

CHAPTER 8

On the Avaivartika

VIII. CHAPTER EIGHT: ON THE AVAIVARTIKA

A. Q: WHAT ARE THE DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS OF AN AVAIVARTIKA?

Question: These bodhisattvas are of two kinds: First, those who are *vaivartika* (reversible), and second, those who are *avaivartika* (irreversible). One should explain the characteristics that determine whether one is a *vaivartika* or an *avaivartika*.

B. A: THERE ARE FIVE DEFINING DHARMAS, AS FOLLOWS: (VERSE)

Response:

He maintains a mind of equal regard toward beings,
does not envy the benefits and support obtained by others,
and, even at the cost of his own body and life,
does not speak of a Dharma master's transgressions.

He has resolute faith in the profound and sublime Dharma
and does not crave to be the object of others' reverence.
One who embodies these five dharmas
Is an *avaivartika*.

1. MAINTAINING A MIND OF EQUAL REGARD TOWARD BEINGS

As for "maintaining a mind of equal regard toward beings," beings are those within the six rebirth destinies. One's mind remains free of discriminating judgments by which one might regard them as either superior, middling, or inferior. This is a defining quality of an *avaivartika*.

Question: As has been explained, one should bring forth a mind of supreme reverence for buddhas and bodhisattvas. As for the other beings, this is not the case. Moreover, it has been stated that one should draw close to buddhas and bodhisattvas, revere them, and making offerings to them. As for the other beings, they are not to be treated in this way. Why then do you claim here that one maintains a mind of equal regard toward all beings and refrains from any duality in this?

Response: Each of these statements is principled and such as one should neither doubt nor challenge.

As for "maintaining a mind of equal regard toward beings," there are beings who look upon the bodhisattva as if he were an enemy, those who look upon him as if he were a father or mother, and those

who look upon him as a neutral person. It is because he maintains a mind of equal regard toward these three categories of beings as he benefits and strives to liberate them that he does not indulge any notions of differences among them. Hence you should not pose any challenge on this account.

2. NOT ENVYING BENEFITS AND SUPPORT OBTAINED BY OTHERS

As for “not envying the benefits and support obtained by others,” in a case where someone else obtains robes, food-and-drink, bedding, medicines, dwellings, property, gold, silver, precious gems, villages, towns, states, cities, male and female attendants, and so forth, one does not feel envy toward them. Not only does one refrain from harboring any hostility toward them, one’s mind is instead pleased by this.

3. NOT SPEAKING OF A DHARMA MASTER’S TRANSGRESSIONS

As for “He does not speak of a Dharma master’s transgressions,” in a case where someone is teaching the Great Vehicle dharmas of emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness, the six *pāramitās*, the four bases of meritorious qualities, the bodhisattva’s ten grounds, or any other such Great Vehicle dharmas, even if it would cost one his own life to do this, one still refrains from exposing any of that person’s transgressions or negative aspects. How much the less might one create a bad situation for him.

4. RESOLUTE FAITH IN THE PROFOUND AND SUBLIME DHARMA

As for “he has a resolute faith in the profound and sublime Dharma,” “profound Dharma” refers to emptiness, signlessness, wishlessness, and all of the abstruse scriptures such as the *Prajñāpāraimitā*, the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*, and other such scriptures. One maintains a single-minded resolute faith in this Dharma and has no doubts about it. Because one has obtained the flavor of the profound scriptures, one does not find this sort of delight in anything else.

5. NOT CRAVING TO BE THE OBJECT OF OTHERS’ REVERENCE

As for “not craving to be the object of others’ reverence,” because one has reached a penetrating understanding of the true character of dharmas,¹²¹ one sees no difference between esteem and disgrace, gain and absence of gain, and so forth.¹²²

As for “embodying these five dharmas,” they are those just listed above.

6. ONE DOES NOT RETREAT FROM COMPLETE ENLIGHTENMENT

One does not retreat from *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*, nor does one allow one’s efforts in pursuit of it to deteriorate through indolence. These are the factors that characterize one who is an *avaivartika* (irreversible). The opposite qualities characterize one who is *vaivartika* (reversible).

