

THE TEN GROUNDS SUTRA

The Daśabhūmika Sūtra

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Translated from Sanskrit to Chinese in the Later Qin Era¹
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Chinese to English Translation by Bhikshu Dharmamitra

CHAPTER ONE

The Joyfulness Ground⁴

I. THE INTRODUCTORY SECTION

A. THE SETTING AND AUDIENCE

(A) Thus I have heard. At one time, the Buddha was residing in Maṇi Jewel Hall within the palace of the Paranirmita Vaśavartin Heaven King together with an assembly of great bodhisattvas, all of whom were irreversible in their progression toward *anuttarasamyaksam̄bodhi*. They had all assembled there from the realms of other regions.

B. THE GREAT BODHISATTVAS AND THEIR QUALITIES

These bodhisattvas had all achieved sovereign mastery in those places where all bodhisattvas' wisdom is practiced and had all entered into all those places that all *tathāgatas'* wisdom enters.⁵ They were well able to teach the inhabitants of all worlds and were freely able at any time to everywhere manifest the spiritual superknowledges and other such phenomena.

In each and every mind-moment, they were entirely able to perfectly accomplish what all bodhisattvas have vowed to accomplish. In all worlds, in all kalpas, and in all lands, they always cultivated all of the bodhisattva practices and endlessly carried on the perfection of all bodhisattvas' merit and knowledge.

They were able to act for the benefit of all and were able to reach the perfection of all bodhisattvas' wisdom and skillful means. They were able to reveal for beings the gateway leading from *samsāra* to *nirvāna* and never desisted from coursing in the practices of all bodhisattvas.

They skillfully roamed in all of the bodhisattva's *dhyāna* concentrations, liberations, *saṃādhis*, spiritual superknowledges, and clear knowledges.⁶ In all the endeavors to which they devoted themselves, they were well able to manifest all of the bodhisattva's effortlessly-implemented bases of psychic powers,⁷ all of which they had already acquired.

In but a single mind-moment, they were able to go forth to the great assemblies of all buddhas throughout the ten directions

wherein they entreated them to initiate teachings, freely posed queries to them, and received and retained the teachings brought forth through the turning of the Dharma wheel.⁸

They always devoted their great minds to presenting offerings to all buddhas and they remained ever able to cultivate the works practiced by all great bodhisattvas. Their bodies manifested in countless worlds. Their voices were universally heard, reaching everywhere without exception. Their minds had achieved a penetrating level of comprehension whereby they were able to clearly see all bodhisattvas of the three periods of time. They perfectly cultivated and practiced all the meritorious qualities. The meritorious qualities of these bodhisattva *mahāsattvas*⁹ were so measureless and boundless that they could never be completely described even in countless kalpas.

C. THE NAMES OF THE BODHISATTVAS IN ATTENDANCE

Their names were:¹⁰

Vajragarbha Bodhisattva Mahāsattva;
 Jeweled Treasury Bodhisattva;
 Lotus Treasury Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of Qualities Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of Lotus Qualities Bodhisattva;
 Solar Treasury Bodhisattva;
 Lunar Treasury Bodhisattva;
 Pure Moon Treasury Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of Adornments Illuminating All Worlds Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of Wisdom¹¹ Illumination Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of Sublime Qualities Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of Candana's Qualities Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of Floral Qualities Bodhisattva;
 Utpala Blossom Treasury Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of Celestial Qualities Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of Merit Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of Unimpeded Pure Knowledge Qualities Bodhisattva;
 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;
 Great Brilliance Net Treasury Bodhisattva;
 Treasury of the King of Pure Light's Awesome Qualities Bodhisattva;

Treasury of the King of the Great Golden Mountain of Light's
Awesome Qualities Bodhisattva;
Treasury of Adornment With the Pure Qualities of All Marks
Bodhisattva;
Treasury of Adornment With Vajra Flames' Marks Bodhisattva;
Treasury of Blazing Flames Bodhisattva;
Treasury of the Constellation Kings' Radiance Bodhisattva;
Treasury of the Unimpeded Sublime Sound of Emptiness Bodhisattva;
Treasury of Dhāraṇī Qualities and Vows Sustaining All Worlds
Bodhisattva;
Treasury of Oceanic Adornment Bodhisattva;
Treasury of a Sumeru of Qualities Bodhisattva;
Treasury of the Purification of All Meritorious Qualities Bodhisattva;
Tathāgata Treasury Bodhisattva;
Treasury of Buddha Qualities Bodhisattva;
And Liberation Moon Bodhisattva.

Bodhisattva *mahāsattvas* such as these were present there in measureless, boundless, inconceivable, and indescribable numbers.¹² Vajragarbha Bodhisattva Mahāsattva served as their head.

D. VAJRAGARBHA ENTERS SAMĀDHIS AND COUNTLESS BUDDHAS MANIFEST

(B) At that time, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva Mahāsattva aided by the Buddha's awesome spiritual power, entered "the bodhisattva's great wisdom light samādhi."¹³ (C) Then, off in one of the directions among the worlds of the ten directions, beyond worlds as numerous as the atoms in ten *kotis*¹⁴ of buddha lands, there immediately appeared a Tathāgata named Vajragarbha. And in this same manner, there were in sequence buddhas as numerous as the atoms in ten *kotis* of buddha lands, all named Vajragarbha, who manifested their bodies. And so it was as well in all worlds of the ten directions.

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

All of them together, as if with a single voice, uttered their praises, saying:

It is good indeed, good indeed, Vajragarbha, that you are now able to enter the great wisdom light samādhi. In this way, buddhas as numerous as the atoms in the worlds of the ten directions, all of them of the same name, augment your awesome spiritual power.

This is also due to the power of the original vows of Rocana Buddha,¹⁵ also because you possess great wisdom,¹⁶ and also so

that you will bestow upon all bodhisattvas the inconceivable Dharma light of all buddhas, in particular doing so:

- (D) To cause their entry into the grounds of wisdom,¹⁷
To facilitate their gathering of all roots of goodness;
To enable their skillful differentiation and selection of all dharmas of the Buddha;
To enable their vast knowing of all dharmas;
To enable their decisively resolute explication of all dharmas;
To cause their skillful differentiation with non-discriminating knowledge;
To ensure that they cannot be defiled by any worldly dharma;
To facilitate their purification of roots of world-transcending goodness;
To enable their acquisition of the inconceivable powers of knowledge;
To enable their acquisition of the sphere of knowledge of those possessed of all-knowledge;
To also cause their acquisition of the bodhisattva's ten grounds;
To present a reality-accordant explanation of the differentiating aspects of the bodhisattva's ten grounds;
To present a differentiating explanation of the non-attachment associated with the dharmas that are free of the contaminants;¹⁸
To enable their own adornment through skillful analysis using the light of great wisdom;
To cause their entry into the gateway of fully accomplished knowledge;
To enable them to provide sequential explanations appropriate to the circumstances in which they abide;
To facilitate their acquisition of the light of unimpeded eloquence;
To cause their complete fulfillment of the grounds of great unimpeded knowledge without ever losing the bodhisattva's resolve;
To enable their teaching and complete development of all realms¹⁹ of beings;
And also in order to cause their acquisition of definitive knowledge that reaches everywhere.
- (E) Additionally, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva, you should explain the differentiating aspects associated with these Dharma gateways, doing so:

On account of the Buddhas' spiritual powers;
 To be able to take on the Tathāgata's spiritual powers;
 To facilitate purification of one's own roots of goodness;
 To purify the realms of the Dharma realm;²⁰
 To benefit the realms of beings;
 To cause beings to acquire the pure Dharma body and knowledge body;
 To enable the receiving of the prediction from all buddhas;
 To enable acquisition of the most lofty and grand body in the entire world;
 To enable stepping beyond all worldly paths;
 And also to facilitate purification of world-transcending roots of goodness.

F. THE BUDDHAS BESTOW QUALITIES AND ABILITIES ON VAJRAGARBHA

(F) The Buddhas of the Ten Directions then immediately bestowed the following things on Vajragarba Bodhisattva:

They bestowed the genuine and unsurpassable body of a buddha;²¹
 They bestowed the skill of unimpededly eloquent discourse;
 They bestowed skillfully differentiating pure wisdom;²²
 They bestowed the ability to skillfully remember and never forget;
 They bestowed a skillfully decisive intelligence;²³
 They bestowed the bases for universally extensive omniscience;
 They bestowed all buddhas' powers of invincibility;
 They bestowed the fearlessnesses and absence of timidity;²⁴
 They bestowed all buddhas' unimpeded knowledges²⁵ that distinguish all dharmas and skillfully open the Dharma gateways;
 And they also bestowed all buddhas' supremely sublime functions of body, speech, and mind.

