

THE SIX DHARMA GATES TO THE SUBLIME

六妙法門

By Śramaṇa Zhiyi (Chih-i)
From Tiantai Mountain's Dhyāna Cultivation Monastery

天台山修禪寺沙門智顓述

English Translation by Bhikshu Dharmamitra

比丘恆授法友英譯

CHAPTER NINE

The Six Gates According to the Perfect Contemplation

IX. SIX GATES CULTIVATION ACCORDING TO THE PERFECT CONTEMPLATION

Now, as for the “perfect contemplation,” how could it be similar to that which has been explained above wherein one only contemplated the mind’s source and so perfected the six gates to the sublime and yet, in contemplating other dharmas, failed to be able to have it be so?

A. “COUNTING” IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PERFECT CONTEMPLATION

Now, the practitioner contemplates any single manifestation of mind and yet perceives all manifestations of mind as well as all dharmas. He contemplates but a single dharma and yet perceives all dharmas as well as all manifestations of mind. He contemplates bodhi and yet perceives all instances of affliction and birth-and-death. He contemplates affliction and birth-and-death and yet perceives all instances of bodhi and nirvāṇa. He contemplates but a single buddha and yet perceives all beings as well as all buddhas. He contemplates but a single being and yet perceives all buddhas as well as all beings.

In every case, everything manifests like reflections which do not abide either inwardly or outwardly and which are neither singular nor differentiated. [554b] Throughout the ten directions, everything is [recognized as] inconceivable and ineffable. The original nature is naturally so. There is no one who could create such circumstances.

It is not merely that, within a single thought, one distinguishes the number of all form and mind dharmas of all common persons and āryas throughout the Dharma realm’s ten directions. Rather, one is also able, even within a single dustmote, to command a penetrating comprehension of all dharmic methods of enumeration belonging to all buddhas throughout the worlds of the ten directions as they pertain to the forms and minds of all common persons and āryas.

B. THE SIMILAR CHARACTER OF THE OTHER FIVE GATES

This then is a summary description of the gateway of counting as it occurs within the perfect contemplation. The [gateways] of

following, stabilization, contemplation, turning, and purification, are in each and every case similar to this. This [level of engaging the practice of] counting is itself so subtle, sublime, inconceivable, and ineffable that it cannot be proclaimed in words or fathomed by the mind. Not even the lesser bodhisattvas would be able to reach to this One-Vehicle realm of perception, how much the less would this be possible for any common person.

C. THE RELATIONSHIP OF SUCH PRACTITIONERS TO THE TATHĀGATA

If it were to happen that there was some great eminence with sharp faculties who, when he heard such a sublime¹ dharma as this, was then able to believe in, understand, and uphold it, deliberating upon it with right mindfulness, and cultivating it with deeply-committed diligence—one should know that this person is one who carries on his practice in the Buddha's place of practice and dwells in the Buddha's dwelling place. He "enters the room of the Tathāgata, dons the robe of the Tathāgata, and sits upon the throne of the Tathāgata."²

D. THE IMPENDING REALIZATIONS OF SUCH PRACTITIONERS

He will definitely, in this very body, succeed in gaining the purification of the six sense faculties and in opening forth the knowledge and vision of the Buddha. He will be able to universally manifest form bodies and achieve the equal and right enlightenment. Thus it is that the *Floral Adornment Sutra* states, "At the very time of generating the aspiration, one then succeeds in achieving the right enlightenment. He gains a penetrating comprehension of the genuine nature of all dharmas and completely [perfects] the wisdom body, achieving this awakening with no reliance on others."³