

CHAPTER SIX

The Direct Presence Ground

F. THE SIXTH GROUND: THE DIRECT PRESENCE GROUND

1. THE SIXTH GROUND'S INTRODUCTORY VERSES AND DHARMA REQUEST

When the bodhisattvas had heard the explanation
of the characteristic features of this supreme ground's practices,
they showered down many sorts of marvelous and precious jewels
from the midst of the skies above,

that, emitting pure and radiant light,
they presented there as offerings to the Bhagavat.
Everyone then uttered praises, saying, "This is good indeed,
good indeed, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva." (1)

There were at that time countless many *koṭis*
of devas there who all rejoiced and,
from up above in space,
showered down many sorts of precious powdered incense.

The rays of light wove together in an elegantly patterned array
that was subtle, marvelous, and utterly pleasing
as the many sorts of incense, flowers, necklaces,
and canopies showered down to the Buddha from above. (2)

The King of the Paranirmita Vaśavartin Heaven,
together with his retinue and others,
rained down many sorts of marvelous and precious objects
that sprinkled gently down, as if descending in a cloud.

They sang forth verses as offerings to the Buddha
and as praises to Vajragarbha,
all in unison proclaiming, "How good indeed.
This is good indeed. May you soon explain these matters." (3)

A thousand myriads of *koṭis* of celestial nymphs,
from where they were abiding in space above,
sent forth many sorts of heavenly musical sounds
singing forth their praises of the Buddha's meritorious qualities

and all in unison uttered these words:
"That which the Tathāgata has proclaimed
is subtle, sublime, and possessed of incalculable import,
for it is able to extinguish all afflictions, (4)

reveals all dharmas as, in their fundamental nature, empty,
 as devoid of any mark even so small as the point of a tiny hair,
 as, in their emptiness, beyond the range of discriminations,
 as analogous in this to empty space itself,
 as devoid of any mark of either coming forth or abiding,
 as beyond the range of frivolous theoretical ideation,
 as fundamentally eternally pure,
 as in a state of true suchness, and as beyond discriminating thought.

(5)

If one is able to reach a penetrating comprehension
 of the nature of all dharmas,
 his mind remains unshaken
 with respect to what exists or what does not exist.

His sole priority is to use the mind of great compassion
 for the sake of liberating beings.

One such as this is a son of the Buddhas
 born from the Dharma proclaimed by the Buddha. (6)

He is always devoted to the practice of giving
 and to bestowing benefit on beings.

Having already become thoroughly pure,
 he thus upholds the moral precepts, doing so with solid resolve.

Knowing the dharmas as free of any basis for harming,
 he is thus devoted to the practice of patience.

Knowing dharmas are by nature transcendent,¹⁸⁴
 he thus courses in the practice of vigor. (7)

Having previously extinguished the afflictions,
 he thus enters all the *dhyānas*.

Having previously comprehended the emptiness of dharmas,
 he thus selectively distinguishes dharmas.

Though his knowledge of quiescent cessation is extensive,
 he still strives to be of benefit to those abiding in the world.

Whosoever is thus able to extinguish every form of evil
 is one who qualifies as great person." (8)

After the celestial nymphs had thus employed
 a hundred thousand sublime sounds
 in singing forth verses in praise,
 they all fell silent and quietly gazed up at the Buddha. (9)

Liberation Moon Bodhisattva

then posed a request to Vajragarbha Bodhisattva, inquiring:
 "Availing oneself of which characteristic attributes
 might one then succeed in gaining the sixth ground?" (10)

2. VAJRAGARBHA COMMENCES THE FIFTH GROUND'S EXPLANATION

[A] Vajragarbha Bodhisattva then replied:

3. THE TEN DHARMAS OF IDENTITY ENABLING ACCESS TO THE SIXTH GROUND

O Sons of the Buddha, the bodhisattva *mahāsattva* who, having already completely fulfilled the fifth ground's practices, then wishes to enter the sixth ground, should take up the cultivation of ten dharmas of identity¹⁸⁵ to succeed in entering the sixth ground. What then are these ten? They are as follows:¹⁸⁶

First, all dharmas are the same due to their absence of any inherent nature;

Second, all dharmas are the same due to their signlessness;¹⁸⁷

Third, all dharmas are the same due to being unproduced;

Fourth, all dharmas are the same due to being undestroyed;

Fifth, all dharmas are the same due to being fundamentally pure;

Sixth, all dharmas are the same due to being beyond frivolous theoretical ideation;

Seventh, all dharmas are the same due to being beyond either grasping or relinquishing;

Eighth, all dharmas are the same due to being entirely transcendent;

Ninth, all dharmas are the same due to being like a conjured illusion, like a dream, like a shadow, like an echo, like the moon reflected on water, like an image in a mirror, like a mirage, and like a magical transformation;¹⁸⁸

Tenth, all dharmas are the same due to the inherent non-duality in their existence and non-existence.