(G) Why did this occur?:

This was due to his acquisition of the bodhisattva's great wisdom light samādhi;
 Due to the power of the bodhisattva's original vows;
 Due to the purification of his higher aspirations;²⁶
 Due to the brilliantly pristine purity of his wisdom;²⁷
 Due to his having well accumulated the dharmas constituting the provisions assisting realization of the path;²⁸
 Due to his having skillfully cultivated karmic works in the past;
 Due to his ability to sustain a measurelessly capacious memory;
 Due to his resolute faith²⁹ in the pure and radiant Dharma;

Due to his skillful acquisition of the *dhāraṇī*³⁰ gateways that are free of discriminations;

And it was also due to his being well-sealed by the seal of knowledge of the Dharma realm.³¹

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

(H) At that time, the Buddhas of the Ten Directions all extended their right hands and rubbed the crown of Vajragarbha Bodhisattva's head. (I) Vajragarbha Bodhisattva then immediately arose from samādhi. (J) Having emerged, he then informed the bodhisattvas:

Sons of the Buddha, as for these endeavors of all bodhisattvas, from the very beginning, they have all involved definite resolve and have remained entirely free of faults and free of discriminations. They have been pure, utterly brilliant, as vast as the Dharma realm itself, and as ultimately far-reaching as empty space. They have universally extended to cover all beings in all buddha worlds of the ten directions. They have been undertaken for the sake of rescuing and liberating the inhabitants of all worlds and have been carried forth under the protection of the spiritual powers of all buddhas.

And how has this come to be? All bodhisattva *mahāsattvas* enter the grounds of knowledge of all buddhas of the past and also enter the grounds of knowledge of all buddhas of the future and the present.

1. VAJRAGARBHA SETS FORTH THE NAMES OF THE TEN GROUNDS

Sons of the Buddha, what are the grounds of knowledge of the bodhisattva *mahāsattvas*? Sons of the Buddha, the grounds of knowledge of the bodhisattvas are ten in number. All buddhas of the past, future, and present have proclaimed them, do now proclaim them, and shall proclaim in the future. It is for the sake of these very grounds that I set forth such a proclamation as this. What then are the ten? They are:³²

- First, the Ground of Joyfulness;
- Second, the Ground of Stainlessness;
- Third, the Ground of Shining Light;
- Fourth, the ground of Blazing Brilliance;
- 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;³³

Tenth, the Dharma Cloud Ground.

Sons of the Buddha, all buddhas of the three periods of time have proclaimed these ten grounds in the past, do proclaim them in the present, and shall also proclaim them in the future. I have not seen that there exists any buddha land anywhere wherein these ten bodhisattva grounds have not been proclaimed. And why is this? These ten grounds constitute the bodhisattvas' most supreme and sublime path and the most supreme gateway into Dharma's light and purity. We refer here to the differentiation of the matters pertaining to these ten stations.

Sons of the Buddha, these matters are inconceivable. We refer here to the wisdom³⁴ of the bodhisattva *mahāsattvas* as they progress through the grounds.

2. VAJRAGARBHA BODHISATTVA FALLS SILENT

(K) Then, having set forth the names of the bodhisattvas' ten grounds, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva Mahāsattva fell silent, remained in place, and did not proceed to present a differentiating explanation of their meanings and import.

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

At that time, having heard the names of the bodhisattvas' ten grounds, the entire congregation of bodhisattvas all gazed up at him with thirst-like anticipation, wishing to hear him set forth an explanation. They all had this thought, "Due to what causes and what conditions does Vajragarbha Bodhisattva, having set forth the names of the bodhisattvas' ten grounds, then fall silent and remain in place without presenting any further explanation?"

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

At that time, within that congregation of bodhisattvas, there was a bodhisattva *mahāsattva* named Liberation Moon. Knowing the thoughts in the minds of those bodhisattvas, he then employed verses to inquire of Vajragarbha Bodhisattva, asking:³⁵

"O mindful and sagacious man possessed of pure knowledge,
why do you, having uttered the names
of the bodhisattvas' grounds,
then fall silent without proceeding to explain them? (1)

Now, the great bodhisattvas
are all beset by thoughts of hesitation,
Why is it that you utter these names
and yet refrain from proclaiming their meanings? (2)

These greatly wise bodhisattvas
all wish to hear
the meanings of such grounds as these.
Please distinguish and explain them for their sakes.^{3}

This entire congregation of bodhisattvas
is pure and free of flaws or defilements.
They abide securely in the solid and genuine Dharma
and are entirely complete in knowledge and meritorious qualities.^{4}

With reverential minds,
they all gaze longingly up to you, O Humane One,
wishing to be able to hear what you will proclaim,
just as those beset by thirst long for the elixir of sweet-dew."^{5}

J. VAJRAGARBHA EXPLAINS HIS SILENCE

Then, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva,
having heard him speak on this matter
and wishing to please those in that great assembly,
immediately uttered verses, saying:^{6}

The matter of the practices of all bodhisattvas
is the most difficult of subjects to fathom.
A differentiating explanation of these grounds,
the very origin of all buddhas,^{7}
is a matter subtle, sublime, and extremely difficult to perceive.
This is not something that is accessible to thought.
It comes forth from the wisdom of the Buddha and is such that,
if one hears it, one may become submerged in confusion.^{8}

Those whose minds have a capacity for retention as solid as vajra,
who possess a profound faith in the wisdom^{36} of the Buddha,
and who take it to be the most supremely sublime—
It is these whose minds would remain free of doubts and difficulties.

Those who have transcended thoughts conceiving of a self
and the grounds wherein thought is active—
it is only bodhisattvas of this sort
who are then capable of hearing this.^{9}

As for the quiescent knowledge that is free of contaminants,
a differentiating explanation of it would be extremely difficult.
It would be like painting a mural in space
or like seizing the wind as it moves through empty space.^{10}

As I bring to mind the wisdom of the Buddha,
the foremost among all inconceivable subjects,

I see that there are but few beings able to believe in this.

It is for these reasons that I remain silent. {11}

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

{L} Having heard him declare this, Liberation Moon Bodhisattva then addressed Vajragarbha Bodhisattva, saying:

O Son of the Buddha, as for those within this congregation of great bodhisattvas, they:

Are possessed of pure resolute intentions,³⁷

Have well practiced the bodhisattva path;

Have well assembled the provisions for realization of the path.³⁸

Have been well able to make offerings to and revere all buddhas;

Have extensively planted roots of goodness under countless buddhas;

Have perfected measurelessly many extremely well-developed meritorious qualities;

Have abandoned delusions, doubts, and regrets;

Are free of covetous attachments and the hindrances associated with the fetters;

Have developed securely established and unshakable resolute intentions and resolute faith;

And, as they abide in this Dharma, do not follow other sorts of teachings.

Therefore, O Son of the Buddha, aided by the Buddha's powers, you should extensively expound on the meaning of these things. These bodhisattvas are all able to realize and understand these profound dharmas.

At that time, Liberation Moon Bodhisattva, wishing to restate this idea, then spoke verses, saying:

Please explain these dharmas ensuring peace and security,
the bodhisattva's supreme practices,
by presenting differentiating explanations of the grounds,
thereby causing their wisdom to become purified.

The knowledge of this congregation is pure and free of defilement.
They are securely established in deep resolute faith,
have dwelt in the company of incalculably many buddhas, and
will realize and understand the ten grounds' meanings.

L. VAJRAGARBHA FURTHER EXPLAINS HIS RETICENCE TO TEACH THIS DHARMA

{M} At that time, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva then responded, saying:

O Son of the Buddha, although those in this congregation are all pure, have abandoned delusion, doubts, and regrets, and do not follow others' teachings with regard to these matters, still, when others who delight in lesser dharmas hear of extremely profound and inconceivable matters such as these, they may well bring forth doubts and regrets about them. People such as these will then be bound to undergo all manner of ruin and torment for a long time. It is because I feel pity for people such as these that I have therefore become silent.

At that time, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva, wishing to fully clarify this meaning, thereupon uttered verses, saying:

Although those in this assembly are pure,
 are deeply knowledgeable, have abandoned doubts and regrets,
 are already possessed of decisive resolve,
 are not inclined to again follow others' teachings,
 are as unshakable as Mount Sumeru,
 and are as imperturbable as the great ocean,
 still, there are yet others not of long duration in their practice
 whose wisdom has not yet become utterly brilliant,
 who follow consciousness rather than knowledge,
 and who, on hearing this, will generate doubts and regrets.
 They will then be bound to fall into the wretched destinies.
 It is out of pity for them that I therefore become silent.