C. TWO TYPES OF REVERSIBLE BODHISATTVAS, RUINED VERSUS PROGRESSING

Among those who are *vaivartika* (reversible) bodhisattvas, there are two types, those who fall into ruination and those who gradually develop and advance until they become *avaivartikas* (irreversible).

1. Q: WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF A “RUINED” REVERSIBLE BODHISATTVA?

Question: As for those described as having fallen into ruination, what are their characteristic qualities?

2. A: SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS, AS FOLLOWS: (VERSE)

Response:

In a case where one has no determination and ability,
delights in inferior dharmas,
is deeply attached to fame and offerings,
or has a mind that is not upright and straight—

Where one feels a miserly cherishing toward others’ households,¹²³
does not have a resolute belief in the dharma of emptiness,
and only esteems all manner of verbal discourse—
These are the marks of one fallen into ruination.

a. ABSENCE OF DETERMINATION AND ABILITY

In the case of “one who has no determination and ability,” his countenance is lackluster in appearance and whatever awe-inspiring personal qualities he might have are only shallow and scant.

Question: It is not on the basis of a dignified physical appearance that one is an *avaivartika*. That being the case, what meaning is there in making such a statement?

Response: This is a meaningful statement and should not be a cause for doubt. I am saying that, because, inwardly, one possesses meritorious qualities, the body manifests a correspondingly awe-inspiring personal presence. This is not simply a case of claiming that, [independent of these causes], he has a handsome physical appearance and countenance.

As for “determination and ability,” this is what may be referred to as the power of one with an awe-inspiring personal presence.

If a person is able to cultivate and accumulate good dharmas while ridding himself of bad dharmas and then develops strength in accomplishing this endeavor, he then becomes one who possesses this “determination and ability.” Even though one might possess a body like that of a king of the devas and radiance comparable to the sun and moon, so long as one is unable to cultivate and accumulate good dharmas and entirely rid oneself of bad dharmas, one is still a person who is devoid of “determination and ability.”

[On the other hand], even though one's physical appearance might be ugly and one might have the physique of a hungry ghost, if he is able to cultivate the good and get rid of the bad, he then becomes one who possesses "determination and ability."

It is for these reasons that the challenge you have posed here has no merit.

b. DELIGHTING IN INFERIOR DHARMAS

As for "delighting in inferior dharmas," when compared to the Buddha Vehicle, with the exception of the Buddha Vehicle, all other vehicles are small in scope, inferior, and incapable of measuring up to it. It is for these reasons that they are referred to as "inferior," not because they are "bad" *per se*. Still, any other peripheral unwholesome factors would indeed also qualify as "inferior."

Whatever has been achieved by adherents of the Two Vehicles is relatively inferior when compared with the Buddha, that's all. Still, because they have entirely escaped the world and have entered the nirvāṇa without residue, this cannot be said to be "bad."

It is for reasons such as these that, if someone distances himself from the Buddha Vehicle and instead has a resolute belief in the Two Vehicles, this amounts to delighting in inferior dharmas. Although such people do delight in superior endeavors, because they have anchored their resolute faith in the teachings of the Two Vehicles and have abandoned the Great Vehicle, they are still referred to as "delighting in inferior dharmas."

Then again, "inferior" refers as well to matters that are themselves "bad," namely the five objects of desire,¹²⁴ annihilationism, eternalism, and the rest of the sixty-two wrong views, all of the doctrinal tenets typical of non-Buddhist traditions, and any preoccupations that would increase one's entanglement in *saṃsāra*. These are "inferior dharmas." It is due to practicing these sorts of dharmas that one is said to delight in inferior dharmas.

c. BEING DEEPLY ATTACHED TO FAME AND OFFERINGS

Being "deeply attached to fame and offerings" refers to having deep-seated inclinations to focus one's thoughts on skillfully arranging ways to receive gifts of material wealth and other sorts of offerings and praises. It is due to failing to experience the flavor of the pure Dharma that one may then covet and delight in such matters.

d. HAVING A MIND THAT IS NOT UPRIGHT AND STRAIGHT

As for "the mind not being upright and straight," this refers to someone whose nature is given over to flattery and deviousness and who delights in being deceptive.

