

**The *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra*:
a Study of Wealth, Gender and Power
in an Indian Buddhist Narrative**

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Abstract

The *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra*: a Study of Wealth, Gender and Power in an Indian Buddhist Narrative

In this thesis, I examine the roles of wealth, gender and power in the Mahāyāna Buddhist scripture known as the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra*, using contemporary textual theory, narratology and worldview analysis. I argue that the wealth, gender and power of the spiritual guides (*kalyāṇamitras*, literally ‘good friends’) in this narrative reflect the social and political hierarchies and patterns of Buddhist patronage in ancient India during the time of its compilation. In order to do this, I divide the study into three parts.

In part I, ‘Text and Context’, I first investigate what is currently known about the origins and development of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, its extant manuscripts, translations and modern scholarship. Next, using a relative chronology based on current research into the origins of the Mahāyāna, I argue for the 3rd century CE, as likely time of origin, and suggest Dhānyakāṭaka/Dharaṇīkoṭa as the place of origin for the text.

In part II, ‘Structures’, I examine the text’s worldview and narrative structures. In chapter 3, I investigate the notions of reality, society and the individual. In chapter 4, I outline some key concepts developed by the Dutch narratologist Mieke Bal (1997) and demonstrate how these concepts may be utilised in an analysis of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*.

I begin part III, ‘Forces’, by considering Derrida’s (2001) notion of ‘force’ as a critique of structuralism’s overly ‘geometric’ model in the study of narrative. In an attempt to synthesise structure and force in part III, I examine the various structures outlined in previous chapters in relation to the themes of wealth, gender and power, as they unfold chronologically within the narrative.

From this study, I conclude that in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, wealth functions as a sign of spiritual status, the significant number of royal female *kalyāṇamitras* reflects the importance of female patrons at the time of the text’s compilation, and the spiritual hierarchy within the story mirrors the political hierarchies of Buddhism’s Middle Period in India.

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Abbreviations

A	Royal Asiatic Society ms. of <i>Gv</i> , Hodgson 2
<i>Aṣṭa</i>	<i>Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra</i>
<i>Av</i>	<i>Avatamsaka-sūtra</i>
BHS	Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit
<i>BHSD</i>	<i>Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary, Vol. II</i>
<i>BHSG</i>	<i>Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary, Vol. I</i>
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
C	Thomas Cleary's English translation, <i>The Flower Ornament Scripture</i> , of T 279
D	Derge Kanjur of the the <i>Gv</i>
Doi	Torakazu Dio's German translation, <i>Das Kegon Sutra</i> , of T 278
<i>EI</i>	<i>Epigraphia Indica</i>
<i>Gv</i>	<i>Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra</i>
<i>IJJ</i>	<i>Indo-Iranian Journal</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JIABS</i>	<i>Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies</i>
<i>JIP</i>	<i>Journal of Indian Philosophy</i>
<i>JPTS</i>	<i>Journal of the Pali Text Society</i>
<i>km</i>	<i>kalyānamitra</i>
MW	Monier-Williams' <i>Sanskrit-English Dictionary</i>
P	Peking Kanjur edition of the <i>Gv</i>
<i>PED</i>	<i>Pali-English Dictionary</i> , Rhys Davids and Stede
<i>PraS</i>	<i>Pratyutpanna-buddhasaṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra</i>
SI	Suzuki & Idzumi edition of the <i>Gv</i>
T	<i>Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō</i>
V	Vaidya's edition of the <i>Gv</i>

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**To my parents,
sisters, family, friends
and all beings...**

Introduction

The *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra* (*Gv*) is the story of a young man's quest for enlightenment in ancient India during the time of the Buddha. Like the Buddha, this young man named Sudhana ('Good Wealth'), the son of a merchant-banker (*śreṣṭhidāraka*), leaves home in search of spiritual counsel. But Sudhana does not renounce the world and take up ascetic practices; rather on the advice of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī he sets out to visit 'good friends' (*kalyāṇamitra*) in order to learn how to carry out the course of conduct of a bodhisattva (*bodhisattvacaryā*). After travelling far and wide across India visiting numerous good friends of various occupations (the *Gv* narrates fifty-two of these encounters), Sudhana returns home and has his final visionary experience of the supreme bodhisattva Samantabhadra.

In the pages that follow, I tell a story about wealth, gender and power in the *Gv* using textual theory, worldview analysis and contemporary narratology. I argue that in the *Gv*, the wealth, gender and power of the good friends reflect the social and political hierarchies and patterns of Buddhist patronage in ancient India during the time of its compilation (*circa* 3rd century CE). By examining the text using these categories, I hope to contextualise this Buddhist story and also demonstrate the analytical utility of this method for the study of religions. Before I outline the chapters to follow, I shall define my terms and rationalise my approach.

Narratology

Narratology is the scientific study of narrative. The term was first introduced in the 1970s by structural theorists such as Gerard Genette, Mieke Bal and Gerald Prince (Onega and Landa 1996:1). Roland Barthes describes the nearly infinite scope of the field:

The narratives of the world are numberless.... Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy.... Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society.... narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself.¹

Although the early structural narratologists made a number of important advances in formalising the structure of narratives, narratology as a 'scientific' discipline came under attack by post-structuralists in the 1980s and 1990s. The term 'narratology', associated as it was with the structuralist enterprise, fell into disfavour by many literary theorist in these decades who preferred the term 'narrative theory' instead (see Gibson 1996 and Currie 1998). Deconstruction's critique of classical narratology, while pointing out a number of weaknesses in structuralist theory, has failed to produce a comprehensive understanding of narrative. Jonathan Culler, a contemporary American theorist, argues that deconstruction complements rather than delegitimises structuralist theory.² Culler's views represent the continued appeal and utility of early structuralist narratology while taking into consideration important insights from post-structuralism and semiotics. For my study of the *Gv*, I apply concepts of structural narratology outlined by the Dutch theorist, Mieke Bal (1997). Accepting Culler's notion that deconstruction can compliment structural theory (1983), I also consider Jacques Derrida's notion of 'force' in narrative (2001).

In order to say something relevant about stories, narratology needs to examine their formal structures and address the meaning of particular narratives. But the meanings of stories are not stable, static identities that exist separately from their shifting interpretations through time and space. Narratives mean more than their

¹ Taken from Roland Barthes (1977) *Image, Music, Text*. Edited and translated by Stephan Heath. New York: Hill & Wang, pp.79–117, cited in Onega and Landa 1996: 45.

² See Onega and Landa 1996: 93, and Culler 1982 and 1983.

author(s) intended them to mean; with each re-telling new meanings are generated through the disclosure of the tale. Meaning is thus continuously created and re-created. Because the cultural and social context of narrative disclosure are central to understanding the production of any story's meanings, I propose that the meaning of a narrative is its use within a worldview.³

Worldview

A worldview (*Weltanschauung*) is a totalising and generalised theory of existence that constructs meaning out of experience through defining the relationships among individuals, society and reality.⁴ Every thinking human being has a worldview regardless of whether s/he is fully conscious of it or able to fully articulate it. As human beings we need frameworks of meaning in order to make sense of experience and to act intentionally. Cognitive psychologists call these frameworks 'schemas'. Whereas every individual has a vast and indeterminate number of schemas for understanding different aspects of experience, one's 'total set of schemas' according to Stanford psychologist David Rumelhart, 'in a sense constitutes our private theory of the nature of reality'.⁵

How do individuals come to acquire a theory of the nature of reality? One answer is that we are socialised into one through language and culture. An important

³ I first developed the notion that the role of a narrative is its use in a worldview in an unpublished paper (Osto 1996). In this paper I am discussing myth, but now I consider myth to be a special kind of narrative, and have thereby expanded my definition to include all types of narrative.

⁴ For the basic outline of my interpretation and use of 'worldview' see Osto 1999: 36–39. The inspiration for the use of this term comes from Ninian Smart's *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs* (1983; Third Edition 1995). In this work, Smart uses 'worldview' to refer to both traditional religions and secular ideologies. Employing the image of a triangle to describe worldview structure, Smart states that the apex of the triangle represents a notion of the cosmos and the two corners at the base the self and society (1983: 54 and 1995: 48). Smart's approach of 'structured empathy' in his analysis of worldviews maintains a strong affinity to Husserl's phenomenological *epoche* or 'bracketing' of one's own beliefs when studying the beliefs of others (see Smart 1995: 13–21). While also employing a tripartite model (individual, society and reality), my understanding and use of worldview varies considerably from Smart's position (see below).

⁵ Quoted from LaBerge and Rheingold 1990: 122-123.

breakthrough in structuralist theory that led to the development of semiotics was that both language and culture may be studied as systems of signification or sign construction (Eco 1976: 8–28). If both language and culture are understood as systems of signification and our theory of reality is acquired through our language and culture, then it follows that what we call real or true and unreal or false is something that is constructed. The anthropologist Peter Winch argues that reality is not what gives language its sense, rather ‘what is real and what is unreal shows itself in the sense that language has’.⁶

Friedrich Nietzsche was the first to declare that ‘truth’ is a ‘will to truth’ and this will to truth is a will to power (Nietzsche 1956: 289). More recently, Michel Foucault states that ‘truth’ is ‘...linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A regime of truth’.⁷ Ritual theorist Cathrine Bell understands a regime of truth to function as a ‘redemptive hegemony’ that actually creates reality through relations of domination, subjugation, appropriation, resistance, misrecognition, legitimisation and objectification between persons and groups in society (1992: 85). In this way, worldviews are theories of existence constructed by systems of significations within the languages and cultures of societies which through their very act of theorising construct their own realities. These realities emerge through the play of power relations within a regime of truth or redemptive hegemony. Viewed in this way worldviews may be seen as ‘reality games’ that are continually being played within societies through acts of imagining and re-imagining, which both inform the way individuals act and are informed by the way they act. Thus worldviews are more than

⁶ Quoted from Capps 1995: 260. Winch has been influenced by some of Wittgenstein’s insights into language (see Wittgenstein 1988).

⁷ See Foucault 1972b: 131–133, cited in Cahoon 1996: 380.

abstract, static theories of existence, they are strategic, programmatic and hegemonic reality games always in flux and perpetually being negotiated within regimes of truth.

This definition of worldview may be further refined by identifying certain characteristic features of all worldviews. Because worldviews are theories about reality they necessarily include concepts concerning the nature of time, space and causality. These conceptual categories are needed to make sense of events within the natural world and are necessary components in a worldview's cosmology (theory of the nature of the cosmos or natural order) and cosmogony (theory of the origins of the cosmos). Whether or not a worldview recognises any reality or realities outside, above or beyond the natural order is an important criterion in distinguishing between secular and religious worldviews. A religious worldview acknowledges the existence of some type of transcendental⁸ power or powers such as Dharma, God, Tao, gods, spirits, etc., which control or exert influence upon the natural order. Secular ideologies do not recognise any such transcendental powers.

Since worldviews also attempt to locate society's position within reality, they map out a social hierarchy that establishes the extent and range of certain groups' powers and authority. Through the development of institutions (government, university, military) a society establishes realms of discourse that define the roles and limitations of individuals and groups based on gender, class, race and ethnicity. The privileged groups, of course, are the ones with the most power. Power may be defined here as political (the ability to wage war, collect taxes, make and enforce laws through a penal system, etc.), economic (the ability to amass a surplus of wealth and goods, to buy and sell, invest, trade, hire labour etc.), and military (access to tactical knowledge, weapons technology and manpower). These different types of power

⁸ I am using the term 'transcendental' here in the same way Stanley Tambiah does in his definition of 'religious charisma' as deriving from 'transcendental claims to authoritative leadership' (1993: 325).

coexist in complex and interrelated ways to establish a redemptive hegemony and a regime of truth whereby 'reality', the social world and the individual's place within them are defined.

In a religious worldview the highest power is transcendental and spiritual. Thus within the hierarchy of its redemptive hegemony, spiritual powers are at the top and often these powers are hierarchically arranged in very similar ways to the social hierarchy. Within societies developed on a religious worldview, a priestly caste often functions as an intermediary between the worldly and transcendental realms. Because the priestly caste exists in a special relationship to transcendental power, it often maintains a privileged position within the worldly sphere through a high social status, economic wealth and political power. The legitimation of the professional priestly caste's worldly power highlights an important feature of worldviews: regimes of truth not only define what is real and unreal, true and false, but they do this through establishing what are considered legitimate means of knowing. The religious caste has power through its ritual, scholarly or mystic knowledge only if this type of knowledge is recognised as legitimate. On the level of discourse, epistemology (a theory of knowledge) is central to establishing a redemptive hegemony's ideological foundation.

In addition to establishing what is real and what is society's relation to the real, a worldview positions the individual within these two. In an important sense, it is not simply that each individual has a worldview, but that worldviews have individuals. The importance of the unconscious mind in structuring the individual's sense of self and his/her ideas about the world have been recognised by

psychoanalysis and hypnosis since the nineteenth century.⁹ The unconscious also plays an important role in linguistics and structuralism. Culler states, ‘The need to postulate distinctions and rules operating at an unconscious level in order to explain facts about social and cultural objects has been one of the major axioms that structuralists have derived from linguistics’ (Culler 1975: 28). The recognition of the unconscious has led structuralists to reject the notion of an autonomous subject (ibid.). Because an individual’s sense of self emerges within the context of a society and culture through forces largely unconscious and therefore unrecognised, the idea that an ‘I’ exists as an independent centre of consciousness, volition and intention ceases to be a tenable position. Personal identity, like reality, is something that is constructed within the reality games of truth regimes.¹⁰

Central to the construction of self is the notion of body. The body, as the locus of consciousness and unconsciousness, is always gendered and positioned within the redemptive hegemony’s hierarchical structures. In patriarchal societies, the male gender is constructed as the norminative human gender with ‘female’ considered a special and inferior type of human. Both ‘body’ and ‘gender’ are not givens in experience, but ideas that emerge as part of a worldview’s totalising vision of experience generated through the play of power. As meaning making machines, human beings cannot escape the various programs whereby we operate in the world. What the raw ‘stuff’ of experience is outside of our models of it is not cognitively or

⁹ See for example Clark L. Hull (1933) *Hypnosis and Suggestibility*, New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., and S. Freud (1933 (1976)) ‘New introductory lectures on psychoanalysis’, in *The complete psychological works* (Vol. 22), edited and translated by J. Strachey, New York: Norton.

¹⁰ Both the construction of personal identity and reality involve the use of narrative. For example, Oliver Sacks writes, ‘We have, each of us, a life-story, an inner narrative—whose continuity, whose sense, *is* our lives. It might be said that each of us constructs and lives, a “narrative”, and that this narrative *is* us, our identities’ (1986) *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, London: Picador, p. 105. The function of personal histories within the development of personal identity is analogous on a micro-level to the use of myth or history in a worldview at a macro-level. Although the role of narrative in the construction of the ‘self’ is beyond the scope of this present work, the interested reader will find much written on the topic in the field of narrative therapy. See below for more on the relation between narrative and worldview.

linguistically accessible to us. Even our bodies' concrete sensorial experiences may not be taken as norminative, natural or given. Culture constructs the body which cannot be understood divorced of its social context.¹¹ Through conventional patterns of work and rest; waking and sleeping; the frequency, amount and types of food eaten; permissible and forbidden types of sexual activities and psychoactive substances; ideals of beauty; and types of leisure and labour, bodies are as socially constructed as the clothes we put on them. Therefore, any analysis of a worldview must take into consideration not only that worldview's notions of time, space, causality and society, but also its concepts of body, gender, race and beauty.

Modernism

It may be instructive to illustrate my definition of worldview with an example.

'Modernism' is a term often used to describe a worldview which possibly began in the eighteenth century during the Enlightenment, but which is clearly evident as the dominate reality game of Europe and North American by the early twentieth century. Fundamental tenets of Modernism are that science, reason and individual freedom 'will lead to social progress through virtuous, self-controlled work, creating a better material, political, and intellectual life for all' (Cahoone 1996: 12). Modernism's secularist vision of reality looks to science for its description of the physical world. Science supplies its cosmogony (Big Bang theory) and its cosmology (astronomy's understanding of the universe consisting of hundreds of billions of galaxies each with hundreds of billions of stars). Within this cosmos, time is thought to progress monolinearly (from past, to present, then future), and space is thought to be finite, but

¹¹ 'The body is not opposed to culture, a resistant throw-back to a natural past; it is itself a cultural product, *the* cultural product' (Grosz 1994: 23).

incredibly vast and constantly expanding.¹² Within its regime of truth, Modernism hierarchically constructs the legitimate means of knowledge such that the ‘hard sciences’ (mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology) maintain a higher position above the softer ones (psychology, sociology, linguistics, etc.), and these in turn are situated above the ‘humanities’ (history, anthropology, religious studies, etc.). This hierarchical arrangement is reflected by patterns of funding for academic programs by governments and the private sector; as well as by differences in rates of pay for faculty members in academic institutions, student funding, etc. Invariably the ‘harder’ the knowledge, the more money there is available to fund research for it. This pattern of patronage reflects the valuation of science as a means of progress for developing technology and industry.

Free market capitalism, liberal democracy and secular humanism are each part of Modernism’s economic, political and ethical posturing (Cahoone 1996: 11). Universal basic education is generally valued and supported by the state. And the belief in the autonomy of the individual creates an ethic of responsibility whereby it is thought (especially in the United States) that any individual who has strong enough moral fibre and works hard enough should be able to advance higher up the economic and social hierarchy.

But an examination of the social hierarchies in European and North American societies demonstrates that white males possess the vast majority of the political and economic power. Within the redemptive hegemony of Modernism power games are played with a ‘stacked deck’ in favour of men over women; white over black, Anglo over Asian or African. In this reality game the white, youthful, able, male body is the

¹² Modern cosmological theory is much more complicated than this brief description and there is hardly consensus among theorists. For recent views (some of which seem to come closer to Buddhist notions of time and space) see David Levy, ed. (2000) *The Scientific American Book of the Cosmos*, London: Macmillan.

ideal human body and all other types are defined in terms of it (Grosz 1994: 14).

Thus the male body is normalised so that the sexual specificity of men may be ignored in favour of men as fundamentally rational beings. Because rationality finds its home and source in the mind of the white male, he is able to discern the true from the false and the real from the unreal through his science and reason. The sexual specificity of the female body on the other hand is primary, and as object of desire and symbol of sex, the image of female beauty is exploited by media and advertising within the consumer capitalist system.

It should be clear at this point that I have not chosen 'Modernism' randomly from a set of possible worldviews. Because it is one of, if not *the*, dominant ideological force today, Modernism functions as a necessary point of departure for my current study. Although deeply critical and suspicious of patriarchal constructions of power based on a metaphysics of objectivity, and notions of rationality, I have embraced, embodied and benefited from this worldview to a large extent. While admitting my privileged position as a white male within the redemptive hegemony of Anglo-American academic discourse, I attempt to use critically the legitimate means of knowledge of my time and place to analyse a different worldview of a people from a different time and place. Because the compilers and early audience of the *Gv* have long since given up the mortal coil, our only access to their worldview is through their textual and cultural remains. Fortunately for my study, the story of Sudhana's visits to the good friends is rather explicit about its worldview. But before I can analyse the worldview of the *Gv*, I need to explain my understanding of the role of texts and scripture within worldviews and narratives.

Textual Ontology

Although 'text' is often used in academic discourse in a manner that assumes a common-sense referent, its meaning becomes problematised when one asks such questions as, 'If the *Mona Lisa* is in the Louvre, where is *Hamlet*?'¹³ The answer to this question is hardly straight forward, and the various answers that have been given define what is know as 'textual ontology'—or what it means for a 'text' to 'exist'.

Jerome McGann, one of the leading American textual theorists, defines 'text' in terms of a finite set of linguistic and bibliographical codes.¹⁴ As a critique of and response to the concept of 'authorial intentions' developed by modern text criticism,¹⁵ McGann stresses these two codes in order to highlight texts as material objects with social histories (McGann 1983 and 1991). Because texts are socially produced objects inscribed with both linguistic and bibliographical codes, their position within societies and cultures is constantly transforming. The transformations of a text throughout time and in various places not only constitute what that text is, but also what that text means. In other words, a text's significance depends on how its linguistic and bibliographical codes are read at any given place and time, which may or may not be related to the intentions of the author(s) who produced it.

¹³ This question (originally: 'If the *Mona Lisa* is in the Louvre, where are *Hamlet* and *Lycidas*?'), first raised by F. W. Bateson, is now well known among contemporary theorists of textual ontology (see Greetham 1994: 342).

¹⁴ McGann writes, 'For the past six years I have been exploring a different distinction by calling attention to the text as a laced network of linguistic and bibliographical codes' (1991: 13; see also McGann 1992).

¹⁵ The *locus classicus* for modern textual criticism is Paul Maas' *Textual Criticism* (translated into English by Barbara Flowers, 1958). For further developments in this method see Martin West's *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique* (1973).

If we accept that a text's meaning is not an inherent property of it inscribed for all time by authorial intentions, but emerges within the act of reading,¹⁶ then we must pay close attention to context. Bibliographical codes such as the style and format of a text (printed book or manuscript, type of script, illuminations, ornamentations, etc.) are part of the social meaning of a text, as well as its means of production, the expense of copying and maintaining it, and the number of its available copies. Factors such as cost of production determine who has access to certain texts, and social codes and values determine who may read certain texts, when they are read, who they are read to, and other similar factors. There is always a social and cultural context to reading (or listening) to texts and this context plays a central role in the production of meaning.¹⁷

Earlier I stated that the meaning of a narrative is its role within a worldview. In an important sense, the meaning of a text is also its role within a worldview. As culturally produced objects, texts are positioned within the social, political and economic hierarchies of the societies that produce and maintain them. For most of human history both the ability to read texts and the necessary wealth to produce them have been limited to scribal, royal and wealthy elites. Because ideology functions within texts by means of linguistic codes, and moves through them by means of their bibliographical codes, they are acts of power that play a part in the redemptive hegemony's construction of a worldview.¹⁸

¹⁶ For one developed theory of 'reader response' see Umberto Eco's *The Role of the Reader* (1979). See also Culler 1981: 119-31.

¹⁷ Although I maintain that the meaning of a text is produced in its reading, I do not claim that meaning is merely an idiosyncratic response of the reader. Readers learn how to read through a conventional system of decoding. Texts as linguistic codes limit the infinite range of possible interpretations through literary conventions, grammar, and syntax. Thus a dialectic or dialogue between text and reader functions as the space where meanings emerge.

¹⁸ Oral texts, although they lack bibliographical codes, play a similar role through conventions and limitations on who is able to memorise them, when and where memorisation takes place, appropriate time, place and audience for recitation, and other such conditions.

If we return to the question, ‘where is *Hamlet*?’, we now can offer one possible answer. As a text, *Hamlet* is a finite set of linguistic and bibliographical codes that exists where and whenever it is materially manifested. Thus in a sense there are as many *Hamlets* as there are copies of *Hamlet*. As a story or more specifically as a play, *Hamlet* exists in each and every act of its reading and performance. Thus on the textual level, *Hamlet* exists as a cultural product, and on the narrative level, as a discursive act within a cultural context. As an act of power within a worldview, the play’s multiplicity of meanings are related to both levels of text and narrative. Regimes of truth within different worldviews will limit and restrict the infinite possible readings of *Hamlet* by determining such things as who produces copies of the play and how many are produced, who reads it or sees it performed, the significance that surrounds these acts of disclosure, and what are accepted methods of interpretation.¹⁹

This understanding of textual ontology shares a number of similarities with what Andre Lefevere calls a ‘systems approach’ to literature.²⁰ Lefevere outlines four assumptions of such an approach. First, it assumes that literature is a system embedded in a cultural or societal environment. Second, every literary system possesses a regulatory body that extends patronage to it. This patronage possesses at least three components: an ideological, economic and status component. Third, a literary system possesses a poetics, which has both an inventory aspect that defines genres, characters, and typical literary situations, and a functional aspect that defines literature’s role within society. And fourth, there is a constraint imposed on the

¹⁹ For instance, English departments in Britain and North America have firmly established *Hamlet* within the canon of ‘English Literature.’ This canonisation secures a place for the play within the academy that both guarantees its cultural influence for a segment of Anglo-American society and limits the possible meanings of the play through an indoctrination program of orthodox interpretations.

²⁰ See Andre Lefevere, ‘Mother Courage’s Cucumbers: Text, System, and Refraction in a Theory of Literature,’ *Modern Language Studies* 12:4 (1982): 3–20. The following discussion is from a reprint of this article in Venuti 2000: 233–49.

system by natural language, both formally through the language's grammar, and pragmatically by the way the language reflects culture. In this interpretation of literature as system, Lefevere recognises texts both as cultural products with bibliographical codes, and as linguistic codes limited by cultural conventions. Also, Lefevere's discussion of literature's regulatory body highlights the notion that texts function within the hierarchical power structures of worldviews. The relationship of patronage to literature is particularly relevant to my study of the *Gv*, and I address this issue in more detail when I discuss the text's cultural context in chapter 2.

Scriptures and Canons

Notions of scripture and canon are essential for understanding the role of texts and narratives within religious worldviews. As mentioned above, religious worldviews are worldviews that recognise one or more transcendental sources of power. Often in religious worldviews certain texts are recognised as being inspired or revealed by a transcendental power source. Because of the believed transcendental source of these texts, they take on a privileged status within the worldview. A text endowed with the special status of being derived from a transcendental source I call 'scripture'.²¹ In some worldviews such as Judaism and Islam, the sacred nature of scripture extends to its linguistic codes (Hebrew and Arabic), while in others such as Christianity or Buddhism, the sacred nature of the message is thought to be independent of a particular set of linguistic codes.²² Often the materiality of the scripture as manifested in a text's bibliographical codes is also thought to be sacred, so that scriptures are written only on certain materials, are kept in special restricted areas, and can only be

²¹ For a detailed discussion of scripture see Wilfred Cantwell Smith's (1993) *What is Scripture?: A Comparative Approach*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

²² Of course, this is only partially true. Latin in the Western Church, and Sanskrit (especially in the Siddham script) in East Asian Esoteric Buddhism, both had a special status as sacred languages.

handled in particular ways by certain individuals at the appropriate times. A religious 'canon' is an official collection of texts recognised as scripture by an authoritative body.

The importance of scriptures and canons within religious worldviews is directly related to their privileged status as texts or collections that are thought to derive from one or more transcendental sources. Because scripture can not be 'wrong' for those that consider it scripture, the ideologies within sacred texts take on special authority. Within a religious worldview, the authority of scripture and the authority of the priestly caste depend on each other: the priestly caste asserts the authority of the scripture, and the scripture legitimises that caste's own position within the power structures of the worldview. But unless a priestly caste maintains absolute power, the maintenance and survival of scripture as sacred text requires the continued patronage from the other politically powerful and wealthy members of society. Therefore, a scripture's ideology can not directly attack or undermine the authority of the rich and powerful without jeopardising its own status as scripture. Because of its important, but precarious position within the redemptive hegemony, a scripture often negotiates power relations between the priestly and ruling castes, and offers metaphysical, transcendental or divine authority to a ruling class's right to rule. As acts of power within religious worldviews, sacred texts reveal important information about the regimes of truth that produced and maintained them.

Chapter Outline

Having discussed in some detail my definitions of 'worldview', 'narrative', 'text' and 'scripture', it is now time to apply these terms and categories to an analysis of the *Gv*.

In Part I: 'Text and Context', I examine the origins and development of the *Gv*. In

chapter 1, I present a genealogy of Sudhana's story through its various historical and cultural manifestations relying on the modern scholarly literature on the subject. Included in this chapter is a literature review of the modern research done on the *Gv*. In the chapter 2, I argue, based on internal and inscriptional evidence, for the relatively late compilation of the narrative in the 3rd century CE. Then, I investigate the role of Buddhist monasticism within Indian society and culture during Buddhism's Middle Period in India (0–500 CE). Using epigraphical evidence, I examine patterns of patronage of Buddhist monasteries during this period. I argue in this chapter that the *Gv* was compiled by city dwelling monks, possible from Nāgārjunikoṇḍa during the rule of the Ikṣvākus, for patrons from an urban, wealthy elite in which women played an important role.

In Part II: 'Structures', I apply the categories of worldview and narrative to an analysis of the *Gv*. In chapter 3, I examine the worldview of the *Gv*. In order to understand how the text constructs its view of reality, society and the individual, I analyse several passages that give insight into its key concepts such as *dharmadhātu*, *dharmakāya*, *rūpakāya*, and *kalyāṇamitra*.

In chapter 4, I discuss the genre of Sudhana's story and explore its structure using ideas developed by Mieke Bal (1997). Beginning with the Russian formalists, structural analysts have tended to divide narratives into separate levels of analysis—the most common division being the distinction between fabula and story.²³ At the more formal abstract level, the fabula of the narrative is the particular sequence of events that is being narrated and the level at which one may group particular narratives according to genre. The story is the way a particular fabula is told with all

²³ Fabula and story are Bal's terms (1997). Culler uses story and discourse (1983: 169–187); while other theorists, such as Umberto Eco employ different terms (see Eco 1979: 27, where he uses fabula and plot).

its rhetorical and poetic devices. In this chapter, I analyse the *Gv*'s narrative at both levels—on the level of fabula, and as a particular story which makes use of repetition, stock formulas, lists, multiplications, etc. for rhetoric and poetic effects.

In the following chapters of Part III: 'Forces', I explore the way the *Gv*'s narrative employs notions of wealth, gender and power. My choice of these three has been motivated by two factors. First, I maintain that ideas about wealth (as economic power) and gender (as a major factor in the construction of the body, the individual and the social hierarchy) play important roles in worldview construction. Also, a worldview's notions of power reveal ideological justifications for its social and political hierarchies and policies of subjugation, domination, coercion and force. And second, although well developed and central to the *Gv*'s narrative and worldview, these three have been completely ignored by modern scholarship.

Fundamental to my analysis of wealth, gender and power in the *Gv* is Umberto Eco's notion that texts are 'ideologically overcoded' (1979: 22–23). According to Eco, a text is never ideologically neutral, but possesses a structure that may not be apparent to the author(s). Whenever someone reads a text his/her own position encounters the ideological structures of the text. Differing ideological positions (or, in my terminology, worldviews) when coming into contact have the potential to uncover novel readings of a text. Because texts are cultural and institutional products, they always contain an over-abundance of semiotic codes and thus are ideologically overcoded. My goal in studying wealth, gender and power in the *Gv* is to reveal information about the ideological overcoding within the text's narrative and worldview, such as its assertions that certain economic, social and political hierarchies are cosmic norms.

Beginning with chapter 5, I move away from structures to consider the ‘force’ of the narrative in relation to wealth, gender and power. Force may be understood in this context as the progressive unfolding of the story as it takes place within time, with all of its dramatic disclosures, suspense, asides, foreshadowing and reversals. In switching from structures to forces, I attempt to use the dynamics of the temporal approach to illustrate how force functions within the structures of narrative and worldview.

After a brief introduction to Part III, I move through the narrative sequentially examining how ideological positions on wealth, gender and power unfold. Chapters 5–16, each deal with sections of the story that are particularly relevant to this study. In this manner, Part III functions as a commentary that employs the analytical tools and categories developed in the preceding chapters to analyse the themes of wealth, gender and power. Through close readings of key passages, I attempt to investigate the story in its natural temporal sequence and thereby reveal its ideological overcoding.

Part I: Text and Context

1. A Genealogy of the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra*

Chinese Sources

We find our earliest dateable evidence of the *Gv* in the Chinese catalogues of the Buddhist canon composed in the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries CE.¹ According to these catalogues, the *Gv* was first translated into Chinese by the monk Sheng Chien (T 294) sometime between 388 and 408 CE. Compared to the extant Sanskrit text this is only a partial translation. In his dissertation (1967: xxiv), Gómez indicates four ways in which this text differs from the Sanskrit. First, it lacks the verses from the introductory section (the *Nidāna-parivarta*) and the first nine good friends found in the Sanskrit text. Second, instead of the 27th *kalyāṇamitra*, the householder Veṣṭhila, this translation has a bodhisattva named *Pu chiao kao kwei te wang*. Third, the following section describing Sudhana's encounter with the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara lacks the twenty-two verses found in the Sanskrit text. Finally, this translation ends abruptly after the 34th good friend, the night goddess Pramuditāyājagadvīrocānā.

The first complete Chinese translation of the *Gv* soon followed in 420. Entitled the “Chapter on the Entrance into the Dharma Realm” (T 278),² it was translated by Buddhābhadda and his team of translators as the final chapter of the immense *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* (*Av*). This version contains the Veṣṭhila section but without its two final verses, and the Avalokiteśvara section still lacks its verses. Also missing are the final sixty-two verses of the *Gv* found in the section of Sudhana's encounter with the bodhisattva Samantabhadra. These verses collectively known as

¹ The following information on the Chinese sources and translations is from Gómez 1967, xxiii–xxix. The catalogues consulted by Gómez are themselves part of the Chinese Buddhist canon and are numbered T 2145–49, 2151, 2153–54 and 2157.

² The Chinese title corresponds to the Sanskrit **Dharmadhātu-praveśana-parivarta*.

the *Bhadracarī* (*Bhad*) are found in all extant Sanskrit manuscripts, at the end of the final Chinese translation (T 293; see below for details) and as an independent text in the Chinese Buddhist canon (T 297). In Buddhahadra's translation instead of the *Bhad*, the *Gv* ends with verses of praise to 'all bodhisattvas in the universe' (Gómez 1967: xxvi).

The *Av* was translated again into Chinese between 695 and 699, by the Khotanese monk, Śikṣānanda and his team of translators.³ The translation of the *Gv* within this work is substantially the same as the earlier one with the following exceptions: the final two verses of the Veṣṭhila section have been added, the name of Avalokiteśvara's mountain has changed from *Prabha to Potalaka and a short verse greeting has been added in the final section (T 279, 442b–c).⁴

The fourth and final Chinese translation of the *Gv* was completed in 798 by the Kashmiri monk, Prajñā (T 293). Called **Acintyavimokṣa-gocarapraveśana-samantabhadracaryā-praṇidhāna*, it is based on an expanded and no longer extant Sanskrit version belonging to the king of Orissa, who sent his personal copy to China as a gift to the Emperor in 795.⁵ T 293 contains the verses of the Avalokiteśvara section⁶ and the *Bhad* verses at the end of the Samantabhadra section⁷ as found in the

³ T 279. This translation is known as the 'Hua-yen in 80 chuan', in order to distinguish it from the Buddhahadra's translation in 60 chuan.

⁴ See Gómez 1967: xxvi–xxvii.

⁵ The colophon to the Chinese translation contains a letter from the king to the Emperor (see T 293, 848b–c; and Gómez 1967: xxvii).

⁶ These verses appear to share a close affinity to the Avalokiteśvara verses found in the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* (Kern and Nanjio 1912: 452–55). According to Gómez (1967: xxviii), the relationship between these two has been addressed in a paper by Hokei Idzumi titled 'Bonbun Kegonkyō ni okeru Kanjizai-bosatsu' (*Seigo Kenkyū* No. 1, August 1933).

⁷ Although the *Bhad* does not become part of the *Gv* until Prajñā's translation, according to the Buddhist Text Translation Society, 'Nowadays it [the *Bhad*] is often incorporated at the end of the 80 role New Version [Śikṣānanda's translation] of the *Av*,...' (*The Flower Adornment Sutra 39–1: Entering the Dharma Realm* 1980: xxi–xxii). The Society does not specify exactly when this addition was made, but this statement does offer an explanation as to why Thomas Cleary includes the *Bhadracarī* at the end of his English translation of Śikṣānanda's translation (see Cleary 1993: 1511–18).

existing Sanskrit manuscripts. There are also a number of passages in this translation not found in any extant Sanskrit source.

Thomas Cleary, in a brief discussion (1993: 1535) of Prajñā's translation, states that these additions appear to be explanations or amplifications of the text which may be attributed to Prajñā or his assistants.⁸ Rather than assuming that the Chinese translators tampered with their Sanskrit archetype, I think an equally plausible explanation is that the king of Orissa possessed an expanded version of the Sanskrit text no longer extant in the surviving manuscripts. Our brief survey of the Chinese translations has demonstrated a general trend toward an expansion of the *Gv* over time. Prajñā's translation contains passages that are not found in the earlier Chinese translations. Some of these are found in the existing Sanskrit versions and some are not found in any other version. This evidence argues for the surviving Sanskrit versions' compilation sometime between the completion of Śikṣānanda's translation (699) and Prajñā's translation (798). This hypothesis assumes the possibility of an undiscovered Sanskrit version (an Orissan recension?) corresponding to Prajñā's translation.

Why the *Bhadracarī* would come to replace the final verses at the end of Śikṣānanda's translation of the *Av* is not clear. There is the Mahāyāna Buddhist belief that many *sūtras* are only partial renditions of much longer works existing in celestial planes (see Obermiller 1986: 170). When the *Bhad* became important as a liturgical text sometime between the end of the 7th and end of the 8th centuries it was incorporated as the final verses of the *Gv* (which seemed to have maintained the status of an independent *sūtra* from the *Avatamsaka* in India). When the Chinese discovered this new ending of the *Gv*, in a desire for a more complete *Avatamsaka*, they must have replaced the older verses in Śikṣānanda's translation with the *Bhadracarī*.

⁸ Cleary translates a number of these amplifications into English from the Muktaka, Śilpābhijñā, Sucandra and Śivarāgra sections (Cleary 1993: 1535–41).

Tibetan Sources

According to modern scholarly consensus the extant Tibetan *Av* was translated into Tibetan in the early period of Buddhist transmission (7th–9th centuries),⁹ possibly during the ‘Great Revision’ sponsored by kings Khri Ide srong bstan (*circa* 800–815 CE) and Khri gstug lde bstan (*circa* 815–836 CE).¹⁰ According to Ernst Steinkellner, it is very unlikely that an earlier translation of the *Gv* existed prior to the codification which took place under these two kings (Steinkellner 1995: 19). If this is the case, then the Tibetan translation is our next earliest evidence of the *Gv* after the Chinese translations.¹¹ Tibetan tradition is divided concerning the translators of the *Av*; the famous translation trio of Jinamitra, Surendrabodhi and Ye shes sde being the most commonly mentioned in the Kanjur colophons.¹²

Following the initial translation efforts in the early 9th century, after several centuries of textual transmission, the distinct Tibetan Kanjur (*bKa’ ’gyur*) collections began to emerge in the 14th century with the development of the Old Narthang manuscript Kanjur. According to Peter Skilling, this Kanjur was ‘the *conceptual prototype* for later, large-scale, single project Kanjurs—but not their *textual archetype*’ (italics his; Skilling 1997a: 100). In other words, although the Old Narthang was the first project of its kind, it has not functioned as a direct textual source for all the subsequent Kanjurs. Since the 14th century over twenty distinct Kanjurs have been

⁹ The Tibetan title of the *Av* is *Sangs rgyas phal po che* (Skt *Buddhāvataṃsaka*). The *Gv* is called *sDong pos brgyan pa*.

¹⁰ See Skilling 1997a: 90; Steinkellner 1995: 14–15; Harrison 1996: 72–73; and Gómez 1967: xxx–xxxii.

¹¹ The *Gv* is only found in the Tibetan canon as part of the *Av*. Although the date of the Tibetan translation (early 9th century) is about contemporaneous with Prajñā’s translation (end of the 8th century), the surviving Kanjur versions of the Tibetan correspond almost exactly with the surviving Nepalese Sanskrit versions and not Prajñā’s version (see below for more details). This difference between the Tibetan translation and final Chinese translation, which were both translated at about the same time may lend evidence for a separate lost Orissan recension of the *Gv*.

¹² See Steinkellner 1995: 14–15. Contrary to the predominate view the Narthang and Mongolian Kanjurs list Surendrabodhi and Vairocana as translators, while Bu ston and the Lhasa Kanjur mention only Vairocana (Tarthang Tulku 1982: 189).

compiled. Although textual relationships between all of these different versions are hardly clear, a number of scholars have made substantial progress in tracing the Kanjurs' genealogies through the application of modern text critical method.¹³

Through his detailed and comprehensive work on the *Mahāsūtras* (1994 & 1997b), Peter Skilling has developed the most recent and probably the most reliable stemma representing the genealogical relationships of the various Kanjurs (Skilling 1997a: 107). Following Eimer (1992), Skilling identifies two main branches of transmission, the Tshal pa and Them spangs ma, and indicates a number of Kanjurs which seem to have developed independently from these branches, such as the Lahul, Tabo, Newark Batang and Phug brag (ibid.).

Unlike the Chinese who often included several translations of a single Buddhist work in their canon, the Tibetans, after a period of using multiple translations, instituted a general policy of including only one official and authoritative translation of each work.¹⁴ Therefore the textual variations found in the different Kanjurs of a work such as the *Gv* reflect (in theory) transmissional variation all stemming from an original, single Tibetan translation of a Sanskrit text. By comparing the variant readings of a text as found in the Kanjurs, a stemma can be developed and a critical edition of a work produced which attempts to reproduce the lost, original translation. Of course several centuries of copying, revising and conflating different versions between the first translations in the early 9th century and the beginning of the first Kanjurs in the early 14th century add an unavoidable level of uncertainty to any attempt at definitive critical editions. Nevertheless, modern textual criticism has been successfully practiced on works in the Tibetan canon to produce

¹³ See Eimer 1992, Harrison 1996 and Skilling 1997a.

¹⁴ Skilling attributes the beginning of this policy of including only one translation to Bu ston (see Skilling 1997a: 100, n. 96).

editions which demonstrate both the historical development of the texts through their various Kanjur incarnations, and give us a best guess at the earliest versions of the Tibetan translations.¹⁵ In the following study, I consult the Derge (D) Kanjur from the Tshal pa branch¹⁶ for all extended quotes from the *Gv*, and provide a concordance of the Derge, Peking and Tog Palace Kanjur versions of the text in appendix C.

Sanskrit Manuscripts and Editions

The earliest dateable, complete Sanskrit manuscript of the *Gv* was brought from Nepal by the British civil servant, B. H. Hodgson, and presented to the Royal Asiatic Society, London in 1835.¹⁷ Numbered Hodgson 2, this manuscript is written in Newārī script and consists of 289 palm leaves (22 ½ inches by 2 inches) with six lines to a page. The colophon gives the date of the manuscript as Newārī Saṃvat 286 (1166 CE), during the reign of Ānandadeva. Since Hodgson's 'discovery' of this manuscript, several modern Nepalese, Sanskrit manuscripts have come to the attention of scholars.¹⁸ Between 1934–36, D. T. Suzuki and H. Idzumi used six Nepalese manuscripts to produce the first printed edition of the *Gv* in four volumes.¹⁹ These manuscripts were: Hodgson 2, two paper mss. from Cambridge University, a paper ms. from the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, a paper ms. from Tokyo Imperial University and a paper ms. from Kyoto Imperial University.²⁰ Using the Suzuki &

¹⁵ See Harrison 1978 & 1992a and Skilling 1994 & 1997b.

¹⁶ Because the redactors of the Derge also consulted sources from the Them spangs ma branch, from a text critical point of view, it is less useful than other less 'contaminated' versions. I have included it in this study because it is one of the most accessible versions for scholarly study.

¹⁷ See Cowell and Eggeling 1875: 1–4 & 51, for the manuscript details which follow.

¹⁸ For the most complete list in English see Jastram 1975: lxxvii–lxxxv. Jastram give details of sixteen mss., and mentions the possibility of the existence of several other.

¹⁹ A revised edition with corrections was published in 1949.

²⁰ These manuscripts are listed in the 'Note' section of the revised Suzuki & Idzumi edition (1949). A more detailed account of them may be found in Gómez 1967: xviii–xix; and Jastram 1975: lxxix–lxxxii.

Idzumi edition and an additional ms. from Oriental Institute, Baroda,²¹ P. L. Vaidya produced a new edition of the *Gv* that was published in 1960.

In addition to the Nepalese manuscripts, a single folio fragment of *Gv* was discovered in Central Asia at Sorcug.²² Written in Southern Turkistan Brāhmī, the folio contains 12 lines from the Sarvanagararakṣāsambhavatejāśrī section of the text. In his catalogue, Waldschmidt provides a full transliteration of the fragment and notes a large number of readings which vary from Vaidya's text.²³ Most variants in the fragment represent a more hybridised Sanskrit than Vaidya's readings based on the Nepalese mss.—a finding which supports the theory that Buddhist Sanskrit texts tended to be normalised toward more classical Sanskrit forms over time (see below).

Text critical studies on four of the *Gv*'s mss. by Gómez and eight by Jastram has led both scholars to conclude that the surviving Nepalese mss. all come from a common source.²⁴ Jastram believes there is only one archetype for these mss., which is primarily represented by Hodgson 2 (ibid.). Although all manuscripts so far studied appear to represent the same recension, contamination among them prevents us from establishing a definitive stemma.

Because of the particular textual problems involved in the use of the Nepalese sources, editorial practice applied to the study of the *Gv* has tended to rely heavily on the readings of Hodgson 2 as a primary source, and use the other mss. to fill in lacunae. Neither of the existing editions are critical in the contemporary sense of the word—Suzuki and Idzumi never published their list of variant readings, and Vaidya only includes sporadic variant readings from the Baroda ms. In both the Suzuki &

²¹ The Baroda ms. is numbered 13208, has 218 folios (61.5 cm by 27.2 cm with 9 lines to a page), is modern, and the script is of the Kuṭīla type (see Vaidya 1960: ix; and Gómez 1967: xx).

²² The transliteration of this fragment may be found in Waldschmidt 1965: 235–36. See also Jastram 1975: lxxxiv–lxxxv for a detailed description.

²³ For the corresponding section in Vaidya see V240–42.

²⁴ See Gómez 1967: xxi and Jastram 1975: xx–xxi.

Idzumi and Vaidya editions, the editors have modified readings toward more classical Sanskrit norms in order to compensate for various idiosyncrasies of spelling, sandhi and punctuation found in the Nepalese manuscripts.

As the most recent edition based on the most manuscripts, Vaidya has functioned as a primary source for most (non-text critical) scholarly work on the *Gv*.²⁵ But Vaidya's edition (V) is not without its faults. In order to produce a more text critical thematic study, I have checked V's readings against the Suzuki & Idzumi edition (SI), and supplied page references to the Derge (D) and Thomas Cleary's English translation (C) of the second Chinese translation (T 279) for all extended quotes from the *Gv*. Also, I include concordances of the two Sanskrit editions with Hodgson 2 (A),²⁶ and three Tibetan Kanjurs in the appendices. Because I am not attempting to develop a critical edition *per se*, I have limited my use of the Sanskrit ms. A and Derge to resolve textual problems found in V and SI.

Modern Scholarship

The West's initial exposure to the *Gv* came in 1828, when *Asiatic Research* published a description of Hodgson's Sanskrit manuscript finds in Nepal.²⁷ In the article titled 'Essays on the Languages, Literature, and Religion of Nepal and Tibet', Hodgson classifies the *Gv* as a narrative scripture. In 1835, he brought his palm leaf manuscript of the *Gv* to London and presented it to the Royal Asiatic Society (where it remains to this day). But it was not until 1882, that details about the text came to light. Having studied Hodgson 2, R. Mitra described the *Gv* as 'the history of Sudhana in search of perfect knowledge' in his *The Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of*

²⁵ See for example Ehman 1977, Gómez 1975, Griffiths 1981, Paul 1985 and McMahan 1998.

²⁶ For Hodgson 2 (A), I have consulted both the original manuscript and a micro-film copy.

²⁷ The following information concerning the work of Hodgson, Mitra and Kern is summarised in Ehman 1977: 7–20.

Nepal (1882: 90). In a few pages, Mitra gives a general, but accurate summary of the narrative, recounting Sudhana's initial encounter with Mañjuśrī, his journey through India visiting the *kalyāṇamitras*, up to his final encounter (1882: 90–93). In the same year as Mitra's publication, Otto Schulze published H. Kern's *Der Buddhismus und seine Geschichte in Indien* (1882). In this work, Kern refers to the *Gv* as an 'idealist text' (*idealistische Schrift*) in which the Buddha is a spiritual omnipresence that manifests itself in various forms within nature through the 'power of miracle' (*Wunderkraft*).²⁸ Mark Ehman correctly points out Kern's 'indebtedness to Hegelian metaphysics' in his attempt to describe the *Gv*'s worldview in terms of western Idealism (Ehman 1977: 17). By trying to force the *Gv* into a Hegelian worldview, Kern failed to understand the text on its own terms, vocabulary and inner logic.²⁹

In the beginning of the 20th century, D. T. Suzuki and H. Idzumi advanced *Gv* studies with their first printed edition of the text (1934–36; revised edition 1949). Suzuki followed up this edition with selected translations from the *Gv* and an analysis of the text's worldview in his third series of *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (1953). In his *Essays*, Suzuki provides translations of selected passages from the *Nidāna-parivarta*, *Sāgaramegha* and *Maitreya* sections.³⁰ In addition to his translations, Suzuki also presents the first lengthy discussion of the *Gv*'s worldview in the English language.³¹

According to Suzuki, the *Gv* describes a spiritual world that is governed by its own rules. No longer is the Buddha considered merely a historical figure limited by space or time; rather the Buddha is coextensive with the universe itself (1953: 76). When the Buddha (called Vairocana in the *Gv*) enters into his trance state (*samādhi*)

²⁸ See Kern 1882: 512, cited in Ehman 1977: 16.

²⁹ By this criticism I am not implying that there is necessarily a 'correct' reading for the text based on 'the text itself'.

³⁰ See Suzuki 1953: 71–102 and 124–217.

³¹ See Osto 1999: 40–42, for a more detailed discussion of Suzuki's views.

in the ‘Introductory Chapter’ (*Nidāna-parivarta*) at the beginning of the *sūtra*, his peaked dwelling (*kūṭāgāra*) and the Jeta Grove both expand to infinity. Linear time is also transformed so that past, present and future all collapse into a single, eternal moment. All objects within this limitless spacetime³² are transparent, luminous and reflect ever other object. The *Gv* calls this limitless inter-reflecting universe the *dharmadhātu* (Suzuki 1953: 78). Although the *dharmadhātu* contains the ordinary world of linear spacetime within it (called the *lokadhātu*), it transcends the boundaries of the ordinary world and is the universe as seen from the spiritual level of the bodhisattvas.

Suzuki refers to the notion of ‘Interpenetration’ as ‘the fundamental insight’ of the *Gv*, and compares this idea to the Hegelian concept of concrete-universals (Suzuki 1953: 87). He states,

It [Interpenetration] is, philosophically speaking, a thought somewhat similar to the Hegelian concept of concrete-universals.... A system of perfect relationship exists among individual existences and also between individuals and universals, between particular objects and general ideas. This perfect network of mutual relations has received at the hand of the Mahāyāna philosopher the technical name of Interpenetration (ibid.).

According to Suzuki, the true nature of the *dharmadhātu* is Interpenetration, which is best demonstrated by the *Gv*’s description of the great peaked dwelling (*mahākūṭāgāra*) in the Maitreya section (Suzuki 1953: 148).³³ The inter-reflection of the thousands of peaked dwellings within Maitreya’s great peaked dwelling and the inter-reflection of each and every object within each dwelling with every other object represents the complete interpenetration and non-obstruction of all phenomena. Maitreya’s finger snap to open the doors to his dwelling symbolises the sustaining

³² Throughout the remainder of this dissertation I employ the term ‘spacetime’, common in contemporary physics, to refer to the totality of the four dimensions (three of space and one of time).

³³ See V 407–418 and SI 510–528, for the description of Maitreya’s peaked dwelling in the Sanskrit text.

power (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of the bodhisattvas which gives rise to all the wondrous phenomena of the *dharmadhātu*. The ultimate spiritual goal of any Mahāyāna Buddhist according to the *Gv* is to enter into the *dharmadhātu* through the practice of the ‘life of enlightenment’ (*bodhicaryā*). According to Suzuki, this ‘life of enlightenment’ the *Gv* identifies as the ‘life of Bhadra’ (*bhadracaryā*) personified as the bodhisattva Samantadhara who functions as the ultimate goal of Sudhana’s pilgrimage (Suzuki 1953: 83–84 & 170).

