemplation, after which one is then enabled to expound the Dharma. When one enters dhyāna absorption, one is free of verbally-based ideation and mental discursion and thus then should not be able to expound the Dharma. Why do you now say that [the bodhisattva] is constantly abiding in dhyāna absorption, that he does not give rise to ideation or mental discursion, and that he is still able to proclaim the Dharma for the benefit of beings?

**Response:** It is the dharma of persons subject to cyclic birth-and-death that, having entered into dhyāna absorption, they first resort to verbally-based ideation and mental discursion, and afterwards expound on Dharma. The Dharma-body bodhisattva has left behind [that series of] bodies which are subject to cyclic birth-and-death, knows all dharmas, and is marked by constantly abiding in a manner the same as one immersed in dhyāna absorption. He is no longer vulnerable to any confusion.

The Dharma-body bodhisattva creates through his powers of transformation an incalculable number of bodies. He speaks Dharma for the sake of beings and yet this bodhisattva's mind has nothing with respect to which it makes discriminations. It is like the lute of the *asuras* which constantly and spontaneously emits sounds. It creates them in responsive accordance with the individual's intentions. Nobody strums it. This takes place independently of any scattering of mind or concentration of mind. This arises as a karmic retribution for merit. It accords with one's individual wishes in its creation of music.

The Dharma-body bodhisattva is also like this. He has nothing which is the object of discriminations. Nor does he experience any scattering of mind. What's more, he has none of the characteristic signs of [the ordinary person's] expounding of the Dharma. This is on account of the causes and conditions associated with immeasurable merit, with dhyāna absorption, and with wisdom. In the case of this Dharma-body bodhisattva, all sorts of Dharma sounds are put forth according to what is appropriate. For one whose mind is characterized by much miserliness and greed, he hears a voice which speaks of giving. For those persons who break precepts, are hateful, are lazy, are chaotic-minded or who are foolish, each accordingly will hear a voice speaking of upholding precepts, patience, [vigor], dhyāna, or wisdom. Having heard this Dharma, each of them ponders upon it and gradually takes up cultivation within the Three Vehicles teachings and thence succeeds in crossing over to liberation.

#### K. THE BODHISATTVA'S TRANSCENDENCE OF DUAL MODES

Additionally, as the bodhisattva contemplates all dharmas, whether they be those associated with mental scattering or whether they be those associated with the concentration, in every case he realizes that they are non-dual in character. Other persons apply themselves to getting rid of mental scattering and seeking the concentrations.

Why is this? It is because, in the midst of dharmas associated with scattering, their thoughts tend towards hatefulness whereas, in the midst of dharmas associated with concentration, their thoughts tend towards attachment.

1. STORY: UDRAKA, THE RISHI

This is illustrated by the case of Udraka, the rishi. He had gained the five superknowledges. Every day he flew to the palace of the King where he took his meal.

On one occasion, according with the traditions of her country, the wife of the King made obeisance to him, grasping his feet as she did so. When the wife's hands touched him, he immediately lost his spiritual powers. He [was forced to] seek a carriage from the King. He got into the carriage and left, returning to his original dwelling place.

He then went into the forest and sought once again the five superknowledges, applying himself to the endeavor single-mindedly and exclusively. Just when he was about to gain them again, there was a bird up in a tree which started calling out urgently, thus causing his mind to become scattered.

He then left that tree behind and went to the shore of a lake and sought absorption there. He then repeatedly heard the splashing sound of a fish jumping. This man was then unsuccessful in seeking to enter dhyāna and then became enraged, swearing "I ought to kill every one of the fish and the birds, too!"

Much later, this man's cultivation of contemplative thought resulted in his gaining the absorptions. He was reborn in the station of neither perception nor non-perception. When that lifetime came to an end, he fell down into rebirth as a flying fox which killed birds and fish, thus creating an incalculable number of karmic offenses. As a result, he then fell into successive rebirths in the three wretched destinies.

This is a set of causal circumstances associated with a mind attached to the dhyāna absorptions.