4. 6TH GROUND ENTRY, ACQUIESCENT PATIENCE, AND PRIMACY OF COMPASSION

Sons of the Buddha, the bodhisattva *mahāsattvas* who have already completely fulfilled the fifth ground's practices and who then employ these ten dharmas of identity become able thereby to achieve entry into the sixth ground.

Sons of the Buddha, when the bodhisattva *mahāsattva* becomes able to contemplate the nature of all dharmas in this way he becomes able to employ patience that is acquiescent and gains the sixth ground. Although the unproduced-dharmas patience has not yet become directly manifest, his mind will then have already acquired clarity and acuity and he thus then successfully develops the acquiescent patience.¹⁸⁹

(B) When this bodhisattva contemplates all dharmas as characterized in these ways, he takes the great compassion as what is foremost and progressively extends the degree to which completely develops it.

5. THE BODHISATTVA'S CONTEMPLATION OF CAUSALITY IN CYCLIC EXISTENCE¹⁹⁰

(C) He additionally employs a superior contemplation through which he contemplates the signs of production and cessation in the world.

As a consequence, he reflects thus:¹⁹¹

In all circumstances throughout the entire world wherein one takes on physical rebirth, it occurs due to attachment to a self. Were one to abandon all attachment to a self, then there would be no further circumstance in which one would take rebirth in the world.

a. CONTEMPLATION OF THE SEQUENTIAL CONTINUITY OF CAUSAL FACTORS

All common people are blinded by delusion and hence are attached to the existence of a self. They always delight in pursuit of existence and always follow the course of erroneous conceptions. Thus they pursue deviant and false paths and habitually bring forth three sorts of actions: actions involving karmic offenses, actions productive of karmic merit, and imperturbable actions.¹⁹² Through these sorts of actions, they instigate the germination of seeds within the mind. Due to thought characterized by the contaminants and *grasping*, they instigate the birth of a body subject to *birth* and *death* in a circumstance wherein *volitional actions* are the soil, *consciousness* is the seed, *ignorance* is what keeps it covered over, the water of *craving* is what moistens it, the thought conceiving of the existence of a "self" keeps it irrigated, and the generation of all the different sorts of views promotes its growth and gives birth to the sprout of *name-and-form*.

It is due to *name-and-form* that the growth of the *sense faculties* occurs.

It is due to the impingement [of the sense objects] on the *sense faculties* that *contact* is then generated.

It is from *contact* that one then generates *feeling*.

Through delighting in *feeling*, one generates *craving*.

It is due to the growth in *craving* that the four-fold *grasping*¹⁹³ occurs.

It is due to the causes and conditions constituted by the four-fold *grasping* that one thus generates *actions*.

Through *becoming*, one generates the five-aggregate body. This is what constitutes *birth*.

The subsequent deterioration occurring in the five aggregates constitutes *aging*.

The culmination of that deterioration in destruction constitutes *death*.

Because of the causes and conditions constituted by *aging* and *death*, *worry*, *lamentation*, *intense torment*, and the many sorts of *suffering* then accumulate. Now, within these twelve causes and conditions, there is no entity that accumulates, and yet these naturally accumulate. There is no entity that becomes scattered, and yet scattering naturally occurs. When the causes and conditions come together, then these things exist. When the causes and conditions scatter, then they become nonexistent.

So it is that the bodhisattva *mahāsattva* on the sixth ground carries on the progressive contemplation of the twelve causes and conditions.

b. THE BODHISATTVA CONTEMPLATES THE DEFINITIONS OF CAUSAL LINKS

(D) He also reflects in this manner:

It is because of failing to know the ultimate meaning of the truths in accordance with reality that one comes to have *ignorance* covering over the mind.

The karmic effect of *ignorance* is what constitutes *volitional actions*.

It is based on *volitional actions* that there occurs the initial arising of *consciousness*.

The four appropriated aggregates arise together with *consciousness*.

It is based on the appropriated aggregates that *name-and-form* exist.

With development of *name-and-form*, there exist *the six sense faculties*.

Due to *the sense faculties'* interactions with the sense objects, there exist *consciousnesses*.

From the coming together of these factors, there then develops *contact* characterized by the contaminants.

