

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Shining Light Ground

#### C. THE THIRD GROUND: THE SHINING LIGHT GROUND

##### 1. THE THIRD GROUND'S INTRODUCTORY VERSES AND DHARMA REQUEST

When all those bodhisattvas had heard this discourse on these  
inconceivable practices of the bodhisattva,  
their minds all became greatly joyful  
and became filled with immeasurably great reverence.

Then, from the midst of space, they immediately  
rained down the many sorts of fine flowers and incense  
that then draped down like clouds,  
presenting their offerings to Vajragarbha. <sup>(1)</sup>

All in unison, they praised him, exclaiming, "It is good indeed,  
good indeed, Vajragarbha,  
that you have so well proclaimed how the great personages  
guard and maintain their practice of purity in the moral precepts.

With a mind deeply imbued with kindly pity  
toward all beings,  
you have set forth this expansive proclamation explaining  
the second ground's realm of practice. <sup>(2)</sup>

"You have explained these bodhisattvas' sublime practices  
that are true, real, and free of anything that deviates,  
have explained as well the realm of the practice of purity  
coursed in by all such bodhisattvas as these,

and have always sought the finest circumstances  
for all beings.

Thus this explanation of all such matters  
related to the second ground of radiant purity has come to an end. <sup>(3)</sup>

"The devas and humans abiding here in reverence  
pray that you will proceed to discuss the third ground,  
skillfully revealing the endeavors of the wise  
and that which the bodhisattvas practice therein. <sup>(4)</sup>

"We pray you will explain with regard to these great personages  
just how it is that they practice giving,  
the upholding of moral precepts, patience,  
vigor, and how they practice *dhya*na concentration,

wisdom, and skillful means  
 as well as the minds of kindness and compassion,  
 and how it is, in practicing these dharmas,  
 they carry on purifying cultivation of the practices of the Buddha.” (5)

Liberation Moon Bodhisattva  
 then addressed Vajragarbha, saying,  
 “In the case of a bodhisattva who has arrived at the third ground,  
 of which types of mind should he avail himself?” (6)

## 2. VAJRAGARBHA COMMENCES THE THIRD GROUND’S EXPLANATION

(A) Vajragarbha Bodhisattva Mahāsattva then informed Liberation Moon Bodhisattva, saying:

### 3. THE TEN RESOLUTE INTENTIONS AS BASES FOR ENTERING THE THIRD GROUND

O Son of the Buddha, in the case of the bodhisattva *mahāsattvas* who have already completed their profoundly pure-minded practices on the second ground and who then aspire to reach the third ground, they should then avail themselves of ten types of resolute intentions<sup>102</sup> through which they may achieve entry into the third ground. What then are these ten? They are:<sup>103</sup>

- First, the resolute intention set on purity;
- Second, the resolute intention set on intense acuity;
- Third, the resolute intention set on renunciation;
- Fourth, the resolute intention set on abandonment;
- Fifth, the resolute intention set on irreversibility;
- Sixth, the resolute intention set on solidity;
- Seventh, the resolute intention set on flourishing brilliance;
- Eighth, the resolute intention set on unquenchable zeal;
- Ninth, the resolute intention set on happiness;
- And tenth, the resolute intention set on magnanimity.

(B) Sons of the Buddha, this bodhisattva *mahāsattva* employs these ten minds to gain entry into the third ground.

### 4. THE BODHISATTVA’S CONTEMPLATION OF ALL CONDITIONED DHARMAS

Through his contemplations, he becomes able to see the true character of all conditioned dharmas. Specifically, he observes that they are characterized by:

- Impermanence;
- Suffering;
- Emptiness of intrinsic existence;
- Absence of anything constituting a self;
- Impurity;

Inability to long endure;  
 Certainty of ruination;  
 Unreliability;  
 Production and destruction in each successive mind-moment;  
 And also by being neither produced nor destroyed, by not hav-  
 ing coming forth from any point in the past, by not going  
 forth to any point in the future, and by not abiding in the  
 present moment.

