

PART FOUR

The Blazing Brilliance Ground

D. THE FOURTH GROUND: THE BLAZING BRILLIANCE GROUND

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

When those sons of the Buddha had heard of these vast practices on this delightful, deeply sublime, and especially supreme ground, their minds were exhilarated, they were filled with great joy, and they scattered many flowers everywhere as offerings to the Buddha. (1)

When such sublime Dharma had been proclaimed there, the great earth trembled, the ocean's waters roiled, and all of the celestial nymphs became joyful, whereupon they all joined their marvelous voices in singing praises. (2)

The Vaśavartin Heaven King, moved to immense celebratory delight, rained down *maṇi* jewels as offerings to the Buddha, and uttered praises: "The Buddha has come forth here for our sakes, expounding the practices possessed of the foremost merit. (3)

"The meaning of the grounds taught by such a wise one as this is extremely difficult to encounter in a hundred thousand kalpas. We have now suddenly been able to hear this sublime Dharma voice speak of a bodhisattva's supreme conduct. (4)

"We wish to additionally hear expounded the brilliantly wise one's subsequent grounds on the definite path to the realm without residue that bestows benefit on all devas and all humans.

All of these sons of the Buddha would delight in hearing this." (5)

Then the heroically valiant one of great resolve, Liberation Moon, posed a request to Vajragarbha, saying, "O Son of the Buddha, please explain here all aspects of the practice involved in turning from here to enter the fourth ground." (6)

2. VAJRAGARBHA COMMENCES THE FOURTH GROUND'S EXPLANATION

(A) At that time, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva informed Liberation Moon Bodhisattva, saying:

3. 10 GATEWAYS TO DHARMA LIGHT AS BASES FOR ENTERING THE 4TH GROUND

O Son of the Buddha. As for the bodhisattva *mahāsattva* who has already well purified his practice on the third ground and then wishes to enter the fourth ground, the Ground of Blazing Brilliance,

he should cultivate ten gateways to the light of Dharma.⁹² What are the ten? They are:

- Contemplation of the realms of beings;
- Contemplation of the Dharma realm;
- Contemplation of the world realms;
- Contemplation of the realms of empty space;
- Contemplation of the realms of consciousness;
- Contemplation of the desire realm;
- Contemplation of the form realm;
- Contemplation of the formless realm;
- Contemplation of the realms of broadly inclusive resolute intentions and resolute convictions;⁹³
- And contemplation of the realms of magnanimous resolute intentions and resolute convictions.⁹⁴

The bodhisattva employs these ten gateways to the light of Dharma to gain entry into the fourth ground, the Ground of Blazing Brilliance.

4. TEN KNOWLEDGE-MATURING DHARMAS FOR BIRTH IN THE BUDDHAS' CLAN

(B) Son of the Buddha, if a bodhisattva comes to dwell on this Ground of Blazing Brilliance, then, by employing ten types of knowledge-maturing dharmas,⁹⁵ he becomes able to acquire its inner dharmas⁹⁶ and achieve birth into the clan of the Tathāgatas. What then are those ten? They are:

- Through possessing non-retreating resolute intentions;
- Through bringing forth ultimately pure and indestructible faith in the Three Jewels;
- Through contemplating the production and destruction of all karmic formative factors;
- Through contemplating all dharmas as, by their very nature, unproduced;
- Through contemplating the formation and destruction of worlds;
- Through contemplating that it is on account of karmic actions that birth exists;
- Through contemplating *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*;
- Through contemplating the karma associated with beings and lands;
- Through contemplating the past and the future;
- And through contemplating non-existence and complete destruction.

These are the ten.

5. THE BODHISATTVA'S PRACTICE OF THE 37 ENLIGHTENMENT FACTORS

a. THE FOUR STATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

(c) Son of the Buddha, the bodhisattva dwelling on this fourth ground employs the body-examining contemplation that takes his own body as the objective focus, employing diligent and robust mindfulness and knowing awareness⁹⁷ in ridding himself of desire and distress associated with the world. He employs the body-examining contemplation taking others' bodies as the objective focus, employing diligent and robust mindfulness and knowing awareness in ridding himself of desire and distress associated with the world. And he employs the body-examining contemplation that takes both his own body and others' bodies as the objective focus, employing diligent and robust mindfulness and knowing awareness in ridding himself of desire and distress associated with the world.