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

[N] Liberation Moon Bodhisattva then said:

O Son of the Buddha, aided by the powers of the Buddha, please skillfully differentiate these inconceivable dharmas, these matters borne in the protective mindfulness of the Buddhas, and thus allow others to easily develop resolute faith in them.

And why? When it comes to the skillful explanation of the meaning of the ten grounds, the Dharma of the buddhas of the ten directions requires that they should extend their protective mindfulness to all bodhisattvas in this circumstance. It is due to their receiving such protection in these matters that those bodhisattvas are then able to pursue diligent and vigorous practice.

And why is this? This is because these matters constitute the most supreme practices undertaken by these bodhisattvas, for these are the means that allow them to finally succeed in reaching the dharmas of all buddhas. This is analogous to the circumstance holding for all literature wherein, in every case, the bases of its creation are entirely subsumed in one's initial alphabet³⁹ and

that initial alphabet serves as their very origin, for there is not even a single alphabetical character not already subsumed within that initial alphabet.

In this same manner, O Son of the Buddha, these ten grounds constitute the very origin of all dharmas of the Buddha. It is through the bodhisattva's complete practice of these ten grounds that he is able to gain all-knowledge.

Therefore, O Son of the Buddha, please do explain the meaning of these. The Buddhas shall provide their protective mindfulness and shall bestow the aid of their spiritual powers whereby others will be caused to develop indestructible faith and acceptance.

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

It would be good indeed, O Son of Wisdom
perfectly fulfilled in the pure practices
if you would please present an exposition of the ten grounds' practices

together with the dharmas of the ten grounds that one enters
whereby one reaches perfection in wisdom
and through which one gains the realization of bodhi.

All buddhas of the ten directions,
those most supreme of those honored among men—
They all join in affording you protective mindfulness
as you explain the ten grounds' meanings.

The ten grounds constitute their very origin.
These are the very bases of the implementation of knowledge.
and also constitute the ultimate path
and the repository of the Buddha's measurelessly many dharmas.

They are analogous to the alphabetic characters of all literature
that are all subsumed even in one's initial alphabet.
Just so, the ten grounds constitute the very origin
of all of the Buddha's meritorious qualities and knowledge.

N. THE BODHISATTVA CONGREGATION JOINS IN REQUESTING THIS TEACHING

(o) At that time, all of the bodhisattvas present there, at the same time and with a single voice, uttered verses requesting Vajragarbha Bodhisattva to speak, saying:

O man of supreme and sublime wisdom
whose eloquence is measureless
and whose virtue is as weighty as the king of mountains—
Feeling sympathetic kindness, please explain the ten grounds. (12)

You of moral virtue, mindfulness, and purified wisdom—
 please explain the meaning of these ten grounds
 which constitute the very origin of the ten powers
 and the foundational practices for gaining unimpeded knowledge. ^{13}

The qualities of moral virtue, concentration, and wisdom
 are all gathered in the mind of the Humane One.

Arrogance and all erroneous views
 have already been utterly extinguished.

This congregation is entirely free of doubting thoughts
 and wishes only to hear you skillfully explain this. ^{14}

In this, they are like the thirsty in their yearning for water,
 like the hungry imagining delicious food,
 like the sick thinking of an especially good physician,
 and like bees desiring to feast on honey.

We are all just like this
 in our wishing to hear the flavor of the sweet dew Dharma. ^{15}

Therefore, you of such a vast mind—
 Please open the gates to the first ground
 as well to the rest of them including the tenth ground,
 expounding on them in sequence for our sakes. ^{16}

O. THE BUDDHA EMITS BRILLIANT LIGHT FROM BETWEEN HIS EYEBROWS

^(P) At that time, Śākyamuni Buddha emitted from the white hair mark between his eyebrows “the brilliant flaming light of bodhisattva powers,” a light attended by a retinue of a hundred thousand *asamkhyeyas*⁴⁰ of light rays. After he had emitted this light, it then everywhere illuminated all buddha worlds of the ten directions, having none that it did not entirely pervade. The sufferings of the three wretched destinies all subsided. It entirely illuminated the great assemblies of all buddhas of the ten directions as well as the multitudes attending upon their proclamation of the Dharma while also revealing the inconceivable powers of the Tathāgatas.

After this light had everywhere illuminated the bodies of all bodhisattvas in the great assemblies of all buddhas of the ten directions, it then ascended into space wherein it formed an immense terrace of light clouds.

P. ALL BUDDHAS EMIT LIGHT THAT UTTERS VERSES REQUESTING DHARMA

The Buddhas of the ten directions proceeded in this very same way with every one of them emitting “the brilliant flaming light of bodhisattva powers,” a light attended by a retinue of a hundred thousand *asamkhyeyas* of light rays. It everywhere revealed

the inconceivable powers of the Tathāgatas, entirely illuminated the great assemblies of all buddhas, and also illuminated the great assembly of the Sahā World's Śākyamuni Buddha while also shining on both Vajragarba Bodhisattva Mahāsattva and his lion throne. Having provided this illumination, it then ascended into empty space wherein it formed an immense terrace of light clouds. Then, due to the spiritual power of the Buddhas, from the midst of this light cloud terrace there came forth a voice uttering verses, saying:

The Buddhas, the equals of the unequaled,
 who are like empty space⁴¹ in their possession of qualities
 that include the ten powers, the fearlessnesses, and the rest—
 These most revered of all the lords of the world
 appear here before Śākyamuni Buddha
 and manifest these spiritual powers.^{17}

Employ here the powers of the Buddhas to open and show
 the treasury of the Dharma King, the Lion among Men.
 Proclaim the practices taken up on the grounds
 and the distinctions in meaning associated with the grounds.
 Taking on the powers of the Buddhas, proclaim here
 what is invulnerable to refutation by anyone.^{18}

If a person is able to hear the jewel of Dharma,
 he will be protected by all buddhas.^{19}

When one gradually and sequentially perfects the grounds,
 he shall then succeed in gaining buddhahood.^{20}

If there is anyone capable of hearing this,
 even though he is out in the midst of the great ocean
 or in the middle of the kalpa-ending fire,
 he will still definitely be able to hear this scripture.^{21}

If there is anyone who, deluded, has doubts or misgivings,
 he will never be able to succeed in hearing it.^{22}

Therefore, O Son of the Buddha, now is the time
 for you to expound on the grounds' path of knowledge,
 its entry, its strengths, its contemplation dharmas,
 its sequences, how to cultivate and practice them,

and how then to succeed in reaching the other grounds,
 showing too the benefits arising by successfully reaching each one.
 That you might thus bestow benefit on everyone in the entire world,
 please explain these matters. Do not allow them to be cut off.^{23}

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

(Q) At that time, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva regarded the ten directions and, wishing to cause those in that immense assembly to develop increased faith and reverence, thereupon set forth verses, saying:

The path of the Buddhas, the lords among the Āryas,
is subtle, sublime, extremely difficult to comprehend,
and inaccessible to realization through thought's deliberations.
It is a region coursing in only by those possessed of knowledge.
Its essential nature, from its origins on forth to the present,
is quiescently still and without either production or extinction. {24}

From its origins on forth to the present, it is that emptiness
wherein all sufferings and torments are utterly extinguished.
It departs far beyond all of the destinies of rebirth
and is characterized by its identity with nirvāṇa itself.

In it, there is no middle and no end.

It is not amenable to description through words and phrases.
It transcends the three periods of time
and, in character, is comparable to empty space. {25}

This region wherein the Buddhas course
is that of purity and deep quiescent cessation.
It is difficult for verbal descriptions to approach it.
So too it is with the practices coursing in on the grounds.
If even describing them remains such a difficulty,
how much the more so would it be to reveal them to others. {26}

The wisdom of the Buddhas⁴²
transcends the path of the mental factors,
cannot be conceived of by thought or described in words, and
is not a place wherein aggregates, sense realms, or sense bases exist.
One can only come to know it through knowledge
as it is not such as can be reached through the consciousnesses. {27}

It is as difficult to describe as the track [of a bird⁴³] through the air.
How then could one succeed in revealing its aspects?