Arising together with *contact* there then exists *feeling*.

It is the desire for and delight in *feelings* that constitute *craving*.

The increase and development of *craving* is what constitutes *grasping*.

From *grasping*, there then arise *volitional actions* characterized by the presence of the contaminants.

With the existence of *volitional actions*, there develops the resultant retributive effect of *becoming* occurring in the form of the five aggregates that then constitutes *birth*.

The maturation of the five aggregates is what constitutes *aging*.

It is the destruction of the five aggregates that constitutes *death*.

With the separation occurring at the time of *death*, the agitation arising in the clinging mind of the foolish person brings about *worry* and *lamentation* together with wailing and weeping.

This experience as it occurs in association with the five sense consciousnesses is what constitutes *suffering* here, whereas it is that of the intellectual mind consciousness that is associated with *worry*.

As *worry* and *suffering* become increasingly great, they constitute *torment*.

In a circumstance such as this, there can only be the growth of a great tree of suffering, a great mass of suffering.

Yet, in such a mass of suffering associated with the twelve-fold chain of causes and conditions, there does not exist either any “self” or anything belonging to a self. There is no agent of actions or any entity that directs the performance of actions, either.

The bodhisattva continues to reflect in this manner:

If an agent of actions existed, then there would also be endeavors that it would perform. If no agent of actions existed, then there would be no such endeavors performed. From the standpoint of ultimate truth, no agent of actions exists, nor do there exist any endeavors that are performed.

C. THE BODHISATTVA’S CONTEMPLATION OF MIND AS THE BASIS OF EXISTENCE

(E) He additionally thinks:

The three realms of existence themselves are false, for they are mere creations of the mind. (F) The Tathāgata has stated that all of the factors constituting the twelve causes and conditions depend entirely on the mind. And why? It is in accordance with particular circumstances that a thought of desire arises. This thought is identical with *consciousness*, whereas the particular circumstances themselves constitute the basis of *volitional actions*. The delusion of the mind in the context of the *volitional actions* is what constitutes *ignorance*. The location upon which the *consciousness* depends is *name-and-form*. It is in reliance upon the sense bases that a thought of desire is generated. This is an

emblematic characteristic of *the six sense bases*. It is through the conjunction of the three factors that there exists *contact*. That which arises in conjunction with *contact* is *feeling*. It is the desire-based attachment for that which is experienced as *feeling* that constitutes *craving*. When *craving* is not relinquished, then this is what constitutes the basis of *grasping*. It is on account of the coming together associated with this that *becoming* then occurs. The additional existence continuing forth from this is what then brings about *birth*. It is the maturation unfolding after *birth* that constitutes *aging*. The destruction that comes about with aging is what constitutes *death*.

d. THE CONTEMPLATION OF 2 FUNCTIONS OF EACH CAUSAL CHAIN LINK

{G} Among these, *ignorance* has two functions: First, it constitutes the delusion operative in the midst of conditions. Second, it serves as the cause for the generation of *volitional actions*.

Volitional actions also have two functions: First, they generate future retribution. Second, they serve as the cause of *consciousness*.

Consciousness also has two functions: First, it is able to cause the occurrence of continuity. Second, it serves as the cause of *name-and-form*.

Name-and-form also have two functions: First, they are mutually cooperative in their establishment. Second, they serve as the cause of *the six sense bases*.

The six sense bases also have two functions: First, they are able to take the six sense objects as objective conditions. Second, they serve as the cause of *contact*.

Contact also has two functions: First, it is able to contact objective conditions. Second, it serves as the cause of *feeling*.

Feeling also has two functions: First, it manifests an awareness of circumstances that are either detested or loved. Second, it serves as the cause of *craving*.

Craving also has two functions: First, it generates thoughts of desire toward what may cause defilement. Second, it serves as the cause of *grasping*.

Grasping also has two functions: First, it is able to bring about an increase in the afflictions. Second, it serves as the cause of *becoming*.

Becoming also has two functions: First, it is able to bring about *birth* within other destinies of rebirth. Second, it serves as the cause of *birth*.

Birth also has two functions: First, it is able to bring about the arising of the five aggregates. Second, it serves as the cause of *aging*.

Aging also has two functions: First, it causes the maturation of all of the sense faculties. Second, it serves as the cause of *death*.

Death also has two functions: First, it brings about the destruction of the five-aggregate body. Second, because there is then no conscious awareness, it thus allows this process to continue on and not be cut off.

e. THE CONTEMPLATION OF CAUSAL CHAIN PRODUCTION AND DESTRUCTION

(H) In this context, where *ignorance* serves as a condition for *volitional actions*, it is because *ignorance* causes *volitional actions* to continue on without cease and because it facilitates the establishment of *volitional actions*.