In this same manner, he also applies such contemplation to his own feelings, to the feelings of others, and to the feelings of both himself and others, applying the feeling-examining contemplation to those objective conditions.

He also applies such contemplation to his own mind, to the minds of others, and to the minds of both himself and others, employing the mind-examining contemplation to those objective conditions.

And, finally, he also applies such contemplation to subjectively-related dharmas, to objectively-related dharmas, and to dharmas that are both subjectively related and objectively related, employing the dharma-examining contemplation to those objective conditions.

Thus it is that he employs diligent and robust mindfulness and knowing awareness in ridding himself of desire and distress associated with the world.⁹⁸

b. THE FOUR RIGHT EFFORTS

Additionally, for the sake of not generating evil and unwholesome dharmas that have not yet arisen, this bodhisattva strives to bring forth diligently applied vigor and resolves to cut off their arising.

For the sake of severing already arisen evil and unwholesome dharmas, he strives to bring forth diligently applied vigor and resolves to cut them off.

For the sake of generating good dharmas not yet arisen, he strives to bring forth diligently applied vigor and resolves to proceed with their right practice.

And for the sake of ensuring that already-arisen good dhar-
mas will continue and not be lost, and also in order to cultivate,
increase and broaden them, he strives to bring forth diligently
applied vigor and resolves to engage in right practice.⁹⁹

c. THE FOUR BASES OF PSYCHIC POWER

Additionally, this bodhisattva cultivates the severance prac-
tice associated with zeal-based concentration, this in order to
completely establish the spiritual powers, doing so based upon
detachment, based upon dispassion, based upon cessation, and
directed toward relinquishment.¹⁰⁰ He also cultivates the sever-
ance practices associated with vigor-based concentration, associ-
ated with mind-based concentration, and associated with contem-
plation-based concentration, this in order to completely establish
the spiritual powers, doing so based upon detachment, based
upon dispassion, based upon cessation, and directed toward
relinquishment.¹⁰¹

d. THE FIVE ROOTS

Additionally, this bodhisattva cultivates the root-faculty of faith,
doing so based upon detachment, based upon dispassion, based
upon cessation, and directed toward relinquishment, cultivates
too the root-faculty of vigor, the root-faculty of mindfulness, the
root-faculty of concentration, and the root-faculty of wisdom, in
all cases doing so based upon detachment, based upon dispassion,
based upon cessation, and directed toward relinquishment.¹⁰²

e. THE FIVE POWERS

Additionally, this bodhisattva cultivates the power of faith, doing
so based upon detachment, based upon dispassion, based upon
cessation, and directed toward relinquishment, cultivates the
power of vigor, the power of mindfulness, the power of concen-
tration, and the power of wisdom, doing so based upon detach-
ment, based upon dispassion, based upon cessation, and directed
toward relinquishment.¹⁰³

f. THE SEVEN LIMBS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Additionally, this bodhisattva cultivates the mindfulness limb of
enlightenment, doing so based upon detachment, based upon dis-
passion, based upon cessation, and directed toward relinquish-
ment, cultivates the dharma-differentiation limb of enlighten-
ment, the vigor limb of enlightenment, the joyfulness limb of enlighten-
ment, the pliancy limb of enlightenment, the concentration limb
of enlightenment, and the equanimity limb of enlightenment,

doing so based upon detachment, based upon dispassion, based upon cessation, and directed toward relinquishment.¹⁰⁴

g. THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

Additionally, this bodhisattva cultivates right views, doing so based upon detachment, based upon dispassion, based upon cessation, and directed toward relinquishment. So too, he cultivates right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration, doing so based upon detachment, based upon dispassion, based upon cessation, and directed toward relinquishment.¹⁰⁵

h. THE BODHISATTVA'S TEN AIMS IN PRACTICING THE 37 FACTORS

{D} The bodhisattva cultivates such meritorious qualities as these, engaging in such cultivation:

