

bhūtā in accord with her previous vow. In the same way by the south, by the west, by the north gate to the estate countless beings enter specifically; they had been invited by the lay disciple Prabhūtā in accord with her previous vow. Prabhūtā, the lay disciple, has them sit down, and with the food each desires, prepared by diverse cooks using diverse seasonings, colors, and aromatics, she restores them. She restores, refreshes, satisfies, cheers, elates, fills with delight, and makes glad of heart. As with the varying food, so with varying liquid refreshments, with diverse exquisite elixirs, with varying seats, with varying couches, with varying vehicles, with varying clothes, with varying flowers, with varying garlands, with varying perfumes, with varying incense, with varying unguents, with varying powders, with varying ornaments, with varying jewel chariots, with varying umbrellas, with varying flags, with varying banners, with varying special foods she restores them until they are glad of heart. She restores the gods with divine food, the Nāgas, spirits, Gandharvas, antigods, birdlike spirits, semihumans, great serpents, the humans and the nonhumans. She restores each with suitable food. She restores them until they are glad at heart. And the bowl is not emptied, nor bare, nor insufficient, nor diminished, nor exhausted, nor reached an end, nor reached the bottom, nor been completely finished, nor been scraped clean.

Then, the lay disciple Prabhūtā said to Sudhana, the merchant's son: "I know the Bodhisattva salvation which is a storehouse of merit and an indestructible harmony. How can I know the conduct of the Bodhisattvas? Their merit is indestructible by the indestructibility of their sea of merit. They are fashioned like the firmament with the magnitude of their extensive and well-produced merit. They are like the jewel which is the king of wish gems in the completeness of their vow for the welfare of the whole world. They are like the Cakravāḍa mountain range sur-

rounding the earth by their protection of the root of welfare for the whole world. They are like a great cloud of merit because they provide rains like those of the Bodhisattva Ratnapāṇi for the whole world. They superintend the great storehouse of merit by their guardianship of the door to the city of the Dharma. They illumine great merits with light for the darkness and poverty of the whole world. How can I know the Bodhisattva conduct? How can I tell its qualities?

"Go, good son. Right here in South India is a city by the name of Mahāsambhava. There a householder by the name of Vidvān lives. Go to him and ask: "How is a Bodhisattva trained in the Bodhisattva conduct? How does he practice and acquire it?" "

Then, Sudhana, the merchant's son, bowed his head to the feet of the lay disciple Prabhūtā, and afterward, with his right side toward her, walked around her several hundred thousand times. After looking back again and again, he set forth from her presence although he was still unsated with the sacred vision of the lay disciple Prabhūtā.

E. Introduction to "Vasumitrā" ("Excellent Friend"), the twenty-sixth good friend whom Sudhana encounters

The author of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* refers to Vasumitrā as a *Bhāgavatī*. The meaning of this term is not clear. Edgerton notes that it might mean a female follower of Śiva, its usual meaning being "a female follower of Viṣṇu."³⁹ The only reference to Śiva is the mention of a Saivite incense. The Chinese *Gaṇḍavyūha* is said to describe Vasumitrā as a prostitute. The account in the Sanskrit version does not state this, but it describes her thus:

