

## Figures of Six Existences and Eight *Dhyānas*

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The Vajradhātu- and Mahākaruṇāgarbha-maṇḍalas form the core in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism to translate profound truth, levels of meditation, and the emergence of the world from the Great Source. As a psychophysical representation of the universe, they are used as a projection of interior life in meditation, a movement from multiple facticity of existence at the lowermost level to a focused concentration at the highest point. This also leads to realization of the outflowing enlightenment which penetrates every sphere of existence. The Mahākaruṇāgarbha-maṇḍala unfolds from its unitary center to the diversity of its extremes in twelve sections. An important ritual and symbolic form, the mystical circle is often drawn or painted on walls or on scrolls to be hung inside Shingon temples. The *vajrakula* of the Mahākaruṇāgarbha-maṇḍala represents the three realms: Kāmadhātu, Rūpadhātu, and Arūpadhātu. Beyond them is the world of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the eleven enclosures. Only by crossing these Six Levels of Existence and Eight *Dhyānabhūmis* is one able to concentrate on Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and finally Vairocana sitting at the center of the maṇḍala.

The central figure of Mahāvairocana is the great source and *dharmakāya* as it exists in the totality of phenomenal existence. He is the source of manifestation of the infinite world and yet is inherent in each and every existence. Being one with him is the goal of *samādhi*. Mahāvairocana is the body of principle, the supreme power in Esoteric Buddhism, who preaches the dharma in innumerable worlds in ten directions. He is the *dharmakāya* inseparable from *rūpa* or form, and he reveals himself in formal modes in countless forms. Realization of Mahāvairocana's transcendental forms by an adherent requires the highest level of meditation. To reach that level one has to cross the Three Realms visualized in the Mahākaruṇāgarbha-maṇḍala: the Realm of Desire, the Realms of Rūpa and Arūpa, Kāmadhātu, Rūpadhātu, and Arūpadhātu. They represent the upward layers of the universe, the process of creation, the world in between the lowest and the highest levels of the universe. The figures of the Six Levels of Existence and Eight *Dhyānas* are depicted in the *vajrakula* of the Mahākaruṇāgarbha-maṇḍala:

1-4	<i>Naraka, Preta, Tiryak, and Asura</i>	Kāmadhātu	<i>Durgati</i>	south
5.	<i>Manuṣya</i>	Kāmadhātu	<i>Sugati</i>	west
6.	<i>Deva</i>	Kāmadhātu	<i>Sugati</i>	divided
1-4	<i>Dhyānas</i>	Rūpadhātu		north

The Ttraidhātuka theory encompasses all the stages of existence and meditation. The Six Existences in the universe and Eight *Dhyānabhūmis* are a way to enlightenment, moving from the lowermost to the highest point through focusing on the spiritual symbol of strength at the center of the maṇḍala. The Three Realms lie below the world of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who are above the Devas residing in the Devaloka. Gradually, through meditation on crossing these Three Realms, an adherent can enter their world.

**KĀMADHĀTU:** The Realm of Desire includes the six migratory states of existence generally accepted in Buddhism. They are a part of ten ascending stages of religious practice according to the Tendai sect. These stages are all mutually inclusive; each stage contains the other nine. The six migratory states can be further divided into two stages: *durgati* and *sugati*. *Naraka*, *Preta*, *Tiryak*, and *Asura* fall in the *durgati* category, while the remaining two, *Manuṣya* and *Deva*, are placed in the *sugati* category. The Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha (Jp. Jizo Bosatsu) saves all the sentient beings of the six existences (Kāmadhātu), who live in the period between the death of the historical Buddha and the arrival of Maitreya (Matsunaga 1978, vol. 1, p. 187). *Naraka* is the lowermost in the Realm of Desire; desire gives birth to sufferings and sufferings are given form in hells. The gods who dwell in Kāmadhātu are known as *kāmāvacara*. They can be divided into two types: earth dwelling and sky dwelling.

**FIGURES OF THE SIX LEVELS OF EXISTENCE:** Man's existence is bound by earth and sky. The sky is the limit; beyond that is the world of Buddhas, which can be reached after crossing all the levels leading up to the twenty-eight heavens. The Six Levels of Existence are philosophically designed to represent the psychological states of the human mind. Man ascends because of good deeds and descends to the lower levels as a result of his evil deeds. The Six Levels of Existence are known as *ṣaḍgati*. *Gati* signifies motion in general and is a mode of existence (Kathopanisad iii.11). It represents the course of the soul through numerous forms of life (Williams 1899, p. 347). In Japanese, *ṣaḍgati* is known as *rokudō*, the Six Realms in which the souls of living beings transmigrate from one to another (JEBD 1965). Rebirth is possible within the Six Levels of Existence. A brief summary of five or six *gati* is given in *Abhidharmakośasaṅgraha* (iii, p. 11), *Divyāvadāna* (p. 300, lines 10-11; p. 301, line 20), and *Dharmasamuccaya* (p. 57). In the maṇḍala, *ṣaḍgati* refers to the various levels of human psychology which a person must transcend in order to be fit for meditation.

*Gati* is also the wheel of existence, *bhava-cakra*. *Bhava-cakra* is painted as a gigantic wheel inside yoga rooms: *madhye yogagrahasya atha likhet sansāramaṇḍalam* (Poussin 1894, p. 842). It is also painted on the entrance of temples

to instruct those who come to worship. *Bhava-cakra* symbolizes the endless cycle of birth and death and the beings of the world in the clutches of *karma*. It is a summation of Buddhist teachings in a pictorial form, a picture path to spiritual liberation. Three spiritual poisons and twelve *sānsāric* existences lead to the Six States of Rebirth (Chandra 2000, vol. 2, p. 551).

According to Nichiren, all the worlds from Hell to the realm of Buddhas exist in this five foot body. The condition of despair in which one is completely overwhelmed by suffering is Hell; the state of being dominated by deluded desires that can never be satiated is represented by eternally hungry ghosts in the world of *Pretas*; the instinctual state of fearing the strong and bullying the weak is animality represented by the world of *Tiryak*; the state of anger, characterized by an unrestrained competitive urge to surpass and dominate others, often on pretence of being good and wise, is represented by the world of *Asuras*. These four states of existence are said to be evil paths or *durgati* because they are characterized by destructive negativity. The world of Humans has humanity, a tranquil state marked by the ability to reason and make calm judgments. The world of *Devas* is free from sufferings. It is the state of joy experienced when desires are fulfilled (Chandra 2000, vol. 2, p. 555). In sum, the first four are the realms of loss and woe.