e. FEELING A MISERLY CHERISHING TOWARD OTHERS' HOUSEHOLDS

In the case of one who “feels a miserly cherishing toward others’ households,” this person, no matter which household he enters, whenever he witnesses others receiving offerings, reverence, or praise, he immediately becomes envious, saddened, and displeased. Because his mind is impure and because he is deeply habituated to conceiving of the existence of a self, he is covetous of and attached to offerings, has thoughts of jealousy, and harbors resentment toward others’ benefactors.

f. NOT HAVING A RESOLUTE BELIEF IN THE DHARMA OF EMPTINESS

As for “not having a resolute belief in the dharma of emptiness,” the buddhas have three ways in which they discuss the dharma of emptiness, namely the three gates to liberation. As for these dharmas associated with emptiness, this person does not believe in them, does not delight in them, and does not esteem them as precious. This is because his mind has not achieved a penetrating comprehension of them.

g. ONLY ESTEEMING ALL MANNER OF VERBAL DISCOURSE

As for “only esteeming all manner of verbal discourse,” this means that one only delights in words and phrases, but cannot practice in accordance with them. One is only able in such a case to carry on verbal discourse, but still cannot develop a resolute belief in these dharmas to the degree that one realizes their true import and flavor.

h. THESE ARE THE MARKS OF ONE FALLEN INTO RUINATION

As for “these are the marks of one fallen into ruination,” if someone has formerly brought forth the bodhi resolve but then displays signs such as these, one should realize that this is a bodhisattva who has fallen into ruination.

“Fallen into ruination” designates the quality of not being well trained or compliant. For instance, a poorly-bred, ill-tempered horse might appropriately be thought of as “ruined.” It merely bears the name “horse” without having any of a horse’s uses.

A bodhisattva fallen into ruination is just like this, bearing only an empty designation while not carrying on any genuine practice. If one wishes to avoid becoming a bodhisattva fallen into ruination, one should rid himself of bad dharmas and accord with the Dharma in a manner worthy of one’s name.

3. Q: WHAT ARE THE TRAITS OF THE REVERSIBLE BODHISATTVA WHO SUCCEEDS?

Question: You stated that there are two kinds of bodhisattvas still on the grounds of the *vaivartika* (reversible) bodhisattva: First, the bodhisattva fallen into ruination and, second, someone who, after the

consistent application of vigor gradually becomes an *avaivartika* (irreversible) bodhisattva. Having already explained what is meant by “the bodhisattva fallen into ruination,” you could now explain what is meant by the one who, after consistent application of vigor gradually becomes *avaivartika* (irreversible).

4. A: HE HAS FIVE QUALITIES, AS FOLLOWS: (VERSE)

Response:

The bodhisattva does not apprehend the existence of any self and also does not apprehend the existence of any being. He does not engage in discriminations as he discourses on Dharma, nor does he apprehend the existence of bodhi.

He does not see a buddha by his signs. It is because of these five meritorious qualities that he can be referred to as a great bodhisattva who is bound to become an *avaivartika*.

If a bodhisattva implements these five meritorious qualities, he thereby proceeds directly to the stage of the *avaivartika*.

a. NOT APPREHENDING THE EXISTENCE OF ANY “SELF”

As for “not apprehending the existence of any ‘self,’” this is due to having abandoned attachment to the existence of any self. When this bodhisattva searches among the inwardly related and outwardly related five aggregates, twelve sense bases, and eighteen sense realms, he cannot apprehend the existence of a self anywhere among them. He contemplates thus:¹²⁵

If it were the case that the aggregates constituted a self, then that “self” would be characterized by birth and destruction. How could one, merely on the basis of feelings, immediately create some entity that experiences feelings?

If a self were to exist apart from the aggregates, one should be able to apprehend it apart from the aggregates. But how could one take it that feelings are something separate from what experiences feelings?

If it were the case that the self possessed the five aggregates, that self would be something apart from the five aggregates in the same way that it is commonly said in worldly parlance that an ox is different from the ox-herder.

It is on the basis of the conjunction of different things that this phenomenon is said to exist. Therefore, if it were the case that some self possessed the aggregates, that self would be something different from the aggregates.

