

CHAPTER FOUR

The Blazing Brilliance Ground

D. THE FOURTH GROUND: THE BLAZING BRILLIANCE GROUND

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

When those Buddha's Sons had finished listening to this explanation of such aspects and meanings associated with this ground, so deep, sublime, and immeasurable, their minds were all filled with joyous delight. They then scattered the many sorts of fine flowers and incense as offerings to the Tathāgata. ⁽¹⁾

Thereupon the entire earth was gripped with strong tremors, all waters of the great seas were roiled, and the celestial nymphs and others, high in the air above, joined their subtle and sublime voices in singing the praises of this supreme Dharma. ⁽²⁾

The King of the Transformation of Others' Bliss Heaven, immensely joyful at hearing this, rained down *maṇi* pearl jewels that sprinkled on down to the Buddha from on high.

He then arose and uttered praises, declaring:
"Good indeed! The Buddha has come forth into the world. His treasury of meritorious qualities is here distributed in order to benefit us all. ⁽³⁾

"I have just now been able to hear this teaching on the characteristics and meanings of this bodhisattva ground. This event is one that, even in a hundred thousand kalpas, would be a rarity to hear, and yet I have been able to hear it here. ⁽⁴⁾

"We only pray that you will explain the ground that follows in order to be of benefit to both devas and humans. Everyone here would delight in it and hence we wish to hear of the aspects of the practices involved in reaching this ground." ⁽⁵⁾

Liberation Moon Bodhisattva

then once again presented a request to Vajragarbha, saying:
"We pray that, for the sake of all bodhisattvas, you will explain the practices used in reaching the fourth ground." ⁽⁶⁾

2. VAJRAGARBHA COMMENCES THE FOURTH GROUND'S EXPLANATION

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

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

O Son of the Buddha, those bodhisattva *mahāsattvas* who have completed the purifying cultivation of the third ground and then wish to reach the fourth ground should avail themselves of ten gateways to the light of Dharma¹¹⁶ in order to gain entry into this fourth ground. What then are these ten? They are:

- First, contemplation of the realms of beings;
- Second, contemplation of the Dharma realm;
- Third, contemplation of the realms of the worlds;
- Fourth, contemplation of the realms of empty space;
- Fifth, contemplation of the realms of consciousness;
- Sixth, contemplation of the desire realm;
- Seventh, contemplation of the form realm;
- Eighth, contemplation of the formless realm;
- Ninth, contemplation of the realms of happy [resolute intentions and] resolute convictions;¹¹⁷
- Tenth, contemplation of the realms of magnanimous resolute intentions [and resolute convictions].¹¹⁸

Sons of the Buddha, by employing these ten gateways to the light of Dharma, the bodhisattva is able to advance from the third ground into the fourth ground.

4. 10 KNOWLEDGE-MATURING DHARMAS FOR BIRTH IN THE BUDDHAS' CLAN

(B) Sons of the Buddha, if the bodhisattva *mahāsattva* reaches the fourth ground, the Ground of Blazing Brilliance, he immediately acquires ever more strength in the clan of the Tathāgatas and then, due to acquiring its inner dharmas,¹¹⁹ he comes to possess ten kinds of knowledge [maturing dharmas].¹²⁰ What then are these ten? They are:

- First, non-retreating resolve;
- Second, the knowledge associated with acquiring indestructible and ultimately pure faith in the Three Jewels;
- Third, cultivation of the contemplation of production and extinction;
- Fourth, cultivation of understanding all dharmas as originally unproduced;
- Fifth, constant cultivation of understanding the actions involved in the generation and dissolution of worlds;

- Sixth, cultivation of an understanding of how birth occurs due to karmic actions' causes and conditions;
- Seventh, cultivation of the gateway of discerning the different factors involved in *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*;
- Eighth, cultivation of understanding the different factors involved in beings' karma;
- Ninth, cultivation of understanding the different factors associated with the past and the future;
- Tenth, cultivation of the practice of understanding [all phenomena's] constant destruction and non-abiding in this very moment.

It is through cultivation of these knowledge-maturing intentional practices that one is born into the clan of the Buddhas and develops ever more strength within it.