1. ***Naraka (Jp. Jigoku)***: The lowermost level of existence is portrayed as *Naraka*, the realm of hells. Hells are infernal regions where different kinds of tortures are inflicted upon sinners. Buddha accepted the existence of heavens and hells for didactic purposes, but it was the later form of Mahāyāna Buddhism that propagated the idea because it was more laity oriented. The Buddhist concept of hell represents a psychological state of mind at the philosophical level in the present life. *Naraka* or *niraya* is called *jigoku* in Japanese, one of the six worlds in which unenlightened people transmigrate. *Niraya* means devoid of happiness. According to the *Abhidharmakośasaṅgraha*, the realm of hells is situated under Jambudvīpa (Jp. Embudai); its descriptions vary according to scriptures (JEBD 1965. p. 135; Matsunaga 1969).

The realm of tortures is visualized through *Piśācas* eating the limbs of a human body and drinking blood in the *vajrakula* of the Mahakarūṅāgarbha-maṇḍala below the figure of Chitragupta in south. The figures drawn there are demons of dark places and privies. Śubhakarasiṃha says that *Piśāca* means supreme suffering and that they belong to the rank of *Gaki*-the hungry ghosts. Sometimes they are named as attendants of Chitragupta (Snodgrass 1988, p. 484). *Piśācas* look horrible with ugly postures, wildly grown hair, and ill-shaped bodies. Hells are portrayed as future abodes of suffering in order to induce the practice of virtue. Inspired by Buddhist sūtras, monks

painted a variety of hell scenes out of the compassion aroused in their hearts to save the wicked from the path of evils and to lead them to salvation. Scrolls of hells, hungry ghosts, and diseases served as warnings. In such works, people were confronted with different phases of hells, in which the damned are subjected to various ordeals. Such scenes are always gruesome and frightening, and are often accompanied by written commentaries. Examples are the scrolls from the Hara collection, now owned by the Commission for the Protection of Cultural Properties in Tokyo. Here one can see the guilty being pounded and crushed in a huge mortar. Scenes of hells are often dominated by the gloomy atmosphere of the underworld symbolized by a grey background (Akiyama 1961, p. 87). The *Gaki zoshi* is a picture scroll from the late twelfth century that depicts hungry ghosts in a Buddhist hell. The souls of condemned men and women go to hell, looking horrible and monstrous, they wander around eternally hungry and thirsty, remaining invisible to humans but visible to themselves. They are often believed to go to graveyards to find food for themselves (Lee 1978, p. 311).

2. ***Preta (Jp. Gaki)***: *Pretas* dwell in the realm of ghosts or evil spirits. A *Preta* is the body given to a person after death. They live in this form of existence so long as obsequial rites are not performed according to the Purāṇic tradition. *Pretas* are eternally hungry; not even a single grain of rice or drop of water enters their mouths or throats. Some of these suffering ghosts have huge bodies, but mouths as small as eye of a needle. Others are very thin as there is no food to eat. They are so scrawny that not even a bit of flesh can be scraped off or a drop of blood can be squeezed. They consist of only bones and the layer of skin covering the bones; the skin of their stomachs is wrinkled and touches their backbones. Their eyes are deep and hollow and look as if they have been taken out. Their hair is nasty, and they do not have even a tiny piece of cloth to cover their bodies (Reynolds 1982, pp. 96-97). They are devoid of any possessions, constantly seeking food to fill their distended bellies. The needle thin throats and wild hair add to their grim appearance. Hungry ghosts prefer to live in filthy places, eat impure food, and inflict suffering, especially on children. Two *Pretas* kneel before Chitragupta in the south in the *vajrakula* of the Mahākaruṇāgarbha-maṇḍala as if confessing or ready to listen to the judgment given by the king who attends Yama. Chitragupta keeps a record of the deeds of each person and passes judgment (Snodgrass 1988, p. 484). Their world is called *Gakidō* in Japanese.

Apart from the three types of *Pretas* are powerful ghosts known as *Yakṣas*, *Piśācas*, and *Rākṣasas*. *Piśācas* are placed in the same category as *Pretas*. They are depicted as malevolent and hungry, eating human arms and drinking blood with a corpse lying in front of them. *Piśācī* as a female imp appears among the retinue of Kālī. *Ḍakinīs* are their female counterparts, but are not represented in horrible shapes

and appearances. Their hair is tied up, and they sit on lotus seats spread for them. Three *Dākinīs* are sitting below the *Piśācas* who are eating human arms. The two sitting on the sides are holding bowls full of blood in their right hands, and the one on the right side is holding a cleaver shaped sword in her left hand. Śubhakarasiṃha refers to them as attendants in the retinue of Mahākāla, also identified as demons who devour the defilements found in the hearts of human beings. The ruler of the world of *Pretas* is Yamarāja, who holds a mirror reflecting the deeds of men. Chitrugupta records their deeds and the assistants of Yamarāja punish people for their sins and transgressions.

3. ***Tiryak* (Jp. *Chikusho*):** The realm of birds, beasts, fishes, dragons, serpents, shells, worms, and insects is the world of *Tiryak*. Animals do not have a sense of dharma; they do not till the land for living. *Tiryak gati* is the state of an animal in transmigration (*Mahābhārata* iii.1166). They live in a world of uncontrolled instincts. The life of animals is one *kalpa* in length at the most, and the animals that live the longest time live for one *antarkalpa*. These are the Great *Nāgas*, *Nāga* kings, Nanda, Upananda Aśvatara, etc. The Eight Great *Nāga* Kings sustain the Earth (Poussin 1990, vol. 2, p. 473).

In the Mahākaruṇāgarbha-maṇḍala, the three *Nāga* kings represented in the *vajrakula* are Nanda, Upananda, and Varuṇa. Nanda-nāgarāja and Upananda-nāgarāja sit in the west and south gates respectively. They are among the Eight *Nāga* Kings (Jp. *Hachidairyū*) who protect the Dharma. They sit opposite each other. *Nanda* means joy and *Upa* means near or lesser. They are the rulers of the *Nāgas* who dwell in the waters of the Great Ocean surrounding Mount Sumeru. They poured water over the infant Śākyamuni at the time of his nativity. Nanda represents the power of wisdom and Upananda the power of *samādhi* and of the quickening mind. They wear crowns of seven hooded snakes and hold swords in their right hands (Snodgrass 1997, p. 479).