Where *volitional actions* serve as a condition for *consciousness*, it is because *volitional actions* cause *consciousness* to continue on without cease and because they facilitate the establishment of *consciousness*.

Where *consciousness* serves as a condition for *name-and-form*, it is because *consciousness* causes *name-and-form* to continue on without cease and because it facilitates the establishment of *name-and-form*.

[So too does this principle hold true] on through to *birth's* serving as a condition for *aging, death, worry, lamentation, suffering, and torment*. *Birth* then is ceaseless, this because it continuously facilitates the establishment of *name-and-form*.

f. CONTEMPLATION OF THE 12 LINKS' ASSOCIATION WITH INSEPARABILITY.

[So too does this same principle hold true where,] if *ignorance* ceases, then *volitional actions* cease, and so forth on through to *aging, death, worry, lamentation, suffering, and torment*.

In this context, if *ignorance* becomes nonexistent, then *volitional actions* also become nonexistent. If the cause is destroyed, then the effect is destroyed. This also holds true for the remaining factors as well.

g. THE TWELVE LINKS AS CONSTITUENTS OF THREE PATHS

(H) Among these factors, it is the three factors of *ignorance, craving, and grasping* that constitute the ceaseless *path of afflictions*. The factors extending from *volitional actions* on through to *becoming* constitute the ceaseless *path of karmic volitional actions*. The remaining factors in the chain of causes and conditions constitute the ceaseless *path of suffering*.

Because of the ceaseless prior and subsequent continuity involved in these, these three paths themselves are ceaseless. These three paths' constituents exist apart from any self or possessions of a self and yet still undergo a process of production and extinction wherein they are analogous to two stalks of bamboo that, by virtue of their leaning one against the other, they are thus able to remain standing.¹⁹⁴ By themselves, they are not solidly established and yet they are thus able [in this manner] to exist in a manner resembling a state of being solidly established.

h. THE TWELVE LINKS' CORRELATION WITH THE THREE PERIODS OF TIME

(j) Where *ignorance* serves as a cause and condition for *volitional actions*, this refers to past circumstances. *Consciousness, name-and-form, the six sense bases, contact, and feeling* are circumstances associated with the present. *Craving, grasping, becoming, birth, aging, and death* are circumstances associated with the future.

There is in these factors a progression going forth through the three periods of time. Where it is stated that, with the extinguishing of *ignorance*, *volitional actions* are then consequently extinguished, this constitutes an explanation of how continuity is severed.

i. THE TWELVE LINKS' CORRELATION WITH THE THREE KINDS OF SUFFERING

(k) This twelve-fold chain of causes and conditions describes *the three sufferings*. *Ignorance, volitional actions, consciousness, name-and-form, and the six sense bases* collectively constitute *the suffering associated with the karmic formative factors*.¹⁹⁵ *Contact and feeling* constitute *the suffering of suffering*.¹⁹⁶ *Craving, grasping, becoming, birth, death, worry, lamentation, suffering, and torment* constitute *the suffering of deterioration*.¹⁹⁷

j. CONTEMPLATION OF THEIR ARISING & CEASING BY CAUSES AND CONDITIONS

Where it is stated that, because *ignorance* is extinguished, *volitional actions* are then consequently extinguished, and so forth on through to *birth* and *death*, this constitutes an explanation of how continuity in *the three sufferings* is severed.

(l) With *ignorance* as the cause, *volitional actions* are then consequently produced. So too it is with the remaining factors. With the extinguishing of *ignorance*, *volitional actions* are then consequently extinguished. Because *volitional actions* are devoid of any inherently essential nature, the same follows for all of the remaining factors as well.

k. CONTEMPLATION OF THEIR CREATION AND DESTRUCTION OF THE BONDS

Where it is stated that *ignorance* serves as a cause and condition for the generation of *volitional actions*, this corresponds to the explanation of how the development of the bonds develops. Where it is stated that, because *ignorance* is extinguished, *volitional actions* are thus consequently extinguished, this corresponds to the explanation of how the bonds are destroyed. This same principle applies to the remaining factors as well.

l. CONTEMPLATION OF "UTTER NONEXISTENCE" & "UTTER CESSATION"

Where it is stated that *ignorance* serves as a cause and condition for *volitional actions*, this is a statement accordant with the "utter nonexistence" contemplation.