In his study, Suzuki, like Kern before him, invokes Hegelian philosophy to explain the worldview of the *Gv*. Nevertheless, through his sensitivity to the philosophical dynamics of the text and use of the text’s own vocabulary (such as *dharmadhātu*, *adhiṣṭhāna*, *bodhicaryā*), he moves considerably closer than Kern to an understanding of the *Gv*’s worldview. But as thoughtful as Suzuki’s study may be, his characterisation of the fundamental insight of the *Gv* as ‘Interpenetration’ reveals his indebtedness to the Chinese Hua-yen masters. Suzuki gives no Sanskrit equivalent for ‘Interpenetration’, and I have found none in my reading of the text. It seems that he is using this term to translate the Hua-yen concepts of *Shih Shih Wu-ai* used by the Hua-yen masters in their analysis of the *Av*.³⁴ This Chinese term, in turn appears to encompass a number of terms found in the Sanskrit *Gv*, such as *pratibhāsa* (‘reflection’), *pravedha* (‘penetration’), and *spharāṇa* (‘pervading’)—among others used to describe the *dharmadhātu*.

Further in-roads into *Gv* studies were made in 1953, with the publication of Franklin Edgerton’s *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary (BHSG & D)*. Using the Suzuki & Idzumi edition, Edgerton gives numerous citations and entries from the *Gv* in this monumental work of Sanskrit philology that provide much

³⁴ See Garma Chang’s *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality: The Philosophy of Hwa Yen Buddhism* (1971) for a detailed study of Hua-yen philosophy.

insight into and important information about the language of the Sanskrit text. Even though Edgerton's volumes have been aptly criticised by Brough (1954) for his lack of attention to the orthographic peculiarities of the Nepali scribes, *BHSG & D* still stands as the single greatest accomplishment in Buddhist Sanskrit philology of the modern era.

In 1960, the Mithila Institute published an edition of the Sanskrit *Gv* edited by P. L. Vaidya. In Vaidya's opinion, his edition 'marks a vast advance over the older edition', because he fills in many lacunae with the Baroda ms. and corrects SI in numerous places with regard to punctuation, and the separation of words, phrases and paragraphs (Vaidya 1960: ix).³⁵ As mentioned above, V tends to be the edition most often used for non-text critical work on the Sanskrit *Gv*. Although possibly an improvement over SI, V lacks a critical apparatus and suffers from its own errors, and therefore a true critical edition of the Sanskrit *Gv* with complete apparatus remains a *desideratum*.³⁶

In 1967, Luis Gómez completed his Ph.D. dissertation 'Selected Verses from the Gaṇḍavyūha: Text, Critical Apparatus, and Translation' (Gómez 1967). In this first true critical study of the *Gv*, Gómez edits and translates verses from the *Nidāna-parivarta* and *Samantagambīraśrīvimalaprabhā* section based on four Sanskrit manuscripts (mentioned above), the two Sanskrit editions, and the Peking and Lhasa Kanjurs. In addition to his editing and translating these verses, Gómez provides a lengthy introduction discussing the textual relationships among various versions of the Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese texts, reference to the *Gv* in Indian literature, linguistic features of the Sanskrit text, its original title, date of origin and philosophy.

³⁵ Gómez agrees with Vaidya: 'This edition [V] nevertheless improves over the previous one considerably' (Gómez 1967: xxi).

³⁶ Such a massive undertaking has already begun—see below.

Gómez's analysis of the philosophy of the *Gv* in his dissertation and in a later article written in 1977,³⁷ provide important insights into the worldview of the text.³⁸ For Gómez, the central doctrines of the *Gv* represent 'an elaboration and combination of two notions common to all Buddhists: the notion that all appearance is illusory and the traditional belief in the psychic powers attained through the exercise of asceticism' (Gómez 1967: lxxvi). According to the *Gv*, the most important psychic power, possessed only by buddhas and the most advanced bodhisattvas, is the ability to generate illusory bodies. Buddhas and bodhisattvas are able to generate magical bodies because they are thought to possess two bodies: a 'Dharma body' (*dharmakāya* or *dharmasārīra*) and a 'Form body' (*rūpakāya* or *rūpasārīra*), corresponding to two different aspects of the *dharmadhātu*: the undivided *dharmadhātu* (*asambhinnadharmadhātu*) and the *dharmadhātu* divided into levels (*dharmadhātutalabhedā*). The Dharma body represents the *dharmadhātu* as the non-differentiated, absolutely pure, empty, metaphysical foundation of all phenomena.³⁹ The Form body represents the infinite, illusory manifestations of the *dharmadhātu*—all the forms of buddhas, bodhisattvas, realms, beings and objects inter-reflecting and interpenetrating one another.⁴⁰ Thus enlightened beings who possess the Dharma body are beyond duality and therefore are able to recreate illusory form bodies for the sake of saving all deluded beings. In this way, the *dharmadhātu* is the foundation, the goal and the fruit of the bodhisattva's course of conduct.

Therefore, according to Gómez, the *Gv* goes beyond the 'common ground' of the Mahāyāna by establishing 'an equation between the true nature of *dharmas*, the

³⁷ See 'Bodhisattva as Wonder-Worker' in *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems* (1977), pp. 221–261.

³⁸ I discuss Gómez's views on the *Gv* in more detail in Osto 1999: 42–44.

³⁹ See Gómez 1977: 230ff. This is a decidedly more metaphysical interpretation of 'dharmakāya' than Harrison's understanding (1992b). As I demonstrate in chapter 3, Gómez's comprehension of the term as it is used in the *Gv* is completely warranted.

⁴⁰ See Gómez 1977: 230ff. The *Gv* makes no mention of the 'enjoyment body' (*sambhogikakāya*) of the *trikāya* systems.

dharmadhātu, the ultimate essence of Buddhahood, and the bodhisattva's course (*caryā*) represented by the function of the Form body' (Gómez 1977: 235). This equation leads the text to present the 'principle fruit' of concentration and trance as the ability to produce reality (ibid.). Thus as the central concept of the *Gv*, the *dharmadhātu* possesses metaphysical, magical and soteriological aspects.

Like Suzuki before him, Gómez views Maitreya's *kūṭāgāra* as representing the *dharmadhātu*. For Gómez, this is where Sudhana receives his 'supreme teaching' and final answer to his quest', which is how one carries out the 'The Perfect Noble Course' (*samantabhadracaryā*) of the bodhisattvas (Gómez 1977: 236, 240 & 230). Thus, unlike Suzuki, Gómez sees the visionary experience attained by Sudhana in Maitreya's tower as the highest vision of the *dharmadhātu* and the attainment of complete omniscience.

Although probably the most insightful and influential interpretation of the *Gv*'s worldview in modern times, Gómez's analysis is not without faults. Mark Ehman is right to point out⁴¹ that Gómez's emphasis on the 'psychic powers attained through the exercise of asceticism' finds little textual support. Psychic powers are a central concern of the *Gv*, but there are no discussions of ascetic practices leading to these powers. Rather, in the *Gv*, psychic powers come through the attainment of trances (*samādhi*) which are achieved solely through the instruction and sustaining power (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of the *kalyāṇamitras*.

Although Gómez is correct to point out the central importance of the *dharmadhātu*, his interpretation of Sudhana's visionary experience of Maitreya's dwelling as the highest attainment is not supported by a close reading of the text. After a careful reading of the Maitreya section and a detailed examination of the

⁴¹ Ehman 1977: 26. See below for more on Ehman's views.

Samantabhadracaryā-praṇidhāna in a previous study,⁴² I have concluded with Suzuki that Sudhana's vision and ultimate unity with Samantabhadra in this final section represents the highest goal for the *Gv*.

A weakness in both Suzuki's and Gómez's interpretations is their failure to elaborate on the connection between the text's worldview and narrative. By failing to examine the function of Sudhana's pilgrimage within the worldview of the text, they neglect one of the crucial aspects of worldview analysis: the role of society in relation to the individual and reality. Both Suzuki and Gómez point out essential features of the text's vision of reality and the individual's spiritual goal of attaining this vision, but both fail to elaborate the social roles of the good friends (*kalyāṇamitras*), and their relation to Sudhana (as individual) and the *dharmadhātu* (as reality).

In the same year as Gómez's dissertation, Jan Fontein's important art-historical study titled, *The Pilgrimage of Sudhana: A Study of Gaṇḍavyūha Illustrations in China, Japan and Java* was published (Fontein 1967). Fontein's careful analysis of the reliefs of the *Gv* on the second gallery wall of Barabaður is particular insightful and breaks new ground in the field.

In 1975, Judy Jastram completed the most important text critical work on the *Gv* to date. In her Ph.D. dissertation verbosely titled, 'Three Chapters from the Gandavyuha Sutra: A Critical Edition of the Sanskrit and Tibetan Texts of the Youth Sudhana's Visits to the Bhiksus Meghasri, Sagaramegha and Supratishita', Jastram edits and translates these three sections⁴³ of the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts using eight Sanskrit manuscripts⁴⁴ and five Tibetan Kanjurs.⁴⁵ In addition to these sources, she

⁴² See Osto 1999: 46–49 & 55–60.

⁴³ These sections correspond to V 48–50, 51–54 and 55–58 respectively.

⁴⁴ The Sanskrit manuscripts used were: A, the two Cambridge mss., the Baroda ms. used by Vaidya in his edition, a ms. in the possession of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta, a ms. from Kyoto University Library, a ms. from the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and a ms. from the Tokyo University Library. For details see Jastram 1975: lxxvii–lxxxii.

also consulted the Chinese translations by Buddhahadra, Śikṣānanda and Prajñā. Because of its careful comparison of several different manuscripts and language versions of the *Gv*, Jastram's study still stands as an important contribution to *Gv* studies.⁴⁶

Two years after Jastram's dissertation, Mark Ehman completed his dissertation on the *Gv* titled, 'The Gaṇḍavyūha: Search for Enlightenment' (Ehman 1977). Unlike Jastram's work, this study is not text-critical. Using only Vaidya's edition, Ehman examines the *Gv*'s worldview and translates the *Nidāna-parivarta* (prose only), Meghaśrī, Sāgaramegha, Supraṭiṣṭhita, Ratnacūḍa and Samantanetra sections.⁴⁷

In his analysis of the text's worldview, Ehman ignores the concept of *dharmadhātu* in favour of *buddhaviśaya*, the 'Sphere of the Buddha' (Ehman 1977: 33ff). According to Ehman, *buddhaviśaya* is the central concept of the *Gv* and, as the 'Sphere of the Buddha', possesses both a centre and circumference. The centre of the *buddhaviśaya* is represented in the *Gv* by the peaked dwellings of Vairocana in the *Nidāna-parivarta* and Maitreya in the Maitreya section. Its circumference is represented by Sudhana's pilgrimage, which leads him around in circles asking the *kalyāṇamitras* how to carry out the course of conduct of Samantabhadra. According to Ehman, these visits do not teach Sudhana anything important, but serve only as occasions for him to repeatedly ask his questions (Ehman 1977: 80-81). He states,

In the *Gv*, Sudhana walks in circles—i.e., he repeats his actions. Indeed, he repeats his questions and his thoughts. Such repetition brings him ultimately to his starting point. He has now circumambulated the cosmic pattern, both physically and psychically;

⁴⁵ The Kanjur editions used were: Peking, Derge, Narthang, Lhasa and Cone. See Jastram 1975: ci, for details.

⁴⁶ Unfortunately, Jastram's English translation, by leaving untranslated such terms as '*anuttarasamyaksambodhi*', '*buddhadharma*' and '*parinirvāṇa*', reads as an example of what Paul Griffiths has derogatorily called 'Buddhist Hybrid English' (Griffith 1981).

⁴⁷ Ehman's translation corresponds to V 1-17, 48-50, 51-54, 55-58, 114-116 and 117-119.

and consequently, he understands the nature of reality (Ehman 1977: 106).

This ‘nature of reality’ for Ehman is none other than the *buddhaviṣaya* which has the structure of an orderly arrangement or pattern (*vyūha*), demonstrated by the text’s constant use of the number ten and the repetition of formulas which occur during Sudhana’s visits (Ehman 1977: 105).

Like Gómez, Ehman sees Maitreya’s peaked dwelling as representing ultimate reality, but for him this reality is not the *dharmadhātu*, but *buddhaviṣaya*: ‘*buddhaviṣaya* is none other than Maitreya’s dwelling place’ (Ehman 1977: 93). As the Sphere of the Buddha, Maitreya’s *kūṭāgāra* establishes Sudhana in a new consciousness which transforms the entire universe and represents his realisation of the ‘highest perfect enlightenment’ (Ehman 1977: 92).

There are a number of problems with Ehman’s analysis of the *Gv*’s worldview. First, his emphasis on *buddhaviṣaya* and neglect of *dharmadhātu* is not supported by a careful reading of the text. Whereas the term ‘*buddhaviṣaya*’ does occur occasionally in the *Gv*, the constant repetition of the term ‘*dharmadhātu*’ and descriptions of it clearly indicate its centrality for the text.⁴⁸ Second, Ehman’s claim that Sudhana does not learn anything significant from the *kalyāṇamitras* is also not supported by the text.⁴⁹ Third, as I have already mentioned above, there is significant textual evidence to contradict the position that Sudhana achieves his highest attainment in the Maitreya section.

⁴⁸ See chapter 3, on worldview for a detailed discussion of the *dharmadhātu*.

⁴⁹ See for example the description of the two trances (*samādhi*) Sudhana attains during his meeting with the brahmin Jayoṣmāyatana (V 94.23–25), and the trance he enters during his visit to the night goddess Sarvanagararakṣāsāṃbhavatejaḥśrī (V 241.15–18). As I argue below, the attainment of these *samādhis* are, according to the *Gv*, the way one progresses along the bodhisattva-path.

In the 1970s, a number of Buddhist scholars produced partial translations, translations and studies of the *Gv*. In his *Indian Buddhism* (1970),⁵⁰ A. K. Warder summarises the narrative of the *Gv*,⁵¹ describing the text as a ‘literary masterpiece’, ‘the most readable of all Mahāyāna *sūtras*’ and as a ‘work of art’ (Warder 1980: 424).⁵² In 1977, Herbert Guenther translated selections from the Sarvajagadrakṣāvīryaprabhā, Śrīsaṃbhava and Śrīmatī, Vasantī, Gopā and Maitreya sections into English.⁵³ Using the Buddhahadra translation, Torakazu Doi translated the entire *Av* into German under the title *Das Kegon Sūtra: Das Buch vom Eintreten in den Kosmos der Wahrheit* (Doi 1978). Sokuō Etō translated both the Buddhahadra and Śikṣānanda Chinese translations of the *Av* into Japanese.⁵⁴ In *Women in Buddhism* (Paul 1979), Francis Wilson provides abbreviated translations of the Siṃhavijṛmbhitā, Āśā, Prabhūtā and Vasumitrā sections using Vaidya’s edition.⁵⁵ In the same work, Wilson provides brief introductions to her translations in which she discusses the role of these female *kalyāṇamitrās* in the *Gv*.⁵⁶

In the 1980s, the Dharma Realm Buddhist University published the *Flower Adornment Sutra, Chapter 39, Part I: Entering The Dharma Realm* (1980), a partial English translation of Śikṣānanda’s Chinese translation of the *Gv*.⁵⁷ In 1981, Luis Gómez wrote an important article on role of the *Gv* in the construction of Barabudūr, although his theory that the structure is a plastic representation of Maitreya’s *kūtāgāra*

⁵⁰ Quotes here are from Warder’s Second Revised Edition, 1980.

⁵¹ Warder 1980: 424–430.

⁵² Compare Warder’s opinion of the literary merits of *Gv* to Griffiths’ view in Griffiths 1981, wherein he describes the *Gv* as ‘paralysingly boring’ (p. 25).

⁵³ See Guenther 1977: 3–35. Guenther does not specify from which text he is translating.

⁵⁴ For complete bibliographic information, see Nakamura 1980: 194, notes 4 & 5.

⁵⁵ A 2nd edition of *Women in Buddhism* was published 1985. See Paul 1985: 98–102, 138–144, 146–155 and 156–162 for Wilson’s translations. These pages correspond to V 148.1–153.11, 79.1–85.25, 104.24–109.5 and 154.8–156.10.

⁵⁶ See Paul 1985: 94–97, 134–138, 144–146 and 155–156. Wilson’s analysis contains a number of inaccurate statements and questionable interpretations, which I address in part III (see below).

⁵⁷ This translation corresponds to V 1–47. Since 1980, Parts II–VII have been published.

has faults.⁵⁸ 1981 also saw the publications of Qobad Afshar's study of the toponyms in the *Gv* titled *An ancient Indian itinerary: The geographical appellatives in the GAṆḌAVYŪHASŪTRA (tentative identifications)*. Although some of Afshar's identifications find support from respected scholars in the field,⁵⁹ many are based on rather dubious etymologies and cannot be regarded as anything more than fanciful speculation. Probably the most significant contribution to *Gv* studies from the 1980s, is Thomas Cleary's English translation of the entire *Av* from the Śikṣānanda translation.⁶⁰ Although not a text-critical study, Cleary's translation of the *Gv* was the first of its kind in the English language, and is a valuable resource for non-specialist students of comparative religion and a useful quick reference for English speaking Buddhist scholars.⁶¹

The 1990s witnessed continued progress in the field of *Gv* studies. In 1994, the first complete translation of the Sanskrit *Gv* into a modern language (Japanese) was published. Titled *Satori eno henreki*,⁶² this translation is based on the two Sanskrit editions, the Peking and Derge translations and the three complete Chinese versions. In the following year, Shin'ichiro Hori identified a small Sanskrit fragment from central Asia as belonging to the *Gv*.⁶³

Also in 1995, Ernst Steinkellner made a substantial contribution to Tibetan *Gv* studies with his monograph entitled, *Sudhana's Miraculous Journey in the Temple of Ta Pho: the inscriptional text of the Tibetan Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra edited with introductory remarks* (Steinkellner 1995). From the inscriptions, Steinkellner

⁵⁸ See Gómez 1981: 173–194. For a critique for his 'kūṭāgāra theory', see Osto 1999: 72–74.

⁵⁹ See chapter 2, where I discuss the possible geographic origins of the *Gv*.

⁶⁰ Cleary's translation was first published in three volumes between 1984 and 1989. References to Cleary's translation in this study are from a single volume edition published in 1993.

⁶¹ I strongly disagree with Paul Griffiths' statement that '...it is surely clear that a translation of such a work [the *Gv*] could have no scholarly purpose' (Griffiths 1981: 25).

⁶² Translated by Yuichi Kajiyama et al. in two volumes (Tokyo: Chuokoron Shinsha, 1994).

⁶³ See *Sanskrit Handschriften aus den Turfanfunden Teil 7* (1995), p. 272.

concludes that not only is the Tabo text the earliest partial⁶⁴ Tibetan translation we have of the *Gv* (dated to the 10th century), but it also forms an independent witness to the Kanjurs and possibly represents an old, local West Tibetan tradition (Steinkellner 1995: 7–8). According to Steinkellner this means that the philological importance of the Tabo inscriptional text ‘can hardly be overestimated’ (Steinkellner 1995: 1).

More recently, David McMahan writes about the *Gv* in his article ‘Orality, Writing, and Authority in South Asian Buddhism: Visionary Literature and the Struggle for Legitimacy in the Mahāyāna’ (McMahan 1998). Using Vaidya’s edition, McMahan translates a passage from the *Nidāna-parivarta* and cites this as an example of a movement away from the oral and aural experience of the world in Early Buddhism to an emphasis in Mahāyāna Buddhism on the visual world and visionary experience (McMahan 1998: 250–51). According to McMahan, this transformation was based on a shift from an oral tradition of textual transmission to a written one with the advent of Mahāyāna Buddhism (McMahan 1998: 251). That there may be a relationship between writing and the rise of the Mahāyāna was first proposed in an article written by Richard Gombrich (1990), which although interesting, is based on weak assumptions and faulty logic.⁶⁵ McMahan’s own contribution to Gombrich’s view—i. e. the connection between writing and visionary experience—is provocative, but unsubstantiated in that he fails to show any necessary or logical connection between literacy and a visually based mysticism.

⁶⁴ Desiring to reproduce the *Gv* as completely and faithfully as possible, but limited by space, the creators of the Tabo inscription abbreviated the text. Omissions were either marked or unmarked by various redactional words or phrases (Steinkellner 1995: 13). In this way, the inscriptional text and paintings at Tabo form a continuous, illustrated narrative of the *Gv* in an abbreviated version.

⁶⁵ I find the major weakness of Gombrich’s argument to rest on his *a priori* assumption that there could not possibly be another institutional basis outside the traditional saṅgha to support an alternative oral tradition. Gombrich assumes that the ancient saṅgha was a monolithic institution which did not tolerate the existence of fringe elements within its ranks. I disagree that it takes a large organised body of people to orally transmit a sacred text. A small fanatical group, I imagine could be quite successful at it. Also, the assertion that the Mahāyāna *sūtras* would not have survived without being written down is a *post hoc, propter hoc* fallacy: Mahāyāna *sūtras* were written down; they survived; therefore they survived because they were written down.

Later in his article, McMahan returns to the *Nidāna-parivarta* when he discusses visionary literature and legitimacy in the Mahāyāna (McMahan 1998: 268–269). Referring to the passage where the *mahāśrāvakas*, such as Śāriputra, Maudagalyāyana and Mahākāśyapa, present in the Jeta Grove, fail to see the miraculous transformation of the Buddha because they lack the ‘necessary roots of goodness’ (V 12–14), McMahan states that the significance of these visionary descriptions ‘...is to establish a kind of spiritual hierarchy with those who merely heard the words of the Buddha, the *śrāvakas*, on the bottom, and those bodhisattvas who saw the true transfigured state of the Buddha and his surroundings on top’ (McMahan 1998: 269). Although it is undoubtedly true that visionary experience and spiritual hierarchy are connected in the *Gv* (in fact, I shall argue that they are central for understanding the role of the *kalyāṇamitras*), McMahan’s simple dichotomy between bodhisattvas who see visions and *śrāvakas* who hear discourses begins to break down when one considers Mañjuśrī’s conversion of Śāriputra and sixty other monks a little later in the text (V 36–39).

McMahan further elaborates his understanding of the role of visionary experience in the *Gv* in his *Empty Vision: Metaphor and Visual Imagery in Mahāyāna Buddhism* (2002: 111–142). Although there are a number of inaccuracies and mistakes in his treatment of the text,⁶⁶ McMahan makes an important observation about the image of kingship. He states,

For example, in the opening scene of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, Śākyamuni Buddha is dwelling in a multi-storied palace or tower (*kūṭāgāra*) that then expands to encompass the universe as the surrounding area is transformed into a luxuriant pure land. Many images associated with royalty are present in this transfigured landscape.... The many

⁶⁶ The most glaring of these is his reference to Ananyagāmin as a ‘female bodhisattva’ (p. 125). This mistake must be due to reading the nominative, masculine singular ending ‘-ī’ of the *-in* stem as a feminine. Even a cursory reading of the Sanskrit text makes it clear that Ananyagāmin can only be male (see V 165–6).



bodhisattvas and disciplined in the scene now resemble a vast retinue of royal attendants (p. 118).

This image of kingship,⁶⁷ I refer to as the ‘metaphor of kingship’ and examine closely as a key concept in understanding how hierarchical structures of power are developed within the story.

Currently (2002), Yuko Ijiri from Leiden University is conducting a study and translation of the four laywomen *kalyāṇamitras* in the *Gv* (Āśā, Prabhūtā, Acalā and Bhadrattamā) for her PhD dissertation. For textual sources, Ijiri uses the two Sanskrit editions, the Peking and Derge Kanjurs, as well as the Buddhahadra and Śikṣānanda translations.⁶⁸ Finally, Shin’ichiro Hori from Tokyo University, for his dissertation, is preparing a critical edition of several sections of the *Gv* (equivalent to approximately fifty pages of the Vaidya edition) using twenty Sanskrit mss., the Peking and Derge translations and the three complete Chinese versions.⁶⁹

Although this brief survey of the modern scholarship on the *Gv* is not exhaustive, it covers all the major research done on the text in English, as well as some substantial works done in German and Japanese.⁷⁰ Clearly, important studies already have been carried out on the text, but much work remains to be done. The areas for future research may be divided roughly into three main categories. The first is philological: further text-critical work on the Tibetan and Chinese versions, a complete critical edition of the Sanskrit text, as well as a complete translation into English from the Sanskrit remain important *desiderata*. The second is historical and

⁶⁷ For a developed treatment of the royal metaphor in Indian Esoteric Buddhism, see Davidson 2002: 113–168. Donaldson refers to the concept as the ‘imperial metaphor’.

⁶⁸ This information is based on email correspondence with Yuko Ijiri in March 2001.

⁶⁹ This information is based on a personal conversation with Shin’ichiro Hori in September 2001.

⁷⁰ A weakness of this survey is that it does not include secondary literature on the *Gv* published in Chinese and only mentions a few references to Japanese publications. This is due solely to my linguistic limitations, and therefore this survey would benefit from the additional contributions of scholars appropriately proficient in these languages.

cultural: except for a few studies,⁷¹ the relationship between the *Gv* and its historical and cultural contexts has not yet been explored in any depth. The third area is interpretative and narratological: whereas a number of scholars have written on the worldview of the text, no one, to date, has attempted to relate this worldview to its narrative structure. Such a study might examine the *Gv*'s worldview in relation to the narrative role of the *kalyāṇamitras* in order to understand how the text's vision of reality relates to its position on society and the individual's aspirations toward spiritual advancement within this society.

In the following chapters, I attempt to contribute to *Gv* studies by investigating aspects of the second and third areas of research.

⁷¹ Hikata 1960, Fontain 1967 and Gómez 1981, are some of the exceptions.

2. The Indian Context

Literary References and Title of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*

A number of Indian Buddhist works refer to, or quote from the *Gaṇḍavyūha*.¹

Gómez mentions eight: the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-upadeśa-śāstra*, the *Mahāyānāvātāra-śāstra*, the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, the *Sūtrasamuccaya*, the first *Bhāvanākrama*, the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* and the *Subhāṣitasamgraha* (Gómez 1967: xxxiii–xxxvii). Of these works, Śāntideva's *Śikṣāsamuccaya* and *Bodhicaryāvatāra* cite the *Gv* most often—fifteen and eleven times² respectively. The majority of these are from the Maitreya section.

In addition to textual references, we also learn something about the *Gv* in India from a letter dispatched to the emperor of China from an Indian king (Gómez 1967: xxvii). In 795, king Śubhakaradeva of Orissa sent his personal copy of the *sūtra* along with a letter to China as a gift to the emperor. Both the *Gv* and the letter were translated into Chinese by Prajñā between 796 and 798.³ This letter indicates that, although the *Gv* was translated into Chinese as the final chapter of the *Avataṃsaka* by the 5th century, it circulated within India in the 8th century as an independent text. It also demonstrates, along with references to the *Gv* in the commentarial literature such as Śāntideva's works, interest in the text within both royal and monastic circles during the 7th and 8th centuries.

When and where the story of Sudhana's quest was first called the '*Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra*' is not known. The first complete Chinese translation refers to it

¹ I first discussed these reference in Osto 1999: 62.

² This includes the commentary by Prajñākaramati (ibid.).

³ See my introduction.

as the **Dharmadhātu-praveśana-parivarta* (T 278).⁴ Śikṣānanda's translation (T 279) in the late 7th century also uses this title, but Prajñā's translation (T 293) at the end of the 8th century calls the text **Acintyavimokṣa-gocarapraveśana-samantabhadracaryā-praṇidhāna*.⁵ Whereas the *Upadeśa* follows this title, calling the text the *Acintyavimokṣa-sūtra*,⁶ the first *Bhāvanākrama*, the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and all extant Sanskrit manuscripts refer to it as the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra* (Gómez 1967: lxv–lxvi). The original title of the work may have been any or none of these.⁷

Translating the term '*Gaṇḍavyūha*' has caused modern scholars much difficulty, and its interpretations have varied widely.⁸ While the word *vyūha* is relatively straightforward and means an 'array' or 'manifestation' (MW: 1041), the correct meaning of *gaṇḍa* in this compound is problematic. Common meanings for the word in classical Sanskrit are 'cheek, the side of the face, the side, a bubble, boil, pimple or goitre' (MW: 344).⁹ In Buddhist Sanskrit and Pāli sources, it often means 'the stalk of a plant' (*BHSD*: 208; *PED*: 241).¹⁰ Edgerton states that in BHS it may also mean a 'piece, part or portion' (*BHSD*: 208).¹¹ While most modern translations employ one of these definitions for *gaṇḍa* with somewhat inelegant or even monstrous result, all ignore another meaning of the word when used in compounds.

Monier-Williams gives 'the chief, excellent, best' as a meaning for *gaṇḍa* in such

⁴ This reconstructed Sanskrit may be translated as 'The Chapter on the Entrance into the Dharma Realm'.

⁵ This may be translated, 'The Vow Concerning the Course of Conduct of Samantabhadra and the Entry into the Range of Inconceivable Liberations'.

⁶ 'The Scripture of Inconceivable Liberations'.

⁷ Gómez favours **Acintyavimokṣa-sūtra* (Gómez 1967: lxiv); while Afshar suggests **Dharmadhātu-praveśana* (Afshar 1981: 6). In my opinion, the evidence is not conclusive.

⁸ See Osto 1999: 5, n. 8, for a number of attempts.

⁹ 'Appearance of the *uṣṇīṣā*, the prominence on the Buddha's head'—is an attempt to translate *gaṇḍavyūha* with this meaning for *gaṇḍa* (see Nou and Frédéric 1996: 126).

¹⁰ See Afshar 1981 and Paul 1985, for translators using this meaning.

¹¹ Both Edgerton and Gómez use this meaning for their translations. Edgerton suggests, 'supernal manifestation in (many small) sections' (Edgerton 1954: 50). Gómez offers, '[The Sūtra Containing] Manifestations in Sections' (Gómez 1967: lxii).

compounds as *gaṇḍa-grāma* (‘any large village’), *gaṇḍa-mūrkhā* (‘exceedingly foolish’), and *gaṇḍa-śailā* (‘any large rock’).¹² These are all *karmadhāraya* compounds where *gaṇḍa* (a noun) functions appositionally with the second member, and therefore may be rendered in English as an adjective or adverb. In other words, a ‘rock that is chief’ (*gaṇḍa-śailā*) is ‘a large rock’. Edgerton cites a compound from the *Gv* as evidence for *gaṇḍa* used to render ‘piece, part, portion’ that could also be interpreted with this meaning of *gaṇḍa* as ‘chief’ (*BHSD*: 208).¹³ Edgerton translates the compound ‘*pañca-gaṇḍa-gati-cakra*’ as ‘the wheel of the five-partite (five-fold) states of existence’. But translating this compound as ‘the wheel of the five main states of existence’¹⁴ works just as well, if not better. In the same way, ‘*gaṇḍa-vyūha*’ may be considered an ‘array that is chief’ or the ‘best or supreme array’. Following this interpretation, I suggest the following new translation of the title *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra*: ‘The Scripture of the Supreme Array’, or simply ‘The Supreme Array Scripture’.¹⁵

Dates of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*

Louis Gómez has discussed the dates of the *Gv* at some length (Gómez 1967: lxviii–lxxiv). He places the *terminus ad quem* of the text in the second half of the third century CE, based on quotations from the *Gv* found in the *Upadeśa*. Since Lamotte (1973) has argued persuasively that the *Upadeśa* is a composite text, a more

¹² MW: 344. The last compound is particularly well attested.

¹³ Edgerton cites SI 484.9 (= V 384.30).

¹⁴ A more awkward but literal translation might be, ‘the wheel of the five states of existence that are chief.’ The idea here being that there are many states of existence (*gati*), but this wheel only shows the five main ones—the gods, men, animals, hungry ghosts, and hells (see *BHSD*: 208–209; and chapter 3).

¹⁵ I have chosen a singular ‘array’ over the plural ‘arrays’ based on the concluding statement in the *Gv* where *āryagaṇḍavyūho* in the singular, masculine nominative case is found (V 436.28). If my interpretation of this compound is correct, the ‘supreme array’ may be a reference to the *dharmadhātu* (see chapter 3).

conservative *terminus ad quem* would be prior to the *Gv*'s first Chinese translation in the late 4th or early 5th century.¹⁶ For the *terminus a quo*, Gómez states that the work 'probably belongs to a period shortly after the beginning of our era' (Gómez 1967: lxxiv).

We know with certainty that the *Gv*, like the *Aṣṭa* and many other Mahāyāna works, continued to change and expand for several centuries after its first Chinese translation, and this probably represents a trend that was in progress long before this time. Therefore, because the *Gv* may have been compiled over a number of centuries in oral and/or written form, arriving at a definitive *terminus a quo* would be a somewhat arbitrary assignment. Having issued this general *caveat*, however, I think there are a number of clues within the text which, through applying some principles of relative chronology based on doctrinal considerations, point to a period of primary formation.

Before offering dates for the *Gv*, first we must outline some problems in dating Mahāyāna texts. The origins of the Mahāyāna have long been debated in modern scholarly discourse. Edward Conze considered the *Aṣṭa* and its verse summary, the *Ratnaguṇasaṃcaya-gāthā*, as the basic text of the *Prajñāpāramitā* corpus and dates its development between 100 BCE and 100 CE (Conze 1978: 1). If Conze is correct, this date would position the *Aṣṭa* as one of, if not the oldest, Mahāyāna *sūtra*. Although this view has not remained unchallenged, it has had a lasting impact on studies into the origins of the Mahāyāna.¹⁷ However, the earliest recorded date of the first Chinese translations of Mahāyāna *sūtras* is not until the late

¹⁶ I first questioned Gómez's *terminus ad quem* for the *Gv* in Osto 1999: 4.

¹⁷ Schopen has challenged Conze's chronology, suggesting that the *Vajracchedikā* may be earlier (see Schopen 1975: 156). Nevertheless, several scholars accept Conze's assertion of the *Aṣṭa*'s antiquity, and draw conclusions about early Mahāyāna based on this (see especially Lancaster 1975; Rawlinson 1977; MacQueen 1981, 1982; and Kent 1982). For a different opinion see Vetter 1994, 2001.

second century CE (Harrison 1987: 68–72). Paul Harrison (1995: 56) refers to nine Mahāyāna texts, translated by the Indo-Scythian Lokakṣema at Luoyang, as representing ‘the *early middle* period’ of the Mahāyāna. Although these translations constitute our earliest dateable evidence of the Mahāyāna, general introductory works on Buddhism continue to place the origins of the Mahāyāna at sometime in the first century BCE.¹⁸

Early scholars, such as Edward Conze, Etienne Lamotte, Nalinaksha Dutt and Akira Hirakawa, associated the Mahāyāna with lay Buddhist concerns and aspirations.¹⁹ A number of these scholars also connected the origins of the Mahāyāna to the Mahāsāṅghika school and attempted to locate this movement in the south or northwest of India.²⁰ In an influential article Hirakawa (1963) argues that the *stūpa* cult was a lay movement which formed ‘the institutional basis from which Mahāyāna Buddhism arose’.

More recent scholarship has moved away from associating the Mahāyāna with lay concerns, the Mahāsāṅghika school, or any specific geographical location. In fact, scholars such as Gregory Schopen, Paul Harrison, Jonathan Silk, Jan Nattier and Ulrich Pagel, have noticed strong monastic, ascetic and conservative tendencies in the Mahāyāna sources they have studied. In Schopen’s now famous article on the cult of the book in Mahāyāna, he argues (in direct opposition to Hirakawa’s thesis) that early Mahāyāna may have begun as a ‘loose federation of a number of distinct though related cults,... each associated with its specific text’ (1975: 181). Elsewhere, he states that, ‘from its first appearance in inscriptions Mahāyāna was a monk

¹⁸ See Williams 1989: 32; Harvey 1990: 95; Gethin 1998: 225.

¹⁹ See Conze 1951 (1975): 153; Lamotte 1954: 378; Dutt 1958: 277; Hirakawa 1963: 85ff.

²⁰ Conze, Lamotte and Dutt all considered the Mahāsāṅghika school the starting point of the Mahāyāna (Conze 1951 (1975): 120; Lamotte 1954: 378; Dutt 1958: 278). Whereas Conze and Dutt thought the origins of the Mahāyāna lay in the south (Conze 1978: 3; Dutt 1958: 284), Lamotte argued in favour of the northwest (1954: 389–395).

dominated movement' (1985: 26). Harrison (1995: 56) believes that it is 'hopeless' to determine a sectarian affiliation of early Mahāyāna, since it was a 'pan-Buddhist movement—or, better, a loose set of movements'. Both Harrison and Nattier suggest that an institutional basis of the early Mahāyāna may have been a meditational movement instigated not by lay people, but by ascetic, forest monks searching for Buddhahood.²¹ Silk and Pagel have demonstrated in their own studies the overwhelming monastic concerns of such texts as the *Ratnarāsi-sūtra* (Silk 1994) and the *Bodhisattva-piṭaka* (Pagel 1995). More recently, Schopen (1999) has pointed out the conservative or even reactionary monastic values found in the *Maitreya-mahāsimhanāda-sūtra*. Thus the conclusions about early Mahāyāna Buddhism made by recent scholarship are very different from the ones of the older generation of scholars.²²

So how do we account for such different interpretations on the origins of the Mahāyāna? Some of the differences may be attributed to poor method by the earlier thinkers. Schopen (1985: 23) accuses previous scholars of using 'textual sources as if they were somehow descriptions of actual behavior'. This critique is mirrored in Harrison's statement that 'we should not read these sources uncritically, or mistake their rhetorical and mythical flourishes... as sociological or historical facts'—a fault Harrison finds with Hiraoka's study.²³ Much of the earlier views on the origins of the Mahāyāna can be traced to this uncritical approach to texts.

²¹ Harrison (1995: 65) states, 'My hypothesis... is that some of the impetus for the early development of the Mahāyāna came from forest-dwelling monks. Far from being the products of an urban, lay, devotional movement, many Mahāyāna *sūtras* give evidence of a hard-core ascetic attempt to return to the original inspiration of Buddhism, the search for Buddhahood or awakened cognition'. Jan Nattier, in her Harvard Buddhist Studies Forum lecture titled, 'A Few Good Men: Re-imagining the Emergence of the Mahāyāna', maintains a similar position (lecture delivered on 5 May 1995). See also Nattier's recent translation of the *Ugraparipṛccha-sūtra* (2003).

²² For a return to the hypothesis of a lay origin of the Mahāyāna, see Vetter 1994.

²³ See Harrison 1995: 68ff, in reference to Hiraoka 1963.

Another explanation of the radically different theories on early Mahāyāna is that different sources lead to different conclusions. Studying such texts as the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* or *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, for example, gives a different impression about Mahāyāna Buddhism than one derived from the *Kāśyapa-parivarta*, *Rāṣṭrapāla-paripṛccha*, *Ratnarāśi* or *Bodhisattva-piṭaka*. Because Mahāyāna literature is so vast and largely unstudied,²⁴ the theories on the origins of the Mahāyāna may be compared to the blind men's descriptions of the elephant in the famous Indian parable—one's conclusions about the nature of an elephant (origins of the Mahāyāna) depends on what part of the elephant (literature) is touched (studied). Of course, the crucial difficulty for comparing these sources is always one of dating.

Since all we have are the dates of the Chinese translations, we are only able to determine the *terminus ad quem* for any translated Indian text. And this merely tells us that a certain text had to exist before it was translated and does not indicate whether or not it is older than texts which were translated after it. In other words, simply because the Chinese translated a certain text in the 2nd century and another in the 5th century, does not mean the first is necessarily older than the second. One way to possibly surmount this difficulty is to establish a relative chronology of texts based on doctrinal content. This, however, involves an important and somewhat questionable assumption: that Mahāyāna sources which possess doctrinal positions closer to 'Mainstream Buddhism'²⁵ are earlier than those that express more doctrinal innovation. This assumption, when combined with the dates of the Chinese

²⁴ Of the extant versions of Mahāyāna *sūtras* that survive in Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese, less than 10% have been edited and much less translated into modern languages. Within the Tibetan Kanjur there are approximately 350 Mahāyāna *sūtras*. The Chinese Canon, which preserves multiple translations of texts made throughout the centuries, has many more. Given the vastness of the material and the philological acumen necessary to tackle it, one may safely say that we are still lifetimes away from acquiring even a general picture of the landscape.

²⁵ See Harrison 1995: 56, for the use of this term.

translations, has led to the general position that if a text was translated before another *and* it represents a doctrinal position closer to the mainstream, then it may be considered earlier.²⁶

If we apply considerations of relative chronology and some of the recent views on the origins of the Mahāyāna to the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, we can make two observations: 1) the *Gv* was first rendered into Chinese approximately two centuries after the earliest translations of Mahāyāna *sūtras* by Lokakṣema in the late second century; 2) the *Gv* lacks any reference to features thought to be characteristic of early or early middle Mahāyāna, such as ‘the cult of the book’, the monastic ideal, or forest asceticism. These two observations would seem to indicate that the formative period of the *Gv* occurred after the development of the Lokakṣema corpus. A number of other doctrinal features of the *Gv* corroborate this impression. The text lacks a strong polemic against, or concern with, the *śrāvakayāna* typical of texts thought to be early (Pagel 1995); it has a very positive role for female lay teachers,²⁷ a strong devotional component,²⁸ and proto-Tantric elements.²⁹ So, if Harrison has correctly dated the Lokakṣema corpus as early middle Mahāyāna, and the assumptions of relative chronology are applied, the *Gv* would represent a middle period of development within the Mahāyāna. Given these assumptions, we may move the *terminus a quo* of the *Gv* up to approximately the beginning of the 3rd

²⁶ This assumption seems to be behind Harrison’s statement that, ‘the *Lokānuvartanā-sūtra* (LAn) may be a work of this [early period] type, and I suspect the *KP* [*Kāśyapa-parivarta*] is also very old’ (Harrison 1995: 56). See also Pagel 1995, for an application of relative chronology.

²⁷ Harrison demonstrates the decidedly unfavourable attitude towards women in the Lokakṣema corpus (Harrison 1987: 75–79). Of course later commentators, such as Śāntideva, also express such negative attitudes. Once I have located a time and place for the *Gv*, I shall discuss possible reasons for the text’s different opinion.

²⁸ In reference to the Lokakṣema translations, Harrison states, ‘But as far as *bodhisattvas* are concerned the *initial* message of the Mahāyāna is clear: people should not worship *bodhisattvas*, they should become *bodhisattvas* themselves’ (Harrison 1987: 80).

²⁹ I am referring in particular to the *maṇḍalic* formation of the *bodhisattvas* in the *Nidāna* (see chapter 5), a similar arrangement of the night goddesses (see chapter 14) and the Vasumitrā section (see chapter 12).

century. This gives us dates for the formative period of the *Gv* at roughly 200 to 300 CE.

Geographical origin of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*

There is no external evidence for the geographical origin of the *Gv*. The text's narrative, however, possesses two significant internal clues for its original location. As Mitra and Ehman point out,³⁰ the narrative action of the *Gv* takes place in two primary areas: the 'southern region' (*dakṣiṇāpatha*) and the 'domain of Magadha' (*magadhaviṣaya*). As the area where the Buddha lived and taught, the northeast of India has always been a special place for Buddhists. Therefore, the reason for the Magadhan portion of the story seems clear: Sudhana visits various good friends at the site most sacred to all Buddhists, the *bodhimaṇḍa*, and also travels to other important Buddhist locales nearby, such as Lumbhinī Grove and the city of Kapilavastu. But the vast majority of the narrative takes place in the south. This fact by itself does not indicate a southern origin of the text. However, there is another piece of evidence when viewed with it that definitely suggests the south as the geographical source of the *Gv*.

Dhanyākara is the name of Sudhana's hometown (V 39.5). As the place of origin for the story's protagonist, and the place where his journey both begins and ends, this city seems a good candidate for the birth-place of the *Gv*. As Afshar noted in his study of the *Gv*'s geographical appellatives, both Lamotte and Dutt equate Dhanyākara with Dhānyakaṭaka/Dharaṇīkoṭa,³¹ an ancient city on the banks of the

³⁰ See Mitra 1882: 91–92; and Ehman 1977: 13–14.

³¹ See Afshar 1981: 9 & 117–8, n. 13; Lamotte 1954: 384–85; Dutt 1970: 277, n. 2. Lamotte states, 'de Dhanyākara... l'actuel Dharanikot, dans le district de Guntur' (ibid.). Elsewhere, Lamotte writes, '...Dharanikota, earlier known as Dhānyakaṭaka' (1988: 344). More recently, Robert Knox, in his study of Amarāvati mentions that Dhānyakaṭaka is usually thought to be Dharaṇīkoṭa, although

Kṛṣṇā River in the southern region of Andhra. If Dhanyākara may be equated with Dhānyakaṭaka, then we have a likely place for the origin of the *Gv*. In the 3rd century CE, Dhānyakaṭaka was the thriving city in the Ikṣvāku Dynasty near to both Amarāvati and Nāgārjunikoṇḍa.³² I shall discuss the implications of this identification after I outline some features of Indian Buddhism during its Middle Period.³³

The Middle Period

Gregory Schopen (1995a: 476) refers to the history of Buddhism in India between the beginning of the Common Era and 500 CE as the ‘Middle Period’. Schopen is primarily concerned with these five centuries because they roughly demarcate the formative period of both the Buddhist *vinaya* collections and Mahāyāna *sūtras* (ibid.). His studies on the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* shed light on many important and neglected aspects of Buddhist monasticism during this period. When this information is juxtaposed with archaeological, epigraphical and textual sources, a number of interesting features of Buddhist monasteries and their patronage emerge. Some of these are particularly relevant for our understanding of the *Gv*’s cultural context.

Bareau argues for Vijayavada (see (1992) *Amaravati: Buddhist Sculpture from the Great Stūpa*, London: British Museum Press, p. 15). For Bareau’s view see (1965) ‘Le Site de la Dhānyakaṭaka de Hiuan-Tsang’, *Arts Asiatiques* XII, pp. 21–82. Whether Dhānyakaṭaka is Dharaṇikoṭa or Vijayavada makes little difference for the identification of Dhanyākara with Dhānyakaṭaka—both Dharaṇikoṭa and Vijayavada are located in approximately the same area on the Kṛṣṇā River in Andhra.

³² The Prākṛitic forms, Dhañīakaṭaka and Dhanakaṭaka are found at Amarāvati (*EI* XX: 9). The form Dhañīakaṭa is found on the Mayidavōlu copper-plate grant of the Pallava king Śivaskandavarman (*EI* XX: 9, n. 3).

³³ Of course, both the time for the formative period of the *Gv* (200–300 CE) and the place (Dhānyakaṭaka/Dharaṇikoṭa) are working hypotheses—there is no external evidence for either, only highly suggestive internal evidence. Unfortunately for historians of Indian Buddhism, these types of hypotheses may be the closest we ever come to locating many texts.

In an article titled, 'Early Buddhism, Trade and Empire' (1984), James Heitzman compares locational aspects of Buddhist monastic sites, trade routes and non-monastic sites in South Asia between 500 BCE and 300 CE. From his research, Heitzman (1984: 121) concludes that Buddhist monastic sites grew up around permanent settlements connected by long-distance trade routes and served 'as symbolic structures mediating social hierarchy within a new urban complex'. According to Heitzman 'the threefold union of Buddhism, trade, and empire continued into the Christian era' (1984:131). He states that the connection between Buddhism and the Ikṣvākus in the 3rd century is 'obvious', as demonstrated by a sudden jump in monastic sites during their rule, followed by a subsequent desertion of sites in Andhra Pradesh during their decline (ibid.). In his concluding remarks, Heitzman writes,

From one standpoint, Buddhist diffusion was closely dependent on the patronage of urban elites; Buddhist monasticism appears as an appendage to centralized organizations in the early middle period. On the other hand, the simultaneous spread of religious establishments alongside political and mercantile organizations suggests the necessity for the symbolic ordering performed by Buddhism in the successful operation of early Asian urban institutions (1984: 133).

This 'symbolic ordering' which Buddhism provided was an opportunity for members of urban society to express and confirm their position within the social hierarchy through the 'ostentatious display' of their wealth with donations to Buddhist monastic institutions (Heitzman 1984: 132).

More recently, Ronald Davidson points out the strong connection between Indian Buddhism and trade. He writes,

Buddhist institutions may have received their great impetus from Aśoka, but their capacity to spread through multiple languages and ethnic groups and their ability to elicit patronage generation after generation depended as much on their symbiotic relationship with the

guilds of Indian tradesman and merchants as on their attractiveness to princes needing access to the advances of Indic culture (2002: 77).³⁴

Given the close connection between urban trade centres and Buddhist monasteries in the Middle Period, it is not surprising to discover that the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*, a Buddhist monastic code probably from this period, contains many detailed passages concerned with the correct handling and use of money. Schopen demonstrates that this *vinaya* contains many rules for lending money on interest and written loan contracts; as well as rules which presuppose that monks possessed personal wealth and continued to have the right to inherit family property after becoming monks (Schopen 1994, 1995b, 2000). A large number of inscriptions from this period which mention monks and nuns as donors to Buddhist institutions confirm that individual monks and nuns held considerable private wealth.³⁵

Patronage of Buddhism in the Middle Period has been discussed in a number of important studies on the subject. In an article on the reciprocal relationship between Buddhist monastics and laypeople, Schopen (1996) demonstrates that monasteries 'given' to monastics by laypeople continued to belong to their lay donors. Monks receiving dwellings or any other items were thereafter *obligated* to use such things that were given to them so that their sponsor (who still 'owned' them) would continue to acquire merit from the gift. In this way, laypeople took care of the monastics' material well-being through donations, in exchange for the monastics maintenance of the laypeople's spiritual well-being by their use of those donations.

³⁴ See also Ray 1986 and Neelis 2001, for the relationship between Indian Buddhism and trade.

³⁵ See Schopen 1997: 238–257; Schopen 1979; and Dehejia 1992.

In a study of the numerous inscriptions at such sites as Sanchi, Karle and Mathura, Vidya Dehejia (1992) argues that Buddhist patronage between 100 BCE and 250 CE was characterised by its collective and popular basis. Dehejia (1992: 36–37) notes of the 631 donative inscriptions at Sanchi, two hundred were from monks and nuns, and about three hundred were from ‘diverse donors’ consisting of ordinary householders (*gahapati*) and housewives (*ghāriṇī*), bankers (*sethi*), merchants (*vāṇija*), weavers (*sotika*), cloak-sellers (*pāvārika*), artisans (*kamika*) and the like. According to Dehejia, this collective patronage was a ‘pan-Indian phenomenon’ up to 250 CE, but is not found in Indian art in its later history (1992: 44). After the mid-third century, patronage of Buddhist art became progressively the domain of royalty. Dehejia (1992: 45) attributes this to the monarchs’ dual ambition for worldly prestige and religious merit.

Particularly significant is the extensive involvement of women in the patronage of Buddhism up to the 4th century. Schopen (1997: 250) argues that before the fourth century, ‘...nuns, indeed, women as a whole, appear to have been very numerous, very active, and, as a consequence, very influential in the actual Buddhist communities of early India’. Textual evidence also seems to support this conclusion. From her study of the Pāli sources, Janice Willis (1992: 48) states, ‘It appears in fact that from his earliest days as a teacher, the Buddha was supported by a number of wealthy women—by women merchants, wealthy courtesans, and queens’.³⁶ Female patronage of Buddhism in the Middle Period is nowhere more evident than during the rule of the Ikṣvākus in the 3rd century.

³⁶ Although Willis’s study of female patronage in Indian Buddhism is largely derivative and lacks a historically critical approach to its sources, she supports this statement with Pāli stories about wealthy female donors such as the laywoman Visākhā and the courtesan Ambapālī (Willis 1992: 48–49). Therefore, I find her point valid to the extent that we are able to accept the Pāli sources as historical evidence.

