

THE TEN BODHISATTVA GROUNDS

The Avataṃsaka Sūtra

Chapter 26: The Ten Grounds

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PART ONE

The Joyfulness Ground²

I. THE INTRODUCTORY SECTION

A. THE SETTING AND AUDIENCE

(A) At that time, the Bhagavat was residing in the Maṇi Jewel Treasury Palace of the Paranirmita Vaśavartin Heaven King, together with an assembly of great bodhisattvas. All of those bodhisattvas had already achieved irreversibility in their progression toward *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*. They had all come to assemble there from the worlds of other regions.

B. THE GREAT BODHISATTVAS AND THEIR QUALITIES

They dwelt in the realm of knowledge possessed by all bodhisattvas. They were tirelessly diligent in entering those places entered by the knowledge of all *tathāgatas*. They were well able to manifest many different sorts of endeavors accomplished by the spiritual superknowledges. They taught and trained all beings and, in doing so, never erred in their timing.

In order to fulfill all of the great vows of the bodhisattva, they remained diligent in the cultivation of all practices, doing so in all worlds, in all kalpas, and in all lands, never desisting even briefly. They had become completely equipped with the bodhisattva's merit and knowledge, the provisions assisting realization of the path, and were never deficient in benefitting beings everywhere. They had achieved the most ultimate perfection in all bodhisattvas' wisdom and skillful means.

They manifested entry into *saṃsāra* as well as *nirvāṇa*, and yet they still refrained from neglecting their cultivation of the bodhisattva practices. They were skillful in entering all of the bodhisattva's *dhyāna* concentrations, liberations, *samādhis*, *samāpattis*, spiritual superknowledges, and clear knowledges.³

They achieved sovereign mastery in all of their undertakings. They had already garnered all of the freely exercised spiritual powers of the bodhisattva such that, in but a moment, without moving in the slightest, they were all able to go forth to join the assemblies gathered at the *bodhimaṇḍas*⁴ of all *tathāgatas* to serve therein

as leaders for those congregations, and to request that the Buddhas expound the Dharma.

They served there as guardians of the wheel of the right Dharma⁵ of all buddhas. With expansively magnanimous minds, they made offerings to and served all buddhas and were always diligent in their cultivation and implementation of all works performed by all bodhisattvas. Their bodies appeared everywhere in all worlds. Their voices reached everywhere throughout the ten directions of the Dharma realm.⁶ Their minds and their knowledge were unimpeded. They everywhere saw all bodhisattvas of the three periods of time. They had already entirely cultivated and brought all meritorious qualities to perfect fulfillment. Even in an ineffable⁷ number of kalpas, one would still be unable to entirely describe them all.

C. THE NAMES OF THE BODHISATTVAS IN ATTENDANCE

Their names were:⁸

- Vajragarbha Bodhisattva;
- Jewel Treasury Bodhisattva;
- Lotus Blossom Treasury Bodhisattva;
- Treasury of Qualities Bodhisattva;
- Treasury of Lotus Qualities Bodhisattva;
- Solar Treasury Bodhisattva;
- Sūrya Treasury Bodhisattva;
- Stainless Moon Treasury Bodhisattva;
- Treasury of Adornments Manifesting in All Lands Bodhisattva;
- Treasury of Vairocana's Knowledge Bodhisattva;⁹
- Treasury of Sublime Qualities Bodhisattva;
- Treasury of Candana's Qualities Bodhisattva;
- Treasury of Floral Qualities Bodhisattva;
- Treasury of Kusuma's Qualities Bodhisattva;
- Treasury of Utpala's Qualities Bodhisattva;
- Treasury of Celestial Qualities Bodhisattva;
- Treasury of Merit Bodhisattva;
- Treasury of Unimpeded Pure Knowledge Qualities Bodhisattva;¹⁰
- Treasury of Meritorious Qualities Bodhisattva;
- Treasury of Nārāyaṇa's Qualities Bodhisattva;
- Treasury of Stainlessness Bodhisattva;
- Treasury of Defilement Transcendence Bodhisattva;
- Treasury of Adornment with All Forms of Eloquence Bodhisattva;
- Treasury of the Great Net of Light Rays Bodhisattva;

Treasury of the King of the Pure Light of Awesome Qualities Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of the King of Great Qualities' Gold-Adorned Brilliance Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of Pure Qualities Adorned with All the Marks Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of Adornment with Flaming Vajra Radiance and the Marks of Merit Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of Radiant Flames Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of Constellation King's Radiance Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of Spacious Unimpeded Knowledge Bodhisattva;¹¹
 Treasury of Unimpeded Sublime Sound Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of Dhāraṇī Qualities and Vows Sustaining All Beings Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of Oceanic Adornments Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of Sumeru-Like Qualities Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of All Qualities of Purity Bodhisattva;
 Tathāgata Treasury Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of Buddha Qualities Bodhisattva;
 And Liberation Moon Bodhisattva.

An assembly of bodhisattva *mahāsattoas*,¹² such as these was present there in countless, measureless, boundless, matchless, innumerable, indescribable, inconceivable, immeasurable, and ineffable numbers.¹³ Vajragarbha Bodhisattva served as their head.

D. VAJRAGARBHA ENTERS SAMĀDHI AND COUNTLESS BUDDHAS MANIFEST

(B) At that time, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva, aided by the spiritual power of the Buddha, entered “the bodhisattva’s great wisdom light samādhi.”¹⁴ (C) After he entered this samādhi, from beyond a number of worlds in each of the ten directions as numerous as the atoms in ten *koṭis*¹⁵ of buddha lands, buddhas as numerous as the atoms in ten *koṭis* of buddha lands, all of them identically named “Vajragarbha,” immediately appeared directly before him and uttered these words:

E. THE BUDDHAS PRAISE HIM AND ENCOURAGE HIM TO TEACH THE TEN GROUNDS

It is good indeed, good indeed, Vajragarbha, that you have become able to enter this bodhisattva’s great wisdom light samādhi.

Son of Good Family, these are a number of buddhas from each of the ten directions as numerous as the atoms in ten *koṭis* of buddha lands who have all joined in providing assistance to you here. This is due to the power of the original vows of Vairocana Tathāgata, Worthy of Offerings, of Right and Universal Enlightenment,¹⁶

and because of his awesome spiritual powers. It is also because of your supreme powers of knowledge and because they wish to influence you to describe for all bodhisattvas the inconceivable Dharma light of all buddhas, in particular doing so:

- (D) To cause their entry into the grounds of knowledge;
- To bring about their gathering together of all roots of goodness;
- To enable their skillful selective differentiation of all dharmas of the Buddha;
- To bring about their vast knowing of all dharmas;
- To enable their skillfulness in the ability to expound on Dharma;
- To facilitate their purification of non-discriminating knowledge;
- To ensure their non-defilement by any worldly dharma;
- To facilitate their purification of roots of world-transcending goodness;
- To facilitate their acquisition of the realm of inconceivable knowledge;
- To cause their acquisition of the realm of knowledge of those possessed of all-knowledge;
- To also cause their acquisition, from beginning to end, of the bodhisattva's ten grounds;
- To bring about the reality-accordant explanation of the differentiating aspects of the bodhisattva's ten grounds;
- To enable objectively focused mindfulness of all dharmas of the Buddha;
- To facilitate their cultivation and differentiation of the dharmas that are free of the contaminants,¹⁷
- To facilitate their skillful adornment through excellence in selection and contemplation employing the light of great wisdom;¹⁸
- To cause their skillful entry into the gate of absolutely definitive knowledge;
- To enable them to be fearless in providing sequential expositions wherever they may abide;
- To facilitate their acquisition of the light of unimpeded eloquence;
- To enable their abiding on the ground of great eloquence with skillful resolve;
- To enable their bearing in mind the bodhisattva's resolve without ever forgetting it;
- To bring about their ripening of beings in all realms of existence;
- And to facilitate their realization of definitive awakening that reaches everywhere.

(E) Son of Good Family. You should eloquently explain the different skillful means dharmas associated with these Dharma gateways, doing so:

- To receive the Buddha's spiritual power through being aided by the light of the Tathāgata's knowledge;
- To facilitate the purification of one's own roots of goodness;
- To everywhere purify the Dharma realm;
- To everywhere draw forth beings;
- To deeply enter the Dharma body and knowledge body;
- To receive the Buddha's consecrating anointing of the crown;
- To acquire the most supremely lofty and grand body in the entire world;
- To step entirely beyond all worldly paths;
- To purify roots of world-transcending goodness;
- And in order to completely fulfill the cognition of all-knowledge.