2. STORY: THE BHIKSHU WHO MISTOOK THE DHYĀNAS FOR ARHATSHIP

Non-Buddhists are prone to circumstances of this sort. Among the disciples of the Buddha there is also the example of a bhikshu who had gained the fourth dhyāna and had developed such extreme arrogance that he was of the opinion that he had gained the four-fold path [of the arhats]. When he had gained the first dhyāna, he thought it was the station of the *srota-āpanna*. When he gained the

second dhyāna, he thought it was the station of the *sakṛdāgāmin*. When he gained the third dhyāna, he thought it was the station of the *anāgāmin*. When he gained the fourth dhyāna, he thought he had gained arhatship.

Based on this, he stopped applying himself and did not seek to advance any further. When his life was about to come to an end, he saw the signs of the arrival of the intermediary aggregates bringing rebirth in the fourth dhyāna [heavens]. He reacted to this with a wrong view whereby he thought, "There is no such thing as nirvāṇa. The Buddha has cheated me."

On account of generating this maliciously perverse idea, he lost the intermediary aggregates leading to rebirth in the fourth dhyāna realms and next saw the signs of the arrival of the intermediary aggregates associated with the Avīci hells. As a consequence, when his life ended, he was immediately reborn in the Avīci hells.

The Bhikshus asked the Buddha, "When bhikshu so-and-so, the *āraṇya* hermitage dweller, finally died, where then was he reborn?"

The Buddha said, "This man was reborn in the Avīci hells."

The Bhikshus were all greatly startled and amazed, exclaiming "This man sat in dhyāna meditation and upheld the precepts. Could it be this serves as the basis for such a resulting circumstance?"

The Buddha said, "This man was extremely arrogant. This happened because when he gained the four dhyānas, he believed he had actually gained the four-fold path [of the arhats]. Then, when his life was coming to its end, he saw the signs of the fourth dhyāna intermediary aggregates and generated a wrong view, thinking, 'There is no such thing as nirvāṇa. I am an arhat and yet I am now returning to be born yet again. The Buddha's teachings are false and deceptive.'

"At this very time, he immediately saw the signs of the intermediary aggregates of the Avīci hells. When his life ended, he was immediately reborn in the Avīci hells." The Buddha then uttered a verse, saying:

One may be learned, uphold the precepts, and be adept at dhyāna,  
While not yet realizing the dharma free of outflow-impurities.  
Although one may possess these meritorious qualities,  
This circumstance is one on which one cannot base one's trust.

### 3. THE BODHISATTVA REALIZES A SINGULAR NATURE IN DUAL PHENOMENA

This bhikshu consequently underwent this sort of suffering in the wretched destinies. One may realize from this that if one grasps

at the characteristic of being mentally scattered, one may develop towards it hate-filled thoughts and other such afflictions. If one seizes upon the characteristic of abiding in concentration, then one may then develop attachments with respect to that.

The bodhisattva does not seize upon the characteristic of mental scattering nor does he seize upon the characteristic of abiding in dhyāna concentration. This is because the characteristics of scattering and the characteristic of abiding in concentration are ultimately of a single character. It is this realization which qualifies as concordant with dhyāna *pāramitā*.

#### L. THE BODHISATTVA'S WISDOM-BASED TRANSCENDENCE OF THE HINDRANCES

Take for example the characteristic features of the first dhyāna consisting of separating from desires, of eliminating the hindrances, and of focusing the mind in a single place. These bodhisattvas, on account of their sharp faculties and wisdom-based contemplations regarding the five hindrances have nothing whatsoever which they eliminate, and with respect to the characteristic features of the dhyāna concentrations, they have nothing whatsoever which is seized upon. This is because the characteristic features of all dharmas are empty of inherent existence.

How is it that, with respect to the five hindrances, there is nothing whatsoever which is eliminated? The hindrance of sensual desire does not abide inwardly, does not abide outwards, and does not abide anywhere between the two. How is that? If it existed as an inward dharma, it should not have to depend on any outward phenomenon for its arising. If it abides instead as an outwardly-existent dharma, then it should not present any calamity to oneself. If it were the case that it resided somewhere between the two, then it would in effect be devoid of any real location at all.