Historically, the Ikṣvākus are best known for their close affiliation with the archaeological site of Nāgārjunikoṇḍa. According to Lamotte (1988: 348), Nāgārjunikoṇḍa owes practically everything to this dynasty. Inscriptions from this site share two distinctive features: they rarely record monastic donors,³⁷ and frequently mention donations from female Ikṣvākus royalty and wealthy laywomen. About the Ikṣvākus Dynasty, Nilakanta Sastri writes:

Almost all the royal ladies were Buddhist: an aunt of Vīrapurisadāta built a big stupa at Nāgārjunikoṇḍa for the relics of the great teacher, besides apsidal temples, *vihāras*, and *mandapas*. Her example was followed by other women of the royal family and by women generally as we know from a reference to a Bodhisiri, a woman citizen.³⁸

Both Lamotte's and Sastri's statements are based on a set of inscriptions from Nāgārjunikoṇḍa that have been studied, transcribed and translated by Vogel (*EI XX*: 1–45). Whereas the kings and princes of the Ikṣvākus were sponsors of Brahmanical religion, the queens and princesses patronised Buddhism (*EI XX*: 4). Of the nineteen inscriptions studied by Vogel, several royal women are mentioned such as: Cāṃtisiri, the sister of king Siri-Cāṃtamūla and paternal aunt of king Siri-Vīrapurisadāta; Aḍavi-Cāṃtisiri, the daughter of king Siri-Cāṃtamūla; Haṃnasiriṇikā, another sister of Siri-Cāṃtamūla; and her two daughters Bapisiriṇikā and Chaṭhisiri who both married the reigning monarch (their cousin) and became queens (*EI XX*: 4–5). These and other prominent women donated pillars, shrines, *caitya*-halls, *stūpas* and monasteries to Buddhist monks in the area. In this manner, Buddhism thrived under Ikṣvāku rule largely through the generosity of its royal and wealthy female patrons.

³⁷ See Schopen 1997: 64.

³⁸ See Nilakanta Sastri (1963) *A History of South India*, Madras, p. 96, as cited in Wayman and Wayman 1974: 2. The reference to Bodhisiri mentioned by Sastri may be found on the 'Second Apsidal Temple inscription F' transcribed and translated by Vogel in *EI XX*: 22–23. The inscriptions reads, 'a *caitya*-hall (*cetiya-gharaṇ*)... was caused to be made by the lay woman Bodhisiri (*kāritaṇ uvāsikāya Bodhisiriya*)' (ibid.).

To briefly summarise this overview of the Middle Period: scholarly consensus suggests that Buddhism in these centuries was characterised by highly developed urban monasteries which benefitted from the generous patronage of wealthy urban elites. Monasteries were powerful multi-purpose institutions that functioned as academies, libraries, hospitals, hospices and banks.³⁹ These monasteries were supported by monks, nuns, laymen and women from all social classes and stations up until about 250 CE, when patronage became progressively more the domain of royalty. The interaction between monastic institutions and lay patrons functioned as a symbolic exchange whereby individuals both gained religious merit for their future lives and reinforced their social status within the urban hierarchy through the conspicuous display of their wealth (Heitzman 1984). The archaeological evidence points to a growth of urban monastic institutions during the early Middle Period throughout India within the great empires of the Kuṣānas and Sātavāhanas (ibid.). These institutions continued to thrive during the later Gupta and Vākāṭaka dynasties.⁴⁰ The short-lived rule of the Ikṣvākus in the 3rd century was a particularly fertile period for the spread of Buddhism and its royal and/or wealthy laywomen provided generous patronage to Buddhist monasteries.

The *Gaṇḍavyūha* in the Middle Period

In my introduction, I suggest that a text may be viewed as a set of bibliographic and linguistic codes, or as an act of power within a redemptive hegemony's construction

³⁹ For monasteries as places of care for the sick and dying see Schopen 2000: 95. For monasteries as banks we have the monastic codes mentioned above that give detailed instructions on how to lend money on interest and written loan contracts. Monasteries also minted their own money—see Schopen 1997: 18, n. 27, where he states, 'Evidence for the manufacture of coins at Buddhist monastic sites is both early and widespread'.

⁴⁰ During the Gupta period, 'Gold coins were donated to Buddhist monasteries with detailed instructions for the use of interest accruing on the investment of this capital... The Buddhist monasteries retained their functions as banks in this way' (Kulke and Rothermund 1997: 93).

of a worldview. Although some scholars assert that the Mahāyāna began as a written literary movement,⁴¹ there is no conclusive evidence connecting the origin of the Mahāyāna and writing. Chinese sources indicate that by the 2nd century CE, at least, Mahāyāna *sūtras* were written down. Unfortunately, no manuscripts of these *sūtras* survive from the Middle Period. As stated above, the earliest extant manuscript of the *Gv* is Hodgson 2 (A), the Nepalese manuscript dated 1166 CE. So, although we have good reason to assume that the *Gv* existed as a written text in the Middle Period, we possess no definite bibliographic details about it. Writing materials,⁴² ornamentation and script⁴³ used in the composition of a written *Gv* can only be conjectured from other sources. As a set of linguistic codes, the *Gv* of the extant Sanskrit manuscripts falls into Franklin Edgerton's second class of Buddhist texts that feature hybridised verse and prose of relatively standard classical Sanskrit (*BHSG*: XXV). Both hybrid Sanskrit and classical Sanskrit are well attested from inscriptions in the Middle Period beginning with the Kṣatrapas (*circa* 78–200 CE) in the Mathurā region and spreading southward by the 3rd century.⁴⁴ In fact, the first significant amount of southern Sanskrit inscriptions originates from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, and most of these date from the time of the later Ikṣvāku king Ehavala Cāntamūla (Salomon 1998: 90).

Having outlined some important characteristics of Indian Buddhism in its Middle Period, we are now in a better position to understand the *Gv* as an act of power within the political and economic hierarchies of this period. In other words,

⁴¹ See Gombrich 1990 and McMahan 1998.

⁴² Most likely the materials used were birch bark or palm leaf, reed pens and black ink. The British Library's Khāroṣṭhī manuscripts, the earliest Buddhist manuscripts from India so far discovered, are written on birch bark with reed pens and black ink (see Salomon 1999).

⁴³ The script used would have been some type of Brāhmī. If the *Gv* were composed during the reign of the Ikṣvākus, the script used would have been an 'eastern Deccan style' (Salomon 1998: 38).

⁴⁴ See Damsteegt 1978 and Salomon 1998: 90.

using the terminology defined in the introduction, we can examine the *Gv*'s role within the worldview of the Buddhist Middle Period. As a religious scripture, the *Gv* would most likely have been composed by monks. In a recent article, Jonathan Silk argues strongly for the monastic origins of Mahāyāna *sūtras*:

Because the content of Mahāyāna texts shows a very high degree of familiarity—we might say a total familiarity—with virtually all aspects of Sectarian Buddhist thought and literature, it is very difficult to believe that the authors of these texts, the de facto representatives of the Mahāyāna communities, were other than educated monks. It is difficult to imagine that the Mahāyāna *sūtras* could have been written by anyone other than such monks or, more likely, communities of such monks (2002: 374).

Urban monastic institutions were the centres of Buddhist learning and scholarship during the Middle Period, and monks were primarily responsible for the preservation, through memorisation and copying, of the 'Buddha's words' (*buddhavacana*). As a *sūtra* relating the story of Sudhana, who was thought to live during the lifetime of the Buddha, the *Gv* must have been considered *buddhavacana*, and therefore the responsibility for its care and maintenance would probably fall upon the monastic institutions. But such care and maintenance requires money and therefore patronage.

Recent scholarship views the beginnings of the Mahāyāna as a minority ascetic movement (or movements) with strong conservative tendencies. Given the large numbers of wealthy monk and nun donors during the early Middle Period, it is easy to imagine that many of the first Mahāyāna *sūtras* were composed by monastics for monastics.⁴⁵ As Lefevere points out, patronage has both an economic and ideological effect upon literature.⁴⁶ For a text to survive its ideology cannot directly oppose the views of its patrons. Based on the volume of Chinese translations

⁴⁵ Of course the situation during this period is far from clear. Vetter (1994) argues for a possible lay origin to the *PraS*.

⁴⁶ See the section on textual ontology my introduction.

produced during and shortly after the Middle Period, we know that this was a time of tremendous literary output for Mahāyāna Buddhism. Such a large volume of texts requires an army of scribes and vast amounts of materials, which both cost considerable money. Without substantial amounts of wealth from rich patrons the enormous Mahāyāna literary corpus would never have survived to be translated into Chinese and Tibetan. Because of this relationship between textual survival and patronage, we would expect to find a correlation between the ideological concerns of texts and the patrons of those texts.

Does the *Gv*'s ideology reflect the pattern of patronage found at this time and place? If we accept a formative period for the *Gv* at about the 3rd century and Dhānyakāṭaka as the location for its origin, then, to a significant extent, it does.

We have seen that the Nāgārjunikoṇḍa inscriptions are distinctive for two reasons: first, the rarity of monastic donors, and second, the predominance of royal and wealthy female donors. These features of Ikṣvāku patronage have not passed unnoticed by previous scholars: both Lamotte as well as Alex and Hideko Wayman associate this dynasty with Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Lamotte (1988: 348) points out that a prophecy in the *Mahāmegha-sūtra* (T 387, ch. 6: 1107a) appears to serve the 'glorification' of the Ikṣvākus' 'pious wives'. He quotes the following passage from a Chinese translation of the *sūtra*:⁴⁷

Seven hundred years after my Nirvāṇa, in South India, there will a small kingdom called Lightless (*Wu ming*, Andha, the Prākṛit form of Andhra); in that kingdom, there will be a river called Black (*Hei an*, Kṛṣṇā, modern Kistna) and, on the South Bank of the river, a town named Ripe Grain (*Shu ku*, Dhānya[kāṭaka], present day Dharanikōt); in that town, there will be a king named Even-Vehicle (Śātavāhana). The wife of the king will give birth to a daughter named Growth (*Tsêng chang*, in Tibetan *Dpal ḥphel*, in Skt. *Śrīvṛddhi*); she will be so beautiful that everyone will love her; she will observe the religious

⁴⁷ This *sūtra* was translated into Chinese between 414 and 421 (ibid.)—coincidentally at about the same time as the first complete translation of the *Gv* in 420.

prescriptions; her goodwill will be inexhaustible (Lamotte 1988: 348–349).

The primary evidence of this passage, of course, depends on Lamotte’s identification of Sanskrit toponyms for the Chinese terms. If we accept his interpretations, this passage connects the *Mahāmegha-sūtra* to the Ikṣvākus (or possibly to the Sātavāhanas).

Alex and Hideko Wayman attempt to locate the origin of *Śrīmālāsiṃhanāda-sūtra* (*Śrīmālā*) during the rule of the Ikṣvākus. Their primary argument for placing the origin of the *Śrīmālā* during the Ikṣvāku reign is that the text glorifies its main character, the Buddhist queen, Śrī Mālā, and stresses ‘good daughter of the family’ side by side with ‘good son of the family’.⁴⁸ They claim that this evidence ‘points to a period when the prosperity of the Buddhist congregation depended heavily on the patronage of one or more Buddhist queens and contributions by ladies of high social rank’—in other words, the Ikṣvāku dynasty (ibid.). Although the Waymans’ evidence is not substantial, it highlights a possible relationship between the *Śrīmālā* and female royalty.

As Lamotte and the Waymans before me, I propose to locate the origins of a Mahāyāna *sūtra* during the Ikṣvāku rule based on internal evidence. Using relative chronology, I position the *Gv* sometime between 200–300 CE. This time frame begins slightly before the Ikṣvākus (perhaps during the Sātavāhanas) and ends shortly after (early Gupta or Vākaṭāka period). I associate Dhanyākara, Sudhana’s home city, with Dhānyakaṭaka, the capital of the Ikṣvākus, and suggest this city as

⁴⁸ See Wayman and Wayman 1974: 1. The arguments used by the Waymans to place the text in the 3rd century based on a type of relative chronology are very weak. The first is that the *Śrīmālā* alludes to a ‘two-body’ theory of the Buddha, and the second is that the *Laṅkāvatāra* cites the *Śrīmālā* and therefore comes after it (ibid.). Because it is far from clear whether the text does allude to a ‘two-body’ theory (the passage they cite is very vague), and no clear chronology exists for the development of the ‘two-body’ theory into the ‘three-body’ theory, the first argument may be discarded out of hand. The second argument immediately collapses when one considers the possible composite nature of the *Laṅkāvatāra* (see Lindtner 1982).

the geographical birth-place of the text. In addition, the *Gv* gives a prominent role to its female *kalyāṇamitras*. Half of the text is devoted to female teachers (twenty-one in total), many of whom are queens, or have been queens in previous lives.⁴⁹

At this stage one might argue that even if wealthy laywomen were patrons of Buddhism during the Middle Period, we have no proof that they could or did read Buddhist texts; hence, there is no reason why texts originating from monastic institutions would reflect their ideological concerns. But, in fact, we do have evidence that laywomen read Buddhist texts. A passage from the *Mākandikāvadāna* in the *Divyāvadāna* refers to upper class Buddhist women studying *buddhavacana* in their own homes (Tatelman 2000: 12). Tatelman translates the passage as follows:

Moreover, at night these young women study the Buddha's Word by lamplight for which [activity] is required birchbark, pen and ink as well as oil and wick [for the lamp] (*api tv etā dārikā rātrau pradīpena buddhavacanam pathanti atra bhūrjena prayoḥjanam tailena masinā kalamayā tūlena*).⁵⁰

The *Divyāvadāna* is thought to date from the 3rd or 4th century.⁵¹ If this literary source provides historically accurate information, then we have evidence that laywomen read Buddhist scriptures in the Middle Period.⁵² Since we have learned from epigraphical sources that women were important patrons of Buddhism during this period and that they may have read *buddhavacana*, may we not assume that monks composed at least some Mahāyāna *sūtras* with these women as a target

⁴⁹ Even if the *Gv* did not originate during the 3rd century from within the Ikṣvākus domain, given the importance of women during the Middle Period, it may have come from a different, as of yet undiscovered, locale with a similar pattern of patronage.

⁵⁰ Tatelman 2000: 41, n. 79. Tatelman's Sanskrit text is from Vaidya's edition (1959) *Divyāvadānam*, Dharbhanga: The Mithila Institute, p. 457.17–18. The *Divyāvadāna* was first edited by E. B. Cowell and R. A. Neil (1886).

⁵¹ For dates of the *Divyāvadāna* see Tatelman 2000: 8 and Warder 1980: 416.

⁵² Tatelman (2000: 12) maintains that the off-handed nature of this passage in the text lends historical authenticity to it. I tend to agree with his position.

audience?⁵³ In order to answer this question, I examine in the following pages the *Gv*'s ideological over-coding with special attention to wealth, gender and power.

⁵³ Skilling (2004: 149) writes, 'Mahāyāna sūtras may be read as records of debates and negotiations, as attempts to resolve contradictions and tensions in Buddhist doctrine and practice.... Debates on the spiritual status of women are rehearsed in any number of sūtras.' As a moment in these debates, the *Gv* presents a very positive opinion of women's spiritual status. This may be due to its female target audience (see below).

Part II: Structures

3. Worldview

In the introduction, I define a 'worldview' as a totalising and generalised theory of existence that constructs meaning out of experience through defining the relationships among the individual, society and reality. I also examine a number of different aspects of worldviews from psychological, symbolic, political and ritual perspectives. From the point of view of cognitive psychology, a worldview is a largely unconscious 'total set of schemas' through which the individual experiences the world. Semiotics views worldviews as systems of signification of sign construction (Eco 1976). From a political or ritual perspective, a worldview may be seen as a 'regime of truth' (Foucault 1972b), or a 'redemptive hegemony' (Bell 1992). Having looked at these various perspectives, I conclude that worldviews, as arbitrary and rule-governed systems, may be understood as 'reality games' that continually negotiate power between individuals and groups within a society.

Because they are theories about the nature of reality, worldviews address notions of time, space, cosmology and cosmogony. I define a 'religious worldview' as a worldview that recognises the existence of (a) transcendental power(s) above or beyond the natural order; while defining a 'secular worldview' as one that does not acknowledge such (a) power(s). Since worldviews attempt to locate society's position within reality, they map out a social hierarchy that establishes the extent and range of certain groups' powers and authority. In addition to deciding what is real and society's relation to the real, worldviews position the individual in relation to these two. Concepts about the individual are deeply imbedded in notions about the body, gender and beauty. Thus these notions are culturally constructed and may not be understood outside of their relation to constructions of reality and society.

In order to locate myself in relation to my study of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, I discuss Modernism in the introduction. While admitting my position within Anglo-American academic discourse, I propose to analyse the worldview of the *Gv*. Having traced a genealogy of Sudhana's story through the centuries and developed a historical and cultural context for the text during the Middle Period of Indian Buddhism, we are now ready to examine the worldview of the *Gv* in relation to this context using the categories and conceptual models developed in the introduction.

'Reality' in Indian Buddhist thought

To understand the *Gv*'s view of reality, it is necessary to locate its position within classical Indian cosmological thought. Throughout Buddhism's existence within its Middle Period (0–500 CE) certain notions of time and space were generally recognised by most Buddhist and Brahmanical thinkers. Indian cosmology at this time maintained that space is limitless and filled with innumerable world systems each cycling endlessly through incredibly vast periods of evolution and devolution. Time is measured in terms of eons (*kalpa*); one eon being the time it takes for a world system to complete its cycle of evolution and devolution until its destruction by fire.¹ Once a world system is destroyed, another begins—a process which has neither beginning nor end.² Thus Indian Buddhist thought does not posit a beginning of the universe in time, and therefore, unlike Christianity or Big Bang Theory, does not possess a cosmogony.³

¹ An eon was thought to be between 1,344,000 and 1,280,000,000 years. Thinkers disagreed about its exact length (Conze 1951 (1975): 49).

² 'According to Hindu cosmology, a beginningless series of worlds pass through cycles within cycles forever' (Stutley 1985: 44). See also Koller 1982: 252.

³ Although in Pāli one does find something like a myth of origins in the *Agaññā-sutta* (see Gombrich 1992 and Collins 1993).

Indian Buddhists recognised various classes of world systems, or world-realms (*lokadhātu*), distinguished according to size. The Pāli *Mahāniddeśa* 356 first divides world systems into fifty categories, beginning with a world system consisting of just a single world, up to a world system of fifty worlds (see *PED*: 587). Beyond fifty, the text mentions *sahasī culanika*, *dvisahasī majjhimikā*, *tisahasī* and *mahāsahasī lokadhātus* (ibid.) The first is a minor world system consisting of a thousand worlds, and the second a middling world system of two thousand worlds. The third would seem to be a world system of three thousand worlds, although Buddhaghosa interprets a ‘thrice-thousandfold world-system’ (*tisahasī lokadhātu*) to be a system of 1,000,000,000,000 worlds.⁴ A ‘great thousand’ (*mahāsahasī*) world system, from the *Mahāniddeśa* list, seems to rank above a *tisahasī* world system, but what ‘mahā-’ means before a number is unclear.⁵ The Pāli Vinaya 1.12 also mentions a world system of 10,000 worlds (*dasasahasī lokadhātu*).⁶

Edgerton has noticed three types of world-realms mentioned in Buddhist Sanskrit literature: *sāhasracūḍika*, *dvisāhasra* and *trisāhasramahāsāhasra* (*BHSD*: 464). The first two correspond to the Pāli *sahasī culanika* and *dvisahasī majjhimikā*. The third term has caused modern translators some difficulty.⁷ Although Edgerton points out that in the *Mahāvvyūtpatti* 7999 ff. and in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* 343.16 ff. ‘mahā-’ compounded with numbers means ten times that number, he chooses to translate *trisāhasramahāsāhasra* with ‘(world system) consisting of a “triple thousand great thousand” (worlds)’ (*BHSD*: 259). Other contemporary scholars also attempt more or less literal translations, and thereby avoid giving a

⁴ see Gethin 1998: 144. Vasubandhu puts the total at 1,000,000,000 (ibid.).

⁵ See discussion below on the Sanskrit term ‘*trisāhasramahāsāhasralokadhātu*.’

⁶ *PED*: 587.

⁷ I first discussed this term in Osto 1999: 81, n. 5.

definite value to the term.⁸ Although the exact number of worlds in a *trisāhasramahāsāhasralokadhātu* is far from clear, this term plainly indicates a world system of many thousands of worlds and appears regularly in Mahāyāna *sūtras*, including the *Gv*.⁹

As mentioned above, the smallest world-realm is thought to be one consisting of a single world. Thus a *lokadhātu* may refer to a system of thousands of worlds or a single world-realm. Although Indian Buddhists believed in a universe consisting of untold millions of worlds, each world is generally described as possessing the same basic structure.¹⁰ All world-realms, including our own called the ‘Sahā world-realm’ (*sahā lokadhātu*), are divided into three parts: the realm of desire (*kāmadhātu*), the realm of form (*rūpadhātu*) and the formless realm (*arūpyadhātu*). The realm of desire is the world of the five senses and possesses a symmetrical topography. At its centre is a massive mountain called Sumeru or Meru. Surrounding this mountain are said to be seven rings of mountains divided by seven seas. Beyond the mountains and seas, Indian Buddhists imagined island-continent located at the primary compass points. At the outer-most edge of the realm of desire stands a circular chain of iron mountains called Cakravāla.

Within the realm of desire exists five or six primary states of rebirth or existence (*gati*): the state of gods, demigods, humans, animals, ghosts and hell beings.¹¹ The six classes of gods dwell on or above Mount Meru. Below the gods on

⁸ Other attempts have been: ‘The Great Trichiliocosm’ (Conze 1973a: 323), ‘Three-thousandfold, multi-thousandfold world system’ (Gómez 1975: 242), ‘world system of three thousand great thousand worlds’ (Schopen 1989: 123) and ‘Trichiliomeghachiliocosm’ (Harrison 1990: 13).

⁹ The previous note refers to the term’s occurrence in the *Aṣṭa* (Conze 1973a: 323), the *Gv* (Gómez 1975: 242), the *Vajracchedikā* (Schopen 1989: 123) and the *PraS* (Harrison 1990:13). For two other examples in the *Gv* see V 420.1 and V 424.2. For occurrences in other Mahāyāna *sūtras* see *BHSD*: 259.

¹⁰ Recent descriptions of this structure may be found in Lopez 1996: 12–16 and Gethin 1998: 115–119. See Gómez 1996: 257–8, for diagrams of a single world system.

¹¹ Some descriptions leave out the demigods (*asura*).

Mount Meru live the demigods. Buddhist literature and iconography depict them as jealous, war-like beings envious of the gods. Upon the four island-continent dwell humans, animals, ghosts and various human-like mythological creatures. Indian Buddhists believed that in the Sahā world-realm they inhabit the southern island-continent which they refer to as Jambudvīpa (the Rose Apple Island). Living among the humans and animals of this island are many different sorts of creatures such as demons (*yakṣa*), centaurs (*kiṃnara*), sea serpents (*nāga*), giant birds (*garuḍa*), celestial musicians (*gandharva*) and celestial maidens (*apsaras*). At this same level within the realm of desire, Indian Buddhists thought that an unfortunate class of spirits, most often called ‘hungry ghosts’ in English,¹² wander the earth in search of nourishment. Buddhist art depicts these piteous creatures with huge bellies and tiny mouths and throats. Due to their excessive greed in a former human life, they are doomed to constant hunger, never able to satisfy themselves. Beneath Jambudvīpa, were thought to be various hell realms. Indian Buddhists described these hells in detail—some are thought to be extremely hot, others extremely cold—but all are quite horrible. The wicked in the hells must die over and over again in the most hideous ways: through dismemberment, boiling, crushing, burning, drowning, etc., until their evil karma has been expiated.¹³

Indian Buddhists believed that above the realm of desire exists the realm of form. Here divine beings abide dwelling in sublime states of mental bliss. This realm is divided into four main levels corresponding to the four stages of concentration (*dhyāna*) attained through the practice of ‘calm’ (*samatha*) meditation.

¹² The Sanskrit term for these beings is *preta* (‘deceased’). ‘Hungry ghost’ seems to come from an English translation of a Chinese term for them (see Soothill 1937 (1977): 454).

¹³ For a description of these hells in the *Mahāvastu*, see Jones 1949: 6–21.

Higher still, is the formless realm. Here Indian Buddhists thought beings exist as pure consciousness without form. Four levels are distinguished in the literature corresponding to highest levels of concentration thought to be attainable through *śamatha* meditation: Infinite Space, Infinite Consciousness, Nothingness and Neither Consciousness nor Unconsciousness.¹⁴

Indian Buddhists imagined that the basic structure of their Saḥā world, both in terms of its various levels and topographical features, are the same for all worlds. Gómez (1996: 8) observes: ‘The universe of the classical Buddhist Indian imagination was a system of parallel worlds all of which shared a similar structure’. An important exception to this general pattern and a characteristic of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism was a belief in special worlds called ‘buddha-fields’ (*buddhakṣetra*).¹⁵ A buddha-field is a world which either possesses a buddha or has the potential to possess one (see *BHSD*: 401). Due to the spiritual power of the buddha residing in a buddha-field, that world may have a different structure considered more conducive to religious practice.¹⁶ If a buddha-field does contain a living buddha, then that buddha will be surrounded by a retinue of bodhisattvas. Unlike ordinary human beings, the advanced bodhisattvas of a buddha’s assembly have the power to instantly transport themselves to other worlds, and this is a common motif occurring in many Mahāyāna *sūtras*.¹⁷

¹⁴ See the *Vibhaṅga* 422–6, *Visuddhimagga* vii. 40–4, xiii 29–65, and the *Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha* 22–4.

¹⁵ See *BHSD*: 401 for a discussion of the term. As Edgerton points out, ‘*buddhakṣetra*’ occurs often in the *Mahāvastu*, and therefore cannot be considered a strictly Mahāyāna notion.

¹⁶ See Gómez 1996: 262, for a table of the different types of buddha-fields. The most popular and detailed buddha-field for Mahāyāna Buddhists throughout Asia seems to have been Amitābha’s Sukhāvātī described in the *Sukhāvātīvyūha sūtras* (See Gómez 1996, for the most recent study and translation).

¹⁷ See for example the *Akṣayamati-nirdeśa* (Braarvig 1993: 24–26), the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* (Kern 1963 (1884): 394ff), the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* (Thurman 1976: 79), and the *Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom* (Conze 1961: 42ff).

The cosmological notions outlined above form the basic presuppositions of both the authors and the early audience of the *Gv*. Before I discuss in some detail specific features of the *Gv*'s own understanding of reality, I would like to mention one more important feature of Buddhist cosmology in general, which Gethin has aptly calls the 'principle of *the equivalence of cosmology and psychology*'.¹⁸ According to this principle the various cosmological realms are the result of certain psychological states of the beings who inhabit those realms. Thus in the bad states of existence (*durgati*), the greedy are reborn as hungry ghosts; the hateful are reborn in the hells; and the ignorant are reborn as animals. Good actions may lead to rebirth in the heavens; while the practice of calm meditation may cause one to be reborn in the realms of form or the formless realms. Also, the physical characteristics of a world realm were thought to dependent upon the virtues of the beings which inhabit them. The most virtuous humans were thought to be reborn in buddha-fields like Amitābha's pure land where the trees are made of jewels, lotus ponds are scattered across the perfectly level ground and palaces float in the sky (Gómez 1996: 260).

Some Indian Mahāyāna Buddhists brought this equivalence between cosmology and psychology to its logical extreme: the belief that all the innumerable worlds with their different levels are merely the product of thought (*cittamātra*) and therefore unreal.¹⁹ The illusory nature of all worlds and even all things is often expressed in Mahāyāna sources in terms of the ten comparisons: all conditioned factors (*dharma*) are like acts of magic, a mirage, the moon reflected in water, space, an echo, the city of the Gandarvas, a dream, a shadow, an image reflected in a mirror and objects created by psychic powers (Gómez 1967: lxxvi). The last of these ten

¹⁸ See Gethin 1998: 119; italics his.

¹⁹ This idea may be found such texts as the *PraS* (Harrison 1990), the *Av* (Cleary 1993), the *Samdhinirmocana-sūtra* (Powers 1995) and the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* (Suzuki 1973). For a recent and detailed study of Yogācāra ideas see Lusthaus 2002.

comparisons highlights the Buddhist acceptance of the traditional Indian belief that certain spiritual beings possess psychic powers (*rddhi*).²⁰ As I mention in chapter 1, Gómez states that the central doctrines of the *Gv* represent an ‘elaboration and combination’ of the Buddhist belief in the illusory nature of phenomena and in psychic powers (1967: lxxvi).²¹

‘Reality’ in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*

These early [Mahāyāna] sūtras seem to have functioned in mutual independence, with each sūtra deemed by its devotees to be complete unto itself, representing its own world (Lopez 2001:114).

Having painting a picture of Indian Buddhist cosmology in broad strokes, we are ready to approach the unique ‘world’ of the *Gv*. Both Suzuki and Gómez have discussed the importance of the concept of *dharmadhātu* in the *Gv* (see chapter 1).

The term ‘*dharmadhātu*’ (*chos kyi dbyings*) means ‘the Dharma-element’ or the ‘Dharma-realm’. Both senses of the compound appear in Mahāyāna sūtra literature. For instance, the *Pañcaviṃśati-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* uses the word in the first sense to mean a Buddhist sūtra placed in a stūpa and ritually worshipped in contrast to a *śarīradhātu*, or ‘body-element’ (a bodily relic of the Buddha or Buddhist saint).²² In contrast to this usage, the *Gv* employs the second meaning of ‘Dharma-realm’ to

²⁰ For a discussion of these powers in the Mahāyāna, see Dayal 1932: 122ff, and Pagel 1995.

²¹ Buddhist cosmology demonstrates both a striking similarity and radical differences with modern, western cosmology. As Edward Conze (1951 (1975): 50) pointed out over fifty years ago, the Indian Buddhist notion of innumerable world systems, some possessing many thousands of worlds, is analogous to modern astronomy’s description of a universe filled with untold millions of galaxies each with millions of stars. But unlike Indian Buddhist cosmology, the worldview of Modernism does not recognise various levels of hells or heavens, form and formless realms, or other intelligent life in the universe besides human beings on our planet. Whereas the traditional Indian Buddhist cosmos teems with intelligent living creatures of all sorts in countless parallel worlds, the universe of modern astronomy is incredibly vast but largely filled with dead matter. Although some modern thinkers believe that intelligent life exists elsewhere in the universe, the vastness of space and the light barrier, may prevent us from ever finding out. Einstein’s theory of relativity ($E=mc^2$) states that nothing can move faster than the speed of light (Approx. 186,000 ft./sec.). Even if we could travel close to this speed, over 99% of the known universe would remain millions of lifetimes away from us.

Modernism also rejects both rebirth and psychic powers as either irrational or impossible.

²² See Conze 1964: 250.

identify a special locus of enlightened activity that both simultaneously encompasses all the infinite *lokadhātus* (world-realms) and transcends them. In order to grasp this particular understanding of *dharmadhātu* in the *Gv*, we must look at the occurrences of the term within the text.

Although the compound *dharmadhātu* appears in numerous places within the *Gv*,²³ the text as a narrative prefers to ‘show, not tell’, and does not provide an exact definition of the term. Therefore, I shall look first at a number of passages in the text where the compound is used in order to get a sense of its significance in the *sūtra*, and then turn to some descriptions of objects that seem to represent the *dharmadhātu*, such as Maitreya’s peaked dwelling.²⁴ Gómez has pointed out that the *Gv* refers to the ‘*dharmadhātu* divided into levels’ (*dharmadhātutalabheda*) and an ‘undivided *dharmadhātu*’ (*asambhinnadharmadhātu*). Although these terms occur in a number of places,²⁵ ‘*dharmadhātu*’ appears more often without special qualifiers or with other qualifiers such as ‘unobstructed *dharmadhātu*’ (*anāvaraṇadharmadhātu*)²⁶ and the ‘*dharmadhātu* of unobstructed space’ (*asaṅgavaradharmadhātu*).²⁷ Therefore, while *dharmadhātutalabheda* and *asambhinnadharmadhātu* are aspects of the *dharmadhātu*, a clearly defined division between only these two types of *dharmadhātu* is not apparent from a close reading of the text.

²³ See for example V 234.10-20, 272.20, 288.6, 289.28, 342.13, 353.11, 368.31, 369.11, 370.6-11, 372.32, 375.25, 378.30, 382.1, 382.11, 384.1, 385.23, 386.30, 387.11, 396.5, 420.12, 421.9-29, 423.10-32, and 424.20-425.7. Note that all of these examples are from the second half of the text and most are from the Maitreya and Samantabhadra sections. This pattern reflects the *dharmadhātu*’s significance as a soteriological goal. As Sudhana travels further on his quest, he gets closer to attaining enlightenment, which the *Gv* equates with entry into the *dharmadhātu*. See below.

²⁴ Both Suzuki and Gómez have suggested that Maitreya’s dwelling represents the *dharmadhātu* (see chapter 1).

²⁵ For *dharmadhātutalabheda* see V 368.31 and 384.1 (at V 353.11, there is ‘*dharmadhātutalasaṃbheda*’). For *asambhinnadharmadhātu* see V 272.20. At V 370.6, Maitreya’s dwelling is called the ‘undivided abode of the *dharmadhātu*’ (*dharmadhātvasaṃbhedavihāra*).

²⁶ V 375.25.

²⁷ V 288.6.

The most significant description of the Dharma-realm's qualities occurs in a passage previously over-looked by contemporary scholars. In this passage, the night goddess Sarvanagararakṣāsambhavatejaḥśrī (*km#37*) tells Sudhana about the bodhisattva-liberation (*bodhisattvavimokṣa*) she attained called 'the entrance into the profound miracle through a beautiful sound'.²⁸ During her description, the goddess says that she sees, approaches and advances toward the *dharmadhātu* by means of ten aspects (*ākara*). The Dharma-realm's ten aspects are that it is:²⁹

- 1) immeasurable (*aprameya*),
- 2) infinite (*anantamadhya*),
- 3) boundless (*aparyanta*),
- 4) unlimited (*asīmāprāpta*),
- 5) uninterrupted (*avyavacchinna*),
- 6) a single unity (*ekotībhāvagata*),³⁰
- 7) inherently pure (*svabhāvavimala*),³¹
- 8) the same in all worlds (*sarvajagatsamatānugata*),
- 9) a single ornament (*ekālaṃkāra*)³² and
- 10) indestructible (*avināśana*).

²⁸ *manojārutagamabhūravikurvitapraveśa* (V 233.24).

²⁹ For the list of ten see V 234.10–18. See also SI 305.2–13; D a149v.3–150r.5 (citations of the Derge are from (1991) *The Tibetan Tripitaka: Taipei Edition, Volume VIII. bKa' d'Gyur*. Taiwan: SMC Publishing Inc. References to the Derge are abbreviated D for 'Derge' and are followed by the Tibetan volume ('ga' or 'a' of the Phal po che), folio number (Tibetan numbering system), r or v (for 'recto' or 'verso') and the line number); C 1340.

³⁰ The compound '*ekotībhāvagata*' is difficult to explain here. Monier-Williams, citing the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, gives 'having one and the same object of desire or aim (course), tending to one single purpose', as a definition for '*ekoti*' (MW: 230). For '*ekotībhāva*', he cites Buddhist literature with a meaning of 'state of concentration on one single object, tranquillity, blissful serenity (state of mind, following after conversion' (ibid.). Edgerton records '*ekoti-(*)bhāva*' to mean 'the becoming concentrated, concentration'; and reads '*ekoti*' as *eka + ūti* (*BHSD*: 154); with *ūti* here meaning 'web' from the verbal root *ve-*, 'to weave' (MW: 221 & 1013). Although Edgerton cites this particular instance in the *Gv* (SI 305.7), he does not explain how it could mean 'concentration' in this context. The term '*ekodībhāva*' occurs in Pāli with the same meaning of 'concentration', but Rhys Davids and Stede take *ekodī* to be from *eka + odi* for *odhi* ('limit') (*PED*: 160 & 167). Following Edgerton's interpretation of *eka + ūti*, a literal rendering of the compound would be something like '(the *dharmadhātu*) being in a state which is a single web or weave'. This interpretation is supported by the Tibetan which reads, *chos kyi dbyings ni rgyud kyi tshul gcig tu gyur bar*—literally 'as for the Dharma-realm, its nature is of a string that has become one' (D a149v.7–150r.1). Although it is easy to see how *ekotībhāva* in the right context means 'concentration', in this instance I have opted for 'unity'. Both Cleary and Dio have translated the Chinese this way: Cleary simply writes 'the reality realm is one' (C 1340); and Dio translates 'der Kosmos der eine und der derselbe ist' (Dio 197).

³¹ More literally, 'pure with regard to its own-being'.

³² the text here reads slightly different than the other aspects: 'I penetrate the entire *dharmadhātu* which is a single ornament...' (*ekālaṃkāraṃ sarvadharmadhātuṃ avatarāmi...*(V 234.17)). I interpret this inclusion of *sarva* in the compound to indicate that the *dharmadhātu* is a single seamless unity.

This list is the most detailed direct reference to qualities of the *dharmadhātu*, and provides us with some insight into the religious significance of the term in the *Gv*. To borrow terminology from Christian theology, this list demonstrates both the ‘immanence’ and ‘transcendence’ of the Dharma-realm. As a locus that is immeasurable, infinite, boundless and unlimited, it is always present, yet always more than what is present. As an indestructible, single, uninterrupted, pure unity that is the same in all worlds, it functions as the ‘ground’ (Gómez) of all the multiplicity of realms and worlds. In its immanent aspect, it is described as ‘divided into levels’; and in its transcendent aspect as ‘undivided’ or ‘unobstructed’. As I hope to demonstrate in the following pages, the *dharmadhātu* is one of the two most important religio-philosophical concepts in the *Gv*.³³ It represents both the ultimate nature of reality behind and beyond all illusory phenomena, and the ultimate goal of the religious quest.

Dharmadhātu as a Building

Eschewing precise definitions in favour of lavish descriptions, the *Gv* tends to describe reality through metaphor rather than philosophical analysis. Two prominent metaphors in the text for the Dharma-realm are buildings and bodies. In the opening scene of the *sūtra*, the Buddha Vairocana resides at Śrāvastī in the park of Anāthapiṇḍada in the Jeta Grove within a peaked dwelling (*kūṭāgāra*) called the Great Array (*mahāvīyūha*) surrounded by 5000 bodhisattvas with Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī foremost among them, 500 *śrāvakas*, and lords of the world (*lokendras*) (V 1–4). Having discerned the thoughts of his followers and seen that they desired to know of his past attainments and current powers, the Buddha enters into a trance

³³ The other is *dharmakāya*, or the ‘Dharma-body’ (see below).

(*samādhi*) called the ‘Lion’s Yawn’ (*siṃhavijṛmbhita*) that magically transforms his peaked dwelling into an infinitely vast array (*vyūha*) filled with countless parasols, banners, flags, diamonds, jewels and gems of all varieties (V 5.1–8). The Jeta Grove also expands infinitely and the ground and sky become adorned with priceless substances (V 5.8–6.15). Although the peaked dwelling is not explicitly associated with the *dharmadhātu*, its transformation into an infinitely vast array suggests that it is used here to represent it.

One finds further evidence that Vairocana’s peaked dwelling functions as a metaphorical representation of the *dharmadhātu* in the Maitreya section. Having gone to a park called ‘Great Array’ (*mahāvvyūha*)³⁴ in the region of Samudrakaccha in search of Maitreya, Sudhana finds a great peaked dwelling containing the ornaments of Vairocana’s array (*mahākūṭāgāra vairocnavyūhālaṃkāragarbha*) (V 369.4).³⁵ After prostrating himself before the tower and circumambulated it hundreds of thousands of times, Sudhana speaks aloud a long list of its inhabitants’ spiritual qualities. A number of these are worth special mention. Sudhana states that this *kūṭāgāra* is the residence ‘of those who dwell in the undivided abode of the *dharmadhātu*’;³⁶ and it is a place in which ‘there is the means to pervade the *dharmadhātu* in all its aspects’.³⁷ He declares that this abode’s inhabitants dwell where ‘one eon enters into all eons, and all eons enter into one eon’;³⁸ ‘in which there is no division between one field and all fields, or between all fields and one field’;³⁹ and where there is ‘no impediment between one element (*dharma*) and all elements,

³⁴ This is the same term used to describe the Buddha’s *kūṭāgārā* in the opening passage of the *sūtra*. See below.

³⁵ I first discussed this section in Osto 1999: 24–27.

³⁶ *dharmadhātvasaṃbhedavihāravihārīṇāṃ* (V 370.6).

³⁷ *samantamukhadharmadhātuspharaṇopāya-* (V 370.11).

³⁸ *ekakalpasarvakalpasarvakalpaikakalpānupraveśavihāravihārīṇāṃ* (V 370.15).

³⁹ *ekakṣetrasarvakṣetraikakṣetrāsambhedavihāravihārīṇāṃ* (V 370.15–16).

or between all elements and one element'.⁴⁰ Then Sudhana recites verses wherein he proclaims that the *kūṭāgāra*'s residents 'roam the *dharmadhātu* unattached',⁴¹ 'move in the sky of the *dharmadhātu* like the sun and moon',⁴² and 'course the unobstructed *dharmadhātu* with thoughts unattached.'⁴³

Sudhana's words, by associating the inhabitants of the *kūṭāgāra* with those that travel within the *dharmadhātu*, explicitly connect Maitreya's dwelling with the Dharma-realm.⁴⁴ His statements about all eons, fields and objects entering each other without division or impediment within the *kūṭāgāra* signifies the 'interpenetration' (Suzuki) of the *dharmadhātu* and further strengthens this connection. This association of a bodhisattva's peaked dwelling with the Dharma-realm suggests that the Buddha's *kūṭāgāra* in the opening scene of the *sūtra* also represents the *dharmadhātu*.

Vairocana's *kūṭāgāra* is referred to as the 'Great Array' (*mahāvvyūha*) and Maitreya's is said to contain the ornaments of Vairocana's array. The word 'vyūha' is extremely common term in the *Gv*, and often occurs in descriptions of mystical visions and in the names of the liberations attained by the good friends.⁴⁵ Although countless *vyūhas* are mentioned in the text, these two peaked dwelling represent particularly important ones—*vyūhas* depicting the *dharmadhātu* it is manifestation of infinite multiplicity. I would like to suggest that these *vyūhas* are representation of the Dharma-realm as the 'Supreme Array' (*gaṇḍavyūha*), and that the *sūtra*'s title is a reference to the *dharmadhātu*.

One other example of the *dharmadhātu* as a building is particularly illuminating. When Sudhana asks Ratnacūḍa (*km#16*) about the bodhisattva's path,

⁴⁰ *ekadharmasarvadharmasarvadharmāikadharmāvirodhavīhāravīhāriṇaḥ* (V 370.16).

⁴¹ *dharmadhātu vicaranti asajjamānā* (V 372.5).

⁴² *dharmadhātugagane śaśīsūryabhūtā vicaranti* (V 374.1-2).

⁴³ *eṣo asaṅgamatinām anāvāraṇadharmadhātucaraṇānam... vīharu* (V 375.25).

⁴⁴ This association was previously noticed by Suzuki and Gómez (see introduction).

⁴⁵ See Vaidya 1960: xxiv–xxix, for a list of these attainments.

he tells him to look at his house (*niveśana*) (V 114.9–11). Sudhana sees a building with ten stories and eight gates ornamented with priceless objects made of gold, silver, jewels, gems and other treasures (V 114.11–16). He enters and sees on the first three floors food, drink, all types of garments, and all kinds of gem-encrusted ornaments being given away. On the fourth floor he witnesses virtuous young women being given away for the pleasures of love (V 114.17–19). On each floor from the fifth to the ninth,⁴⁶ Sudhana sees assemblies of bodhisattvas with various spiritual attainments. The higher he ascends the greater their attainments. The bodhisattvas of the fifth floor have attained the fifth stage (*pañcamībhūmi*) of the bodhisattva-path; those on the sixth floor have achieved the abode of the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitāvihāra*); those on the seventh have obtained intellectual receptivity similar to an echo,⁴⁷ perfected their firm resolve towards a knowledge of means and received the cloud of teachings (*dharmamegha*) from all the *tathāgatas*. The bodhisattvas of the eighth floor have obtained the imperishable supernatural knowledges (*abhijñā*), they roamed through all world-realms, and are evenly distributed throughout the entire Dharma-realm. The bodhisattvas of the ninth floor are only a lifetime away from buddhahood. And finally, on the tenth floor Sudhana sees

the *tathāgatas*' oceans of vows arising from their course of conduct [beginning] with their initial thought [of enlightenment], the miraculous spheres of all the teachings of the buddhas, the assembled groups of all buddha-fields, and the arrays of power for the guidance of all beings that [emitted] the sound of the wheels of teachings of all the buddhas.

⁴⁶ V 114.19–115.11.

⁴⁷ *pratiśrutikopamakṣānti*- (V 115.3). I am not sure what this means (for *kṣānti* as 'intellectual receptivity', see *BHSD*: 199). The Tibetan, *sgra brnyan lta bu'i bzod pa* (D a17v.4), is a literal translation and not particularly helpful.

*sarvatathāgatānām saprathama-*⁴⁸ *cittotpādacaryāniryānapraṇidhāna-*
sāgarān sarvabuddhadharmavikurvitaśayān sarvabuddhakṣetra-
parśanmaṇḍalān sarvabuddhadharmacakranirghoṣān sarvasattva-
vinayādhiṣṭhānavyūhān adrākṣīt (V 115.9–11).⁴⁹

This description of Ratnacūḍa’s house provides valuable insight into the nature of the *dharmadhātu*. The building’s construction out of priceless substances belies its similarity on a somewhat lesser scale to the two *kūṭāgāras* previously mentioned. Ratnacūḍa shows Sudhana his house in response to Sudhana’s questions about the bodhisattva’s path, just as Maitreya sends Sudhana into his peaked dwelling. This parallel also suggests that the house is an architectural representation of the Dharma-realm. The first four floors visually demonstrate the perfection of giving (*dānapāramitā*), the first of ten perfections,⁵⁰ with each higher level representing greater acts of generosity.⁵¹ Floors six to nine possess an obvious spiritual hierarchy—the bodhisattvas seen at higher floors have achieved greater spiritual attainment. On the tenth and highest floor Sudhana has a vision of the teachings and lands of the supreme beings, the buddhas. Thus Ratnacūḍa’s house represents the *dharmadhātu* hierarchically arranged according to spiritual attainment.

Dharmadhātu and Dharmakāya

The human body is another metaphor used in the *Gv* to represent the *dharmadhātu*. A example is found early in the text when Sudhana meets the monk Sāradhvaja⁵² (*km#7*) from Milaspharaṇa (V 68–78). Sudhana finds the monk seated in deep meditative trance with countless miraculous projections emanating from every pore in his body

⁴⁸ V 115.9 reads *-prathamopacitto-*. This seems to be a mistake. SI 149.22 reads *prathamacitto-*. This reading is corroborated by A 80r.6.

⁴⁹ SI 149.22–25; D a18r.1–3; C 1239.

⁵⁰ See V 118.2–11 for a list of all ten.

⁵¹ Giving is a particularly important virtue for Buddhist laypeople. As a wealthy merchant and good friend, Ratnacūḍa’s generosity would function as a example for other wealthy Buddhists.

⁵² The Tibetan name for this monk is rGya mtsho’i rgyal mtshan (see D ga349r.4), which would translate into Sanskrit as **sāgaradhvaja* (‘ocean-banner’), not *sāradhvaja* (‘best banner’).

and pervading the entire Dharma-realm. These projections are of all types of beings which appeared to go forth to worship all buddhas, purify all buddha-fields, spiritually mature all beings, save all beings from suffering and lead them all to omniscience (V 68.9–18). The beings emerging from Sārādhvaja’s body are hierarchically arranged like those in Ratnacūḍa’s house. From the soles of Sārādhvaja’s feet, countless merchants and brahmin householders come forth and help the poor through giving all types of gifts (V 68.19–26). From his knees, endless numbers of scholars (*paṇḍita*) come forth and aid beings through their teachings. From his navel, appear sages (*ṛṣi*); from his sides, serpent girls (*nāgakanyā*); from his chest, the lords of the demi-gods (*asurendra*) (V 68.27–70.8). Bodhisattvas emerge from Sārādhvaja’s head and buddhas from his top-knot (*uṣṇīṣa*) (V 72.12–75.19). Thus the monk’s limbs, like the floors of Ratnacūḍa’s house, represent the various levels (*tala*) of spiritual hierarchy within the Dharma-realm.

As Sudhana progresses on his quest for enlightenment, he meets more spiritually advanced good friends. The more advanced the *kalyāṇamitra*, the more exalted is the text’s description of his or her body. For instance, when Sudhana meets the night goddess Sarvajagadrakṣāpraṇidhānavīryaprabhā (*km#39*), he sees that her body is ‘covered with a net of jewels reflecting the principles of the Dharma-realm...’,⁵³ ‘showing the reflection of all the light of the moons and suns, planets and constellations of stars...’,⁵⁴ and ‘pervading all directions with infinite manifestations’.⁵⁵ This description concludes with the following:

Her physical form, having come from the indivisible solid realm which is the Dharma-body, was purified through a body whose stainless

⁵³ *dharmadhātunayapratibhāsamañijālasamañchāditaśarīrāṃ* (V 265.4).

⁵⁴ *sarvacandrasūryajyotirgrahatārānakṣatrapratibhāsamañdarśana-* (V 265.5). As V 265, n.1 indicates, SI 341.16 omits *-tārā-*. This appears to be mistake. A 179v.5 supports the reading in V.

⁵⁵ *anantamadhyāvabhāsasarvadikṣpharaṇa-* (V 265.11).

essence is the pure own-being that is the original substance arisen through the power of the non-abiding *tathāgatas*.

...*dharmakāyābhedyasāravatī*⁵⁶-*dhātuniryātām apratiṣṭhita-tathāgatādhiṣṭhānaprakṛtyasaṃkliṣṭasvabhāvanirmaladharmatā-sārāraśuddhakāyām* (V 265.15–16).⁵⁷

Five characteristics mentioned here suggest a connection between the body of the night goddess and the Dharma-realm. First, her body, like the buildings mentioned, is adorned with jewels and reflects all the principles (*naya*) of the *dharmadhātu*. This strongly implies a connection between her body and the Dharma-realm. Second, her body reflects all the light of the celestial bodies, which suggests that through this power of reflection (*pratibhāsa*) it contains the entire physical world, like the *dharmadhātu*. Third, her body projects infinite manifestations. This use of the adjective ‘infinite’ (*anantamadhya*) hints at the infinite Dharma-realm. Fourth, her body comes from the indivisible solid realm (*abhedyasāravatīdhātu*) that is the Dharma-body (*dharmakāya*). The concept of a *dharmakāya* is extremely important for an understanding of the *Gv*’s soteriology, and one I shall return to in greater detail when I discuss the text’s conception of the individual later in this chapter. For now, let us note that this Dharma-body is said to be an undifferentiated realm like the Dharma-realm which is undivided (*asaṃbhinna*) and a single unity (*ekotībhāva*). Fifth, her physical form has been purified through a body (*śarīra*) whose ‘stainless essence’ (*nirmaladharmatā*) is ‘pure own-being’ (*asaṃkliṣṭasvabhāva*).

After Sudhana has his vision of Maitreya’s peaked dwelling, Maitreya tells him that all conditioned factors lack the perfection of own-being.⁵⁸ But notice that the night goddess Sarvanagararakṣāsāmbhavatejaḥśrī describes the Dharma-realm as

⁵⁶ The adjective *sāravatī* here in the feminine is curious. Edgerton understands the word to be closely modifying *dhātu* which seems correct and I have translated *sāravatīdhātu* accordingly as a ‘solid realm’ (see *BHSD*: 593). For *dhātu* as a feminine noun see *BHSD*: 282.

⁵⁷ SI 342.2–4; D a180r.4–5; C 1364.