F. THE BUDDHAS BESTOW QUALITIES AND ABILITIES ON VAJRAGARBHA

(F) At that time, the Buddhas of the ten directions bestowed these things on Vajragarbha Bodhisattva:

- They bestowed a body that none could outshine;
- They bestowed the skill of unimpeded eloquent expression;
- They bestowed skillfully differentiating pure knowledge;
- They bestowed the power of skillful remembrance invulnerable to forgetfulness,
- They bestowed thoroughly decisive and completely understanding intelligence;¹⁹
- They bestowed awakened knowledge that extends to all places;
- They bestowed the freely exercised powers associated with realization of the path;
- They bestowed the fearlessnesses of the Tathāgatas;²⁰
- They bestowed the Omniscient Ones' eloquence and knowledges²¹ that contemplate and distinguish all Dharma gateways;
- And they bestowed the adornments of all Tathāgatas' supremely sublime and utterly perfected body, speech, and mind.

(G) Why did this occur?

- Because acquisition of this samādhi dharma entails just such an occurrence;
- Because this was generated by his original vows;
- Because of his having well purified his resolute intentions;²²
- Because of his having well cleansed the sphere of knowledge;²³

Because of his having well accumulated the provisions assisting realization of the path;²⁴
 Because of his having well cultivated and refined whatever he engaged in;
 Because his mindfulness made him fit as a vessel able to contain measurelessly many dharmas;²⁵
 Because of the knowledge that he was possessed of pure resolute faith;²⁶
 Because of his having acquired the comprehensive retention *dhāraṇīs*²⁷ in which he was free of errors;
 And because of his having been well-sealed by the seal of knowledge of the Dharma realm.²⁸

G. VAJRAGARBHA EMERGES FROM SAMĀDHI AND SPEAKS OF THE TEN GROUNDS

(H) At that time, the Buddhas of the ten directions each extended their right hands and rubbed the crown of Vajragarbha Bodhisattva's head. (I) After they had rubbed the top of his head, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva emerged from samādhi and, (J) addressing everyone in that congregation of bodhisattvas, he informed them as follows:

Sons of the Buddha, the vows of the bodhisattva are excellent in their resolve, unmixed, imperceptible, as vast as the Dharma realm itself, and as ultimately far-reaching as empty space. They extend to the very bounds of future time and everywhere throughout all buddha lands. They serve to rescue and protect all beings, are carried out under the protection of all buddhas, and enter into the grounds of knowledge of all buddhas throughout the past, the future, and the present.

1. VAJRAGARBHA SETS FORTH THE NAMES OF THE TEN GROUNDS

Sons of the Buddha, what then are the grounds of knowledge of the bodhisattva *mahāsattvas*? Sons of the Buddha, there are ten grounds of knowledge of the bodhisattva *mahāsattvas*. All buddhas of the past, the future, and the present have proclaimed them, will proclaim them, and do now proclaim them. In this same way, I too proclaim them here. What then are these ten? They are:²⁹

- First, the Ground of Joyfulness;
- Second, the Ground of Stainlessness;
- Third, the Ground of Shining Light;
- Fourth, the Ground of Blazing Brilliance;³⁰
- Fifth, the Difficult-to-Conquer Ground;
- Sixth, the Ground of Direct Presence;

Seventh, the Far-Reaching Ground;
 Eighth, the Ground of Immovability;
 Ninth, the Ground of Excellent Intelligence;³¹
 Tenth, the Ground of the Dharma Cloud.

Sons of the Buddha, these ten bodhisattva grounds have been proclaimed by all buddhas of the three periods of time. They have proclaimed them in the past, will proclaim them in the future, and do proclaim them now.

Sons of the Buddha, I have never observed any among all the buddha lands in which the *tathāgata* therein failed to set forth an explanation of these ten grounds. Why is that? These constitute the bodhisattva *mahāsattvas'* most supreme path to the realization of bodhi as well as the gateway to the light of the pure Dharma. We refer here to the differentiation and explication of the bodhisattva grounds.

Sons of the Buddha, these stations are inconceivable. We refer here to all bodhisattvas' knowledge as it develops in accordance with their realizations.

2. VAJRAGARBHA BODHISATTVA FALLS SILENT

(K) Then, having set forth the names of these ten grounds of the bodhisattva, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva fell silent, remained in place, and did not then proceed to present a differentiating explanation of them.

H. THE CONGREGATION IS CAUSED TO WONDER WHY THERE IS NO EXPLANATION

At this time, having heard the names of the bodhisattvas' ten grounds without hearing any attendant explanation of them, that entire congregation of bodhisattvas gazed up at him with thirst-like anticipation as they thought to themselves, "Due to what causes and what conditions does Vajragarbha Bodhisattva merely set forth the names of the bodhisattvas' ten grounds while not then proceeding to explain them?"

I. LIBERATION MOON BODHISATTVA'S FIRST REQUEST FOR DHARMA TEACHING

Liberation Moon Bodhisattva, knowing the thoughts in the minds of those in that great assembly, thereupon employed verses with which he inquired of Vajragarbha Bodhisattva, asking:³²

Why is it that you who are possessed of pure awakening
 and are replete with the qualities of mindfulness and knowledge
 speak of these supremely sublime grounds, but then,
 even with the power to do so, still refrain from explaining them? (1)

All of those here are decisively resolute in all things,
 valiantly brave, and entirely free of any timidity.
 Why then would one set forth the names of the grounds
 and yet still refrain from beginning to expound on them for us? {2}

As for the sublime meanings and import of the grounds,
 the members of this congregation all wish to hear them.
 Their minds are free of timidity.
 Hence they wish you will differentiate and explain these for them. {3}

Those in this congregation are entirely pure,
 have abandoned indolence, and are strict in their pristine purity.
 They are able to remain solidly unmoving
 and are replete with meritorious qualities and wisdom.³³ {4}

Looking at each other, they have all become filled with reverence
 and have trained the focus of their gaze up at you.
 In this, they are like bees when they bring to mind fine honey or
 like one who is thirsty when he longs for the elixir of sweet-dew. {5}

J. VAJRAGARBHA EXPLAINS HIS SILENCE

At that time, having heard him say this, the greatly wise and fearless Vajragarbha Bodhisattva, wishing to cause the assembled congregation to feel delighted in mind, spoke verses for the sake of all those sons of the Buddha: {6}

The matter of the bodhisattva's practices on the grounds
 is the most supreme of all and is the origin of all buddhas.
 To reveal them through a differentiating explanation
 is the foremost of all rare and difficult endeavors. {7}

This is extremely subtle and difficult to perceive.
 It transcends thought and steps beyond the mind ground.
 It produces the domain realized by the Buddha.
 Those who hear of it may all be thrown into confusion. {8}

It is those whose minds have a capacity for retention as solid as vajra,
 who possess profound faith in the Buddha's supreme knowledge,
 and who know the mind ground as devoid of any self
 who are then capable of hearing this supreme Dharma. {9}

Like a mural painted in space
 and like the appearance of wind in empty space—
 The knowledge of the Muni is of this very sort,
 for it is very difficult to see through differentiating explanations. {10}

As I call to mind the wisdom of the Buddha,
 the most supremely inconceivable of matters,
 I see that no one in the world would be able to accept it.
 Hence I fall silent and no longer speak. {11}

K. LIBERATION MOON BODHISATTVA'S SECOND REQUEST FOR DHARMA TEACHING

[L] At that time, having heard him declare this, Liberation Moon Bodhisattva then addressed Vajragarbha Bodhisattva, saying:

O Son of the Buddha. Those in this assembly that has gathered together here:

Have well purified their resolute intentions;³⁴

Have well cleansed their thoughts;

Have well-cultivated all of the practices;

Have well-accumulated the provisions for realization of the path,³⁵

Have been well able to draw close to hundreds of thousands of *koṭis* of buddhas;

Have perfected countless meritorious qualities and roots of goodness;

Have abandoned delusion;

Have become free of the defilements;

Are possessed of resolute intentions and resolute faith;

And, as they abide in the Buddha's Dharma, do not follow other sorts of teachings.

It would be good indeed, O Son of the Buddha, if, having here received the aid of the Buddha's spiritual powers, you would expound on these matters for their sakes. All of these bodhisattvas are able to achieve realization of such extremely profound stations as these.

At that time, Liberation Moon Bodhisattva, wishing to restate his meaning, spoke verses, saying:

Please speak on what is most conducive to peace and security,
these unsurpassable practices of the bodhisattva,
presenting a differentiating explanation of all of the grounds,
the purification of knowledge, and realization of right enlightenment.

Those in this congregation are free of all defilements,
are entirely bright and pristine in resolve and understanding,
have rendered service to countless buddhas,
and are able to realize the meaning of these grounds.