- In order to refrain from forsaking all beings;
- In order to be sustained by his original vows;
- In order to make the great compassion foremost;
- In order to perfect the great kindness;
- In order to reflect upon and bear in mind the cognition of all-knowledge;
- In order to completely accomplish the adornment of buddha lands;
- In order to completely realize the Tathāgata's powers, fearlessnesses, dharmas exclusive to the Buddhas, major marks, subsidiary signs, and voice;
- In order to further his quest to acquire the most especially supreme path;¹⁰⁶
- In order to accord with what he has learned regarding the extremely profound liberation of the Buddha;
- And in order to reflect upon greatly wise and good skillful means.

6. THE BODHISATTVA'S LEAVING OF WRONG VIEWS, ATTACHMENTS, AND ACTIONS

{E} Son of the Buddha, the bodhisattva dwelling on the Ground of Blazing Brilliance, taking the view imputing the existence of a self associated with the body as chief among them, abandons all attachments that might be generated, including attachments to the existence of a self, to a person, to beings, to a lifespan, to the aggregates, to the sense realms, and to the sense bases, doing so because they arise and disappear in reliance on conceptual thought, because they are sustained through discursive thought, because they are but subsidiary to a self, because they are but its

material possessions, and because they are but points of attachment. He entirely abandons them all.

(F) Whenever this bodhisattva sees that particular karmic actions have been censured by the Tathāgata as defiled by the afflictions, he abandons all of them. Whenever he sees that particular karmic actions accord with the bodhisattva path and have been praised by the Tathāgata, he cultivates all of them.¹⁰⁷

7. MENTAL AND PERSONAL QUALITIES GAINED IN PATH CULTIVATION

(G) Son of the Buddha, this bodhisattva cultivates the path and the provisions assisting realization of the path¹⁰⁸ in a manner that befits the skillful means and wisdom he has developed. Proceeding in this manner, he thus acquires:¹⁰⁹

The harmoniously smooth mind;
 The gentle mind;
 The congenially adaptive mind;
 The mind that benefits and provides happiness to others;
 The mind unmixed with defilement;
 The mind that seeks ever more superior dharmas;
 The mind that seeks especially supreme wisdom;
 The mind that seeks to rescue everyone in the world;
 The mind that respects those of venerable virtue and does not go against their teaching instructions;
 And the mind that thoroughly cultivates in accordance with the Dharma one has learned.

(H) This bodhisattva:¹¹⁰

Acknowledges kindnesses received;
 Knows to repay kindnesses;
 Has a mind that is extremely harmonious and good;
 Dwells happily together with others;
 Is endowed with a character that is straight-minded;
 Is gentle and pliant;
 Is free of behavior influenced by the dense forest [of afflictions];
 Is free of arrogance;
 Is one who skillfully accepts instruction;
 And is one who well understands the intentions of those whose speech he hears.

It is in this way that this bodhisattva's patience becomes completely developed, in this way that his pliancy becomes completely developed, and in this way that his quiescence becomes completely developed. Having thus acquired completely developed patience,

pliancy, and quiescence, he then purifies his karmic actions on the subsequent grounds.

8. THE BODHISATTVA'S ACQUISITION OF TEN KINDS OF VIGOR

(j) At this time, as he proceeds with well-considered cultivation, he acquires:¹¹¹

Unresting vigor;
 Vigor unmixed with defiling factors;
 Non-retreating vigor;
 Vast vigor;
 Boundless vigor;
 Blazing vigor;
 Matchless vigor;
 Invincible vigor;
 Vigor aimed at maturing all beings;
 And vigor that is well able to distinguish what is and is not the path.