Where it is stated that, because *ignorance* is extinguished, *volitional actions* are thus consequently extinguished, this is a statement accordant with the "utter cessation" contemplation. This same principle applies to the remaining factors as well.

m. A SUMMARY LISTING OF 10 CONTEMPLATIONS OF THE 12 CAUSAL FACTORS

{M} It is in this manner that one engages in ten types of sequential and counter-sequential contemplations of the dharma of the twelve-fold chain of causes and conditions.¹⁹⁸ Specifically, they are:¹⁹⁹

Contemplation of the sequential continuity of the causal factors;

Contemplation of their reducibility to body and mind;²⁰⁰

Contemplation of it as a dharma wherein each factor assists in its establishment;

Contemplation of their inseparability;

Contemplation of their conforming to proceeding along in the three paths;²⁰¹

Contemplation distinguishing their associations with the past and the future;

Contemplation distinguishing their associations with the three types of suffering;

Contemplation of their arising based on causes and conditions;

Contemplation of their association with the creation and destruction of the bonds;

Contemplation in terms of "utter nonexistence" and "utter cessation."

6. THE BODHISATTVA'S ACQUISITION OF THE THREE GATES TO LIBERATION

{N} At this time, pursuant to his reflections on the twelve-fold chain of causes and conditions, the bodhisattva contemplates and

observes the nonexistence of self, the nonexistence of beings, the non-existence of any entity possessed of a life, the nonexistence of any person, the absence of any inherently existent nature, and the transcendence of any agent of actions, any director of actions, or any subjective entity, he observes that, because they belong to a multiplicity of subsidiary causes and conditions, they are devoid of anything at all that exists. When he contemplates in this manner, he then acquires the direct manifestation of *the emptiness gate to liberation*.²⁰²

Due to perceiving the cessation of these phenomena so that they no longer demonstrate any continuity of existence, he acquires what is known as the direct manifestation of *the signlessness gate to liberation*.²⁰³

Having realized both of these things, he then no longer feels any pleasure in taking on rebirths with the sole exception of doing so to implement the mind of great compassion in the transformative teaching of beings. He then acquires the direct manifestation of *the wishlessness gate to liberation*.²⁰⁴

When the bodhisattva cultivates these *three gates to liberation*, he abandons any mark of others or a self, abandons any mark of any agent of actions or anyone who undergoes experiences, and abandons any mark of either existence or nonexistence.

7. THE BODHISATTVA'S COMPASSIONATE RELUCTANCE TO ENTER FINAL NIRVĀṆA

(0) His mind of compassion thus progressively increases. As a consequence of his emphasis on the importance of the mind of compassion, he becomes diligent in the practice of vigor. Thus, whichever dharmas facilitating bodhi he has not yet brought to complete fulfillment, he then wishes to bring to complete fulfillment. Hence the bodhisattva then reflects thus:

It is due to a circumstance involving a conjunction of factors that conditioned entities continue on. When those factors scatter, they are then destroyed. It is because a multiplicity of conditions are completely present that they continue on and it is because of their becoming incomplete that they are then destroyed.

Because I am now aware of the many faults of conditioned dharmas, I should not indulge the complete fulfillment of such conjunctions of causes and conditions. However, in order to carry on the transformative teaching of beings, I should still refrain from bringing about the ultimate destruction of conditioned dharmas.

Sons of the Buddha, so it is that the bodhisattva realizes the manifold faults of conditioned dharmas and realizes that they are devoid of any inherently existent nature, that they exist apart from any characteristic of solidly established durability, and that they are neither produced nor destroyed. Even so, he becomes conjoined with the great kindness and great compassion, refrains from forsaking beings, and then immediately acquires the direct manifestation of the light of unimpeded *prajñāpāramitā*.

Having acquired just such wisdom, he proceeds to completely perfect the cultivation and gathering together of the causes and conditions for acquiring *anuttarasamyakṣambodhi*, and yet, even in doing so, refrains from abiding in the midst of conditioned dharmas. He contemplates the nature of conditioned dharmas as characterized by quiescent cessation and yet refrains from abiding in this either. This is because he wishes to completely perfect the factors leading to the unsurpassable bodhi.

8. THE BODHISATTVA'S SAMĀDHIS RELATED TO THE THREE GATES TO LIBERATION

{P} The bodhisattva abiding on the Ground of Direct Presence acquires:²⁰⁵

- The penetration of emptiness samādhi;
- The emptiness of any inherently existent nature samādhi;
- The emptiness of the supreme meaning samādhi;
- The foremost emptiness samādhi;
- The great emptiness samādhi;
- The emptiness of unities samādhi;
- The emptiness of production samādhi;
- The reality-accordant non-discriminating emptiness samādhi;
- The all-embracing emptiness samādhi;
- And the transcendent yet not transcendent emptiness samādhi.