⁵⁸ *sarvadharmā... svabhāvāpariniṣpannā* (V 415.27–29).

‘inherently pure’, or literally ‘pure with regard to its own-being’ (*svabhāvavimala*).⁵⁹ Thus unlike ordinary things (*dharma*), Sarvajagadrakṣāpraṇidhānavīryaprabhā’s body, like the Dharma-realm, has pure own-being. Implied by the *Gv*’s assertion that both the night goddess’s body and *dharmadhātu* have pure own-being is that they are the *same thing*. This identity is made explicit when a little later in the text the night goddess states that a bodhisattva has a ‘body that is the undivided Dharma-realm’ (*asambhinnadharmadhātukāya*).⁶⁰ Thus the Dharma-body of the night goddess and all spiritually advanced beings is co-extensive with the Dharma-realm. This identity is best illustrated in the description of Samantabhadra’s body in the final section of the *Gv* (see chapter 16).

In our discussion thus far we have seen that the *Gv* divides reality into a number of levels. The infinite world-realms (*lokadhātu*) of various sizes are each divided into realms of desire, form and formlessness. These levels are further subdivided and contain countless beings who experience suffering or happiness according to their previous actions. From a higher viewpoint, because all things lack own-being, all these worlds, realms and beings are illusory manifestations of the *dharmadhātu*. As ultimate ground and locus, the Dharma-realm is the totality of everything divided into hierarchically arranged levels. These levels represent a spiritualised view of the universe wherein the physical world is miraculously transformed into an infinitely reflecting, jewelled paradise. Although all levels interpenetrate each other, through representing the *dharmadhātu* as buildings or bodies, the *Gv* reveals a spiritual hierarchy wherein the more advanced beings inhabit spatially central or higher levels of architectural structures or human limbs. The most advanced beings, the bodhisattvas and buddhas, through their knowledge that all things are illusory, have

⁵⁹ See list above (from V 234.15).

⁶⁰ V 272.20.

the power (*adhiṣṭhāna*) to control, generate and manipulate reality. This power ultimately derives from their Dharma-body that is one in essence with the Dharma-realm. Both the *dharmakāya* and the *dharmadhātu*, from the point of view of their own-being (*svabhāva*), are infinite, omnipresent, indivisible and inherently pure. These two concepts are central for understanding the *Gv*'s worldview and vision of the spiritual path. Thus, the greater frequency of these terms in the later sections of the narrative indicate both Sudhana's own development and the higher spiritual status of the good friends he visits.

Society

The characters of the *Gv* represent a wide array of occupations and social classes that interacted within urban centres during the Middle Period (0–500 CE) of Indian Buddhism. Of the forty-one locations visited by Sudhana and mentioned by name, nineteen are referred to as '*nagara*'—a town or city (MW: 525). Sudhana begins his quest in Dhanyākara which is called a '*mahānagara*' (V 39.5)—this term no doubt implying a substantial urban centre. The *kalyāṇamitras* Sudhana encounters in these locations are of many different types. Among them we find: five monks, a nun, five merchant-bankers (*śreṣṭhin*), four householders, two laywomen, a courtesan, a sage, a brahmin, a perfumer, a homeless wanderer, a mariner, a teacher, a goldsmith, three princesses, two queens, two kings, five bodhisattvas and ten goddesses. Three of the goddesses recall past lives as queens, two as princesses, one as a prince and one as a merchant-banker's daughter (*śreṣṭhidārikā*). This abbreviated list⁶¹ of good friends

⁶¹ See appendix A, for a complete list of *kalyāṇamitras*.

strongly represents a certain social demographic: the wealthy, the royal and the female.⁶²

The presence of urban, social elites within the *Gv* becomes more significant when we examine their religious status as *kalyāṇamitras*. As we saw in our discussion of the text's concept of reality, the *Gv* divides experience into two primary levels: the mundane level of world-realms and the supra-mundane spiritual level of the Dharma-realm. In a similar fashion, the text distinguishes two types of societies: the mundane society of India during the Buddhist Middle Period and the spiritual society of the good friends. The overlap and interconnection of these two societies reveal the *Gv*'s particular orientation toward gender, wealth and power.

The concept of *kalyāṇamitra* (Pāli: *kalyāṇamitta*) within the Buddhist tradition is both ancient and widespread. In an article titled, '*Kalyāṇamitta* and *Kalyāṇamittatā*', Steve Collins discusses the various meanings of these terms found in Pāli literature (Collins 1987). For *kalyāṇamitta* Collins distinguishes three overlapping levels of meaning in the Pāli sources: 1) a general sense 'in which trustworthiness, reciprocity and perhaps a consequent mutual regard are extolled', 2) a 'Buddhicised' level where such sentiments are set within the framework of Buddhist morality, and 3) a specifically Buddhist sense when it is applied 'to someone who helps another on the Buddhist Path' (Collins 1987: 52–53).

When *kalyāṇamitta* is used in Collins' third sense, it refers to a number of different types of helpers. In the *Kalyāṇamitta-sevanā-sutta*, the Buddha states, 'Ānanda, it is owing to my being a good friend to them that beings subject to birth are

⁶² This will become more obvious in part III, when I discuss several *kalyāṇamitras* in some detail. For now let me point out that the four householders (*gṛhapatis*) and two laywomen (*upāsikās*) mentioned in this list do not represent the medieval Indian equivalent to your average income households—the *Gv* goes to some length to describe their fabulous wealth and generosity. Notice also that if we include the past life stories of the goddesses we have a total of ten royal women represented in the narrative.

freed from birth.⁶³ Citing this passage, Buddhaghosa in the *Visuddhimagga* writes that, ‘...it is only the Fully Enlightened One who possesses all the aspects of the good friend.’⁶⁴ Thus in the Pāli sources the Buddha functions as the ideal *kalyāṇamitta*. Collins points out that other famous monks during the lifetime of the Buddha were also considered exemplars of good friends (Collins 1987: 58–59). Also, any monk or layperson who advises or encourages may be considered a good friend; although in the Pāli tradition the term *kalyāṇamitta* seems to be used much more often for monks than laypeople (Collins 1987: 59). This title is especially common for monks acting in the role of meditation teachers.⁶⁵

The term *kalyāṇamittā* is not commonly used for nuns or laywomen in the Pāli tradition.⁶⁶ This general rule holds true also for the other Indian mainstream schools.⁶⁷

The concept of the good friend as spiritual guide continues to be important in Mahāyāna Buddhism. The *Mahāyāna-sūtrāṅkāra*, the *Bodhisattva-bhūmi* and the *Aṣṭa* each mention the ‘blessing of having taken hold of a good friend’.⁶⁸ Finding a good friend is a necessary first step on the bodhisattva’s path, and that friend remains a valuable aid at all times (Dayal 1932: 63). According to the *Samādhirāja-sūtra*, only someone who has been very charitable to the poor in a past life is able to find such a friend (ibid.). A *kalyāṇamitra* always encourages a bodhisattva to follow the

⁶³ This is Ñāṇamoli’s translation from Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga* (Ñāṇamoli 1991: 98). Buddhaghosa is quoting from *Samyutta Nikāya* i, 88.

⁶⁴ Ñāṇamoli 1991: 98, as cited in Collins 1987: 58.

⁶⁵ Collins 1987: 62. See also the *Visuddhimagga*’s discussion on taking a meditation subject (Ñāṇamoli 1991: 85–117).

⁶⁶ A rare exception to this rule is a passage from the *Samyutta Nikāya* (i., 6, 3) that refers to one’s mother as ‘a good friend in the home’ (Horner 1930: 11).

⁶⁷ Again an important exception is found in the *Mahāvastu* (Jones 1949: 313.5), where a certain woman Mālinī is called a *kalyāṇamitrā* (BHS: 174).

⁶⁸ *kalyāṇamitraparigrahasampad* (as quoted in Dayal 1932: 63).

precepts and ideals of the Mahāyāna rather than the other systems.⁶⁹ The *Caturdharmaka-sūtra* states that a bodhisattva, ‘must never give up the good friend for his long life; nay even at the cost of life’.⁷⁰ According to Śāntideva, the entire acceptance of the Buddha’s teaching is implied in the injunctions not to leave the good friend and to study the scriptures (ibid.).

Kalyāṇamitra in the Gaṇḍavyūha

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of the *kalyāṇamitra* concept in the *Gv*. All the occurrences of the term are too numerous to discuss here, although several of them are worth close examination for the insight they provide into the significance of the concept.

Early in the *Gv*, the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī (*km#1*) leaves the Buddha’s assembly and goes to the south. Having stopped in the city of Dhanyākara, he preaches the Dharma to a large congregation of people. As he is leaving, Sudhana recites verses praising him and asks him to show the way to enlightenment. In response, the bodhisattva says:

Son of Good Family, it is very good that you, having aroused the thought for supreme perfect enlightenment, follow the good friends. You, who desire to perfect the bodhisattva’s path, think one should enquire about the course of conduct of a bodhisattva. Indeed, Son of Good Family, for the perfection of omniscience this is the beginning and natural course—namely the visiting, serving and worshipping of the good friends. Therefore, Son of Good Family, you should tirelessly venerate the good friends.

*sādhu sādhu kulaputra yas tvam anuttarāyāṃ samyaksaṃbodhau
cittam utpādyā kalyāṇamitraṇy anubadhnāsi. bodhisattvacaryāṃ
paripraṣṭavyāṃ manyase bodhisattvamārgaṃ paripūrayitukāmaḥ. eṣa
hi kulaputra ādiḥ eṣa niṣyandaḥ sarvajñatāpariniṣpattaye yaduta
kalyāṇamitrāṇāṃ sevanaṃ bhajanaṃ paryupāsanam. tasmāt tarhi*

⁶⁹ This from the *Śatasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* as paraphrased in Dayal 1932: 63.

⁷⁰ This quote is from Bendall and Rouse’s translation of Śāntideva’s *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (1922: 43).

*kulaputra aparikhinnena te bhavitavyaṃ kalyāṇamitra-
paryupāsanaṭāyai* (V 46.12–15).⁷¹

The significance of these statements is twofold. First, Mañjuśrī refers to good friends in the plural (*kalyāṇāmitrāṇi*). Other occurrences of the term discussed so far from Pāli and Mahāyāna sources use the singular. I shall return to this point shortly. Second, Mañjuśrī's statements provide us with important information about the *kalyāṇamitras*' relation to the spiritual path. Supreme, perfect enlightenment (*anuttarā samyaksambodhi*) is the highest goal of Mahāyāna Buddhism and is synonymous with the attainment of omniscience (*sarvajñatā*). Those who strive towards it train in the bodhisattva's path (*bodhisattvamārga*) or practice the bodhisattva's course of conduct (*bodhisattvacaryā*). Thus, when Mañjuśrī states that visiting, serving and worshipping the good friends is the beginning and natural course for the perfection (*pariṇiṣpatti*) of omniscience, he means that through these practices one attains supreme, perfect enlightenment. This assertion of a devotional spiritual path is very much at odds with other Buddhist systems that focus on individual effort and ascetic practices.⁷²

Devotionalism as a Spiritual Path in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*

Just prior to Sudhana's encounter with Maitreya, the boy and girl, Śrīsaṃbhava and Śrīmatī,⁷³ make the most emphatic statements in the *Gv* concerning devotion to the *kalyāṇamitras* as a means to attain enlightenment. After telling Sudhana that he should go to Maitreya who is a 'good friend that will water all your roots of merit and

⁷¹ SI 56.24–57.3; D ga322v.5–323r.1; C 1178.

⁷² See for example the *Visuddhimagga* (Ñāṇamoli 1991), the *Rāṣṭrapāla-paripṛccha* (Finot 1901) and the *Ugraparipṛccha* (Nattier 2003).

⁷³ Since these two form an inseparable pair, I have counted them both as *km*#51.

cause them to grow’,⁷⁴ Śrīsaṃbhava and Śrīmatī enter into a protracted discourse on the *kalyāṇamītras*. Having stated that one should never tire of seeking good friends, resist their advice or doubt their instructions (V 363.19–25), the two list about fifty reasons why. Some of these are: ‘the bodhisattvas’ hearing about the course of conduct of all bodhisattvas depends on the good friends’,⁷⁵ ‘the practices of the teachings of all bodhisattvas depend on the good friends’,⁷⁶ ‘the lights of knowledge of all bodhisattvas are produced by the good friends’,⁷⁷ ‘the enlightenment of all buddhas is obtained through propitiating the good friends’,⁷⁸ ‘bodhisattvas supported by the good friends do not fall into evil destinies’,⁷⁹ and ‘bodhisattvas embraced by good friends do not turn away from the Mahāyāna’.⁸⁰

This list reinforces Mañjuśrī’s statements and clarifies the *Gv*’s position on the *kalyāṇamītras*. Again we learn that practicing the *bodhisattvacaryā* depends on the good friends. The statements about ‘practices’ (*pratipatti*) and ‘lights of knowledge’ (*jñānāloka*) emphasise the need for bodhisattva to rely upon the *kalyāṇamītras*. Any doubt that the *Gv* presents a devotional path to enlightenment is immediately dispelled by the declaration that, ‘*the enlightenment of all buddhas is obtained through propitiating the good friends*’. The statement that bodhisattvas who are supported by good friends do not fall into evil destinies highlights the *kalyāṇamītras*’ protective role. This role is reinforced when Śrīsaṃbhava and Śrīmatī proclaim that the good friends are true mothers, fathers and nurses.⁸¹ Finally, the pair’s statement that bodhisattvas embraced by the *kalyāṇamītras* do not turn away from the Mahāyāna

⁷⁴ *sa te... kalyāṇamītro >bhiṣyandayīṣyati sarvakuśalamūlāni vivardhayīṣyati* (V 361.16–17).

⁷⁵ *kalyāṇamītrādhiṇāḥ... bodhisattvānāṃ sarvabodhisattvacaryāśravāḥ* (V 363.26).

⁷⁶ *kalyāṇamītrapratibaddhāḥ sarvabodhisattvaśiṣyāpratipattayaḥ* (V 363.30).

⁷⁷ *kalyāṇamītrasaṃjanitāḥ sarvabodhisattvajñānālokaḥ* (V 364.4).

⁷⁸ *kalyāṇamītrarādhanapratilabdā sarvabuddhabodhiḥ* (V 364.10–11).

⁷⁹ *kalyāṇamītrasaṃdharitāḥ... bodhisattvā na patanti durgatiṣu* (V 364.16).

⁸⁰ *kalyāṇamītrapariṅhātā bodhisattvā na nivantante mahāyānāt* (V 364.17).

⁸¹ *mātrībhūtāni kalyāṇamītrāṇi... pūtrībhūtāni kalyāṇamītrāṇi... dhātrībhūtāni kalyāṇamītrāṇi* (V 365.10–11).

defines the good friends in a strictly Mahāyānistic sense: only those that teach the Great Vehicle are real *kalyāṇamitras*.

The True Identity of the *Kalyāṇamitras*

The statements made by Mañjuśrī, Śrīsaṃbhava and Śrīmatī about the importance of the good friends are repeated hundreds of times throughout the *Gv*. The centrality of devotion to the *kalyāṇamitras* raises an important question about the religious orientation of the text: how is it that a bodhisattva's worship of merchant-bankers, householders, prostitutes, princesses, queens, kings, etc. leads to enlightenment? In order to answer this question we must search the *Gv* for clues as to the true nature of the good friends.

Our first clue comes at the end of the opening scene of the *sūtra*. After they witness the Buddha emitting a ray of light from his brow (V 27.5-8), the countless bodhisattvas gathered at the Jeta Grove experience innumerable mystic visions (V 27.9–32.15). This causes them to realise as many entrances into great compassion (*mahākaruṇa*) as dust particles in an inconceivable number of buddha-fields (V 34.9–10). Motivated by this great compassion, the bodhisattvas send out infinite magical creations of various types throughout all worlds to spiritually develop beings (V 34.11–35.8). Some of these creations possess the forms of wandering ascetics, brahmins, doctors, merchants, dancers, and patrons of all arts (*sarvasīlpādhāra*), and they were seen in all villages, towns, cities and countries (V 35.8–11). This passage suggests that the good friends Sudhana encounters are the magical creations (*nirmita*) of these advanced bodhisattvas.

For those adhering to the Mahāyāna doctrine that all things are ultimately unreal, the magical creations of the bodhisattvas are as real (or unreal) as any other

creature. Because these creations are generated for the sake of enlightening all suffering beings, they may themselves be considered manifestations of the bodhisattvas. For the *Gv* there is no difference between a manifestation of a bodhisattva and a bodhisattva: because they originate from the same enlightening source⁸² they share the same essence.⁸³ Such a metaphysical position implies that the *kalyāṇamītras* are themselves bodhisattvas. This is made explicit when the night goddess Vāsantī (*km#32*) states,

Having obtained the majesty of a god among the gods and the majesty of a human among humans, I was never separated from the good friends, namely the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

*sadā ahaṃ deveṣu devamāhātmyaṃ pratilabhya manuṣyeṣu
manuṣyamāhātmyaṃ na jātu kalyāṇamītravirahitā abhūvaṃ yaduta
buddhabodhisattvaiḥ* (V 179.9–10).⁸⁴

Vāsantī’s equation of good friends with buddhas and bodhisattvas compels us to ask another question: if *kalyāṇamītras* are bodhisattvas why are only five in the *Gv* called bodhisattvas?⁸⁵ The title ‘bodhisattva’ appears to be reserved for only those good friends who have achieved a particularly advanced stage on the bodhisattva-path. Thus the term ‘*kalyāṇamītra*’ is applied to anyone that is acting as a spiritual guide to one or more beings, while the titles ‘buddha’ and ‘bodhisattva’ are used exclusively for the most spiritually developed teachers.

We may now return to our original question about how a bodhisattva can attain enlightenment from worshipping good friends. This is possible because *kalyāṇamītras* themselves are bodhisattvas and because all bodhisattvas and buddhas are also good friends when they act as spiritual guides. Thus the less advanced

⁸² The same enlightening source is the power (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of the buddhas and the bodhisattvas.

⁸³ This essence is the own-being (*svabhāva*) of the *dharmakāya* / *dharmadhātu*. See below.

⁸⁴ SI 233.7–9; D a88r.7–88v.1; C 1292.

⁸⁵ These five are: Mañjuśrī (*km#1*), Avalokiteśvara (*km#28*), Ananyagāmin (*km#29*), Maitreya (*km#52*) and Samantabhadra (*km#53*).

bodhisattvas progress along the spiritual path through devotion to the more advanced. The various social roles of the good friends function like costumes or disguises, which bodhisattvas assume through their skill-in-means (*upāyakaśalya*) in order to train other bodhisattvas. In the same way, the good friends may have been viewed as magical creations of advanced bodhisattvas and therefore disguised manifestations of those bodhisattvas.

Kalyāṇamitras as a Spiritual Society

Thus far in our discussion of the concept of *kalyāṇamitra* in the *Gv* most of the references mention ‘good friends’ in the plural (*kalyāṇamitrāṇi*). This use of the term is a characteristic feature of the text, and reflects the *Gv*’s vision of the spiritual path. Any individual striving for enlightenment must visit and venerate many good friends rather than having just one spiritual guide. In this way, the text portrays the good friends as constituting a spiritual society that exists within mundane society. The evidence that the good friends form their own society is threefold: 1) they are known to each other, 2) they (like every society) are hierarchically arranged, 3) they are not (necessarily) known to outsiders.

At the beginning of Sudhana’s quest, Mañjuśrī sends him to see the monk Meghaśrī (V 47.19). Toward the end of this visit, Meghaśrī declares his ultimate ignorance of the bodhisattva’s course of conduct⁸⁶ and dispatches Sudhana to see the monk Sāgaramegha (V 50.11–12). This pattern repeats itself each time Sudhana meets a different good friend,⁸⁷ demonstrating both that the *kalyāṇamitras* know of

⁸⁶ Meghaśrī stated, ‘how am I to know the course of conduct of bodhisattvas who are purified within the circle of endless knowledge, or explain its virtues?’ (*kiṃ mayā śakyaṃ bodhisattvānām anantaññānamaṇḍalaviśuddhānām caryā jñātum guṇān va vaktum* (V 49.16–17)). See chapter 4, for more about this statement of ignorance and other formulae used in the narrative.

⁸⁷ Meghaśrī’s statement of his ignorance is repeated in various forms by every good friend except five: Viśvāmītra (*km*#44), Ajitasena (*km*#49), Maitreya (*km*#52), Mañjuśrī (*km*#1) and Samantabhadra

each other's existence and they recognise the existence of a spiritual hierarchy. The statements of ignorance continue until Sudhana meets the three final and most important *kalyāṇamitras*: Maitreya, Mañjuśrī (revisited) and Samantabhadra. Thus the hierarchy we see depicted in the *dharmadhātu*, as it is represented in buildings and bodies, is replicated in the progression of the narrative.

The third indication that the good friends of the *Gv* constitute their own society separate from worldly structures is that they are not always recognised as *kalyāṇamitas* by outsiders. Twice on his journey, Sudhana questions whether the person he is visiting is actually a good friend and needs reassurance from divinities.⁸⁸ When Sudhana visits the courtesan Vasumitrā (*km#26*), the people who do not know of her virtues tell him not to go to her (V 154.9–17); while those aware of her spiritual excellence encourage him to see her (V 154.17–21).⁸⁹ Whether someone knows that a person is a good friend appears to depend on their own level of spiritual attainment. The *Gv* indicates early in the text that those who have developed the necessary roots of merit (*kuśalamūla*) are able to see and understand things that people of lesser attainment cannot.⁹⁰ Thus the *kalyāṇamitras* function like a secret organisation within worldly society known only to the spiritual elite.⁹¹

Just as the Dharma-realm pervades and transcends the innumerable world-realms, so the society of good friends pervades and transcends the worldly, urban society of monks, merchants, householders and royalty. Although the hierarchy of the

(*km#53*). The omission of this confession for the first two seems to be an oversight. Given the high status of the last three and their position within the narrative, this omission must be intentional (see Ehman 1977: 215, n. 17; Osto 1999: 23, n. 22).

⁸⁸ These are the brahmin Jayoṣmāyatana (*km#10*) and the king Anala (*km#18*). See V 90.27–93.23 and V 121.26–122.5. I discuss Sudhana's visits to these good friends in chapters 9 and 11.

⁸⁹ See chapter 12.

⁹⁰ See V 12.26–13.7, where the great *śrāvakas* cannot see the magical transformation of Vairocana's *samādhi* because they lack the 'corresponding roots of merit' (*kuśalamūlāsabhaḡatayā*). See chapter 5 for a detailed discussion.

⁹¹ This idea is suggested by Sudhana's statement that Maitreya, 'has obtained the leadership of the secret circle of all bodhisattvas' (*sa mūrdhaprāptaḡ sarvabodhisattvaguhyamāṇḡalasya* (V 393.30)).

kalyāṇamitras is based on spiritual attainment rather than the wealth or power of mundane society, it appears to be connected to mundane existence in particular ways. We have seen that a significant proportion of the good friends is wealthy, female and royal. In the following chapters, I explore the connections between spiritual status on one hand, and the wealth, gender and power of the *kalyāṇamitras* on the other.

Individual

In order to understand the *Gv*'s notion of the individual⁹² and the relationship of the individual to reality and society, we must first widen our focus and look at the role of the individual in Indian Buddhist thought. A worldview's construction of an individual cannot be divorced from its concepts about the body, gender and beauty. Therefore, I shall explore some general aspects of these categories within Indian Buddhism before returning to the *Gv*.

Attitudes toward the body, gender and beauty have not remained constant within the Indian Buddhist literary tradition. Pāli sources portray the human body as 'a sore with nine openings'.⁹³ But it is only as a human that one may attain enlightenment. Biographical accounts of Prince Siddhārtha's hedonistic lifestyle, followed by his severe self-mortification prior to his enlightenment, function to underscore the Buddhist teaching as a 'middle path' (*madhyamo mārga*) between these two extremes. Although technically a 'middle path', early Buddhist teaching upholds a decidedly ascetic ideal of a celibacy and the denial of bodily pleasures.

⁹² I am not using this term in the technical Buddhist sense of *pudgala* or *ātman*, but rather in the sense defined in the introduction.

⁹³ See *Āṅguttara Nikāya* 4:386–87.

There can be little doubt that early Buddhism considered the youthful, healthy male body as the ideal and standard.⁹⁴ We find evidence of this in descriptions of the young Siddhārtha within the biographical accounts of the Buddha.⁹⁵ In sharp contrast to this positive assessment of the male body, early Buddhist hagiographies display a decidedly negative attitude toward the female body. A good example is found in the story of the Yaśas, a disciple of the Buddha.⁹⁶

In the *Songs of Lake Anavatapta*, the disciples of the Buddha sit at a mountain lake and take turns singing songs about their past lives. When it is Yaśas' turn, he recites verses recalling a time when he was a sage who lived in an ancient forest. One day while walking to a village to beg for alms the sage comes across the corpse of a woman.⁹⁷ He sits down to meditate upon the rotting body,⁹⁸ and while sitting there, he sees the stomach of the cadaver burst open,⁹⁹ unleashing a horrible smell of putrefaction and exposing hundreds of hungry maggots busy eating the rotting intestines, heart, kidneys, lungs, blood and excrement. At this horrific sight, the sage (not surprisingly) loses his appetite and instead of going to the village, returns to his ashram.

⁹⁴ See for example Gandhāran Buddha and bodhisattva statues in Errington and Cribb 1992, and Errington and Bopearachchi 2000.

⁹⁵ See for example the *Mahāvastu* (Jones 1952: 72ff) and the *Buddhacarita* (Johnston 1972).

⁹⁶ The story of Yaśas is from a collection of verses known as the *Anavatapta-gāthā*, or 'Songs of Lake Anavatapta'. In addition to the existence of these verses in Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese, several may be found among the recently discovered Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts (Salomon, 1999). These manuscripts, written on birch bark, in the Gāndhārī language and Kharoṣṭhī script are thought to date from the first century CE. The following is a summary of the recitation of the Buddhist saint Yaśas based on my own study of his verses from fragment number 1 of the Gāndhārī, with the help of the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions. The verses are fragmentary and I have relied heavily on the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions to reconstruct the story. For the Sanskrit text see Wille 1990: 70–107. For the Tibetan with French translation, see Hofinger 1982: 72-76 & 220-24. Richard Salomon is currently producing a complete transliteration and translation of the Gāndhārī *Anavatapta-gāthā* (GBT 5). I would like to thank him for permission to summarise the Gāndhārī version, and for his invaluable comments. See Osto (forthcoming) where I discuss the story of Yaśas at greater length and compare it to Gopā's story in the *Gv* (see chapter 15).

⁹⁷ G. *istrikunavu*; Skt *nārikunapam*; Tib. *bud med kyi ni ro*.

⁹⁸ This ancient meditation practice on the foulness of the human body is described at some length by Buddhaghosa in his *Visuddhimagga* (see Ñānamoli 1991: 173–190).

⁹⁹ G. *udaru tasa phaṭṭiṣ[u]*; Tib. *de yi lto rdol* (the Skt is missing the first half of the verse).

Eventually he goes back to the village for food,¹⁰⁰ and upon arrival realises that all the beautiful people there are like the rotting corpse of the woman on the inside—filled with excrement, blood, intestines, etc. As a result of this realisation he attains a state of dispassion, cultivates the Four Immeasurables (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity), and in his next life becomes enlightened.

Liz Wilson discusses Buddhist stories from the Pāli tradition similar to the story of Yaśas in her *Charming Cadavers: Horrific Figurations of the Feminine in Indian Buddhist Hagiographic Literature* (1996). In this study of what she calls Post-Aśokan hagiography, Wilson interprets these biographies as establishing a ‘gendered system of point of view’, where the male ‘I’ views the corrupt female body as an object of contemplation in order to attain freedom from lust and attachment to the body (Wilson 1996: 183). The examples that Wilson gives underscore the moral dimension to the foulness of the female body. In many stories the female characters distract either actively or passively the male characters from the spiritual life with their physical beauty. This distraction can be nothing but ‘false advertising’ for the true nature of the female body is corruption (Wilson 1996: 76). In other words, the foulness of the female body reflects women’s spiritual and moral deficiency. Such a view is well suited for a male ascetic audience committed to celibacy and the denial of bodily pleasures.

This negative assessment of the female body and women in general is also found in Indian Mahāyāna literature. According to the larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha-sūtra*, only men are reborn in Amitabha’s pure-land.¹⁰¹ The *Aṣṭa, Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*

¹⁰⁰ G. *gramu prav[i]kṣe bhuyaṇath[i]*; Skt *grāmaṃ praviśan bhojanārthikāḥ* (From Gilgit XI. 145); Tib. *grong khyer du zas kyi ched du zhugs pa*.

¹⁰¹ See Paul 1985: 169–170, and Gómez 1996.

and *Candrottarādārikā-vyākaraṇa sūtras* each contain passages where a female character, due to an advance in spiritual status, miraculously changes gender.¹⁰²

Based on his study of the Lokakṣema corpus, Paul Harrison states that ‘This theme of the undesirability of birth as a woman and the necessity of sex change is a common one...’ (Harrison 1987: 77). In his *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, Śāntideva quotes with approval from the *Saddharma-smṛtyupasthāna* which states that ‘a woman is the destruction of destructions in this world and the next; hence one must avoid women if he desires happiness for himself’,¹⁰³ and from the *Ugradatta-paripṛccha* which declares a wife to be ‘an obstacle to virtue, to meditation, and to wisdom.... She is like a thief, a murderer, or a guardian of hell’.¹⁰⁴ These statements display a negative assessment both of the female body and women’s’ spiritual potential.¹⁰⁵

The Individual in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*

When we look at the *Gaṇḍavyūha* we find a rather different perspective. The *Gv* clearly supports the general Buddhist view that the youthful, male body is superior to others. This premium awarded to the male youth is obvious: as the protagonist of the story, Sudhana represents the ideal spiritual aspirant who is called a ‘boy’ (*dāraka*); and Mañjuśrī has the epithet *kumārabhūta* (‘remaining young’).¹⁰⁶ Also, those referred to as buddhas and bodhisattvas are always gendered male in the *Gv*. The perfect form of the male body is defined in the *Gv*, as in many other Buddhist sources,

¹⁰² See Paul 1985: 166–211.

¹⁰³ Bendall and Rouse 1922: 77.

¹⁰⁴ Bendall and Rouse 1992: 83.

¹⁰⁵ Some exceptions to this negative attitude may be found in the *Śrīmālā* (Wayman and Wayman 1974) and in Śariputra’s encounter with the goddess in the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* (Thurman 1976: 56–63).

¹⁰⁶ Another possible translation would be ‘princely’. See *BHSD* : 187.

by the thirty-two characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*) of a ‘great man’ (*mahāpuruṣa*).¹⁰⁷ That these characteristics are found upon the form-bodies of buddhas as well as those of princes, kings and wheel-turning monarchs (*cakravartin*) suggests a symbolic connection between spiritual and temporal power (I shall return to this idea in later chapters). At one point in the narrative, goddesses refer to Sudhana as a ‘great man’ (V 300.6–7), which implies he also possesses this ideal physical form.

Although the *Gv* strongly favours the male body as superior to the female, it makes no statement about the necessity of having a male body, the foulness of the female body, or the spiritual inferiority of women. In fact, as Francis Wilson points out in Diana Paul’s *Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in the Mahāyāna Tradition* (1985), many of the female good friends of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* are described as beautiful ‘with lustrous black locks and skin the colour of gold’ (Paul 1985: 45). For example, the narrative declares princess Acalā (*km#20*) to be more beautiful than any other being and describes her complexion, proportions and aura to be unmatched by any except for buddhas and the most advanced bodhisattvas (V 132.10–19). Also, Vasumitrā (*km#26*) displays a beauty that surpasses all the gods and humans within the realm of desire (V 155.4–14). Her spiritual power is such that she may transform herself into the female form of any creature in order to teach beings through embraces and kisses (V 155.20–156.6).¹⁰⁸

As a religious worldview, the *Gv* asserts that the highest aspiration of any individual within society is the attainment of spiritual perfection. Sudhana’s quest to discover how one carries out the bodhisattva’s course of conduct represents this aspiration. As a young man and the son of a wealthy merchant-banker, Sudhana’s

¹⁰⁷ See *BHSD*: 458–60, for a lengthy discussion of these marks and references to them in Buddhist sources.

¹⁰⁸ For more about Acalā and Vasumitrā, see chapters 10 and 12.

age, gender and social status function as archetypes and ideals for anyone who would set out to achieve this highest goal. This goal is most often described as the attainment of supreme, perfect enlightenment (*anuttarā samyaksambodhi*), or omniscience (*sarvajñatā*). We have seen in our discussion of the *kalyāṇamitras* that it is achieved through devotion to the good friends. As spiritual guides to Sudhana, the *kalyāṇamitras* themselves represent individuals at various stages along the path to enlightenment. Therefore, descriptions about their ages, bodies and social status also provide insight into the *Gv*'s conception of the individual.

I noted in our discussion of reality and society that the *Gv* distinguishes between two dimensions or modes of existence: the mundane worldly dimension, and the supra-mundane. In other words, it proposes a division between the world-realms and the Dharma-realm, and between conventional society and the society of good friends. In the same way, the *Gv* distinguishes between two types of bodies; the form-body (*rūpakāya*) and the Dharma-body (*dharmakāya*). A comprehension of the differences between, and the relationship of, these two bodies will allow us to connect the text's conception of the individual with its notions about reality and society.

Earlier in this chapter, I point out that the night goddess Sarvajagadrakṣāpraṇidhānavīryaprabhā possesses an inherently pure Dharma-body. This body, I argue, is co-extensive with the Dharma-realm. I support this with a passage from the *Gv* which states that a bodhisattva has a 'body which is the undivided Dharma-realm'.¹⁰⁹

This two-body theory provides valuable insight into the text's position on gender and beauty in relation to the spiritual path. Not only does the text indicate that the beauty of female *kalyāṇamitras* is due to their past good actions, but it also

¹⁰⁹ As I demonstrate in the following pages, the *Gv*'s conception of the *dharmakāya* is decidedly more metaphysical than the interpretations discussed by Harrison (1992b).

establishes that a number of female friends possess the Dharma-body (I shall explore the full implication of this position in part III). Because the acquisition of the Dharma-body is equivalent to entry into the Dharma-realm and the attainment of omniscience, I pay special attention to statements about the Dharma-body and use these as one criterion for assessing the spiritual status of the good friends.

In order to understand the worldview of the *Gv*, I have examined its notions of reality, society and the individual. My analysis reveals a primary bifurcation between a conventional level and a higher, spiritual level of experience. Reality is divided into the world-realms and the Dharma-realm; society into mundane, urban society and the society of good friends; the individual into one or many form-bodies and a Dharma-body. As a text with a religious worldview, the *Gv* asserts that the ultimate goal of any individual is to transcend ordinary society and become a member of the spiritual society through visiting and worshipping the good friends. Such activity propels one along the bodhisattva-path and eventually leads to entry into ultimate reality, the undivided *dharmadhātu*. Entrance into the Dharma-realm is synonymous with the attainment of the Dharma-body and with the realisation of omniscience. Although distinct and superior to conventional levels, the higher spiritual reality, society and individual are connected to the lower levels. Thus, the *dharmadhātu* is always and forever immanent within the infinite *lokadhātus* and is often symbolically represented by buildings and bodies. The good friends function within conventional society and are found routinely among its wealthy, royal and female members. Also, the individual who quests for enlightenment (Sudhana) and those who teach the way to it (the *kalyāṇamitras*) tend to be young, beautiful and equally male and female. Although the *Gv* privileges the male gender as spiritually ideal, descriptions of female

good friends and their prominent role within the narrative point to a spiritual emancipation that might well be unparalleled in Indian Buddhist literature.

4. Narrative Structures

Is the *Gaṇḍavyūha* a Mahāyāna Avadāna?

How may we classify the literary genre of the *Gv*? A. K. Warder states that the text is ‘...a highly imaginative religious novel, though it opens in the manner of a *sūtra*’ (1980: 424). Are these two categories—religious novel and *sūtra*—mutually exclusive as Warder seems to think? The *Gv* is clearly a *sūtra* in the traditional Buddhist sense of the word: it begins with the necessary phrase, ‘Thus have I heard...’ (*evaṃ mayā śrutam*) and the Nepalese manuscripts conclude with the statement that, ‘...the noble *Gaṇḍavyūha*, the royal gem of Mahāyāna *sūtras*, is finished’.¹ In the first two complete Chinese translations and in the Tibetan Kanjur versions, the *Gv* constitutes the final chapter of the much larger *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*. This massive work represents the collection of a number of separate *sūtras* brought together to form a single corpus. Thus, if we accept the Buddhist traditions’ own assessments, the *Gv* should be considered a *sūtra*. So why does Warder refer to it as a religious novel?

The concept of the ‘novel’ is fairly modern and we may readily discard Warder’s use of the term as inappropriate for this ancient Indian text. Warder’s designation appears to be inspired by the *Gv*’s progressive narrative structure. Although many Mahāyāna *sūtras* contain narrative portions interspersed with didactic sections,² I know of none other than the *Gv* that are entirely devoted to a single story.³ Therefore, we may consider the *Gv* a special sort of Mahāyāna *sūtra* constructed as a progress narrative relating a young man’s quest for enlightenment.

¹ *āryagaṇḍavyūho mahāyānasūtraratnarājaḥ samāptaḥ* (V 436.28).

² Some examples of this blend of narrative and didactic discourse may be found in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, *Laṅkāvatāra*, *Kāraṇḍavyūha* and *Samādhirāja sūtras* (Ruegg 1999: 211).

³ A possible exception may be the *Lalitavistara*, which the Tibetan Kanjurs classify as a Mahāyāna *sūtra* (Ruegg 1999: 203).

A much shorter version of this type of quest narrative is found in the final section of the *Aṣṭa*.⁴ As I have discussed elsewhere (Osto 1999: 17–18), a number of parallels exist between Sudhana’s story and the story of the bodhisattva Sadāprarudita at the conclusion of the *Aṣṭa*. Both involve a young man’s journey in search of enlightenment at the instruction of a spiritual authority. Sadāprarudita travels in search of his *kalyāṇamitra*, the bodhisattva Dharmodgata, while Sudhana also seeks good friends. Both Sudhana’s encounter with Maitreya and Sadāprarudita’s meeting with Dharmodgata take place at a peaked dwelling (*kūṭāgāra*). In this way, the story of Sudhana may be viewed as an expanded Mahāyāna quest narrative which develops certain motifs found in the story of Sadāprarudita.⁵

Conze maintains (1978: 8) that the story of Sadāprarudita was a late addition to the *Aṣṭa*. If correct, then both stories may fall roughly into the same time period: the first three centuries CE. Their locations in the final sections of much larger Mahāyāna philosophical and didactic works (the *Aṣṭa* and *Av*) implies a certain functional similarity. But what was the functional significance of these quest narratives for Indian Mahāyāna Buddhists during this period?

The general term for a story about the Buddha or Buddhist holy person is a *avadāna* (‘glorious tale’).⁶ Although *avadānas* often contain information about one or more previous lives of their protagonist, this does not seem to be an essential element.⁷ Is it possible then that the authors and target audience of the stories of Sadāprarudita

⁴ For an English translation of this story see Conze 1973a: 277–300.

⁵ By this statement I do not mean to assert the direct influence of Sadāprarudita’s story upon Sudhana’s story, but merely that a comparison of the two suggests a development of certain motifs important to Indian Mahāyāna Buddhists.

⁶ Both Reugg (1994: 203) and Fontain (1981: 106) point out the loose boundary between *jātaka* and *avadāna*—the term *bodhisattvāvadāna* applied to the *jātakas* such as those found in the *Jātakamāla* indicate that *jātakas* were considered a special type of *avadāna* involving the Buddha in a previous life. Also worth noting is that the *Mahāvastu*, which largely contains biographical information about the Buddha, has *avadāna* as part of its title (Reugg 1994: 203).

⁷ See Tatelman 2000.

and Sudhana considered them Mahāyāna *avadānas*? The placement of both stories at the end of long didactic *sūtras* would seem to indicate that they functioned as inspirational tales used to demonstrate certain Buddhist virtues expounded in the preceding philosophical discourses in a more dramatic and emotive manner. The Middle Period of Indian Buddhism saw a flourishing of this type of dramatic narrative literature, generally understood as *avadānas*, and apparently equally embraced by all Buddhists regardless of sectarian affiliation or philosophical school. Since the *Gv* developed in this period, it may well represent a fusion of two genres. In other words, it could be viewed as both a Mahāyāna *sūtra* and an *avadāna*.

Another clue of the *Gv*'s association with the Indian Buddhist *avadāna* tradition is found in the story itself. During several of Sudhana's encounters, the good friends relate stories about their past lives.⁸ About these Fontain (1981: 106) comments:

The fully developed *Mahāyāna-avadāna* occurs in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* where some of Sudhana's women teachers,⁹ especially the Night Goddesses, Gopā, and Māyā, explain in detail how they have attained their advanced stage of enlightenment by virtuous deeds and acts of devotion performed in countless previous births. These stories, like the rest of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, are populated by innumerable Buddhas and Bodhisattvas; *bhakti* is their *Leitmotiv*, and predictions of future Buddhahood occur in the lives of all in whom the *bodhicitta* has just been aroused.

This interpretation highlights two important details. First, by focussing on devotion (*bhakti*) and the arising of *bodhicitta*, they constitute a distinctive type of 'Mahāyāna-avadāna'. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, the *Gv* asserts a spiritual path that is above all devotional. Second, the fact that several prominent *kalyāṇamitras* use these stories indicates the value that *avadānas* held for the authors and target audience of the *Gv*. Given the importance of these glorious tales within the

⁸ See V 115.19–29, 133.30–134.21, 156.8–18, 178.16–179.28, 196.1–202.7, 207.1–217.4, 235.20–239.14, 249.6–263.2, 272.26–283.30, 295.9–296.16, 309.1–332.8, and 348.16–349.12.

⁹ These stories are not just told by female good friends—the story at V 115.19–29 is by Ratnacūḍa (*km#16*).

text itself, it is easy to see how the *Gv* as a whole was conceived as an expansive Mahāyāna-style ‘*Sudhanāvadāna*’.¹⁰

Structural Narratology

In order to understand better the story of Sudhana and its relation to the worldview of the *Gv*, I will now analyse the narrative structure of the story using concepts outlined by the Dutch narratologist Mieke Bal (1997).¹¹ I begin where Bal begins—with a number of definitions—and then apply these terms to an analysis of the *Gv*. According to Bal, a ‘text’ is ‘a finite, structured whole composed of language signs’ (5). This definition, although it ignores the bibliographic codes which make up a text (McGann 1991: 13),¹² is sufficient for our immediate concerns. Bal defines a ‘narrative text’ as ‘a text in which an agent relates (“tells”) a story in a particular medium, such as language, imagery, sound, buildings, or a combination thereof’ (5). ‘A *story* is a fabula that is presented in a certain manner. A *fabula* is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors’ (ibid.; italics hers). Bal’s division of a narrative into text, story and fabula is generally recognised by structural narratologists¹³ and will function as a useful analytical tool to investigate the structure of the *Gv*. Departing from Bal’s ordering somewhat,¹⁴ I shall discuss first text, then fabula and story.

¹⁰ In the *Divyavadāna* there is a story about a prince (the Buddha in a former life) named Sudhana called the *Sudhanakumāravadāna* (see Cowell and Neil 1875: 441ff). There is also a similar story of a prince Sudhanu in the *Mahāvastu* (see Jones 1952: 95ff). These two seem to be the same prince, but different from Sudhana, the merchant-banker’s son, the hero of the *Gv*.

¹¹ All following page references to Bal are from Bal 1997.

¹² See discussion of textual ontology in my introduction.

¹³ See my introduction.

¹⁴ Bal’s ordering is text, story, fabula (1997).

Text

The agent that relates a narrative text is called a ‘narrator’. In structural narratology, a narrator is *not* conceived of as an actual person, but rather as a function of narration (Bal: 16). Bal distinguishes between two types of narrator: an ‘external narrator’ or ‘EN’ and a ‘character-bound narrator’ or ‘CN’ (22). An external narrator of a narrative text is a narrator that never mentions him/herself and thus is external to the text. Like all Buddhist *sūtras*, the *Gv* begins with the words *evam mayā śrutam*, which indicates according to tradition that the Buddha’s faithful monk-servant Ānanda recited the text at the first council from memory. Therefore, theoretically Ānanda, as the mouth-piece of the Buddha, is the EN for the *Gv*. However, by the time of the composition/compilation of our text, the beginning phrase *evam mayā śrutam* seems to function more stylistically and rhetorically. Above all, it indicates that a text enjoys the status of a *sūtra* and appears to have lost any connection to a particular historical recitation.¹⁵

The EN of the *Gv* begins ‘telling’ the narrative as a witness to a scene at the Jeta Grove in Śrāvastī where the Buddha Vairocana is surrounded by bodhisattvas, disciples and other beings. From this location, the EN follows the movements of Mañjuśrī to Dhanyākara where he meets Sudhana, and from then on describes all of Sudhana’s activities. In the course of this narration, twelve good friends tell their own *avadānas*. Bal calls this type of narrative within a larger narrative an ‘embedded narrative text’ (52). While these narratives are told, the narration switches from the EN to a character-bound narrator (CN) who relates the text from his/her own point of view. In the shorter *avadānas*, the CNs use the first person (‘once I was so-and-so and I met the Buddha of that age...’), but for the longer ones, narrated by the goddesses, Gopā and

¹⁵ Ānanda is never mentioned in the *Gv*, nor does the text tell Sudhana’s story as if it were a discourse of the Buddha.

Māyā, the CNs relate the embedded narrative in the same manner as the EN tells the larger narrative of Sudhana's quest. It is only at the conclusion of the *avadānas*, that they state that they are a particular character in the narrative. In this manner, the CNs of the longer *avadānas* function only as CNs from the point of view of the narrative text of the whole *Gv*; within the embedded *avadāna* texts they are ENs.

Not all parts of a narrative text are, strictly speaking, narrative. Because a narrative, as Bal defines it, is a chronological sequence of events narrated in a particular manner, sentences or passages that do not relate these events Bal refers to as 'argumentative' or 'descriptive' passages (31–43). Bal defines argumentative passages as passages that 'do not refer to an element (process or object) of the fabula, but to an external topic' (32–33). This definition would include both opinions and statements about the state of the world. Therefore, as Bal points out, argumentative passages often give explicit information about the ideology of a text (34). Descriptive passages are those in which features are attributed to objects (Bal: 36). Because descriptions interrupt the sequence of events in the fabula, the manner in which they are inserted 'characterize the rhetorical strategy of the narrator' (Bal: 37).

If one reads the *Gv* in order to determine which passages are narrative, argumentative or descriptive, one soon realises that the vast majority of the text *is not narrative*. Most of the passages I cite from the *Gv* in my analysis of the text's worldview, for example, are argumentative or descriptive. These passages best illustrate the ideological structures that constitute the text's worldview. In the introduction, I define the meaning of a narrative as its role within a worldview. By carefully examining the text's argumentative and descriptive passages, I develop a framework with which to analyse the narrative of the text. The actual narrative passages of the *Gv* involving a sequential series of actions form only the barest of

skeletons that is filled in by lengthy descriptions and some significant argumentation. The objects, opinions and statements about the world reported in these passages, the manner in which they are described and the relation of these passages to the fabula, all constitute the rhetorical strategies of the narrator. Before investigating some of the forces involved in these strategies, we must analyse the structures of the fabula and story.

Fabula

Structural narratology rests on the assumption that all narratives share certain elements which allow them to be recognised as narratives (Bal: 175). These elements are necessarily abstract and are thought to function on a deep structural level—the level of fabula (ibid.).¹⁶ As mentioned above, Bal defines a fabula as ‘a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors’. Events, according to Bal, are ‘the transition from one state to another state, caused or experienced by actors’ (182). Borrowing concepts from Greimas, Bal divides actors into a number of different classes based on their shared characteristics in relation to the telos of the fabula (195–198). This approach implies a certain functional homology between the structure of a fabula and the structure of a sentence (Bal: 196). Actors of every fabula have an aim which represents the telos of the fabula. Actors who follow this aim are analogous to the subject of a sentence, while the aim represents the object. The intention to achieve this aim functions as the verb. Thus the entire fabula of the *Gv* may be structured as the following sentence ‘Sudhana (subject) wants (verb) enlightenment (object)’.

¹⁶ The category of ‘fabula’ was first used by the Russian formalists (Onega and Landa 1996: 23). Although the terminology differs among theorists, the general assumption that narratives may be divided into discreet levels of analysis that distinguish between a series of events and their presentation is a fundamental presupposition of structural narratology. In a brilliant essay, Jonathan Culler points out a ‘contrary logic’ that exists between these two levels that cannot be synthesised (1981: 169–187). But rather than discarding analysis in the face of this ‘self-deconstructive’ aspect of narrative, Culler suggests a flexibility that allows one to shift perspectives from one level to the next and back again (1981: 187).

Another important class of actors Bal calls ‘the power’ (198). The power is the actor that enables the subject to achieve the aim of the fabula. It may be a person or a characteristic. In addition to the power, there are two other classes of actors: helpers and opponents, who aid or obstruct the subject. In order to distinguish between power and helper, Bal provides a number of characteristics for each (201). The power ‘has power over the whole enterprise; is often abstract; often remains in the background; usually only one’. The helper ‘can give only incidental aid; is mostly concrete; often comes to the fore; usually multiple’. If we continue with the analogy of sentence structure, the power, helpers and opponents may be understood as ‘adverbial adjuncts’ (ibid.). Applying these classes of actors to the *Gv*, we may identify Vairocana Buddha as the power, the good friends as the helpers and Sudhana’s own ignorance of the bodhisattva’s path as the opponent. The following sentence thus represents the fabula: ‘Sudhana, despite his ignorance, achieves enlightenment through the help of the good friends and the Buddha’.

So how does this analysis help us in understanding the *Gv*’s narrative? By examining the narrative at the level of fabula, we are able to distil the basic features of Sudhana’s story in relation to the universal categories of narrative. The application of Bal’s approach has highlighted a class of actors in fabulas that is particularly important for this study: the power. Bal’s characterisation of the power (abstract, in the background, singular) perfectly describes Vairocana Buddha. In part III, I discuss the ways in which Vairocana is manifested in the story through the activities of the good friends.

Story

The story is the particular manner in which a fabula is told. At this level, suspense, ideology and point of view all come into play (Bal: 79). Therefore, a correct

understanding of the structural features of Sudhana's story is essential before we can discuss forces in the following chapters. The features that distinguish the story from the fabula, Bal refers to as 'aspects' (78). Several aspects are particularly relevant to the present study.

Bal first discusses sequential ordering (80–99). In the fabula, the sequence of events is analysed chronologically. In the story, the fabula is told in any number ways; sometimes stories start *in media res*, and often there are retroversions ('flash-backs') and anticipations ('flash-forwards') (Bal: 84). Bal refers to differences between the arrangement of a story and the chronology of a fabula as 'chronological deviations' or 'anachronies' (83). The sequential ordering of Sudhana's story is strictly chronological. I discuss the importance of this type of sequencing later in this chapter.

The second aspect relevant to this study is rhythm. According to Bal, rhythm is a functional relationship between the time of the fabula (TF) and the time of the story (TS) (102). The TF corresponds to the amount of 'real' time that is supposed to have transpired during the course of events in the fabula. The TS is the amount of time used in 'telling' a certain portion of the fabula and may be expressed in the number of pages, lines or words used (Bal: 100). Descriptive and argumentative passages generally create a 'pause' where the TS continues, but the TF has stopped (there are no events taking place). In a summary the TF exceeds the TS ('Sudhana wandered for many years' would be an example of a summary). During scenes, dialogues and monologues there is a general equivalence between TF and TS—the events and their 'telling' are taking place at roughly the same time.

Position and Weight

Analysis of the sequential ordering and rhythm in the *Gv*'s story may be useful in developing criteria to determine the spiritual status of the various good friends.