If it were the case that the self existed within the aggregates, then this is just like there being a person inside of a room or like there being someone there on a couch, listening. The self then should be something different from the aggregates.

If it were the case that the aggregates existed within a self, this would be analogous to fruit being contained in a bowl or like milk in which there are flies. The aggregates then would be different from the self.

This is just as with a combustible not being the burning itself even as burning cannot occur apart from a combustible. Combustion does not possess its combustible nor does combustion itself abide within what is combustible.

A self isn't identical with nor separate from the aggregates, nor does a self possess the aggregates. There is no self within the five aggregates and there are no five aggregates within a self.

Similarly analogous are dye and that which is dyed, the afflictions and whoever is affected by the afflictions, a vase [and its clay], cloth [and its threads], and so forth. All of these phenomena should be understood in this same way.

If someone asserts that the self exists as a fixed entity or that dharmas are possessed of differentiating characteristics, one should realize that such a person has not realized the flavor of the Buddha's Dharma.

When the bodhisattva carries out such contemplations, he immediately abandons any view imputing the existence of a self. Because he abandons any view conceiving of the existence of a self, he becomes unable to apprehend the existence of any self at all.

b. NOT APPREHENDING THE EXISTENCE OF ANY "BEING"

As for his being unable "to apprehend the existence of any being," the term "being" here refers to any entity other than this bodhisattva. Because he has abandoned any view clinging to the existence of a self, he contemplates thus: "If others truly had a self, then they would constitute an 'other.' It is based on the existence of a self that one is able to regard someone else as constituting an 'other.' However, in reality, when one seeks to find some 'self,' it cannot be apprehended. Because an 'other' cannot be apprehended, either, then there is neither any 'other' nor any 'self.'" It is in this manner that the bodhisattva remains unable to apprehend any [being that is] "other," either.

C. NOT ENGAGING IN DISCRIMINATIONS WHILE SPEAKING ON DHARMA

As for, “he does not engage in discriminations as he discourses on Dharma,” because this bodhisattva has a resolute belief in the non-duality of all dharmas, in the nonexistence of any distinctions among them, and in their being characterized by a singular character, he contemplates thus, “All dharmas arise from erroneous perceptions and discriminations. They are false and deceptive.” This bodhisattva extinguishes all discriminations, becomes free of all distress, immediately enters into the unsurpassable supreme meaning’s dharma of conditioned origination, and then no longer needs to rely upon the wisdom imparted by others.

The nature of reality is not something that exists,
nor is it the case that it does not exist,
nor does it both exist and not exist,
nor does it neither exist nor not exist.¹²⁶

Nor does it abide in verbal expressions,
nor is it something apart from verbal expressions.
So it is that the meaning of ultimate reality
can never be expressed by resort to speech.

The speaker and the words that can be spoken—
—these are all characterized by quiescent cessation.
Whatsoever has the nature of quiescent cessation
is neither existent nor nonexistent.

No matter what one might wish to speak about
and no matter which means one might choose to speak,
how could there be someone who is wise and yet [still conceives]
of there being any “speaking” that takes place with some “speaker.”

If the nature of all dharmas is emptiness,
then dharmas are devoid of any [inherently existent] nature.
Consequently whatever dharmas are empty [of inherent existence],
those very dharmas are ineffable.

One cannot fail to have words that one speaks,
hence we borrow words to speak about emptiness.

The true meaning is neither empty
nor non-empty,

nor both empty and not empty,
nor neither empty nor not empty.

It is not false nor is it true,
nor is it spoken, nor is it not spoken.

And yet, in truth, there is nothing that exists,
and yet it is not the case that nothing exists at all.
This constitutes the complete relinquishment
of the discrimination of anything at all as existent.

Causes as well as whatever arises from causes—
All such dharmas as these
are in every case characterized by quiescent cessation.
There is neither any seizing on them nor any relinquishing of them.

