

CHAPTER IV.

SAMADHI AND PRAJNA

(Concentration and Wisdom).

The Patriarch (on one occasion) preached to the assembly as follows:—

Learned Audience, in my system, Samadhi and Prajna are fundamental. But you should not be under the wrong impression that these two are independent of each other, for they are inseparably united and are not two entities. Samadhi is the quintessence of Prajna, while Prajna is the activity of Samadhi. At the very moment when we attain Prajna, Samadhi is therewith; and vice versa. If you understand this principle, you know what is the equilibrium of Samadhi and Prajna. A disciple should not say that there is a distinction between 'Samadhi begets Prajna' and 'Prajna begets Samadhi'. To hold such an opinion would imply that there are two characteristics in the Dharma.

For one whose tongue is ready with good words but whose heart is impure, Samadhi and Prajna are useless, because they do not balance each other. On the other hand, when we are good in mind as well as in words and when our outward appearance and our inner feelings harmonise with each other, then it is a case of equilibrium of Samadhi and Prajna.

Argument is unnecessary for an enlightened disciple. To argue whether Prajna or Samadhi comes first would put one in the same position as those who are under delusion. Argument implies a desire to win; strengthens egotism; and ties us to the belief in the idea of a self, of a being, of a living being, and of a person.

Learned Audience, what may Samadhi and Prajna be analogous to? They may be analogous to a lamp and its light. With the lamp, there is light. Without it, it would be dark. The lamp is the quintessence of the light and the light is the expression of the lamp. In name they are two things, but in substance they are one and the same. It is the same case with Samadhi and Prajna.

(On another occasion), the Patriarch preached to the assembly as follows:—

Learned Audience, to practice the 'Samadhi of Specific Mode' is to make it a rule to be straightforward on all occasions—no matter we are walking, standing, sitting, or reclining. The Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra says, "Straightforwardness is the holy place, the Pure Land." Don't let your mind be crooked and practise straightforwardness with your lips only. We should practise straightforwardness and should not attach ourselves obstinately to anything. People under delusion believe obstinately in Dharmalakṣaṇa (phenomenal objects, or things and form) and so they are stubborn in having their own way of interpreting the 'Samadhi of Specific Mode' which they define as 'sitting quietly and continuously without letting any idea arising from the mind'. Such an interpretation would rank us with inanimate objects and it is a stumbling block to the right Path. Learned Audience, the Path should be kept open, how can we block it up? Should we

free our mind from attachment to all things (Dharma), the Path would be clear, otherwise, we would have ourselves under restraint.* If that interpretation 'sitting quietly and continuously etc.' be correct, why on one occasion Sariputta was reprimanded by Virmalakirti for sitting quietly in the wood? †

Learned Audience, some teachers of meditation instruct their disciples to keep a watch on their mind for tranquility, so that it will cease from activity. Henceforth the disciples give up the exertion of their mind. Ignorant persons who understand not become insane for having too much confidence on such instruction. Such cases are not rare, and it is a great mistake to teach others to do so.

(On another occasion), the Patriarch addressed the assembly as follows:—

In orthodox Buddhism, the distinction between the 'Sudden' School and the 'Gradual' one really exists not: the only difference recognised is that by nature some men are quick-witted, while others are dull in understanding. Those who are enlightened realise the truth in a sudden, while those who are under delusion have to train themselves gradually. But such a difference will disappear, when we know our own mind and realise our own nature. Therefore these terms, 'Gradual' and 'Sudden', are more apparent than real.

Learned Audience, it has been the tradition of our school to take 'Idea-lessness' as our object, 'Non-objectivity' as our basis, and 'Non-attachment' as our fundamental principle. 'Non-objectivity' means not to be absorbed by objects when in contact with objects. 'Idea-lessness' means not to be carried away by any particular idea in the exercise of the mental faculty. 'Non-attachment' is the characteristic of our essence of mind.