He acquires the direct manifestation of a myriad such emptiness samādhis. So too does this occur in the same manner with the signlessness samādhis and the wishlessness samādhis.

9. THE BODHISATTVA'S TEN TYPES OF RESOLUTE INTENTIONS

{Q} This bodhisattva who abides on the Ground of Direct Presence develops:²⁰⁶

- The determined resolute intention;²⁰⁷
- The definitely certain resolute intention;
- The sublime resolute intention;²⁰⁸
- The profound resolute intention;
- The non-retreating resolute intention;

The unrelenting resolute intention;
 The vast resolute intention;
 The boundless resolute intention;
 The resolute intention that delights in knowledge;
 And the resolute intention joining wisdom and skillful means.

10. 10 CONSEQUENCES OF THE BODHISATTVA'S 10 TYPES OF RESOLUTE INTENTIONS

(R) Because he brings such resolute intentions as these to ever more supreme degrees of development, he:

Accords with *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*;
 Becomes one that none of the treatise masters of other traditions can cause to quaver in the slightest;
 Enters the grounds of knowledge;
 Turns away from the Śrāvaka-disciples and the Pratyekabuddhas;
 Progresses resolutely toward the knowledge of the Buddha;
 Becomes invulnerable to being controlled by any of the many sorts of *māras* or afflictions;
 Becomes securely established in the light of the bodhisattva's wisdom;
 Skillfully cultivates the emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness gates to liberation;
 Devotes himself to the employment of wisdom conjoined to skillful means;
 And practices the dharmas assisting the realization of bodhi.

11. THE BODHISATTVA'S PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ PRACTICE AND PATIENCE ACQUISITION

(S) This bodhisattva who dwells on the Ground of Direct Presence develops ever more supreme practice of *prajñāpāramitā* and acquires the third of the patiences, the supremely acquiescent patience,²⁰⁹ this due to acting in accordance with and never contrary to this dharma.

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

The bodhisattva dwelling on this Ground of Direct Presence succeeds in being able to see many hundreds of buddhas, many thousands of buddhas, and so forth on up to many hundreds of thousands of myriads of *koṭis* of buddhas, making offerings to them, paying reverence to them, venerating them, praising them, and presenting them with robes, food and drink, bedding, and medicines. He draws close to the Buddhas and listens to the teaching of the Dharma in the presence of the Buddhas. Having heard their teachings on Dharma, he employs the light of reality-concordant wisdom to implement those teachings in practice in a manner

accordant with the way they were taught, doing so in a manner that delights all buddhas.

This person becomes ever more superior in his knowledge of the Dharma treasury of the Buddhas, continuing in this way for a time extending even up to countless many hundreds of thousands of myriads of *koṭis* of kalpas during which his roots of goodness become ever more marvelous in the shining brilliance of their purity.

13. PURIFYING GOOD ROOTS LIKE POLISHING GOLD & MOONLIGHT'S COOLNESS

Sons of the Buddha, this is analogous to that circumstance wherein one uses a lapis lazuli jewel in polishing real gold to such lustrousness that its brilliant appearance becomes ever more supremely radiant. So too, the bodhisattva who abides on this Ground of Direct Presence, through employing wisdom together with skillful means, develops roots of goodness that become ever more supreme in the radiance, purity, and quiescence through which they become unapproachable by the roots of goodness of those abiding on other grounds.

Sons of the Buddha, in this, their radiance is analogous to the light of the moon that is able to cause the bodies of beings to experience a sense of pristine purity that not even the blowing of the four kinds of winds could diminish. The roots of goodness of the bodhisattva *mahāsattva* dwelling on this Ground of Direct Presence increase in their supremacy to the point that they can extinguish the fires of the afflictions of countless many beings while also becoming invulnerable to destruction even by any of the four kinds of evil *māras*.