Without ash-soap, a robe cannot be made clean,
But still, ashes may have the contrary effect of staining a robe.
[So too], were it not for words, one could not proclaim the truth.
Still, if one uses words and speech, that too may have its faults.¹²⁷

It is in this manner that the bodhisattva contemplates, develops resolute belief in, and then achieves a penetrating understanding whereby, in his discoursing on the Dharma, “he does not engage in discriminations.”

d. NOT APPREHENDING THE EXISTENCE OF BODHI

As for being “unable to apprehend the existence of bodhi,” because this bodhisattva possesses a resolute belief in the dharma of emptiness, his “apprehension” here is not of the same sort as the common person’s apprehension of bodhi. He contemplates in this manner:

The buddhas have not apprehended bodhi
and those who are not buddhas do not apprehend it, either.
As for the fruits of the path and the other related dharmas,
in every case, this also applies in the same way to them.

Where there is a buddha, there is bodhi.
but to hold that a buddha has “apprehended” it is just eternalism.
Without a buddha, there is no bodhi,
but to hold that it cannot be apprehended is just annihilationism.

Apart from a buddha, there is no bodhi
and apart from bodhi, there is no buddha.
If they are singular, their difference cannot be established.
So how could there be any sort of conjoining of them?

In general, as regards all dharmas,
it is because they are different that they may be conjoined.
But bodhi is not something distinctly different from a buddha.
Therefore, in the case of these two, there is no conjoining.

In the case of a buddha and bodhi,
neither their difference nor their conjoining can be established.
There is no third alternative apart from these two.
How then could [such concepts] be validly established?

Therefore buddhas are characterized by quiescent cessation.
 So too is bodhi characterized by quiescent cessation.
 Because these two are characterized by quiescent cessation,
 everything is characterized by quiescent cessation.

e. NOT SEEING A BUDDHA BY HIS SIGNS

As for “he does not see a buddha by his signs,” this bodhisattva has a resolute belief in and an utterly penetrating understanding of the dharma of signlessness. He reflects thus:¹²⁸

If everything is signless,
 then everything is identical with whatever possesses signs.
 Quiescent cessation is signless
 and is identical with whatever is possessed of signs.¹²⁹

If one contemplates the dharma of signlessness,
 whatever is signless is [seen to be] the same as what possesses signs.
 If one says that one is cultivating signlessness,
 that is just a non-cultivation of signlessness.

Were one to relinquish all covetousness¹³⁰
 and designate that as constituting signlessness,
 such seizing on this sign of having relinquished covetousness¹³¹
 then becomes the very absence of liberation.

In general, it is because of the existence of grasping
 that then, because of that grasping, there then is relinquishing.
 There is someone who grasps and something that is grasped¹³²—
 It is on this basis that one then refers to “relinquishing.”

As for the one who grasps, the grasping to which he resorts,
 and also that dharma that is subject to being grasped—
 whether as conjoined or separate, they all do not exist,¹³³
 for these are all synonymous with quiescent cessation.

If a dharma's signs are established on the basis of causes,
 this is just something devoid of any [inherently existent] nature.
 Whatever is devoid of any [inherently existent] nature—
 this is just something devoid of any [inherently existent] signs.

If a dharma has no [inherently existent] nature—
 this is just something that is signless.
 How can one assert that it has no [inherently existent] nature?
 It is precisely because it is signless.¹³⁴

If one uses [such terms as] “existence” and “nonexistence,”
 “both” and “neither” should be permissible as well,¹³⁵ for,
 although one may speak thus, so long as one's mind is not attached,
 one thereby remains free of any fault in doing so.

Where has there ever first existed some dharma
that, afterward, was not destroyed?
Wherever there has first existed some fire
that, afterward, was then extinguished,
the quiescent cessation of these existent signs
is identical to the quiescent cessation of whatsoever is signless.

Therefore, as for these words about quiescent cessation
as well as the one who speaks about quiescent cessation,
from the beginning, too, they have not been quiescent¹³⁶
nor have they been non-quiescent,
nor have they been both quiescent and non-quiescent,
nor have they been neither quiescent nor non-quiescent.

Because this bodhisattva has such a penetrating comprehension of the wisdom of signlessness, he is free of any doubts or regrets. He does not see a buddha in terms of the signs of his physical form, nor does he see a buddha in terms of feelings, perceptions, formative factors, or consciousness.

