

17.

Chapter 17

VIDVĀN

- 17.1 Sudhana, the head merchant's son, had obtained the light of the liberation called *the unceasing display of the treasure of merit*. He contemplated that ocean of merit. He viewed that sky of merit. He obtained that heap of merit. He climbed that mountain of merit. He accumulated that store⁹⁶⁴ of merit. He immersed himself in that river of merit. [F.11.b] He descended the steps into the bathing place of that merit. He purified that field of merit. He looked at that treasure of merit. He thought of that way of merit. He paid attention⁹⁶⁵ to that tradition⁹⁶⁶ of merit. He purified that lineage of merit.
- 17.2 Eventually he arrived at the town called Mahāsaṃbhava and searched, sought, and looked around⁹⁶⁷ for the householder Vidvān.
- 17.3 He searched for the householder Vidvān while longing for kalyāṇamitras, with his being transformed by seeing kalyāṇamitras, with an aspiration that was the blessing of the kalyāṇamitras, with dedication to following⁹⁶⁸ kalyāṇamitras, with diligence in tireless service of the kalyāṇamitras, with all the roots of merit of relying on kalyāṇamitras, with all the accumulation of merit through being faithful to the kalyāṇamitras, with the practice of the skillful methods increased by the kalyāṇamitras, with skill in serving the kalyāṇamitras without relying on anyone else, and while increasing all his roots of merit, purifying the bodhisattva motivation, increasing the bodhisattva faculties, ripening all roots of merit, increasing the fulfillment of great prayers, making great compassion vast, seeing himself as coming close to omniscience, receiving the Dharma radiance of the completely good bodhisattva conduct from all the buddhas, and increasing the illumination of the ten strengths of the tathāgatas.
- 17.4 He saw the householder Vidvān at the crossroads in the center of the town. He was upon a dais made of the seven precious materials. He was seated upon an excellent throne made of countless jewels. [F.12.a] Its legs of precious jewels were adorned with various diamonds and sapphires. It was

covered with a network of strings of gold. It contained stainless precious jewels. Its form was decorated with five hundred jewels. Various cushions of divine material were set upon it. Around it stood streamers, banners, and flags made of divine cloth. It was covered by a net of strings of many jewels. Overhead was a great bejeweled canopy, from which hung wreaths of flowers of gold and jewels.

17.5 A parasol of Jambu River gold was held aloft⁹⁶⁹ by its stainless handle made of beryl. Vidvān was being fanned by precious stainless fans made of the feathers of the king of geese,⁹⁷⁰ and censers of various incenses perfumed the air around him.

17.6 There was an entourage of five thousand musicians to the right and left who played and beat on musical instruments, emitting a beautiful music that transcended that of the devas and filled the town of Mahāsambhava in order to bring delight to beings. These ten thousand beings let fall a rain from clouds of divine flowers. Their bodies surpassed those of devas and humans. They had the complete bodhisattva motivation and were adorned with jewelry that surpassed that of the devas.

17.7 Sudhana, the head merchant's son, approached the householder Vidvān and, having come up to him, bowed his head to Vidvān's feet, circumambulated him, keeping him to his right, many hundreds of thousands of times, and sat down before him. With his palms together in homage, Sudhana said, "Ārya, I have set out to attain the highest, complete enlightenment in order to end the suffering of all beings, [F.12.b] in order to bring all beings to happiness, in order to save all beings from the ocean of saṃsāra, in order to take all beings across to the island of the jewels of the Dharma, in order to dry up the moisture of the cravings of all beings, in order to create the moisture of compassion in all beings, in order to expel all delight and craving of desire from all beings, in order to make all beings gain a craving for the wisdom of buddhahood, in order to make all beings pass through the jungle of saṃsāra, in order to make all beings develop a delight and desire for the Dharma and the qualities of the buddhas, in order to make all beings depart from the city of the three realms, and in order to lead all beings to the city⁹⁷¹ of omniscience.

17.8 "However, I do not know how bodhisattvas should train in bodhisattva conduct and in what way they should practice it. Ārya, I have heard that you give instruction and teachings to bodhisattvas! I pray that you explain to me how bodhisattvas should train in bodhisattva conduct and how having trained in it they become supports for all beings!"

17.9 The householder Vidvān said to Sudhana, the head merchant's son, "Noble one, it is excellent, excellent, that you have developed the aspiration for the highest, complete enlightenment!