L. VAJRAGARBHA FURTHER EXPLAINS HIS RETICENCE TO TEACH THIS DHARMA

[M] At that time, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva responded by saying:

O Son of the Buddha. Although those within this assembled congregation have well purified their thought, have abandoned delusion and doubts, and within the extremely profound Dharma, do

not follow others' teachings, still, there are yet other beings possessed of only inferior understanding who, on hearing of these extremely profound and inconceivable matters, would then generate numerous doubts due to which they would consequently suffer all manner of ruin and torment for a long time. It is because I feel pity for those of this sort that I have therefore fallen silent.

At that time, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva, wishing to once again state his meaning, thereupon uttered verses, saying:

Although those in this congregation are pure, of vast wisdom,
of extremely deep and brilliant acuity in their selective abilities,
are possessed of minds as immovable as the king of mountains,
and are as invulnerable to overturning as the great oceans—

Still, others, not long-tenured in practice, not yet understanding,
acting in accord with consciousness and thus not with knowledge—
Hearing this, they will raise doubts and fall into wretched destinies.
It is due to pity for those of this sort that I therefore do not speak.

M. LIBERATION MOON BODHISATTVA'S THIRD REQUEST FOR DHARMA TEACHING

(N) At that time, Liberation Moon Bodhisattva again addressed Vajragarbha Bodhisattva, saying:

O Son of the Buddha, aided by the spiritual powers of the Buddha, please do present here a differentiating exposition of these inconceivable dharmas. These persons will be afforded the protective mindfulness of the Tathāgatas and will consequently bring forth faith and acceptance.

And how could this be? Whenever an explanation of the ten grounds is set forth, the Dharma of all bodhisattvas is such that they should be afforded the protective mindfulness of the Buddhas in this way. Due to having been afforded the protective mindfulness of the Buddhas, they will then be able to bring forth heroic valor in cultivating these grounds of knowledge.

And why is this? This is because these constitute what the bodhisattvas practice from the very beginning and utilize in perfecting all dharmas of the Buddhas. This is analogous to the circumstance involved in the writing of words wherein everything in the realm of counting and description relies upon the alphabet³⁶ as its origin and also relies upon the alphabet in the end. There is not even the most minor increment of this that departs from the alphabet.

O Son of the Buddha. All dharmas of the Buddha in every case rely upon the ten grounds as their very origin and also rely upon

the ten grounds in the end as they are cultivated and perfected and then culminate in all-knowledge.

Therefore, O Son of the Buddha, please expound on these matters for our sakes. These persons will most certainly be afforded the protection of the Tathāgatas through which they will be caused to bring forth faith and acceptance.

At that time, Liberation Moon Bodhisattva, wishing to restate his meaning, thereupon uttered verses, saying:

Good indeed it would be, O Son of the Buddha. Please do expound on the practices taken up in progressing into bodhi's grounds.

Of all of the ten directions' sovereignly masterful Honored Ones, none fail to hold these roots of knowledge in protective mindfulness.

These bases of establishment in knowledge are also ultimate, for all the dharmas of the Buddha grow forth directly from them just as all writing and counting are but expressions of their alphabets. So too it is with Buddha's Dharma in its reliance on the grounds.

N. THE BODHISATTVA CONGREGATION JOINS IN REQUESTING THIS TEACHING

(0) At that time, that entire congregation of great bodhisattvas, simultaneously and with a single united voice, uttered verses to Vajragarbha Bodhisattva, saying:

[May it be that you] of supremely sublime and stainless knowledge as well as boundless eloquence in differentiation will expound with profound and exquisite phrases that correspond to the supreme meaning. (12)

[May you] whose pure practice is maintained with mindfulness, who has ten powers, and who has gathered the meritorious qualities proceed to differentiate their meanings with eloquence and present the exposition of these most supreme grounds. (13)

With concentration, moral precepts, and accumulated right thought, as well as transcendence of arrogance and wrong views, this congregation is entirely free of doubting thoughts and hence wishes only to hear a skillful proclamation. (14)

We are like the thirsty thinking about cool water,
like the hungry recalling exquisite cuisine,
like the sick calling to mind an especially fine physician,
and like bees craving fine honey.

We are all just like these
in our wishing to hear this sweet-dew Dharma. (15)

Good indeed it would be, you of such vast knowledge.
We only pray that you will expound on the entry into the grounds,

on accomplishment of the ten powers' unimpeded realization, and on all of the practices of the Well Gone Ones. (16)

O. (P) THE BUDDHA EMITS BRILLIANT LIGHT FROM BETWEEN HIS EYEBROWS

At that time, the Bhagavat emitted from between his eyebrows a pure light known as "the flaming light of bodhisattva powers," a brilliance attended by a retinue of a hundred thousand *asaṃkhyeyas*³⁷ of light rays. It everywhere illuminated all worlds of the ten directions, having none it failed to entirely pervade. The sufferings of the three wretched destinies then all subsided. It also illuminated the assemblies in attendance on all *tathāgatas*, revealed the inconceivable powers of the Buddhas, and also shone upon the bodies of all of the bodhisattvas in all worlds throughout the ten directions who were then being aided by all buddhas in the proclamation of Dharma. After it had done this, it then ascended into space, formed an immense terrace made of a net of light clouds, and then remained there.

P. ALL BUDDHAS EMIT LIGHT THAT UTTERS VERSES REQUESTING DHARMA

At that time, the Buddhas of the ten directions all proceeded in this very same manner, emitting a pure light from between their eyebrows wherein that light, its retinue of light rays, and its actions all manifested in just the same manner. In addition, they illuminated this Sahā World, the Buddha, and his great assembly, and then, after shining on the person of Vajragarbha Bodhisattva and his lion throne, those rays ascended up into empty space and formed an immense terrace made of a curtain of light clouds. Then, from within that terrace of light, through the awesome spiritual powers of the Buddhas, there then resounded the proclamation of verses, stating:

The Buddhas, the equals of the unequaled, are like empty space³⁸ in their possession of the ten powers and countless supreme qualities. They are the most superior of men, supreme in the entire world. Here they augment the Dharma of the Lion of the Śākya Clan. (17)

Son of the Buddha, you should take on the powers of the Buddhas, open forth the most supreme treasury of this Dharma king, and employ Buddha's awesome powers to distinguish and explain the supreme and sublime practices of the grounds' vast knowledge. (18)

Where one is afforded the assistance of the Well Gone Ones, one will receive the entry of the Dharma jewel into one's mind. (19)

When one gains sequential fulfillment of the grounds' stainlessness, he shall then also completely embody a *tathāgata's* ten powers. {20}

Though residing amidst an ocean's waters or in kalpa-ending fires, those able to accept this Dharma will certainly be able to hear it. {21}

Wherever someone doubts it or has no faith in it, they will never be able to hear ideas such as these. {22}

You should expound on the grounds' path of supreme knowledge, on their entry, abiding, and progressively sequential cultivation, and on the birth of Dharma knowledge from the domains of practice, doing so because this will provide benefit to all beings. {23}

Q. VAJRAGARBHA'S PRELIMINARY VERSES ON THE DIFFICULTY OF THIS EXPLANATION

{Q} At that time, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva directed his contemplative regard to the ten directions and, wishing to cause those in that immense assembly to develop an increased degree of pure faith, thereupon uttered verses, saying:

The path of the Tathāgatas, the Great Rishis, is subtle, sublime, and difficult to know.

It is not perceptible through thought nor by abandoning thought.

If one seeks to perceive it in that way, it cannot thereby be realized.

It is without either production or destruction and is by nature pure and constantly quiescent. {24}

For those who abandon defilement and possess brilliant sagacity, it is the place in which their knowledge is put into practice.

Its own nature is fundamentally empty, quiescently still, devoid of duality, and endless.

It brings about liberation from all of the rebirth destinies and the abiding in a state of uniform identity with nirvāṇa itself.

It has no beginning, has no middle, and has no end.

It cannot be described through words or phrases, utterly transcends the three periods of time, and, in character, is comparable to empty space. {25}

The quiescence in which the Buddha courses cannot be reached through any verbal description.

The practices that are taken up on the grounds are also of this sort, difficult to describe and difficult for one to be able to accept. {26}

The realm of the Buddha, produced through knowledge, is not a path accessible through thought or by abandoning thought.

It is not a gate entered by aggregates, sense realms, or sense bases.