(C) It is in this manner that the bodhisattva contemplates the true character of all conditioned dharmas. He thus knows these dhar-  
 mas:

As uncreated;  
 As non-arising;  
 As neither coming nor going;  
 As being such that, even so, beings experience worry, sorrow,  
 suffering, and anguish on their account;  
 As bound up with hatred and love;  
 As involving ceaseless accumulation;  
 As being such that beings have no fixed station of rebirth;  
 As being such that beings may only be burned up in the fires of  
 covetousness, hatred, and stupidity;  
 As increasing the bonfire of suffering and torments undergone  
 in future lifetimes;  
 And as like magical conjurations in their absence of any true  
 nature.

##### 5. THE BODHISATTVA'S RENUNCIATION & QUEST FOR BUDDHA'S KNOWLEDGE

(D) Having observed all this, he redoubles the strength of his renunciation of all conditioned dharmas and his striving to progress toward the Buddha's wisdom. This bodhisattva realizes that the wisdom of the Tathāgata:<sup>104</sup>

Is inconceivable;  
 Is immeasurable;  
 Is possessed of immense power;  
 Is insuperable;  
 Is characterized by absence of admixture with anything else;  
 Is free of the sufferings of ruination, anguish, worry, or sorrow;  
 Is capable of reaching all the way to the great city of fearlessness  
 and security;  
 Is irreversible;  
 And is able to rescue countless suffering beings.

## 6. THE BODHISATTVA'S TEN SYMPATHETIC MENTAL INTENTIONS TOWARD BEINGS

(E) Having thus observed that the knowledge of the Buddha is immeasurably vast and having observed that conditioned dharmas involve immeasurably vast suffering and anguish, he then brings forth ten especially supreme types of mental intentions toward all beings.<sup>105</sup> What then are these ten? They are worthy of pity because:<sup>106</sup>

They are alone, with no one who might come to their rescue;  
 They are poverty-stricken and have no one to rely on;  
 They are ceaselessly burned by the fires of the three poisons;  
 They are confined in the solidly-constructed prison of the three realms of existences;  
 They always abide in the forest of the afflictions' wickedly injurious thorns;  
 They are bereft of the power of correct contemplation;  
 They possess only feeble aspirations to cultivate the dharmas of goodness;  
 They have lost the marvelous Dharma of the Buddha;  
 They always follow the course of the flowing stream of cyclic births and deaths;  
 And they are frightened at the prospect of entering nirvāṇa.

## 7. THE BODHISATTVA'S GENERATION AND PRACTICE OF GREAT VIGOR

(F) Observing that beings are beset by just so very many sorts of ruinous torments, this bodhisattva brings forth great vigor, thinking with regard to these beings:<sup>107</sup>

I should rescue them;  
 I should liberate them;  
 I should cause them to develop purity;  
 I should cause them to gain liberation;  
 I should see to their becoming situated in a place of goodness;  
 I should cause them to abide securely;  
 I should cause them to become joyful;  
 I should cause them to know what is most fitting;  
 I should cause them to succeed in reaching liberation;  
 I should influence them to achieve the cessation of suffering.

(G) So it is that the bodhisattva skillfully abandons all conditioned dharmas and becomes deeply mindful of all beings. He sees that the omniscience of the Buddhas has countless benefits. Hence, because he immediately wishes to equip himself with the wisdom

of the Buddha in order to rescue and liberate beings, he diligently practices the bodhisattva path.

He then has this thought: "Using which causes and conditions and which skillful means should I extricate these beings who have fallen down into the afflictions associated with immense suffering so that I may cause them to abide forever in ultimate and eternal bliss?"