The meanings associated with the ten grounds are just like this.
They are not such as a mind not boundlessly vast can ever know. {28}

Although these matters are difficult,
one brings forth vows, coursing thence in kindness and compassion.
One's gradual fulfillment of practice on the ten grounds
is not such that the mind can reach it. {29}

This sort of practice on the grounds
is subtle, sublime, and especially difficult to perceive.
One cannot know them through the mind.
One must take on the powers of the Buddhas to describe them.
You should all now attend to this with reverence
wherein everyone joins together in single-minded listening. {30}

The practices one utilizes in entering the grounds and their aspects
as well as the Dharma gates one cultivates in going forth therein—
Though one might discuss them for countless *kotis* of kalpas,
one could still never be able to reach the end of their explanation.
Now I will present a reality-accordant summary discussion
of their meanings, leaving nothing therein unaddressed. {31}

Attend upon it with single-minded reverence
as, receiving the power of the Buddhas, I proceed here to speak
with the great voice, proclaiming in a manner reliant on analogies
the concepts and designations in a mutually non-contradictory way.
^{32}

In doing so, the immeasurably vast spiritual powers of the Buddhas
shall now all reside here within my person.
Even so, that upon which I proceed to expound here
will be comparable only to a single drop in what is a vast sea. {33}

II. THE MAIN DOCTRINAL TEACHING SECTION

A. THE FIRST GROUND: THE JOYFULNESS GROUND

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

(R) Having uttered these verses, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva then informed the great assembly:

Sons of the Buddha, if there is a being:

Who has assembled thick roots of goodness;

Who has cultivated the good practices;

Who has well accumulated the dharmas facilitating realization of the path;⁴⁴

Who has made offerings to the Buddhas;

Who has assembled the white dharmas of pristine purity;

Who has been under the protection of the good spiritual guide;

Who has entered the resolute and vast intentions;

Who has become resolutely disposed toward the great Dharma mind,⁴⁵

Who has for the most part tended toward implementation of kindness and compassion;

And who delights in seeking the Buddha's wisdom—

(S) A being such as this then becomes capable of bringing forth the resolve to gain *anuttarasamyaksam̄bodhi*, doing so:

For the sake of acquiring the knowledge of all modes;

For the sake of gaining the ten powers;

For the sake of gaining the great fearlessnesses;

For the sake of achieving the complete fulfillment of the dharmas of buddhahood;

For the sake of rescuing all worlds;

For the sake of purifying the mind of great kindness and great compassion;

For the sake of proceeding toward the unimpeded knowledge of everything without exception throughout the ten directions;

For the sake of bringing about the purification of all buddha worlds without exception;

For the sake of knowing in the space of a single mind-moment all phenomena throughout the three periods of time;

And for the sake of turning the wheel of the great Dharma with sovereign mastery, thus broadly manifesting the spiritual powers of the Buddha.

(T) All bodhisattva *mahāsattvas* bring forth this very sort of resolve.

2. THE QUALITIES OF THE BODHISATTVA'S RESOLVE

Sons of the Buddha, this resolve:

Takes the great compassion as foremost;
 Takes wisdom as its predominant condition;
 Is guarded by skillful means;
 [Is sustained by] by consummately realized higher aspirations
 and resolute intentions;⁴⁶
 Is invested with a capacity commensurate with the powers of
 the Buddha;
 Is accompanied by skillful assessment of beings' powers and
 the Buddha's powers;
 Is directed toward unimpeded knowledge;
 Is accordant with spontaneous knowledge;⁴⁷
 Is able to incorporate all dharmas of the Buddha in using wis-
 dom 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

(i) Sons of the Buddha, when the bodhisattva brings forth just such a resolve as this, he immediately:

Passes beyond the grounds of the common person;
 Enters the station of the bodhisattva;
 Becomes born into the clan of the Buddhas;
 Acquires a lineage that none can disparage;
 Passes beyond all worldly paths;
 Enters the world-transcending path;
 Dwells in the bodhisattva dharmas;
 Abides in the ranks of the bodhisattvas;
 Equally enters the three periods of time;
 And becomes definitely bound for the ultimate realization of
 anuttarasamyaksam̄bodhi in the lineage of the Tathāgatas.

(iv) The bodhisattva who dwells in dharmas such as these is known as one who dwells on the Ground of Joyfulness, this on account of the dharma of imperturbability.

Sons of the Buddha, the bodhisattva *mahāsattva* who abides in this Ground of Joyfulness is endowed with:

Abundant joy;
 Abundant faith;
 Abundant purity;

Abundant ebullience;
 Abundant pliancy;
 Abundant tolerance;
 [Abundant] disinclination to disputatiousness;
 [Abundant] disinclination to harming or interfering with other beings;
 And [abundant] disinclination to anger.⁴⁸

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

{w} Sons of the Buddha, those bodhisattvas who dwell on this Ground of Joyfulness:

Have joyful thoughts due to calling to mind the Buddhas;
 Have joyful thoughts due to calling to mind the Dharma of the Buddhas;
 Have joyful thoughts due to calling to mind the bodhisattva *mahāsattvas*;
 Have joyful thoughts due to calling to mind the conduct practiced by the bodhisattvas;
 Have joyful thoughts due to calling to mind the characteristic purity of the *pāramitās*;
 Have joyful thoughts due to calling to mind the bodhisattvas' especially supreme qualities in comparison to those of everyone else;
 Have joyful thoughts due to calling to mind the indestructibility of the bodhisattvas' powers;
 Have joyful thoughts due to calling to mind the teaching methods of the Tathāgatas;
 Have joyful thoughts due to calling to mind the ability to be of benefit to beings;
 And have joyful thoughts due to calling to mind the gateways to wisdom⁴⁹ and skillful means entered by all buddhas and all bodhisattvas.

{x} Sons of the Buddha, the bodhisattva also brings forth this thought:

I have joyful thoughts due to having turned away from and abandoned all worldly states;
 I have joyful thoughts due to entering the uniform equality of all buddhas;
 I have joyful thoughts due to departing far from the grounds of the common person;
 I have joyful thoughts due to drawing close to the grounds of knowledge;⁵⁰

I have joyful thoughts due to severing all vulnerability to entering any of the wretched destinies;
 I have joyful thoughts due to becoming a refuge for all beings;
 I have joyful thoughts due to drawing near to and seeing all buddhas;
 I have joyful thoughts due to being born into the domain of the Buddhas;
 I have joyful thoughts due to entering the ranks of all bodhisattvas;
 And I have joyful thoughts 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

問 Why is it that when this bodhisattva *mahāsattva* gains the Ground of Joyfulness, all types of fearfulness are immediately left far behind? In particular, they are:

The fear of failing to survive;
 The fear of a bad reputation;
 The fear of death;
 The fear of falling into the wretched destinies;
 And the fear of the awesomeness of great assemblies.⁵¹

He leaves behind all such forms of fearfulness. And why is this? It is because this bodhisattva has abandoned any perception of a self.⁵² He does not even covet his own body. How much the less might he covet whatever things it happens to use. As a consequence, he has no fear of failing to survive.

His mind does not cherish any hope of receiving offerings or reverence from anyone, but instead thinks, 'I should make offerings to beings of whatever they require. Therefore he has no fear of a bad reputation.

He has abandoned any view conceiving of the existence of a self. Because he has no perception of the existence of a self,⁵³ he has no fear of death.

He also has this thought: 'When, after I have died, I am reborn, I most certainly will not take rebirth somewhere apart from the Buddhas and the bodhisattvas.' As a consequence of this, he has no fear of falling into the wretched destinies.

He thinks: "The object of my resolve and that in which I delight have no equal anywhere, how much the less might there be anything that could be superior to it?" Consequently, he has no fear of the awesomeness of great assemblies.

Sons of the Buddha, bodhisattvas of this sort have left behind the fear of circumstances that would cause hair-raising terror as well as all such fearsome circumstances.

6. THE BODHISATTVA'S GROUNDS PURIFYING PRACTICES

(z) Sons of the Buddha, this bodhisattva takes the great compassion as what is foremost and is possessed of a profound and vast resolve that is solid. Thus he redoubles his diligent cultivation of all roots of goodness, specifically doing so:

- {AA} Through making faith predominant;
- Through extensive practice of pure thought;⁵⁴
- Through possessing pure convictions;⁵⁵
- Through extensive reliance on the faith-imbued mind in making differentiating judgments;
- Through bringing forth the mind imbued with compassion and kindly pity;
- Through perfection of the great kindness;
- Through remaining free of any tendency to become weary or to withdraw from his efforts;
- Through being adorned with a sense of shame and dread of blame;
- Through achieving consummate proficiency in patience and mental pliancy;
- Through respectfully according with the Buddhas' teaching dharmas with strong faith and veneration;
- {BB} Through always and insatiably cultivating 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 carrying forth right contemplation accordant with the Dharma one has learned;⁵⁶
- Through refraining from mental attachments;
- Through not seeking offerings, renown, or reverence from others;
- Through remaining free of miserliness regarding life-supporting material possessions;
- Through always and tirelessly bringing forth jewel-like resolve;⁵⁷
- {CC} Through happily striving to reach the ground of all-knowledge;
- Through always questing to gain realization of the Buddha's powers, fearlessnesses, and exclusive dharmas;

Through seeking to acquire the dharmas assisting proficiency in the *pāramitās*;

Through abandoning all flattery and deceptiveness;

Through being able to practice in accordance with what has been taught;

Through always practicing truthful speech;

Through never defiling the house of the Buddhas;

Through never relinquishing the moral precepts in which the bodhisattvas train;

Through bringing forth a resolve set on realization of all-knowledge that is as unshakeable as the king of mountains;

Through finding no pleasure in any worldly matters as he perfects the world-transcending roots of goodness;

Through insatiably gathering together the dharmas comprising the factors assisting realization of bodhi;

And through always striving to achieve realization of the most supreme of all superior paths.