It is known by cognition, but not reached by the intellectual mind. {27}

Like the track of a bird through the air,
it is difficult to describe and difficult to show.
In this same manner, the meanings associated with the ten grounds
cannot be entirely fathomed by the mind's intellectual faculty. {28}

Kindness, compassion, and the power of vows
bring forth the practices through which one may enter the grounds
and sequentially realize perfect fulfillment of the mind.
The practices of knowledge are not the domain of mental reflection.
{29}

This realm is difficult to perceive.
It can be known but cannot be described.
It is due to the powers of the Buddhas that one expounds on them.
You should all receive them in reverence. {30}

Such knowledge-entering practice as this
cannot be completely described even in a *koti* of kalpas.
Hence I shall now merely set forth a summarizing explanation
of their genuine meaning, leaving nothing unaddressed. {31}

Attend to this in single-minded reverence as,
aided by the Buddhas' powers, I speak
the subtle and sublime voice of the supreme Dharma
in a manner compatible with analogies' phrasings. {32}

The boundless spiritual powers of the Buddhas
all arrive here and enter my person.
Of this circumstance so difficult to proclaim,
I shall now describe but a minor measure. {33}

II. THE MAIN DOCTRINAL TEACHING SECTION

A. THE FIRST GROUND: THE JOYFULNESS GROUND

1. VAJRAGARBHA LISTS THE FIRST GROUND'S QUALIFICATIONS & MOTIVATIONS

(R) Sons of the Buddha, suppose there is a being:

Who has deeply planted roots of goodness;
 Who has well cultivated the practices;
 Who has well accumulated the provisions facilitating realization of the path;³⁹
 Who has practiced well the making of offerings to the Buddhas;
 Who has well accumulated the white dharmas of pristine purity;
 Who has been skillfully drawn forth by the good spiritual guide;
 Who has well purified his resolute intentions;
 Who has established himself in the vast resolve;
 Who has developed vast understanding;
 And who has brought forth presently manifest kindness and compassion, [having done so]:

(S) For the sake of the quest to acquire the knowledge of the Buddha;
 For the sake of gaining the ten powers;
 For the sake of realizing the great fearlessnesses;
 For the sake of gaining the Buddhas' dharma of uniformly equal regard for all;
 For the sake of coming to the rescue of all worlds;
 For the sake of purifying the great kindness and great compassion;
 For the sake of gaining the knowledge that knows everything without exception throughout the ten directions;
 For the sake of bringing about the unimpeded purification of all buddha lands;
 For the sake of knowing all three periods of time in a single instant;
 And for the sake of fearlessly turning the great wheel of Dharma.

2. THE QUALITIES OF THE BODHISATTVA'S RESOLVE

(T) Son of the Buddha, the bodhisattva's generation of such resolve:

Takes the great compassion as foremost;
 Takes wisdom as its predominant condition;
 Is subsumed within skillful means;
 Is sustained by the most superior resolute intentions;
 [Is aided by] the measureless powers of the Tathāgata;

[Is accompanied by] skillful contemplation and assessment of beings' strength of courage and strength of knowledge;
 [Is implemented with] the directly manifested unimpeded knowledge;
 Is accordant with spontaneous knowledge;⁴⁰
 Is able to take on all dharmas of the Buddha in using wisdom in transformative teaching;
 And is as vast as the Dharma realm, as ultimately extensive as empty space, and so enduring as to reach the very end of future time.

3. THE CONSEQUENCES OF GENERATING THE BODHISATTVA VOW

(U) Son of the Buddha, when the bodhisattva first brings forth this resolve, he immediately:

Steps beyond the grounds of the common person;
 Enters the station of the bodhisattva;
 Takes birth into the clan of the Tathāgatas;
 Becomes such that no one can claim his lineage is possessed of any fault;
 Leaves behind worldly destinies;
 Enters the world-transcending path;
 Acquires the bodhisattva dharmas;
 Abides in the bodhisattva abodes;
 Equally enters the three periods of time;
 And becomes definitely bound to realize the unexcelled bodhi in the lineage of the Tathāgatas.

(V) The bodhisattva who dwells in dharmas such as these is known as one who dwells on the Ground of Joyfulness, this on account of his being imperturbable.

Son of the Buddha, abiding on the Ground of Joyfulness, the bodhisattva is completely endowed with:

Abundant joy;
 Abundant pure faith;
 Abundant fond delight;
 Abundant happiness;
 Abundant exultation;
 Abundant ebullience;
 Abundant valiant fortitude;
 Abundant disinclination to disputatiousness;
 Abundant harmlessness;
 And abundant disinclination to anger.⁴¹

4. THE BASES FOR THE FIRST GROUND BODHISATTVA'S JOYFULNESS

{w} Son of the Buddha, the bodhisattva dwelling on this Ground of Joyfulness:

- Becomes joyful due to calling to mind the Buddhas;
- Becomes joyful due to calling to mind the Dharma of the Buddhas;
- Becomes joyful due to calling to mind the bodhisattvas;
- Becomes joyful due to calling to mind the conduct practiced by the bodhisattvas;
- Becomes joyful due to calling to mind the pure *pāramitās*;
- Becomes joyful due to calling to mind the exceptional supremacy of the bodhisattva grounds;
- Becomes joyful due to calling to mind the indestructibility of the bodhisattvas;
- Becomes joyful due to calling to mind the Tathāgata's teaching of beings;
- Becomes joyful due to calling to mind the ability to cause beings to acquire benefit;
- And becomes joyful due to calling to mind entry into all *tathāgatas'* knowledge and skillful means.

{x} He also has this thought:

- I become joyful due to turning away from and abandoning all worldly states;
- I become joyful due to drawing close to all buddhas;
- I become joyful due to departing far from the grounds of the common person;
- I become joyful due to drawing near to the grounds of wisdom;⁴²
- I become joyful due to eternally cutting off any vulnerability to entering the wretched destinies;
- I become joyful due to serving as a place of refuge for all beings;
- I become joyful due to seeing all the Tathāgatas;
- I become joyful due to being born into the domain of the Buddhas;
- I become joyful due to becoming of the same nature as all bodhisattvas;
- And I become joyful due to leaving behind the fear of all circumstances that would cause hair-raising terror.

5. THE FIRST GROUND BODHISATTVA'S FIVE KINDS OF FEARLESSNESS

{Y} Why is it that, once this bodhisattva has gained the Ground of Joyfulness, he abandons all forms of fearfulness? In particular, they are:

- The fear of failing to survive;
- The fear of a bad reputation;
- The fear of death;
- The fear of rebirth in the wretched destinies;
- And the fear of the awesomeness of great assemblies.⁴³

He succeeds in forever leaving behind all such forms of fearfulness. And why is this? It is because this bodhisattva has abandoned any perception of a self. Thus he does not even cherish his own body. How much the less might he cherish any provisions or valuables it happens to possess. As a consequence, he is entirely free of any fear of failing to survive.

He does not hope for or seek out offerings from others. Rather, he devotes himself solely to providing for and making gifts to all beings. Consequently he has no fear of a bad reputation.

Because he has abandoned the view that conceives the existence of a self and because he does not perceive any existence of a self, he is therefore entirely free of any fear of death.

He realizes that once he dies, he will definitely not be reborn apart from the Buddhas and the bodhisattvas. Consequently he is entirely free of any fear of falling into the wretched destinies.

He thinks, "That to which I aspire is without equal anywhere in the world. How much the less might there be anything superior to it?" Consequently, he is entirely free of any fear of the awesomeness of great assemblies.

Thus it is that the bodhisattva leaves far behind all such circumstances that might otherwise cause fear and hair-raising terror.

6. THE BODHISATTVA'S GROUNDS PURIFYING PRACTICES

{Z} Son of the Buddha, this bodhisattva takes the great compassion as foremost. He is possessed of a vast aspiring resolve that no one could obstruct or destroy. Thus he redoubles his diligent cultivation of all roots of goodness, thereby achieving complete success in his aims, in particular doing so:

- {AA} Through making faith predominant;
- Through abundant pure faith;⁴⁴
- Through the purity of his resolute faith;⁴⁵

Through the resolute decisiveness of his faith;
 Through bringing forth compassionate pity;
 Through perfecting the great kindness;
 Through remaining free of any tendency to become weary or
 withdraw from his efforts;
 Through being adorned with a sense of shame and dread of
 blame;
 Through perfecting mental pliancy;
 Through respectfully according with and venerating the
 Buddhas' teaching dharmas;
 (BB) Through insatiably cultivating and accumulating roots of
 goodness day and night;
 Through drawing near to good spiritual guides;
 Through always cherishing and delighting in the Dharma;
 Through insatiably pursuing extensive learning;
 Through engaging in right contemplative investigation accor-
 dant with the Dharma he has learned;
 Through ensuring that his mind remains free of dependent
 attachments;
 Through not indulging any attachment to receiving offerings,
 becoming renowned, or receiving expressions of reverence
 from others;
 Through not seeking for any life-supporting material posses-
 sions;
 Through tirelessly bringing forth jewel-like resolve;⁴⁶
 (CC) Through seeking to reach the ground of all-knowledge;
 Through seeking to gain the Tathāgata's powers, fearlessnesses,
 and dharmas exclusive to the Buddhas;
 Through seeking proficiency in the *pāramitās* and the other
 dharmas assisting realization of the path;
 Through abandoning all flattery and deceptiveness;
 Through being able to practice in accordance with what has
 been taught;
 Through always maintaining adherence to truthful speech;
 Through never defiling the house of the Tathāgatas;
 Through never relinquishing the moral precepts of the bodhi-
 sattvas;
 Through bringing forth a resolve to gain all-knowledge that is
 as unshakeable as the king of mountains;
 Through never relinquishing his endeavors in service to anyone
 in the world while still perfecting the world-transcending
 path;

Through insatiably accumulating those dharmas that comprise
the factors assisting realization of bodhi;
And through always striving to gain ever more superior realiza-
tion of the most supremely excellent path.