* A Bhikkhu once asked Dhyana Master Shek Tau (石頭邊), a successor to one of the Sixth Patriarch's disciples, "What is emancipation?" The Master asked him in return, "Who puts you under restraint?" The significance of this answer is practically the same as that of our text here. Again when the Sixth Patriarch said that the Fifth Patriarch would not discuss on Dhyana and Emancipation but on the realisation of the essence of mind (Chapter I), he expressed the same idea too.

—DIH PING TSZE.

† Virmalakirti said to Sariputta, "As to sitting quietly, it should mean that one does not put in an appearance within the three worlds (i.e. to have an existence above the World of Desire, the World of Matter and the World of Non-Matter). It should mean that while remaining in Nirodha Samapatti (Ecstasy with cessation of consciousness), one is able to do the various bodily movements such as walking, standing, sitting, or reclining, etc. It should mean that without deviating from the Norm, one is able to discharge various temporal duties. It should mean that one abides neither within nor without. It should mean that one practises the thirty-seven Bodhipaksa (Wings of enlightenment) without being moved by heretical views. It should mean that without exterminating Klesas (defilements), one may enter Nirvana. He who is able to sit thus will be approved by the Buddha."

—VIRMALAKIRTI NIRDESA SUTRA.

Towards all things—good or bad, beautiful or ugly—we should treat all of them as void; and even in time of disputes and quarrels, we should treat our intimates and our enemies alike and never think of retaliation. In the exercise of our thinking faculty, let the past be dead. If we allow our thoughts, the past, one, the present, and the future ones, to link up in a series, we would put ourselves under restraint. On the other hand, if we let our mind attach to nothing at all times and towards all things, we gain emancipation. For this reason, we take 'Non-attachment' as our fundamental principle.

Learned Audience, to free ourselves from absorption in all external objects is called 'Non-objectivity'. When we are in a position to do so, the nature of Dharma will be pure. For this reason, we take 'Non-objectivity' as our basis.

Learned Audience, to keep our mind free from defilement under all circumstances is called 'Idea-lessness'. Our mind should stand aloof from circumstances, and on no account should we allow them to influence the function of our mind. But it is a great mistake to suppress our mind from all thinking; for even if we succeed in getting rid of all thoughts and die immediately thereafter, still we shall be reincarnated elsewhere. (Note: Such an attainment is useless, for it cannot free us from incessant re-births). Mark this, treaders of the Path. It is bad enough for a man to commit blunders for not knowing the purport of the Law, but how much worse would it be to encourage others to follow suit? Being deluded, he sees not and in addition he blasphemes the Buddhist Canon. Therefore we take 'Idea-lessness' as our object.

Learned Audience, (let me explain more fully) why we take 'Idea-lessness' as our object. Because there is a type of man under delusion who cants of the realisation of the essence of mind; but being carried away by circumstances, idea rises in his mind, followed by erroneous views which are the sources of all sorts of false notions and defilements (Klesa). In the essence of mind (which is the embodiment of void), there is intrinsically nothing to be attained. To say that there is attainment and to talk thoughtlessly on merits or demerits are erroneous views and Klesas. For this reason, we take 'Idea-lessness' as the object of our school.

Learned Audience, (in 'Idea-lessness') what should we get rid of and what should we fix our mind to? We should get rid of the 'pairs of opposites' and all conceptions of Klesas. We should fix our mind to the true nature of Tathata (Suchness). Tathata is the quintessence of idea, and idea is the result of the activity of Tathata.

It is the attribute (or positive essence) of Tathata—not the sense organs—that gives rise to idea. Tathata bears its own attribute, and therefore it can give rise to idea. Without Tathata, the sense organs and the sense objects would perish immediately. Learned Audience, because it is the attribute of Tathata that gives

rise to idea, our sense organs—in spite of their functioning in seeing, hearing, touching, knowing, etc.—may not be tainted or defiled under all circumstances, and our true nature may be 'Self-manifested' all the time. Therefore the Sutra says, "He who is an adept in the discrimination of various Dharmalakshana (things and phenomena) will be immovably installed in the 'First Principle' (i.e. the 聖樂處 blissful abiding place of the Holy, or Nirvana)."