14. VAJRAGARBHĀ'S FINAL STATEMENTS ABOUT THE 6TH GROUND BODHISATTVA

Sons of the Buddha, this has been a description of the bodhisattva *mahāsattva's* Ground of Direct Presence.

a. THE BODHISATTVA'S STATION AND DHARMA PRACTICE

The bodhisattva who abides on this ground often becomes a king of the Fine Transformations Heaven²¹⁰ possessed of fiercely sharp wisdom that is able to demolish anyone's overweening pride and that can never be exhausted by the challenging questions of any *śrāvaka*-disciple.

b. THE BODHISATTVA'S MINDFULNESS

In all endeavors he takes up, he employs giving, pleasing words, beneficial actions, and joint endeavors and never departs from mindfulness of the Buddha, mindfulness of the Dharma,

mindfulness of his bodhisattva companions, and so forth until we come to his never departing from mindfulness of the knowledge of all modes.

c. THE BODHISATTVA'S ASPIRATION TO SERVE BEINGS

He always brings forth a vow in which he states, "I shall become one who serves as a leader for beings, one worthy of veneration..." and so forth until we come to his thinking, "I shall become one upon whom all beings can rely."

d. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE BODHISATTVA'S VIGOR AND VOWS

If this bodhisattva wishes to bring forth the diligent practice of vigor, then, in but an instant, he becomes able to acquire tens of myriads of *koṭis* of samādhis and so forth until we come to his ability to manifest tens of myriads of *koṭis* of bodhisattvas to serve him as a retinue. Were he to avail himself of the power of vows, he could manifest these phenomena in even greater numbers so large that one could never calculate them even in however many hundreds of thousands of myriads of *koṭis* of *nayutas* of kalpas one might attempt to do so.

15. VAJRAGARBHA BODHISATTVA'S SUMMARIZING VERSES

At that time, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva, wishing to further clarify the meaning of this discourse, thereupon uttered verses, saying:

When bodhisattvas have already succeeded
in completely fulfilling the fifth ground's practices,
realizing dharmas' sameness through absence of inherent nature,²¹¹
signless, unproduced, undestroyed,

originally and always pure,
and beyond frivolous theoretical ideation—
through cultivation and accumulation of knowledge such as this—
they then succeed in entering the sixth ground. (11)

So too with dharmas' sameness due to always transcending signs,
due to being beyond either grasping or relinquishing,
due to being empty by nature and like mere conjurations,
due to transcending duality, and due to being beyond discrimination.

If they are able to accord with such
a subtle and sublime import
so that their minds refrain from opposing it,
they may then succeed in entering the sixth ground. (12)

Through abiding in clarity and acquiescent patience
and through the development of strength in wisdom,
they contemplate all
characteristic signs of production and destruction in the world
and thus realize that the entire world
in all cases comes forth from the darkness of delusion
and that, were the darkness of delusion to be destroyed,
then the entire world could no longer exist. (13)

Contemplatively investigating the dharma of causes and conditions,
they observe its accordance with the ultimate meaning
even as it does not contradict karmic conditions, retribution,
actions, or conventional designations,

observing too that, in reality, no agent of actions exists at all,
and observing that no entity undergoing experience exists, either.
They contemplate all that is conditioned in just this way,
seeing it all as like clouds wherein nothing substantial exists. (14)

Failure to realize meaning in accordance with ultimate truth
is what constitutes *ignorance*.

It is from this that one generates thought
and pursues physical and verbal *actions* that engender retributions.

It is from *actions* that there exists *consciousness*
and then the immediate development of *name-and-form*.

It is in this manner that one comes to be born into the world,
arriving then amidst birth, death, and a mass of suffering. (15)

If one utterly realizes that the three realms of existence
all exist entirely from the mind

and realizes too that the twelve causes and conditions
reside entirely within the purview of a single thought—

if one develops this realization, then one sees birth and death
as coming forth solely from the mind

and sees that, if one but succeeds in extinguishing this thought,
birth and death will then become extinguished as well. (16)

The two functions of *ignorance*

whereby it serves to produce delusion and instigate actions,

and so forth on through to *aging-and-death's*

destructive ruination of the five aggregates—

it is from the sphere of these very factors

that one entirely brings forth all of this suffering and affliction. (17)

But if these factors were to all be brought to an end,

then this suffering and affliction would also be brought to an end.

So long as *ignorance* is fully present,
then the continuity of this process will not be cut off.

However, if these causes and conditions are not fully present,
then one may thereby cut off this very continuity.

Ignorance on through to *craving* and *grasping*
are synonymous with *the path of afflictions*.

Actions and *becoming* comprise *the path of karmic deeds*.

The remaining factors then are what constitute *the path of suffering*. (18)

Ignorance on through to the *six sense bases*
constitute *the suffering associated with the karmic formative factors*.

Contact and *feeling* constitute *the suffering of suffering*.

The remaining factors are what constitute *the suffering of deterioration*.

If one extinguishes the continuities underlying *the three sufferings*,
then the self itself will no longer exist. (19)

Ignorance as well as *actions*
are associated with the past.

