

6 Paramitas: Dhyana Paramita/Samadhi II

My eyes glazed over after reading the first summary paragraph of the Wikipedia entry on samadhi ... so Zen's report was very helpful :) It's partly because such descriptions mostly don't make sense as I'm a beginner.

So I'll offer a life story of Asanga instead of a report on samadhi ... :

Unable to fathom meaning of Perfection of Wisdom Sutras, Asanga sought and received teachings that began a journey to find and to learn from the coming Buddha, Maitreya. For this, he spent twelve years of solitary meditation in a mountain cave. After three years, he felt his spiritual quest had failed and decided to leave the confinement. As he was leaving, he noticed how some rocks outside the cave had been worn smooth by the wings of birds that made their nests on the mountain. At this, he turned back and sat down again to meditate alone for another three years in the cave. However, he still hadn't gained a vision of Maitreya and received teachings. Again he decided to quit the cave. As he left, he saw a man, making needles by rubbing iron with cotton, who showed Asanga needles that he had made in this fashion. Asanga took this as another sign that he should persevere with this practice. He returned and spent another three years in seclusion but still he couldn't reach his goal. He left the cave finally.

As he was walking close to a town, he saw a dog, suffering terribly from worms that are eating into its body. Although he felt great compassion for the dog, he also realised that worms would die if they were to be removed from the dog. So he decided to remove some of his own flesh from which the worms could feed instead of the dog. When he was about to cut himself, to his surprise, the dog transformed into Maitreya. Asanga complained why it took such a long time for Maitreya to appear before him [LOL]. Maitreya explained that he had always been with Asanga in the cave but due to his mental obstructions, Asanga couldn't perceive Maitreya. His overwhelming compassion for the dog and the twelve years of diligent practice had finally helped Asanga to a point where Maitreya was visible to him.