Varuṇa-nāgarāja, as ruler of the hydrosphere, sits in the west with Varuṇānī and Varuṇa-paricarā. He is shown with a frowning face, wears a seven hooded snake crown, and holds a lance in his right hand and a snake noose in the left (Chandra 1972, pl. 326-28).

4. ***Asura* (Jp. *Ashura*):** *Asura* is enumerated as the fourth level of existence and is visualized as chief of the evil spirits (*Rgveda* ii.30.4, vii.99.5), or demons or ghosts, who are generally said to be enemies of the gods (*Rgveda* viii.96.9). In the Purāṇic tradition they are said to be the children of Diti by Kaśyapa; as such, they are demons of the first order perpetually hostile to the gods and must not be confused with Rākṣasa (Williams 1899, p. 121). They are said to have been expelled from heaven because of their pride. They fight the gods for the fruits of the wish-giving tree, whose roots are in

their realm but the fruit is in the world of gods (Chandra 2000, vol. 2, p. 551). In Buddhism, *Asuras* are belligerent beings that make war on Indra. When the *Asuras* gain supremacy in the endless battle, evil and chaos prevail in the world (Snodgrass 1997, p. 100).

In the *vajrakula* of the Mahākaraṇḍgarbha-maṇḍala, *Asura* and *Maṇi-asura* sit below the Siddha-vidyādhara wearing armor and shoes like celestial guardians. The figure identified as *Maṇi-asura* by Snodgrass is holding a sword in his right hand with the left placed on his thigh, and the one identified as *Asura* is holding a club with a jewel on the top. I would like to interchange these figures on the bases of their attributes. Two pairs of *Asura* kings sit in the south and west gates of the *vajrakula* (Chandra 1972, pl. 271-72, 323). Identical to the *Nāga* kings, they sit facing each other holding swords in their right hands with circles drawn as haloes.

5. **Manuṣya (Jp. Ningen):** Tathāgata Vairocana took the form of *Manuṣya* to preach in the world of humans to alleviate their sufferings. The Realm of Humans (*Manuṣya*) shows birth, disease, old age, and death. It is located in the four great continents (*caturdvīpako-lokadhātu*; Jp. *shidaishu*) that surround Mount Sumeru in the four directions. 1) Uttarakuru is the excellent land to the north of Sumeru (Jp. Hokkuruji), which is said to be square in shape and inhabited by square-faced people. 2) Aparagodānīya/ Aparagodāna) is to the west of Sumeru, and is known as the “Western cattle giving land” because cattle are the medium of exchange. The continent is circular in shape and its inhabitants are also circular-faced. 3) To the south of Sumeru is Jambūdvīpa (Jp. Enbudai) named after the Jambū tree. It is triangular in shape and its inhabitants have triangular faces. 4. Pūrvavideha is believed to be located to the east of Sumeru (Jp. Tohotsubadai) . It has a semicircular shape and its residents have the same shape of faces (Snodgrass 1997, p. 100).

In the *vajrakula* of the Mahākaraṇḍgarbha-maṇḍala, a *Manuṣya* sits in the west after *Manuṣyā*, one of the nine mother goddesses. He represents the world of humans, which is one level higher than the *Asuras*. Man has the power to think and thus exists above the realms of *Naraka*, *Preta*, *Tiryak*, and *Asura*, and below the *Devaloka*. Here he is depicted sitting cross-legged with his right hand open flat almost raised to the chest level; the other hand rests on his lap. The halo behind the figure indicates his divine personality (Chandra 1972, pl. 309). The Mother Goddess *Manuṣyā* can be taken as one of the nine Mother Goddesses or as the female counterpart of Man.

6. **Deva (Jp. Tennin):** *Devas* fall into three large divisions: *Kāmāvacara* living in the Kāmadhatu, *Rūpāvacara* living in the Rūpadhatu, and *Arūpāvacara* living in the Arūpādhatu. The *Kāmāvacara* gods are: Caturmahārājika, Rājakāyika, Trayastrinśa, Yama, Tuṣita, Nirmāṇarati, and Paranirmitavaśavartin. They are divided into two

categories, *Bhauma* and *Antarikṣavāsin*. (Edgerton 1977, p. 270). *Devas* born from lotus blossoms enjoy heavenly delight. They, too, are subject to the law of *anityatā*, i.e. birth, life, death, and rebirth. They may live for millions or billions of years in heaven, but when their merits are exhausted they have to return to earth. Accumulated merits lead to birth in a higher realm and demerits in a lower realm.

According to the *Dharmasaṅgraha* (p. 127), the six categories of gods residing in the Realm of Desire are: *sat kāmāvacarāḥ devāḥ/ tadyathā- caturmahārājikāstrayastrinśas-tuṣṭita yāmāḥ nirmāṇaratayaḥ paranirmitavaśavartināśceti*. They are caturmaharajikāḥ, Trayastrinśāḥ, Tuṣṭitāḥ, Yāmāḥ, Nirmāṇaratayaḥ, and Paranirmitavaśavartināḥ. There are eighteen kinds of gods residing in the Realm of Form: *aṣṭadaśarūpāvacarāḥ devāḥ/ tadyathā- brahmakāyikāḥ, brahmapurohitāḥ, brahmapārśadyaḥ, mahābrāhmaṇaḥ, parittābhah, apramāṇābhah, ābhāsvaraḥ, parittaśubhaḥ, śubhakraṭsanāḥ, anabhraḥkaḥ, puṇyaprasavaḥ, br̥hatphala, asañjñisattva, abṛha, atapa, sudṛśāḥ, sudarśana, and akaniṣṭhaśceti*. (*Dharmasaṅgraha*, p. 128). Four kinds of gods reside in the Realm of Formless: *catvāro rūpāvacarāḥ devāḥ: ākāśanantyāyatanopagāḥ,*

*vijñānānantyāyatanopagāḥ, akiñcanyāyatanopagāḥ, and  
naivasañjñāsañjñāyatanopagāḥ* (*Dharmasaṅgraha*, p. 129).