9. OTHER QUALITIES DEVELOPED IN THE BODHISATTVA'S 4TH GROUND PRACTICE

(j) This bodhisattva's aspirations have become purified, his resolute intentions never wane, his awakened convictions are brilliant and sharp, and his roots of goodness increase.¹¹² He abandons the world's defiling turbidities, cuts off all doubts and uncertainties, achieves perfected clarity in severance, and is filled with delight. He is one of whom the Buddhas are protectively mindful and his resolute intentions in relation to the immeasurable minds have become fully developed.¹¹³

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

(k) Son of the Buddha, due to the power of his vows, the bodhisattva dwelling on this Ground of Blazing Brilliance is able to see many buddhas. That is to say that he can see many hundreds of buddhas, can see many hundreds of thousands of buddhas, and so forth until we come to his seeing of many hundreds of thousands of *koṭis* of *nayutas* of buddhas, all of whom he reveres, venerates, and serves, presenting offerings to them of robes, bedding, food and drink, medicines, and all amenities supporting their existence, offering up all of these things while also making offerings to those in all their sangha assemblies, proceeding then to dedicate the merit associated with these roots of goodness to *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*.

So too does he then respectfully listen to the teachings on Dharma in the presence of those buddhas. Having heard these

teachings, he takes them on, upholds them in practice, and entirely perfects their cultivation. Furthermore, during the Dharma reign of those buddhas, he leaves behind the home life to cultivate the path.

11. THE BODHISATTVA'S PURIFICATION & ITS COMPARISON TO REFINING GOLD

He also purifies his resolute intentions and resolute faith¹¹⁴ as he passes through countless hundreds of thousands of *koṭis* of *nayutas* of kalpas wherein he causes his roots of goodness to shine ever more brightly in their purity.

Son of the Buddha, this is analogous to a goldsmith's refining of real gold to create objects of adornment unmatched in their perfection by anything made from other grades of gold. So too it is with this bodhisattva *mahāsattva*. When he dwells on this ground, all of his roots of goodness are such that none of the roots of goodness of those on lower grounds could ever match them.

12. THE RADIANCE OF THIS BODHISATTVA'S ROOTS LIKE THAT OF A MAṆI JEWEL

This circumstance is analogous to a *maṇi* jewel's orb of pure radiant light that is able to emit radiance of the sort that no other jewel's radiance can even approach, radiance that not even the conditions of wind, rain, and so forth are able to ruin. So, too, the bodhisattva *mahāsattva* dwelling on this ground cannot be matched by any of the lower ground bodhisattvas, for he cannot be destroyed by any of the many sorts of *māras* or afflictions.

13. THE BODHISATTVA'S PRACTICE OF MEANS OF ATTRACTION AND PĀRAMITĀS

Among the four means of attraction, this bodhisattva most extensively devotes his practice to "joint endeavors," while, among the ten *pāramitās*, he most extensively practices the perfection of vigor. It is not that he does not practice the others. Rather, he simply accords them an amount of emphasis corresponding to his own strengths and to what is fitting.

14. VAJRAGARBHĀ'S STATEMENTS ABOUT THE 4TH GROUND BODHISATTVA

Sons of the Buddha, this has been a concise explanation of the bodhisattva *mahāsattva's* fourth ground, the Ground of Blazing Brilliance.

a. THE BODHISATTVA'S STATION AND DHARMA PRACTICE

The bodhisattva dwelling on this ground often becomes the heavenly king *Suyāma* in which capacity he is equipped with skillful means by which he can influence beings to rid themselves of the view imputing the existence of a real self in association with the

body¹¹⁵ and other such delusions, thereby causing them to abide in right views.

b. THE BODHISATTVA'S MINDFULNESS

In his practice of giving, pleasing words, beneficial actions, and joint endeavors and all other such works that he pursues, he never departs from mindfulness of the Buddha, never departs from mindfulness of the Dharma, never departs from mindfulness of the Sangha, 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," and so forth until we come to "as one who relies on the cognition of all-knowledge."

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

If this bodhisattva brings forth diligently vigorous practice, then, in but a moment, he will become able to enter a *koṭi* of samādhis, will be able to see a *koṭi* of buddhas, will become aware of the spiritual powers as exercised by a *koṭi* of buddhas, will be able to cause tremors in a *koṭi* of worlds, and so forth until we come to his being able to manifest a *koṭi* of bodies wherein each and every one of those bodies will itself become able to manifest a *koṭi* of bodhisattvas serving in his retinue. 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, and so forth until we come to a hundred thousand *koṭis* of *nayutas* of kalpas.

