

THE ESSENTIALS
of
BUDDHIST MEDITATION

Tiantai Master Zhiyi's Classic Meditation Manual:

*The Essentials for Practicing
Calming-and-Insight & Dhyāna Meditation*

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CHAPTER TEN

Realization of the Fruits

1. SECTION TEN: REALIZATION OF THE FRUITS
 - a. [PROVISIONAL CONTEMPLATIONS]
 - 1) [CONTEMPLATION OF HEARERS AND PRATYEKABUDDHAS]

When the practitioner cultivates calming-and-insight in this manner, he may be able to realize that, in every case, all dharmas arise from the mind and, due to the falseness and insubstantiality of causes and conditions, they are empty. Because he realizes that they are empty, he is unable to apprehend any existence in the names and characteristics linked to any dharma. This constitutes the calming achieved through the comprehension of truth.

At such a time, one does not perceive any fruit of buddhahood above which may be sought after, nor does one perceive any beings below which could be delivered to liberation. This constitutes moving from [contemplation of] conventional [truth] into the contemplation of [the truth of] emptiness. It is also the contemplation of the two truths, is also a function of the wisdom eye, and is also [the basis of] all-knowledge.

If [one commits the error of] taking up residence in this contemplation, one thereby falls down onto the ground of the Hearers and Pratyekabuddhas.¹ Thus, the [*Lotus*] *Sutra* states that the assembly of Hearers and others sighed to themselves and said, "If we heard of the purification of buddhalands and of the teaching and transforming of beings, our minds were not pleased. Why is this? All dharmas are empty and still. There is in them no production, no destruction, no greatness, no smallness, no outflows, and no conditioning. Having deliberated in this fashion, we did not generate any joy or happiness in it."²

One should realize that if one establishes oneself in a perception of the unconditioned and in so doing then enters into the "correct station" (*samyaktva-niyāma*),³ such a person will never be able to generate the mind directed toward *samyak saṃbodhi*.⁴ This is a case of a failure to perceive the buddha nature due to excessive emphasis on the power of meditative absorption.

2) [CONTEMPLATION OF THE BODHISATTVAS]

The bodhisattva perfects all of the dharmas of a buddha for the sake of all beings. He should not seize upon or become attached to the unconditioned, thus bringing himself to enter a state of quiescent cessation. At such a time, one should instead cultivate going from [contemplation of the truth of] emptiness into the contemplation of conventional [truth]. Then, one ought to carefully contemplate and realize that, although the nature of the mind is empty, nonetheless, when one abides in the dual realm of conditions, one is still able to bring forth all dharmas. They are comparable to magically-conjured illusions or supernaturally-generated transformations. Although they are devoid of any fixed reality, there still do exist different characteristic distinctions in the sphere of seeing, hearing, awareness, knowing, and so forth.

When the practitioner contemplates in this manner, although he realizes that all dharmas are ultimately empty and still, he is nonetheless able to cultivate all kinds of practices in the midst of emptiness. It is just as if he were planting a tree in empty space. One is still able to distinguish the faculties of beings and, based on the incalculable number of individual natures and desires, one is then able to proclaim an incalculable number of different dharmas [for their sakes]. If one is able to perfect unobstructed eloquence, then one will be able to benefit the beings of the six destinies.

This constitutes the calming characterized by skillful means adapted to conditions. This then constitutes a moving from [contemplation of the truth of] emptiness into the contemplation of the conventional [truth]. It is also the evenly balanced contemplation, is also the function of the dharma eye, and is also the knowledge of the aspects of the paths (*mārga-ākara-jñātā*).

If one abides in this contemplation, on account of an excessive emphasis on the power of wisdom, although one *does* succeed in perceiving the buddha nature, still, one does not yet arrive at a completely clear comprehension of it. Although the bodhisattva may succeed in perfecting these two kinds of contemplations, this still only constitutes an entryway involving provisional contemplations. It is not the case that it constitutes the correct contemplation.