Because each *kalyāṇamitra* proclaims his/her own ultimate ignorance¹⁷ and then sends Sudhana to the next good friend, a good friend's position earlier in the story may be used as a general indication of lower status. Examining the rhythm of the story as a percentage of the total text¹⁸ devoted to each *kalyāṇamitra* may also provide an indication of status. I refer to this criterion as the 'weight' of a section. For example, using position and weight, we find that Ratnacūḍa is the sixteenth good friend and Sudhana's visit with him constitutes only .69% of the total text; while Maitreya is the fifty-second *kalyāṇamitra* and 11.9% of the total text is devoted to this section. Thus by these criteria, we may assume that Maitreya has greater status than Ratnacūḍa.¹⁹

Position and weight are only useful guidelines to determining status. Other aspects of the story reveal further useful criteria. Determining the spiritual status of the various *kalyāṇamitras* enables us to gauge the relative importance of events and speech acts that occur in the story. By using structural analysis, we are able to gauge the ideological force of passages dealing with wealth, gender and power in part III.

Characters

The most important aspect of any story are its characters. Bal defines a character as 'the effect that occurs when an actor [in a fabula] is endowed with distinctive human characteristics' (115). Thus, whereas an actor is a more abstract concept defined simply as the agent of events in a fabula, a character emerges in a story as a more defined personality. Although there are many characters in the *Gv*, there is minimal character development. Often the good friends represent personifications of Buddhist virtues and, as such, lack personal characteristics. The story supplies general information about the characters including the name of their city or town, their

¹⁷ There are five good friends who do not (see chapter 3).

¹⁸ I determine the percentage by taking the total number of pages in the Vaidya edition (436) and dividing by the number of pages devoted to the good friend.

¹⁹ See appendix A for a list of *kalyāṇamitras* with their percentages.

occupation and spiritual attainment.²⁰ The *Gv* provides detailed information about the physical appearance of some of the good friends and very little or none for others.

Certain geographical locations, occupations and physical descriptions possess ideological implications that may also be used to determine the spiritual status of the good friends. When the story refers to a *kalyāṇamitra* as a brahmin from the ‘southern region’ (*dakṣiṇāpatha*),²¹ or a goddess (*devatā*) from Vairocana’s site of enlightenment (*vairocanabodhimaṇḍa*),²² each of these characterisations must be compared to the position and weight of the section devoted to that particular good friend. From these we may determine the *kalyāṇamitra*’s spiritual status and the ideological significance.

Literary theorists often refer to the central character of a story as the ‘hero’. The hero of a story generally represents the characterisation of the actor-subject of the fabula.²³ In our discussion of the fabula, I identified Sudhana as the subject of the analogical sentence representing the fabula of the *Gv*. Is Sudhana the hero of the story? Bal (132) lists a number of criteria to determine whether a character may be considered the hero:

- *qualification*: comprehensive information about appearance, psychology, motivation, past
- *distribution*: the hero occurs often in the story, his or her presence is felt at important moments in the fabula
- *independence*: the hero can occur alone or hold monologues
- *function*: certain actions are those of the hero alone: s/he makes agreements, vanquishes opponents, unmasks traitors, etc.
- *relations*: s/he maintains relations with the largest number of characters (italics mine).

²⁰ Vaidya provides a useful list of each *kalyāṇamitra*, their place of residence, vocation, special attainment and result of that attainment (V XXIV–XXIX). See also my appendix A.

²¹ Jayoṣmāyatana (*km#10*).

²² *kms#34–39* are night goddesses.

²³ Bal states that, ‘Sometimes, the hero can also be equated, in many ways, with the actantial subject’ (132). Unless I have misunderstood her analysis of the actors in a fabula, it seems to me that the hero would most often be equated with this subject.

When we compare Sudhana's character to others in the story using distribution, independence, function and relations, he is the obvious choice as hero. Once the narrator introduces him, Sudhana is present throughout the entire story, his external and internal experiences are the central focus of the story and he encounters the greatest number of other characters.

Although it would be difficult to imagine readers not intuitively identifying Sudhana as the hero of the *Gv*, by applying Bal's criteria, we are able to offer structural reasons for this choice. Identification of the hero is crucial for the current study: the narrator's choice of a hero and his attributes provide important information about the story's ideological position (Bal: 132). Therefore, in part III, I pay close attention to the entire range of Sudhana's attributes, actions and statements.

Space

Space is another aspect of stories that is particularly relevant to the *Gv*. Bal defines space as the relation of places to their points of perception (133). A place is the location of events in a fabula (Bal: 214). Thus, the relationship between place and space is analogous to the relationship between actors and characters: the first term is a more abstract concept of the fabula, while the second term is a more concrete notion arising from the telling of the story. According to Bal, spaces can function merely as 'frames' (locations of actions), or may be 'thematized', and thereby become objects of presentation for their own sake (136).

In the previous chapter, I establish that space plays a central role in relation to the distinction between the *dharmadhātu* (which encompasses all spacetime) and the multitude of *lokadhātus* of relative spacetime. By representing the *dharmadhātu* as a building, the *Gv* clearly 'thematizes' space in the manner described by Bal. Such thematisation of space also takes place through Sudhana's travels. Some of the

locations that he visits possess special significance for Indian Buddhists, such as the place of the Buddha's birth at Lumbhinī Grove, or the site of his enlightenment. In this way, space becomes thematised as 'sacred space', and events which occur in these locations reveal clues to the story's ideological orientation.

Space is further thematised through the structure of the story as a travel narrative. Bal offers important insights into this genre:

In many travel stories, the movement is the goal in itself. It is expected to result in a change, liberation, introspection, wisdom, or knowledge. It tends to be gender-specific as well: in traditional genres, men travel whereas women stay at home (137).

Sudhana's quest for enlightenment clearly represents an Indian Mahāyāna version of this type of travel story. Sudhana, the male hero, travels tirelessly for years and years searching for spiritual liberation. Although he visits numerous female good friends, as in other traditional travel stories, these women all stay at home. Bal states that in these types of stories movement is often circular—the character returns to his or her point of departure (ibid.). Sudhana's story is also circular—before his final encounter with the bodhisattva Samantabhadra, Mañjuśrī returns Sudhana in his 'own place'.²⁴ According to Bal, this type of circularity thematises space as a labyrinth, unsafety or confinement (137). In part III, I pay close attention to these types of thematisation in order to understand the roles of the *dharmadhātu*, sacred space and travel.

Focalization

There is one other aspect that warrants special mention: 'focalization'.²⁵ Bal defines focalization as the relations between the elements of the fabula and the vision through which they are presented (142). In this manner, focalization describes the process of perspective (both psychological and physical) from which a story is told (Bal: 143).

²⁴ *svadeśe* (V 419.13). See chapter 16.

²⁵ Focalization is probably Bal's most significant single contribution to the field of structural narratology. Because it is a technical term, I preserve Bal's American spelling of the word.

Focalization, like narration, may either be internal or external to the story. When it is internal, focalization is from the point of view of a character. Thus Bal refers to internal focalization as ‘character-bound focalization (CF)’, and non-character bound focalization as ‘external focalization (EF)’ (148). CF can shift from one character to another even though the narrator remains constant (ibid.). Most of the *Gv* is narrated by an external narrator (EN) and also focalized by an external focalizer. The focalized object of most of the story is the thoughts, actions and experiences of Sudhana. Words such as the verb form ‘saw’ indicate a change in level of focalization (Bal: 158). Hence, when the external narrator states that Sudhana saw a particular vision, the level of focalization shifts from EF to CF—Sudhana becomes the character-bound focalizer and his vision the object focalized, while the level of narration remains the same.

As MacMahan (1998, 2002) demonstrates, the *Gv* is replete with visionary experience. Because of its concern with visual perception, Bal’s notion of focalization is particularly useful for analysing the story. According to Bal, focalization is ‘...the most important, most penetrating, and most subtle means of manipulation’ (171). Because of this, she advocates employing the notion to uncover ‘hidden ideology’ embedded in texts (ibid.). In order to identify the prevailing ideological overcodings embedded in the *Gv*, I shall observe shifts in focalization signalled by forms of the verb ‘to see’.

Style and Formulae

Before preceding to part III, a number of comments need to be made on the *Gv*’s style and use of stock formulae. The narrative is extremely verbose in both descriptive and argumentative passages.²⁶ This characteristic is common throughout the *Av*. In order

²⁶ This abundant verbiage has been commented on, somewhat disparagingly, by Griffiths (1981).

to render the text more accessible, I employ a number of strategies to deal with this seemingly endless cascade of words. First, I focus solely on those passages that are directly relevant to the current study. Second, I paraphrase and summarise passages that do not need a word-for-word translation. Finally, I abbreviate using of ‘etc.’ and ‘so forth’ for long lists of spiritual qualities and descriptive features. This last method is rather inexact, but I provide the page and line numbers of the entire passage in the Vaidya edition for the interested reader.²⁷

As is typical of Buddhist *sūtras* in general, repetition is a common feature in the story. This may be due to the original oral nature of Buddhist literature.²⁸ It is entirely possible that sections, particularly some of the hybridised verse, represent an early oral strata that was incorporated into the body of a written text. Regardless of whether the Mahāyāna began as a written tradition or not,²⁹ its *sūtras* incorporated this repetitive style. A common characteristic is the use of stock formulae, particularly in standard greetings.³⁰ The *Gv* employs a number of these formulae, repeated in various forms during each encounter. In order to provide a sense of the basic structure of Sudhana’s visits, I shall now cite examples of five formulae that occur throughout the narrative.

1) Question Formula

During Sudhana’s encounter with Mañjuśrī, his first good friend, our hero asks a long list of questions about a bodhisattva’s course of conduct. I refer to this collection of questions as the ‘Question’ formula. In order convey a sense of its content, I shall translate its first occurrence in full:

Noble One, please explain in detail, how should a bodhisattva learn the course of conduct of a bodhisattva? How should it be understood? How

²⁷ See also my appendix B (a concordance of V, SI, and A), and appendix C (a concordance of the Derge, Peking and Tog Palace Tibetan Kanjur versions of the *Gv*).

²⁸ See Allon 1997; Collins 1992; Cousins 1983.

²⁹ See chapter 1, where I discuss this issue in relation to the views of Gombrich (1990) and McMahan (1998).

³⁰ For a detailed study of these formulae in the Pāli Canon see Allon 1997.

should a bodhisattva undertake the course of conduct of a bodhisattva, follow it, perfect it, purify it, comprehend it, accomplish it, go after it, grasp hold of it, or expand it?

*yad ārya vistareṇa kathaṃ bodhisattvena bodhisattvacaryāyāṃ śikṣitavyam? kathaṃ pratipattavyam? kathaṃ bodhisattvena bodhisattvacaryā prārabhyā?*³¹ *kathaṃ bodhisattvena bodhisattvacaryāyāṃ caritavyam? kathaṃ bodhisattvena bodhisattvacaryā paripūrayitavyā? kathaṃ bodhisattvena bodhisattvacaryā pariśodhayitavyā? kathaṃ bodhisattvena bodhisattvacaryā avatartavyā? kathaṃ bodhisattvena bodhisattvacaryā abhinirhartavyā? kathaṃ bodhisattvena bodhisattvacaryā anusartavyā? kathaṃ bodhisattvena bodhisattvacaryā adhyālambitavyā? kathaṃ bodhisattvena bodhisattvacaryā vistartavyā?* (V 46.16–22).³²

The exact content of the ‘Question’ formula varies considerably throughout the narrative, but it tends to begin with the basic question, ‘How is a bodhisattva to learn the course of conduct of a bodhisattva?’ (*kathaṃ bodhisattvena bodhisattvacarāyāṃ śikṣitavyam*).

2) Go and Ask Formula

The Mañjuśrī section contains two other significant stock formulae that I call the ‘Go and Ask’ formula and the ‘Departing’ formula. Both occur with slight variations at the end of almost every section. The first occurrence of the ‘Go and Ask’ formula reads:

There is,³³ Son of Good Family, in this very world, in the southern region, a country named Rāmāvarānta. There is a mountain there called Sugrīva. On that mountain lives a monk named Meghaśrī. Approach him and ask—‘how should a bodhisattva learn the course of conduct of a bodhisattva, how should it be engaged in? How should the course of conduct of a bodhisattva be undertaken, followed, perfected, purified, comprehended, accomplished, gone after, grasped, expanded? How is the circle of the universally good course of conduct to be accomplished by a bodhisattva?’ Son of Good Family, that good friend will teach you about the circle of the universally good course of conduct.

*asti kulaputra ihaiva dakṣiṇāpathe rāmāvarānto nāma janapadaḥ.
tatra sugrīvo nāma parvataḥ. tatra meghaśrīr nāma bhikṣuḥ*

³¹ SI 57.5 reads *prārabdhyā*. This seems to be a mistake. The conjunct in this word at A 30r.2 is difficult to read. To my mind it could be a *bhyā*, *dyā* or *dhyā*. The reading of SI, *bdhyā*, seems very unlikely.

³² SI 57.3–10; D ga323r.1–5; C 1178.

³³ Most sections have the imperative verb ‘go’ (*gaccha*), instead of the verb to be (*asti*) in this position.

prativasati. tam upasaṃkramya pariṇṛccha—kathaṃ bodhisattvena bodhisattvacaryāyāṃ śikṣitavyam, kathaṃ prayoktavyam? kathaṃ bodhisattvacaryā prārabhyā?³⁴ kathaṃ bodhisattvacaryāyāṃ caritavyam? kathaṃ bodhisattvacaryā paripūrayitavyā? kathaṃ pariśodhayitavyā? kathaṃ avatartavyā? kathaṃ abhinirhartavyā? kathaṃ anusartavyā? kathaṃ adhyālambitavyā? kathaṃ vistārayitavyā? kathaṃ bodhisattvasya paripūrṇaṃ bhavati samantabhadracaryāmaṇḍalam? sa te kulaputra kalyāṇamitraḥ samantabhadracaryāmaṇḍalam upadekṣyati (V 47.18–24).³⁵

The general structure of this formula consists of the *kalyāṇamitra* Sudhana is visiting telling him to ‘go’ (*gaccha*) to a place often in the ‘southern region’ (*dakṣiṇāpathe*). Then the statement that a certain good friend lives there, followed by the imperative ‘ask’ (*pariṇṛccha*) him/her some version of the ‘Question’ formula. Notice that the ‘Question’ formula repeated by the bodhisattva is very similar to Sudhana’s initial ‘Question’ formula, but not exactly the same.

3) Departing Formula

The next stock set of expressions is the ‘Departing’ formula. This first occurrence reads as follows:

Then Sudhana, the son of the merchant-banker, pleased, enraptured, transported with joy, delighted, content, full of joy and gladness respectfully saluted by placing his head at the feet of princely Mañjuśrī. He circumambulated the princely Mañjuśrī many hundreds of thousands of times, and gazed upon (him) many hundreds of thousands of times, while his mind lingered behind out of love for the good friend, unable to bear not seeing the good friend, crying with tears streaming down his face, he departed from the presence of the princely Mañjuśrī.

atha khalu sudhanaḥ śreṣṭhidāraḥ tuṣṭa udagra āttamanāḥ pramuditaḥ prītsaumanasyajāto mañjuśrīyaḥ kumārabhūtasya pādau śirasābhivandya mañjuśrīyaṃ kumārabhūtam anekaśatasahasrakṛtvāḥ pradakṣiṇīkṛtya anekaśatasahasrakṛtvo >valokya kalyāṇamitrapremānugatacittaḥ kalyāṇamitrādarśanamasahamāno >śrumukho rudan mañjuśrīyaḥ kumārabhūtasyaṅtikāt prakrāntaḥ (V 47.25–28).³⁶

³⁴ SI 58.19 (= A 30v.5) reads *prārabdhyā*. See above note.

³⁵ SI 58.16–24; D ga324r.3–7; C 1179.

³⁶ SI 58.24–59.3; D ga324r.7–324v.2; C 1179–80.

Standard elements in the formula involve Sudhana saluting, circumambulating and looking at the *kalyāṇamitra* many of hundreds of thousands of times, and then leaving his/her presence.³⁷

4) Approach Formula

When Sudhana approaches the next good friend, the monk Meghaśrī, he performs a set of standard devotional acts, which I call the ‘Approach’ formula. The first occurrence reads: ‘After approaching the monk Meghaśrī and saluting him by placing his head at his feet, he circumambulated him, stood in front of him with his palms placed together and said this:...’³⁸ This formula is used to express Sudhana’s reverence for the good friends and to introduce his ‘Question’ formula. There are very slight variations of it throughout our hero’s encounters.

5) Statement of Attainment and Ignorance Formula

At the conclusion of Sudhana’s visit to Meghaśrī, the monk makes a declaration to our hero which I call the ‘Statement of Attainment and Ignorance’ formula. Its first occurrence begins:

Son of Good Family, I have attained a recollection of the buddhas from this light manifesting and uniting all entrances and all locations. How am I able to know the course of conduct of those bodhisattvas purified through the circle of infinite knowledge, or speak of their qualities—those who have obtained entrance into a recollection of buddhas within the group of all lights through having a vision directed toward the pure array that is the dwelling place of the collection of all *tathāgatas* and all buddha-fields?

*asyā ahaṃ kulaputra samantamukha-³⁹ sarvārambaṇavijñapti-
samavasaraṇālokāyā-⁴⁰ buddhānusmṛter lābhī. kiṃ mayā śakyaṃ*

³⁷ The additional elements included in this first occurrence of the ‘Departing’ formula, such as the strong emotional element of shedding tears, I attribute to the particular importance of Mañjuśrī in the narrative. As one of Vairocana’s primary ‘helpers’ and the one that sends Sudhana on his quest, this bodhisattva has a special relationship with our hero, not unlike the *iṣṭadevatās* of the later Tantric tradition, or the patron saints of medieval Christianity.

³⁸ *sa yena meghaśrīr bhikṣus tenopasaṃkramya meghaśrīyo bhikṣoḥ pādau śirasābhivandya meghaśriyaṃ bhikṣuṃ pradakṣiṇīkṛtya purataḥ prāñjaliḥ sthītṛvā etad avocat:...* (V 48.8–9; SI 59.12–14; C 1180).

³⁹ SI 61.6 reads *samantamukhaṃ*. The word at A 32r.3 might end in an *anusvāra*.

*bodhisattvānāṃ anantajñānaṃaṇḍalaviśuddhānāṃ caryā jñātum,
guṇān⁴¹ va vaktum, ye te samantāvabhasamaṇḍala-
buddhānusmṛtimukhapratilabdhaḥ
sarvatathātamaṇḍalasarvabuddhakṣetrabhavana-
viśuddhivūhābhimukhapasāyanatayā (V 49.15–18).⁴²*

These statements continue for twenty-four more lines (V49.19–50.10). The standard features of this formula are the good friend’s statement of attainment—usually a liberation (*vimokṣa*), light of knowledge (*jñānāloka*), or entrance (*mukha*)—and a declaration of ignorance beginning with ‘how am I able...’ (*kiṃ mayā śakyaṃ...*). The actual content of what the *kalyāṇamitra* does not know varies considerably and is usually related to their particular attainment. As I mention in chapter 3, every good friend makes this statement of ignorance except for five.

Now that we have developed a vocabulary, set of analytical tools and a comprehension of the *Gv*’s basic structures, we are prepared to examine the conceptions of wealth, gender and power within the narrative.

⁴⁰ SI 61.7 reads *–kāyāṃ*. The reading at A 32r.3 does not appear to have an *anusvāra*. The ms. is smudged.

⁴¹ SI 61.8 reads *guṇā*. A 32r.4 reads *gūṇāṃ*.

⁴² SI 61.6–10; D ga326v.1–3; C 1181.

Part III: Forces

Introduction to Part III

In the introduction, I propose to study the concept of wealth, gender and power in the *Gv*. I claim that my approach is to use critically the legitimate means of knowledge of my time and place to analyse a different worldview of a people from a different time and place. Parts I and II function as a means of describing my 'point of view'. In others words, when I 'look' at the *Gaṇḍavyūha* with my twenty-first century, Modernist, Anglo-American, male, white, academic 'eyes' this is what I 'see'. This particular vision is largely concerned with historical processes, cultural contexts, patterns of patronage, structures of worldviews and narratives. But there may be a way to imagine a perspective on the story that recreates a vision of Sudhana's journey closer to the viewpoint of the authors and target audience. I attempt to do this in the remaining chapters by applying the concept of narrative 'force'.

Based on notions developed by Derrida,¹ Andrew Gibson has attacked structural narratology's neglect of narrative 'force' in favour of 'geometrics' (Gibson 1996: 3–8, 32–68). As an approach to narrative, geometrics is the use of spatial metaphor and imagery to analyse stories in order to uncover their structures as one would investigate a piece of architecture. The weakness of this method is that it ignores the temporality of stories, in favour of a spatial metaphor, which views them as geometric structures existing in their totality at any given moment. Derrida refers to this structural approach as an appeal to 'the theological simultaneity of the book' (Derrida 2001: 28). By studying narrative as a simultaneously existing geometric structure, narratology fails to

¹ See Jacques Derrida (2001) 'Force and Signification' in *Writing and Difference*, translated with an introduction and additional notes by Alan Bass, London: Routledge Classics, pp. 1–35. Gibson continually cites 'Derrida 1990', but there is no such reference in his Bibliography. In an email correspondence (September 2002), he informed me that the reference should be 'Derrida 1978' (the first published English translation of *Writing and Difference*).

take notice of stories' use of 'force' or 'energetics' (Gibson 1996: 33). Force may be understood in this context as the progressive unfolding of the story as it takes place within time, with all of its dramatic disclosures, suspense, asides, foreshadowing and reversals. By paying attention to the tempo, rhythm and pace of a story as it reveals its content, one is better able to grasp the force of narrative poetics within time. According to Derrida, the force of a work is 'precisely that which resists geometric metaphorization and is the proper object of literary criticism' (Derrida 2001: 23).

Inspired by Jonathan Culler's belief that deconstruction complements rather than delegitimises structural theory,² I attempt a synthesis of structure and force in my analysis of the *Gv*. I propose to do this by extending the spatial metaphor of geometrics to include a fourth dimension—time. Having defined the *sūtra*'s worldview and narrative structures in the previous chapters, in the chapters that follow I move through the story sequentially highlighting how these structures manifest themselves as the narrative unfolds. In this way, the remaining 'time of my dissertation' parallels the 'story-time' of the *Gv*. Through this approach I hope to capture some aspect of the impact or force that the narrative might have had for the ancient Indian audience.

Like Barabaður in Java, the *Gaṇḍavyūha* possesses countless forces moving through it and within it. Nevertheless, these forces exist within structures and need to be understood within this context. By focussing on certain themes, I examine how forces and structures interact within the text to create specific ideological positions. This approach is based on Eco's notion that texts are ideologically overcoded.³ Because every text contains an over-abundance of semiotic codes, whenever a text is read, novel

² See my introduction.

³ See my introduction.

readings may be produced through the interaction of the reader's and the text's ideologies. In my terminology, when a worldview encounters another worldview new interpretations may emerge. I have chosen wealth, gender and power as topics of study because these are central to the *Gv* worldview and the narrative provides an abundance of previously unstudied information on these subjects. In the remaining chapters, I focus on key sections that best show how these themes are woven together. Therefore, I spend quite a bit of time on certain sections, while completely skipping over others that I judge irrelevant to the current study.⁴

Very often, one of these themes is emphasised above others; at other times, all three blend seamlessly into each other. As the tale of our hero unfolds through time within its worldview and narrative structures, ideological positions on wealth, gender and power are revealed, developed and elaborated. But let me first introduce the three themes that are the focus of the remainder of my study.

Wealth

Description of fabulous wealth are extremely common in the *Gv*. Almost every page contains some reference to diamonds, gems, jewels, gold or other precious substances. Why do such conspicuous displays of fabulous wealth occur so often in the *Gv*? Thomas Cleary (1993: 1531) in an appendix to his translation of the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* states that,

Jewels and precious substances symbolize enlightening teachings....

⁴ See appendix A, for a complete list of *kalyāṇamītras*. Two female good friends, Surendrābhā (*km# 43*) and Bhadrattamā (*km#46*), has not been included, because the position, weight and content of these sections make them of minor importance for this study. All other *kalyāṇamītras* not discussed, such as the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara (*km#28*) and Ananyagāmin (*km#29*), have been excluded for the same reason.

Canopies or parasols represent protection from afflictions, inclusion in a sphere of activity or enlightenment, compassion, breadth of mind, and universality of knowledge.

Seats, thrones, and residences represent spiritual states, stability, or spheres of awareness and action.

Banners and pennants stand for virtues, outward manifestations of qualities or realizations, excellences of character;...

Personal ornaments such as garlands and jewellery represent virtues, knowledge, skills, or cultivation of one's faculties.

Cleary's explanation for the occurrence of these objects may either reflect the views of the Chinese commentators or his own interpretation (he does not cite a source). But does it reflect the understanding of the composers and Indian audience of the story? Why would wealth functions metaphorically to represent elevated spiritual states? Because 'metaphor is never innocent' (Derrida 2002: 19), we must ask this question. The Pāli *suttas*, for instance, abound with a concern for, and constant discussion of compassion, excellence of character, virtues and cultivations of one's faculties without using material wealth to represent them. I have not found any evidence within the *Gv* itself which indicates that particular objects represent certain spiritual virtues. Nor have I found it necessary to interpret descriptions of wealth as metaphorical. Rather, as I argue in the following pages, I believe the narrator of the story was deeply concerned with 'real'⁵ material wealth, its relation to the spiritual path, and to the very nature of reality.

Although descriptions of wealth are not unique to the *Gv* in Indian Buddhist literature,⁶ the story is distinctive for the frequency, length and self-consciousness with which such descriptions are used. Particularly valuable objects and substances are mentioned throughout the narrative. Commonly occurring are the 'seven precious

⁵ I use 'real' here in the every day common sense of the word, rather than in a metaphysical sense.

⁶ See for example the *Mahāvastu* (Jones 1949: 41), the *Aṣṭa* (Conze 1973: 288), *The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom* (Conze 1975: 39), the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* (Kern 1963 (1884): 87) and the *Akṣayamatīnirdeśa-sūtra* (Braarvig 1993: 24, 50).

objects' (*sapta ratna*): gold (*suvarṇa*), silver (*rūpya*), lapis lazuli (*vaidūrya*), crystal (*sphaṭika*), red pearl (*lokitamukti*), emerald (*raśmigarbha*) and coral (*musāragalva*).⁷

Also mentioned frequently are diamonds (*vajra*), gems (*ratna*), jewels (*maṇi*) and 'jewel-gems' (*maṇiratna*). Monier-Williams cites this last term as a neuter noun meaning 'a jewel, gem' and states that 'with Buddhists "one of a sovereign's 7 treasures"'.⁸ I interpret this compound as a *karmadhāraya* referring to a particular kind of gem.

Therefore, I translate the compound (for lack of a better solution) as a 'maṇi-gem'.

Another fairly common object that often features among the jewellery of the good friends are 'wish-fulfilling gems' (*cintāmaṇi*). *Cintāmaṇis* (literally 'thought-gems') are magical objects that grant their owners whatever they desire.⁹ In the *Gv*, these are often called 'royal thought-gems' (*cintārājamaṇi*), 'royal thought-maṇi-gems' (*cintārājamaṇiratna*), or even 'royal, great, thought maṇi-gems' (*cintārājamahāmaṇiratna*).¹⁰

Wealth in the *Gv* takes three forms: 1) wealth enjoyed by particular individuals, 2) wealth that magically appears, 3) the magical transformation of mundane landscapes into bejewelled lands. Descriptions of the first type occur frequently throughout the story. Prominent examples of good friends that dwell in fabulous abodes and are adorned with countless treasures are the queen Āśā,¹¹ the courtesan Vasumitrā,¹² and the kings Anala¹³

⁷ For an example of this list in the *Gv* see V 124.17–19. For references to these seven in other works, see Jones 1949: 41 and Conze 1973: 288.

⁸ MW: 775. I am not sure of the reference. MW gives Dharmas as the source but in his list of abbreviations he has only Dharmas(aṃgraha) and Dharmasarma(ābhyudaya), but no Dharmas. For a list of the seven treasures in the *Gv*, see V 328.24–329.2. In this list there is a 'great maṇi-gem' (*mahāmaṇiratna*) called 'Ādityagarbhaprabhamegharāja'.

⁹ See MW: 398.

¹⁰ For examples of these terms in the *Gv* see V 80.23, 399.27, 400.1 and 400.31.

¹¹ *km*#8 (V 79–86).

¹² *km*#26 (V 154–156).

¹³ *km*#18 (V 120–123).

and Mahāprabha.¹⁴ The second type, wealth that magically appears, features during Sudhana's conception and birth (V 40.13–31), as well as during his visits with Mahādeva¹⁵ and Sthāvarā.¹⁶ The third type, magical transformation, occurs most dramatically in the opening scene of the story when Vairocana Buddha, through his spiritual power (*adhiṣṭhāna*), enters a trance (*samādhi*) and changes the Jeta Grove and his peaked dwelling into an infinitely vast jewelled space (V 4.30ff). In transformations, both inorganic (towers, banners, parasols, flags, etc.) and organic (trees, flowers, ponds, the earth, etc.) materials are changed into diamonds, emeralds, pearls, coral, lapis lazuli, etc.

There is both an ethical and ontological aspect to wealth in the *Gv*. Beings who own fabulous treasures are often said to possess it as a result of their previous 'roots of merit' (*kuśulamūla*) or past good deeds (*puṇya*). Hence, wealth functions as a sign of one's ethical development. The magical appearance of wealth and the transformation of mundane landscapes serve to indicate spiritual power (*adhiṣṭhāna*).¹⁷ As a sign of both ethical development and spiritual power, the possession of wealth demonstrates one's spiritual status.

The ontological basis for such an opinion about wealth is related to the concept of the Dharma-realm. As I argue in chapter 3, the *dharmadhātu* is often represented by buildings and bodies. Both Vairocana's and Maitreya's peaked dwellings are architectural presentations of the Dharma-realm divided into levels

¹⁴ *km#19* (V 124–130).

¹⁵ *km#30* (V 167–168).

¹⁶ *km#31* (V 169–170).

¹⁷ Also, as is evident from Vairocana's transformation of the Jeta Grove and Sudhana's encounters with Queen Āśā (*km#8*; V 79–86) and the nun, Simhavijrmbhitā (*km#25*; V 148–153), the ability to witness such transformed landscapes is indicative of one's spiritual development.

(*dharmadhātutalabheda*). These buildings are made of various precious objects. In a similar fashion, the EN describes King Mahāprabha's city (V 124.17–125.17) and Simhavijrmbhitā's park (V 148.9–149.16). These buildings, parks and cities represent a higher order of reality—the supra-mundane Dharma-realm. In this way, the text establishes a link between mundane wealth in the world-realms (*lokadhātu*) and the infinite jewelled world beyond all economic hardship, the Dharma-realm. Mundane wealth is attained through one's previous good actions, leading eventually to the magical appearance of wealth and finally to entrance into a world filled with countless treasures.

The correct attitude toward the possession of material wealth is detachment. This is indicated by descriptions of great acts of generosity (*dāna*). As the second perfection (*paramitā*), *dāna* generates merit for the giver and cultivates their detachment, thus propelling them along the spiritual path.¹⁸ If the *Gv* were composed by monastics for wealthy merchants and royal patrons, then its extolling the virtue of generosity makes perfect sense. This would help the Sangha maintain material support for its institution. In a manner similar to the Mahāyāna cult of the book,¹⁹ prescribing acts of generosity ideologically encodes information that is useful for the continual survival of the text.²⁰

Gender

Although the *Gv* is unquestionably an androcentric text, the female good friends play a significant and positive role. Of Sudhana's fifty-three encounters, twenty-one are with females, which occupy approximately 51.1% of the total text. Sudhana's visit to Gopā,

¹⁸ For a discussion of *dāna* in Mahāyāna sources see Dayal 1932: 172ff.

¹⁹ See the now classic article, Schopen 1975.

²⁰ Thus passages in a text prescribing generosity or merit making through copying the text, act like ideological DNA used to encode information needed for the text's survival.

the wife of the Buddha, is the second longest section (only the Maitreya section is longer) and constitutes 8.9% of the story (V 300–338). Sudhana’s meetings with the eight night goddesses occupy 26.1% of the story. The night goddesses relate a number of *avadānas* about their past lives to our hero. These embedded narratives provide useful information about the story’s construction of gender.

As I mention in the chapter 3, compared to the early Buddhist hagiographies the *Gv* possesses quite a different attitude toward female beauty. Like wealth, beauty has both an ethical and ontological dimension. The EN depicts beauty as a the result of one’s past good actions. The highest ideal of physical perfection is the male body possessing the thirty-two characteristics (*lakṣāṇa*) of the ‘great man’ (*mahāpuruṣa*). Although this is the ideal, female beauty also plays a positive role and is used by a number of female friends as a means (*upāya*) to aid beings on the spiritual path. Paradoxically, beauty does not inspire passion (*rāga*) in those that witness it, but dispassion (*virāga*).

The ontological rationale for this attitude is located in the story’s conception of the ‘form-body’ (*rūpakāya*) and ‘Dharma-body’ (*dharmakāya*). The female good friends are form-body manifestations of the enlightened activity of the Dharma-body. Their physical beauty is the result of past good actions and serves as a tool to develop beings. Five of the female good friends even possess the Dharma-body.²¹ This suggests the possibility of female participation at the highest level of enlightenment.²²

²¹ See V 177.7, 195.16, 242.24, 265.15 and 343.30. At V 177.7 and 195.16, the variant form, *dharmasārīra*, is used in place of *dharmakāya*.

²² This possibility exists only in theory, however. In the *Gv* buddhas and bodhisattvas are always male, and no mention is made of the female good friends obtaining omniscience or supreme, perfect enlightenment. For discussions about women’s ability to attain enlightenment see Wilson 1996 (mainstream Indian Buddhism), and Paul 1985 (Mahāyāna).

The content of Sudhana's encounters with the female good friends reveals a number of 'ideal types'. Several female *kalyāṇamitras* embody the ideal Buddhist laywoman, nun, courtesan, wife, mother, etc. Particularly significant is the large percentage of female characters who are wealthy and/or of royal blood (queens or princesses). These characters' wealth and royal background indicate a high status within the worldly hierarchy. Because wealth also functions as a sign of spiritual status, its possession suggests that a number of female good friend enjoy such a high spiritual rank as well. This unification of high status within both the temporal and spiritual domains indicates that female royalty of the sort who patronised Buddhism during the Ikṣvāku dynasty might have been the text's target audience.

Power

Within the *Gv*, power may be divided into three categories: economic, political and spiritual. As discussed in my introduction, relations of power are arranged hierarchically. Within the narrative there is considerable overlap among these three hierarchies. The significant number of wealthy laypeople and the particularly strong presence of the merchant-banker (*śreṣṭhin*) class in the narrative indicate the overlap in economic and spiritual hierarchies. Several kings, princes, queens and princesses in the narrative and embedded narratives also demonstrate a connection between political and spiritual hierarchies. Royal *kalyāṇamitras* who possess fabulous wealth, such as queen Āśā and king Anala, enjoy a high status in all three.

As a Mahāyāna Buddhist narrative about a young man's quest for enlightenment, the *Gv* naturally places the highest value on spiritual power. This power may be defined

both in a narrow and broad sense. The narrow sense is encompassed by the term *adhiṣṭhāna*. *Adhiṣṭhāna* is the ability to generate, manipulate and control reality. It is also the power to induce visions in others and inspire them to speak the Dharma.²³ Buddhas are considered the ultimate source of *adhiṣṭhāna*, and there are several references in the *Gv* to verses recited through the power (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of Vairocana. More broadly defined, spiritual power is also the ability to enter trances (*samādhi*) and attain liberations (*vimokṣa*), lights of knowledge (*jñānāloka*) and entrances into the Dharma (*dharmamukha*) that propel one further into the Dharma-realm. The *kalyāṇamitras* are good friends because they possess this power and use it to aid Sudhana on his path toward omniscience. Because enlightenment depends on the aid of the *kalyāṇamitras*, the EN places the highest value on devotion to them and absolute obedience to their authority. As the power to command, authority is also an important theme within the story, and plays a prominent role during Sudhana's encounters with Jayoṣmāyatana and Anala.²⁴

Like their economic and political power, the good friends' spiritual power is hierarchically arranged. This hierarchy models the political hierarchies current at the time of the story's conception. Based upon a metaphor of kingship, Vairocana represents the supreme ruler of the Dharma-realm, Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra are his chief ministers, and Maitreya is the crown prince. The other good friends act as royal officials within Vairocana's domain.

As discussed in chapter 4, I employ three criteria to determine the spiritual status of the good friends: weight, position and content. These will allow us to judge the

²³ In this sense it is not unlike the Christian notion of grace. See for example Rex Warner, trans (1963) *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, New York: Mentor Books, pp. 211–212.

²⁴ See chapters 9 and 10.

relative importance of the *kalyāṇamitras* in relation to each other. At the same time, I also examine the relationship between this spiritual society and the economic and political hierarchies of mundane society. However, rather than discussing all the good friends, I move through the story sequentially and mention only those *kalyāṇamitras* that are relevant to the themes of wealth, gender and power.

5. Setting the Stage: The *Nidāna-parivarta*

The *Nidāna-parivarta* is thirty-four pages in the Vaidya edition¹ and constitutes approximately 7.8% of the total text. As one of the longest sections in the narrative and its introductory chapter, the *Nidāna* is important for a comprehension of the text as a whole. In this section, the EN introduces narrative and worldview structures and develops themes that reoccur throughout the *sūtra*. An analysis of the worldview reveals that Vairocana represents the supreme being at the apex of an elite spiritual society. His *samādhi* introduces the *dharmadhātu* as a higher dimensional reality that both transcends and interpenetrates infinite worlds and times.

In the *Nidāna*, the EN provides information about the *Gv*'s conceptions of power and wealth. The power in this section is the 'power of the Buddha' (*buddhādhiṣṭhāna*), and constitutes the ability to transform reality through trance or the emission of light-rays in order to teach beings the path to omniscience. Ideological overcoding reveals a metaphorical connection between the Buddha as spiritual ruler of the *dharmadhātu* and Indian monarchy as conceived during the Buddhist Middle Period (0–500). The transformation of Vairocana's peaked dwelling and the Jeta Grove into a vast array of jewels, gems, gold, etc., also establishes a connection between the Buddha's power and wealth.

The Spiritual Hierarchy

The *Gv*'s *Nidāna* begins in typical *sūtra* fashion with the following:

Thus have I heard. At one time the Lord was dwelling at Śrāvastī in Jeta Grove, the pleasure park of Anāthapiṇḍada, within the Great Array

¹ In his edition, Vaidya ends the *Nidāna* after the last of the directional bodhisattvas recites his verses (V 24). the next chapter he calls 'Samantabhadraḥ', which constitutes Samantabhadra's discourse and verses, the Buddha's emission of the light-ray, Mañjuśrī's verses and the bodhisattvas' sending out of magical creations (V 25–34). Because all of these events take place in the same location, I think Vaidya's division into two chapters is somewhat artificial. I treat these events as part of the *Nidāna*.

peaked dwelling accompanied by five thousand bodhisattvas, with the bodhisattvas Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī foremost among them.

evaṃ mayā śrutam. ekasmin samaye bhagavān śrāvastyāṃ viharati sma jetavane >nāthapiṇḍadasyārāme mahāvūhe kūṭāgāre sārđham pañcamātrair bodhisattvasahasraiḥ samantabhadramañjuśrī-bodhisattvapurvamgamaiḥ (V 1.1–3).²

In this passage, a number of elements central to the narrative and worldview are introduced. In the previous chapter, I state that Vairocana Buddha functions in the *Gv* as ‘the power’—the abstract force that allows the subject to attain his/her goal. Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī are his two most important ‘helpers’. Thus, at the very beginning of the story, the narrator introduces the power and most important helpers in Sudhana’s quest for enlightenment.

In chapter three, I demonstrate that reality in the *Gv* is divided into the mundane world-realms and the infinite Dharma-realm. By stating that the Buddha is ‘at Śrāvastī in Jeta Grove, the pleasure park of Anāthapiṇḍada’, the EN sets the stage, specifying the time and place of the story within the mundane world-realms. The Jeta Grove in Śrāvastī is a very common location in Buddhist *sūtras*, and would not have seemed remarkable in any way to a Buddhist audience in ancient India.³ However, the Buddha’s position within the Great Array peaked dwelling is significant because, (as I demonstrate in chapter 3) frequently in the *Gv* buildings and bodies are used to represent the *dharmadhātu*. This particular *kūṭāgāra* is transformed by Vairocana into an infinite expanse witnessed only by the advanced bodhisattvas. Thus the EN

² SI 2.11–13; D ga274v.7–275r.1; C 1135.

³ In an article titled ‘If You Can’t Remember, How to Make It Up: Some Monastic Rules for Redacting Canonical Texts’ (in Petra Kieffer-Pülz and Jens-Uwe Hartmann, eds. (1997)

Bauddhavidyāsudhākaraḥ: Studies in Honour of Heinz Bechert on the Occasion of His 65 Birthday, Swisttal-Odendorf, pp. 571–82), Schopen discusses a passage from the *Kṣudrakavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* which gives detailed instructions for deciding the location of the Buddha’s discourses, names of kings, householders, etc. when a monk cannot remember. These rules clearly favour Śrāvastī and studies done by Schopen and others indicate that this city occurs as the setting of the Buddha’s discourses in a very high percentage of texts from the Chinese *Madhyama-āgama*, the Pāli *Majjhima-nikāya* and the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*.

begins by introducing the mundane aspect of reality, only to shift dramatically the scene to the supra-mundane level of the Dharma-realm.

Following these initial statements, 153 of the 5000 bodhisattvas attending are given by name (V 1.3–3.19).⁴ After this list, the EN reports that there are present ‘five hundred auditors, all with great powers’⁵ and ‘lords of the earth who had performed services to previous conquerors’.⁶

This presentation possesses an obvious hierarchy. First, Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī, bodhisattvas of the highest attainment, are mentioned. Next, 5000 bodhisattvas are referred to, followed by a list of 153 by name. Finally there are 500 unnamed auditors (*śrāvaka*) and an unspecified number of lords of the earth (*lokendra*). In chapter 3, I point out that the text distinguishes between two types of society: the spiritualised society of good friends, who are at a certain level all bodhisattvas, and the conventional society of the mundane world. The opening scene of the *sūtra* establishes this social hierarchy both temporally and spatially: temporally by first mentioning the Buddha, then Samantabhadra, Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattvas, auditors and lords of the world; spatially by positioning the Buddha in the centre and the others on the periphery radiating outward from the central power. Thus the EN clearly establishes the superiority of the bodhisattvas over the auditors and lords of earth by their spatio-temporal location—a method even more dramatically depicted later in this chapter.

⁴ These names may be arranged into fifteen groups of ten according to their final elements. The three extra names are the result of the fifth group containing twelve names and the eighth group possessing eleven. Ehman (1977: 219, n.4) see these as errors in the listing. I am inclined to agree with his opinion.

⁵ *pañcabhiśca śrāvakamahārdhikaśataiḥ sarvaiḥ* (V 3.26).

⁶ *lokendraiśca pūrvajinakṛtādhikāraiḥ* (V 3.29).

The Buddha's *Samādhi*

Up to this point in the story there has been only description—no true narrative action has taken place. The first action of the story is a mental event. All those gathered before the Buddha share the same thought:

It is not possible for the world with its gods to understand, plunge into, earnestly devote (themselves to), understand, discern, investigate, ascertain, divide, recognise, or establish with regard to the mental disposition of other beings the domain of the *tathāgata*, or his range of knowledge, power (*adhiṣṭhāna*), strength, confidence, trance (*samādhi*), abode, sovereignty, body or knowledge except through the power (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of the *tathāgata*. (Nor are these activities possible other than) through the *tathāgata*'s miraculous action, authority, previous vow, there being previous roots of merit from the Buddha's good deeds, his accepting the good friends, his purification of knowledge leading to faith, his undertaking the light of noble intention, his purification of the bodhisattva's resolve, and his setting out (on the spiritual path) with a vow toward resolve and omniscience.

—*na sakyam sadevakenāpi lokena tathāgataviṣayaṃ*⁷ *tathāgata-jñānagocaraṃ tathāgatādhiṣṭhānaṃ tathāgatabalaṃ tathāgata-vaiśārdyaṃ tathāgatasamādhiṃ*⁸ *tathāgatavihāraṃ*⁹ *tathāgatādhipatyam tathāgatakāyaṃ*¹⁰ *tathāgatajñānam avagantum vā avagāhitum vā adhimoktum vā prajñātum vā vijñātum vā vicārayitum vā vibhāvayitum vā vibhājitum vā prabhāvayitum vā parasattvasaṃtāneṣu vā pratiṣṭhāpayitum, anyatra tathāgatādhiṣṭhānena tathāgatavikurvitena tathāgatānubhāvena tathāgatapūrvaprāṇīdhānena pūrvabuddhasukṛtakusālamūlatayā kalyānamitrapari-graheṇa śraddhānayanajñānapariśuddhyā udārādhimuktyavabhāsapratilambhena bodhisattvādhyāśaya-pariśuddhyā adhyāśayasarvajñatāpraṇīdhānaprasthānena* (V 4.5–12).¹¹

In this passage there is shift in focalization from the scene in the Jeta Grove to the internal thoughts of those gathered around the Buddha. This event's significance rests in its declaration about Vairocana's inconceivable nature. It is only through the

⁷ SI 5.8 reads *—viṣayas*. A 3v.2 reads *—viṣayas* or employs irregular sandhi which retains the normal dental labial, *m*, and writes it in conjunct with the following *t* (*mt*), instead of using the *anusvāra*, *m̐*. The syllables *sa* and *ma* are extremely similar in this Nepalese ms.

⁸ SI 5.9 (= A 3v.2) reads *—samādhis*. See note above.

⁹ SI 5.9 reads *—vihāras*. Syllables at A 3v.3 are smudged.

¹⁰ SI 5.10 reads *—kāyas*. At A 3v.3, the conjunct seems much more likely to be irregular sandhi between *m* and *t*, than the conjunct *st*.

¹¹ SI 5.7–15; D ga277v.1–4; C 1137.

Buddha's power (*adhiṣṭhāna*) that those around him are able to comprehend the extent of his spiritual qualities. This passage makes clear that Vairocana is 'the power' of the fabula, who is both the ultimate cause and source of Sudhana's attainments. In other words, this first (mental) event reinforces the importance of Vairocana that is suggested by the initial description of the Jeta Grove.

The second action is another thought shared by those present before the Buddha:

If only the Lord would show his previous setting out for omniscience to us, all the bodhisattvas with such a mental disposition, and beings with a variety of mental dispositions, intentions, realisations, who have obtained a variety of words and gestures, who are established in various stages of mastery, who have purified various faculties, who strive toward various mental dispositions, whose domain are various (types of) consciousness, who rely on the (good) qualities of the *tathāgata*, and who are approaching from various directions for the elucidation of the Dharma.

apyeva nāma bhagavān asmākaṃ yathāśayānāṃ bodhisattvānāṃ sarveṣāṃ ca sattvānāṃ āśayavimātratayā adhimuktinānātvatayā pratibodhanānātvatayā vacanasamketanānātvaprāptānāṃ nānādhipateyabhūmipratiṣṭhitānāṃ nānendriyaviśuddhānāṃ nānāśayaprayogānāṃ nānācetanāviśayānāṃ nānātathāgataguṇāni¹²-śrītānāṃ nānādharmānirdeśadigabhimukhānāṃ pūrva-sarvajñatāprasthānaṃ ca saṃdarśayet (V 4.12–15).¹³

This is followed by a long list of other thoughts, each expressing the desire that the Buddha demonstrate spiritual qualities which he developed in the past. Some of these are: his 'realisation of previous vows of a bodhisattva',¹⁴ 'the purification of the collection previous perfections of a bodhisattva',¹⁵ 'the miracle of ascending the previous stages of a bodhisattva',¹⁶ 'the accomplishment of the previous realisations

¹² SI 5.19 reads *-guṇāniḥ śrītānāṃ*. A 3v.5 has the same reading. V's reading here may be an emendation based on other mss. or he simply corrected the text.

¹³ SI 5.15–20; D ga277v.5–278r.1; C 1137.

¹⁴ *pūrvabodhisattvaprañidhānābhinihāraṃ* (V 4.15–16).

¹⁵ *pūrvabodhisattvapāramitāmaṇḍalaviśuddhiṃ* (V 4.16).

¹⁶ *pūrvabodhisattvabhūmyākramaṇavikurvitaṃ* (V 4.17).

of the collection of a bodhisattva's courses of conduct'¹⁷ and 'the light of the array of previous realisations of the bodhisattva's vehicle'.¹⁸

Then the Buddha, knowing the thoughts of those bodhisattvas, enters into a trance (*samādhi*) called 'the Lion's Yawn' (*siṃhaviṣṭambhita*) which is an array (*vyūha*) illuminating the world (V 4.30–5.1). As soon as he enters this trance his Great Array peaked dwelling becomes an infinite expanse. The Buddha's dwelling is also miraculously transformed so that it appeared to be

an array with a ground-surface of unsurpassed diamonds, with a surface of the earth that appeared to be a royal net of all (kinds) of *maṇi*-gems, covered with many flowers (made of) gems, evenly dispersed with great *maṇi*-gems, adorned with pillars of lapis lazuli, with royal ornaments evenly distributed with jewels illuminating the world and a multitude of pairs of all gems. It was a purified array of turrets, archways, mansions, windows and innumerable pavilions all (made) of gems, adorned with store-houses of gold and *maṇi*-gems. It was an array of *maṇi*-gems resembling those (possessed) by all the lords of the earth. It was an array of *maṇi*-gems (found) within the oceans of the world, covered with all *maṇi*-gems, with parasols, banners and flags raised up. It was a pervasive array discharging nets of light rays into the Dharma-realm through all the openings in the gates and archways of the array. It was an array with pavilions outside on the ground-level (containing) an inconceivable number of assembled groups, with houses of *maṇi*-gems having staircases in all directions, supremely well distributed and adorned.

*aparājitavajradharaṇītalavyūhaḥ sarvamaṇiratnarājajāla¹⁹-saṃsthita-
bhūmitalam anekaratnapuṣpābhikīrṇo mahāmaṇiratnasuvikīrṇo
vaidūryastambhopaśobhito jagadvirocanamaṇirāja-
suvibhaktālaṃkāraḥ sarvaratnayamakasaṃghāto²⁰
jāmbūnadamaṇiratnakūtopaśobhitaḥ sarvaratnaniryūhatoraṇa-
harmyagavākṣāsaṃkhyeyavedikāviśuddhavyūhaḥ
sarvalokendrasaḍṣamaṇiratnavyūho jagatsāgaramaṇiratnavyūhaḥ
sarvamaṇiratnasamchāditaḥ samucchritacchatradhvajapatākaḥ
sarvadvārorāṇavyūhamukhair dharmadhāturaśmijāla-
pramuktaspharaṇavyūho bahiranabhilāpyaparṣanmaṇḍala-
bhūmitalavedikāvyūhaḥ samantadiksopānamaṇiratnakūṭaḥ parama-
suvibhaktopaśobhitaḥ (V 5.2–8).²¹*

¹⁷ *pūrvabodhisattvacaryāmaṇḍalābhinihāraparipūrṇaḥ* (V 4.17–18).

¹⁸ *pūrvabodhisattvayānābhinihāravayūhāvabhāsam* (V 4.18).

¹⁹ SI 6.16 omits *-jāla-*. A 4r.4 includes *-jāla-*.

²⁰ SI 6.17–18 reads *saṃghāto*. A 4r.5 also reads *saṃghāto*.

²¹ SI 6.15–23; D ga278v.7–279r.4; C 1138.