(H) He then immediately realizes that it is only through coming to abide in the unimpeded wisdom of liberation that one can accomplish this. He realizes, too, that this unimpeded wisdom of liberation is inseparable from the knowledge that penetratingly comprehends dharmas in accordance with reality which is the practice wisdom that cognizes the non-existence of any [inherently existent] action at all.<sup>108</sup>

[He also thinks]: "From what does one acquire the light of such wisdom as this? One should realize that it is inseparable from the definitive wisdom associated with extensive learning."

He again reflects, "What constitutes the very origin of unimpeded liberation and the other dharmas of the Buddha? They are inseparable from hearing the teaching of Dharma. That is their origin."

(I) Having thought in this manner, whenever there is an opportunity to advance his quest for Dharma, the bodhisattva brings forth ever increasing vigor to the point that, day and night, he always insatiably and tirelessly:<sup>109</sup>

Delights in hearing the Dharma,  
 Finds joy in the Dharma;  
 Cherishes the Dharma;  
 Relies upon the Dharma;  
 Accords with the Dharma;  
 Deeply esteems the Dharma;  
 Strives to achieve the ultimate realization of the Dharma;  
 Takes refuge in the Dharma;  
 Rescues the Dharma;  
 And complies with the practice of the Dharma.

(J) It is in this manner that the bodhisattva employs such skillful means in pursuit of the Dharma. As for any of the precious jewels, wealth, material possessions, gold, silver, or contents of storehouses and treasuries, he has none of them that he sees as difficult to obtain or worthy of cherishing esteem. He does not

conceive of such things as rare, for he only conceives of those who explain the Dharma as rarely encountered.

Were it to be for the sake of seeking the Dharma, there is nothing then in the sphere of inward or outward possessions that he would not be able to relinquish. No matter what there is in the world that one might be able to give as a gift, be it countries, peoples, retinues, agricultural labor, wealth, material possessions, precious *maṇi* pearls, gold, silver, storehouses, treasuries, elephants, horses, carriages, necklaces made of the many sorts of jewels, every sort of physical adornment, one's wife, sons, daughters, or one's limbs, feet, hands, ears, eyes, nose, tongue, or entire body, he would be able to give away all of these without retaining any cherishing for them.

Additionally, for the sake of seeking the Dharma, he does everything he can think of to pursue the respectful making of offerings, supplying and serving whoever speaks the Dharma. He eliminates all arrogance, pride in self, and great pride. He is able to endure being subjected to every sort of evil, suffering, torment, and unprincipled circumstance for the sake of fulfilling his deeply sincere quest to acquire the Dharma.

Were he to merely be able to acquire a single sentence of Dharma he had never heard before, he would consider that to be superior to acquiring precious jewels sufficient to completely fill a great trichiliocosm.

Were he to simply be able to hear but a single stanza of right Dharma, he would consider that to be superior to becoming a wheel-turning sage king or to ascending to the station of a Śakra Devānām Indra or of a king of the Brahma Heaven wherein he might reign for countless kalpas.

If someone came before this bodhisattva and spoke these words: "I will bestow on you a single sentence of Dharma spoken by the Buddha by which you will be able to purify your cultivation of the path practiced by bodhisattvas. However, I will only allow you to hear it if you are able to enter a huge fire pit and endure immense suffering. If you can do that, I will give it to you."

This bodhisattva would then have this thought:

If I were to be able to receive but a single sentence of such Dharma, I would even leap from the height of the Brahma Heaven down into a fire pit the size of a great trichiliocosm. How much the less might I shrink from descending into such a relatively small fire pit as this. In our seeking of the Dharma, we should be able to entirely endure even all the sufferings of the

hell realms. Even then, we should still pursue the acquiring of Dharma. How much the less might one shrink from these lesser sufferings and torments encountered in the human realm.

For the sake of seeking the Dharma, he is able to bring forth just such resolve as this. Also, whatever Dharma he hears causes his mind to feel ever joyful and he is able to make it all the focus of right contemplation.

