

THE SIX DHARMA GATES TO THE SUBLIME

六妙法門

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CHAPTER EIGHT

The Six Gates According to Contemplation of Mind

VIII. SIX GATES CULTIVATION ACCORDING TO CONTEMPLATION OF MIND

A. CLARIFICATION OF “CONTEMPLATION OF MIND’S” MEANING

As for the six gates to the sublime according to “contemplation of mind,” this refers to the skillful recognition of unwholesome aspects of dharmas as carried out by the practitioner whose very nature is informed by possession of great root faculties.¹ Without depending on any particular sequence, he is able to illuminate from an elevated perspective the very source of all dharmas. What is it that constitutes “the very source of all dharmas”? It is the so-called “mind of beings.” All of the myriad dharmas arise from the mind. If one is able to turn back and contemplate the nature of the mind itself, then one is unable to apprehend [any inherently existent] source of the mind. One then realizes that the myriad dharmas are all entirely devoid of any fundamental foundation.

When according with this “contemplation of the mind” in explaining the six gates to the sublime, it is not the case that [this practice] is similar to what we have treated earlier. How is this so?

1. CONTEMPLATION OF MIND AND THE GATEWAY OF “COUNTING”

Take for example when one first begins to study contemplation of the mind. One realizes that all of the worldly and supramundane methods for “enumeration” all come forth entirely from the mind and that, apart from the mind, there does not exist even one single additional dharma. This being the case, then, in enumerating all dharmas, in every case it is an instance of enumeration done in concert with the mind. One should realize that it is the mind itself which constitutes the gateway of “counting.”

2. CONTEMPLATION OF MIND AND THE GATEWAY OF “FOLLOWING”

Additionally, at that very time when the practitioner contemplates the mind, he realizes that all dharmas associated with counting follow along with the “mind king.”² If there were no mind king, then there would be no mental-factor (*caitasika*) dharmas. [554a] It is because there is movement in the domain of the mind king that mental-factor dharmas also move.

This is analogous to the hundred ministers and subjects who all follow along and accord with a great king. The reliance upon and according with the mind king which takes place on the part of all of the mental-factor dharmas is just the same in this respect. At that very time when one contemplates in this way, one realizes that it is the mind itself which constitutes the gateway of “following.”

3. CONTEMPLATION OF MIND AND THE GATEWAY OF “STABILIZATION”

Additionally, at the very moment when the practitioner contemplates the mind, he realizes that the nature of the mind is in a state of eternal quiescence and that this is just a case of all dharmas abiding in quiescence as well. Because they abide in a state of quiescence, he does not bear them in mind. Because he does not bear them in mind, then he does not move. Because he does not move, this constitutes “stabilization.” One should realize that it is the mind itself which constitutes the gateway of “stabilization.”

4. CONTEMPLATION OF MIND AND THE GATEWAY OF “CONTEMPLATION”

Additionally, at that very time when the practitioner contemplates the mind, he becomes completely aware that the nature of the mind is like empty space, is devoid of name, is devoid of any [inherently-existent] characteristic features, and is such that it cuts off the path of all discourse [attempting to describe it]. He opens up “the repository of ignorance” and perceives its genuine nature. He gains unattached wisdom with respect to all dharmas. One should realize that it is the mind itself which constitutes the gateway of “contemplation.”

5. CONTEMPLATION OF MIND AND THE GATEWAY OF “TURNING”

Additionally, at that very time when the practitioner contemplates the mind, since he does not apprehend [any inherent existence of] that mind which is the object of contemplation, he does not apprehend that wisdom which is able to engage in contemplation, either. At that very time, the mind is like empty space and has nothing upon which it depends.

Although he does not perceive [the inherent existence] of any dharma, employing the sublime wisdom of non-attachment, he nonetheless “turns back” and, with a penetrating understanding of all dharmas, makes distinctions about them, reveals them, and explains them. He enters the entire Dharma realm with no place being left out or only meagerly attended to. He manifests form bodies everywhere, taking on forms below in the [other] nine karmic

destinies.³ He enters into the treasury of supernatural transformations and superknowledges, accumulates all manner of roots of goodness, dedicates them to bodhi through transference [of merit], and carries on with the adornment of the buddhalands. One should realize that it is the mind itself which constitutes the gateway of “turning.”⁴

6. CONTEMPLATION OF MIND AND THE GATEWAY OF “PURIFICATION”

Additionally, at that very time when the practitioner contemplates the mind, although he is unable to apprehend [any inherent existence in] either the mind or any other dharma, still, he is able, utterly and completely, to make distinctions with regard to all dharmas. Although he makes distinctions with regard to all dharmas, he is not attached to any dharma, and thus he perfects all dharmas.

He does not become “stained” by any dharma because his very nature is pure. This is because, from the very beginning on through to the present, he has remained unstained by ignorance, delusion, or inverted views. Thus it is that a sutra says, “The mind does not become stained even in the midst of the afflictions. The afflictions do not stain the mind.”⁵

Because the practitioner possesses a penetrating understanding of the purity of his own nature, even when entering into defiled dharmas, he remains unstained by defiled dharmas. Thus it is that this qualifies as “purification.” One should realize that it is the mind itself which constitutes the gateway of “purification.”

B. SUMMATION OF THE SIX GATES AND CONTEMPLATION OF MIND

The six gates taken up in this manner do not rely upon any sequence. One directly contemplates the nature of mind and then straight-away achieves perfection.