**Trayastrinśā:** Trayastrinśā is the abode of thirty-three gods (Jp. *sanjusanten*) located on the summit of Mount Sumeru; the palace of Indra, the leader of the thirty-three gods, is located at the center. The way of *devas* culminates in union with Brahmā. Indra preaches the *Dharma* in the Trayastrinśā heaven. The gods dwelling in Kāmāvacara-the Realm of Desire-are a group of six *ṣaṭkāmāvacarāḥ devāḥ dharmāḥ*. In iconography they are conceived of as dwelling upon the top of Mount Sumeru in eight castles facing the four directions, and one castle in the center containing their leader (Matsunaga 1969, p. 52). Indra, the lord of Trayastrinśā Heaven (Jp. Tori-ten) sits cross-legged in full majesty in the north in the *vajrakula* to the west of the northern gate on a hill, holding a *vajra* in his right hand. He is of golden color, wears a jewel crown with ribbons flowing down to the elbow level, has a third eye drawn on his forehead and a double halo encircling his head. An attendant figure is kneeling in front below his seat and offering flowers.

**Caturmahārājika, the Realm of the Four Divine Guardian Kings:** The group of four guardians or celestial kings, unknown in the Vedic literature but believed to have played an important role in many events in the life of Śākyamuni, is collectively known in Japan as *shitenno*. They are worshipped as guardians because of the pledge they took in the presence of the Buddha to protect the nation from all sorts of calamities, sorrows, and pestilence. In their heaven, fifty years of human life is but a single day,

and the life span of these *devas* consists of five hundred celestial years composed of such days (Matsunaga 1969, p.51). In the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa-sūtra* they are called great kings: *Viśravaṇo mahārājo Dhṛtarāṣṭro mahārājo Virūḍhako mahārājo Virūpākṣa mahārāja* .....(*Suvarṇaprabhāsa-sūtra*, p. 36)

Sanskrit	Direction	Japanese	Commander of
Dhṛtarāṣṭra	east	Jikokuten	Gandharvas and Piśācas
Virūḍhaka	south	Zochoten	Kumbhāṇḍas and Pretas
Virūpākṣa	west	Komokuten	Nāgas
Vaiśravaṇa	north	Tamonten, Bishamonten	Yakṣas

Images of these Four Divine Guardian Kings, often combined with Brahmā and Indra as maintainers of the Buddhist law and protectors of the state, complete with symbolic features, colors, etc., are associated with the four cardinal points of the compass and thus are placed in the corresponding four directions inside Buddhist halls of worship. As inhabitants of the lowest *Devaloka*, serving as guardians of the four quarters they are accompanied by large retinues on their travels. Protection of the Buddha was undertaken by this group of divine beings from the moment of his conception; moreover in the *Ātānāṭīyasutta*, they appear as protectors of Buddha's followers as well. The record of happiness in the assemblies of *Devas* is their responsibility, while their counselors record righteousness and virtues of men. Their world is situated halfway up the mountain, or they preside over one of the slopes of Mount Sumeru, assisted by twenty-eight or thirty-two generals presiding over the sun, the moon, the stars, and the Eight Types of Beings (Jp. *Hachibushu*): *gandharva, piśāca, kumbhāṇḍa, preta, nāga, yakṣa, rākṣasa, and mahābhūta*).

In the *Mahākaruṇāgarbha-maṇḍala*, Dhṛtarāṣṭra sits in the east wearing armor and shoes and holding a sword in his left hand as protector or governor of the country. His body is red and has a wrathful appearance. Virūḍhaka is seated above the south gate attended by a *Preta*-like figure. He has a sword in his right hand and wears a helmet, armor, and shoes. He is of ruddy skin color. Virūpākṣa, like the preceding guardians, sits to the north of the west gate in the *vajrakula* holding a trident and wearing armor (Chandra 1972, pl. 325). Vaiśravaṇa is the protector of the north, so he is placed in the *vajrakula* above the north gate holding a stūpa placed on his left palm and a jeweled scepter in his right hand (Chandra 1972, pl. 362).

### **Twelve Celestial Beings of Space (Jp. Juniten)**

1. Śakra (Taishakuten) E
2. Agni (Katen) SE
3. Yama (Emmatenno) S



4. Nairṛiti (Rasetsuten/Nirritei-o) SW
5. Varuṇa (Suiten) W
6. Vāyu (Futen) NW
7. Kubera (Kubira) W
8. Īśāna (Ishanaten) NE
9. Brahmā (Bonten) E
10. Pṛthivi (Jiten) E
11. Sūrya (Nitten) E
12. Candra (Gaten)

**Rṣis (Sages):** Sages or *Rṣis* are authors or singers of Vedic hymns for the invocation of divine beings. They constitute a peculiar class distinct from gods, humans, and *asuras*. The *Vedas* are believed to be an outcome of their inspiration, introspection, and spiritual vision. The word “*Rṣi*” is derived from “*ṛ*” meaning sound. In Vedic times, *Rṣis* communicated the sacred lore through their mouths. The voice of *Ārṣa Bhārata* is said to be the voice of *Rṣis*. They are regarded by later generations as saints and inspired personages, occupying the same position in Indian history as heroes and patriarchs of other countries. According to general belief, the number of *Rṣis* is forty eight thousand. Several types of enumerations are given in the *Purāṇas*, *Brāhmaṇas*, *sūtras*, and *epics*. The Vedic tradition accepts their number to be seven, *saptarṣayaḥ*. According to the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (xiv.5.2.6) these seven sages are: Gautama, Bhāradvāja, Viśvāmitra, Jāmadagni, Vaśiṣṭha, Kāśyapa, and Atri. The names given in the *Mahābhārata* (xii) are different, except those of Atri and Vaśiṣṭha: Mārīci, Angiras, Pulaha, Kratu, Pulastya, Atri, and Vaśiṣṭha. The large number of *Rṣis* are classified into three categories: *Devarṣis*, *Brahmarṣis*, and *Rājarṣis*. According to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Vaśiṣṭha was a *Brahmarṣi*, Viśvāmitra was a *Rājarṣi*, and Kāśyapa was a *Devarṣi*.

According to the Japanese Buddhist pantheon, there are five hermit ascetics who attend Agni: Vaśiṣṭha, Gautama, Angiras, Atri, and Bhṛgu. Angiras is replaced by Garga in the *Taizo-in-zu* (TZ 241) illustrations of mudras in the Garbha-maṇḍala preserved at Ninnaji, Kyoto. In the *vajrakula* of the Mahākaruṇāgarbha-maṇḍala, Agni sits with Agnāyī in the southeast corner. Only three *Rṣis* are shown with their consorts/ attendants together with Agni. Vaśiṣṭha sits to the right side of Agni, while the other two Angiras and Gautama sit just below him.