- 17.10 “Noble one, it is rare to find a being who develops the aspiration for the highest, complete enlightenment, who seeks the bodhisattva conduct, [F.13.a] who never has enough of gazing upon a kalyāṇamitra, who never tires of coming into the presence of a kalyāṇamitra, who never becomes dispirited in serving a kalyāṇamitra, who never becomes unhappy with seeking a kalyāṇamitra, who never turns back from seeking a kalyāṇamitra, who never ceases to sincerely yearn for and be attracted to a kalyāṇamitra, who never turns away from gazing upon a kalyāṇamitra, who is never despondent in following the instructions of a kalyāṇamitra, and who never wearies of serving and honoring a kalyāṇamitra.
- 17.11 “Noble one, do you see those in my entourage?”
Sudhana replied, “Yes, Ārya, I see them.”
- 17.12 Vidvān said, “Noble one, I made all of them develop the aspiration for the highest, complete enlightenment. I have caused them to be reborn in the family of the tathāgatas. I have nourished them through the accumulation of the perfections. I have made them practice all the good qualities. I have made them develop the ten strengths of the tathāgatas. I have made them transcend the family of the world. I have established them in the family of the tathāgatas. I have made them turn away from the wheel of worldly existences. I have made them enter into the turning of the wheel of the Dharma. I have saved them from falling into lives in the three lower existences. I have established them in the understanding of the true nature of phenomena.
“Noble one, it is in that way that bodhisattvas become a refuge for all beings.
- 17.13 “Noble one, I have attained the bodhisattva liberation called⁹⁷² *the merit that arises from the treasury of mind*. Through its power I give food to those who wish for food; drink for those who wish for drink; [F.13.b] excellent flavors to those who wish for excellent flavors; hard food to those who wish for hard food; soft food to those who wish for soft food; food that is licked to those who wish for food that is licked; food that is sucked to those who wish for food that is sucked; clothes to those who wish for clothes; flowers to those who wish for flowers; garlands to those who wish for garlands; perfume to those who wish for perfume; incense to those who wish for incense; ointments to those who wish for ointments; powders to those who wish for powders; jewelry and adornments to those who wish for jewelry and adornments; jewels to those who wish for jewels; gold to those who wish for gold; silver to those who wish for silver; pearls to those who wish for pearls; dwellings to those who wish for dwellings; seats to those who wish for seats; beds to those who wish for beds; medicine that heals illness to those who wish for medicine that heals illness; utensils to those who wish for

utensils; carriages to those who wish for carriages;⁹⁷³ steeds to those who wish for steeds;⁹⁷⁴ elephants, horses, chariots, oxen, donkeys, water buffalo, sheep, and goats⁹⁷⁵ to those who wish for elephants, horses, chariots, oxen, donkeys, water buffalo, sheep, and goats; banners, parasols, and flags to those who wish for banners, parasols, and flags; male and female slaves to those who wish for male and female slaves; a retinue of youths to those who wish for a retinue of youths; women to those who wish for women; girls to those who wish for girls; crowns and topknot jewels to those who wish for crowns and topknot jewels; topknot jewels combined with leather to those who wish for topknot jewels combined with leather; locks of pure, deep-black hair to those who wish for locks of pure, deep-black hair; [F.14.a] and so on, up to I give all the various kinds of utensils to those who wish for all the various kinds of utensils.

“Noble one, stay a moment and you will see a sight.”

17.14 As soon as the householder Vidvān said those words, at that moment, having been invited by the householder Vidvān in the prayers he had made in the past, there came countless beings from different directions, from different lands, from different districts, from different towns, from different markets, from different cities, from different villages, from different hamlets, from different houses, from different castes, from different families, from different levels of families, from different ways of life, and from different classifications of stations in life. These beings had various different sensory perceptions, wishing for various kinds of food, desiring various kinds of food, with various aspirations, desiring different aspirations and desires, desiring pure food and drink, desiring meat, wishing to consume contrasting kinds of different food, and remaining in various kinds of distinct sensory perceptions and different ways of life. In other words, among humans there were those who wished for such various kinds of food as boiled rice, sour gruel, broths, fish, and meat.

17.15 Whatever were the different kinds of food and drink that were wished for by those with different ways of life among human beings, through the power of the bodhisattva, the drumbeat of the unimpeded generosity of the bodhisattva, and the invitation made by the past prayers of the bodhisattva, all those human beings came there, and when they had arrived they entreated the householder Vidvān. They looked upon him, observed him, and addressed him.

17.16 The householder Vidvān, knowing that the petitioners had all gathered there, [F.14.b] thought for a moment and then looked up into the sky. From the realm of the sky there came into the palms of his hands a great number of various kinds of food and drink, with various kinds of flavors, various kinds of colors, and various kinds of aromas. He gave these different kinds of food,

drink, and utensils to all the petitioners gathered there, who had different aspirations and desires, in accordance with what they desired, so that they were satiated, pleased, contented, delighted, joyful, and overwhelmed with happiness.