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

a. THE FOUR STATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

(c) Then again, O Sons of the Buddha, the bodhisattva *mahāsattva* dwelling on this fourth ground carries on the body-examining contemplation in regard to his own body and, through energetically diligent single-mindedness in this, succeeds in ridding himself of desires and distress associated with the world.

He carries on as well the body-examining contemplation in regard to the bodies of others, and, through energetically diligent single-mindedness in this, succeeds in ridding himself of desires and distress associated with the world.

So too does he carry on the body-examining contemplation in regard to both his own and others' bodies, and, through energetically diligent single-mindedness in this, succeeds in ridding himself of desires and distress associated with the world.

So too, he contemplates his own feelings, the feelings of others, and the feelings experienced by both himself and others, contemplates his own mind, the minds of others, and the minds of both himself and others, and, using the dharma-examining contemplation, contemplates subjectively associated dharmas, objectively-associated dharmas, and dharmas that are both subjectively associated and objectively associated, thereby bringing energetic and diligent single-mindedness to bear in ridding himself of desire and distress associated with the world.¹²¹

b. THE FOUR RIGHT EFFORTS

This bodhisattva strives to bring forth diligently applied vigor and resolves to rightly cut off any not yet arisen evil and unwholesome dharmas, doing so for the sake of preventing their arising.

He strives to bring forth diligently applied vigor and resolves to rightly cut off any already arisen evil and unwholesome dharmas, doing so for the sake of cutting them off.

He strives to bring forth diligently applied vigor and resolves to carry out right practice of any not yet arisen good dharmas, doing so in order to ensure their arising.

And he also strives to bring forth diligently applied vigor and resolves to carry out that right practice by which one cultivates, increases, and broadens any already arisen good dharmas for the sake of ensuring that they will continue and not be lost.¹²²

c. THE FOUR BASES OF PSYCHIC POWER

This bodhisattva also cultivates the four bases of psychic power. In his cultivation of the bases of psychic power, his establishment of the severance practice associated with zeal-based concentration is done based upon detachment, based upon dispassion, based upon cessation, and directed toward relinquishment.¹²³ So too is this true of his establishment of the severance practice associated with vigor-based concentration as he cultivates the bases of psychic power, his establishment of the severance practice associated with mind-based concentration as he cultivates the bases of psychic power, and his establishment of the severance practice associated with contemplation-based concentration as he cultivates the bases of psychic power, for they all are done based upon detachment, based upon dispassion, based upon cessation, and directed toward relinquishment.¹²⁴

d. THE FIVE ROOTS

This bodhisattva's cultivation of the root-faculty of faith is done based upon detachment, based upon dispassion, based upon cessation, and directed toward relinquishment. So too, his cultivation of the root-faculty of vigor, the root-faculty of mindfulness, the root-faculty of concentration, and the root-faculty of wisdom is done based upon detachment, based upon dispassion, based upon cessation, and directed toward relinquishment.¹²⁵

e. THE FIVE POWERS

This bodhisattva's cultivation of the power of faith is done based upon detachment, based upon dispassion, based upon cessation,

and directed toward relinquishment. So too, his cultivation of the power of vigor, the power of mindfulness, the power of concentration, and the power of wisdom is done based upon detachment, based upon dispassion, based upon cessation, and directed toward relinquishment.¹²⁶

f. THE SEVEN LIMBS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

This bodhisattva's cultivation of the mindfulness limb of enlightenment is done based upon detachment, based upon dispassion, based upon cessation, and directed toward relinquishment. So too, his cultivation of the dharma-selection limb of enlightenment, the vigor limb of enlightenment, the joyfulness limb of enlightenment, the pliancy limb of enlightenment, the concentration limb of enlightenment, and the even-mindedness limb of enlightenment is done based upon detachment, based upon dispassion, based upon cessation, and directed toward relinquishment.¹²⁷

g. THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

This bodhisattva's cultivation of right views is done based upon detachment, based upon dispassion, based upon cessation, and directed toward relinquishment. So too, his cultivation of right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration is done based upon detachment, based upon dispassion, based upon cessation, and directed toward relinquishment.¹²⁸

h. THE BODHISATTVA'S TEN AIMS UNDERLYING HIS 37 FACTORS PRACTICE

(D) The bodhisattva engages in these practices:

- Due to his resolve to refrain from forsaking beings;
- Due to the power of his original vows;
- In order to take the great compassion as what is foremost;
- In order to combine his practice with the great kindness;
- In order to accumulate all-knowledge;
- In order to engage in the adornment of buddha lands;
- In order to become completely equipped with the Buddha's powers, fearlessnesses, dharmas exclusive to the Buddhas, thirty-two marks, and eighty subsidiary signs;
- In order to become perfectly endowed with his voice;¹²⁹
- In order to accord with the Buddha's profoundly deep liberation;
- And in order to reflect upon great wisdom and skillful means.

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

(E) Sons of the Buddha, the bodhisattva *mahāsattvas* dwelling on the Ground of Blazing Brilliance confront all of the attachments related to the view imputing the existence of a true self in association with the body. These include the attachment to the existence of self, the attachment to the existence of a being, and the attachments to the existence of a person, an entity possessed of a lifespan, a knower, a perceiver in association with clinging to the five aggregates, the twelve sense bases, or the eighteen sense realms.

They observe that whatever arises in this connection, including whatsoever is contracted or extended, is withdrawn or set forth, or is caused to emerge or sink away is all carried forth by discursive thought's perception of something deemed to be a refuge or an individual territory worthy of affectionate attachment or something worthy of being valued as precious. Consequently they completely sever all of these attachments.¹³⁰

7. MENTAL & PERSONAL QUALITIES GAINED IN PATH CULTIVATION

(F), (G) This bodhisattva then redoubles his vigor in the dharmas constituting provisions for the path¹³¹ that are developed through wisdom and skillful means. In accordance with what he cultivates his mind becomes ever more.¹³²

Gentle;
 Harmonious;
 Tractable to use;
 Mentally inexhaustible;
 Inclined to seek increasingly superior dharmas;
 Possessed of increased wisdom;
 Devoted to rescuing everyone in the world;
 Compliant with teachers;
 Respectful in receiving teachings;
 And compliant in practice with what has been taught.

(H) At this time, this bodhisattva:¹³³

Is cognizant of kindnesses received;
 Knows to repay kindnesses;
 Has a mind that becomes ever more inclined to congeniality
 and goodness;
 Dwells happily together with others;
 Is possessed of a straight mind;
 Is possessed of a pliant mind;
 Is free of any form of deviousness;

Implements the practice of right meditative concentration;
 Is free of arrogance and is consequently easy to engage in discussion;
 Complies with teaching instructions;
 And realizes the intent of those who speak to him.

It is in just such a manner as this that he becomes completely equipped with the good mind, the pliant mind, the quiescent mind, and the patient mind, purifies the dharmas associated with the grounds, and proceeds with well-considered cultivation.

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

(i) At this time, as this bodhisattva perfects non-retreating vigor he becomes possessed of:¹³⁴

Vigor that is never forsaken;
 Indestructible vigor;
 Insatiable vigor;
 Tireless vigor;
 Vast vigor;
 Boundless vigor;
 Fiercely intense vigor;
 Utterly matchless vigor;
 Vigor that pursues the rescue of all beings;
 And vigor that distinguishes what is and is not the path.

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

(j) This bodhisattva's aspirations have become purified, he never loses his resolute intentions, and his resolute convictions are bright and sharp. His roots of goodness increase, and he abandons worldly defilements. He has already utterly extinguished disbelief, doubtfulness and regretfulness, and other such factors. His freedom from doubtfulness and regretfulness are manifestly complete. He never grows weary of or abandons any of the endeavors associated with his great resolute faith in all buddhas and he naturally practices and delights in them. His resolute intentions in relation to the immeasurable minds¹³⁵ are always directly and presently manifest.

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

(k) The bodhisattva dwelling on this fourth ground, the Ground of Blazing Brilliance, becomes able to see the Buddhas, seeing up to many hundreds, many thousands, and on up to many thousands of myriads of *koṭis* of *nayutas* of buddhas to all of whom he

then makes offerings and demonstrates his reverence, venerating them, praising them, and presenting offerings to them of robes, food and drink, bedding, and medicines. He draws close to all of these buddhas, listens single-mindedly to their teachings on Dharma, and, having listened to and accepted the Dharma, he is then able to have faith in it and uphold it in practice, often leaving behind the home life to cultivate the path in the presence of buddhas.