1. Vaśiṣṭha (Jp. Basuten)
2. Angiras (Jp. Akeira-sen)
3. Gautama (Jp. Kudon-sen)
4. Bhṛgu
5. Atri

## 6. Garga

### **Deities of Time**

**Twelve Zodiacal Signs:** The Twelve Zodiacal signs were painted on a large number of scrolls over the past centuries after their adoption into the Mahākaraṇāgarbha-maṇḍala. They are divided into four groups of three, and placed in the four directions of its *vajrakula*.

1. Meṣa (Jp. Yoku) E
2. Vṛṣa (Jp. Gyuku) E
3. Mithuna (Jp. Nannyoku) E
4. Makara (Jp. Makatsuku) S
5. Kumbha (Jp. Gembyoku) S
6. Mīna (Jp. Sogyoku) S
7. Tulā (Jp. Hyoku) W
8. Dhanu (Jp. Kyuku) W
9. Vṛścika (Jp. Kachugu) W
10. Karkaṭaka (Jp. Kaiku) N
11. Kanyā (Jp. Shojyoku) N
12. Simha (Jp. Shishiku) N

**Constellations:** The twenty constellations are divided into four groups of seven corresponding to the four directions:

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Kṛttikā (Jp. Koshuku) E           | 15. Śravaṇā (Jp. Nyoshuku) W           |
| 2. Rohiṇī (Jp. Hisshuku) E           | 16. Uttarāṣāḍhā (Jp. Toshku) W         |
| 3. Mṛgaśiras (Jp. Shishuku) E        | 17. Abhijit (Jp. Gyushuku) W           |
| 4. Ārdrā (Jp. Sanshuku) E            | 18. Pūrvāṣāḍhā (Jp. Kishuku) W         |
| 5. Punarvasu (Jp. Seishuku) E        | 19. Mūlā (Jp. Bishuku) W               |
| 6. Puṣyā (Jp. Kishuku) E             | 20. Jyeṣṭhā (Jp. Shinshuku) W          |
| 7. Āśleṣā (Jp. Ryushuku) E           | 21. Anurādhā (Jp. Boshuku) W           |
| 8. Maghā (Jp. Seishuku) S            | 22. Dhaniṣṭhā (Jp. Kyoshuku) N         |
| 9. Hastā (Jp. Shinshuku) S           | 23. Śatabhiṣā (Jp. Kishuku) N          |
| 10. Svātī (Jp. Koshuku) S            | 24. Pūrvabhadrapadā (Jp. Shishuku) N   |
| 11. Pūrvaphalgunī (Jp. Choshuku) S   | 25. Uttarabhadrapadā (Jp. Hakishuku) N |
| 12. Uttaraphalgunī (Jp. Yokushuku) S | 26. Revatī (Jp. Keishuku) N            |
| 13. Citrā (Jp. Kakushuku) S          | 27. Aśvinī (Jp. Roshuku) N             |
| 14. Visākhā (Jp. Teishuku) S         | 28. Bharāṇī (Jp. Ishuku) N             |

**Nine Planets:** The nine planets are represented in the following manner:

1. Ketu, Nirghataketu/Ulkapata (Jp. Suisei, Ryusei) E

2. Sūrya (Jp. Nitten) E
3. Rāhu (Jp. Ragosei) S
4. Aṅgāraka (Jp. Kayo) S
5. Bṛhaspati (Jp. Mokuyo) S
6. Budha (Jp. Suiyo) W
7. Śanaīścara (Jp. Doyo) W
8. Soma (Jp. Getsuyo) W
9. Śukra (Jp. Kin'yo) N

### **Trimūrti**

Brahmā is the creator, Viṣṇu is the sustainer, and Śiva is the destroyer of the world. Viṣṇu in his form of Nārāyaṇa rides on a *garuḍa* and holds a wheel in his right hand; Śiva as Nandīśvara rides a bull and is accompanied by his consort Umā. Gaṇapati, the general of the Divine army popularly known as Vināyaka, is the son of Śiva. Kārttikeya is his brother and is depicted in the west in the *vajrakula* of the Mahākaruṇāgarba-maṇḍala, riding a peacock. Another important divinity is Mahākāla, sitting below the northeast corner. Mahākāla means “great time.” He represents the transformation body and wrathful aspect of Maheśvara. Mahākāla has three aspects: the god of war, wealth, and dark realms

**Goddesses:** Saptamāṭṛ (Jp. *Shichimoten*) is the collective name of the seven mother goddesses worshipped all over India since ancient times. They are believed to be divine mothers or the personified energies or *śakti* of principal deities. They are said to be born from the bodies of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Kārttikeya, Yama, etc. According to a Purāṇic story, when Śiva and Viṣṇu created seven mother goddesses upon failing to kill Andhakāsura, an *asura* arose from each drop of Andhakāsura’s blood that fell on ground. These mothers joined with Yogeśvarī, the creation of Śiva, and drank the blood of the *asura* without allowing it to fall on the ground, making it possible for Śiva to kill the demon. There are several stories in the *Purāṇas* related to the creation of the *saptamāṭṛ* (Mani 1979, p. 691); variations in enumeration and iconographic details are also found in various texts, but their usual order is: Brāhmī, Maheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Aindrī, and Cāmuṇḍā. In some texts their number is given as eight and sometimes they are known as “Navaśakti.”

*Saptamāṭṛ* are described in the thirteenth chapter of the *Rishukyo* as having paid homage to the Buddha’s feet and having offered the hook to the Seven Mother Goddesses in order to gather and bring sentient beings onto the path of Buddha. The true essence of their pledge enables the destruction of evils and attainment of enlightenment. Destruction refers to the elimination of unwholesome mind and

attainment refers to the practice of esoteric teachings, which quickly enables one to advance beyond mundane and acquire *siddhis*. The goddesses appearing in the *vajrakula* of the Mahākaruṇāgarbha-maṇḍala are:

1. Aindrī (Jp. Taishaku-nyo)
2. Brāhmī (Jp. Bonten-nyo)
3. Kaumārī (Jp. Kyumari)
4. Cāmuṇḍā (Jp. Shamonda)
5. Raudrī (Jp. Jizaitenno)
6. Vaiṣṇavī (Jp. Bichunyo)
7. Yamī (Jp. Yamanyo)
8. Manuṣyā (Jp. Manusha-nyo)
9. Kauberī