Sons of the Buddha, the bodhisattva *mahāsattva* who completely develops such dharmas for purifying the grounds as these thereby becomes established on the bodhisattva's Ground of Joyfulness.

7. THE BODHISATTVA'S TEN GREAT VOWS

(DD) The bodhisattva who becomes established in this manner on the Ground of Joyfulness makes all of the great vows entailing the generation of just such decisive resolve. Specifically, they are:⁵⁸

"I vow that I shall make gifts of every sort of offering to all buddhas without exception, freely making such offerings with pure resolute faith." In making such a great vow as this, his implementation of it is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as he continues on until the end of future time, exhaustively making offerings of every sort of great gift to all buddhas.

(EE) He also vows that he will uphold and preserve the scriptural Dharma proclaimed by all buddhas, that he will take on the realization of the *anuttarasamyaksam̄bodhi* of all buddhas, that he will always accord with the Dharma taught by all buddhas, and that he will always be able to protect and preserve the Dharma of all buddhas. In making such a great vow as this, his implementation of it is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as he continues on incessantly until the end of future time, exhaustively protecting and preserving the Dharma of all buddhas in every kalpa.

{FF} He also vows that, in all worlds, with the arrival of all buddhas, when they come down from the Tuṣita Heaven, enter the womb, abide in the womb, are first born, leave behind the home life, and then gain buddhahood, in every case he will entreat them to turn the great wheel of the Dharma, vowing too that, when they manifest entry into the great nirvāṇa, “I will in every case go there, make offerings, and serve as a leader in the compilation of their Dharma,” vowing to do these things in order to facilitate [the Dharma wheel’s] turning throughout the three periods of time. In making such a great vow as this, his implementation of it is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as he continues on until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas, incessantly raising up offerings to all buddhas.

{GG} He also vows that he will teach all of the practices coursed in by the bodhisattvas, so vast, lofty, and far-reaching, so immeasurable, indestructible, and free of discriminations, those practices that are subsumed within the *pāramitās*, that are purified on the grounds, that generate the dharmas assisting realization of the path, that constitute the path of signs and the path of signlessness, teaching how they may conduce to success and how they may lead to ruination, teaching the path of the grounds coursed in by all bodhisattvas, teaching too the *pāramitās*’ foundational practices, teaching these things to others in a manner whereby they are caused to take up their practice and bring forth increased resolve. In making such a great vow as this, his implementation of it is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as he continues on until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas, incessantly employing the practices coursed in by all bodhisattvas to provide teaching in accord with Dharma for the ripening of beings.

{HH} He also vows that he will teach all beings, whether possessed of form or formless, whether possessed of perception, free of perception, or abiding in a state of neither perception nor non-perception, whether egg-born, womb-born, moisture-born, or transformationally born, teaching them all, no matter to which of the stations in the triple world they have become connected, no matter in which of the six destinies of rebirth they have taken birth, no matter in which place they have taken rebirth, thus teaching all who are subsumed in the sphere of name-and-form, proceeding thus for the sake of teaching and ripening all beings, for the sake of influencing

them to cut off their coursing through all the destinies of worldly existence, for the sake of influencing them to abide in the Dharma of the Buddha, for the sake of influencing them to accumulate all-knowledge,⁵⁹ teaching all of them without exception. In making such a great vow as this, his implementation of it is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as he continues on until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas, incessantly teaching all beings.

- (ii) He also vows to directly know all of the differentiating aspects of all worlds throughout the ten directions, including all aspects of those worlds that are wide, narrow, extremely towering, of so countlessly many varieties one could never distinguish them all, including those that are immovable, and those that are indescribably coarse, subtle, upright, inverted, formed with their crowns and bases opposing each other, flat, spherical, or cubical, thus being able in this knowing to freely enter the knowledge of all such worlds, knowing them as existing in a manner comparable to appearances in the net-like canopy of Indra wherein things manifest like the phenomena in a conjuration. In making such a great vow as this, his implementation of it is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as he continues on until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas, incessantly carrying on the direct and complete knowing⁶⁰ of all such worlds.
- (iii) He also vows to bring about the purification of all buddha lands wherein all buddha lands enter a single buddha land, a single buddha land enters all buddha lands, and each and every buddha land is adorned with measurelessly many radiant phenomena, wherein they all become filled with measurelessly many wise beings⁶¹ who have abandoned all defilements and perfected the path of purification, and wherein he always possesses the power of all buddhas' great superknowledges, accords with the mental dispositions of beings, and thus appears for their sakes. In making such a great vow as this, his implementation of it is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as he continues on until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas, incessantly purifying lands such as these.
- (kk) He also vows that he will be of like mind with and pursue the same studies as all other bodhisattvas, joining together with them in the accumulation of every sort of goodness, remaining free of enmity or jealousy toward them, that when all are engaged in a single endeavor, he will maintain thoughts of

equal regard toward them, maintaining harmonious relations with them, never becoming mutually estranged from them, being able as well to manifest buddha bodies according to what suits the needs of others, being able in one's own mind to completely understand and know the domains, spiritual powers, and powers of cognition of all buddhas, always being able to freely employ spiritual superknowledges to roam at will to all lands, manifesting the appearance of one's body in the assemblies of all buddhas, being able as well to everywhere take up births into all stations of rebirth, being possessed of all such inconceivably great wisdom, and perfecting the practices of the bodhisattvas. In making such a great vow as this, his implementation of it is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as he continues on until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas, incessantly carrying forth the practice of just such a great path of wisdom.

(LL) He also vows that he will take up the irreversible turning of the wheel of Dharma, that he will course in the bodhisattva path, that, of all of his physical, verbal, and mental actions, none will be such as are done in vain, that any being who merely sees him will thereby immediately become bound for definite success in the Buddha's Dharma, that, "Any being who so much as hears my voice will thereby immediately become bound for success in the path of genuine wisdom,"⁶² that, "Any being who merely lays eyes on me will immediately be filled with joyous delight and abandon afflictions," that, in this, he will become like the great king of medicine trees, and that, in order to develop such resolve as this, he will course in the bodhisattva path. In making such a great vow as this, his implementation of it is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as he continues on until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas, incessantly coursing along in the path of irreversibility, ensuring that none of his actions will have been done in vain.

(MM) He also vows that he will gain the realization of *anuttarasamyaksam̄bodhi* in all worlds, that even in those places manifesting within the tip of a single hair, he will manifest entry into the womb, leaving behind the home life, sitting in the *bodhimanda*, gaining buddhahood, turning the wheel of Dharma, bringing about the liberation of beings, and manifesting the appearance of entering the great *nirvāṇa*, that he will manifest the great spiritual and cognitive powers of

the *tathāgatas*, that he will adapt to the circumstances of all individual beings and that, according to what is appropriate for their liberation, he will, even in every successive mind-moment, manifest realization of the buddha path, facilitate the liberation of beings, and bring about the extinguishing of their suffering and afflictions, that he will gain the cognition that realizes all dharmas are characterized by identity with nirvāṇa, that, employing a single voice, he will be able to cause all beings to become established in joyfulness, that, even though he manifests entry into the great nirvāṇa, he will nonetheless never cut off his coursing in the bodhisattva practices, that he will reveal to beings the grounds of great knowledge, that he will cause them to realize all dharmas are in every case false and deceptive, accomplishing these endeavors by resort to great wisdom,⁶³ great superknowledges, and freely manifested spiritual transformations. In making such a great vow as this, his implementation of it is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as he continues on until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas, incessantly persisting in accomplishing the works associated with the path to buddhahood, in seeking great wisdom,⁶⁴ and in acquiring the great spiritual powers and other such realizations.

Sons of the Buddha, the bodhisattva dwelling on the Ground of Joyfulness takes these ten vows as foremost while also generating additional hundreds of myriads of *asamkhyeyas* of other great vows. {NN} He employs ten infinity dharmas to facilitate the generation of these vows, doing so to instigate the diligent practice of vigor for the sake of bringing these vows to fulfillment. What then are those ten? They are:

- First, beings cannot end;
- Second, worlds cannot end;
- Third, empty space cannot end;
- Fourth, the Dharma realm cannot end;
- Fifth, nirvāṇa cannot end;
- Sixth, the buddhas' coming forth into the world cannot end;
- Seventh, the Buddhas' wisdom⁶⁵ cannot end;
- Eighth, conditions taken as objects of mind cannot end;
- Ninth, the arising of knowledge cannot end;
- Tenth, the varieties of worldly paths, the varieties of Dharma paths, and the varieties of paths of wisdom⁶⁶ cannot end.