Question: How is it that he does not see a buddha by the signs of his physical form? And how is it that he does not see a buddha in terms of feelings, perceptions, formative factors, or consciousness?

Response: It is not the case that physical form is a buddha, nor is it the case that feelings, perceptions, formative factors, or consciousness are what constitute a buddha.¹³⁷

Nor is it the case that a buddha exists apart from physical form, nor is it the case that he exists apart from feelings, perceptions, formative factors, or consciousness.

Nor is it the case that a buddha possesses physical forms, nor is it the case that a buddha possesses feelings, perceptions, formative factors, or consciousness.

Nor is it the case that a buddha exists within physical form. Nor is it the case that a buddha exists within feelings, perceptions, formative factors, or consciousness.

Nor is it the case that physical form resides within a buddha. Nor is it the case that feelings, perceptions, formative factors, or consciousness reside within a buddha.

The bodhisattva who does not seize on any signs of these five aggregates succeeds in reaching the ground of the *avaiivartika*.

D. Q: WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTIC SIGNS OF AN AVAIVARTIKA?

Question: Now that we already know that one who acquires these dharmas is an *avaiivartika*, what characteristic signs does the *avaiivartika* possess?

E. A: THE AVAIVARTIKA HAS NUMEROUS CHARACTERISTICS, AS FOLLOWS:

Response:

The *Prajñāpāramitā* has already extensively explained the characteristic signs of the *avaivartika*.

If, in contemplating the ground of the common person, the grounds of the *śrāvaka* disciple, the ground of the *pratyekabuddha*, and the ground of a buddha, a bodhisattva does not engage in duality-based perceptions, does not engage in discriminating thoughts, and has no doubts or regrets, one should realize that this is an *avaivartika*.

Whenever an *avaivartika* speaks, it is beneficial in some way.

He does not contemplate others' relative strengths and shortcomings or good and bad aspects.

He does not long to hear the discourses of non-Buddhist *śramaṇas*.

What should be known, he immediately learns. Whatever should be seen, he then sees.

He does not revere or serve others' deities, nor does he make offerings to them of flowers, incense, banners, or canopies. Nor does he venerate or serve the gurus of those other traditions.

He does not fall into the wretched destinies nor, when reborn, does he take on a female body.

He always cultivates the ten courses of good karmic action himself while also teaching them to others, thereby causing them to practice them.

He always uses good dharmas in revealing [truths], instructing, benefiting, and delighting others. Even in his dreams, he never relinquishes the ten courses of good karmic action and never engages in any of the ten courses of bad karmic action.

The roots of goodness that he plants through physical, verbal, and mental actions are all done in order to facilitate beings' peace and happiness and their liberation [from *samsāra*]. He shares with other beings the karmic rewards that result from his endeavors.

Whenever he hears discussions of profound dharmas, he does not develop either doubts or regrets.

He tends to be a man of relatively few words. His discourse is beneficial and peaceful, agreeable and pleasing, soft and pliant.

He sleeps but little and, whether going or coming, moving along or stopping, his mind is not scattered. He is refined in his deportment and his thoughts are stable and resolute.

His body is free of parasites. His robes and mat are clean and unstained. He is pure in both body and mind and he is serene and uninvolved in extraneous matters.

His mind is free of flattery and deviousness nor does it tend toward miserliness or jealousy.

He does not prize offerings, robes, food and drink, mats, medicines, or other physical necessities.

He has no tendency to engage in disputation over profound dharmas. He listens single-mindedly to explanations of the Dharma and always wishes to be in front [wherever it is taught].

Through the merit gained in these various ways, he succeeds in perfecting his practice of the *pāramitās*.

He excels over others in mastery of the world's cultural skills and arts.

He contemplates all dharmas in accordance with the nature of dharmas.

Even if Māra, the Evil One, were to manifest an apparition of the eight great hells while transformationally appearing before him as a bodhisattva, saying, "If you do not relinquish the resolve to attain bodhi, you will be reborn here"—even when witnessing such a terrifying circumstance as this, his mind would still refuse to relinquish its resolve.

Should Māra, the Evil One, then also say, "The sutras of the Mahāyāna were not spoken by the Buddha"—even when hearing this declaration, his resolve would remain unchanged. He continues to rely on the characteristic aspects of the Dharma and does not follow others.