(K) Having heard the Dharma, this bodhisattva proceeds to subdue his mind. In a secluded location, he guides his mind in thoughts such as this: "It is only through cultivating in a manner concordant with what one has been taught that one may acquire the Buddha's Dharma. One cannot accomplish this solely through the spoken word."

#### 8. THE BODHISATTVA'S CONQUEST OF THE MEDITATIVE ABSORPTIONS

So it is that the bodhisattva is able to abide on the Ground of Shining Light. He immediately separates himself from all desires and from all evil and unwholesome dharmas, whereupon, still possessed of ideation and possessed of mental discursion, experiencing joy and bliss arising through separation, he enters the first *dhyāna*.

Then, extinguishing ideation and mental discursion, establishing himself in inward purity, focusing his mind in a single place, becoming free of ideation and free of discursion, and experiencing joy and bliss arising through concentration, he enters the second *dhyāna*.

Due to separating himself from joyfulness, coursing in equanimity in the sphere of the formative factors aggregate, being possessed of mindfulness, establishing himself in discerning knowing, experiencing physically-based bliss the likes of which the Worthies and the Āryas are able to say of it that one is able to maintain equanimity toward it, and always abiding in mindfulness as he experiences such bliss, he enters the third *dhyāna*.

Due to cutting off suffering and cutting off bliss and on account of having earlier extinguished both sorrow and joy, experiencing neither suffering nor bliss, and coursing in equanimity and mindfulness that are pure, he enters the fourth *dhyāna*.

Due to going beyond all perceptions<sup>110</sup> of form, extinguishing all perceptions of [sensory] impingement, and not bearing in mind any perceptions of differentiation, this bodhisattva acquires a knowing awareness of boundless space and then immediately

enters the formless realm absorption corresponding to the station of [boundless] space.

Going beyond the perception of everything as empty space, he develops a knowing awareness of boundless consciousness and then immediately enters the formless realm absorption corresponding to the station of boundless consciousness.

Going beyond the perception of everything as consciousness, he develops a knowing awareness of the existence of nothing whatsoever and thus immediately enters the formless realm absorption corresponding to the station of nothing whatsoever.

Going beyond the station of nothing whatsoever, he develops a knowing awareness of the stability constituted by a state of neither perception nor non-perception and thus then immediately enters the formless realm absorption corresponding to the station of neither perception nor non-perception.

Because he only accords with the practice of dharmas, he does not indulge any pleasure-based attachments.

#### 9. THE BODHISATTVA'S DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOUR IMMEASURABLES

{L} Employing the mind of kindness developed to the point of loftiness, vastness, and immeasurability, this bodhisattva becomes entirely free of hatred, free of enmity, free of any tendency to annoy or harm others, and, employing the power of resolute belief, he expands that contemplation until it pervades one direction, two directions, three directions, four directions, the four midpoints, the zenith, and the nadir in just the same manner.

He also cultivates the mind of compassion, the mind of sympathetic joy, and the mind of equanimity until they are lofty, vast, immeasurable, free of hatred, free of enmity, and free of any tendency to annoy or harm others. Through the power of resolute belief, he expands those contemplations until, in just the same way, they pervade one direction, two directions, three directions, four directions, the four midpoints, the zenith, and the nadir.

#### 10. THE BODHISATTVA'S DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL SUPERKNOWLEDGES

{M} This bodhisattva possesses the power of all different sorts of spiritual superknowledges by which:

- He is able to cause the entire great earth to tremor;
- He is able to create many bodies from his own single body;
- He is able to make those many bodies become a single body, either making them become manifest or making them disappear and return to invisibility;

He is able also to go directly through the obstructions of rock, cliffs, and mountains just as easily as if they were empty space;  
 He is able to travel in full lotus through the air just as bird does;  
 He is able to enter into and emerge from solid ground no differently than if it were merely water;  
 He is able to walk across the surface of the water as if it were solid ground;  
 He is able to emit smoke and flames from his body just as if he had become a great bonfire;  
 He is able to employ the awesome power of his great spiritual virtue to reach up and stroke the sun and moon;  
 And he is able to freely exercise his personal powers all the way up to the Brahma Worlds.