[Accordingly, he vows that]:

If beings were to come to an end, then my vows might come to an end. If the worlds were to come to an end, if empty space were to come to an end, if the Dharma realm were to come to an end, if nirvāṇa were to come to an end, if the Buddhas' coming forth into the world were to come to an end, if the Buddhas' wisdom⁶⁷ were to come to an end, if the conditions taken as objects of mind were to come to an end, if the arising of wisdom were to come to an end, and if the varieties of paths were to come to an end, then my vows might come to an end.

However, in truth, beings cannot possibly ever come to an end. So, too, the worlds, empty space, the Dharma realm, nirvāṇa, the Buddhas' coming forth into the world, the Buddhas' wisdom,⁶⁸ conditions taken as objects of mind, the arising of knowledge, and the varieties of paths—none of them could ever possibly come to an end. Consequently, the meritorious qualities associated with these vows cannot possibly ever come to an end, either.

8. THE MENTAL QUALITIES & FAITH ACQUIRED BY THE 1ST GROUND BODHISATTVA
 (oo) Sons of the Buddha, once the bodhisattva has brought forth that resolve through which he makes these great vows, he then acquires:⁶⁹

- The beneficent mind;
- The supple mind;
- The subdued and adaptive mind;
- The mind inclined toward goodness;
- The quiescent mind;
- The harmoniously smooth mind;
- The straight mind;
- The unscattered mind;
- The undisturbed mind;
- And the unsullied mind.

If one is of this sort, he becomes one possessed of faith who delights in the aspects of the mind of faith and distinguishes their respective meritorious qualities. [In particular]:⁷⁰

- He has faith in the path originally coursed in by the Buddhas;
- Has faith in being able to develop the practice of the *pāramitās*;
- Has faith in being able to thoroughly enter into the grounds especially superior qualities;
- Has faith in being able to perfect the ten powers of the Buddha;

Has faith in being able to achieve perfect fulfillment of the four fearlessnesses;
 Has faith in the indomitable dharmas exclusive to the Buddhas;
 Has faith in the inconceivable Dharma of the Buddhas;
 Has faith in the Buddhas' powers as transcendent of either any middle or polar extremes;
 Has faith in the Tathāgata's countless gateways of practice;
 And has faith in realizing the fruits [of the path] as a consequence that results from their respective causes and conditions.

To speak of it in terms of the essentials, he has faith in the universally applied bodhisattva practices as well as the meritorious qualities, wisdom,⁷¹ powers, and other attributes of the Buddhas.

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

(PP) Sons of the Buddha, the bodhisattva has the following thought:

The right Dharma of the Buddhas is characterized by:

- Such extreme profundity;
- Such transcendence of signs;
- Such quiescence;
- Such emptiness;
- Such signlessness;
- Such wishlessness;
- Such non-defilement;
- Such measurelessness;
- Such vastness;
- And such insurmountability.

(QQ) And yet common people:

- Allow their minds to fall into wrong views;
- Allow their wisdom eyes to be covered over by the darkness of ignorance;
- Always raise up the banner of arrogance;
- Fall into the net of craving;
- Follow the course of flattery and deceptiveness;
- Always embrace miserliness and jealousy through which they create the causes and conditions for their subsequent stations of rebirth;
- Extensively accumulate those desires, hatreds, delusions whereby they create all manner of heavy karma;
- So set the fierce wind of their hatefulness and animosity blowing upon the flames of the mind inclined toward

karmic offenses that they are always caused to blaze intensely;

Become such that, whatever actions they pursue are reflections of the inverted views;⁷²

And become such that the flood of desire, the flood of becoming, the flood of ignorance, and the flood of views⁷³ 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 and affliction.

{RR} Specifically, this occurs as follows:

The conjunction of [the aggregates of] name-and-form⁷⁴ then leads to the development of the six sense bases.⁷⁵

The paired conjunctions of the sense bases with their corresponding objective sense dusts generate contact.

Because of the cause and condition of contact, there then occurs the arising of feelings.

Because of a deep delight in feelings, there then occurs the generation of desire.

Because of increased desire, there then follows the generation of grasping.

Due to an increase in grasping, there then follows the production of subsequent existence.

Because of the causes and conditions inhering in existence, there then occur birth, aging, worry, sorrow, suffering, and the afflictions.

It is through causes and conditions such as these that they accumulate such a mass of suffering. In this circumstance wherein beings undergo all manner of suffering and affliction, there is no self, nothing belonging to a self, no agent of actions, no one who undergoes anything at all, and no one who is possessed of any knowing awareness. This circumstance is just as if consisting solely of shrubs, trees, tiles, and stones. It is also comparable to mere reflections.

These common people are so pitiable. In all of this, they are unknowing and unaware and thus become bound to undergo such suffering and affliction.

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

{ss} At this point, observing that these beings are unable to avoid all these sufferings, the bodhisattva immediately brings forth wisdom in association with the great compassion, thinking, "We should all strive to rescue these beings." He also wishes to cause

them to be able to abide in the happiness of the Buddha's ultimate path and so immediately brings forth wisdom in association with the great kindness.

{T} When, in accordance with the dharmas of the great kindness and the great compassion, the bodhisattva *mahāsattva* avails himself of deep and marvelous resolve and abides on the first ground, he becomes free of any covetous cherishing for anything at all and, out of profound veneration for the great and marvelous knowledge of the Buddhas, cultivates the great relinquishing through which he is immediately able to entirely give away everything that can be given. This includes his food and seed grains, the contents of his storehouses and treasures, gold, silver, *mani* jewels, agate, carnelian, lapis lazuli, coral, amber, precious shells, jewel necklaces, adornments for the body, all manner of precious jewels and such, as well as elephants, horses, carriages, rickshaws, workers, servants, members of his own retinue, states, cities, villages, shelters, parks, forests, viewing terraces, wives, children, both male and female, and whatsoever else one might hold dear, relinquishing all of these things. He is also able to give away even his own head, eyes, ears, nose, limbs, hands, feet, and entire body, giving all of these things because of his profound esteem for the knowledge of the Buddha, doing so without retaining any possessive cherishing for them. The bodhisattva *mahāsattva* who dwells on the first ground is thereby able to carry forth the practice of the great relinquishing.

{U} Utilizing the mind of great compassion and the mind of great relinquishing in his striving to rescue all beings, this bodhisattva redoubles his efforts aimed at implementing all forms of worldly and world-transcending beneficial endeavor and perseveres in this tirelessly.

As a consequence of this, this bodhisattva develops the quality of tirelessness through which he is able to open forth and comprehend all of the scriptural texts. He thereby develops the qualities associated with knowing the contents of the scriptures and acquires the wisdom⁷⁶ arising from such knowledge of the scriptural texts. He becomes able then to well assess how he should and should not proceed in relation to beings of superior, middling, and inferior capacities and thus accords with what is appropriate in subsequent related endeavors. He then accords with whoever comes to rely on and draw close to him, adapting to their capacities in his efforts to benefit them.

Thus it is that the bodhisattva develops the qualities associated with worldly knowledge. Having acquired these qualities associated with worldly knowledge, he then becomes aware of what constitutes correct timeliness and correct measure in these endeavors. Then, graced with a sense of shame and dread of blame, he cultivates the path of benefiting self and benefiting others. Because of this, he develops the qualities associated with possessing a sense of shame and dread of blame.

In his implementation of these qualities, he engages in the intensely diligent cultivation of irreversible resolve.⁷⁷ Through this quality of vigor in irreversible resolve, he immediately acquires the power of enduring fortitude. Having acquired this power of enduring fortitude, he then diligently engages in making offerings to all buddhas, according with whatever the Buddha has taught, and practicing in accord with whatever the Buddha has taught.