17.17 Having concluded satisfying them in that way, afterward he taught them the Dharma. He taught the Dharma that elucidated the cause of gathering a vast accumulation of wisdom, elucidated the cause that made it impossible for poverty to occur, elucidated the cause of the arising of perfect great enjoyment, elucidated the cause of the arising of the attainment of the Dharma's way of wisdom, elucidated the cause of the arising of gathering a vast accumulation of merit, elucidated the cause of the arising of the attainment of the enjoyment of the food of happiness, elucidated the cause of the arising of the attainment of a body adorned by the signs and features of a great being, elucidated the cause of the arising of the attainment of invincible strength, elucidated the cause of the arising of the attainment of the unsurpassable⁹⁷⁶ food of wisdom, and elucidated the cause of the arising of the attainment of the inexhaustible strength of merit that defeats the strength⁹⁷⁷ of all the māras.

17.18 When all those who came wishing for food were satisfied through having obtained various kinds of food from the realm of the sky, the householder Vidvān taught them the Dharma so that they could attain perfect lifespans, color, strength, happiness, and eloquence. [F.15.a]

17.19 When all those who came wishing for drink were satisfied and delighted through having obtained many kinds of delicious, nontransgressive drinks, the householder Vidvān taught them the Dharma so that they would turn away from thirsting for saṃsāra, from delighting in saṃsāra, and would develop a delight in the Buddhadharma, a thirst⁹⁷⁸ for the Buddhadharma.

17.20 After all those who came wishing for excellent flavors had been satisfied by the different excellent flavors of sweetness, sourness, saltiness, spiciness, bitterness, and astringency, the householder Vidvān taught them the Dharma so that they would attain the supreme flavor of the physical signs of a great being.

17.21 When all those who had come from all directions wishing for carriages⁹⁷⁹ had received the gifts of different kinds of carriages, the householder Vidvān taught them the Dharma so that they would ride upon the Mahāyāna.

17.22 When those wishing for clothes had come from all directions, the householder Vidvān, knowing that they had all gathered there, thought for a moment and then looked up into the sky. From the realm of the sky appeared many kinds of pure clothes in various colors—blue, yellow, red, white, madder, and transparent⁹⁸⁰—that came into the palms of his hands. When the householder Vidvān had distributed these to the petitioners, he taught

them the Dharma so that they would have the pure attainment of a tathāgata's unsurpassable sense of shame and conscience that is like the color of gold.

In that way, the householder Vidvān demonstrated the inconceivable scope of the bodhisattva liberation.

17.23 Then he said to Sudhana, the head merchant's son, [F.15.b] "I know only the bodhisattva liberation called *the merit that arises from the treasury of the mind*. How could I know the conduct, describe the qualities, or teach the miraculous powers of the bodhisattvas who have attained the power over requisites; who have attained jewel-producing hands; who can cover all world realms without exception with their hands in order to accomplish various offerings to the buddhas; who can send down rain from clouds of jewels of various colors upon the circles of the followers of all the tathāgatas; and similarly can send down rain from clouds of jewelry of various colors, from clouds of crowns of various colors, from clouds of kūṭāgāras of various colors, from clouds of clothing of various colors, from clouds of the various melodious sounds of divine musical instruments being played and beaten and beautiful songs, from clouds of flowers of various colors, from clouds of perfumes of various colors, from clouds of incense, garlands, ointments, powders, Dharma robes, parasols, banners, and flags of various colors, from clouds of every kind of offering to all the buddhas, and from clouds of all requisites that fall upon all the circles of followers of the tathāgatas and all realms of beings in order to honor and make offerings to all the buddhas and in order to ripen and guide all beings?

17.24 "Depart, noble one. In this southern region there is a town called Siṃhapota, where dwells a head-merchant patron of the Dharma by the name of Ratnacūḍa. Go to him and ask him, 'How should a bodhisattva train in bodhisattva conduct? How should a bodhisattva practice it?' "

17.25 Sudhana, the head merchant's son, was pleased, delighted, enraptured, overjoyed, and filled with happiness.⁹⁸¹ [F.16.a] He demonstrated to the householder Vidvān the respect of a Dharma pupil. Sudhana viewed him as someone through whose blessing one can receive all the Buddhadharma, viewed him as someone through reliance on whom one can attain omniscience; he demonstrated a continuous delight⁹⁸² in the kalyāṇamitras; he had the determination to obey every instruction of the kalyāṇamitras; being under their power he followed the kalyāṇamitras; he longed to listen⁹⁸³ to the teachings and words of the kalyāṇamitras; he kept in mind the power of faith that came from the kalyāṇamitras; he sought the instructions of the kalyāṇamitras; and he aspired to follow and please the kalyāṇamitras.

17.26 Sudhana bowed his head to the feet of the householder Vidvān, circumambulated the householder Vidvān, keeping him to his right, many hundreds of thousands of times, and, looking back again and again, departed from the householder Vidvān.