In a similar fashion, the Buddha's *samādhi* transforms the Jeta Grove and buddha-fields equal in number to the dust particles in buddha-fields beyond description (V 5.8–28). With this shift in focalization back to the peaked dwelling and the Jeta Grove, we see for the first time a description of landscape transformed into an infinite jewelled realm. Next, the EN introduces an argumentative passage by asking the rhetorical question, 'What was the reason for this?' (*tat kasya hetoḥ*), and immediately supplies the answer—a long list of the Buddha's spiritual virtues beginning with,

It is because the *tathāgata*'s roots of merit are so inconceivable, his accumulation of pure factors (*dharma*) are so inconceivable, his power (*adhiṣṭhāna*), which is the great majesty of a buddha, is so inconceivable, his miracle of pervading all world-realms with one body is so inconceivable.... that the Jeta Grove appeared purified with the form of a purified buddha-field.

*tathā hi tad acintyaṃ tathāgatakuśalamūlaṃ, acintyas
tathāgataśukladharmopacayaḥ, acintyaṃ tathāgatabuddha-
vṛabhitādhiṣṭhānam, acintyaṃ tathāgatasarvalokadhātveka-
kāyaspharaṇavikurvitaṃ.... yathā ca jetavanam evaṃrūpayā
buddhakṣetrapariśuddhyā pariśuddhaṃ saṃsthitaṃ... (V 5.28–6.5).²²*

I have quoted these passages at length because they introduce several significant structures and forces related to the *Gv*'s narrative, worldview, and themes of power and wealth. Applying the concept of focalization, we see that the external focalizer (EF) shifts first from the perspective of an observer of the scene at the Jeta Grove, then to the internal thought processes of the those attending the Buddha. Next, the EF focuses on the internal processes of the Buddha ('...knowing their thoughts, he entered into the *samādhi*...'), and then on the transformation of the Lord's peaked dwelling and the Jeta Grove. These shifts represent the 'omniscient' perspective often

²² SI 7.21–8.4; D ga280r.5–280v.3; C 1139.

found in modern novels—the EN has privileged access to viewpoints and internal psychological activity that would be impossible for an internal focalizer.

In the transformation of the peaked dwelling and the Jeta Grove we see the thematisation of space, whereby a mundane building and grove become changed into limitless space filled with countless gems, jewels, gold and other precious objects. This magical transformation reveals a concept central to the worldview of the *Gv*: the ultimate ground of all relative spacetime is the infinite, eternal Dharma-realm. The particular nature of this transformation provides the initial discloser of the *Gv*'s position on the concept of power and wealth.

We have already identified Vairocana as 'the power' of the fabula. His transformation of his peaked dwelling and the Jeta Grove gives us the first indication of the concept of power in the *Gv*. The Buddha transforms reality by entering a *samādhi*, or trance.²³ The importance of this concept for the *Gv* cannot be overstated: it is through the attainment of *samādhis* that bodhisattvas achieve insight into the nature of the *dharmadhātu*, power to manipulate reality and the ability to progress along the spiritual path. The good friends teach Sudhana by either describing or imparting *samādhis* to him. In the *Gv*, the concept of *samādhi* is also closely associated with the notion of *vyūha*. As mentioned in chapter 2, a *vyūha* may be translated as an 'array'. In the passage cited above, the EN describes the Buddha's *samādhi* as a *vyūha*. Thus this passage provides insight into both concepts: a *samādhi* is a mystical state of consciousness which transforms mundane reality into a supra-mundane state. The result of this transformation is a *vyūha*, a magical creation generated by the spiritual power of an advanced spiritual being. As 'the power' of the

²³ This term has often been rendered as 'concentration' (See Ñāṇamoli 1991: 85ff; Conze 1973a & 1973b; *BHSD*: 568; *PED*: 685). Because *samādhi* in the *Gv* is a mental state that transforms reality, rather than a one-pointed focussing of the mind, I prefer 'trance' to 'concentration'.

fabula, Vairocana enters a trance that manifested the ‘supreme array’ (*gaṇḍavyūha*), the infinite *dharmadhātu*, and it is through this display that he reveals, in a single visionary experience, both the path toward and the result of omniscience.

The array generated through the Buddha’s trance also provides some content for the concept of *adhiṣṭhāna* in the *Gv*. The term occurs twice already in the narration of the first event of the story: ‘It is not possible for the world with its gods to understand...(the Buddha’s) power (*adhiṣṭhāna*),... except through the power (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of the *tathāgata*’. The term has a number of different meanings depending on its context and has been variously translated.²⁴ In a lengthy entry, Edgerton offers ‘supernatural power’ as one among a number of interpretations of the word (*BHSD*: 15–16). The context of this passage requires something close to Edgerton’s ‘supernatural power’ and I have rendered *adhiṣṭhāna* as ‘power’ both for the sake of elegance in translation, and also to allow a wider range of interpretations in the *Gv*.

Obviously, in this context the Buddha’s *adhiṣṭhāna* has a supernatural component. He displays his power through a trance that magically transforms his dwelling and the surrounding grove. This demonstrates a central notion about power in the *Gv*: true power is the supernatural power of the buddhas and bodhisattvas acquired through their spiritual development. But if we look closely at the application of the term *adhiṣṭhāna* for ideological overcoding, we find that there is both a political and economic component to the term.

Twice in the description of the array generated through the Buddha’s trance, the EN makes reference to objects related to royalty: ‘a royal net of all (kinds) of

²⁴ Some translations of *adhiṣṭhāna* are ‘sustaining power’ (Suzuki 1953: 79–82), ‘résolution déterminante’ (Ruegg 1969: 45), ‘authority’ (Conze 1973: 312) and ‘empowerment’ (Harrison 1990: 191).

*maṇi-gems*²⁵ and ‘royal ornaments evenly distributed’²⁶. These are far from accidental—they indicate a connection between spiritual power and temporal power. In the opening scene, the Buddha is centrally positioned in his peaked dwelling surrounded by bodhisattvas, auditors and rulers of the earth with Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra foremost among them. The Indian target audience, who were ruled by powerful monarchs, may have associated this arrangement with a king (*rāja*) or overlord (*rājādhirāja*) flanked by his chief ministers and surrounded by his court.²⁷ Thus, the Buddha is portrayed as a type of spiritual monarch who rules over his own domain,²⁸ just as temporal monarch rules over his kingdom. This associating becomes more apparent later in the *Nidāna*.

Adhiṣṭhāna also has an economic component. Notice that Vairocana’s *vyūha* is constructed out of objects of unimaginable wealth. Gold, jewels, gems, and lapis lazuli cover the turrets, archways, mansions, windows, banners, flags, etc... This conspicuous display of wealth is the central focus of the transformation caused by the Buddha’s trance. In this way, the *dharmadhātu* is depicted as the infinite bejewelled reality beyond all the economic vicissitudes of *saṃsāra*.

Gathering of the Bodhisattvas

Next in the story, bodhisattvas from distant buddha-fields approach the Buddha, pay their respects and set up various types of jewelled *kūṭāgāras*. The narration of this

²⁵ *sarvamaṇiratnarājajāla-* (V 5.2).

²⁶ *-rājasubihaktālaṃkāraḥ* (V 5.4).

²⁷ We find an explicit statement of the connection between buddhahood and kingship in the *Akṣayamati-nirdeśa-sūtra*, when Śakyamuni Buddha refers to a buddha called Samantabhadra in a distant world-realm: ‘There in that world-sphere there is no other king apart from the peerless king of religion, that Tathāgata worthy of offerings, the perfectly awakened one Samantabhadra (*tatra lokadhātau tathāgatam arhantaṃ samyaksaṃbuddhaṃ samantabhadram anuttaraṃ dharmarājaṃ sthāpayitvā nāsti anyo rājā kaścit*)’ (Braarvig 1993: 50).

²⁸ This is called ‘the domain of the *tathāgata*’ (*tathāgataviśaya*—see V 4.5) or ‘the domain of the Buddha’ (*buddhaviśaya*). Both of these terms would be synonyms for the *dharmadhātu*.

event is deliberate and highly structured. First, a bodhisattva from the east named Vairocana-praṇidhānābhiraśmiprabha from the buddha-field of the *tathāgata* named Vairocanaśrītejorāja, gains permission from that buddha to leave, approaches with a large retinue of bodhisattvas, pays his respects and sets up *kūṭāgāras* to the east (V 6.16–28). Then a bodhisattva named Duryodhanavīryavegarāja comes from the south with his retinue of bodhisattvas, pays his respects and sets up peaked dwellings to the south (V 6.29–7.12). This pattern continues with bodhisattvas arriving in the following order: west, north, northeast, southeast, southwest, northwest, from below and then above (V 7.13–12.5).

This gathering of the bodhisattvas reveals important information about the story's construction of power. The specific pattern and order of arrangement thematise space by representing this gathering as a type of array (*vyūha*). Viewed through the lens of the external focalizer, we see that this array is a three-dimensional *maṇḍala* constructed with Vairocana at the centre.²⁹ The *maṇḍalic* formation also reinforces the metaphor of the Buddha as spiritual monarch. The arrival of the bodhisattvas from distant buddha-fields suggests of temporal rulers gathering to pay homage to a overlord (*rājādhirāja*). Compare this scene to a description of the political structure of the Gupta empire:

From the very beginning, the Gupta empire revealed a structure which it retained even at the height of its expansion... and which served as a blueprint for all medieval kingdoms of India. The centre of the empire was a core area in which Samudragupta had uprooted all earlier rulers in two destructive wars.... This area was under direct administration of royal officers. Beyond this area lived the border kings some of whom Samudragupta even reinstated after they had been presumably subdued by some of their rivals. These border kings paid tribute and were

²⁹ The presence of this three-dimensional *maṇḍala* provokes in me a number of questions: were sections of the text used for visualisation purposes? Does this depiction represent a proto-Tantric element in the *Gv*? If so, what are the implications for a relative chronology of Mahāyāna *sūtras* and the development of Buddhist Tantra in India? Although speculative, this line of enquiry may be an useful approach to developing a set of relations between texts (see Silk 2002).

obliged to attend Samudragupta's court (Kulke and Rothermund 1997: 88).³⁰

The parallels are striking. Vairocana as the spiritual ruler over his own buddha-field is attended by his royal administrators (Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra, and the others); beyond his immediate area of influence, other buddhas rule over other buddha-fields. Those other buddhas do not appear in person to pay tribute to Vairocana, but some of their bodhisattvas (royal administrators) come to pay homage to him. Therefore, the structure of temporal power during the Middle Period of Indian Buddhism appears to have functioned as a paradigm for the structure of spiritual power in the *Gv*.

The Experience of the *Mahāśrāvakas*

Following a description of the newly gathered bodhisattvas' spiritual virtues (V 12.6–25), the EN shifts focalization to the experiences of the 'great auditors' (*mahāśrāvaka*) sitting before Vairocana. This shift highlights the *Gv*'s hierarchically arranged spiritual society. The narrator states, 'But these auditors... did not see the miracle of the *tathāgata* in the Jeta Grove'.³¹ This statement is followed by a lengthy list of the content of what the great auditors do not see, such as:

They did not see the arrays of the Buddha, or his majesty, his exhibition of supernatural power, his magic performance, his overlordship, the miracle of his deeds, his might, his power, or the purity of his buddha-field. They also did not see that inconceivable domain of the bodhisattvas, or their coming together, their assembly, their meeting, their approach, their magic performance, their assembly-*maṇḍala*...

³⁰ By this comparison I am not making the strong argument that the *Gv* was developed during the Gupta dynasty. It may have been, but as I argue in chapter 2, an earlier date during the Ikṣvāku dynasty is suggested by certain textual elements. The point of this comparison is to demonstrate that buddhahood and monarchy are metaphorically related in a general way during the Indian Buddhist Middle Period, rather than definitely connecting the text to a particular dynasty.

³¹ *na ca te mahāśrāvakāḥ... jetavane tathāgatavikurvītam adrākṣuḥ* (V 12.26–27). The narrator lists ten of these *mahāśrāvakas* by name: 1) Śāriputra, 2) Maudgalyāyana, 3) Mahākāśyapa, 4) Revata, 5) Subhūti, 6) Aniruddha, 7) Nandika, 8) Kapphina, 9) Kātyāyana, 10) Pūrṇamaitrāyaṇīputra (V 12.26).

*na ca tān buddhavyūhān buddhavṛṣabhitāṃ buddhavikrīḍitāṃ
buddhaprātihāryaṃ buddhādhipateyatāṃ buddhacaritavikurvitāṃ
buddhaprabhāvaṃ buddhādhiṣṭhānaṃ buddhakṣetrapariśuddhim
adrākṣuḥ. nāpi tam acintyaṃ bodhisattvaviṣayaṃ bodhisattva-
samāgamaṃ bodhisattvasamavasaraṇaṃ bodhisattvasaṃnipātaṃ
bodhisattvopasaṃkramaṇaṃ bodhisattvavikurvitāṃ bodhisattva-
prātihāryaṃ bodhisattvaparīṣanmaṇḍalaṃ... (V 12.27–13.1).³²*

In other words, the detailed description of the transformation of the Jeta Grove and the following assembly of the bodhisattvas escapes the auditors' view, even though they sit right in front of the Buddha!

Anticipating the surprise of the target audience, the EN poses the rhetorical question, 'What was the reason for this?'; and immediately answers with, '(This was) due to (their) lack of the corresponding roots of merit'.³³ The term 'roots of merit' (*kuśalamūla*) commonly occurs in Buddhist literature. In the Pāli sources it refers specifically to three qualities: non-greed (*alobha*), non-hate (*adosa*) and non-delusion (*amoha*).³⁴ In Mahāyāna sources, the term is variously defined.³⁵ Typical of the *Gv*, the text does not provide a precise definition of 'roots of merit', but follows with a long list of other qualities that the auditors did not possess. I interpret this as a collection of characteristics that constitute the necessary roots of merit lacking in the auditors. Some of these are that,

while previously wandering in the cycle of existence, they had not incited beings with regard to (practising) the perfections for (the attainment of) supreme, perfect enlightenment. Nor did they establish the production of the thought of enlightenment in the mental continuums of others.... Nor did they accumulate the root of merit conducive to omniscience.

*na ca taiḥ pūrvam saṃsāre saṃsaradbhir anuttarāyāṃ
samyaksambodhau sattvāḥ pāramitāsu samādāpitāḥ. na ca tair*

³² SI 17.24–18.2; D ga290r.6–290v.2; C 1146.

³³ *īat kasya hetoḥ? kuśalamūlāsabhāgatayā* (V 13.7).

³⁴ See *Majjhima-Nikāya* 1.47 and 489.

³⁵ See the *Dharmasaṃgraha* section 15, where a specifically Mahāyāna list of three qualities is mentioned: 'the production of the thought of enlightenment' (*bodhicittotpāda*), 'purification of the mental dispositions' (*āśayaviśuddhi*) and 'abandoning "I"-making and "my"-making' (*ahaṃkāramamakāraparityāga*) (cited in *BHSD*: 188).

*bodhicittotpādaḥ parasaṃtāneṣu pratiṣṭhāpitaḥ.... na ca taiḥ
sarvajñatāsaṃvartanīyaṃ kuśalamūlam upacitam* (V 13.10–14).³⁶

Each element from this quotation contains a characteristic of the Mahāyāna: the perfections (*parāmitā*), supreme, perfect enlightenment (*anuttarā samyaksaṃbodhi*), the production of the thought of enlightenment (*bodhicittotpāda*) and omniscience (*sarvajñatā*). This sample is representative of the entire list of attributes lacking in the great auditors. When examined as a whole the reason the *mahāsrāvakas* do not see the results of the Buddha's *samādhi* becomes obvious to the informed Mahāyāna audience: they are not bodhisattvas. Because they have not established themselves on the bodhisattva's course of conduct (*bodhisattvacaryā*), they have not performed the necessary actions to generate the corresponding merit needed to see the transformation of the Jeta Grove.

This passage also provides a clear division within a spiritual hierarchy. At the top of the spiritual pyramid sits Vairocana; his knowledge and power infinite. Flanking him are his closest aids, the bodhisattvas Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī. Further down on the pyramid are the other bodhisattvas, all of whom witness the Buddha's miraculous transformation of his dwelling and the Jeta Grove. Below them are the *mahāsrāvakas*, who represent beings upon an inferior spiritual path.

Recitation of Verses

Next, the EN then shifts attention to the ten bodhisattvas from distant buddha-fields. The narrative details how each bodhisattva recites ten verses praising Vairocana, his *samādhi*, his qualities and various spiritual attainments (V 17.14–24.20). The sequence and the number of verses is both intentional and exact: the bodhisattvas

³⁶ SI 19.14–19; D ga291r.2–5; C 1146.

recite in the order they appeared before the Buddha (first the bodhisattva from the east, then south, west, north, northeast, etc...), and each sing ten verses.³⁷

Then, the bodhisattva Samantabhadra illuminates the *samādhi* of the *tathāgata* by means of ten elucidating characteristics (*nirdeśapada*) (V 25.8–20). After this passage, the EN states that Samantabhadra ‘by the power of the Buddha’ (*buddhādhiṣṭhāna*) sings verses (V 25.21–25). This compound, *buddhādhiṣṭhāna*, occurs frequently within the narrative before a character recites verses to indicate that the Buddha functions as the enlightened source of power behind such utterances. Once again, the EN reminds his audience that Vairocana functions as ‘the power’ of the fabula and represents the highest spiritual attainment of any individual.

The Buddha’s Light Ray

Immediately following Samantabhadra’s verses, the text reads:

Then the Lord, in order to put into effect his trance, the Lion’s Yawn, to a specially high degree for those bodhisattvas present emitted a ray of light from the space between his brows called ‘the light of the three times making known all the gates into the Dharma-realm within the circle of hair between the eyebrows’, and made manifest streams (of light) within all fields within the oceans of all world-realms within the ten directions with a spread of rays equal in number to the dust particles in an inexpressible number of buddha-fields.

*atha khalu bhagavān bhūyasya mātrayā teṣām bodhisattvānām atraiva
siṃhavijṛmbhite buddhasamādhau saṃniyojanārthaṃ
bhrūvivarāntarād ūṛṇākośād³⁸ dharmadhātusamanta-
dvāravijñaptitryadhvāvabhāsaṃ nāma raśmiṃ niścāriyivā
anabhilapyabuddhakṣetraparamānurajaḥsamaraśmiparivārāṃ³⁹
daśadiksarvalokadhātusamudreṣu sarvakṣetraprasarān avabhāsayati
sma (V 27.5–8).⁴⁰*

³⁷ Except for the last bodhisattva who recites eleven (cf. V 24.19–20).

³⁸ SI 34.26 reads *ūrṇākośād*. A 18r.7 is an inserted extra seventh line of text added to the folio. Although the writing is small, the text here is clearly *ūrṇākośād*, and therefore corroborates V’s reading.

³⁹ SI 35.2 reads *–parivārā*. At A 18r.7, the *anusvāra* is clearly present at the end of this word.

⁴⁰ SI 34.25–35.3; D ga302v.7–303r.2; C 1161.

This light-show causes the bodhisattvas to see all buddha-fields within the entire *dharmadhātu*, the previous meritorious activities of Vairocana, his oceans of miracles and trances, etc... (V 27.9–30.17). It allows them to penetrate and pervade the entire *dharmadhātu* within every instant of thought and to develop untold spiritual qualities (V 30.18–32.15).

The EN employs this mystical action and the following description of its effect to demonstrate, once more, the power of Vairocana. It also simultaneously reveals important worldview structures. The Buddha's power to generate such visionary experiences establishes him as the supreme individual among an elite spiritual society. The content of the bodhisattvas' visions reveals the *Gv*'s view of reality: beyond and within the infinite multiplicity of world-realms (*lokadhātu*) there is a higher dimensional reality, the Dharma-realm, which binds the entire spacetime continuum into a seamless, inexpressible unity. As supreme spiritual monarch, Vairocana is able to display this vision to his inner circle of ministers, the bodhisattvas gathered around him.

Mañjuśrī's Verses

After a verbose description of Vairocana's spiritual might, the EN states that, 'Then the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, displaying these very same miracles through the power of the Buddha (*buddhādhiṣṭhāna*), surveyed the ten directions and spoke these verses at that time—'.⁴¹ The thirteen verses that follow summarise the vision generated through the Buddha's light-ray. Mañjuśrī's demonstration of the same miracles as well as the content of his verses, indicate this bodhisattva's special status within the spiritual

⁴¹ *atha khalu mañjuśrībodhisattvo buddhādhiṣṭhānena etāny eva sarvavikurvītāni samdarśayan daśa diśo vyavalokya tasyāṃ velāyāṃ imā gāthā abhāṣata* (V 32.16–17).

hierarchy of the *Gv*. The location of these verses after Samantabhadra's verses and as the final verses of the *Nidāna* also belie the importance of their reciter.

Textual Symmetry

When we examine the *Nidāna* as a whole, we can see that it contains a textual symmetry indicating status: in the opening sentence of the text, the EN mentions first Vairocana and then Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī; Vairocana enters a *samādhi* and Samantabhadra is the last to comment on it; Vairocana emits a light-ray and Mañjuśrī then recites verses about it. Algebraically, this symmetry may be represented as follows: if we use a 'V' for Vairocana, 'S' for Samantabhadra, and 'M' for Mañjuśrī, and use '-' to indicate a close temporal connection and '—>' to represent temporal progression of the narrative, then we have the pattern: V-S-M—>V-S—>V-M. This pattern structurally indicates that Vairocana is 'the power' of the fabula and that Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī are his most important 'helpers'. The temporal order also indicates that Samantabhadra has a slightly higher status than Mañjuśrī. The final pages of the *Gv* generate a similar symmetry that supports these conclusions (see chapter 16).

The Magical Creations of the Bodhisattvas

After Mañjuśrī's recitation, the text reads: 'Then every single one of the bodhisattvas from among those bodhisattvas whose mental continuum was illuminated by the Buddha's *samādhi* realised entrances into great compassion equal in number to the particles of dust in an inexpressible number of buddha-fields'.⁴² Here we see the immediate result of the Buddha's trance and light-ray: the generation of great

⁴² *atha khalu teṣāṃ bodhisattvānāṃ buddhasamādhyavabhāsitasamānānām ekaikasya bodhisattvasya anabhilāpyabuddhakṣetrāparamānūrajahsamāni mahākaruṇamukhāny avakrāntāni* (V 34.9–10).

compassion (*mahākaruṇā*) in the bodhisattvas present. This emphasis on *mahākaruṇā* highlights the Mahāyāna orientation of the text. As a form of motivation for action, great compassion distinguishes the Buddha and bodhisattvas as rulers of the spiritual domain from their earthly counterparts, who may be motivated to action by greed for wealth or lust for power.⁴³

Once the bodhisattvas realise these entrances in *mahākaruṇā*, they send out infinite magical creations in the form of ascetics, brahmins, doctors, merchants, etc. throughout all worlds to develop beings (V 34.11–35.11). This passage constitutes the final pages of the *Nidāna* and serves to connect the introductory scene of the *sūtra* to the travel narrative of Sudhana’s visits to the *kalyāṇamitras*. As I argue in chapter 3, the bodhisattvas’ emission of magical creations suggests that the good friends are themselves magical creations of these bodhisattvas. In this manner, the EN connects the spiritual elite society described in the story’s opening scene to the mundane society occupied by the good friends.

References to members of the female gender, whether nun or laywoman, in the Jeta Grove are conspicuously absent from the *Nidāna*. Furthermore, all bodhisattvas included in Vairocana’s retinue and who visit from distant buddha-fields are gendered male.⁴⁴ The lack of female characters in the *Gv*’s *Nidāna* is likely to represent a consciously held ideological position. The message seems to be that females do not possess the necessary roots of merit to be among the spiritual elite present before the

⁴³ Kauṭilya in his political treatise, the *Arthasāstra*, places the highest importance on wealth. Drekmeier writes, ‘Of the threefold ends of earthly life—dharma, artha, and kama (virtue, wealth, and enjoyment)—Kautalya assigns first importance to wealth and, anticipating the most outspoken of Western materialistic pronouncements, proclaims that the condition of righteousness is wealth’ (1962: 194). See also Sastri 1924–25: 12.

⁴⁴ This is not the case for all Mahāyāna *sūtras*—we have several texts that include nuns or laywomen in the Buddha’s retinue. For instance, the Tibetan *PraS* states in its *Nidāna* that 500 monks and 30,000 nuns were present (Harrison 1990: 9). In the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*, 1,200 monks, 6,000 nuns and an unspecified number of male and female lay devotees are mentioned (Kern 1963 (1884): 3–7). The *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra* refers to the ‘fourfold community, consisting of bhikṣus, bhikṣuṇīs, laymen and laywomen’ (Thurman 1976: 12).

Buddha or to witness the rarefied vision of reality he reveals. In this way, the story's beginning (*Nidāna*) and end (see chapter 16) assert male spiritual superiority and contextualise the positive portrayal of women in its middle sections.

6. Mañjuśrī, Monks and the Merchant-banker's Son

After the description of the bodhisattvas sending out magical emanations, the external focalizer (EF) shifts attention to Mañjuśrī. This section is significant for three reasons. First, the events of the *Nidāna* have already established Mañjuśrī as one of the chief 'helpers' of Vairocana Buddha. In this way, the audience of the narrative understands that this bodhisattva's actions within the story are charged with importance. Second, the position of this section immediately after the *Nidāna* and its weight (2.8% of the total text) signal its narratological significance.¹ Third, the content demonstrates this section's importance. After his conversion of a group of *bhikṣus*, Mañjuśrī meets Sudhana, the hero of our story, and sends him on his quest. This is the proper beginning of the narrative and the focus of the remainder of the text.

The Conversion of the Monks

After paying his respects to the Buddha, Mañjuśrī and his retinue set out to visit the countries in the south (V 36.19–20). Then Śāriputra, 'by the authority of the Buddha',² sees the bodhisattva leaving the Jeta Grove, and thinks that he should go with him. Śāriputra approaches the Buddha with sixty monks³ and asks the Lord's consent to follow Mañjuśrī (V 36.21–30). Permission granted, the venerable monk goes to the bodhisattva and describes Mañjuśrī's spiritual qualities to his fellow *bhikṣus*. These words inspire the monks and produce Mahāyānist attributes in them

¹ Although 2.8% does not seem significant, it is within the top ten longest sections of the narrative (see appendix A).

² *buddhānubhāvena* (V 36.21). Here we find the term 'authority' (*anubhāva*) instead of 'power' (*adhiṣṭhāna*), but the general idea is the same: Śāriputra is able to see Mañjuśrī leaving because of the Buddha. Thus, this phrase reinforces the idea that Vairocana is 'the power', (in Buddhist terms) the true source of enlightenment.

³ The EN mentions ten by name: Sāgarabuddhi, Mahāsudatta, Puṇyaprabha, Mahāvatsa, Vibhudatta, Viśuddhacārin, Devaśrī, Indramati, Brahmottama, Praśāntamati (V 36.27–29).

such as faith in the bodhisattvas (*bodhisattvaprasāda*), great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*), great vows (*mahāpraṇidhānāni*) and faith in omniscience (*sarvajñatāprasāda*) (V 37.13–19). Mañjuśrī teaches them how to realise the stage of a *tathāgata* through the ‘ten productions of an indefatigable mind’⁴. This discourse causes the monks to enter into a *samādhi* called, ‘Domain of the Unobstructed Eye Seeing All Buddhas’⁵, which firmly establishes them in ‘the course of conduct of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra’⁶.

The scene of Mañjuśrī’s conversion of *bhikṣus* serves four ideological purposes. First, it demonstrates the spiritual power of the bodhisattva, one of Vairocana’s chief ‘helpers’. Second, it highlights the universality of the Mahāyāna: the bodhisattva-path is opened to any, monastic or lay, who has established the necessary roots of merit, has developed great compassion, wishes to obtain omniscience, etc. Third, the conversion of Śāriputra, a central character in mainstream Buddhist literature, serves to connect the *Gv* to the meta-narrative tradition of Indian Buddhism. Thus, this scene functions to counter-act the distancing from mainstream Buddhism that is produced in the previous section when the auditors fail to see the Buddha’s miracle. In this manner, the distinctiveness and superiority of the *Gv*’s Mahāyānistic vision is maintained. At the same time, it is connected to the larger tradition of mainstream Buddhism through the conversion scene of Śāriputra and the sixty monks. Finally, Mañjuśrī’s conversion of monastics prior to his meeting with Sudhana reinforces the spiritual authority of monks over lay practitioners.⁷

⁴ *aparikhedacittotpāda* (V 37.31).

⁵ *sarvabuddhavidarśanāsaṅgacakṣurviṣayaṃ* (V 38.15).

⁶ *samantabhadrabodhisattvacaryāpratiṣṭhitā* (V 38.29). This expression is a synonym for the *bodhisattvacaryā*, or *bodhisattvamārga* in the *Gv* and indicates that Samantabhadra functions in the text as a personification of the highest spiritual realisation (see Osto 1999).

⁷ This temporal priority of monks over lay people will be repeated in Sudhana’s visits to his first three good friends after Mañjuśrī (see chapter 6).

Why is Sudhana Called ‘Good Wealth’?

Following Mañjuśrī’s conversion of the monks, he journeys to the great city of Dhanyākara.⁸ Some citizens of the city, upon hearing that Mañjuśrī is preaching in the wood to the east, approach him in four different groups. One of these are 500 merchant-bankers’ sons led by Sudhana (V 39.16–40.8). While teaching the crowd gathered before him, Mañjuśrī ‘gazed upon Sudhana’.⁹ Here we see a shift in perspective from an external focalizer (EF) to a character-bound focalizer (CF). Instead of looking at Mañjuśrī and following his actions, the audience is now looking at Sudhana through Mañjuśrī’s eyes. The EN then interrupts the flow of the story with a narrative aside,¹⁰ asking the question, ‘But why is Sudhana, the merchant-banker’s son, called “Sudhana” (Good Wealth)?’¹¹ This question is followed by a long description of the miraculous events surrounding Sudhana’s conception and birth:

As soon as Sudhana, the merchant-banker’s son, entered the womb of his mother, within the household seven jewelled sprouts appeared from all directions evenly distributed throughout the house. There were seven great treasures underneath those jewelled sprouts from which they sprung up, penetrating the surface of the earth and arose—(great treasures) of gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, ruby, emerald and coral as the seventh gem. When his limbs, finger and toes were fully formed and he was born after ten months, those seven great treasures which measured seven spans¹² in length, width and height, arose, opened,

⁸ Dhanyākara is our (soon to be introduced) hero’s hometown and the place where Sudhana meets his first *kalyāṇamitra*, the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. It also functions as the beginning and the end point of Sudhana’s quest for omniscience. Therefore, this city is one of the most important locations in the narrative, and as such could indicate a source of origin for the *Gv*. If Dhanyākara may be equated with Dhānyakāṭaka, then the source of this narrative might have been the thriving metropolis of the Ikṣvāku in the third century CE (see chapter 2).

⁹ ...*sudhanam śreṣṭhidārakam avalokayām āsa* (V 40.12).

¹⁰ Vaidya, sensitive to this aside, places this sentence and the following passage in brackets ‘(...)’ in his edition.

¹¹ *sudhanaḥ khula punaḥ śreṣṭhidāraḥ kena kāraṇenocyate sudhana iti?* (V 40.12–13). Note the EN’s use of the present tense ‘is called’ (*ucyate*) here. This the first instance of a present tense rather than a past tense verb form and therefore also marks the following passage as particularly unusual and worthy of close attention.

¹² I borrowed ‘spans’ from Cleary’s translation (C 1173). The Skt. is *hasta*, literally ‘hands’. But Monier-Williams gives as one definition ‘the fore-arm (a measure of length from the elbow to the tip of

shone forth and sparkled. Five hundred vessels appeared within the house made of various gems, such as vessels of clarified butter, oil, honey and fresh butter; and every one was filled with all types of implements—such as diamond vessels filled with all (types of) perfumes, fragrant vessels filled with various garments, crystal vessels filled with various enjoyable foods and delicious drinks, jewelled vessels filled with various gems, gold vessels filled with silver powder, silver vessels filled with gold powder, silver and gold vessels filled with lapis lazuli, *maṇi*-gems, crystal vessels filled with coral, coral vessels filled with crystal, emerald vessels filled with rubies, ruby vessels filled with emeralds, vessels of *maṇi*-gems that give off light¹³ filled with *maṇi*-gems that purify water, and vessels of *maṇi*-gems that purify water filled with *maṇi*-gems that give off light. These were the most excellent of the five hundred jewelled vessels.¹⁴ As soon as Sudhana, the merchant-banker's son, was born in the house, showers of wealth, grain, gold coins, gold and diverse gems rained down into all the treasuries, granaries and apartments. Because abundant prosperity appeared in the household at the moment of his birth, his fortune-tellers, brahmins, parents and kinsman gave Sudhana the name 'Sudhana' ('Good Wealth').

*sudhanasya khalu śreṣṭhidāarakasya samanantarāvākṛāntasya mātuḥ
kuṣsau tasmin grhe sapta¹⁵ ratnāṅkurāḥ prādurbhūtāḥ samantād
grhasya suvibhaktāḥ. teṣāṃ ca ratnāṅkurāṇāṃ adhaḥ sapta¹⁶
mahānidhānāni, yatas te ratnāṅkurāḥ samutpatya dharāṇitalam
abhinirbhīdyā abhyudgatāḥ suvarṇasya rūpyasya vaidūryasya
sphāṭikasya lohītamukteraśmagarbhasya musāragalvasya saptamasya
ratnasya. sa yadā¹⁷ sarvāṅgapratyaṅgaiḥ paripūrṇo daśānām
māsānāmatyayājātaḥ, tāda tāni sapta¹⁸ mahānidhānāni
saptahastāyāmvistārodvedha¹⁹-pramāṇāni dharāṇitalād
abhyudgamya vivṛttāni virocanti bhrājante sma. pañca ca
bhājanaśātāni tasmin grhe prādurbhūtāni nānāratnamayāni, yaduta*

the middle finger, = 24 Aṅgulas or about 18 inches)' (MW 1294). Therefore, the English 'spans' seems an useful (if somewhat vague) translation.

¹³ '*maṇi*-gems that give off light' is a gloss of the Skt. compound *vyotirdhvajamaṇiratna-*, which literally means something like, '*maṇi*-gems that are banners of light'.

¹⁴ Literally, '(These were) the five hundred jewelled vessels whose most excellent were these (*etat*)'. Against the editing of V and SI (53.4–5), I have separated this off from the following (*sahajātasya khalu sudhanasya...*) for three reasons. First, this short sentence seems to conclude and sum up the long list of vessels. Second, the genitive absolute phrase parallels the one that begins this passage (*sudhanasya khalu śreṣṭhidāarakasya samanantarāvākṛāntasya...*) and therefore should begin the sentence. Third, the use of the enclitic *khalu* ('indeed') tends to follow the first word in a sentence and appears to mark transitions in the text, therefore its inclusion here is further evidence that a new sentence begins with the word '*sahajātasya*'.

¹⁵ SI 52.12 (= A 27v.6) reads *sapta* in compound with *ratna-*. There are no word breaks in A (I suspect the same is true for the other mss.). Therefore, word division in the editions are most likely the decision of the editors.

¹⁶ SI 52.13 reads *sapta* in compound with *mahā-*.

¹⁷ SI 52.16 reads *sarvadā* for *sa yadā*. A 28r.1 reads *sa yadā*.

¹⁸ SI 52.17 reads *sapta* in compound with *mahā-*.

¹⁹ SI 52.17–18 reads *—vistara urdhvādhaḥ-*. A 28r.1 corroborates V's reading.

sarpibhājanāni tailabhājanāni madhubhājanāni navanītabhājanāni, pratyekaṃ ca sarvopakaraṇaparipūrṇāni. yaduta vajrabhājanāni sarvagandhaparipūrṇāni sugandhabhājanāni, nānāvastraparipūrṇāni śīlābhājanāni, nānābhakṣyabhojyasarasāgra-paripūrṇāni maṇibhājanāni, nānāratnaparipūrṇāni suvarṇabhājanāni rūpyacūrṇa²⁰-paripūrṇāni, rūpyabhājanāni suvarṇavarṇacūrṇa-paripūrṇāni, suvarṇarūpyabhājanāni vaidūryamaṇi-ratnaparpūrṇāni, sphatikabhājanāni musāragalvaparipūrṇāni, musāragalvabhājanāni sphāṭikaratnaparipūrṇāni, aśmagarbhābhājanāni lohītamuktā-paripūrṇāni, lohītamuktābhājanāni aśmagarbhaparipūrṇāni jyotirdhvajamaṇiratnabhājanāni udakaprasādakamaṇiratna-paripūrṇāni, udakaprasādakamaṇiratnabhājanāni jyotirdhvajamaṇiratnaparipūrṇāni. etatpramukhāni pañca²¹ ratnabhājanaśatāni[.] saha-jātasya khalu sudhanasya śreṣṭhīdārakasya grhe sarvakośakoṣṭhāgāreṣu dhanadhānyahiraṇyasuvarṇa-vividharatnavarṣāṇy abhipravarsītāni. tasya naimittikair brāhmaṇair mātāpitrbhyaṃ jñātivargeṇa ca vipulasamṛddhir asya jātamātrasya grhe prādurbhūṭeti sudhanaḥ sudhana iti nāmadheyam kṛtam (V 40.13–31).²²

This passage is highly significant to both the narrative and this study, particularly with regard to the theme of wealth. Both the shift in focalization and the rhetorical question made in the present tense serve as narrative devices employed to indicate this passage’s importance. As an ‘argumentative’ passage (see chapter 4), it tells the reader something about the ‘world’ (Why is Sudhana called ‘Good Wealth’?), and therefore possesses particular ideological force. This aside gains additional narrative significance through its weight (it is lengthy and detailed) and position (it is the first information the audience learns about the hero).

Sudhana is called ‘Good Wealth’ because at his conception and birth miraculous events took place involving the magical appearance of fabulous wealth. This account establishes a second connection between spirituality and wealth. Just as the Buddha’s *samādhi* transforms the Jeta Grove into an infinitely vast space filled with countless treasures, so too Sudhana’s conception and birth lead to the (less

²⁰ SI 52.24 reads –varṇa- instead of –cūrṇa-. A 28r.3 reads –cūrṇa-.

²¹ SI 53.4 reads *pañca* in compound with *ratna*-.

²² SI 52.11–53.8; D ga319r.5–320r.1; C 1173–74.

grand, but still impressive) magical appearance of untold priceless objects. Here, we see the emergence of a particular message quite the opposite of the Christian Bible's 'blessed are you poor'.²³ The message of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* appears to be 'blessed are you rich'.

Not only does our hero's name, 'Good Wealth', support this special connection between spirituality and wealth, but so does his title as the 'merchant-banker's son' (*śreṣṭhidāraka*). The precise meaning of the Sanskrit term, *śreṣṭhin*, which I am translating as 'merchant-banker', is not entirely clear. Monier-Williams provides as a common definition 'an eminent artisan, the head or chief of an association following the same trade or industry, the president or foreman of a guild' (MW 1102). For the Pāli equivalent, *setṭhi*, the *PED* offers 'foreman of a guild, treasurer, banker, "City man", wealthy merchant' (722). The term, in its Sanskrit or Prakritic forms, occurs with some frequency in Indian Buddhist donative inscriptions.²⁴ Thus a *śreṣṭhin* appears to have been an important and wealthy urban figure—the head of a guild, a banker, or wealthy merchant. Most likely, much of the difficulty in rendering this term into English stems from the fact that the Sanskrit encompasses some aspects of these different occupations that we distinguish in English. Therefore, in order to make the term as broad as possible, I translate it as 'merchant-banker'. To the Indian audience, Sudhana's title as 'the merchant-banker's son' would have indicated that our young hero is not from a humble background. As

²³ 'And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God"', Luke 6.20 (*The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972).

²⁴ See for example Dehejia 1992: 37, where she states that at Sañchi 'Nineteen donations are from bankers (*sethi*)...'; and Schopen 1997: 39, where he refers to a proto-Mahāyāna inscription that mentions the Buddha Amitābha. Schopen states that although the title of the donor is not given, 'his grandfather is called a *śreṣṭhin*, "banker" or the "head of a guild"'. See also Gokhale 1977: 128, and Neelis 2001: 496–499.

the son of a *śreṣṭhin*, he belongs to a powerful economic, urban elite with close connections to royalty.²⁵

The passage that immediately follows this narrative aside, when read together with it, illustrates an important connection between spirituality and mundane society.

The EN states,

Sudhana, the merchant-banker's son, had served previous conquerors, planted roots of merit, had a noble resolution and intended to follow the good friends. His body, speech, mind, actions and intentions were faultless. He was engaged in the purification of the bodhisattva-path, was approaching omniscience, and had become a vessel for the teachings of the buddhas. He had purified his mental continuum and completely perfected an unobstructed thought of enlightenment.

sudhanaḥ khalu śreṣṭhidārakaḥ pūrvajinakṛtādhikāro >varopita-kuśalamūlaḥ udārādhimuktikaḥ kalyāṇamitrānugatāśayo >navadyakāyavaṇmanaskarmasamudācaro bodhisattvamārga-pariśodhanaprayuktaḥ sarvajñatābhimukho bhājanābhūto buddhadharmāṇām āśayagamana²⁶-parisuddho >saṅgabodhicitta-pariniṣpannaḥ (V 40.31–41.3).²⁷

Here we see a relatively brief enumeration of Sudhana's spiritual qualifications that follows a much longer list of the jewelled sprouts, treasures and vessels that appeared at his conception and birth. Thus, through both position and weight, the EN gives priority to an explanation of the fabulous wealth acquired by Sudhana's family over a list of Sudhana's spiritual qualifications. This priority indicates a fundamental ideological position in the *Gv*: wealth is an indicator of one's spiritual status.

Let us review the evidence provided in this section for this attitude toward wealth. The hero of our story is named 'Good Wealth' because of the fabulous wealth

²⁵ Gokhale (1977: 127) writes, 'the *seṭhis* enjoyed great power at court. The Pañcatantra has a story of a merchant who "directed the whole administration" of a city... Instances of deep friendship between princes and sons of *seṭhis* are on record and one story tells us that a *seṭhi* has power over the king because of some obligation that the merchant had conferred on the King in the past. There are also instances of rich merchants marrying their daughters to kings and princes and the Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata prescribes an identical demeanor, mode of walk and gestures with hands and fingers in acting on stage for royal ministers and merchants.... the interesting point here is that the merchant obviously is regarded here as of the same social standing as a royal minister'.

²⁶ SI 53.11 reads *-gagana-* instead of *-gamana-*. A 28r.6 reads *-gamana-*.

²⁷ SI 53.8–12; D ga320r.1–3; C 1174.

that appeared at his conception and birth; he is the son of a *śreṣṭhin*, a wealthy merchant-banker, part of an urban, economic elite; and his spiritual qualifications indicate he is an advanced bodhisattva. A comparison of the two passages about Sudhana's name and his spiritual attributes highlights the importance given to Sudhana's high economic status. Also in the section, the EN for the first time provides us with a connection between the spiritual elite (described in the *Nidāna* and represented by Mañjuśrī), and an economic elite (represented by Sudhana, the merchant-banker's son).

Mañjuśrī Sends Sudhana on his Quest

After these passages, Mañjuśrī instructs Sudhana and the gathered crowd in various qualities of all the buddhas. Once he has aroused in them the thought of supreme, perfect enlightenment, the great bodhisattva leaves (V 41.4–13).

Inspired by Mañjuśrī's teachings, Sudhana recites thirty-seven verses to the departing bodhisattva (V 41.17– 46.10). The content of these verses consists primarily in Sudhana's desire to be established in the Mahāyāna. This is poetically referred to by such expressions as 'the path to enlightenment',²⁸ the 'royal vehicle',²⁹ the 'best vehicle',³⁰ the 'vehicle of knowledge',³¹ the 'vehicle of enlightenment',³² and the 'Dharma-vehicle'.³³ These verses function to demonstrate both Sudhana's insight into the importance of the bodhisattva-path and his earnest desire to follow it. By making our hero call after Mañjuśrī with these verses, the EN indicates that Sudhana possesses the necessary merit to recognise the spiritual authority of

²⁸ *bodhimārgam* (V 43.14, 18).

²⁹ *yānarājyam* (V 44.8).

³⁰ *agrayānam* (V 44.4, 16; 45.26).

³¹ *jñānayānam* (V 44.28).

³² *bodhiyānam* (V 43.26, 30; 45.6).

³³ *dharmayānam* (V 44.20; 45.10, 14, 22).

Mañjuśrī. Sudhana's final verse highlights the metaphorical connection between this spiritual authority and worldly authority already witnessed in the *Nidāna*:

With your superior vision,
Look at the city of the Dharma-king,
Where those with heads bound with the turban of Dharma,
Are decorated with the crown of the king of knowledge.

*yatra te samabhirūdhacakṣuṣā
jñānarājamakuṭābhyaḥkṛtā
dharmapattavarabaddhaśīrṣayā
dharmarājanagaraṃ vilokayi* (V 46.7–10).³⁴

I interpret the 'Dharma-king' to be the Buddha and the 'city of Dharma-king' to be the *dharmadhātu*. Those wearing the turbans and crowns, therefore, would be the advanced bodhisattvas of his retinue. Royal imagery to establish the exalted spiritual status of buddhas and bodhisattvas is used frequently within the *Gv* and functions as a central motif in the text's definition of power.

Following Sudhana's verses, Mañjuśrī looks upon our young hero with the 'gaze of an elephant' (*nāgāvalokita*) and responds to him with statements about worshipping the good friends in order to obtain omniscience.³⁵ This passage is the first indication that devotion to the *kalyāṇamītras* is the primary means to attain enlightenment. Within the worldview of the *Gv*, the good friends are bodhisattvas (or their magical creations) who teach and empower beings on the bodhisattva-path. As such, they constitute a spiritual society functioning within mundane society. Mañjuśrī's statements about the importance of the *kalyāṇamītras* mark a fundamental shift in the narrative. From this point onward, the primary focus of the story is Sudhana's visits to the good friends.

Our hero responds to the bodhisattva by performing his 'Question' formula for the first time (see chapter 4). Instead of answering Sudhana's questions, Mañjuśrī

³⁴ SI 56.21–22; D ga322v.4–5; C 1178.

³⁵ V 46.11–15; see also chapter 3, where I discuss this passage at length.

recites ten verses in which he praises the merchant-banker's son for his resolve and predicts his enlightenment (V 46.24–47.10). This section concludes with Mañjuśrī's version of the 'Go and Ask' formula and Sudhana's first 'Departing' formula.

To summarise, we see in the Mañjuśrī section a number of important narratological developments. It consists of two primary scenes: Mañjuśrī's conversion of the great auditors and his meeting with Sudhana. The first establishes the spiritual status of Mañjuśrī, and incorporates the *Gv* within the meta-narrative of mainstream Buddhism. In the second scene, Mañjuśrī meets Sudhana and sends him on his quest to seek out the good friends in order to attain enlightenment. It functions within the narrative as a transition from the magical world of the *Nidāna* to the mundane world of Sudhana's travels in ancient India. The theme of wealth is particularly prominent in this section. The explanation of Sudhana's name as well as his social rank as the son of a merchant-banker highlight the strong connection between property and spiritual status.

7. The Authority of Monks

In the next three sections following Sudhana's encounter with Mañjuśrī, the EN recounts our young hero's visits to three *bhikṣus*: Meghaśrī (*km#2*), Sāgaramegha (*km#3*), Supraṭiṣṭhita (*km#4*). The length of narration of each of these visits is three pages, four pages and four pages respectively (for a combined total of only 2.53% of the total text). Although these sections lack weight, their position immediately after Sudhana's first encounter with Mañjuśrī adds force and increases their narrative significance. The social status of these *kalyāṇamitras* possesses particular importance for the possible social context of the narrative's origins, its conception of spiritual hierarchy and its notions about wealth. After briefly summarising the content of Sudhana's encounters with these *bhikṣus*, I discuss their narratological significance within the larger context of the text's structures and themes.

Meghaśrī (*km#2*)

This section begins with Sudhana's arrival in the country of Rāmāvarānta. Once there, our hero locates the mountain Sugrīva, climbs it and, after seven days of searching, spots Meghaśrī on the plateau of a nearby mountain (V 48.1–8). Sudhana approaches the monk and performs his 'Approach and Question' formulae. In response, Meghaśrī praises Sudhana for asking his questions and states how difficult it is to seek out such a path (V 48.16–22). He then tells Sudhana about his own spiritual attainment—the ability to see the '*tathāgatas* in all directions'.¹ The manner in which Meghaśrī describes this ability illustrates both the *Gv*'s pre-occupation with large numbers and its conception of the infinite vastness of space. The monk begins by stating that he sees a single *tathāgata* to the east. Then he declares that he sees

¹ ...*sarvadikkṣetrābhimukhāms tathāgatān paśyāmi* (V 48.26–27).

two, ten, one hundred, one thousand, one hundred-thousand, a *koṭi*,² a hundred *koṭis*, a thousand *koṭis*, a hundred-thousand *koṭis*, a hundred-thousand *niyutas*³ of *koṭis* of buddhas, and continues like this until stating that he sees as many *tathāgatas* as there are dust particles in an inexpressible number of buddha-fields (V 48.27–49.8). Meghaśrī concludes his description by telling our hero that in the same way as he sees buddhas to the east, so he sees buddhas in all directions.

Sāgaramegha (*km#3*)

The next section begins with Sudhana recollecting the instructions of Meghaśrī as he travels gradually (*anupūrveṇa*) to the region of Sāgaramukha to find the monk Sāgaramegha (V 51.1–6). Upon meeting, Sāgaramegha tells a story about his own spiritual attainment. Here we see a shift in both narration and focalization: external narration has changed to character-bound narration and focalization has shifted from Sudhana to Sāgaramegha. The monk’s story begins:

Son of Good Family, for twelve years I have been living here in the region of Sāgaramukha making the great ocean my basis and keeping it present in my mind, namely (by) reflecting on the vast infinitude of the great ocean, its pure clarity, the difficulty in fathoming its depth, its well established gradual depth, its variety of many stores of gems... Son of Good Family, (then) this thought occurred to me—‘There is nothing else in this world other than this great ocean which is vaster, more expansive, infinite, deep or varied.’ Son of Good Family, while I was thoroughly concentrating on this thought in this manner a great lotus appeared from the depth of the great ocean.

*ahaṃ kulaputra pūrṇāni dvādaśa⁴ varṣāṇi iha sāgaramukhe
dikpratyuddēse viharāmi imaṃ mahāsāgaram ārambaṇīkṛtya
āmukhīkṛtya, yaduta mahāsāgarasya vipulāpramāṇatām anuvicintayan
vimalaprasannatām ca gambhīraduravagāhatām ca anupūrva-
nimnasusthitām ca anekaratnākaravictratām.... tasya mama*

² Monier-Williams states that a *koṭi* is ‘the highest number in the older system of numbers (viz. a Krore or ten millions)’ (MW: 312).

³ A *niyuta* is also a very large number defined usually as either a million or one-hundred billion (see *BHS*: 298 and *MW*: 552).

⁴ *SI* 64.7 reads *dvādaśa* in compound with *varṣāṇi*.

*kulaputra evaṃ bhavati—asti na punar anyañ kaścād iha loke yo
>smān mahāsāgarād vipulataś ca vistīrṇataś ca apramāṇataś
ca gambhīrataś ca vicitrataś ca. tasya mama kulaputra evaṃ
yonīśaś cintāmanasikāraprayuktasya mahāsāgarasyādhastān
mahāpadmaṃ prādurabhūt (V 51.29–52.4).⁵*

The CN (Sāgaramegha) then describes in great detail the nature of this mystic lotus.

In typical *Gv*-style, the flower made of precious substances and encrusted with countless jewels and gems. His description begins:

Its stem was made of unsurpassed sapphire *maṇi*-gems and diamond jewels with a great garland of lapis lazuli and *maṇi*-gems; its pure, pedals, vast as the ocean, were of gold arrayed with buds of yellow sandalwood and furnished with emeralds, gems and fragrant powders. Its calyx was on a stem held by a million god-chiefs, enveloped by a net of a million *maṇi*-gems of different kinds...