Sons of the Buddha, thus it is that this bodhisattva comes to comprehensively know all of the dharmas through which one brings forth such purification of the grounds, namely:⁷⁸

- Faith;
- Kindness;
- Compassion;
- Renunciation;
- Indefatigability;
- Knowledge of the scriptures and texts;
- Thorough comprehension of worldly dharmas;
- A sense of shame and dread of blame;
- The power of fortitude;
- The making of offerings to the Buddhas while practicing in accordance with the teachings.⁷⁹

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

(vii) Furthermore, due to having made vows, this bodhisattva dwelling on the Ground of Joyfulness obtains a vast vision of the Buddhas, thereby becoming able to see the Buddhas, seeing many hundreds, seeing many thousands, or seeing even many myriads of *kotis* of *nayutas* of buddhas. When the bodhisattva sees the Buddhas, his mind is filled with great joyfulness and deep-minded cherishing reverence. He then makes offerings to the Buddhas of whatsoever things would be pleasing to bodhisattvas, also making offerings to their Sangha assemblies as well. He then

dedicates the merit of these offerings to his eventual realization of *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*.

12. THE BODHISATTVA'S PRACTICE OF THE MEANS OF ATTRACTION

Due to having made offerings to the Buddhas, this bodhisattva develops the dharmas through which one carries out the teaching of beings, for the most part using two of the means of attraction in his drawing beings forth. Specifically, these are giving and pleasing words. He only employs the remaining two means of attraction⁸⁰ in a manner commensurate with his own powers of faithful comprehension, for his practice of them has not yet reached a state of state of consummate skillfulness.

In a manner corresponding to the offerings he has made to the Buddhas and his efforts in the teaching of beings, this bodhisattva in all cases becomes able to take on the practice of the dharmas involved in purifying cultivation of the grounds. He naturally dedicates all the merit from these actions to all-knowledge. As he proceeds in this fashion, they increase in their shining brightness to the point where they can be put to use.

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

Sons of the Buddha, this circumstance is analogous to that of a goldsmith who, in his refining of gold, employs the power of fire in the smelting and softening of gold through which it becomes increasingly radiant and lustrous. So too it is with the bodhisattva who, commensurate with his making of offerings to the Buddhas and his teaching of beings, takes on the practice of those dharmas used in the purifying cultivation of the grounds and then naturally dedicates all the merit therefrom to the acquisition of all-knowledge. As they become ever more brightly radiant, he thus becomes able to freely put them to use however he wishes.

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

(ww) Furthermore, Sons of the Buddha, with regard to the first ground, the bodhisattva *mahāsattva* should consult, present requests for clarification, and receive instruction regarding its characteristic aspects and acquired fruits, seeking teachings on the dharmas involved in success on this ground, insatiably requesting these teachings from buddhas, bodhisattvas, and good spiritual guides.

As he dwells on the first ground, this bodhisattva should consult, present requests for clarification, and receive instruction regarding the second ground's characteristic aspects and

acquired fruits, insatiably requesting these teachings from buddhas, bodhisattvas, and good spiritual guides. So too should he proceed in these requests for teachings regarding the characteristic aspects and acquired fruits associated with the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth grounds. Thus it is that he should request teachings on successful development of the dharmas associated with the ten grounds, insatiably requesting these teachings from buddhas, bodhisattvas, and good spiritual guides.

This bodhisattva should then:

Thoroughly know with respect to all of the grounds those dharmas that are either contradictory or conducive to their successful cultivation;

Thoroughly know the circumstances conduced to success or to ruination of progress on the grounds;

Thoroughly know the characteristic aspects of the causes and effects associated with the grounds;

Thoroughly know what is involved in the successive acquisition and relinquishing of each of the grounds;

Thoroughly know the practice aspects associated with purification of the grounds;

Thoroughly know with respect to all the grounds the practices involved in progressing from any single ground to the next ground;

Thoroughly know with respect to all of the grounds what is and is not the correct station;

Thoroughly know with respect to the grounds what is involved in changing the station in which one is abiding;

Thoroughly know with respect to the grounds the distinctions in initially-occurring and subsequently-occurring phenomena;

And thoroughly know with respect to the grounds the characteristic signs of achieving irreversibility, and so forth until we come to his thoroughly knowing of all of the dharmas involved in purification of the grounds and his thoroughly knowing what is involved in entering the ground of the Tathāgata's knowledge.

Sons of the Buddha, so it is that the bodhisattvas thoroughly know the characteristic signs associated with all of the grounds from that point wherein one has not yet gained the first ground on through to the tenth ground, possessing unimpeded knowledge of these things. It is through their acquisition of the light

of wisdom in relation to the grounds that they become able to acquire the light of all buddhas' wisdom.⁸¹

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

Sons of the Buddha, this circumstance is analogous to that of a great leader of merchants who is preparing to lead forth many merchants wishing to reach some great city. In such a circumstance, he needs to first inquire about the roads, about any possibly ruinous conditions that might require turning back, and about any circumstances on the road by which anyone might be harmed.

Even before first setting out, he finds out in advance where one will be able to rest each night and comes to thoroughly know all of the matters related to successfully reaching that city. He develops the ability to employ his wisdom⁸² and reasoned assessments in the preparation of all of the provisions they will use, thus ensuring that they will not fall short of anything they need as he correctly leads that group of people on through to successful arrival at that great city. He thereby ensures that, while on that dangerous road, they will be able to avoid calamitous difficulties that might befall either himself or any of the others, thus making sure that everyone may remain free of worry or affliction.

Sons of the Buddha, the bodhisattva *mahāsattva* is just like this. Even while dwelling on the first ground, he comes to thoroughly know all of the grounds' contradictory and conducive dharmas and so forth on through to his thoroughly knowing all bodhisattva's grounds-purification dharmas and his thoroughly knowing entry into the ground of the Tathāgata's knowledge.

At this time, the bodhisattva sees to the accumulation of the provisions consisting of great merit and wisdom.⁸³ He then proceeds to serve beings like that leader of merchants. Thus he then accords with what is appropriate in teaching them and influencing them to escape the dangers, difficulties, and wretched destinies of *samsāra*'s cyclic births and deaths and shows them the safe and secure path, continuing to do so until he causes them to dwell in the great city of the wisdom⁸⁴ of all-knowledge wherein they become free of any vulnerability to ruin or affliction.

Therefore, O Sons of the Buddha, the bodhisattva *mahāsattva* should always bring forth tireless resolve in his diligent cultivation of all of the foundational practices associated with the grounds, doing so on through to the point where he thoroughly

knows the means used in entering the ground of the Tathāgata's knowledge.

16. VAJRAGARBHA'S FINAL STATEMENTS ABOUT THE 1ST GROUND BODHISATTVA

Sons of the Buddha, this constitutes a summary discussion of the bodhisattva *mahāsattva*'s entry into the gateway of the Ground of Joyfulness. Were one to take up an extensive discussion of this, this would involve the treatment of countless hundreds of thousands of myriads of *koti*s of *asamkhyeyas* of specific topics.

17. THE BODHISATTVA'S SOCIAL STATION AND DHARMA PRACTICE

(xx) The bodhisattva *mahāsattva* dwelling on this 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.⁸⁵ He is skilled in doing away with beings' filth of miserliness as he always practices great giving and never lessens the good karmic works in which he engages.

a. THE BODHISATTVA'S MINDFULNESS

No matter whether he is engaged in the meritorious practices of giving, pleasing words, beneficial actions, or joint endeavors, still:

He never departs from his mindfulness of the Buddha;
 He never departs from his mindfulness of the Dharma;
 He never departs from his mindfulness of all of his companions among the bodhisattva *mahāsattvas*;
 He never departs from his mindfulness of the path practiced by the bodhisattvas;
 He never departs from his mindfulness of the *pāramitās*;
 He never departs from his mindfulness of the ten grounds;
 He never departs from his mindfulness of the powers, the fearlessnesses, and the dharmas exclusive to buddhas;
 And so forth until we come to his never departing from his mindfulness of the quest to completely perfect his realization of the knowledge of all modes.

b. THE BODHISATTVA'S ASPIRATION TO SERVE BEINGS

He always has this thought: "For all of these beings, I should serve them as a leader, as one who is supreme in this, as one who is grand, as one who is sublime, as one who is superior, as one who is unsurpassably superior, as one who serves them as a guide, as one who serves them like a general, as one who serves them as a teaching master, as one who is worthy of their reverence, and

as one who serves them in other such ways up to and including serving them as one upon whom they can rely."

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

Sons of the Buddha, if this bodhisattva *mahāsattva* wishes to relinquish the home life, once he applies himself to this, with but a moment's application of effort, he will become able to relinquish the home life along with his wife and children and the five desires. Having succeeded in leaving the home life under the auspices of the Buddha's Dharma, then, through but a moment's application of diligent effort:

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 throughout a hundred buddha worlds;

He will become able to fly across the span of a hundred buddha worlds;

He will become able to illuminate a hundred buddha worlds;

He will become able to teach the beings within a hundred buddha worlds;

He will become able to abide for a lifespan of a hundred *kalpas*;

He will become able to know the events of a hundred *kalpas* of both the past and the future;

He will become able to skillfully enter a hundred gateways into the Dharma;

He will become able to create a hundred transformation bodies;

And he will be able to manifest a hundred bodhisattvas to serve in the retinue of each of them.