15. VAJRAGARBHA BODHISATTVA'S SUMMARIZING VERSES

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

"The bodhisattva who has already purified the third ground next contemplates beings, the worlds, the Dharma realm, the realms of empty space and consciousness, the three realms, intentions, and convictions. Fathoming these, he is able to enter.¹¹⁶ (7)

On first ascending to the flaming ground, as he increases in strength, he is born into the Tathāgatas' clan through never-retreating resolve, indestructible faith in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, contemplating dharmas as impermanent and unproduced, (8)

contemplating worlds' rise and fall, karma as the basis for birth, *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, the karma associated with lands and such, contemplating past and future, and also contemplating destruction. Through just such cultivation as this, he is born in Buddha's clan.¹¹⁷ (9)

After acquiring these dharmas, his kindly sympathy increases, he redoubles diligent cultivation of the four stations of mindfulness and their inward and outward contemplation of body, feelings, mind, and dharmas, thus expelling and banishing all worldly desires. (10)

The bodhisattva cultivates the four right efforts by which bad dharmas are extinguished and good dharmas are increased. Psychic power bases, faculties, and powers are all well cultivated. So too it is with the seven limbs of bodhi and the eightfold path.¹¹⁸ (11)

He cultivates those practices in order to liberate beings, to be guarded by original vows, to perfect kindness, to make compassion foremost, to aid his quest for all-knowledge and adornment of buddha lands, and also to bear in mind acquisition of the Tathāgata's ten powers, (12)

four fearlessnesses, the dharmas exclusive to the Buddhas, their special major marks, subsidiary signs, and fine voice.

He also cultivates those practices to pursue his quest for the sublime path's stations of liberation and great skillful means.¹¹⁹ (13)

As for seeing a self related to the body, chief of the sixty-two views that include conceiving of a self, its possessions, and countless other attachments to aggregates, sense realms, sense bases, and such, he abandons all of these on this fourth ground. (14)

Because they are meaningless and unbeneficial, he cuts off all affliction-ridden actions censured by the Tathāgata, while, of the pure karmic actions cultivated by the wise, there are none he fails to implement in order to liberate beings. (15)

The bodhisattva, assiduous in cultivating, refrains from indolence, straightaway achieves perfect fulfillment of ten types of mind, focuses intently on tirelessly pursuing the path to buddhahood, is resolute in aspiring to receive the consecration and liberate beings, (16)

respectfully follows cultivation dharmas of the venerably virtuous, acknowledges kindness, is easily taught, is free of enmity or temper, forsakes pride, abandons flattery, has a subdued and pliant mind, and increases in energetic diligence that then never retreats. (17)

As for the bodhisattva dwelling on this Ground of Blazing Brilliance, his intentions are purified and never are lost.

His awakened convictions are definite, his goodness increases, and he entirely abandons the net of doubts and all defiling turbidity. (18)

The bodhisattva on this ground, the most supreme of all men, makes offerings to countless *nayutas* of buddhas, listens to their right Dharma teaching, leaves the home life, becomes impossible to impede, and becomes like real gold. (19)

The bodhisattva abiding herein is replete with meritorious qualities. He employs knowledge and skillful means in cultivating the path. His resolve cannot be turned back by the many sorts of *māras*. In this he becomes like a marvelous jewel that no one can ruin. (20)

One abiding herein often becomes *Suyāma*, a king of the devas who, masterfully adept in all dharmas and revered by the multitudes, everywhere teaches all types of beings to be rid of wrong views and focuses on seeking Buddha's knowledge and cultivating good karma. (21)

This bodhisattva who is diligent in applying the power of vigor acquires *samādhis* and other achievements, each a *koṭi* in number, and, if he avails himself of the power of vows and knowledge, his acts go beyond this number and exceed even the range of knowability. (22)

Thus it is that the sublime path of the bodhisattva's fourth ground, pure in its practices and mutually consistent with the meritorious qualities, meaning, and knowledge, has been explained by me for the Sons of the Buddha." (23)