### **SKY DWELLING GODS**

**Yama:** In the heaven of Yama (Jp. Emmaten), the seasons are always pleasant and inhabitants enjoy occasional pleasures (Snodgrass 1988, p. 103). Mahāvairocana reveals himself in the form of Yama to preach in the world of hungry ghosts. In the Mahākaruṇāgarbha maṇḍala, Yama is sitting in the south in the *vajrakula* below the southern gate. He is regarded as the judge of the dead, and usually holds a mirror in which a human face is reflected. However, in the maṇḍala he has a scepter topped by a golden half moon supporting a man's head with a hair knot. Yama is sitting on his mount, a water buffalo, and is attended by Kālarātri, who is holding the same attribute and looking towards him. The leader of this heaven, Yama is frequently called Suyama, the name designating the heaven. It is the place where times are always good because in Chinese, “*su*” denotes goodness and “*yama*” was used for time. According to Chinese accounts, this heaven is always illuminated. There is no distinction between day and night; only the opening and closing of flowers regulate time. Two hundred years of human life is but one day to the Yama *deva*, and two thousand years composed of such days form their life span (Matsunaga 1969, p. 52).

**Tuṣita (Jp. Tosotsu):** This is the heaven of contentment, as the dwellers are contented with its pleasures. Bodhisattvas reside there before they are born as Buddhas. The heaven and its presiding deities are frequently termed San-tusita, referring to the gathering of enjoyment or pleasure. To the *deva* of this heaven, one day is equivalent to four hundred years of human life, and four thousand years composed of such days form their lifespan (Matsunaga 1969, p. 52).

In the Mahākaruṇāgarbha maṇḍala, a Tuṣita *deva* representing its inhabitants

sits above *Bṛhadābhāsvara* and below Paranirmita-vaśavartin in the north of the *vajrakula* (Snodgrass 1988, p. 523). He is holding a lotus in his right hand going above the shoulder and is attended by two figures sitting on the sides slightly behind him, holding the same attributes. The three have separate halos, and are often identified as the three gods of Tuṣita, but the smaller size of the two flanking figures indicate their lower rank.

**Nirmāṇarati (Jp. Keraku):** Nirmāṇarati is the heaven of joy in transformation, where the inhabitants enjoy pleasures that they create themselves magically (*sunirmita*). For example, mutual smiling produces impregnation and children are born on the knees by metamorphosis, at birth equal in development to a human child of twelve (Snodgrass 1988, p. 104). The bondage of these *devas* is in being tied by desire to these creations. To the divinities of this heaven, eight hundred years of mankind is but a single day and their lifespan consists of eight thousand such celestial years (Matsunaga 1969, p. 53). The god residing in the Nirmāṇarati Heaven is most probably Mālādhara (Jp. Jimanten). He is sometimes said to be the fifth heaven of the world of desire, and Nirmāṇarati, the heaven of joy in transformation (Snodgrass 1988, p. 525). In the *vajrakula*, Mālādhara sits in the east above Paranirmita-vaśavartin and below Siddhavidyādhara. He does not hold any garland as indicated by the name. There is a lotus in his left hand, and the ribbons from his jewel crown are hanging down. His facial expression is extremely calm and peaceful. The two attending figures sitting on both sides looking towards him are smaller in size and holding the same attribute, lotus flowers.

**Paranirmita-vaśavartin (Jp. Takejizaiten):** This is the heaven of free enjoyment of transformation by others, where the highest class of *Kāmāvacara* gods live controlling the enjoyment magically created by others. *Para* means other; *nirmita* is transformation; *vaśa* means freedom or autonomy; and *vartina* is dwelling or abiding. This means that the inhabitants enjoy various types of pleasures in this heaven that are created by others. They rank higher than the inhabitants of Nirmāṇarati, who create their own magical enjoyment. King Māra (Jp. Ma-ō), the tempter, lives in a separate locality in this heaven, and is accordingly called King Māra of the sixth heaven.

In the Mahākaruṇāgarbha-maṇḍala, Paranirmita-vaśavartin sits above Tuṣita in the north *vajrakula*. He represents the gods who dwell in the sixth heaven of the realm of desire. The central figure is attended by two seated flanking deities, who appear younger in age and smaller in size. Paranirmita-vaśavartin is holding a bow in his right hand and an arrow in the right; both the attending figures have lotus flowers in their hands (Chandra 1972, pl. 383-85).

**Figures of the Eight *Dhyānas*:** *Samādhi* is necessary for the knowledge required for salvation, and concentration is the application of pure minds on a single object with their concomitants, the five *skandhas*. Among the first four *dhyānas*, the first three are three fold and the fourth is eight fold. They are *adhicittaśikṣa*, the higher mental learning or the primary element in the purification of mind, *cittapariśuddhipradhāna*. Only the absorptions that are filled with excellence are called *dhyāna* (Poussin 1990, vol. 4, pp. 1215-17). Absorption is the *samāpatti* form of *dhyāna*, the other is *upapatti* or existence.

An ascetic is fit to enter the basic *dhyāna* after abandoning all the defilements and obtaining detachment from *Kāmadhātu*, and then obtaining the Four Immeasurables of the spheres of the basic *dhyāna*. Defilements are dispelled and made distant and the ascetic becomes invincible, even when he encounters powerful causes of defilement (Poussin 1990, vol. 4, p. 1268). Meditation (*dhyāna*) is said to be of three types: *dhyānam trividha/ tadyathā- sadoṣāpakarṣa*, *dhyānam sukhavaiḥārika*, and *dhyānam aśeṣavaibhūṣita* (drawing out sins, by doing what is to be done, and by residing comfortably) (*Dharmasangraha*, p. 59).

Beings are free from all desires and passions in the realm of form situated above *Paranirmita-vaśavartin*, the highest point of the realm of desire. The inhabitants have a pure and ethereal form. The realm of form is constituted of four *dhyānabhūmis*, as they are attained as a result of perfecting the four corresponding states of mind. *Dhyāna*-meditation, concentration, or mystic trance-has four levels in the Realm of Form, *rūpadhātu*. Various classes of *rūpāvacara* gods occupy these four *dhyānabhūmis*. The gods who dwell there are divided into four groups, corresponding to the four levels of meditation. Each of the four levels of meditation leads to rebirth in the successively higher stages among those gods. The last is the final stage and the highest. There the gods *Śuddhāvāsakāyika* are divided into five sub groups: *Abṛha*, *Atapa*, *Sudṛśa*, *Sudarśa*, and *Akaniṣṭha*. In all the levels of meditation, forms of consciousness are eliminated one by one.