Consciousness on through to *feeling*—
these are associated with the present.

It is on the basis of *craving* that one then generates suffering.

These then are associated with the future.

If one extinguishes *ignorance*,
with this, one then will become free of suffering. (20)

This delusion arises from multiple conditions
and then generates the fetters.

If the multiple conditions are destroyed,
then one thereby destroys the fetters.

It is on the basis of causes that one then generates effects.

If the cause is destroyed, then the effect is destroyed.

Through contemplating all dharmas in this manner,
one observes that they are empty of any inherently existent nature. (21)

It is through following the course of *ignorance*
that the entire world emerges.

“If one acts in a manner that counteracts *ignorance*,
this being the case, then one thereby cuts off *becoming*.”

“It is from having this factor that one then has this other factor,”

“If this factor does not exist, then this other factor no longer exists.”

In just this manner, one carries out *the ten kinds of contemplations*
regarding this extremely profound dharma of causes and conditions,
contemplating the continuity of causes and conditions
as they occur in the past, in the future, and in the present. (22)

Not apart from their presence within a single thought,
 one distinguishes *the three paths*,
 pursuing the contemplation of *the three kinds of suffering*
 as well as that of the dharma of production and destruction,
 that of “utter nonexistence,” and that of “utter cessation,”
 being able to carry out both reversed and sequential contemplations.
 (23)

So it is that the bodhisattva enters into
 the dharma of the twelve causes and conditions.
 Thus he realizes that dharmas are analogous to mere conjurations,
 that they are like a dream, like shadows,
 like a mirage, like magical transformations,
 and that they are false, deceptive, and devoid of any agent of actions.
 (24)

So too, he realizes that they are devoid of any recipient of experiences
 and that they only deceive foolish people.
 It is in this manner that he contemplates causes and conditions
 and emptiness as cultivated by the wise, observing that,
 if the conditions do not exist, then their associated signs do not exist.
 Realizing that these two phenomena are themselves empty and false,
 he then becomes free of anything he might wish for
 within all that exists among them.
 His sole aspiration then is to use the mind of great compassion
 in order to liberate beings with kindness. (25)

It is in this way that the greatly eminent masters
 cultivate the gates to liberation.
 With a mind suffused with compassion, he cherishes the Buddha’s
 countless meritorious qualities
 and realizes that conditioned dharmas
 all exist due to the conjoining of factors. (26)

He then immediately acquires a myriad emptiness absorptions
 and also gains the same number for signlessness and wishlessness.
 His wisdom progressively increases,
 culminating in his acquisition of the supremely acquiescent patience.
 He gains the bodhisattvas’ realizations
 of the unconditioned, wisdom, and liberation.
 Such roots of goodness as these
 become increasingly superior in their radiant purity and acuity. (27)

He makes offerings to countless many buddhas,
 is praised by all buddhas,
 and always, wherever buddhas dwell,
 leaves the home life to pursue study of the Buddha’s path.

Arriving within the treasury of the Buddha's Dharma,
 his roots of goodness continually develop
 until they become like real gold
 when polished with a lapis lazuli jewel,
 the radiance of which then grows ever more pristine.
 Just so is the simile most fitting for this. (28)

Just as the purity of the full moon's light
 as it hangs in the middle of an empty sky
 is invulnerable then to the blowing of the four winds
 that remain unable to cause it to diminish or cease,
 so too, the light of the bodhisattva's wisdom
 in its extinguishing of the heat of all afflictions
 is such that not even the four types of *māras* can subdue it.
 Just so is the simile most fitting for this. (29)

The bodhisattva abiding on this ground
 often becomes a king of the Skillful Transformations Heaven
 who, possessed of faculties that are fiercely sharp,
 is thus well able to dispel anyone's overweening pride.

All the good works that he does
 in every case conform to guidance by wisdom
 of a sort that the challenging questions of *śrāvaka*-disciples
 still remain unable to ever exhaust. (30)

Should this son of the Buddha wish
 to bring to bear such diligent application of vigor,
 he becomes able then to acquire hundreds of thousands
 of *koṭis* of *samādhis*,

and becomes able as well to see hundreds of thousands
 of *koṭis* of buddhas abiding throughout the ten directions
 just as, on a clear spring day,
 the sun's light shines forth with pure brightness. (31)

So it is that this sixth ground
 has such profound sublimity that it is so difficult to know or see
 that no *śrāvaka*-disciple could ever completely fathom it.
 Thus ends this general description of such greatly eminent masters.

(32)