He is not terrorized by the sufferings of *saṃsāra*. Even were he to hear of bodhisattvas who finally fell back and retreated [from the bodhi resolve] after *asaṃkhyeyas* of kalpas of cultivating and accumulating roots of goodness, his resolve would still not sink away as a result.

Also, were he to hear of a bodhisattva that had retreated to become an arhat, even then, he would still not retreat from his resolve to acquire the *dhyāna* absorptions, proclaim the Dharma, and liberate others [from *saṃsāra*].

He is always able to become aware of and recognize all actions of *māras*. Even if he were to be informed that omniscience is empty, that the Great Vehicle's ten grounds are empty, that the beings amenable to liberation [from *saṃsāra*] are empty, and that all dharmas are nonexistent and like empty space—were he to be told such things by someone attempting to throw his mind into confusion, someone wishing thereby to influence him to turn back due to weariness and diminishing intensity of effort—this bodhisattva would still respond by redoubling his practice of vigor and his deep practice of kindness and compassion.

Whenever he wishes to enter the first *dhyāna*, second *dhyāna*, third *dhyāna*, or fourth *dhyāna* meditation states, though he may do so, he nonetheless refrains from taking rebirth in those corresponding *dhyāna* [heavens], but rather returns and takes up dharmas suitable for practice within the desire realm.

He crushes and expels any potential arrogance, does not prize the praise of others, and keeps his mind free of the hindrance of hatred.

In lives spent as a householder, he remains unstained by the five objects of desire, merely taking them on with a mind of renunciation just as one would take medicine when beset with disease.

He does not live by wrong livelihoods and does not live in a manner that disrupts others' lives.

It is only for the sake of bringing peace and happiness to beings that he might abide in the role of a householder.

Traceless vajra-wielding dharma protectors¹³⁸ always follow him, serving and protecting him and ensuring that he cannot be harmed or interfered with by any human or non-human being.

All of his faculties are normally intact and free of defect. He does not use magical spells or noxious elixirs to subdue people or harm beings.

He is not fond of disputation, and does not elevate himself or degrade others.

He does not perform divinations to determine auspiciousness or misfortune.

He is not fond of discussing manifold topics, topics such as: kings, ministers and the people, the state and its frontier lands, wars and battles, weaponry, clothing, possessions, alcoholic beverages and cuisine, matters associated with women, historical happenings, or maritime matters. He does not delight in discussing any matters such as these.

He does not attend, watch, or listen to singing, dancing, or music.

He only wishes to discuss the meaning of the *pāramitās* and only wishes to discuss dharmas related to the *pāramitās*, seeking thereby to cause those listening to gain increased benefit from this.

He abandons all disputation and always wishes to see the Buddha. If he hears of there now being a buddha in some other region, he wishes to take rebirth there. He is always reborn in a country central [to the presence of Dharma]. He never entertains doubts in himself whereby he wonders, "Am I or am I not an *avaivartika*?" He knows with complete certainty that he is an *avaivartika*.

He recognizes the various works of the *māras*, but does not accord with them. [His resolve is so solid that], even after he has taken rebirth, he does not then generate any aspiration to follow the paths of *śrāvaka*

disciples or *pratyekabuddhas*. Even if Māra, the Evil One, were to manifest before him in the body of a buddha, telling him, “You must attain arhatship. I shall now speak the Dharma for you so that you may immediately achieve arhatship right here,” even then, he would refuse to believe or accept this.

He does not spare even his own body or life in his efforts to preserve the Dharma and always practices vigor.

When explaining the Dharma, he is free of doubt or uncertainty and does so in a manner that is free of any deficiencies or errors.

It is factors such as these that constitute the characteristic signs of an *avaivartika*. One should realize that whoever is able to perfect these signs is an *avaivartika*. It might also happen that one encounters those who have not yet completely developed these signs. What sort of individual is this? This individual will, before long, ascend to the ground of the *avaivartika*. He is one who, after having cultivated and accumulated roots of goodness on later grounds and after having developed ever deeper roots of goodness, shall then acquire these characteristic signs of the *avaivartika*.