***Rūpadhātu*:** *Rūpadhātu* is made up of sixteen places. In the heaven of *Brahmapurohitas* rises a lofty dwelling which is named the heaven of *Brahmā* inhabited by a single ruler (Poussin 1990, vol. 2, p.366).

**First *Dhyāna*:** At this stage of meditation, two types of consciousness are transcended so that one is devoid of sexual desire, but possesses sight, hearing, touch, and mind. Meditation is hindered by *vitarka* and *vicāra*, by subtle and coarse intellections. *Vitaraka* (investigation), *vicāra* (reflection), *prīṭi* (joy), *sukha* (bliss), and *samādhi* are the five mental functions that exist. Through the First *Dhyāna*, the ascetic obtains happiness in this world-*dr̥ṣṭadharmasukhavihāra*. The mind attains the level of

Brahmaloka comprising three heavens: Brahma-pāriṣadya, Brahma Purohita, and Mahābrahmā. Brahmā, together with his retinue, is the creator of the world. The material beings differ in bodies and ideas, namely humans and certain gods are the first *viññāna-sthiti*. The six gods of Kāmadhātu and the gods of the First *Dhyāna*, the world of Brahmā, have different bodies. The difference in colors, marks, garments, ornaments, figures etc. symbolize the differences in their ideas of pleasure and displeasure.

In the Mahākaruṇāgarbha-maṇḍala, Brahmā occupies a seat in the north in the *vajrakula*. As a representative of the inhabitants of Brahmāloka, he is shown with four heads and four arms, sitting cross-legged on a lotus. He is holding a lance with the back right hand and making the *varada mudrā* with the front right hand. A lotus is depicted in his upper right hand while a vase is in the lower left. Two heads are drawn on both the sides, and the fourth is put atop the three; all of them have a third eye on the foreheads indicating his enlightenment (Chandra 1972, pl. 223).

**Second *Dhyāna*:** *Vicāra* is eliminated at this stage, which contains joy, happiness, *cittāikāgratā* (concentration of mind on a single object), and *ādhyātmāsamprasāda* (internal purity and faith). At this meditation, only the sixth sense-mind (*mano-viññāna*) remains. The five types of consciousness corresponding to five senses have been transcended. Pleasure and pain are renounced, the identity of persons and things is recognized, all the motivating activity of attraction and repulsion is overcome, and only joy (*muditā*) and renunciation (*upekṣā*) are experienced (Snodgrass 1988, p. 105). The ascetic acquires the seeing of knowledge (*jñānadarśana*), the supernatural knowledge of the divine eye (Poussin 1990, vol. 4, p. 1263). The Second *Dhyāna* corresponds to the following heavens: Parītābha/limited luster, heaven of lesser light; Apramāṇābha/infinite luster, heaven of immeasurable light; Ābhāsvara/radiance, heaven of sounds of light, where light replaces sound as the medium of communication.

The inhabitants of this heaven are different in bodily form, but their ideas are similar. There is no difference in color, mark, or figure. Ābhāsvara is the pure heaven of supreme light, where communication is possible through light. Ābhāsvara in the north in the *vajrakula* represents the gods of the heavens of the Second *Dhyāna*. He is sitting below Bṛhadābhāsvara, with two attendants, holding a lotus in his right hand and making a *mudrā* with thumb, index, and middle fingers flat and the other two folded. Next to him is the god of Bṛhadābhāsvara Heaven, who is holding a water pot in his right hand while the left is brought to the chest (Snodgrass 1988, p. 522).

**Third *Dhyāna*:** Inhabitants of these heavens have only thought (*manovijñāna*) and experience only equanimity (not *vedanopekṣā*, the sensation of indifference, but *saṃskāropekṣā*), mindfulness (that is not losing sight of motive or reason for this

equanimity, *upekṣānittasampramosa*), awareness (*samprajñānam*), happiness, and stability (or *sthiti*, a synonym for *samādhi*). They experience joy and renunciation like those of the second meditation. In the third stage of meditation, the gods are called *śubhāḥ devāḥ*. The ascetic attains the excellent forms of *prajñā*, or *prajñāprabheda*. The *samādhi* that produce these qualities are called *samādhībhāvanā*. The Third *Dhyāna* leads to the following heavens:

Parīṭṭa-śuddha/limited aura - heaven of lesser purity

Apramāṇa-śubha/infinite aura - heaven of immeasurable purity

Śubha-kṛtsna/steady aura - heaven of universal purity

Śubhakṛtsanas have similar bodies and similar ideas because they have the sensation of pleasure. The Śubhakṛtsanas do not become fatigued with the pleasure of Ābhāsvaras, since they are calm. In contrast, the pleasures of Ābhāsvaras, being mental pleasures, disturb the mind and thus the inhabitants are not calm.

**Fourth *Dhyāna*:** The Fourth *Dhyāna* possesses four parts: the sensation of indifference (sensation of neither suffering nor happiness), pure equanimity (*upekṣāparisūddhi*), pure mindfulness, and *samādhi*. At the stage of fourth and the highest meditation in the nine heavens, the *sādhaka* transcends joy, experiences only renunciation, and possesses only thought. The first three *dhyānas* are *sa-iñjita*-disturbed because of faults. But the fourth is free from faults and is undisturbed. The eight faults are *vitarka*, *vicāra*, happiness, suffering, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, inbreathing, and outbreathing. The *dhyāna* is like a lamp in a sealed place, not agitated by winds (Poussin 1990, vol. 4, p. 1239). The ascetic rids himself of all the defilement and attains:

Anabhṛaka - cloudless heaven; even clouds are not required to support the dwellings

Puṇya-prasava - heaven of auspicious birth having abundance of merits

Bṛhatphala - heaven of wide fruition

Asanjñinaya: - heaven without thought, because it is attained in meditation without thought.

All mental functioning, feeling, and perception ceases. This state resembles death, except for the presence of warmth, life, and consciousness. These heavens can be entered by non-returners (*anāgāmins*). However, the beings who dwell there will eventually be reborn into another level of existence. They have not escaped the cycle of rebirth.

The next five heavens are the heavens of non-returners called the Five Pure Abodes (*Śuddhāvāsakāyika*). These heavens are also states of existence, but higher than the preceding six.

