

# ***Not Dwelling on the Nonconditioned***

From the Vimalakirtinirdesa Sutra  
Translated from the Chinese by Thich Nhat Hanh

What does it mean, "not dwelling on the Nonconditioned"? The bodhisattva contemplates the reality of Emptiness but does not take Emptiness as an object of attainment. The bodhisattva practices the reality of Nonappearance and Nonpursuit but does not take Nonappearance or Nonpursuit as an object of attainment. He contemplates the reality of Noncreation but does not take Noncreation as an object of attainment.

He meditates on the truth of Impermanence but does not abandon his work to serve and save. He meditates on Suffering but does not reject the world of births and deaths. He meditates on Extinction but does not embrace Extinction. He meditates on Detachment but goes on realizing good things in the world. He meditates on the homeless nature of dharmas but continues to orientate himself toward the Good. He meditates on the reality of Neither-creation-nor-destruction but still undertakes the responsibility in the world of creations and destructions. He meditates on the reality of the 137 Ultimate but still dwells in the world of interdependent origins. He meditates on Nonaction but continues always his acts of service and education. He meditates on Emptiness but does not abandon Great Compassion. He meditates on the Position of the True Dharma but does not follow a rigid path. He meditates on the Unreal, Impermanent, Unoriginated, Nonpossessed, and Markless nature of dharmas but does not abandon his career concerning merits, concentration, and wisdom.

Practicing in that way, the bodhisattva is described as "not dwelling on the Nonconditioned." He has wisdom but does not end his action in the realm of the conditioned; he has compassion but does not dwell in the Nonconditioned; he wants to realize his great Vow but he will not abandon the conditioned world.