#### 11. THE BODHISATTVA'S HEAVENLY EAR

This bodhisattva employs the purified heavenly ear in a manner exceeding the powers of the human ear so that he is able to entirely hear all of the sounds of both humans and devas, whether they be far or near.

#### 12. THE BODHISATTVA'S KNOWLEDGE OF OTHERS' THOUGHTS

Using the knowledge of others' thoughts, this bodhisattva knows in accordance with reality the thoughts in the minds of others. When they have thoughts defiled [by desire], he knows in accordance with reality that they are thoughts defiled [by desire]. When they have thoughts that have abandoned defilement [by desire], he knows in accordance with reality that they are thoughts that have abandoned defilement [by desire].<sup>111</sup> He knows when they have thoughts affected by hatred or thoughts that have abandoned hatred, when they have thoughts affected by delusion or thoughts that have abandoned delusion, when they have defiled thoughts or thoughts that have abandoned defilement, and when they have petty thoughts or great thoughts.

When they have thoughts that are scattered and disordered, he knows in accordance with reality that they are thoughts that are scattered and disordered. So too, he knows when they have concentrated thoughts or unconcentrated thoughts and when they have thoughts that are in bondage or have thoughts that are liberated.

When others have surpassable thoughts or unsurpassable thoughts, he knows in accordance with reality that they have

surpassable thoughts or unsurpassable thoughts. In this way, he uses his own mind to know the minds of others.

#### 13. THE BODHISATTVA'S RECALL OF PAST LIVES

This bodhisattva remembers with respect to past lifetimes all of the places in which he has taken rebirth, remembering this with respect to a single lifetime, two lifetimes, three lifetimes, four lifetimes, five lifetimes, up to ten, twenty, thirty, forty, and fifty lifetimes, and so forth on up to a hundred lifetimes, a thousand lifetimes, and a myriad lifetimes, remembering even a hundred thousand myriads of *koṭis* of *nayutas* of lifetimes. He knows them as they have transpired across the course of one kalpa, two kalpas, and so forth on up to a hundred thousand myriads of *koṭis* of *nayutas* of measureless kalpas, knowing too with respect to all of those kalpas all of the causal circumstances he passed through during those kalpas' innumerable many creation phases and destruction phases.

He is able to remember them all, recalling: "I was born in that place, belonged to this type of clan, was a member of a family bearing this surname, consumed just such food and drink as this, endured just such sorts of suffering and happiness as these, and dwelt there for just this long, after which I died in that location, was then reborn again in this circumstance, then died in this circumstance and was reborn again in yet another circumstance." Thus it is that he is able to entirely remember with regard to all of those causal circumstances all of the many different sorts of physical appearances that he bore.

#### 14. THE BODHISATTVA'S HEAVENLY EYE

This bodhisattva employs the purified heavenly eye in a manner exceeding the powers of the human eye so that he is able to entirely observe the births and deaths of other beings, observing whether they were of fine or hideous physical appearance, whether they were inclined toward goodness or evil, whether they were poverty-stricken and of only low social station or were wealthy and of aristocratic social station, whether they then proceeded toward the good destinies or toward the wretched destinies, undergoing retributions in accordance with their karmic deeds. He knows all of these things just as they really are, specifically knowing with regard to these beings how, because they have created bad physical karmic deeds, have created bad verbal karmic deeds, have created bad mental karmic deeds, have obstructed and gone against the Worthies and the Āryas, have

accepted teachings characterized by wrong views, and have generated causes and conditions associated with karmic offenses, they have then fallen at death into the wretched destinies and have thus been reborn in the hells.