Nor does it come [forward into the present] from previous existences. How is that? All dharmas are devoid of any coming. Take for example a young child. He is free of sensual desire. If it were the case that it existed based upon previous existences, then one should possess it even when very young. For this reason, one should know that it does not come forth from earlier existences. Nor does it proceed on into later existences. Nor does it come from any of the directions. Nor does it constantly exist just spontaneously.

It does not exist in any one part [of the body]. It is not the case that it is pervasive throughout the entire body. Being singular,<sup>13</sup> it does not come from the five different sense objects, nor does it

come forth from the five different sense faculties. It has no place from which it arises nor does it have any place wherein it is extinguished.

Whether one posits this desire as having a prior production, a later production, or as existing simultaneously with its production, none of these are the case, either. How is this so? If it was the case that there was first a production and later the existence of desire, there should not be the production of desire, this because [effective causes of] desire had not yet had any prior existence.

[On the other hand], if it was the case that only later was there its “production” while the desire itself had existed previously already, then the “production” should not really have anything new which it was producing.

If it was the case that [desire and its production] arose simultaneously, then there would be neither a producer nor a basis from which it was produced. This is because the entity produced and the basis of production would be indistinguishable.

Moreover, this desire and the individual who desires are neither one nor different. How is this so? No individual who desires can be found apart from desire. No desire can be found apart from the individual who desires. This phenomenon is produced solely from the coming together of causes and conditions. Dharmas which are produced from the coming together of causes and conditions are themselves empty of any inherently existent nature.

When seen in this manner, no difference can be found between desire itself and the individual who desires. If they were identical, then desire and the one who desires would be indistinguishable. Due to all sorts of causal bases such as these, the production of desire cannot be gotten at. If a dharma has no production, then this dharma has no destruction either. Since it is neither produced nor destroyed, then neither meditative concentration nor mental distraction can be said to exist.

When one contemplates the hindrance of desire in this manner, then it is found to be essentially identical with dhyāna. The other hindrances are also just like this.

#### M. THE ULTIMATE REALITY BASED IDENTITY OF DHYĀNA AND HINDRANCES

In the case of one who has realized the true character of dharmas, on contemplating the five hindrances, he finds that they have no inherent existence at all. He then realizes that the true character of the five hindrances is identical with the true character of dhyāna

and that the true character of dhyāna is identical with that of the five hindrances. In this way the bodhisattva is able to realize that the five desires as well as the five hindrances, the dhyāna concentrations as well as their component factors—they are all of a single character. Thus, without depending on anything whatsoever, he is able to enter dhyāna absorption. It is this which qualifies as dhyāna “*pāramitā*.”

N. DHYĀNA PĀRAMITĀ’S INTERACTIVE INFLUENCE ON THE OTHER PĀRAMITĀS

Moreover, when the bodhisattva practices the *pāramitā* of dhyāna, the other five *pāramitās* are all comprehensively assisted in their completion. It is this which qualifies as dhyāna “*pāramitā*.”

O. DHYĀNA PĀRAMITĀ AS THE BASIS FOR ACQUISITION OF SUPERKNOWLEDGES

Furthermore, the bodhisattva employs the power of dhyāna *pāramitā* to gain the superknowledges. In only a single thought-moment, even while not emerging from absorption, he is able to make offerings of flowers, incense and all sorts of precious treasures to the Buddhas of the ten directions.

Additionally, the bodhisattva employs the power of the dhyāna *pāramitā* to transformationally create innumerable bodies which universally enter into the five destinies and which employ the Dharma of the Three Vehicles to teach and transform beings.

P. DHYĀNA PĀRAMITĀ AS BASIS FOR RIDDANCE OF UNWHOLESOME DHARMAS

Moreover, when the bodhisattva has entered into the *pāramitā* of dhyāna, he gets rid of all evil and unwholesome dharmas. Entering the first dhyāna and so forth until we come to the absorption of neither perception nor non-perception, his mind is well-regulated and pliant. In each and every one of the dhyānas, he practices the great kindness and the great compassion. On account of the causes and conditions associated with [practicing] kindness and compassion, he is able to remove the offenses accumulated throughout the course of an incalculable number of kalpas. On account of having gained the reality-concordant wisdom cognizing the true character of dharmas, he is borne in mind by the Buddhas and great Bodhisattvas of the ten directions.

