

LEADING FELLOW-BEINGS OUT OF CONFUSION

-Excerpts from lectures on the FIFTY SKANDHA DEMONS section of the SHURANGAMA SUTRA currently in progress at Dharma Realm Buddhist University, City of Ten Thousand Buddhas

HOW TO RECOGNIZE DEMONIC STATES AND DEVIANT SAMADHIS

*-excerpt from THE SHASTRA ON THE AWAKENING OF FAITH
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Suppose there are living beings whose good roots are scanty and who fall prey to the beguilement of demons, those of heterodox ways, ghosts and spirits. Perhaps these demons assume fierce or vile forms so as to terrify such persons, or appear in seductive and enticing shapes to bewitch them. Perhaps these demons manifest as celestial beings, or as Bodhisattvas or Buddhas, whose physical marks are splendid and adorned. Perhaps they proclaim dharanis, or explain the Paramitas, or expound on the numerous doors of liberation, saying how there are no friends or foes, and denying cause and effect. They claim that all dharmas are ultimately empty and still and that one's basic nature is just Nirvana. Perhaps these demons enable these persons to know the past, present, and future, as well as the thoughts of others, to the point of endowing them with unimpeded eloquence and an impressive command of words. This causes those persons to become greedily attached to fame and offerings. They may then lapse repeatedly into anger, or sporadically get carried away on ecstatic fantasies, or they wallow in much sorrow and depression, or they expound rampant love-making. Or they constantly delight in a state of oblivion of sleep. In other cases they may go on for long periods of time without sleep. Or they may become afflicted with much illness. Or their natures may become lax and indulgent. Conversely, they may get roused up in a fit of vigor and immediately following upon that lapse into lethargy. Or they may become fraught with doubts and delusions and not be able to bring forth faith to accept the teachings. They may renounce their original sublime practices to pursue mixed occupations. They may become obsessed with worldly affairs, drowning in emotion and running after its pleasures. Or, those demons may cause such persons to attain the various samadhis of heterodox ways, so that for one day, two days, up to seven days, they can abide in their samadhis. Meanwhile they will obtain delicious food and drink and their bodies will be comfortable and impervious to hunger or thirst. The demons will exhort them to engage in sensuality and lust. They will cause their intake of food and drink to vacillate from

one extreme to the other, so they spordically consume vast or minute amounts. Or, the demons may cause them to look either exquisite or ugly.

When those persons become perturbed by such heterodox views and afflictions, they lose their good roots from the past. Therefore, it is important that you make a careful scrutiny of this and formulate the following contemplation: "This is brought about due to my own insufficient good roots and my heavy karmic obstacles. Therefore, I've fallen prey to the confusion by demons and ghosts." If the individual can understand this and remind himself that all is made from the mind alone, and deeply reflect upon whatever state he encounters in this way, then in the briefest interval of time those phenomena will disappear, and he can leave the myriad marks far behind and enter true samadhi.

When one is apart from the mind's characteristics, even the true mark comes to an end. Thus, as one arises from samadhi, all the various views and afflictions will not appear anymore. Due to the power of samadhi, those seeds (of deviant samadhis) will be destroyed. Moreover, sublime and wholesome states will arrive in succession as one leaves all obstacles, afflictions, and confusion behind. One will give rise to great and proper vigor, forever without pause. However if one doesn't cultivate this true samadhi, one can't possibly aspire to enter the seed-nature of the Thus Come One. This is because all other samadhis fall into the realm of that which has marks, conjoining with those of outside ways. They disrupt one's opportunity to encounter the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Therefore, the Bodhisattva should diligently cultivate this true samadhi and bring it to ultimate perfection.