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

This bodhisattva's higher aspirations and resolute intentions as well as his purified resolute faith and equal regard for others¹³⁶ shine forth ever more brightly. He abides here for a span of many kalpas, for indefinably many hundreds of thousands of myriads of *koṭis* of *nayutas* of kalpas during which his roots of goodness become ever more supremely bright and sharp.

Sons of the Buddha, this is comparable to the use of the best real gold in the making of objects of adornment that all other lesser grades of gold cannot match. So too it is with the bodhisattva *mahāsattvas* who dwell on this bodhisattva's Ground of Blazing Brilliance. Their roots of goodness shine forth with ever more brilliance and sharpness that could never be matched by those of the bodhisattvas abiding on lower grounds.

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

This is analogous to the pure and radiant light of the *maṇi* jewel that is able to illuminate the four directions and cannot be matched in this by any other sort of jewel and cannot be dimmed in the brilliance of its radiance even by the soaking of rains or immersion by floods. So too it is with the bodhisattva dwelling on the Ground of Blazing Brilliance. He cannot be matched by any bodhisattva dwelling on a lower ground and none of the *māras* or any of the afflictions are able to overcome his wisdom.

13. VAJRAGARBHĀ'S FINAL STATEMENTS ABOUT THE 4TH GROUND BODHISATTVA

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

a. THE BODHISATTVA'S STATION AND DHARMA PRACTICE

The bodhisattva *mahāsattva* dwelling on this ground often becomes a *Suyāma* Heaven King who is extensively devoted to instructing beings in doing away with the conception of a truly existent self.¹³⁷

b. THE BODHISATTVA'S MINDFULNESS

In all of the good karmic works that he does, whether in the sphere of giving, pleasing words, beneficial actions, or joint endeavors, he never departs from his mindfulness of the Buddha, never departs from his mindfulness of the Dharma, never departs from his mindfulness of his companions among the bodhisattva *mahāsattvas* and so forth until we come to his never departing from his 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 this thought: "Oh, when will I finally be able to become one who serves all beings as a leader, one worthy of veneration?" and so forth until we come to his thinking, "Oh, when will I finally be able to become one upon whom all beings can rely?"

d. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE BODHISATTVA'S APPLICATION OF VIGOR

If this bodhisattva *mahāsattva* wishes to bring diligent vigor to bear, then, in but a moment, he will become able to acquire a hundred *koṭis* of samādhis, and so forth until we come to his becoming able to manifest a hundred *koṭis* of bodhisattvas. 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 *koṭis* of *nayutas* of kalpas one might attempt to do so.

14. VAJRAGARBHA BODHISATTVA'S SUMMARIZING VERSES

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

"Bodhisattvas, having already completely cultivated the Ground of Shining Light, then contemplate the realms of beings, the Dharma realm, the realms of the worlds, the realms of empty space, the realms of consciousness, the three realms, and [the realms of] resolute intentions and resolute convictions.¹³⁸ Then, due to having purified [the previous ground], they are able to enter the fourth ground.¹³⁹ (7)

They immediately acquire increasing strength within the clan of the Tathāgatas through irreversible [resolute intentions] in the path to buddhahood, indestructible faith in the Three Jewels, contemplation of production and extinction, and non-production, (8)

understanding of the actions involved in worlds' transformations,
 understanding that it is due to karmic actions that birth exists,
 understanding of the distinctions involved in *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*,
 understanding of all the karmic actions of beings,
 contemplation of dharmas' past and future, and understanding
 their characteristics of non-abiding and constant destruction.
 Thereby born into Buddha's clan, they develop strength within it.¹⁴⁰ (9)

When great bodhisattvas and such
 have successfully acquired such dharmas as these,
 they feel kindly pity for all beings,
 practice the contemplation of body, feelings, mind, and dharmas
 in inward and outward focus on the four stations of mindfulness, (10)

and, in this, rely upon detachment and rely upon dispassion
 while also relying upon quiescence,¹⁴¹

dedicating this then to the realization of *nirvāṇa*.