Son of the Buddha, the bodhisattva who completely develops
such dharmas for purification of the grounds as these thereby
becomes one who abides securely on the bodhisattva's Ground
of Joyfulness.

7. THE BODHISATTVA'S TEN GREAT VOWS

{DD} Son of the Buddha, the bodhisattva who dwells on this Ground
of Joyfulness is able to completely institute just such great vows
entailing just such great heroic courage and just such great effec-
tive action. Specifically, they are:⁴⁷

He brings forth a vast, pure, and resolute understanding
through which he makes a vow to reverently present gifts of
every form of offering to all buddhas without exception. His
implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma realm
and as extensive as empty space as it continues on incessantly
until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas.

{EE} He also makes a great vow in which he vows to take on all
buddhas' turning of the Dharma wheel, vows to take on [the
realization of] all buddhas' bodhi, vows to protect all bud-
dha's teaching, and vows to preserve all buddhas' Dharma.
His implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma
realm and as extensive as empty space as it continues on
incessantly until the end of future time and throughout all
kalpas.

{FF} He also makes a great vow in which he vows that, in all
worlds, when the Buddhas come forth into the world, descend
from the Tuṣita Heaven Palace, enter the womb, abide in the
womb, first take birth, leave behind the home life, achieve
realization of the path, proclaim the Dharma, and finally
enter nirvāṇa, in every instance, he will go forth to visit
them, will draw close to them and make offerings to them,
will serve them as a leader within their congregations, will
take on the practice of right Dharma, and will proceed then
to simultaneously turn the Dharma wheel in all places. His
implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma realm
and as extensive as empty space as it continues on incessantly
until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas.

- (GG) He also makes a great vow in which he vows to explain in accordance with their reality all of the bodhisattva practices, so vast, so immeasurable, indestructible, unalloyed in their purity, and inclusive of all the *pāramitās*, vows to explain the purifying cultivation of the grounds, their general characteristics, their specific characteristics, their common characteristics, their differentiating characteristics, the characteristics conducing to success in them, and the characteristics leading to ruination, vowing too to teach these matters to everyone, thus influencing them thereby to take on these practices and bring forth increasing resolve. His implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as it continues on incessantly until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas.
- (HH) He also makes a great vow in which he vows: “I will teach all realms of beings in a manner influencing them to enter into the Dharma of the Buddha, influencing them to eternally cut off coursing in any of the destinies of worldly rebirth, and influencing them to become established in the path to the cognition of all-knowledge,⁴⁸ teaching all of them, whether they be possessed of form or formless, whether they be possessed of perception, free of perception, or abiding in a state of neither perception nor non-perception, whether they be egg-born, womb-born, moisture-born, or transformationally born, teaching all of them, no matter how they are connected to the triple world, no matter in which of the six destinies of rebirth they abide, and no matter in which place they have taken birth, teaching all beings possessed of name-and-form, teaching all such classes of beings as these.” His implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as it continues on incessantly until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas.
- (II) He also makes a great vow in which he vows to directly know and perceive with utterly clear cognition all worlds in all their vastness and countless varieties, including the coarse, the subtle, the disordered, the inverted, and the upright, knowing them all, whether in entering them, coursing along within them, or emerging from them,⁴⁹ knowing them in their countless many different sorts of variations throughout the ten directions that are analogous [in their mutual relationship] to the net-like curtain of Indra. His implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as it continues on incessantly until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas.

- {JJ} He also makes a great vow in which he resolves to bring about the complete purification of all the measurelessly many buddha lands wherein all lands enter a single land, a single land enters all lands, and they are all adorned with many radiant phenomena, wherein they all become filled with measurelessly many wise beings⁵⁰ who have left behind all afflictions and perfected the path of purification, and wherein he everywhere enters the vast realms of all buddhas, accords with the mental dispositions of beings, and thus appears for them in a manner that causes them all to be pleased. His implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as it continues on incessantly until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas.
- {KK} He also makes a great vow in which he vows to unite with all other bodhisattvas in practices with a single determined aim, doing so in a manner that remains free of enmity or jealousy, proceeding in this with the accumulation of all forms of roots of goodness, engaging with all bodhisattvas toward a single objective with universally equal regard, always gathering together with them and never allowing there to develop any mutual estrangement, doing so with a freely exercised ability to manifest all sorts of different buddha bodies, being able by resort to the capacities of his own mind to know all the domains, awesome powers, and wisdom⁵¹ of all *tathāgatas*, being able thus to gain realization of the irreversible psychic powers through which one freely roams throughout all worlds, manifesting his physical presence in all of their assemblies, everywhere entering into all of stations of rebirth, perfecting the inconceivable Great Vehicle, cultivating the practices of the bodhisattvas. His implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as it continues on incessantly until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas.
- {LL} He also makes a great vow in which he vows to take up the irreversible turning of the wheel, to course in the bodhisattva practices, to cultivate the refinement of physical, verbal, and mental karmic actions, to never neglect his endeavors in these matters, vowing too that, if anyone sees him, even if only momentarily, then he will thereby become bound for definite success in the Buddha's Dharma, vows that, if anyone hears his voice, even if only momentarily, then he will thereby become bound to gain genuine wisdom,⁵² vows that, if one merely brings forth thoughts of pure faith, then he will

thereby become bound to eternally cut off the afflictions, vows that he will succeed in becoming like a personification of the great king of medicine trees, that he will become like a personification of a wish-fulfilling jewel, and vowing that he will cultivate all of the bodhisattva practices. His implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as it continues on incessantly until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas.

(MM) He also makes a great vow in which he vows that he will gain realization of *anuttarasamyaksambodhi* in all worlds, that he will not abandon even any of those places manifesting within the tip of a hair, that he will appear even in all those places manifesting within the tip of a hair the actions of taking on human birth, leaving behind the home life, arriving at the *bodhimaṇḍa*, realizing the right enlightenment, turning the wheel of Dharma, and entering nirvāṇa, that he will acquire the Buddha's realms of awareness and powers of great wisdom,⁵³ that even in every successive instant, adapting to the minds of every being, he will manifest for them the realization of buddhahood and cause them to succeed in achieving quiescent cessation themselves, that he will, through a single *sambodhi*, gain the realization of all dharma realms as characterized by identity with nirvāṇa, that, employing a single voice in the proclamation of Dharma, he will be able to cause the minds of all beings to become joyful, that, even though he manifests the appearance of entering the great nirvāṇa, he will still never cut off his coursing in the practices of the bodhisattva, that he will reveal the grounds of great wisdom⁵⁴ and the establishment of all dharmas, and that, in accomplishing this, he will employ the superknowledges associated with the cognition of dharmas, the superknowledges associated with the foundations of spiritual power, the conjuration-like superknowledges, and sovereignly masterful transformations that fill up the entire Dharma realm. His implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as it continues on incessantly until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas.

Son of the Buddha, the bodhisattva dwelling on this Ground of Joyfulness is able to bring forth such great vows, great heroic courage, and great effective action. Taking these ten vow gateways as foremost, he brings about the complete fulfillment of a hundred myriads of *asamkhyeyas* of great vows.

[NN] Son of the Buddha, these great vows are able to achieve their perfect completion on the basis of ten propositions on the ending [of various phenomena]. What then are those ten? They are:

- The end of the realms of beings;
- The end of worlds;
- The end of the realms of empty space;
- The end of the Dharma realm;
- The end of the realm of nirvāṇa;
- The end of the realms where the Buddhas come forth and appear;
- The end of the realm of the Tathāgata's knowledge;
- The end of the realm of objects of mind;
- The end of the realms of objective circumstances penetrated by the Buddha's cognition;
- And the end of the realms of permutations of worlds, permutations of dharmas, and permutations of knowledge.

[Accordingly, he vows that]:

“If the realms of beings come to an end, only then might my vows finally come to an end. If the worlds come to an end...,” and so forth on up to, “If the realms of the permutations of worlds, permutations of dharmas, and permutations of knowledge come to an end, only then might my vows finally come to an end.

“However, because the realms of beings cannot possibly ever come to an end,” and so forth on up to, “Because the realms of the permutations of worlds, permutations of dharmas, and permutations of knowledge cannot possibly ever come to an end, therefore the roots of goodness associated with these great vows of mine will never have an end.”