3) [SUMMARIZING SCRIPTURAL CITATION]

Hence the [*Bodhisattva Necklace Fundamental Practices*] Sutra⁵ states: "The previous two contemplations are provisional paths. It is because of the contemplation of these two emptinesses⁶ that one

succeeds in entering the contemplation of the primary meaning of the Middle Way. One engages in simultaneous illumination of the two truths, perceives every single thought-moment as quiescent extinction...and one naturally flows on into the sea of *sarvajñatā*.”⁷

If a bodhisattva wishes to perfect all of the dharmas of a buddha in a single thought-moment, he should cultivate the calming which distinguishes the two extremes and should carry it out within the correct contemplation of the Middle Way.

b. [CORRECT CONTEMPLATION]

1) [DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF CORRECT CONTEMPLATION]

How does one cultivate the correct contemplation? If one completely comprehends that the nature of the mind is neither true nor false, and if one puts to rest the mind which takes truth and falseness as objective conditions, this constitutes correctness.

If one truly contemplates the nature of mind as neither empty nor conventionally existent while still not refuting those dharmas which are either empty or conventionally existent, and if one is able to realize this sort of complete illumination, then in the very nature of mind, one achieves a penetrating understanding of the Middle Way and achieves perfect illumination of the two truths.

If one is able to perceive the Middle Way and the two truths in one’s own mind, then one perceives the Middle Way and the two truths in all dharmas, but still does not seize upon either the Middle Way or the two truths. This is because no definite and fixed nature can be found in them. It is this which constitutes the correct contemplation of the Middle Way. This is as set forth in a verse from the *Treatise on the Middle*:

As for all dharmas produced of causes and conditions,
I declare them to be empty.
They are also [mere] conventional designations,
And also [embody] the meaning of the Middle Way.⁸

In deliberating deeply on the intent of this verse, one finds that it not only completely delineates the characteristics of the contemplation of the middle but also simultaneously clarifies the import of the previous two provisional-contemplation gateways. One should realize that the correct contemplation of the Middle Way involves the buddha eye and the knowledge of all modes (*sarva-kāra-jñatā*). If one abides in this contemplation, then the powers of meditative absorption and wisdom are equal, one completely and utterly

perceives the buddha nature, and one becomes peacefully established in the Great Vehicle.

2) [CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BODHISATTVA'S POST-RESOLUTION REALIZATIONS]

"His steps are even and correct and his speed is as fleet as the wind."⁹

"One then naturally flows on into the sea of *sarvajñatā*."¹⁰

"One carries on the practices of the Thus Come One."¹¹

"One enters the room of the Thus Come One. One dons the robe of the Thus Come One. One sits in the seat of the Thus Come One."¹²

In this case, one then takes the adornment of the Thus Come One as one's own adornment and succeeds in realizing purification of the six faculties.¹³ One enters into the state realized by the Buddha. One has no defiling attachment to any dharma. All of the Buddha's dharmas entirely manifest before one and one perfects the mindfulness-of-the-Buddha *samādhi*.

One becomes peacefully established in the foremost *Sūraṅgama* meditative absorption. This is the *samādhi* wherein one manifests form bodies universally. One universally enters all of the buddhalands of the ten directions, teaching and transforming beings. One adorns and purifies all of the buddha *kṣetras*, makes offerings to the Buddhas of the ten directions, receives and maintains the Dharma treasury of all Buddhas, perfects the *pāramitās* of all practices, awakens to and enters into the station of the great bodhisattvas, and in doing so becomes a companion of Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī.

Having come to eternally abide in the Dharma-nature body, one is then praised by the Buddhas and given a prediction of buddhahood. One then adorns the Tuṣita Heaven, manifests descent of his spiritual body into the womb of his mother, leaves behind the home life, goes to the site where the Path is realized (*bodhimaṇḍala*), conquers the demon adversaries, realizes the right enlightenment, turns the wheel of Dharma, and then enters *nirvāṇa*. Throughout the lands of the ten directions, one brings to perfect completion all of the Buddha's endeavors and becomes complete in the two bodies, the true body and the response body. This then is the realization of the bodhisattva who has initially brought forth the resolve.

In the *Floral Adornment Sutra*, it states: "At the very time when one first brings forth the resolve, one then succeeds in achieving the right enlightenment. One gains a completely penetrating

understanding of the true nature of dharmas. The wisdom body one possesses is not awakened to in reliance on others."¹⁴

It also states: "The bodhisattva who has generated the initial resolve gains the Thus Come One's singular [Dharma] body and the capacity to create an incalculable number of other bodies."¹⁵

It also states: "The bodhisattva who has generated the initial resolve is the same as a buddha."¹⁶

The *Nirvāṇa Sutra* states: "The bringing forth of the resolve and the ultimate realization are indistinguishable. Of these two minds, the first of them is [particularly] difficult [to generate]."¹⁷

The *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sutra* states: "Subhūti, there are bodhisattvas, *mahāsattvas* who, from the very point of first bringing forth the resolve, immediately proceed to sit at the site where the Path is realized (*bodhimaṇḍala*) where they then proceed to turn the wheel of the right Dharma. One should realize that these are bodhisattvas acting in the same way as buddhas."