Abṛha: - passionless abode



Atapa - heaven without heat, devoid of fever of passions, distress, and anxiety  
 Sudrśa - heaven of clear vision  
 Sudarśana: - well appearing heaven  
 Akaniṣṭha - heaven of the final limit of form.

**Akaniṣṭha:** A heaven of non returners, is of the most subtle and rarefied of forms. The highest of the eighteen heavens of the realm of form, it is ruled by Maheśvara, located at the summit, which is known as the heaven of Sumeru assembly. Each of them represents a state of existence that is more subtle than the preceding. Bodhisattvas assemble there to hear the preaching of the sūtra. Probably this is the reason why Sarasvatī is depicted next to Maheśvara in the west.

An adherent enters the heavens of the formless world after crossing the Akaniṣṭha Heaven. The *arūpāvacara* gods dwell in the next four spheres-*arūpadhātubhūmi*. The inhabitants live in an ecstatic state of pure spiritual existence. They do not possess the *rūpaskandha* which constitutes the body, but retain the *skandhas* (aggregates) of perception, connotation, volition, and consciousness, which constitute the mind and its functioning. The four heavens of the realm of the formless or void are formless, but can be differentiated on the bases of the hierarchy of corresponding meditations of the formless.

**Fifth-eighth *Dhyāna* of Arūpadhātu:** The paths by which the ascetic is delivered from the lower spheres are called Anantya-mārga and Vimuktimārga. The idea of complete transcendence of physical matter does not exist in Ākāśanantyāyatana, but the next three are the abodes of those who have conquered the idea of physical matter. There is no *rūpa* in the Arūpadhātu (Poussin 1990, vol. 4, pp. 1221-223). The mind is supported by mental states and the mental states by the mind. The ascetic leaves the sensation *vedanā* through the Arūpadhātu, as it is beyond the sensation of lower spheres.

The first three *dhyānas* of Arūpadhātu Ākāśanantyāyatana, Vijñānānantyaāyatana, and Akiñcanyaāyatana are named after their preparatory exercise where one considers space (*āyatana*). They are accompanied by only four *skandhas*; no *rūpa* or physical matter is accompanied. This state arises out of separation from the lower spheres. Each proceeds by separating from the lower sphere.

**Fifth *Dhyāna*, Ākāśa-anantya-āyatana:**

Meditation on the place of infinite space ..... Ākāśanantyāyatana-samāpatti

**Sixth *Dhyāna*, Vijñāna-anantya-āyatana:**

Meditation on the place of infinite consciousness ..... Vijñānanantyāyatana-samāpatti

**Seventh *Dhyāna*, Akiñcanya-āyatana:**

Meditation on the place of non-existence ..... Akiñcanyaāyatana-samāpatti

### **Eighth Dhyāna, Naiva-sañjña-asañjña-āyatana:**

The Eighth *Dhyāna* receives its name from the fact that *sañjña*-ideas-are very weak in it. Ideas are not active, but neither is one completely without ideas. In other words, ideas are there but their presence is difficult to feel. Meditation is focused on the place of neither thought nor non thought (*Naivasañjñanāsañjña-āyatana-samāpatti*). This is called *bhavāgra* or the summit of existence.

Each level of meditation severs the mind of the *sādhaka* from the preceding level and unites with the upper (Snodgrass 1988, p. 109). The adherent attains the tranquility and purity essential to go up to the world beyond Traidhātuka-the world of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. This is the final stage where nothing is created. The heaven of neither thought nor non thought is the uppermost limit of the three worlds. Beyond this lies the adamant world of Buddhas, totally unconditioned, immutable, and eternal. According to esoteric Buddhism, Buddhahood is beyond words and lies within the formless void, *arūpasūnyatā*.

In the *vajrakula* of the Mahākaraṇḍāgarbha-maṇḍala, these four stages of meditation are represented as four stupas enshrining four Buddhas after Pṛithivī and followed by Jaya accompanying Sūrya.

An adherent raises himself above the five levels of existence, mentally attaining the divine qualities that make him fit to begin meditation. He crosses all the eight levels of meditation one by one, concentrating on the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and finally reaches the highest point, the great source of the world, Vairocana.

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【要旨】

六趣と八禅定の姿

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六趣と八段階の禅定(八禅定dhyāna)の姿・形は、三界説(Traidhātuka Theory)という生存の三つの世界、あるいは領域によって包含されている。欲界(Kāmadhātu)・色界(Rūpadhātu)・無色界(Arūpadhātu)は、仏教思想における三つの領域である。世界における六趣と八禅定地(dhyānabhūmi)は、マンダラ(maṇḍala)の中心にある力の精神的な象徴に向かって、低い地点から高い地点に、悟りへと導くレベルである。マンダラは、生活空間すべてに一貫して流れる悟りの理解へ導くものでもある瞑想において、内的な生活の投影として用いられる、世界の精神的・物質的な表現である。

欲界(Kāmadhātu)とは欲望の世界、あるいは空間であり、その領域に住む神々はKāmapavanaとよばれる。六趣の形は、不幸な世界と幸福な世界という二つに分けられる。すなわち、地獄(Naraka)・畜生(Tiryak)・餓鬼(Preta)・修羅(Asura)は不幸な範疇だが、人間(Maṇusya)・天(Deva)は、幸福な生存の世界に配される。さらに、神の世界(Devaloka)には、四天王天(Caturmahārājika)・三十三天(Trāystrinśā)・夜摩天(Yama)・兜率天(Tuṣita)・楽変化天(Nirmānarati)・他化自在天(Paranirmitavaśavartin)という、六つの世界がある。

色界(Rūpadhātu)、すなわち形象の世界とは、四禅地(dhyānabhūmi)に生まれる神々であるRūpavanaが住まう世界である。四禅のそれぞれが、連続的により高い彼ら神々の段階に再生するように導く。瞑想の第一段階には、梵天界(Brahmaloka)の住人たちがいる。輝きと無限の光と光輝である神々(光音天Ābhāsvara)は第二段階にあり、第三段階には、限りあるオーラと無限のオーラと不変のオーラを伴った神々がおり、色界の第四にして最高の段階は、五階級の神々によって占められている。

形象のない世界、すなわち無色界(Arūpadhātu)に属する神々の階級は、Arūpavanaとよばれる。その四つの住处とは、空無辺处(Ākaśanāntyaayatana)・識無辺处(Vijñānāntyaayatana)・無所有处(Akincānyāyatana)・非想非非想处(Naivasamjñānāsamjñāyatana)である。