Q. HOW DHYĀNA PĀRAMITĀ AND THE HEAVENLY EYE ENHANCE COMPASSION

Furthermore, the bodhisattva who has entered into dhyāna *pāramitā* employs the heavenly eye and contemplates the beings within the five destinies throughout the ten directions. He observes that there are those who have been born in the form realm who indulge

themselves therein in the enjoyment-focused dhyāna concentrations. He sees that they then fall back into the realms of birds and beasts and then consequently undergo all sorts of associated sufferings.

Additionally, he sees gods of the desire realm who take their pleasure amidst flowers and incenses in pools lined with the seven precious things and then afterwards fall into the hell of brine and boiling excrement.

He observes those among humans who are very learned and possessed of worldly wisdom, eloquence, and intelligence who, on account of not having gained the Path, fall back again among the pigs, sheep, and other domestic animals wherein they have nothing whatsoever in the way of discriminating awareness.

He observes all sorts of cases such as these wherein beings lose great bliss and obtain great suffering, lose great profit and obtain great decline, and lose honorable and noble status and obtain low and base social station. He develops a mind of compassion for these beings which gradually increases and broadens and succeeds in developing into the great compassion. He then refrains from any cherishing of his own body or life. For the sake of beings, he proceeds with diligence in seeking realization of the Buddha Path.

#### V. SUMMATION OF KEY FACTORS IN REALIZATION OF DHYĀNA PĀRAMITĀ

Moreover, “it is through being neither mentally distracted nor indulging enjoyment” that one defines dhyāna *pāramitā*. As the Buddha told Śāriputra, “The bodhisattva abides in the Prajñāpāramitā. It is through being neither mentally distracted nor indulging enjoyment that one should perfect dhyāna *pāramitā*.”

**Question:** What is meant by being “mentally distracted”?

**Response:** There are two kinds of “mental distraction.” The first is subtle. The second is coarse. Among the subtle there are three types. The first is where there is much desire. The second is where there is much arrogance. The third is where there are many views.

What is meant by that type which is characterized by “much desire”? Having obtained the bliss of dhyāna absorption, one’s mind becomes blissfully attached and desires the enjoyment of it.

What is meant by that type in which there is “much arrogance”? This refers to when one has achieved dhyāna absorption and is of the opinion that a difficult endeavor has already been achieved and so, on account of that, one elevates oneself.

What is meant by that type in which there are “many views”? On account of the view which seizes upon the existence of a self and other such views, having entered into dhyāna absorption, one makes discriminations and so seizes upon different characteristics, claiming, “This is what is real. All else is but a pack of lies.”

These three are referred to as “subtle” mental distraction. Stemming from these causal factors, one withdraws from dhyāna absorption and develops the three poisons. This then constitutes what is termed “coarse mental distraction.”

As for “indulging enjoyment,” this refers to when one first succeeds in gaining dhyāna concentration and then indulges a single-minded desire-based attachment to it. This is what constitutes “indulging enjoyment.”

**Question:** All of the afflictions are able to result in defilement and attachment. Why does one only refer here to “desire” as the basis for indulging “enjoyment”?

**Response:** “Desire” and dhyāna are similar. How is this so? In the case of dhyāna, one focuses the mind so that it abides solidly. In the case of desire, one also becomes exclusively attached so that one relinquishes [attachment to its objects] only with difficulty. Also, when one first seeks dhyāna, one’s mind becomes exclusively focused on the wish to gain it. “Desire” exclusively seeks for the bliss associated with the indulgence of sensual desires. Because sensual desire and dhyāna concentration are [in this sense] not opposed [as regards the nature of the motivations involved], when one has already gained dhyāna concentration, if one indulges deep attachment to it and does not relinquish it, then one consequently proceeds to destroy the dhyāna concentration.

This is analogous to making gifts of things to people. If one insists on hoping for a present reward, then there is no karmic merit which results from it. In the case of dhyāna, when one indulges in enjoyment-focused mind states and becomes desirously attached to dhyāna, it is just the same as this. It is for this reason that we only cite “desire” as the basis of the enjoyment-focused meditation and do not cite any of the other fetters as associated with such enjoyment.