(viii) Were he to avail himself of the power of vows, he could freely manifest these phenomena in even greater numbers so large that one could never count them even in however many hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of *nayutas* of *kalpas* one might attempt to do so.⁸⁶

18. VAJRAGARBHA BODHISATTVA'S SUMMARIZING VERSES

At that time, wishing to reiterate and clarify these meanings, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva *Mahāsattva* then uttered verses, saying:

If there be any being

who liberally cultivates the accumulation of roots of goodness,

who perfects a hundred dharmas,

who draws close to the Buddhas,

whose power of pure faith is immense,
and who accords with the minds of kindness and compassion—
A person such as this is capable of bringing forth
the immeasurably vast knowledge of the Buddha. {1}

Questing to acquire the all-knowledge of the Buddhas,
their incalculably vast powers and purity,
with solid and enduring power of endurance,
he perfects all dharmas of the Buddhas,

with the mind of compassion, he rescues those in the world,
purifies all of the buddha lands,
turns the wheel of Dharma through its extensive proclamation,
and brings forth this most unexcelled of vows. {2}

In order, in a single mind-moment, to know the three periods of time,
and yet still have no discriminations in this regard,
in order to manifest within the world
in all of the various sorts of eras, each distinct from the other,
and, to state it briefly, in order to strive
to acquire all of the Buddhas' meritorious qualities,
he brings forth the vast resolve
that is comparable in its scope to empty space. {3}

Taking the compassionate mind and wisdom as foremost,
cultivating in conjunction with skillful means,
due to having pure faith and resolute intentions,
his powers in this become immeasurably vast.

In whatever he turns his mind to, he is unimpeded
so that he need not rely on the instruction from others.
In these matters, he achieves parity with the Buddhas
and thereby brings forth the great resolve. {4}

All sons of the Buddha should give birth to
just such a jewel-like⁸⁷ resolve as this.
By this, one immediately abandons the actions of a common person
and enters into the conduct engaged in by the Buddha.

One thus immediately achieves birth into the family of the Buddhas
that is beyond any bases for criticism or censure,
and then will become the same as the Buddhas
by being definitely bound to gain the unsurpassed enlightenment. {5}

When one gives birth to just such a resolve as this,
he thereupon immediately gains the first ground.
His resolve therein is as unshakeable
as the king of mountains.

This bodhisattva then has
the signs of great joyfulness manifest in him.
His resolve is thenceforth always pure
and is such that it can take on great endeavors. {6}

His mind finds no pleasure in disputatiousness,
is not fond of tormenting beings,
is entirely free of hateful thought,
and delights in a sense of shame, dread of blame, and respectfulness.

He also practices straight-mindedness,
guarding his sense faculties,
always bearing in mind rescuing those in the world,
and bearing in mind his quest for the Buddhas' knowledge.
Thus his mind becomes joyful

and he thinks: "I am bound to achieve success in these matters." {7}

When he gains the Ground of Joyfulness,
he immediately passes beyond five types of fearfulness:
Fear of failing to survive, the fear of death,
the fear of ill-repute,
the fear of the three wretched destinies,
and the fear of the awesome virtue of great assemblies.

It is due to having no covetous attachment to a self
or anything belonging to a self
that the sons of the Buddha
become able to abandon all forms of fearfulness. {8}

He always puts into practice the kind and compassionate mind,
is constantly possessed of faith and reverence,
is replete in a sense of shame, a dread of blame, and the qualities,
and, both day and night, increases the good dharmas.

He delights in genuine benefit provided by meritorious qualities
and does not delight in any of the desires. {9}

Whatever dharma he has happened to hear,
he is able to always subject to skillful contemplation.
He has no behavior motivated by covetous attachment
and has cut off all ideation pertaining to offerings or support.

He always delights in bodhi
and strives single-mindedly to acquire the Buddha's knowledge.
He practices all of the *pāramitās*
and abandons all thought tending toward flattery or deviousness. {10}

He is able to practice in accordance with what has been proclaimed,
and establishes himself securely in truthful speech.

He never defiles the house of the Buddhas,
never relinquishes the bodhisattva training,

distances himself from worldly endeavors and karmic actions,
and delights in bestowing happiness and benefit in the world.

He seeks out good dharmas insatiably
and vigorously quests for ever-increasing progression. {11}

In this way, the bodhisattvas
are fond of and delight in all meritorious qualities
and bring forth their great vows
by which they aspire to see the Buddhas,
vow to protect the Dharma, to go wherever the Buddhas dwell,
and vow to practice the bodhisattva's marvelous practices. {12}

They vow to engage in teaching that matures all beings,
vow to take up the purification of all buddha lands,
vow that "My buddha land shall be
one that is filled with great bodhisattvas,"

vow, "I shall maintain a mind the same as that of all bodhisattvas,
shall become one who, if but heard or seen, it shall not be in vain,
and I shall bring it about that, even within every single atom,
buddhas shall appear, showing their realization of buddhahood." {13}

He brings forth vows such as these,
vows that are incalculable and boundless in their reach.

These vows are as endless
as empty space, as beings,
as the Dharma realm, as the worlds, as nirvāna,
as the coming forth of buddhas, as their wisdom,⁸⁸ {14}

as objects of mind, as arisings of knowledge, and path's variations.⁸⁹
He vows: "My vows shall endure in a manner equal to these." {15}

Thus it is that they bring forth great vows,
carrying them forth with pliant, subdued, and concordant minds.
They are able to maintain faith in Buddha's meritorious qualities and,
in their contemplations with regard to beings,

realize that their circumstances arise from causes and conditions,
whereupon they bring forth the minds of kindness and compassion,
and thus immediately reflect with regard to suffering beings:
"I should rescue them and bring them to liberation." {16}

For the sake of these beings,
he then engages in all the different sorts of giving,
specifically relinquishing to them marvelous lands,
all sorts of supremely wondrous and precious jewels,
elephants, horses, carriages,
his retinue, the services of his countrymen,
and even his head, eyes, hands, feet,
and flesh, relinquishing them all with no regrets.^{17}

He seeks to acquire knowledge of the many different scriptures,
doing so with tireless mind,
gains an understanding of their meanings and purport,
and is able to practice them in a manner adapted to the world.

The sense of shame, the dread of blame, the mind of forbearance—
He gradually brings about growth in these,
and is able to bring forth a reverential mind
in making offerings to countless buddhas.^{18}

The wise, both day and night,
always carry forth their cultivation in this manner,
thus causing their roots of goodness to shine brightly,
just as when one engages in the refinement of gold.

The bodhisattva who dwells on this ground
becomes able to understand all ten of the grounds
so that, as his cultivation progresses,
he has nothing that obstructs his advancement.^{19}

He is comparable to a leader of traveling traders
who, wishing be of benefit to all those merchants,
first inquires about the conditions encountered on the road and
what sorts of hazardous and difficult circumstances they may meet.

The bodhisattva dwelling on the first ground
should learn all of the practices associated with the grounds
so that he will remain free of all obstacles
and be well able to arrive at the ground of buddhahood.^{20}

One who dwells on this first ground
often becomes a monarch on the continent of Jambudvīpa
who is skillful in his knowing of all dharmas
and always employs the minds of kindness and compassion.

He thereby teaches and leads in accordance with the Dharma,
causing everyone to bring forth faith and reverence,
encouraging them to engage in the practice of giving,
and thereby strive to acquire the Buddha's wisdom.^{21}

If the bodhisattva chooses to relinquish his country,
leave the home life, and enter the Buddha's Dharma,
through diligent practice pursued with vigor,
he immediately succeeds in acquiring a hundred samādhis,
in being able to see a hundred buddhas,
in being able to cause tremors in a hundred lands,
in being able to illuminate a hundred lands,
and in being able to fly across just such an expanse. ^{22}

He becomes able, too, to teach the beings in a hundred lands,
to enter a hundred gateways into the Dharma,
to call to mind the events of a hundred kalpas,
and manifest a hundred bodies

while also being able to bring forth a hundred bodhisattvas
to manifest in the retinue of each of them.

If he avails himself of his power of vows,
he is able to exceed these numbers by an incalculably great amount.
^{23}

In this clarification of the ideas related to the first ground, I now
merely offer a summary explanatory description.
If one wished to present an expansively comprehensive description,
one could not complete it even in a *koti* of kalpas.

This first of bodhisattva grounds,
is known as the station of joyfulness.
I hereby now conclude this differentiating discussion
of this one who bestows such benefit on beings. ^{24}

The End of Chapter One