8. THE MENTAL QUALITIES & FAITH GAINED BY THE 1ST GROUND BODHISATTVA

[OO] Son of the Buddha, once the bodhisattva has brought forth such vows as these, he then succeeds in acquiring:⁵⁵

- The beneficent mind;
- The gentle mind;
- The adaptive mind;
- The serene mind;
- The subdued mind;
- The quiescent mind;
- The humble mind;

The harmoniously smooth mind;
 The unmoving mind;
 And the unsullied mind.

He thereby succeeds in becoming one possessed of pure faith and possessed of the functional uses of faith, whereby he is able:⁵⁶

To have faith in the original practices entered by the Tathāgatas;
 To have faith in the perfectibility of the *pāramitās*;
 To have faith in the entry into the supreme grounds;
 To have faith in the perfectibility of the powers;
 To have faith in the complete fulfillment of the fearlessnesses;
 To have faith in the production and development of the indomitable dharmas exclusive to the Buddhas;
 To have faith in the inconceivable Dharma of the Buddhas;
 To have faith in the generation of the Buddha's realm transcendent of either any middle or extremes;
 To have faith in the entry into the Buddha's measureless domain;
 And to have faith in the perfectibility of the resultant fruition.

To speak of the essentials, he has faith in all bodhisattva practices and the other related factors up to and including the Tathāgata's grounds of knowledge, proclamations, and powers.

9. THE BODHISATTVA'S REFLECTIVE CONTEMPLATION ON DHARMA AND BEINGS

{PP} Son of the Buddha, this bodhisattva has these additional thoughts:

The right Dharma of the Buddhas is characterized by:

Such extreme profundity;
 Such serenity;
 Such quiescence;
 Such emptiness;
 Such signlessness;
 Such wishlessness;
 Such non-defilement;
 Such measurelessness;
 And such vastness.⁵⁷

{QQ} And yet common people:

Allow their minds to fall into wrong views;
 Become covered over and blinded by ignorance;
 Erect the lofty banner of arrogance;
 Enter the net of craving;

Travel into the dense forest of flattery and deception and become unable to escape on their own;
 Involve their minds in miserliness and jealousy, fail to relinquish them, and thus constantly create the causes and conditions conducing to rebirth in the various destinies;
 Increase both day and night their accumulation of every sort of karmic activity based on greed, hatred, and delusion;
 So set the wind of their anger and animosity blowing upon the flames of the mind's consciousness that they blaze incessantly.
 Become such that whatever karmic actions they engage in are reflections of the inverted views;⁵⁸
 And become such that the flood of desire, the flood of becoming, the flood of ignorance, and the flood of views⁵⁹ continuously generate seeds associated with the mind and mental consciousness in the field of the three realms of existence that in turn grow forth the sprouts of suffering.

(RR) Specifically, this occurs as follows:

[The aggregates of] name-and-form⁶⁰ arise conjointly and inextricably.
 This name-and-form develops and then produces the vilage of the six sense bases.⁶¹
 In their corresponding pairings, these in turn produce contact.
 As a result of the occurrence of contact, feelings then arise. Because of feelings, there then follows the arising of craving.
 Due to the growth of craving, there then occurs the generation of grasping.
 Because of an increase in grasping, there then occurs the generation of becoming.
 Because of becoming, there then follow birth, aging, death, worry, sorrow, suffering, and the afflictions.

It is in this manner that beings generate and proliferate a mass of suffering. In every case, everything therein is empty. Thus, absent the existence of any self or anything belonging to a self, there is no knowing, no awareness, nothing done, and nothing undergone. Thus these matters are all comparable to shrubs, trees, or a stone wall and are also comparable to mere reflected

images. Still, beings remain unaware and unknowing of these circumstances.

10. THE BODHISATTVA'S RESOLVE, RENUNCIATION, & GROUNDS PURIFICATION

{SS} On observing all beings in this circumstance wherein they are unable to escape from such a mass of suffering, the bodhisattva straightaway brings forth wisdom in association with the great compassion and then has this additional thought: "I should rescue and pull forth all these beings and see to their being placed in a circumstance of ultimate happiness." He therefore immediately brings forth radiant wisdom in association with the great kindness.

{TT} Son of the Buddha, when, in accordance with just such great compassion and great kindness as this, the bodhisattva *mahāsattva* avails himself of deep and profound resolve and dwells on the first ground, he becomes free of any selfish cherishing for anything at all, pursues realization of the Buddha's great knowledge, and cultivates the great relinquishing through which he is able to bestow whatever he possesses as a gift. This includes his wealth, grain, the contents of his storehouses and granaries, gold, silver, *maṇi* jewels, true pearls, lapis lazuli, conch shells, jade, coral and other such things, precious jewels, necklaces, bodily adornments, elephants, horses, carriages, servants and workers, cities and villages, parks, forests, viewing terraces, wives, consorts, sons, daughters, members of his inner and outer retinue, and all other sorts of precious jewels and means of amusement. He is willing to also give even his head, eyes, hands, feet, blood, flesh, bones, marrow, and any other parts of his own body, bestowing all of these things without any selfish cherishing, and bestowing all these things in quest of the vast wisdom⁶² of all buddhas. This is what constitutes the perfection of relinquishing carried out by the bodhisattva dwelling on the first ground.

{UU} Son of the Buddha, because of this mind of great giving imbued with kindness and compassion, the bodhisattva redoubles his quest to acquire every form of worldly and world-transcending beneficial means through which to facilitate the enactment of his aspiration to rescue and protect all beings. Through his tirelessness in this, he comes to perfect the tireless mind.

Having acquired the tireless mind, his mind then becomes entirely free of timidity with respect to pursuing the investigation of all scriptures and treatises. Because he is free of timidity in that regard, he then straightaway succeeds in acquiring the

knowledge contained within all scriptures and treatises. Having acquired this knowledge, he is then well able to assess how he should and should not proceed in relating to all of the beings of superior, middling, and inferior capacities, adapting to what is appropriate for them, adapting to what suits their strengths, and adapting to whatever they are habitually accustomed to.

Due to proceeding in this manner, the bodhisattva succeeds in developing worldly wisdom. Having developed worldly wisdom, he then becomes aware of what constitutes correct timeliness and correct measure in those actions. Then, graced with a sense of shame and dread of blame, he diligently cultivates the path of simultaneously benefiting himself and benefiting others. Thus it is that he perfects the state of being graced by a sense of shame and dread of blame. As he engages in these practices, he diligently cultivates irreversible renunciation⁶³ and thus develops the power of enduring fortitude. Having developed the power of enduring fortitude, he then becomes diligent in making offerings to all buddhas and becomes able to practice in accord with the teaching dharmas proclaimed by the Buddha.

Son of the Buddha, thus it is that the bodhisattva perfects the ten dharmas employed in purifying the grounds, namely:⁶⁴

- Faith;
- Compassion;
- Kindness;
- Renunciation;
- Indefatigability;
- Knowledge of the sutras and treatises;
- Thorough comprehension of worldly dharmas;
- A sense of shame and dread of blame;
- The power of enduring fortitude;
- The making of offerings to the Buddhas while cultivating in accordance with the teachings.⁶⁵

11. THE BODHISATTVA'S SEEING AND SERVING OF COUNTLESS BUDDHAS

{VV} Son of the Buddha, having come to dwell on this Ground of Joyfulness, the bodhisattva, due to the power of his great vows, then becomes able to see many buddhas. That is to say that he becomes able to see many hundreds of buddhas, many thousands of buddhas, many hundreds of thousands of buddhas, many *koṭis* of buddhas, many hundreds of *koṭis* of buddhas, many thousands of *koṭis* of buddhas, many hundreds of thousands of *koṭis* of buddhas, many *koṭis* of *nayutas* of buddhas, many hundreds of *koṭis*

of *nayutas* of buddhas, many thousands of *koṭis* of *nayutas* of buddhas, or many hundreds of thousands of *koṭis* of *nayutas* of buddhas, all of whom he reverently venerates with a magnanimous mind and resolute intentions as he serves them and makes offerings to them of robes, food and drink, bedding, medicines, and every sort of life-sustaining benefaction, all of which he offers up as gifts while also making offerings to all of the many members of the Sangha. He then dedicates all of the roots of goodness thereby created to the realization of the unsurpassable bodhi.

12. THE BODHISATTVĀ'S PRACTICE OF MEANS OF ATTRACTION AND PĀRAMITĀS

Son of the Buddha, on account of making offerings to the Buddhas, this bodhisattva acquires the dharmas by which one brings about the maturation of beings. Employing the first two of the means of attraction, namely "giving" and "pleasing words," he draws forth beings. As for the remaining two means of attraction,⁶⁶ he only employs them in a manner commensurate with his powers of resolute faith, for his practice of them has not yet reached a state of state of consummate skillfulness.