*aparājitamaṇiratnendranīlamanīvajradaṇḍaṃ mahāvaidūryamaṇi-
iratnāvataṃsakam jāmbhūnadasurvarṇavimalavipulapatraṃ
kālanūsāricandanakalikāvīyūham aśmagarbharaṭṭnakesaropetaṃ⁶
sāgaravipula-vistīrṇapramāṇaṃ daśāsuraśataśahasra-
saṃdhāritadaṇḍagarbhaṃ daśamanīratnaśataśahasra-
vicitraratnajālasaṃchannaṃ... (V 52.4–7).⁷*

After his lengthy description of the lotus, Sāgaramegha characterises the mystic flower as ‘produced from transcendental roots of merit of the *tathāgatas*’,⁸ as ‘produced out of illusory phenomena,’⁹ and states that ‘its nature was like a dream’.¹⁰ Next, the monk tells Sudhana that the form of a *tathāgata* appeared on the lotus and described its inconceivable nature (V 52.19–53.2). He then narrates how this buddha extended his right hand, touched him on the head and revealed to him a religious discourse called ‘Universal Eye’ (*samantanetra*) (V 53.3).

This section introduces, for the first time, a character-bound embedded narrative. Several important embedded narratives occur throughout the *Gv*, especially

⁵ SI 64.7–16; D ga329v.2–6; C 1183–84.

⁶ SI 64.18 reads *-ropetaṃ* in compound with *sāgara-*. This reading is corroborated by A 34r.3.

⁷ SI 64.16–19; D ga329v.6–330r.2; C 1184.

⁸ *tathāgatalokottarakuśalamūlanirjātaṃ* (V 52.19).

⁹ *māyāgatadharmānirjātaṃ* (V 52.20).

¹⁰ *svapnasamadharatāsamudācāraṃ* (V 52.21).

when Sudhana encounters the night goddesses. Their basic structure remains the same: Sudhana asks the *kalyāṇamitra* a question, and the good friend responds by telling a story.

Also in this section, the EN describes a magical transformation involving the appearance of fabulous wealth. Like the narration of events that occur at our hero's conception and birth, there is an explicit connection between this vision of the lotus and spiritual merit. This is evident from Sāgaramegha's statement that the lotus was produced from the 'transcendental roots of merit of the *tathāgatas*'. The ultimate illusory nature of the vision demonstrates the *Gv*'s conception of the unreality of all phenomena. Its religious significance rests in its usefulness to convey the Universal Eye discourse to the monk.

Supraṭiṣṭhita (*km#4*)

When he reaches the island of Laṅkā, Sudhana sees the monk Supraṭiṣṭhita walking in the sky surrounded by a retinue of lords of the *nāgas*, *kinnaras*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *yakṣas*, *rākṣasas*, *brahmas* and other divinities, all bearing precious offerings (V 55.1–23).

After Sudhana's 'Approach' and 'Question' formulae, the monk tells our hero that he has attained the liberation (*vimokṣa*) of the bodhisattvas, 'Unobstructed Entrance' (*asaṅgamukha*).¹¹ Through this liberation he has attained a light of knowledge (*jñānāloka*) called, 'Ultimate Non-obstruction' (*asaṅgakoṭi*) (V 55.15). Supraṭiṣṭhita then describes at length the various powers he had acquired through this light of knowledge, such as the ability to multiply his form and to travel to innumerable worlds and worship the buddhas there (V 56.15–57.25). After this, the

¹¹ *ahaṃ kulaputra asaṅgamukhasya bodhisattvavimokṣasya labhī* (V 56.13).

monk lists a number of attainments which come to those whom he encounters such as, ‘those beings whom I come within their range, with whom I meet, those all become established in supreme, perfect enlightenment’.¹²

Analysis

In each section, the EN imparts important information about the *Gv*’s worldview and spiritual path. Sudhana’s encounters with both Meghaśrī and Supraṭiṣṭhita highlight the *Gv*’s expansive vision of the physical universe by describing how these monks can either see innumerable worlds or travel to them at will. Sāgaramegha’s vision of the lotus flower emphasises the illusory nature of phenomena. All three of the monks’ spiritual attainments involve some type of direct experience of a buddha or buddhas, and thereby demonstrate the importance of these types of experiences for one’s spiritual development.

In the Sāgaramegha section, the theme of wealth and its connection to spirituality is further developed from the description of the mystic lotus and by the argumentative passage that connects this lotus to the *tathāgatas*’ transcendental roots of merit. To a lesser extent, the relationship of wealth and religious status surfaces in the depiction of the Supraṭiṣṭhita’s retinue and their gifts.

All three sections are particularly important for the theme of power. They contain explicit information about spiritual powers and encode information about the worldly power of monastics who participated in the production of the text. In the Mañjuśrī section, the EN informs his audience of the spiritual authority of the *kalyāṇamitras*: through meeting, serving and worshipping them one ultimately attains

¹² *yeṣāṃ ca sattvānāṃ ābhāsam āgacchāmi, yaṅ samāgacchāmi, te sarve niyatā bhavanti anuttarāyāṃ samyakṣambodhau* (V 57.27–28). A logical inference from this statement would be that Sudhana, since he has met the monk, is himself established in supreme, perfect enlightenment. This proclamation therefore functions obliquely as a confirmation of Sudhana’s high spiritual status.

omniscience. In the course of Sudhana's conversations with the three monks, the audience learns about the range of spiritual power that is wielded by *kalyāṇamītras*. Meghaśrī has the power to see limitless buddhas in the ten directions. Through concentrating his mind on the ocean, Sāgaramegha (whose name means 'Ocean-cloud') is able to see a buddha sitting on a jewelled lotus and learns the religious discourse known as 'Universal Eye'. Supraṭiṣṭhita's attainments are even more advanced. First, he has the ability to walk in the sky. Second, he has learned the liberation 'Unobstructed Gate' and has gained a 'light of knowledge' from this called 'Ultimate Non-obstruction'. This light of knowledge endows him with many psychic powers, including the ability to multiply his body and travel vast distances through space. In other words, the spiritual power of the good friends consists in visionary experiences of buddhas, learning religious discourses, attaining liberations and lights of knowledge, and the acquisition of psychic abilities.

In order to understand the narrative significance of these three good friends in relation to worldly power, we must inquire into their social status as *bhikṣus*. In chapter 2, I demonstrate that monks and monasteries played an active role in the commercial activities of the first several centuries CE. In some cases, such activities led to the accumulation of considerable wealth. Often wealth resulted in an elevated economic and political status. A brief quote from the *Mattavilāsa*, a satirical play composed in the early seventh century, illustrates the influence of the wealthy Buddhist monasteries. The context is a dispute over a missing skull-cup between a Kāpālika and a Buddhist monk. The Kāpālika's girlfriend complains:

This Buddhist has behind him the wealth of many monasteries. He can fill the mouths of the officials of the court at will. But we are servants

of the poor Kāpālika, whose wealth is merely a snake skin and ash.
With what wealth do we enter the court?¹³

Also in chapter 2, I suggest that monks, rather than laypeople, were responsible for the composition, copying and preservation of Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Now if that is the case and our text was indeed composed by monks, why is the hero of the story a layperson? I think this question may be answered if we consider the authors' target audience. If the *Gv* were composed by monastics for wealthy and royal laypeople, we would expect it to cater to the religious aspirations of these people.

Given the possible monastic authorship of the *Gv*, the early position of these three *bhikṣus* gains considerable significance. By placing these visits directly after Sudhana's encounter with the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī and before the first lay-*kalyāṇamitra*, the EN asserts monastic authority. Mañjuśrī is one of the two most important 'helpers' of the 'power' (Vairocana) in the fabula and is located at the top of the spiritual hierarchy. As such, he completely transcends mundane social hierarchies. The bodhisattva tells our hero to go to a monk at the outset of his spiritual quest. This sends a clear message to the target audience of the story: the layperson's journey towards enlightenment begins with spiritual advice from monks. Even though each monk claims his ultimate ignorance of the bodhisattva's course of conduct, Sudhana first visits three monastics and pays the appropriate homage in recognition of their elevated spiritual status. In this manner, the EN is able to tell a story about a wealthy merchant-banker's son tailored to the interests and aspirations of laypeople while preserving monastic authority.

¹³ From David N. Lorenzen, trans. (2000) 'A Parody of the Kāpālikas', in *Tantra in Practice*, edited by David Gordon White, Oxford: Princeton University Press, p.93. Although this play is from slightly after the Buddhist Middle Period (*circa* 0–500 CE), I think it not unlikely that similar opinions were held by urban dwellers during this period.

8. The Wealth and Power of a Grammarian, Merchant-banker and Queen

Sudhana's next three encounters are with Megha, the grammarian (*dramiḍa*), Mukṭaka, the merchant-banker (*śreṣṭhin*), and Queen Āśā, the laywoman (*upāsikā*). The combined weight of these sections is 3.8% of the total text (25 pages in the Vaidya edition). Their relative position begins about 13.5% into the text and ends at about 19.9%. Each of these visits maintains the standard narrative structures present in Sudhana's previous encounters, featuring the 'Approach and Question', 'Statement of Attainment and Ignorance', 'Go and Ask', and 'Departure' formulae. In between, each good friend explains their special attainment, various visions occur and miraculous events transpire. Throughout, the EN continues to develop the narrative's worldview structures and conceptions of wealth, gender and power.

Megha (*km#5*)

Following the advice of Supraṭiṣṭhita, Sudhana journeys to Vajrapura, a city of grammarians (*dramiḍapattana*), in search of the grammarian Megha. Once he arrives in the city, our hero sees him 'at the cross-roads in the middle of the city, seated on a lion-seat for preaching the Dharma, illuminating a religious discourse to ten thousand beings called "The Array Turning Syllables on a Wheel"'.¹ After Sudhana performs his usual 'Approach' and 'Question' formulae, a dramatic inversion takes place:

Then Megha, the grammarian, out of reverence for the bodhisattva, got up from that lion-seat, descended, completely prostrated himself before Sudhana, the merchant-banker's son, and covered him with a multitude of all different types of flowers. He also bestrewed upon him priceless gems and the best sandalwood powder; and covered him with many hundreds of thousands of garments brightly dyed with various bright colours. Covering and bestrewing him with many beautiful, pleasant, fragrant flowers of various colours and worshipping, honouring, praising and demonstrating his esteem for him with various other types

¹ ...*madhyenagaram śrīṅgātake dharmasāmkathyāya siṃhāsane niṣaṇṇaṃ daśānāṃ prāṇisahasrāṇāṃ cakrākṣaraparivartavyūhaṃ nāma dharmaparyāyaṃ samprakāśayamānam* (V 59.6–8).

of worship, he said this to Sudhana, the merchant-banker's son: 'It is very good, Son of Good Family, that the thought for supreme, perfect enlightenment has arisen in you in such a manner'.

*atha khalu megho dramido bodhisattvagauraveṇa tataḥ simhāsanād
utthāya avatīrya sudhanasya śreṣṭhidārakasya sarvaśarīreṇa
praṇipatya sudhanam śreṣṭhidārakam sarvapuṣparāśinā abhyavakirat.
anarghaiś ca maṇiratnair udāracandanacūrṇaiś cābhiprākirat.
nānācitraraṅgaraktaiś ca anekair vastraśatasahasrair abhicchādayām
āsa. anekaiś ca nānāvarṇai rucirair manoramair gandhapuṣpair
abhyavakīrya abhiprakīrya anyaiś ca vividhaiḥ pūjāprakāraiḥ
pūjayitvā satkrītya gurukrītya mānayatvā pūjayitvā sudhanam
śreṣṭhidārakam etad avocat—sādhu sādhu kulaputra, yena te
anuttarāyām samyaksambodhau cittam utpāditam (V 59.20–25).²*

The significance of this passage is manifold. Although Megha is a *kalyāṇamitra*, he descends from his throne and worships Sudhana with priceless gifts. This inversion of devotional activity immediately after Sudhana's visits to the three monk *kalyāṇamitras* highlights their spiritual authority. When Sudhana meets Meghaśrī, Sāgaramegha and Supraṭiṣṭhita he bows down and worships them; but as monks, these three do not bow down and worship Sudhana, a lay bodhisattva. Megha is the first lay *kalyāṇamitra* who Sudhana encounters. Although the grammarian is teaching to a large crowd of people, he worships the merchant-banker's son. The message encoded here is that lay bodhisattvas pay respect to monk or other lay bodhisattvas, but monk bodhisattvas not worship lay bodhisattvas. In this manner, the EN preserves the authority of monastics over lay teachers.

Megha's reference to Sudhana as a bodhisattva enhances the spiritual status of our hero. Also, by showering flowers, gems and garments upon him, he indicates that Sudhana deserves priceless treasures, while simultaneously highlighting his own wealth. Once again, we see an explicit connection between wealth and spiritual status.

² SI 73.14–21; D ga338r.7–338v.4; C 1189–90.

Muktaka (*km#6*)

The EN informs us that our hero arrives at Vanavāsin ‘gradually after twelve years.’³ Here we see the greatest divergence so far between the time of the fabula (TF) and the time of the story (TS). This change in rhythm, which Bal refers to as a ‘summary’ (see chapter 4), has two primary effects. First, it informs us of Sudhana’s intense devotion to the path by demonstrating his resolve to find Muktaka even after twelve years. Second, it indicates that his spiritual abilities cited in the preceding passage were cultivated during the intervening years. The audience may assume that Sudhana is now older and wiser, and therefore, more accomplished in his spiritual training.

As if to demonstrate this advancement, Sudhana provides Muktaka with an extended version of the ‘Question’ formula, wherein he explains in detail his desire to attain supreme, perfect enlightenment (V 63.21–64.19). Following this passage the story reads:

Then Muktaka, the merchant-banker, at that time attained an entrance into a trance of the bodhisattvas that was the foremost entrance into the infinitely revolving mystic verse called ‘Uniting All Buddha-fields’, through employing the strength of his previous roots of merit, through the power of the *tathāgata* and through the princely Mañjuśrī’s focusing of attention and production of a light of knowledge.

*atha khalu muktakaḥ śreṣṭhī tasyāṃ velāyāṃ sarvabuddha-
kṣetrasamavasaraṇaṃ nāma anantāvartadhāraṇīmukha-
pūrvamaṅgamaṃ bodhisattvasamādhimukhaṃ samāpadyata
pūrvakuśalamūlabalādhānena tathāgatādhiṣṭhānena, mañjuśrīyaś ca
kumārabhūtasya samanvāhareṇa jñānālokopasaṃhāreṇa ca (V
64.20–22).*⁴

In this passage we see further developments in the *Gv*’s conceptions of the spiritual path and notions of power. In response to Sudhana’s questions about the bodhisattva’s course of conduct, Muktaka enters a *samādhi*, thereby reiterating the importance of trance as a means of teaching the Dharma. This is achieved through three sources: the

³ [a]nupūrveṇa dvādāśabhir varṣsais taṃ vanavāsijanapadam anuprāptaḥ (V 63.19).

⁴ SI 79.8–11; D ga344v.2–4; C 1194.

strength of the merchant-banker's own previous roots of merit, the power (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of the Buddha and the aid of the Mañjuśrī. In this way, the EN emphasises the Buddha as the ultimate source of enlightened activity and identifies Mañjuśrī as a primary helper, while simultaneously recognising the individual's own spiritual contribution.⁵

As a result of Mukataka's *samādhi*, his body becomes completely pure and countless buddhas in all directions become visible within it (V 64.23–24). The activities and realms of these buddhas are then described in detail and we learn that Mukataka has accomplished a liberation of the *tathāgatas* called 'Unobstructed Array'.⁶

Muktaka is one of six *kalyāṇamitras* who belong to the merchant-banker class and teach Sudhana, himself a *śreṣṭhin*'s son.⁷ The inclusion of characters from this wealthy urban social strata is unlikely to be accidental. In chapter 2, I discuss the connection between monastics and merchants in the Middle Period of Indian Buddhism. Given this important economic relationship, we may assume that *śreṣṭhins* constituted important members of our narrator's target audience.⁸

⁵ The mention of Mañjuśrī here is significant. This is the first such occurrence since Sudhana's encounter with the bodhisattva. Given that Sudhana, the son of a merchant-banker, has a special relationship with Mañjuśrī, and that Mukataka himself is a merchant-banker, is the EN indicating that this bodhisattva was the Buddhist equivalent to a patron saint of *śreṣṭhins*? Although the evidence is not conclusive, it is suggestive of a possible special relationship between Mañjuśrī and the wealthy merchant-banker class at the time of the story composition.

⁶ *ahaṃ kulaputra asaṅgavyūhaṃ nāma tathāgatavimokṣaṃ āyūhāmi niryūhāmi* (V 65.22).

⁷ There are four other merchant-bankers: Ratnacūḍa (*km#16*), Samantanetra (*km#17*), Utpalabhūti (*km#22*), Jayottama (*km#24*); and one merchant-banker's son, Śilpābhijñā (*km#46*).

⁸ Gokhale (1977: 127–8) writes, 'It is in the Buddhist texts that the special relationship between Buddhism and the mercantile class in general and the *seṭṭhi* in particular is best seen. Even before he formally inaugurated the Saṅgha for monks and nuns the Buddha's first converts were laymen, the two merchants named Tapussa and Bhallika. In the Jātaka stories whenever the Bodhisattva is represented as being born a human being, and in cases where social rank or cast is definitely stated, he is shown as being born in families associated with commerce as many as 67 times, next in number only to the Brāhmana and Kṣatriya caste.... The merchant very frequently figures in the votive inscriptions from Bharhut, Sanchi, Karle, Bhaja, Mahad, Nasik, Pitalkhora and Ajanta. That the merchant community maintained a special relationship with the heterodoxies, Buddhism and Jainism, is an obvious feature of their history'.

Queen Āśā (km#8)

In this section, the EN describes, for the first time, the connection between wealth, women and power. As queen and laywoman, Āśā is both the first royalty and the first female *kalyāṇamitra* in the narrative. This points to another social group included in the narrator's target audience. The weight of this section is 1.8% of the total text (one of longer sections—see appendix A). Therefore, content and weight warrant this section's close investigation.

During Sudhana's encounter with Queen Āśā we find the most elaborate description of wealth thus far. When Sudhana arrives in the country of Samudravetālin, he enters a park and he sees that it is

surrounded by walls made of all types of gems, well adorned and arranged into rows of gem trees of all types; giving off pollen from small, beautiful gem flowers of all types in rows; well decorated with all kinds of gems trees; scattered with various flowers from the blossoms of gem trees of all types; possessed a fragrance that was being emitted in all directions from rows of trees of all kinds of fragrance; raining down with a shower of pendulous garlands of various gems loosed from the buds of trees with garlands of all types of gems...

*sarvaratnaprākāraparikṣiptaṃ sarvaratnadrumapaṅktiṣu
āviddhasamalaṃkṛtaṃ sarvaratna⁹-paṅkirucirasūksma-
kusumareṇupramuktaṃ¹⁰ sarvaratnadrumasamalaṃkṛtaṃ
sarvaratnadrumapuṣpavicitrakusumākīrṇaṃ
sarvagandhadrumapaṅktisamantadigniścaritagandhaṃ
sarvaratnamālādrumakośapramuktapralambanānāratnamālā-
vṛṣṭyabhipravaraṣaṇaṃ... (V 79.7–10).¹¹*

This description continues in a similar fashion for a while. When completed, the EN tells his audience that within the park there are millions of mansions 'arrayed with turrets adorned with all types of great *maṇi*-gems',¹² peaked dwellings 'furnished with

⁹ A 53r.6 inserts *-druma-*.

¹⁰ SI 100.12 reads *-pramuktakān*. A 53r.6 corroborates this reading.

¹¹ SI 100.11–14; D ga364v.3–6; C 1208.

¹² *sarvamahāmaṇiratnapratimaṇḍitaniryūhavyūhāni* (V 79.14–15).

gold peaks and covered in gold',¹³ palaces 'with interiors adorned with solar *maṇi*-gems',¹⁴ lotus pools 'made from all types of gems',¹⁵ etc. In the middle of the park is a palace called 'Manifold Banners' (*vicitrādhvaja*), 'possessing a floor of gems from the depth of the ocean, adorned with pillars of lapis lazuli and *maṇi*-gems, with elevated peaks of gold',¹⁶ etc.

Next, Queen Āśā's appearance is elaborated:

...Āśā, the laywoman, was seated on a very beautiful throne with a golden interior, and was adorned in a net of pearls from the depths of the ocean. She was wearing a crown, her arms were arrayed with arm-bands and bracelets of gold surpassing those of the gods, and her arms were brilliant with *maṇi*-gems emitting a multitude of glorious light rays. Her ear-rings were pendulous jewels of pure, very dark blue; her head was completely adorned with a net of great gems; a row of ornaments upon her ears were lion-pearl *maṇi*-gems,¹⁷ and around her throat was a necklace of wish-fulfilling *maṇi*-gems. Her body blazed with a light from a net of all types of gems that completely covered her, and a multitude of a hundred thousand *niyutas* of *koṭis* of beings were bowed down before her.

...*āśopāsikā kāñcanagarbhamahābhadrāsanopaviṣṭā*
sāgaragarbhamuktājālālaṃkṛtā avabaddhamakutā
divyātirekakanakakeyūravalayabāhuvyūhā śrīkāyaraśmimaṇi-
*ratnavirājitabāhuḥ abhinīlavimalavilambamaṇikuṇḍalā*¹⁸
mahāratnajālasaṃchannopaśobhitaśīrṣā siṃhamukhamāṇi-
ratnakarṇacūḍakadhāraṇī cintārājamaṇiratnahārāvasaktakaṇṭhā
*sarvaratnajālasaṃchannaprabhojjvalitaśarīrā*¹⁹
prāṇikoṭīniyutaśatasahasrapraṇatakāyā (V 80.20–25).²⁰

This passage concludes the description of Queen Āśā's fabulous wealth. The remainder of Sudhana's encounter with Āśā focuses upon the Queen's powers and

¹³ *jāmbhūnadakūṭakanakacchadanopetāni* (V 79.15).

¹⁴ *vairocanamaṇiratnopaśobhitagarbhāni* (V 79.16).

¹⁵ *sarvaratnamayāni* (V 79.16).

¹⁶ *sāgaragarbharatnapṛthivītalasaṃsthānaṃ vaidūryamaṇiratnastambhopaśobhitaṃ jāmbhūnadasuvarṇasaṃudgatakūṭaṃ...* (V 79. 24–25).

¹⁷ *cūḍaka* I am reading as BHS *cūḍā* = Skt. *cūḍamaṇi* (see *BHSD*: 232; *MW*: 400). This is supported by the Tibetan translation (D ga366v.6) of *rgyan* ('ornament'). Cleary's translation does not include this compound. *siṃhamukha*, 'lion's face' or 'lion's mouth', also does not really fit the context. It may be a textual error for *siṃhamuktā*, 'lion-pearl', which occurs much later in the text (see *BHSD*: 595. Edgerton's reference to *Gv* 511.4 is from *SI* and may be found at V 407.17). The Tibetan (D ga366v.6) follows the Sanskrit and translates the term *seng ge 'i gdong* ('face of a lion').

¹⁸ *SI* 102.17 reads *-kuṇḍalā* in compound with *mahā-*.

¹⁹ *SI* 102.19 reads *śarīrām*. This word has no *anusvāra* at A 54v.3.

²⁰ *SI* 102.14–19; D ga366v.4–7; C 1210.

attainments which, when juxtaposed with these accounts of her inconceivable riches, provides further insight into the relationship between wealth and spiritual power.

Immediately after these descriptions, we learn that whoever comes to see Āśā becomes immediately cured of all physical and mental affliction (V 80.20–81.9). After Sudhana performs his ‘Approach’ and ‘Question’ formulae (V 81.10–16), the Queen says:

Son of Good Family, I have attained the liberation of the bodhisattvas, ‘Banner of Tranquillity Without Sorrow’. Son of Good Family, it is efficacious to see, hear, worship, dwell with, and remember me. Son of Good Family, I do not appear through manifesting a vision of myself to beings who have not planted the roots of merit, who have not embraced the good friends, and who are not focused on the supreme, perfectly enlightened buddhas. Son of Good Family, as soon as beings see me they become irreversible from (the path to) supreme, perfect enlightenment.

*ahaṃ kulaputra, aśokakṣemadhvayasya bodhisattvavimokṣasya²¹
lābhinī. sāhaṃ kulaputra amoghadarśanā amoghaśravaṇā
amoghaparyupāsānā amoghaikavāsasaṃvāsānā amoghānusmaraṇā.
nāhaṃ kulaputra, anavaropitakuśalamūlānāṃ sattvānāṃ cakṣuṣa
ābhāsam āgacchāmi darśanaviññaptiā, nāparigrhītakalyāṇamitrānāṃ
nāsamānvāhrtasamyakṣaṃbuddhānāṃ. mama kulaputra
sahadarśanena sattvā avāivartikā bhavanty anuttarāyāḥ
samyakṣaṃbodheḥ (V 81.17–21).²²*

This passage reinforces the conception (first introduced in the *Nidāna*) that only the spiritual elite, the bodhisattvas, have access to certain visionary experiences. Queen Āśā, her park, mansions, palaces, and peaked dwellings are not visible to those who have not developed the necessary roots of merit (*kuśalamūla*), who have not embraced the good friends and who are not focused on the supreme, perfectly enlightened buddhas. But those who have done these things, the mere sight of Āśā cures them of

²¹ SI 103.24 reads *bodhisattvasya vimokṣasya*. A 55r.4 corroborates V’s reading of *bodhisattvavimokṣasya*.

²² SI 103.23–104.3; D ga368r2–6; C 1210.

their afflictions and renders them incapable of back-sliding on the path to enlightenment.²³

One other event in this section deserves mention. After Queen Āśā finishes explaining her liberation to Sudhana, he asks her, ‘Noble One, how long ago did you produce the thought (to attain) supreme, perfect enlightenment?’²⁴ This question introduces a brief character-bound embedded narrative by the Queen in which she tells Sudhana about a number of past lives in which she remembers serving, honouring and worshipping previous buddhas (V 81.29–82.9). Āśā’s narrative is in the first person,²⁵ and constitutes little more than a list of *tathāgata*’s names.²⁶

The sequence used to introduce the Queen in this section parallels Sudhana’s introduction. For both, the EN first describes their fabulous wealth, and then their spiritual attainment. This temporal ordering strengthens the association between wealth and spiritual power. Āśā tells Sudhana that only irreversible bodhisattvas can see her. Therefore, our hero’s vision of the Queen, her garden, mansions, palaces, etc., indicates that he is both spiritually advanced enough to witness such a miraculous display of wealth and that he is irreversible in his progress toward enlightenment.

The gender and social status of Āśā are significant. As female royalty she represents a particularly wealthy and powerful segment of mundane society. Although it is difficult (if not impossible) to assess the actual political power of queens during the composition of the *Gv*, we know from inscriptions that the female royalty of at least one dynasty, the Ikṣvākus, were important donors to Buddhist monastic institutions (see

²³ Wilson writes that Āśā ‘is the embodiment of patience (kṣānti). As a socially ideal type in this world, she would be the Indian mother whose celestial prototype is the Goddess Earth (Bhū)’ (Paul 1985: 138). I find no textual support for these statements in the *Gv*.

²⁴ *kiyacirotpāditaṃ tvayā ārye anuttarāyāṃ samyaksambodhau cittaṃ?* (V 81.28–29).

²⁵ ‘I remember..’ (*anusmarāmi*).

²⁶ Sudhana’s question later in the narrative causes the good friends to respond with lengthy *avadānas*. These embedded narratives are prominent during Sudhana’s encounters with the night goddesses and often concern female royalty (see chapter 14).

chapter 2). The fact that Āśā is only visible to advanced bodhisattvas demonstrates that the Queen possesses an elevated status within the spiritual society of the *Gv*. Hence, the narrator combines here for the first time political, economic and spiritual power in one character.

9. The Spiritual Authority of Non-Buddhists: The Sage and the Brahmin

Sudhana's encounters with *kalyāṇamitras* #9 and #10 are brief,¹ but worth mentioning for three reasons. First, these two visits are with good friends who, at least by outward appearance, are non-Buddhist. In this way they form what I call a 'meaningful pair'. In other words, the EN couples certain good friends because they share a meaningful characteristic.² Their non-Buddhist status may have ideological implications related to an attempt to incorporate other religious practice within a Buddhist conceptual frame-work. Second, in these sections Sudhana experiences *samādhis* for the first time, an accomplishment directly related to the power of these good friends. Third, the narrator develops the conceptions of a spiritual society, and this society's power and authority.

Bhīṣmottaranirghoṣa (km#9)

When Sudhana goes to see the sage (*ṛṣi*) Bhīṣmottaranirghoṣa in the country of Nālayu, he finds the good friend in a hermitage surrounded by 10,000 religious disciples (V 87.7–14). Bhīṣmottaranirghoṣa tells the merchant-banker's son that he has attained the liberation of the bodhisattvas 'Unsurpassed Banner'.³ When Sudhana enquires about its range (*viśaya*), the sage stretches out his right hand, rubs our hero on his head, and grasps his right hand,⁴ whereupon, Sudhana sees incalculable buddha-fields. He observes himself sitting at the feet of all the buddhas in these

¹ Only .69% of the total text for km#9 (V 87–89), and 1.4% for km#10 (V 90–95).

² Other such significant couplings are the kings Anala and Mahāprabha (*kms*#18 and #19; chapter 11), the nun Siṃhavijñmbhitā and courtesan Vasumitrā (*kms*#25 and #26; chapter 12), the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Ananyagāmin (*kms*#28 and #29), and Gopā and Māyā (*kms*#41 and #42; chapter 15).

³ *ahaṃ kulaputra aparājītadhvajasya bodhisattvasya vimokṣasya lāblū* (V 88.15–16).

⁴ *sudhana āha—ka etasya ārya aparājītadhvajasya bodhisattvavimokṣasya viśayaḥ? tato bhīṣmottaranirghoṣa ṛṣiḥ dakṣiṇaṃ pānīm prasārya sudhanaṃ śreṣṭhidārakaṃ śirasi parimārjya dakṣiṇena pānīnā paryagrḥṇāt* (V 88.16–18).

buddha-fields, listening to their teachings, witnessing their past actions, and experiencing the spiritual qualities of their buddha-fields for countless eons (V 88.18–89.11).

When Bhīṣmottaranirghoṣa releases Sudhana, our hero finds himself standing before the Sage just as he had been. Bhīṣmottaranirghoṣa then asks him, ‘Son of Good Family, do you remember?’ And Sudhana replies, ‘Noble One, by the power of the good friend, I remember’.⁵ This response clearly acknowledges the power (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of the *kalyāṇamitra* as the direct cause of his vision experience .

Jayoṣmāyatana (*km#10*)

Having left Bhīṣmottaranirghoṣa, Sudhana arrives in the country of Īṣāna to locate the brahmin Jayoṣmāyatana, and finds him carrying out ascetic practices surrounded by four great ‘masses of fire’ (*mahān agnikandhaḥ*) blazing like mountains of flame (V 90.19–20). In response to our hero’s ‘Question’ formula, Jayoṣmāyatana says, ‘Son of Good Family, go, ascend this mountain with its razor-edged path and throw yourself into this pit of fire. In this way your bodhisattva’s course of conduct will be purified’.⁶

What happens next is the first of only two occasions when Sudhana questions the spiritual advice of a *kalyāṇamitra*.⁷ After hearing the brahmin’s command to throw himself into the fire, our hero reflects on how difficult it is to achieve the necessary conditions to carry out the spiritual path, and then wondered if Jayoṣmāyatana might not be a demon (*māra*) attempting to trick him (V 90.27–91.2).

⁵ *īaṃ bhīṣmottaranirghoṣa ṛṣir āha—smarasi kulaputra? āha—smarāmi ārya kalyāṇamitrādhiṣṭhānena* (V 89.13–14).

⁶ *sa āha—gaccha kulaputra, etaṃ kṣuradhāramārgaṃ parvatam abhiruhya atra agnikhadāyāṇaṃ prapata. evaṃ te bodhisattvacaryā pariśuddhiṃ gamiṣyati* (V 90.25–26).

⁷ The second time occurs during Sudhana’s encounter with King Anala (see chapter 11).

At this point 10,000 Brahmās appear and tell Sudhana not to entertain such thoughts. They then explain to the merchant-banker’s son that the brahmin has ‘obtained the light of a trance that is a diamond flame’ (*vajrārciḥsamādhy-avabhāsalabdha*), and list his many spiritual attainments acquired from it (V 91.4–14). The Brahmās are followed by twelve more groups of ten thousand beings of various sorts, who also speak of Jayoṣmāyatana’s good qualities telling Sudhana to trust him and obey his instructions (V 91.15–94.7).

After hearing this barrage of support, Sudhana is overjoyed, realises that the brahmin is a ‘true good friend’ (*bhūtakalyāṇamitra*), bows at his feet and says, ‘Noble One, I confess my sin—I rejected the authority (*ājñā*) of the good friend’.⁸

Immediately after this statement, Jayoṣmāyatana recites the following verse:

A bodhisattva who successfully makes his mind one with his teachers,
follows instructions and does not doubt;
from this all his aims are also successful, and he skilfully awakens to
the knowledge of the buddhas under the tree of enlightenment.

*pradakṣiṇaṃ ya bodhisattva ānuśāsti kurvati
na kāṅkṣaye gurubhya ekadhā sthapitva mānasam.
tato >sya sarva artha bhonti te >pi ca pradakṣiṇāḥ
prakakṣiṇaṃ ca buddhajñānu bodhimūli budhyate* (V 94.19–22).⁹

This verse highlights the moral of this episode: a bodhisattva ‘should not doubt’ (*na kāṅkṣaye*) the instructions of his teachers. In other words, the spiritual authority of the good friends is absolute and should be obeyed without hesitation.¹⁰

Sudhana then climbs the mountain path and jumps into the fire. While falling he attains a trance of the bodhisattvas called ‘Well Established’ (*supraṭiṣṭhita*), and upon touching the fire, attains another *samādhi* called ‘The Supernatural Knowledge of Bliss within Cessation’ (*praśamasukhābhijñā*) (V 94.23–25).

⁸ *atyayam atyayato deśayāmy ārya yo >haṃ kalyāṇamitrājñāṃ prativāhayāmi* (V 94.17–18).

⁹ SI 122.11–14; D ga387r.4–5; C 1222.

¹⁰ This same message will be repeated even more forcefully during Sudhana’s visit to King Anala (see chapter 11).

Analysis

Bhīṣmottaranirghoṣa is a sage (*ṛṣi*) with matted hair¹¹, and Jayoṣmāyatana is a brahmin (*brāhmaṇa*). But both teach our hero Buddhist Dharma. Even more surprising, Sudhana attains his first *samādhis* during these encounters. What is our narrator's motivation for these events? One reason may be the ideological incorporation of non-Buddhist religious activity into the worldview of the *Gv*. In other words, the purpose of these sections is similar to Mañjuśrī's conversion of Śāriputra and the monks (see chapter 6), but within a broader framework. Whereas, the conversion of Śāriputra and his followers serves to highlight the universality of the *Gv*'s spiritual path and connects it to mainstream Buddhism, Sudhana's visits to a sage and brahmin is an attempt to expand this universality to include non-Buddhist religious practice. This attempt at universality points to a social context for the *Gv* that was religiously pluralistic and highly competitive.

But Sudhana's encounters with Bhīṣmottaranirghoṣa and Jayoṣmayatana go well beyond a mere attempt to incorporate non-Buddhist practices: through the spiritual power of these *kalyāṇamītras* our hero attains his first direct experiences of *samādhi*. The question must be asked: why would the EN give such an exalted role to seemingly non-Buddhist religious practitioners? Recall for a moment the epigraphical evidence discussed in chapter 2, which indicates that the kings and princes of the Ikṣvāku dynasty were patrons of Brahmanical religion, whereas the queens and princesses patronised Buddhism. If the *Gv* developed in such an environment, Sudhana's attainments of *samādhi* from a sage and brahmin, may be the EN's attempt to assert simultaneously the universality of the *Gv*'s religious vision and recognise the

¹¹ *jaṭāmakūṭadhāriṇam* (V 87.13).

spiritual power of (seemly) Brahmanical religious practitioners. These encounters would then represent a prudent attempt by the monastic institution to recognise the validity of traditions patronised by the kings and princes, and thus maintain a friendly relationship with the ruling power.¹²

These sections also further develop the story's conception of a spiritual society existing within mundane society, as well as this society's spiritual power and authority. Although Bhīṣmottaranirghoṣa and Jayoṣmayatana outwardly appear to be non-Buddhists, they are actually *kalyāṇamitras* who empower Sudhana to have distinctively Buddhist visions. This highlights a recurrent theme in the story: whereas the *kalyāṇamitras* are known to each other, people in mundane society may not recognise them as such.¹³

¹² A close relationship existed between the office of kingship and Brahmanical religion in post-Mauryan, pre-Gupta India (see Drekeimer 1962, and Sharma 1988). Kauṭilya in his *Arthaśāstra* 'championed the brahmanic social structure because he saw it as the best means of providing a balanced artha-dharma' (Drekeimer 1962: 195). The *Dharmaśāstras*, which probably began during this period, are much more emphatic about the importance of the priestly caste for correct rulership. According to the *Manusmṛti*, 'Though the prosperity of the community rests on the king, the king's welfare, in turn, depends on the brahman class—the spiritual power is the source of the temporal power. To anger the priests is to seek destruction. If either caste is to flourish, the brahmins and the kshatriyas must work together' (Drekeimer 1962: 231).

¹³ This idea is repeated in the Vasumitrā section (see chapter 12).

10. Women With Looks and Money

The second, third and fourth female *kalyāṇamitras* are: Maitrāyaṇī (*km#11*), Prabhūtā (*km#14*) and Acalā (*km#20*).¹ These characters possess four traits worthy of mention.

1) The first two friends are endowed with inconceivable wealth, and 2) all three are described as physically attractive. 3) Maitrāyaṇī and Acalā embody the Buddhist virtues of generosity² and chastity. 4) Maitrāyaṇī and Acalā are both connected to royalty.

Maitrāyaṇī (*km#11*)³

While in the city Siṃhavijrmbhita, Sudhana learns that the princess Maitrāyaṇī is teaching the Dharma on the top of the palace of king Siṃhaketu (V 96.10–17).

Sudhana enters the palace and sees that it is made of lapis lazuli, diamonds, gold and countless gems and jewels (V 96.18–21). The beautiful Princess is described as having ‘very dark eyes, long, very dark hair and skin the colour of gold’.⁴

Following Sudhana’s ‘Question’ formula, Maitrāyaṇī tells our hero to look at her abode. Reflected in each and every object Sudhana sees the *tathāgatas* within the *dharmadhātu* along with the key moments in their spiritual careers: the initial thought of enlightenment, the range of their course of conduct and vows, the arrays of their

¹ By including Acalā in this chapter, I break slightly from my strict sequential analysis. As *kalyāṇamitra* #20 she should be discussed after the kings Anala and Mahāprabha (*kms* #18 and #19; see chapter 11). I have done this on this occasion only in order to group these three female good friends together.

² Wilson writes that Prabhūtā, ‘is the embodiment of the perfection of giving’ (Paul 1985: 144).

³ Weight and position indicate that Maitrāyaṇī does not hold a particularly high position within the spiritual hierarchy of the *Gv*. Sudhana’s visit with her is only about .69% of the total text (V 96–98), and her position as the 11th *kalyāṇamitra* occurs 22% into the story. Therefore, I shall only briefly summarise this encounter.

⁴ ...*abhinīlanetrām abhinīlakeśīm suvarṇavarṇacchavim* (V 96.21–22).

going forth, the miracles of their enlightenment, their setting in motion the wheel of Dharma and their final extinctions (V 96.27–31).⁵

Prabhūtā (km#14)⁶

When our hero arrives at the city Samudrapraṭiṣṭhāna, he finds Prabhūtā's house covered with innumerable gems. The narrator explains that this building 'came into existence as the result of [Prabhūtā's] inconceivable meritorious actions'.⁷ When Sudhana enters, he discovers the laywoman sitting on a jewelled throne. The EN provides an elaborate description of her appearance:

He (Sudhana) entered that house, looked all around and saw seated on a jewelled seat the laywoman Prabhūtā, young, thin, fresh, appearing in her first youthfulness, beautiful, pleasant, good looking, endowed with a richness of colour that was extremely bright, her long hair loose, her body without ornaments, and wearing pure white garments. Except for buddhas and bodhisattvas, no being enters that house who she does not overcome with her body, mastery of mind, splendour, colour or radiance. Whatever beings see the laywoman Prabhūtā, whether gods or humans, all perceive her as a teacher.

*sa tad gṛham praviśya samantād anuvilokayann adrākṣīt prabhūtām
upāsikāṃ ratnāsanopaviṣṭāṃ navāṃ daharāṃ taruṇīṃ prathama-
yauvanasamudgatām abhirūpāṃ prāsādikāṃ darśanīyāṃ parama-
śubhavarṇapuskalatayā samanvāgatāṃ muktakeśīṃ
nirābharaṇagātrām avadātavastranivasanām. sthāpayitvā
buddhabodhisattvān na sa kaścit sattvas tad gṛham upasaṃkrāmati,
yam asau nābhibhūya tiṣṭhati kāyena vā cittādhipatyena vā, tejasā vā,
varṇena vā, śriyā vā. ye ca sattvāḥ prabhūtām upāsikāṃ pasyanti devā
vā manuṣyā vā, teṣāṃ sarveṣāṃ prabhūtāyām upāsikāyām sāsṭṛsaṃjñā
bhavati (V 105.17–23).⁸*

⁵ This passage indicates that Maitrāyaṇī's palace, like Ratnacūḍa's house discussed in chapter 3, represents the *dharmadhātu*. By connecting this fabulous jewelled dwelling with the Dharma-realm, the EN reinforces the ontological relationship between wealth and this higher spiritual dimension.

⁶ Sudhana's visit to Prabhūtā, is only slightly longer than his visit to Maitrāyaṇī. This encounter constitutes about 1.1% of the total text (V 105–109).

⁷ *acintyapunyavipākābhīrṇivṛttam* (V 105.16–17).

⁸ SI 136.23–137.4; D a6r.4–6v.1; C 1232.

Before Sudhana departs, Prabhūtā tells him that she has attained a liberation of the bodhisattvas that allows her to serve food to countless beings from a single vessel (V 106.11ff).

Acalā (*km#20*)⁹

When Sudhana reaches the city of Sthirā, the people tell him that Acalā lives at home with her parents and relatives, where she is teaching the Dharma to a crowd of people (V 132.1–2). Approaching the house, our hero sees a golden light coming from the building, which upon contact causes him to enter five hundred *samādhis* (V 132.6–9). Next, our narrator describes Acalā as the most beautiful being in the world. Only buddhas and bodhisattvas who have obtained the stage of ‘anointing’ (*abhiṣeka*) surpass her in form, complexion, proportions, aura, etc. (V 132.16ff).¹⁰ This is followed by the statement that,

There is not a being within the collection of beings found in the world, with its ten directions, who is able to look at Acalā, the laywoman, with a mind of lust. There is not a being within the collection of beings found in the world, with its ten directions, whose mental afflictions would not end immediately upon beholding Acalā, the laywomen.

*na sa sattvaḥ sattvanikāye saṃvidyate daśadiśi loke yaḥ samartha
>calām upāsikāṃ rāgacittena prekṣitum. na sa sattvaḥ sattvanikāye
saṃvidyate daśadiśi loke yaḥ¹¹ acalāyā upāsikāyāḥ sahadarśanena
kleśo¹² na vyupaśamaṃ gacchet¹³ (V 132.26–29).¹⁴*

⁹ The Acalā section is slightly longer than the Prabhūtā section. The weight of this section is 1.4% of the total text (V 131–136).

¹⁰ Notice that the EN does not distinguish here between male and female beauty. Acalā’s beauty surpasses all beings, except (male) bodhisattvas of the tenth stage and (male) buddhas.

¹¹ SI 173.12 inserts *samarthaḥ*.

¹² Both SI 173.12 and A 92v.4 have the plural *kleśā*.

¹³ SI 173.13 reads *gacchayeuḥ*. This must be a misprint for *gaccheyuḥ* (plural optative) found at A 92v.4.

¹⁴ SI 173.10–13; D a38r.3–4; C 1252.

When Sudhana asks Acalā about the range (*viṣaya*) of her attainment, narration shifts from EN to CN. The laywoman (CN) tells our hero an embedded narrative about one of her past lives as the daughter of a king named Vidyuddatta (V 133.30–134.1). One night, when everyone was asleep, she had a vision of the buddha of that age in the sky. When this buddha spoke to her, he inspired her to seek omniscience. In the midst of listing her various spiritual attainments that resulted from this visionary experience, Acalā says:

Son of Good Family, beginning from that time, I do not recall the arising of a thought of enjoying sexual desires even for as many eons as dust particles in the continent of Jambudvīpa—who could speak of having a thought of enjoying sexual intercourse?

*nābhijānāmi kulapura tata upādāya etena¹⁵ cittotpādena
jambudvīpaḥ¹⁶ paramāñurajaḥsamaiḥ kalpair api kāmān paribhoktum,
kaḥ punar vādo dvayadvayasamāpattiyā (V 134.28–29).¹⁷*

Analysis

In these three sections, we witness, for the first time, detailed descriptions of female beauty. Long dark hair, dark eyes and golden skin make Maitrāyaṇī beautiful. Prabhutā's youth, slimness, long rich hair and bright colour make her irresistible to all but buddhas and bodhisattvas. Rather than distracting beings for the spiritual path, her good looks attract their attention in a positive way, so that all who see her consider her a teacher. Similarly, Acalā's appearance does not inspire lust, but immediately relieves those that see her of all mental afflictions. In other words, these women's beauty is a skill-in-means (*upāya-kauśalya*) that aids beings in their search for enlightenment.

¹⁵ Although both editions print *etena* (see SI 176.5), A 94r.3 could in my mind read *ekena*. Not only does this make more sense, but it is also supported by the Tibetan (D a40r.7) which uses *cig* ('one').

¹⁶ SI 176.5–6 reads: *jambudvīpa-* in compound with *paramāñu-*

¹⁷ SI 176.4–7; D a40r.7–40v.1; C 1254.

The description of Prabhūtā's bejewelled house and the fact that it is the result of her 'inconceivable meritorious action' demonstrate, once more, that wealth functions as a sign of spiritual status. Her feeding of countless beings by means of her magic vessel indicates that Prabhūtā embodies the perfect generosity of a Buddhist laywoman.

Acalā represents both the ideal of female beauty and perfect chastity. Since the moment eons ago when she first saw the buddha of that age, she has not even had a thought of sexual indulgence. The embedded narrative about her past life as a princess once again strengthens the association between female royalty and the Buddhist path.

11. The Wealth of Kings

Sudhana's encounters with the kings Anala (*km#18*) and Mahāprabha (*km#19*) are brief,¹ but crucial to the current study. These sections provide key statements about wealth and its relation to spiritual status, worldly power and spiritual authority. In fact, these two encounters contextualise all other descriptions of wealth in the story. What was previously hinted at, is here rendered explicit. The Mahāprabha section defines a spiritual hierarchy through wealth and spells out the attitude a bodhisattva should cultivate toward wealth.

Anala (*km#18*)

After a long search, Sudhana approaches the city Tāladhvaja and asks, 'Where is the king Anala?'² The people of Tāladhvaja inform our hero that the King is seated upon a lion-throne carrying out the duties of a king for the good of the city. These duties include: punishing criminals, promoting the good, comforting the wretched, stopping misdeeds and delivering his people from false views (V 120.10–16).

When Sudhana approaches Anala, he sees a wondrous sight:

...king Anala seated on a great jewelled lion throne brilliant with the diamond jewels of Nārāyaṇa, with legs of gems (giving off) various innumerable lights and sounds, with beautiful spherical ornaments well constructed out of many gems, well crafted with cowry shells on a net of threads of gold, illuminated with many lamps of *maṇi*-gems, containing lotuses made of *maṇi*-gems and bewitching royal jewels, well arranged with raiments of many celestial gems, with ornaments made fragrant with various celestial perfumes, illuminated with a hundred thousand jewelled banners and parasols mounted on it,

¹ The Anala section is only .92% of the total text (V 120–123). The Mahāprabha section is 1.6% (V 124–130).

² *so >nupūrveṇa janapadena janapadaṃ grāmeṇa grāmaṃ deśaṃ parimārgaṃ yena tāladhvajaṃ nagaraṃ tenopasaṃkramya paripṛcchati sma—kutrānalo rājeti* (V 120.8–10). The toponym 'Tāladhvaja' is interesting—a *dhvaja* is a 'banner, flag, standard, characteristic, sign'; and *tāla* (among its several meanings) Monier-Williams states that it is a name of a hell and cites both the *Viṣṇu*- and *Śivapurāṇas* (MW: 445). So we may translate Tāladhvaja as 'The Banner of the Tāla hell'. Also, the King's name, Anala, means 'fire' or the 'the god of fire', which is also suggestive of hell. The significance of these name will become clear shortly.

adorned with a hundred thousand elevated flags (made of) gems,
illuminated by bundles of variegated jewelled flower garlands hanging
down, (and) cover with manifold celestial jewelled canopies...

*...analaṃ rājānaṃ nārāyaṇavajramaṇivicitre asaṃkhyeyanānāvidha-
prabhāsvararatnapāde anekaratnasuracitālaṃkārarucirabimbe
kāñcanasūtrajālaśvetasupariniṣṭhite anekamaṇiratnadīpapradyotite
vaśirājamaṇiratnamayapadmagarbhe anekadivyaratnavastra-
suprajñāpte vividhadivyagandhadhūpitopacāre
ucchritaratnadhvajachatraśatasahasravirājite
ratnapatākāśatasahasrodviddhopaśobhite vicitraratna-
puṣpadāmakalāpābhipralambhitojjvalite vividhadivyaratna-
vitānavitate mahāratnasimhāsane niṣaṇṇaṃ...(V 120.17–22).³*

The King is young, thin and extremely handsome. Here we witness, once again, the premium placed on youth, slimness and masculine beauty. He wears a crown of wish-fulfilling jewels, sapphire earrings, a breastplate and bracelets made from the finest gems, etc...(V 120.22–121.6). But following this dazzling vision of Anala on his jewelled throne, the scene takes a dramatic and terrifying turn. Sudhana sees the King surrounded by ten thousand executioners (*kāraṇāpuruṣa*) resembling the guardians of hell (*narakapāla*) armed with swords, axes, spears, lances, pikes and various other weapons,⁴ carrying out horrific punishments upon criminals. Our hero witnesses the armed men cutting off their victims' hands, feet, ears, noses, arms, legs and heads, even burning them alive, or completely dismembering them. The bodies are heaped upon each other, a torrent of blood flows from them, and the screams of those who are mutilated and killed are as terrifying as the cries of the tortured in the great Naraka hell (V 121.6–26).

After witnessing this horrific slaughter, Sudhana thinks:

I have set out toward supreme, perfect enlightenment with the welfare
and happiness of all beings as my aim. Entirely devoted to striving

³ SI 155.20–26; D a23r.3–7; C 1243.

⁴ *aśīparaśuśaktitomaraḥṣuṇḍīśūlapraharāṇagrhūtāni* (121.9). Monier-Williams gives 'a kind of weapon' for *bhuṣuṇḍi*, (MW: 760) and 'a weapon' for *praharāṇa* (MW: 701). I gloss these terms with the phrase 'various other weapons'.

after the course of conduct of a bodhisattva, I ask good friends what good is to be done by a bodhisattva, and what evil is to be avoided. But this king Anala is deprived of the good Dharma, a doer of tremendously wicked deeds, a desirer of sin, one practised at the injury of other beings' lives, entirely devoted to wounding other beings, indifferent to other beings, and is striving for descent into the evil destinies. How then am I to hear the course of conduct of a bodhisattva from him?'