So too is he able to observe how beings, because they have created good physical karmic deeds, have created good verbal karmic deeds, have created good mental karmic deeds, have refrained from any action obstructive of the Worthies and the Āryas, have believed in and taken on right views, and have cultivated the causes and conditions of good karmic actions, after they die, they are then born into good stations of existence, including up in the heavens.

#### 15. THE BODHISATTVA'S VOW-DETERMINED REBIRTH APART FROM THE DHYĀNAS

This bodhisattva is able to enter and emerge from the *dhyāna* absorptions, *samādhis*, and liberations while still not acquiescing in taking on their corresponding stations of rebirth. Rather, he simply observes which places present him with the bases for carrying out his cultivation of the dharmas assisting the realization of bodhi and then, availing himself of the power of his vows, he is able to take rebirth in just such circumstances.

#### 16. THE BODHISATTVA'S SEEING AND SERVING OF COUNTLESS BUDDHAS

{N} This bodhisattva who dwells on the Ground of Shining Light sees many hundreds of thousands of myriads of *koṭis* of *nayutas* of buddhas and pays reverence to them, makes offerings to them, venerates them, and praises them. He presents them with robes, food and drink, bedding, and medicines. He draws close to the Buddhas, listens to and takes in the Dharma of the sutras, and then, having listened to and taken in the Dharma, he puts it into practice in a manner befitting his powers to do so.

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

This bodhisattva then contemplates all dharmas as neither produced nor destroyed and as existing through the conjunction of a multitude of conditions.

{O} The bonds of desire that he has created across the course of hundreds of thousands of myriads of *koṭis* of kalpas gradually become attenuated and all of the bonds of becoming and all of the bonds of ignorance also become attenuated. They are no longer accumulated. Because they are no longer accumulated, he entirely severs wrong desire, wrong hatred, and wrong delusion.

Sons of the Buddha, it is just as with real gold which, when it is refined by a skilled artisan, it becomes ever more pure and fine and shines with doubly increased radiance. So too it is with the bodhisattva dwelling on the Ground of Shining Light who, because he no longer accumulates three types of bonds, cuts off all wrong desire, wrong hatred, and wrong delusion. His roots of goodness then become ever more radiantly purified.

This bodhisattva's inclination to be patient, his inclination to be gentle, his inclination to be beautifully sublime, his inclination to remain indestructible, his inclination to remain imperturbable, his inclination to remain unmuddled, his inclination to refrain from elevating himself, his inclination to refrain from judgments of "superiority," his inclination to refrain from judgments of "inferiority," his inclination to not seek gratitude for anything he does, his inclination to reward even the smallest deeds done by others, his inclination to refrain from flattery or deviousness, his inclination to remain undefiled and unconfused—all of these become ever more purified.<sup>112</sup>

#### 18. THE BODHISATTVA'S PRACTICE OF MEANS OF ATTRACTION AND PĀRAMITĀS

At this time, among the dharmas constituting the four means of attraction, the bodhisattva focuses more strongly on the practice of "pleasing words" and "beneficial actions," whereas, among the ten *pāramitās*, he focuses more strongly on the patience *pāramitā* and the vigor *pāramitā*.<sup>113</sup> As for the remaining dharmas assisting the realization of bodhi, they all become ever more radiantly purified.

#### 19. VAJRAGARBHĀ'S FINAL STATEMENTS ABOUT THE 3RD GROUND BODHISATTVA

Sons of the Buddha, this is what constitutes the third bodhisattva ground, the Ground of Shining Light.

##### a. THE BODHISATTVA'S STATION AND DHARMA PRACTICE

(P) The bodhisattva dwelling on this ground often becomes Śakra Devānām Indra. Using wisdom that is fiercely sharp, he is able to use the causes and conditions of skillful means to turn beings in such a way that they are influenced to abandon sensual desire.