Among the ten *pāramitās*, this bodhisattva becomes especially superior in his practice of *dāna pāramitā*. It is not, however, that he does not cultivate the remaining *pāramitās* at all. Rather, he simply accords them an amount of emphasis corresponding to his own strengths and to what is fitting.⁶⁷

This bodhisattva, in accordance with whatever he is diligently cultivating, whether it be making offerings to buddhas or teaching beings, in every case does so through cultivating the grounds-purifying dharmas. He dedicates all of the associated roots of goodness to the acquisition of the ground of all-knowledge. As he does so, they become ever more radiant, pure, and pliant to the point that he becomes freely able to put them to use however he wishes.

13. THE BODHISATTVĀ'S GROUNDS PURIFICATION COMPARED TO REFINING GOLD

Son of the Buddha, this circumstance is analogous to that of a goldsmith who, especially well skilled in the refinement of gold, introduces it into the fire again and again, with the result that it shines ever more brightly, becomes ever more pure, and becomes ever more pliant to the point that, once this process is completed, he can then freely put it to use however he wishes.

The bodhisattva is just like this. His making of offerings to the Buddhas and his teaching of beings is in every case done in the service of cultivating the dharmas employed in purification of

the grounds. All of the roots of goodness thereby developed are dedicated to reaching the ground of all-knowledge. As he proceeds with this cultivation, they become ever more brightly shining, pure, and pliant to the point where he becomes freely able to put them to use.

14. THE BODHISATTVA'S ACQUISITION OF FURTHER KNOWLEDGE OF THE GROUNDS

{(ww)} Son of the Buddha, the bodhisattva *mahāsattva* who dwells on the first ground should set forth searching questions in the presence of the Buddhas, the bodhisattvas, and his good spiritual guides, insatiably requesting from them clarification of this ground's characteristic aspects and acquired fruits, doing so wishing to completely develop this ground's dharmas.

So too should he set forth searching questions in the presence of the Buddhas, the Bodhisattvas, and his good spiritual guides, insatiably requesting from them clarification regarding the second ground's characteristic aspects and acquired fruits, doing so wishing to completely develop that ground's dharmas.

So too should he set forth searching questions insatiably requesting clarification of the characteristic aspects and acquired fruits associated with the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth grounds, doing so wishing to completely develop those grounds' dharmas.

This bodhisattva then:

Thoroughly knows the obstacles encountered on the grounds as well as the means for countering them;

Thoroughly knows the means of achieving success or falling into ruination on the grounds;

Thoroughly knows the characteristic aspects and fruits associated with the grounds;

Thoroughly knows the attainment and cultivation of the grounds;

Thoroughly knows the grounds' purification of dharmas;

Thoroughly knows the progression in the successively adopted practices used in advancing from ground to ground;

Thoroughly knows with respect to each successive ground what is and is not the correct station;

Thoroughly knows with respect to each successive ground the type of especially superior knowledge associated with it;

Thoroughly knows with respect to each successive ground the means by which to prevent retreating from it;

And thoroughly knows how to bring about the purifying cultivation of all of the bodhisattva grounds on through to the point of progression into the ground of the Tathāgata.

Son of the Buddha, in this way, the bodhisattva thoroughly knows the characteristic features of the grounds beginning with the first ground, knows how one takes up the practices and carries them forward without interruption in this manner until one finally enters the tenth ground, continuing on in this without any instance of the practice being cut off. It is on account of the light associated with the knowledge of the grounds that he succeeds in developing the light of the Tathāgata's wisdom.⁶⁸

15. THE BODHISATTVA'S PATH KNOWLEDGE COMPARED TO A CARAVAN GUIDE

Son of the Buddha, this circumstance is analogous to that of a leader of merchants who comes to know well the means employed when wishing to lead a group of merchants going off to some great city. Before embarking, he must first ask about the roads to be taken, inquiring about their fine qualities and their faulty aspects while also inquiring about the places where one might stop along the way, inquiring also as to whether the threats to security one might encounter along the way are surmountable or not. After doing this, he prepares the provisions to be used on the road and does all that one should do in preparing to embark.

Son of the Buddha, even though that great leader of merchants has not yet set foot on the road to be taken, he is nonetheless able to know all of the circumstances that might threaten their security along the path. He is skilled in applying his wisdom⁶⁹ in assessment and observation, in preparing whatever they will need, in ensuring that they will not run short of anything, and in safely leading the entire band of merchants all along the way until they reach that great city, doing so in a manner whereby he himself as well as that group of men will all be able to avoid encountering disastrous circumstances.

Son of the Buddha, so too it is with the bodhisattva in his acting like a leader of merchants. Even as he dwells on the first ground, he comes to know well the obstacles encountered on the grounds as well as the means for countering them. He comes to well know everything else as well, all the way on through to his knowing of the purifying cultivation of all of the bodhisattva grounds and the subsequent progression on forth into the ground of the Tathāgata. Having accomplished this, he next prepares the provisions of merit and knowledge with which he will be able

to lead all beings through the hazardous and difficult regions within the vast wilderness of *saṃsāra*'s births and deaths so that they succeed in safely reaching the city of all-knowledge, all the while leading them along so neither he himself or those beings are forced to go through calamitous and difficult circumstances.

Therefore, the bodhisattva should never slacken in his diligent cultivation of the most especially superior purifying karmic deeds on all the grounds on through to the point where he enters the ground of the Tathāgata's knowledge.

16. VAJRAGARBHĀ'S FINAL STATEMENTS ABOUT THE FIRST GROUND BODHISATTVA

Son of the Buddha, this has been a summary discussion of the bodhisattva *mahāsattva*'s entry into the gateway of the first bodhisattva ground. Were one to present an extensive discussion of this, that would involve an incalculable and boundless number of hundreds of thousands of *asaṃkhyeyas* of differentiating factors.

a. THE BODHISATTVA'S STATION AND DHARMA PRACTICE

(XX) Son of the Buddha, the bodhisattva *mahāsattva* dwelling on the first ground often becomes a monarch reigning over the continent of Jambudvīpa who is a member of the aristocratic nobility that, acting with sovereign freedom, is able to draw forth beings through great giving. He is skilled in doing away with beings' filth of miserliness as he always practices endless great giving.

b. THE BODHISATTVA'S FOUR MEANS OF ATTRACTION AND MINDFULNESS

Even while pursuing the practices of giving, pleasing words, beneficial actions, and joint endeavors, in all these works that he carries out:

He never departs from mindfulness of the Buddha;
 He never departs from mindfulness of the Dharma;
 He never departs from mindfulness of the Sangha;
 He never departs from mindfulness of the bodhisattvas engaged
 in the same practices;
 He never departs from mindfulness of the bodhisattva conduct;
 He never departs from mindfulness of the *pāramitās*;
 He never departs from mindfulness of the grounds;
 He never departs from mindfulness of the powers;
 He never departs from mindfulness of the fearlessnesses;
 He never departs from mindfulness of the dharmas exclusive
 to the Buddha;

And so forth until we come to his never departing from mindfulness of his quest to achieve complete fulfillment of the knowledge of all modes and the cognition of all-knowledge.

c. THE BODHISATTVA'S ASPIRATION TO SERVE BEINGS

He also has this thought: "I should become one who serves these beings as a leader, as one who is supreme, as one who is most especially supreme, as one who is marvelous, as one who is most subtly marvelous, as one who is excellent, as one who is unexcelled, as one who is a guide, as one who is a general, one who is a supreme leader," and so forth until we come to "as one who relies on the cognition of all-knowledge."

d. THE RESULT OF THE BODHISATTVA'S LEAVING THE HOUSEHOLD LIFE

If this bodhisattva wishes to relinquish the home life and take up the diligent practice of vigor in the Dharma of the Buddha, then he will be able to relinquish the household, his wife and children, and the five desires, and then rely on the teaching of the Tathāgata in his abandonment of the household and in his study of the path.

Having left behind the home life, if he diligently applies himself in the cultivation of vigor, in but a single moment:

He will be able to acquire a hundred samādhis, see a hundred buddhas, and know a hundred buddhas' spiritual powers;
 He will be able to cause tremors in a hundred buddha worlds;
 He will be able to travel across a hundred buddha worlds;
 He will be able to illuminate a hundred buddha worlds;
 He will be able to teach the beings in a hundred buddha worlds;
 He will be able to remain for one hundred kalpas;
 He will be able to know events occurring throughout a hundred kalpas of the past and future;
 He will be able to enter a hundred Dharma gateways;
 He will be able to manifest a hundred bodies;
 And he will be able to manifest a hundred bodhisattvas to serve as the retinue for each and every one of those bodies.