Through ridding themselves of bad dharmas,
 good dharmas then successfully increase and grow,
 this through practice of the four dharmas of the right efforts.

They cultivate the four factors essential to psychic powers,
 cultivate the five root-faculties,
 also use them in cultivating the five powers,
 cultivate the seven limbs of bodhi,
 and practice the eightfold path of the Āryas.¹⁴² (11)

Their cultivation of all such dharmas,
 is done entirely for the sake of beings,
 in order to be assisted by their original vows, in order to
 practice kindness and keep the mind of compassion foremost,
 in order to facilitate their quest to acquire all-knowledge,
 in order to engage in purification of the buddha lands,
 in order to develop the meritorious qualities of the ten powers, (12)

the fearlessnesses, the dharmas exclusive to the Buddhas,
 their voices and modes of speech,
 and the dharmas of the extremely profound and sublime path,
 as well as in order to accord with their unimpeded liberations, and
 to further contemplation of their great wisdom and skillful means.¹⁴³
 (13)

With the view imputing an existent self associated with the body
 as chief among the sixty-two views that include
 views conceiving existence of beings and existence of persons,
 and views conceiving of the existence of a lifespan and a knower,
 as well as all the bases of attachment

within the aggregates, sense realms and sense bases—
 Upon acquiring entry into this fourth ground,
 all of them are entirely cut off and done away with. {14}

As karmic actions associated with the afflictions are cut off,
 their minds become correspondingly more purified.
 All the good karmic actions in which they then engage
 are done entirely for the sake of rescuing inhabitants of the world. {15}

The bodhisattva possesses a gentle mind
 that is never allowed to fall into negligence,
 the mind tractable to use, the straight mind,
 and the mind that strives to be of benefit to beings.

All such matters that he strives to accomplish
 are done in order to acquire the unsurpassable path's
 station of consecration wherein one is possessed of great wisdom
 and in order to be of benefit to those in the world. {16}

He acts with a deep mind in revering and supporting his teachers,
 delights in cultivating in the manner he is taught,
 is cognizant of kindnesses received, knows to repay kindnesses,
 is easy to teach, is free of hatred or enmity,

is free of any sort of devious motivation,
 is gently congenial, dwells happily together with others,
 and cultivates such dharmas as these
 vigorously and without retreating from them. {17}

As for the resolute intentions and higher aspirations
 of the bodhisattva dwelling on this ground,
 he purifies his intentions and resolute faith to the point that
 that they all become ever more brightly shining in their purity.

He increases all his roots of goodness
 while entirely ridding himself
 of defiling turbidity, the dharmas of doubt and regret,
 and all other such matters. {18}

The bodhisattvas who abide here
 on the fourth ground, the Ground of Blazing Brilliance,
 are able to encounter countless many buddhas
 and inquire into and receive the Dharma that they teach.

In all the places where these buddhas dwell,
 they leave the home life and become difficult to impede,
 and, in this, they are comparable to true gold used in adornments
 that is such that no other sort of gold can match it. {19}

The meritorious qualities, resolute intentions,

wisdom, and skillful means
involved in the pure path coursed in
by the bodhisattva who dwells on this ground

are such that even a thousand *koṭis* of *māras*
all assailing him in unison could not destroy.
He becomes like a marvelously radiant pearl
that cannot be ruined even by floods or rains. (20)

The bodhisattva dwelling on this ground
is one to whom both devas and humans present offerings.
He often becomes a Suyāma Heaven king
well able to overturn any of the wrong views.

All the good karmic deeds he carries out
are done for the sake of gaining the Buddha's wisdom.
His resolve is forever solid
and such that it cannot be shaken or turned back. (21)

If he devotes himself to the diligent practice of vigor,
he succeeds in acquiring a hundred *koṭis* of samādhis,
becomes able to see a hundred *koṭis* of buddhas,
and, if resorting to the power of vows, can exceed even this. (22)

We now come here to the end
of this explanatory discussion of the fourth ground
which, practiced by one with measureless merit and wisdom,
is pure and renowned as "the ground of Blazing Brilliance." (23)