##### b. THE BODHISATTVA'S MINDFULNESS

In all of the good karmic deeds he does, whether in the sphere of "giving," "pleasing words," "beneficial actions," or "joint endeavors," he never departs from his mindfulness of the Buddha, mindfulness of the Dharma, 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.

c. THE BODHISATTVA'S ASPIRATION TO SERVE BEINGS

He always brings to mind the thought, "Oh, when will I be able to become among beings, one who serves them as a leader, and one who is worthy of veneration?" and so forth until we come to his thinking, "Oh, when will I be able to become for all beings one upon whom they can rely?"

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

If this person wishes to apply himself to the diligent practice of vigor, then, in but a moment's time, he will be able to acquire a hundred thousand samādhis and so forth until we come to his being able to manifest a hundred thousand bodhisattvas to serve in his retinue. In accordance with the power of vows, through sovereign mastery in the spiritual superknowledges, he could manifest these phenomena in incalculable numbers so large that one could never count them even in however many hundreds of thousands of myriads of *koṭis* of *nayutas* of kalpas one might attempt to do so.

20. VAJRAGARBHA BODHISATTVA'S SUMMARIZING VERSES

At that time, wishing to make his meaning even more clear, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva then uttered verses, saying:

By using the types of resolute intentions, the bodhisattva becomes able to succeed in reaching the third ground: the pure mind, the intensely acute mind, the mind of renunciation, the mind of abandonment, the non-retreating mind, the solid mind, the mind capable of withstanding whatever comes,<sup>114</sup> the happy mind, and the magnanimous mind. Employing such types of mind as these, he succeeds in entering the third ground. (7)

One who is wise, dwelling on the Ground of Shining Light, contemplates conditioned and created dharmas as impure, impermanent, suffering, devoid of self, as characterized by being bound to perish, as having no enduring or solid nature, as not lasting long, and as destroyed in each succeeding moment. He meditates upon them in this way and realizes that they are characterized as well by having no coming or going. (8)

He observes that all conditioned dharmas  
 are comparable to a sickness, like an abscess, and like a sore,  
 that beings are bound up in the bonds of their love-obsessed minds,  
 that they generate all manner of worry, sorrow, and suffering,  
 that their existence is only one of being burned up  
 by the fierce flames of covetousness, hatred, and stupidity,  
 and that, from the onset of their beginningless lifetimes onward,  
 this blaze has always burned on incessantly. {9}

He immediately renounces  
 everything in the three realms of existence  
 and feels revulsion for all conditioned dharmas.  
 His mind then remains free of covetous attachments.

He devotes himself solely to acquiring the knowledge of the Buddhas  
 that, immeasurable and boundless,  
 is extremely profound, difficult to conceive of, difficult to describe,  
 pure, and free of all forms of suffering. {10}

Having seen in this way that the Buddha's knowledge  
 is free of all suffering and anguish,  
 he feels sympathetic pity for all beings  
 in their poverty-stricken state bereft of merit and wisdom,  
 for they are always burned by the fires of the three poisons,  
 have no one to rescue and protect them,  
 and have become bound to fall down into the hell realms  
 wherein they are sliced by the hundred kinds of sufferings. {11}

These neglectful common people  
 have become immersed in a mass of afflictions,  
 are blind, totally unable to see,  
 and have lost the jewel of the Buddha's Dharma.

They forever follow the flowing currents of cyclic births and deaths  
 and have no fear of that, yet remain fearful of emptiness.  
 He then thinks, "I should be diligent  
 in bringing about the liberation of these beings {12}

and hence should vigorously pursue wisdom  
 in order to become one who benefits them."  
 He contemplates which skillful means, if employed,  
 could be successful in rescuing and protecting them,  
 realizes that it can only be that quality of the Tathāgatas,  
 their profound, sublime, and unimpeded knowledge,  
 and thus ponders, "What does such knowledge take as its cause?"  
 and then realizes, "It can only arise from wisdom." {13}