In the *Lotus Sutra*, the instance of the jewel being offered up by Dragon Daughter serves as a corroborating case. Sutras such as these all clarify that, in the initial establishment of resolve, one perfects all of the dharmas of the Buddha. This is just as exemplified by the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sutra's* gateway of the syllable "a," just as exemplified by the concept in the *Lotus Sutra* of teachings being for the sake of causing beings to open up the knowledge and vision of the Buddhas, and is also just as exemplified by the concept in the *Nirvāṇa Sutra* of abiding in the great nirvāṇa through perceiving the Buddha nature.

We have already explained in brief the initial-resolve bodhisattva's signs of realizing the fruits arising on account of cultivating calming-and-insight.

3) [CHARACTERISTICS OF LATER-STAGE REALIZATIONS]

Next, elucidation of the characteristics of realization of the fruits on the part of later-stage minds. The states of realization which develop for those with later-stage minds are not such as we can cognize. However, if we now extrapolate from what the teachings make clear, we find that they never depart from the two dharmas of calming and insight.

So, how is this the case? Take for example when the *Lotus Sutra* states that [the Buddha] assiduously praised the wisdom of the Buddhas. This is a reference to the concept of [insight] contempla-

tion. This is a case of employing a correlation to [insight] contemplation as a means of elucidating its fruits.

As for the *Nirvāṇa Sutra's* expansive description employing a hundred statements on the topic of liberation as a means of explaining the great nirvāṇa, nirvāṇa corresponds to the meaning inherent in calming. This is a case of employing a correlation with calming as a means of elucidating its fruits.

Therefore it states that the great *parinirvāṇa* is an eternal quiescent meditative absorption. As for "meditative absorption," it corresponds to the meaning inherent in calming.

Although in the *Lotus Sutra*, the correlation to [insight] contemplation is employed as a means of elucidating its fruits, it is nonetheless also inclusive of calming. Hence it states, "[The characteristic of liberation, the characteristic of abandonment, the characteristic of cessation], as well as the ultimate nirvāṇa's characteristic of eternal quiescent extinction are all finally returnable to emptiness."¹⁸

Although in the *Nirvāṇa Sutra*, the correlation to calming is employed to elucidate its fruits, it is nonetheless also inclusive of [insight] contemplation. Hence it takes the three qualities¹⁹ as constituting the great nirvāṇa.

Although there are differences in the texts of these two great sutras as regards the explicit and the esoteric, it is never the case that they depart from a relationship to the two entryways of calming and insight. In the articulation of their ultimate concepts, they both rely upon the two dharmas of meditative absorption and wisdom in order to elucidate the utmost fruits [of cultivating the path] The practitioner should realize that the initial, middle and later fruits are all inconceivable and ineffable. Hence the new translation of the *Golden Light Sutra* states, "The Thus Come Ones at the beginning are inconceivable and ineffable. The Thus Come Ones during the intermediate phase engage in all sorts of adornments [of the Dharma realm of beings and in every case it is for the sake of benefiting others.] The Thus Come Ones at the final phase are eternally indestructible."²⁰

In every case the correlation to the cultivation of the two minds of calming and insight is employed to articulate the fruits [of cultivation]. Hence a verse from the *Pratyutpanna Samādhi Sutra* states:

It is from the mind that all buddhas gain liberation.
As for the mind, it is pure and known as undefiled.

Even in the five destinies, it remains fresh and immaculate and takes on no form.

Where there is one who studies this, he perfects the great Path.²¹

c. [THE ESSENTIAL PREREQUISITES FOR SUCCESS]

I declare as a matter of solemn oath that, as for that which is practiced, it is essential to get rid of the three obstacles²² and the five hindrances.²³ In the event that they are not gotten rid of, even though one might be diligent in applying one's efforts, one will ultimately gain no benefit from it.

End of The Essentials for Practicing Calming-and-Insight and Dhyāna Meditation