(17) Then, if he resorts to the power of the especially supreme vows of the bodhisattva, he will become freely able to bring forth manifestations beyond this number, such that one would never be able to count them even in a period of a hundred kalpas, a thousand kalpas, or a hundred thousand kalpas.

17. VAJRAGARBHA BODHISATTVA'S SUMMARIZING VERSES

At that time, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva, wishing to once again proclaim his meaning, thereupon uttered verses, saying:

If someone accumulates the many sorts of good deeds,
 perfects the hundred sorts of dharmas of purification,
 makes offerings to those most honored among devas and men,
 accords with the path of kindness and compassion,

possesses the most extremely vast sort of resolute faith,
and possesses resolve and delight that are pristinely pure,
then, for the sake of seeking the wisdom⁷⁰ of the Buddha,
he brings forth this unexcelled resolve. (1)

In order to pursue the purification of all-knowledge, the powers,
and the fearlessnesses,
to achieve the perfection of all dharmas of the Buddha, and
to draws in and rescue the many sorts of beings,

And in order to acquire the great kindness and compassion,
set turning the wheel of the supreme Dharma,
and adorn and purify buddha lands,
he brings forth this utterly supreme resolve. (2)

In order, in a single moment, to know the three periods of time,
and still be free of discriminations about them,
in order, in all of the various eras, each different,
to manifest his presence within the world,

and, to state it briefly, in order to seek
all of the Buddhas' supreme meritorious qualities,
he brings forth the vast resolve
equal in its scope to the realm of empty space. (3)

Taking compassion as foremost and wisdom as primary,
adopting skillful means accordant with them,
being possessed of resolute faith and purified intentions,
availing himself of the Tathagata's measureless powers,
directly manifesting unimpeded knowledge,
bringing forth spontaneous understanding not reliant on others, and
gaining fulfillment herein that achieves parity with the Tathāgata,
he brings forth this most supreme resolve. (4)

When a son of the Buddha first brings forth
such a marvelous jewel-like resolve as this,
he then steps beyond the position of the common person
and enters into the station in which the Buddha courses.

He is thus born into the family of the Tathāgatas,
into that clan lineage utterly free of flaws, and
becomes one bound to become the equal of the Buddhas
who will definitely realize the unexcelled enlightenment. (5)

As soon as he brings forth such a resolve as this,
he straightaway succeeds in entering the first ground
and develops determination and delight as unshakeable
as the great king of the mountains.

He experiences abundant joy, abundant cherishing delight,
and abundant pure-minded faith as well,
marshals a great and heroically brave resolve,
and avails himself of celebratory and exhilarated thought. (6)

He abandons disputatiousness,
harmful behavior, and hatred,
and becomes humble, respectful, and straightforward in character
while also skillfully guarding the sense faculties.

Regarding those who are matchless in rescuing the world
and all of their many varieties of wisdom,⁷¹
he reflects: "This is the station that I am bound to realize,"
and, in bringing them to mind, he is filled with joy. (7)

On first gaining entry into the first ground,
he straightaway oversteps five types of fearfulness:
failure to survive, death, ill-repute,
the wretched destinies, and the awesome virtue of assemblies.

It is because they have no covetous attachment to a self
or to anything belonging to a self
that these sons of the Buddha
abandon all forms of fearfulness. (8)

They always practice great kindness and sympathy
and constantly possess faith and reverence.
Replete in a sense of shame, a dread of blame, and the qualities,
they strive day and night to increase in good dharmas.
They delight in the genuine benefit conferred by the Dharma,
and are not fond of indulgence in the desires. (9)

They contemplate the Dharma that they have learned
and leave far behind actions involving grasping and attachment.
They do not covet offerings or support,
only delight in the bodhi of the Buddha,
single-mindedly seek to acquire the Buddha's knowledge,
and focus intently on maintaining undistracted mindfulness.
They cultivate the *pāramitās*
and abandon flattery, falseness, and deception. (10)

They cultivate in accordance with what has been proclaimed,
and establish themselves in truthful speech.
They refrain from defiling the house of the Buddhas,
never relinquish the moral precepts of the bodhisattva,
do not delight in any sort of worldly matters,
and always benefit the world.
They are insatiable in the cultivation of what is good,
and strive ever more to reach increasingly superior paths. (11)

In this manner, they are fond of and delight in dharmas associated with meritorious qualities and whatever is meaningful. They constantly raise up the resolve of their great vows, vow to go and see the Buddhas, vow to guard and sustain all Buddhas' Dharma, and vow to gather and preserve the Great Rishi's teachings on the path. They always bring forth vows such as these, vowing to cultivate the most supreme practices. (12)

They vow to bring all sorts of beings to maturation, vow to carry forth the purifying adornment of the buddha lands, vow to bring it about that, all buddha lands shall become completely filled with sons of the Buddha, vow that they shall maintain the same singular resolve as theirs, vows that, whatever actions one does shall not have been in vain, and vows that, even in those places within the tip of every hair, they will, at once, manifest the realization of right enlightenment. (13)

They make such great vows as these that are measurelessly vast and boundless in their reach. They declare: "If there were an end to empty space or beings, an end to the Dharma realm or nirvāṇa, an end to the worlds or the appearance of buddhas in the world, an end to the Buddhas' knowledge (14) or to objects of mind, (14) an end to the realms entered by a *tathāgata's* knowledge or to the three permutations [of worlds, dharmas, and knowledge]— If all of these phenomena were to somehow come to an end, my vows might then begin to come to an end. But, just as all of those have no point at which they would end, So too it is with these vows that I have made." (15)

Thus it is that they bring forth great vows with minds that are gentle, subdued, and adaptive. Through their ability to maintain faith in the Buddha's qualities and contemplate the realms of beings, they realize their circumstances arise due to causes and conditions, and then let flourish their kindly and mindful resolve, wherein they reflect thus: "Suffering beings of this sort are such as I should now rescue and liberate." (16)

For the sake of these beings, they then carry out the many different types of giving, relinquishing the royal throne and jewels as well as other possessions, including elephants, horses, and carriages,

their heads, eyes, hands and feet,
 even to the point of giving their entire body, its blood and its flesh.
 They are able to relinquish absolutely everything
 while still remaining free of any distress or regret in this. ⁽¹⁷⁾

They strive to study the many different scriptures
 with minds tireless in this pursuit.
 They skillfully comprehend their meaning and import,
 and are able to adapt to the world in implementing their practices.

They grace themselves with a sense of shame and dread of blame
 and become ever more solid in their cultivation.

They make offerings to countless buddhas,
 doing so with respect and profound veneration. ⁽¹⁸⁾

Thus it is that they are always devoted to cultivation,
 carrying it forward tirelessly, both day and night.
 Their roots of goodness become ever more bright and pure
 just as with true gold when it is refined in fire.

The bodhisattva dwelling herein
 engages in the purifying cultivation of the ten grounds
 and remains free of obstacles in all endeavors he pursues,
 bringing them to completion without interruption. ⁽¹⁹⁾

In this, he is like a great leader of merchants
 who, for the sake of benefiting an entire group of traders,
 inquires about and learns the road's hazardous and easy conditions,
 thus ensuring safe arrival at some great city.

The bodhisattva abiding on the first ground
 should also be known as just like this.
 Bringing heroic bravery to bear, he remains unimpeded
 as he advances all the way to the tenth ground. ⁽²⁰⁾

When he abides on this first ground,
 he may become a monarch possessed of great meritorious qualities
 who employs the Dharma in teaching beings
 and uses the mind of kindness to refrain from inflicting injury
 as he unites and leads the residents of Jambudvīpa
 in a way that there are none not reached by his transformative acts.
 Thus they are all caused to abide in that great relinquishing
 through which they perfect the Buddha's wisdom.⁷² ⁽²¹⁾

Then, wishing to pursue the most supreme of paths,
 he relinquishes his position on the royal throne.
 He becomes able in taking up the Buddha's teachings
 to diligently pursue their cultivation with such heroic bravery

that he then succeeds in acquiring a hundred samādhis,
 in seeing a hundred buddhas,
 and in causing tremors throughout a hundred worlds.
 His radiantly illuminating practices are also of this sort. {22}

Thus he teaches the beings in a hundred lands,
 enters a hundred gateways into the Dharma,
 knows the events occurring for a hundred kalpas,
 manifests a hundred bodies therein,

and manifests a hundred bodhisattvas
 to serve in each of their retinues.

If he avails himself of his sovereign mastery over the power of vows,
 he may extend his capacities beyond this to incalculable numbers. {23}

I have provided here a summary description
 of but a minor measure of this ground's meanings
 If one wished to comprehensively distinguish them all,
 he could never finish it even in a *koṭi* of kalpas.

The supreme path of the bodhisattva
 benefits all of the many types of beings.

I have hereby now concluded the explanation of
 such dharmas of the first ground as these. {24}