He then reasons that this wisdom  
 can itself only come forth from extensive learning.  
 Having assessed the matter in this way,  
 he diligently seeks to acquire the dharma of extensive learning,  
 becoming ever vigorous both day and night  
 in tirelessly listening to and absorbing the teachings,  
 and in studying, reciting, cherishing, and delighting in the Dharma,  
 taking only the Dharma as worthy of being esteemed as valuable. (14)

Thus, desiring to pursue his quest to acquire the Dharma,  
 he bestows gifts of the various sorts of precious jewels and such,  
 as well as his dearly beloved wife and children,  
 while also freely granting the services of his retinue,  
 his country, its cities,  
 and all the fine possessions useful to supporting one's life.  
 He joyfully presents all of these as gifts  
 with a mind free of anything it affectionately cherishes. (15)

Hence, no matter whether it be his head, eyes, ears, nose, tongue,  
 teeth, his hands, or his feet,  
 and no matter whether it be his limbs or body, his flesh or blood,  
 his heart, liver, marrow, or brain,  
 he is able to give all such things away to others  
 while still not taking this to be particularly difficult.  
 Rather, he considers the ability to hear right Dharma  
 as what is the most supremely difficult thing to encounter. (16)

Supposing that there was a person  
 who told this bodhisattva,  
 "If you are now able to plunge into  
 this immense and fiercely blazing bonfire,  
 then, after you have done that, I will bestow on you  
 Dharma that has been spoken by the Buddhas,"  
 having heard this, he would immediately be filled with delight  
 and would throw himself into that bonfire. (17)

Even if there was a bonfire entirely filling up  
 a great chiliocosm into which  
 he had to leap from the heights of Sumeru or the Brahma Worlds,  
 he would still not see that as sufficient to be seen as difficult  
 if, in doing so, it was in order to seek a single sentence  
 of the Dharma proclaimed by the Buddhas  
 with which he might rescue those embroiled in suffering,  
 for it is obtaining that which he would see as extremely difficult. (18)

He thinks, “For the sake of fulfilling my quest to acquire all dharmas, I would even endure all of the sufferings occurring in the Avīci Hells beginning from the time I first brought forth the resolve and continuing on until I reach the realization of buddhahood, undergoing it to the very end of all these kalpas that transpire during the intervening time, how much the more so would I take on such minor sufferings as are endured within the human realm?” (19)

On account of having heard the Dharma, he becomes able to develop right mindfulness. Due to developing right mindfulness, he becomes able to bring forth the *dhyāna* absorptions, the profoundly marvelous equally-regarding samādhis,<sup>115</sup> and the phenomena associated with the five spiritual superknowledges. He is able to bring them all forth in sequence with sovereign mastery, so does not acquiesce in their power to determine one’s rebirths. (20)

The bodhisattva dwelling on this ground is able with decisive resolve to present many offerings to the Buddhas, hear and accept the Dharma they explain, cut off all wrongly generated desire, hatred, and such, and reduce residual afflictions to the point that they are but feeble, doing so in a manner comparable to refining gold so that it is evenly purified, thereby reaching its ideal state. (21)

The bodhisattva dwelling on this ground is possessed of an entirely full treasury of meritorious qualities, often becomes the Trāyastriṃśa Heaven King who freely offers instruction in the abandonment of sensual desire and who, because he cherishes the qualities of the Buddha, teaches and leads forth an immeasurably vast assembly of devas in a manner whereby they all succeed in coming to abide within the unsurpassably superior path of the Buddha. (22)

The bodhisattva dwelling on this ground who is able to employ a pliant mind in the diligent application of vigor will gain realization of a hundred thousand samādhis and will become able to see the Buddhas with bodies graced by the major marks and subsidiary signs. For one whose resolve is even more intensely strong, the results of his vow power are especially superb. (23)

In this, he always diligently strives  
to bring about whatever is best for all beings.  
This concludes the differentiating explanation  
of this third ground, the Ground of Shining Light. (24)