*ahaṃ ca sarvasattvahitasukhahetor anuttarāṃ samyaksambodhim
abhisamprasthito bodhisattvacaryāparimārganatatparaḥ
kalyāṇamitrāṇi paripṛcchāmi—kiṃ bodhisattvena kuśalaṃ kartavyaṃ,
kim akuśalaṃ parivarjayitavyam iti. ayaṃ ca analo rājā
kuśaladharmaparihīṇo mahāsāvadyakarmakārī pradusṭamanaḥ-
samkalpaḥ parasattvajīvitoparodhāya pratipannaḥ
parasattvotpīdanatatparaḥ paralokanirapekṣo durgati-
prapātābhimukhaḥ. tat kuto >smād bodhisattvacaryāśravo
bhaviṣyatīti? (V 121.27–32).⁵*

In this passage Sudhana questions the authority of a good friend for the second and final time (see chapter 9). While our hero is engaged in this thought, divinities appear on a platform in the sky above him and say, 'Son of Good Family, do you not remember the instruction of the good friend, the sage Jayoṣmāyatana?'⁶ A direct reference to a previous section is rare in the *Gv*, and its use here serves to connect Sudhana's questioning of Jayoṣmāyatana to his doubting of Anala. As in his encounter with the Brahmin, Sudhana's hesitation about the King is immediately followed by the appearance of divinities that reassure him and assert the authority of the good friends.

When Sudhana says that he remembers the instructions of Jayoṣmāyatana, the divinities tell him:

Son of Good Family, you must not give rise to doubt concerning the instructions of the good friends. The good friends rightly guide

⁵ SI 157.20–26; D a24v.6–25r.2; C 1244.

⁶ *upari gaganatale devatā ity evaṃ ārocayāṃ āsuḥ—na smarasi kulaputra jayoṣmāyatanaṣya rṣeḥ kalyāṇamitrāṇuśāsanīm iti?* (V 122.1–2). Notice that the divinities refer to Jayoṣmāyatana as a 'sage' (*rṣi*) and not a 'brahmin' (*brāhmaṇa*) as he is in his own section (V 90–95). There seems to be some confusion with regard to title between the brahmin Jayoṣmāyatana and the *kalyāṇamitra* directly before him, the sage Bhīṣmottaranirghoṣa. But it is clear from the context of this section that the gods are referring to Jayoṣmāyatana.

(beings); they do not lead them astray. For, Son of Good Family, the knowledge of the conduct of bodhisattvas' skill-in-means is inconceivable.

*mā tvam kulaputra, kalyāṇamitrānuśāsanīṣu vicikitsām utpādaya.
samyak samena kalyāṇamitrāṇi praṇayanti na viṣameṇa. acintyaṃ hi
kulaputra bodhisattvānām upāyakauśalyacaryājñānam (V 122.3–5).⁷*

This is the clearest statement in the *Gv* about the authority of the good friends—it is absolute and should not be questioned. When Jayoṣmāyatana tells Sudhana to jump into the fire, after much reassurance, he jumps. This is followed by a verse about how a bodhisattva should not doubt his teachers (see chapter 9). When Sudhana sees Anala surrounded by executioners, he again has misgivings, but is once more instructed not to question. On this occasion, the divinities invoke the Mahāyāna notion of skill-in-means (*upāyakauśalya*).⁸ Because the skill-in-means of bodhisattvas is inconceivable, Sudhana should not question the good friends. Unquestioned obedience to the *kalyāṇamitras* is required because one only attains omniscience through serving and worshipping the good friends (see chapter 3). The devotional path of the *Gv* demands nothing less of the devotee than complete obedience to the instructions of the *kalyāṇamitras*.⁹

Once our hero performs his 'Approach' and 'Question' formulae to the King, Anala steps down from his throne, takes Sudhana by the hand and leads him to his palace (V 122.16–17). When they arrive, Anala says to the merchant-banker's son, 'Look at the enjoyments of my house'.¹⁰ What follows is a description of fabulous wealth even more dazzling than the King's throne. For example, Anala's palace is adorned with many hundreds of thousands of jewelled towers, it gives off rays of light

⁷ SI 158.4–7; D a25r.3–5; C 1244.

⁸ The *locus classicus* of the *upāyakauśalya* conception is chapter II of the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* (Kern 1963 (1884): 30ff). For a discussion of the term as one of the ten perfections, see Dayal 1932: 248ff.

⁹ This emphasis on the absolute authority of the good friends provides us once again with murmurings of what would eventually evolve into Tantric Buddhism in the Indian sub-continent.

¹⁰ ...*vyalokayasva kulaputra imaṃ mama gṛhparibhogam iti (V 122.18–19).*

which shine from nets illuminated by an inconceivable number of gems and raised above it fly lion banners made of rubies and *maṇi*-gems. Within its walls live 100 million exceedingly beautiful women (V 122.19–27).

Once Sudhana has seen the priceless riches of Anala, the King says,

What do you think, Son of Good Family, would such a karmic result arise for evil-doers; or the acquisition of such a body (as mine), such followers, such great enjoyments or such great power and control?

*tat kiṃ manyase kulaputra, api tu pāpakāriṇām evaṃrūpaḥ
karmavipāko >bhinirvartate? evaṃrūpā ātmabhāvasaṃpat, evaṃrūpā
parivārasaṃpat, evaṃrūpā mahābhogasaṃpat, evaṃrūpā
mahaiśvaryādhipatyasaṃpat? (V 122.28–30).¹¹*

Sudhana replies, ‘Indeed, it would not, Noble One’.¹²

This passage features the most definitive statement about the relationship between wealth and spiritual status. The belief that wealth is the direct result of past good actions is so strongly maintained by the EN that its possession by Anala functions as proof that he is not a wicked man. The Buddha’s transformation of the Jeta Grove, Sudhana’s name ‘Good Wealth’, and the visionary experiences of inconceivable riches that occur throughout the *sūtra* must be seen in this context. Wealth is proof of one’s past good actions. And by extension, the greater one’s wealth, the greater one’s past good deeds.

After demonstrating to Sudhana that he is not a villain, king Anala tells our hero that he has attained a liberation known as ‘Gone to Illusion’ (*māyāgata*) (V 122.31). He uses this liberation as a means of disciplining the unruly citizens of Tāladhvaja by generating the magical display that executioners are killing criminals (V 122.31–123.12). In fact, no one has ever really been killed. The King then reassures our hero stating, ‘Son of Good Family, I do no harm to any being with my

¹¹ SI 159.8–11; D a26r.3–4; C 1245.

¹² ...no *hīdam ārya* (V 122.30).

body, speech or mind. I would (rather) wander suffering as a future inhabitant of the Avīci Hell'.¹³

The account of Sudhana's visit with king Anala provides us with a number of valuable keys to interpret the themes of wealth and power. The character of Anala embodies three types of power: economic, political, and spiritual. Moreover, the King's wealth is proof of his goodness and that his spiritual authority, like his worldly authority, is absolute. These ideas about wealth and authority so clearly expressed here operate throughout the entire story.

Mahāprabha (km#19)

When Sudhana arrives at the great city of Suprabha in search of king Mahāprabha, he sees that the city is made of the seven precious substances: gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, red pearl, emerald, coral¹⁴ (V 124.17–19). Even, the city's streets, mansions, palaces and towers are constructed out of the precious substances and other countless diamonds, gems, and jewels (V 124.20–125.17). The King's palace is described in equally exalted terms (V 125.18–26).

After passages which contain some of the most elaborate descriptions of unimaginable wealth in the story, the EN reveals Sudhana's attitude toward these countless treasures:

Then Sudhana, the merchant-banker's son, his mind not pleased with the jewelled moats, not being astonished by the jewelled walls, not being charmed by the rows of jewelled palm trees, not enjoying the sound of the nets of jewelled bells, his mind not attached to the sweet sounds of the concert of celestial voices, not concentrated on the enjoyments of the various and manifold jewelled palaces and peaked dwellings, delighted in the pleasures of the Dharma-groves among happy groups of men and women. With his mind free from the

¹³ *nāhaṃ kulaputra kasyacit sattvasya viheṣṭhaṃ karomi kāyena vācā manasā vā. āparāntikāvīcikaduḥkhe sambhrāmayeyam.* (V 123.12–16).

¹⁴ *musāragalva.* The exact meaning of the this term is not know (see *BHSD*: 436).

pleasures of form, sound, smell, taste and touch, completely occupied with the profound meditation upon the Dharma, he gradually made his way to the cross-roads of the city constantly asking about the good friend to beings as they approached.

*atha khalu sudhanaḥ śreṣṭhidārako ratnaparikhāsv ananunītacitto
ratnaprākāreṣv avismayamāno ratnatālapaṅktiṣv arajyamāno
ratnaghanṭākīṅkiṅijālaghoṣam anāsvādayan divyavādyarutasamgīti-
madhuranirghoṣeṣv asaktacittaḥ nānāvicitraratnavimānakūṭāgāra-
paribhogān amanasikurvan¹⁵ pramuditeṣu naranārīgaṇeṣu
dharmārāmaratirato rūpaśabdagandharasaspharśarativiviktacetā
dharmanidhyaptiparamo yathābhigatasattvakalyāṇamitrānirantara-
paripr̥cchanatayā anupūrveṇa yena nagaraśr̥ṅgāṭakam tenopajagāma
(V 125.27–31).¹⁶*

Because he is so concerned with finding the good friend, our hero is not distracted by the bejewelled city. Clearly, the EN prescribes Sudhana's attitude for his target audience: even though wealth functions as a sign of spiritual status, the bodhisattva's correct attitude toward it is one of disinterest. In fact, this passage reads much like a warning: 'do not be attached to material wealth.' Sudhana, although himself from a wealthy family, is not interested in wealth or seduced by the wondrous displays of it. The wealth of the *kalyāṇamitras* is not something they crave after or are attached to. Rather, as we have seen in the encounter with Prabhūtā, the correct attitude towards fabulous wealth is generosity.¹⁷ Wealth, if approached correctly, is not an obstacle toward spiritual development, but the natural result of past good actions. It should be used to practice generosity, and thereby further one on the path to enlightenment. In light of the *Gv*'s probable monastic origin and target audience, this emphasis on wealth as a sign of spiritual status, and a generous attitude towards it make sense. They would clearly serve the best interests of the story's monastic authors.

¹⁵ SI 163.19 reads *manasikurvan*. A 87v.5 corroborates V's reading.

¹⁶ SI 163.16–22; D a29v.5–30r.1; C 1247.

¹⁷ Other examples of this generosity may be found during Sudhana's encounters with Vidvān (*km*#15) and Ratnacūḍa (*km*#16) (see V 110–116).

Next, the EN relates the encounter between Sudhana and Mahāprabha. The King sits on a jewelled throne in the middle of city, possesses the ideal human form (the thirty-two marks of a great man) and is surrounded by inconceivable amounts of wealth (V 126.4–24). After describing, in some detail, his righteous rule and how he develops his subjects spiritually, the King comments on the nature of his city:

Moreover, Son of Good Family, these beings who live within this great city, Suprabha, all of them are bodhisattvas advanced in the Mahāyāna. This great city, Suprabha, appears to them according to the purity of their mental dispositions; namely for some it appears limited, for others, expansive; for some its surface appears to be clay, for others, bestrewn with *maṇi*-gems and lapis lazuli; for some its walls appear to be clay, for others scattered on the great walls are unsurpassed banners of cloth, garments and *maṇi*-gems; for some it appears uneven with scattered gravel and sand, and has many chasms and cliffs; for others it is beautiful with innumerable jewelled houses, mansions, palaces, peaked dwellings, buildings, surfaces, turrets, windows, nets, half moons, lions, cages and manifold gems. Even for those dwelling outside of the city, whose mental dispositions are purified, whose roots of merit have been made, who have respectfully attended many buddhas, who are directed toward omniscience, who have recourse to omniscience, it appears as made of gems.

*ye khalu punar kulaputra suprabhamahānagarābhyantarānīvāsānīnaḥ
sattvāḥ, sarve te bodhisattvā mahāyānasamprasthitāḥ. teṣāṃ
yathāśayapariśuddhyā idaṃ suprabhaṃ mahānagaram ābhāsam
āgacchati, yaduta keṣāṃcit parītaṃ keṣāṃcid vipulaṃ keṣāṃcin
mṛttikātalaṃ keṣā(ṃ)cid¹⁸ vaidūryamaṇiratnasamstrītalaṃ
keṣā(ṃ)cin¹⁹ mṛttikāprākāraṃ keṣāṃcid aparājītavāstradhvajavastra-
ratnamahāprākāraparikṣiptaṃ keṣāṃcid ākīrṇaśarkara-
kaṭhallaṃmūlānikūlaṃ śvabhṛaprapātabahulam²⁰, keṣāṃcid
anekamahāmaṇiratnasamstrītalaṃ kṛtopacāraṃ samapāñītalajātaṃ,
keṣāṃcid asamkhyeyaratnabhavanavimānaprāsādakūṭgāraharmya-
talaniryūhagavākṣajālārdhacandrasimhapañjaramaṇīvicitradarśanīya
m ābhāsam āgacchati. bahirnagarānīvāsānīnāṃ api śuddhāśayānāṃ
kṛtakuśalamūlānāṃ paryupāsītābuddhotpādānāṃ
sarvajñatābhīmukhānāṃ sarvajñatāpratiśaraṇānāṃ ratnamayam
ābhāsam āgacchati (V 127.23–31).²¹*

¹⁸ SI 166.17 reads *keṣāṃcid*. A 89r.3 also reads *keṣāṃcid*.

¹⁹ SI 166.17 reads *keṣāṃcin*. A 89r.3 is unclear, but appears to have the same reading.

²⁰ SI 166.19 reads *śvabhṛaprapātaṃ bahulam*. A 89r.4 follows V's reading without the *anusvāra*.

²¹ SI 166.14–24; D a32r.4–32v.2; C 1249.

This passage establishes a connection between wealth and spiritual attainment on the ontological level. Advanced bodhisattvas, whose mental disposition are purified (*śuddhāśaya*), who have developed the necessary roots of merit (*kuśalamūla*), who have attended many buddhas and who have set out to attain omniscience, perceive a magical, jewelled city. Those who lack such spiritual qualifications experience only a city of clay, gravel and sand, uneven with cliffs and chasms.

The King's statement about the nature of his city also demonstrates certain ontological presuppositions fundamental to the *Gv*'s worldview. As discussed in chapter 3, the *Gv* divides reality into two primary components: the infinite world-realms (*lokadhātu*) and the Dharma-realm (*dharmadhātu*). The Dharma-realm, also has two basic aspects: divided into levels (*dharmadhātutalabheda*) and undivided (*asambhinnadharmadhātu*). Mahāprabha's description of his city demonstrates the difference between those who experience only the city in the *Sahā* world-realm and those that see it as part of the Dharma-realm divided into levels. In other words, the type of city one witnesses is based on where one is situated within the spiritual hierarchy. In this description, the jewelled city represents a higher order of reality. Sudhana's experience of the city within the Dharma-realm therefore functions as evidence of our hero's advanced spiritual status.

12. Power, Sex, Beauty and Money: The Nun and Courtesan

The fifth and sixth female friends are the nun *Siṃhaviḥṛmbhitā* (*km#25*) and the courtesan¹ *Vasumitrā* (*km#26*). The nun and courtesan represent opposites—one is celibate, the other makes a living through sex. But both represent a category of ‘other’ to the traditional female roles of wife, mother and daughter.² Their appearance in the story indicates an idealised vision of the perfect Buddhist nun and courtesan.

These sections are short,³ but feature three aspects that warrant our attention. First, *Siṃhaviḥṛmbhitā* is a particularly powerful Dharma teacher. Second, the inhabitants of *Vasumitrā*’s city express an attitude toward her that reveals important information about the nature of the spiritual hierarchy of *kalyāṇamitras* in relation to the mundane worldly sphere. Third, *Vasumitrā*’s use of her good looks is highly suggestive of proto-Tantric elements within the *Gv*. In short, these two sections further develop the notion of ‘woman’ and the attributes of power, beauty and wealth.

Siṃhaviḥṛmbhitā (*km#25*)

When Sudhana arrives in the city of *Kaliṅgavana*, the citizens tell our hero that the nun *Siṃhaviḥṛmbhitā* dwells in the great park, *Sūryaprabha* (V 148.1–8).

Characteristically, the park is described as adorned with manifold trees made of countless jewels. Beneath each tree is a lion-throne (*siṃhāsana*) made of different gems, jewels, gold, lapis lazuli, etc., covered with parasols, perfumed with incense,

¹ The EN refers to *Vasumitrā* as a *bhagavatī*, the feminine form of the word *bhagavat*, meaning ‘fortunate one, illustrious, divine, lord’ (MW: 743; PED: 495). It is clear from the context that the Lady *Vasumitrā* is a well trained and educated prostitute or courtesan of a type not uncommon in ancient India.

² About this pair Paul and Wilson write, ‘It seems that the nun and prostitute share a lack of a positive characteristic. They are not family women. The sphere of woman is the family, except for the prostitute and nun’ (Paul 1985: 96).

³ The *Siṃhaviḥṛmbhitā* section is 1.4% of the total text (V 148–153); the *Vasumitrā* section is .69% (V 154–156).

and so forth. Innumerable gems cover the ground and thousands of jewelled towers are everywhere. Sudhana is able to see such a miraculous park ‘by receiving the strength and might of the great inconceivable psychic powers (*rddhi*) of the nun Siṃhavijṛmbhitā’.⁴

The EN then provides an argumentative passage about the nature of the park:

Then Sudhana, the merchant-banker’s son, looking all around saw in this way these arrays of the great park, gathered together through infinite, inconceivable good qualities, completely perfected as the result of the bodhisattva’s actions, produced through vast transcendental roots of merit, arisen as the natural result of worshipping and waiting on inconceivable numbers of buddhas, unable to be collected by the remaining roots of merit existing in all worlds, sprung forth from the self-nature of illusory phenomena, arisen as the result of pure and vast good deeds, arisen through the implementation of the strength which was the result of the previous good deeds and conduct of the nun Siṃhavijṛmbhitā; unique, (the arrays of this park) could not be collected together by the auditors or solitary buddhas, could not be destroyed by all the heretics and false teachers, and could not be seen by all those whose conduct followed the path of the Evil One, or all the ignorant, worldly people.

*atha khalu sudhanaḥ śreṣṭhidāraḥ imān evam apramāṇācintya-
gunasamuditān mahodyānavyūhān bodhisattvakarmavipākapari-
niṣpannān lokottaravipulakuśalamūlanirjātān acintyabuddha-
pūjopasthānaniṣyandasambhavān sarvalokagatān avaśeṣakuśala-
mūlāsamhāryān māyāgatadharmasvabhāvanirvṛttān vimalavipula-
śubhapuṇyavipākasambhūtān siṃhavijṛmbhitāyā bhikṣuṇyāḥ pūrva-
sukṛtasucaritaniṣyandabalādhānasambhūtān asādhāraṇān saśrāvaka-
pratyekabuddhair asamhāryān sarvatīrthyaparapravādibhir
anavamardiyān sarvamārapathasamudācārair anavalokyān sarvabāla-
pṛthagjanaiḥ samantād anuvilokayann adrākṣīt (V 149.18–23).⁵*

This passage indicates, once more, that the ontological appearance of wealth is the result of one’s past good deeds. As we have seen, the more fabulous the description of wealth, the greater the merit of the one generating it. Sudhana is able to see this park due to his own previous merit, but also through the strength of Siṃhavijṛmbhitā’s psychic powers (*rddhi*). A common sequence within the narrative

⁴ ...siṃhavijṛmbhitāyā bhikṣuṇyā mahatā acintyārdhiprabhāvabalādhānena (V149.17).

⁵ SI 195.2–9; D a56v.3–6; C 1266–67.

is repeated in this section: first, a miraculous bejewelled scene is described, followed by an argumentative passage explaining it as the result of a *kalyāṇamitra*'s vast merit.

Next, Sudhana perceives the nun sitting on the each and every 'great lion-throne' (*mahāsiṃhāsana*) teaching the Dharma to various beings (V 149.24–151.8). This ability to multiply one's body is part of a standard list of psychic powers (*rddhi*) said to be attainable through meditation.⁶ *Siṃhavijṛmbhitā*'s power to multiply herself functions as further proof of her high spiritual status. The nun's audience reinforces this point: she teaches bodhisattvas established in all ten stages (*bhūmi*) of the bodhisattva-path and 'holders of the thunderbolt' (*vajrapāṇī*)⁷ (V 151.9–28). This suggests that the nun has attained at least the tenth stage in order to teach bodhisattvas at this advanced level.

The EN then supplies us with the most definitive passage about *Siṃhavijṛmbhitā*'s spiritual status:

...The nun *Siṃhavijṛmbhitā* realised innumerable hundreds of thousands of entrances into the ten perfections of wisdom, beginning with the equanimity of the universal eye, elucidations of all the teachings of the buddhas, the dividing the levels of the Dharma-realm, the destruction of all the multitudes (*maṇḍala*) of obstructions, the origination of the thought of merit in all beings, the superior arrays, the container⁸ of unobstructed principles, the multitudes within the Dharma-realm, the store-house of thought and the container of universal brilliant realisations. And of those bodhisattvas and other beings who came to the great park *Sūryaprabha* in order to see the nun *Siṃhavijṛmbhitā* or hear the Dharma, all of those the nun *Siṃhavijṛmbhitā* first urged them with regard to the elements (*dharma*) of the roots of merit they should acquire and then made them irreversible from (their path toward) supreme, perfect enlightenment.

...*siṃhavijṛmbhitāyā bhikṣuṇyāḥ samantacakṣurupekṣāvātī-
pramukhāni sarvabuddhadharmanirdeśapramukhāni
dharmadhātutalaprabhedapramukhāni sarvāvaraṇamaṇḍala-
vikiraṇapramukhāni sarvajagatkuśalacittasaṃbhavapramukhāni*

⁶ See the *Visudhimagga* (Ñāṇamoli 1991: 373ff) for one mainstream Buddhist account, and Dayal 1932: 112ff, for these powers in Mahāyāna sources.

⁷ Mention of the 'thunderbolt-holders' hints of later Tantric developments (see Snellgrove 1987).

⁸ This may be a reference to the *dharmadhātu*.

*viśeṣavativyūhapramukhāni asaṅganayagarbhapramukhāni
dharmadhātumaṅdalapramukhāni cittakośapramukhāni
samantarucitābhīnirhāragarbhapramukhāni daśaprajñāpāramitā-
mukhāsaṃkhyeyaśatasahasrāṇy avakrāntāni. ye ca tat sūryaprabhaṃ
mahodyānaṃ bodhisattvās tad anye vā sattvāḥ praviśanti
siṃhavijṛmbhitāyā bhikṣuṇyā darśanāya dharmāśravaṇāya, sarve te
siṃhavijṛmbhitāyā bhikṣuṇyāḥ prathamam kuśalamūladharma-
samudāneṣu niyojitā yāvad anuttarāyāḥ samyaksambodher avivartyāḥ
kṛtāḥ (V 152.2–9).⁹*

Here we have a reference to the ‘ten perfections of wisdom’ (*daśaprajñāpāramitā*), but without any mention of the traditional list of ten.¹⁰ Rather, the EN lists ten aspects of hundreds of thousands of entrances (*mukha*) into these ten. This suggests that ‘the perfections of wisdom’ are being applied in a less technical manner than in the commentarial literature.¹¹ Nevertheless, the point of this passage is clear: the nun commands an impressive portfolio of spiritual accomplishments. This might indicate a powerful female presence in monastic institutions at the time of the story’s composition. My assessment of the possible time period when this took place (*circa* 3rd century CE) is consistent with the epigraphical evidence that indicates such a powerful presence¹²—a time well before the eventual decline in women’s participation in Buddhism in all of its aspects.¹³

⁹ SI 198.23–199.6; D a59v.3–7; C 1268–69.

¹⁰ For a description of the ten perfections in relation to the ten stages, see the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* (Vaidya 1967). For a discussion of the perfections in Buddhism Sanskrit literature, see Dayal 1932: 165ff.

¹¹ See for example Kamalaśīla’s *Bhāvanākrama* (Stephen Beyer, trans. (1974) *The Buddhist Experience: Sources and Interpretations*, Encino: Dickenson), and Atiśa’s *Bodhipathapradīpa* (R. Sherburne, trans. (1983) *A Lamp for the Path and Commentary*, London: Allen and Unwin).

¹² Based on epigraphical evidence, Donaldson writes, ‘... early Buddhist institutions apparently enjoyed a great vitality of women’s participation.... Even though Indian nuns and laywomen at this time (as at other times) were relegated to a secondary status, they actively involved themselves at both householder and monastic levels to an extraordinary degree’ (2002: 94). See also Schopen 1997: 250.

¹³ Donaldson (2002: 91) writes, ‘The decline of women’s participation was part of a process, and from the seventh century forward we see an erosion of women’s involvement, most particularly the virtually total eclipse of the office of nun (*bhikṣuṇī*) in North India. More broadly, though, the early medieval period saw a dramatic deterioration of support for and involvement of women in Buddhist activities at any and every level...’.

Vasumitrā (km#26)

When Sudhana arrives in Ratnavyūha in the country of Durga, he meets two types of people. The first, who do not know Vasumitrā's virtues (*guṇa*) or the scope (*gocara*) of her knowledge think:

One whose senses are calm and restrained in this way, who is thoughtful in this way, who is composed in this way, whose mind is not frustrated in this way, whose gaze is kept down¹⁴ in this way, whose thoughts are not overcome by sensations in this way, who is grasping at the causeless, whose eye has rejected all forms in this way, whose mind is not agitated, whose behaviour is profound, who is handsome, whose manner is like the ocean, whose mind is imperturbable and not downcast—what would this one do with the lady Vasumitrā? For such people do not delight in passion; their minds are not perverted (*viparyasta*). The conception of foul things do not course within such people. Such people are not slaves to desire. Such people are not in the power of women. Such people do not course in the range (*gocara*) of the Evil One. Such people do not inhabit the domain (*viṣaya*) of the Evil One. Such people do not sink into the mud of desire. Such people are not bound by the snares of the Evil One. They are not doers of what should not be done.

kim asya evaṃ śāntadāntendriyasya evaṃ saṃprajānasya evaṃ abhrāntasya evaṃ avikṣiptamānasasya evaṃ yugamātraprekṣiṇaḥ evaṃ vedanābhir aparyādattacittasya evaṃ animittagrāhiṇaḥ sarvarūpagateṣu utkṣiptacakṣuṣaḥ evaṃ avyagramānasasya gambhīraceṣṭasyābhirūpasya sāgarakalpasya akṣobhyānavālīna-cittasya vasumitrāyā bhāgavatya kāryam? na hīdṛśā rāgaratā bhavanti, na viparyastacittāḥ. nedṛśānām aśubhasaṃjñā¹⁵ samudācarati. nedṛśāḥ kāmādāsā bhavanti. nedṛśāḥ strīvaśagā bhavanti. nedṛśā māragocare caranti. nedṛśā māraviṣayam niṣevante. nedṛśāḥ kāmapaṅke saṃsīdanti. nedṛśā mārapāśair badhyante. nākāryakāriṇo bhavanti (V 154.10–17).¹⁶

¹⁴ *yugamātraprekṣiṇaḥ*. Literally, 'whose gaze is the measure of a yoke'.

¹⁵ SI 202.6 reads *śubhasaṃjñā*. This reading is corroborated by A 108r.3. The Tibetan provides an entirely different reading: 'di lta bu dag ni sdug cing gtsang ba'i 'du shes yongs su rgyu ba med de ('For such people, the conception of affliction and purity does not course'). The Tibetan reading suggests a Sanskrit archetype that read *aśubhaśubhasaṃjñā*. Are SI and A the result of a scribal eye-skip? Is Vaidya's reading an error, or has he emending the text based on the authority of the Baroda ms? Cleary's translation of the Chinese seems to support Vaidya's reading, 'you should not have any impure thoughts' (C 1271). *aśubhasaṃjñā* may be a reference to the meditation on foulness similar to the practice discussed in the *Visuddhimagga* (Ñāṇamoli 1991: 173ff), or a general reference to the foulness of the female form (see chapter 3). The statement of the other townspeople that Sudhana wishes to produce beneficial cognition (*tvam śubhasaṃjñāṃ vikarītukāmaḥ* (V 154.20; see below)), seems to be contrasted with *aśubhasaṃjñā*, which would support Vaidya's reading. An examination of more sources might clarify this textual quandary.

¹⁶ SI 202.1–9; D a62v.1–5; C 1270–71.

But those who know of the excellence (*viśeṣa*) of her virtues and the scope (*gocara*) of her knowledge say to our young hero:

Very Good, Son of Good Family! You, who think that the lady Vasumitrā should be questioned, have made good gains! Surely you desire buddhahood! Surely you desire to make yourself into a resource for all beings! Surely you desire to extricate the spear of passion for all beings! Surely you desire to produce beneficial cognition!

sādhu sādhu kulaputra, sulabdhās te lābhāḥ, yas tvam vasumitrām bhāgavatīm paripraṣṭavyām manyase. niyamena tvam buddhatvam prārthayase. niyamena tvam sarvasattvapraṭiśaraṇam ātmānam kartukāmaḥ. niyamena tvam sarvasattvānām rāgaśalyamuddhartukāmaḥ. niyamena tvam śubhasaṃjñām vikaritukāmaḥ (V 154.18–20).¹⁷

These two passages clearly represent the important distinction between mundane and spiritual societies first discussed in chapter 3. The first group of people can not understand why Sudhana wants to visit Vasumitrā. This group represents a traditional (mainstream) Buddhist notion that someone like Sudhana whose senses are calm, etc., would have nothing to do with a courtesan. These people are members of mundane society who lack the necessary roots of merit (*kuśalamūla*) and therefore the spiritual insight to see that Vasumitrā is actually a *kalyāṇamitra*. But the second group is extremely pleased that Sudhana wants to see her and recognises this as a sign of his own advanced spiritual status.

The second group's attitude expresses the opinion that a courtesan's occupation does not exclude her from being an advanced Buddhist practitioner.¹⁸ Paradoxically though, the acceptance of this type of woman is not an endorsement of passion (*rāga*) or desire (*kāma*), as the first group assume. The second group makes this clear when they say to Sudhana: 'Surely you desire to extricate the spear of

¹⁷ SI 202.10–14; D a62v.6–7; C 1271.

¹⁸ See Willis 1992, for an example from Pāli literature.

passion (*rāga*) for all beings!’ This paradox is elaborated when Vasumitrā explains her unique method of teaching Dharma.

When our hero approaches Vaṣumitrā’s house, he sees that it and the surroundings are made of jewels, gold, diamonds, *maṇi*-gems, lapis lazuli, etc... (V 154.22–155.3). The courtesan is described as

...beautiful, pleasant, attractive, endowed with the supreme excellence of a beautiful appearance, with skin the colour of gold, long very dark hair, a body with well proportioned limbs, brilliant with regard to her colour, form and appearance which each exceeded all the gods and humans in the realm of desire, with a voice surpassing Brahmā’s...

...*abhirūpāṃ prāsādikāṃ darśanīyāṃ paramayā
śubhavarṇapuṣkalatayā samanvāgatāṃ suvarṇavarṇacchavim*¹⁹
*abhinīlakeśīṃ suvibhaktasamāṅgapratyaṅgaśarīrāṃ
sarvakāmadhātuka-devamanuṣyātīkrāntavarṇarūpasamsthānaśobhāṃ
brahmāṭirekasvarāṃ...* (V 155.4–6).²⁰

She is said to be skilled in languages, the arts and sciences and the means (*upāya*) of bodhisattvas. Her jewellery is made of diamonds, *maṇi*-gems, wish-fulfilling gems and other precious substances (V 155.7–14). Vasumitrā possesses a number of physical attributes (golden skin, long dark hair, well proportioned limbs) characteristic of the story’s ideal of female beauty, as well as the wealth common to *kalyāṇamitras* of her status.

Vasumitrā tells Sudhana that she has attained a liberation know as ‘Ultimate Dispassion’ (*virāga koṭigata*) (V 155.20). Through it she is able to assume the female form of any being to teach them the Dharma and lead the lustful to a state of dispassion (V 155.20–24). Those that come to her attain this state through various means: seeing her, talking to her, holding her hand, dwelling with her, embracing her and kissing her (V 155.26–156.6). Vasumitrā concludes by stating that ‘any beings who approach near with devotion, all of those, on this very spot, I establish in

¹⁹ SI 203.7 reads *-cchavitām*. A 108v.4 corroborates V’s reading.

²⁰ SI 203.5–8; D a63v.2–4; C 1271.

Ultimate Dispassion, this liberation of the bodhisattvas directed toward the stage of unobstructed omniscience'.²¹

Vasumitrā's description of her attainment once again demonstrates the paradox of female beauty in the *Gv*: rather than inspiring passion (*rāga*), it is utilised to lead beings to dispassion (*virāga*) and advance them on the spiritual path. The courtesan's method of teaching the Dharma is particularly striking, and foreshadows later Buddhist developments in the application of Tantric sexual yoga.²²

²¹ *ye kecit sattvā manāntikam upasaṅkrāmanti, sarvāṃs tān aham atraiva virāgakoṭīgate asaṅgasarvajñatābhūmyabhimukhe bodhisattvavimokṣe pratiṣṭhāpayāmi* (V 156.4–7).

²² For the development of Buddhist Tantra in India, see Snellgrove 1987. See also, Isaacson 1994, Sanderson 1994, and Tribe 2000.

13. The God and Goddess Who Give

Sudhana's encounters with Mahādeva (*km#30*), the god, and Sthāvarā (*km#31*), the earth goddess (*prthivīdevatā*), illustrate important aspects of the *Gv*'s conception of wealth. Like the grammarian Megha (*km#5*) early in the story, both of these *kalyāṇamitras* give Sudhana priceless treasures. This serves two functions within the narrative: first, to demonstrate the importance of generosity; second, to highlight once more the idea that wealth is a sign of one's past good actions. Both sections are extremely short, containing very little content outside the usual formulae.¹ But the position of these encounters is significant: Mahādeva is the last *kalyāṇamitra* Sudhana visits in the southern region (*dakṣiṇāpatha*) before he is directed to go to the site of enlightenment (*bodhimaṇḍa*) in the region of Magadha (*magadhaviṣaya*). In this way, our hero's movement from the god to the goddess marks a transition in geographical terms. The probable non-Buddhist origins of Mahādeva (see below), his gift to Sudhana and his position as the final good friend of the southern region, all add significance to this section. Sudhana's encounter with the earth goddess functions as our hero's initial introduction to sacred space (the site of the Buddha's enlightenment), thereby heightening the importance of this section's events.

Mahādeva (*km#30*)

Following the advice of the bodhisattva Ananyagāmin, Sudhana journeys to the city of Dvāravatī in search of the god Mahādeva.² When our hero finds him at the crossroads of the city, the god stretches out his four hands, brings water from the four

¹ Each is only two pages (.46% of the total text) in the Vaidya edition (V 167–8; V 169–70).

² *mahādeva*, 'the great god', is a title often associated with Śiva (see MW: 796). Śiva offering treasures to a bodhisattva seems to indicate Buddhism's superiority to Śaivism. This good friend's honouring of Sudhana with vast amounts of wealth, therefore, may represent a Buddhist polemic against a contemporary Śaivite movement.

directions, washes his face and showers Sudhana with golden flowers (V 167.14–15).

Then Mahādeva states that he himself has attained the liberation ‘Net of Clouds’

(*meghajāla*) (V 167.16–22).

When Sudhana inquires about the range of this liberation, Mahādeva manifests before him a mountain of gold, heaps of silver, crystal, coral, emeralds, gems and countless other treasures, including ‘innumerable, hundreds of thousands of *koṭis* of girls’³ (V 167.24–168.1). The god then says,

Son of Good Family, take from these and give gifts, perform good actions, worship the *tathāgatas*; protect beings through gifts which are for protection, urge them with regard to the perfection of abandoning, and teach the world through giving! Demonstrate abandonment which is difficult to perform! Son of Good Family, just as I produce this means of helping you, so do I generate a mental continuity influenced by abandoning for immeasurable beings whose consciousness is unobstructed for giving. Having planted roots of merit (in them) with regard to the Buddha, Dharma, Saṃgha, bodhisattvas and good friends, I incite them to supreme, perfect enlightenment.

*itaḥ kulaputra grhītvā dānāni dehi, puṇyāni kuru, tathāgatān pūjaya
sattvān dānena saṃgrahavastunā saṃgrhya tyāgapāramitāyāṃ
niyojaya, dānena lokaṃ śikṣaya. duṣkaraparityāgatāṃ pradarśaya.
yathaiivāhaṃ kulaputra tavopakaraṇavidhim upasaṃharāmi, evam
aparimāṇānāṃ sattvānāṃ dānacetanāniruddhānāṃ tyāgavāsītāṃ
saṃtatiṃ karomi. buddhadharmasaṃgheṣu
bodhisattvakalyāṇamitreṣu ca kuśalamūlāny avaropayitvā
anuttarāyāṃ samyaksambodhau samādāpayāmi (V 168.1–6).⁴*

This section concludes with the god directing our hero to seek out the earth goddess

Sthāvarā at the site of enlightenment in Magadha.

Sthāvarā (*km#31*)

The next section begins with Sudhana’s arrival at the *bodhimaṇḍa* and discovery of

Sthāvarā accompanied by a million other earth goddesses (V 169.1–2). The

goddesses praise our hero, predict his enlightenment, and cause numerous miraculous

³ ...*asaṃkhyeyāni ca kanyākoṭīśatasharāṇy...* (V 168.1).

⁴ SI 219.24–220.4; D a76v.4–7; C 1282.

events. Following this Sthāvarā says, ‘Welcome to you, Son of Good Family! This is the spot of earth where you stood and planted roots of merit which I have witnessed. Do you wish to see that one spot with its fruits come to maturation’?⁵ Our hero replies, ‘I wish it, Noble One’.⁶

The goddess then strikes the earth with the soles of her feet, making it appear adorned with innumerable *koṭīs* of containers filled with *maṇi*-gems, and says,

Son of Good Family, these hundreds of thousands of *niyutas* of *koṭīs* of containers of *maṇi*-gems are your companions, your servants, to be used as you wish, produced as a result of your good actions, and protected by the strength of your good actions. Take from them and do that which should be done!

*imāni kulaputra maṇiratnanidhānakoṭīniyutaśatasahasrāṇi
tavānugāmīni, tava purojavāni, tava yathecchopabhogyāni, tava
puṇyavipākanirjātāni, tava puṇyabalarakṣitāni. tebhyas tvaṃ gṛhītvā
yatkāryaṃ tat kuruṣva* (V 169.21–23).⁷

Analysis

Mahādeva’s statements to Sudhana exemplify how wealth should be used to advance on the spiritual path. Rather than being a hindrance to religious development, riches function as a means to perform acts of giving (*dāna*) and abandoning (*tyāga*). These actions generate merit and develop a detachment to worldly things. Once enough merit is generated, one becomes established in the Mahāyāna. This section, therefore, demonstrates the two attitudes toward wealth extolled in the narrative: generosity and detachment. When the earth goddess strikes the ground, she shows Sudhana the results of his previous roots of merit. This event serves to highlight the role of riches as a sign of spiritual status. Next, she tells him to take the treasures and do what

⁵ *svāgataṃ te kulaputra. ayaṃ sa pṛthivīpradeśo yatra te sthītvā kuśalamūny avaropitāni yatrāhaṃ pratyakṣā. kim icchasi tad vipākaphalaikadeśaṃ draṣṭum* (V 169.15–17)?

⁶ *icchāmy ārye* (V 169.19).

⁷ SI 221.24–26; D a78r.6–7; C 1283.

should be done. The assumption behind this statement is that Sudhana, as an advanced bodhisattva, would use the wealth appropriately for acts of generosity.

We do not know whether Sudhana takes these treasures, nor is there any comment from our hero about these gifts. Silence, I would argue, serves to demonstrate the young bodhisattva's detachment towards wealth. Sudhana's introduction to the sacred space of the *bodhimaṇḍa* is also the last occurrence of such an act of giving from a good friend to our hero. In this way, both the role of wealth as a sign of spiritual status and the correct attitudes toward it (generosity and detachment) are reinforced before the focus of the narrative shifts to Sudhana's visits to the sacred places of Buddhism.

14. How Good Buddhists Become Divine: The Goddesses

The ten goddesses (*kms#31–40*) constitute the largest single group of *kalyāṇamitras* and the narration of these encounters occupies an impressive 30% of the total text. Their position in the middle third of the story,¹ as well as their geographical location point to their significance. Eight goddesses dwell at the Buddha's site of enlightenment (*bodhimaṇḍa*), one is above the city of Kapilavastu, and one at the Lumbhinī Grove. As important sites of the Buddha's life and teaching these locations function as 'thematized' sacred space, thereby enhancing the importance of these encounters.

The first is the earth goddess Sthāvarā. Because this section is discussed in the previous chapter, I shall not mention it again here. After the earth goddess, Sudhana meets eight night goddesses (*rātridevatā*). Although the description of these visits is too lengthy to discuss in detail, three narrative features call for special attention. First, the number of night goddesses and their arrangement around the *bodhimaṇḍa* suggest a *maṇḍala* similar to that described in the *Nidāna*. Second, the descriptions of the goddesses' bodies in relation to the Dharma-body (*dharmakāya*) reveal their advanced spiritual attainment. Third, six goddesses tell Sudhana *avadānas* about their previous lives. The heroes and heroines of these embedded narratives supply additional evidence that wealthy and royal patrons were the EN's target audience.

¹ These encounters begin at 39.2% and conclude at 68.9% into the story. Also, their position before Sudhana's meeting with Gopā, the wife of the Buddha (the second longest section in the story), add to their narrative significance.

Maṇḍalic Formation

When we examine the locations of the night goddesses an intriguing pattern emerges. Sudhana sees the first night goddess, Vāsantī, ‘...above the great city of Kalipavastu on a platform in the sky within a peaked dwelling of multi-coloured matchless jewels, seated on a lion-throne of great gems within a lotus (smelling) of all the finest fragrances...’² At the conclusion of this visit, the goddess sends Sudhana to see Samantagambhīraśrīvimalaprabhā (*km#33*) at the site of enlightenment (V 180.28–30). This goddess tells our hero to see Pramuditanayanajagadvirocanā (*km#34*) right next to her on the right at Vairocana’s site of enlightenment.³

Pramuditanayanajagadvirocanā sits ‘upon a lion-throne in a flower within the Lord’s assembly-*maṇḍala*’.⁴ She instructs Sudhana to go to Samantasattvatrāṇojaḥśrī (*km#35*), who sits right next to her in ‘the assembly-*maṇḍala* of the *tathāgata*’.⁵

Similar statements are made for the next two goddesses, Praśāntarutasāgaravatī (*km#36*) and Sarvanagararakṣāsambhavatejaḥśrī (*km#37*).⁶ Then

Sarvanagararakṣāsambhavatejaḥśrī tells Sudhana to go to Sarvavṛkṣapraphullanasukhasaṃvāsā sitting next to her ‘at the base of the feet of the Lord Vairocana’.⁷ Finally, this goddess instructed our hero to see Sarvajagadrakṣāpraṇidhānavīryaprabhā who was ‘near the Lord’ (*bhagavato sakāsam*) (V 264.26).

These statements indicate a circular, symmetric pattern around a central point resembling a *maṇḍala*. The goddesses themselves indicate this with references to the

² ...*kapilavastuno mahānagarasyordhvaṃ gaganatale vicitrānupamamanikūṭāgare sarvavaragandhapadmagarbhamahāratanasiṃhāsane niṣaṇṇām* (V 171.13–14).

³ ...*iyam ihaiva mamānantaraṃ vairocanabodhimaṇḍe pradakṣiṇena pramuditanayanajagadvirocanā nāma rātridevatā prativasati* (V 185.14–15).

⁴ ...*bhagavataḥ parśanmaṇḍale puṣpagarbhasiṃhāsaniṣaṇṇām*... (V 180.26–27).

⁵ *tathāgataparśanmaṇḍalasamanantaraṃ* (V 202.20).

⁶ See V 219.19–20 and 230.29.

⁷ ...*bhagavato vairocanasya pādamūle*...(V239.30).

assembly-*maṇḍala* (*parśanmaṇḍala*) of the Lord (*bhagavān*) or *tathāgata*. Sudhana's encounter with the first goddess in the sky above Kapilavastu is his entry point into this three dimensional *maṇḍala* around the *bodhimaṇḍa*. The seven goddesses following are positioned next to each other, each to the other's right, so that our hero performs a *pradakṣiṇa* around the site of the Buddha's enlightenment. The numeral eight suggests that each goddess faces a primary or secondary direction (north, northeast, east, southeast, south, etc.) around the *bodhimaṇḍa*. Statements that a goddess is 'at the base of the feet of the Lord Vairocana' and 'near the Lord' demonstrate the belief that the Buddha in some sense is always present at the site of his enlightenment. The night goddesses surround the Buddha in the same way that consorts encircle buddhas on Tantric *maṇḍalas*.⁸ Within the metaphor of kingship, the goddesses represent Vairocana's inner circle of harem women. Thus their arrangement in a *maṇḍala* and their role as consorts to Vairocana both increase the spiritual status of the goddesses.

The Bodies of the Goddesses

The goddesses' advanced level of attainment is corroborated by several statements about their bodies. In chapter 3, I mention that the night goddess Sarvajagadrakṣāpraṇidhānavīryaprabhā's physical form is said to come from the Dharma-body (*dharmakāya*) and that its essence is the pure own-being (*svabhāva*) arisen through the power (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of the non-abiding *tathāgatas* (V 265.15–16).

⁸ See for example the *Hevajra Tantra*, where Hevajra and consort are surrounded by eight yoginīs (Snellgrove 1959). Tribe (2000: 225) suggests that visualisation in the Caryā tantras was inspired by the *Gv*: 'This idea [that visualisation transforms the world to accord more closely to its actual nature] becomes prominent from the period of the Caryā tantras, which took the luminous, translucent, magical world of the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* as the measure for how awakened cognition would perceive the world'. Once again we see evidence of proto-Tantra in the *Gv*.

Speaking of her own attainments, the goddess Vāsantī proclaims, ‘My Dharma-body is transcendently pure, and abides everywhere within all three times’.⁹ Sudhana recites about the goddess Praśāntarutasāgaravatī, ‘Your body resides within the Dharma-body, and your unobstructed mind is made of knowledge’.¹⁰ The goddess Sarvanagararakṣāsambhavatejaḥśrī has a body which faces all beings, is equal in all worlds and has the own-being (*svabhāva*) of the *tathāgatas* (V 233.9–12).

In chapter 3, I discuss at some length the *Gv*’s distinction between form-bodies (*rūpakāya*) and the Dharma-body (*dharmakāya* / *dharmasārīra*). Form-bodies are the magical manifestations of the buddhas and bodhisattvas appearing in all worlds for the sake of beings. The Dharma-body is co-extensive with the Dharma-realm (*dharmadhātu*) and, therefore, is immeasurable, infinite, boundless, inherently pure, etc. (see list in chapter 3). The ultimate religious goal of the *Gv* is the acquisition of the Dharma-body, which is equivalent to entry into the Dharma-realm, the realisation of omniscience and the attainment of supreme, perfect enlightenment. Thus, the goddesses’ possession of the Dharma-body suggests that they have achieved a very advanced stage of spiritual development.

The *Avadānas* of the Goddesses

The night goddesses relate seven embedded narratives about their previous lives. These character-bound *avadānas* share a number of features. They are each introduced after Sudhana enquires about the past attainment of a goddess. For example, Sudhana asks Vāsantī, ‘Goddess, how long ago did you set forth for supreme, perfect enlightenment? How long ago did you obtain this liberation, from

⁹ *dharmasārīru mamātivīsuddaṃ sarvatṛiyadhvasamantasthitānām* (V 177.7–8).

¹⁰ *kayo hi te dharmasārīragarbhaḥ cittaṃ ca te jñānamayaṃ asaṅgam* (V 231.23–24).

the attainment of which you arrived at activity for the sake of beings with this form’?¹¹ The opening of Vāsantī’s reply employs a standard formula:

Son of the Conqueror, formerly in a bygone time, eons ago equal in number to the particles of dust within Mount Sumera, was an eon called Praśāntaprabha in which there arose five hundred *koṭīs* of buddhas. In that eon there was a world-realm called Ratnaśrīsaṃbhava. Moreover in that world-realm the middle four continents were called Ratnacandrapradīpaprabhā. The capital city there was called Padmaprabhā. In that capital city was a king name Sudharmatīrtha, a follower of Dharma, a Dharma-king, a world-turning monarch, lord of the four continents, endowed with the seven gems (of kingship).

bhūtapūrvam jinaputra atīte >dhvani sumeruparamānurajaḥsamānām kalpānām pareṇa praśāntaprabho nāma kalpo >bhūt pañcabuddha-koṭīśataprabhavaḥ. tatra ratnaśrīsaṃbhavā¹² nāma lokadhātur abhūt. tasyām¹³ khalu punar lokadhātau ratnacandrapradīpaprabhā nāma madhyamā cāturdvīpakā. tasyām padmaprabhā nāma rājadhānī. tatra rājadhānyām sudharmatīrtho nāma rājābhūt dhārmiko dharmarājā cakravartī caturdvīpeśvaraḥ saptaratnasamanvāgataḥ (V 178.16–20).¹⁴

This formula usually includes the names of the eon, the world-realm, the four continents, the capital city, the king and often (not included in this passage) the name of the buddha of that age. In this way, the goddesses locate their stories at a certain time and place. The vast spans of time involved are probably meant to impress the audience with the Dharma-realm’s infinite expanse and the bodhisattva’s endless commitment to enlightenment. Specifying the names of the ages, places and characters is common practice in *avadāna* literature, and adds authenticity to the goddesses’ narratives.¹⁵

Vāsantī tells Sudhana about the queen Dharmamaticandrā, wife of the king Sudharmatīrtha, who is visited by the night goddess Suviśuddhacandrābhā and

¹¹ *kiyacciraṃ saṃprasthītāsi devate anuttarāyām samyaksaṃbodhau? kiyacciraṃ pratilabdhaś ca te >yaṃ vimokṣaḥ, yasya pratilambhāt tvam evaṃrūpayā sattvārthakriyayā pratyupasthītā?* (V 178.13–15).

¹² SI 232.6 reads *ratnaśrīsaṃbhavo*. A 123v.5 corroborates V’s reading.

¹³ SI 232.7 reads *tasmin*. A 123v.5 also reads *tasmin*.

¹⁴ SI 232.5–10; D a87v2–4; C 1291.

¹⁵ See for example the *Divyāvadāna* (Cowell and Neil 1886).

instructed to seek out the buddha of that age and worship him. As is standard for *avadāna* literature, at the narrative's conclusion Vāsantī reveals her identity with one of the story's characters (in this case the queen) (V 179.4–10). Following this narrative, the goddess tells our hero another *avadāna* in which she is a daughter of a merchant-banker (*śreṣṭhidārikā*) named Prajñāvabhāsaśrī. During this life, the night goddess of her former life appears to her again and shows her the buddha of that eon, which leads to the realisation of her bodhisattva-liberation (V 179.13ff).

The night goddess Pramuditānayanajagadvirocānā narrates an *avadāna* similar to Vāsantī's in which she is a queen named Bhadramatī (V 196.7ff). Her husband, a wheel-turning monarch (*cakravartin*), is Mañjuśrī and the night goddess who showed her the buddha is a magical projection (*nirmita*) of Samantabhadra (V 201.28–30). In Samantasattvatrāṇojahṣrī's *avadāna*, she is a princess named Padmabhadrābhirāmanetraśrī (V 207.1ff). Her father, a wheel-turning monarch, is the bodhisattva Maitreya,¹⁶ and her mother is Praśantarutasāgaravatī (*km#36*), the night goddess sitting right next to her at the *bodhimāṇḍa* (V 215.19–23). In Sarvanagararakṣāsambhavatejahṣrī's (*km#37*) *avadāna*, she is a nun who is the daughter of a wheel-turning monarch (Samantabhadra in a previous life) (V235.20–236.27). The goddess Sarvavṛkṣapraphullanasukhasambhāsā (*km#38*) narrates a story in which she is a daughter of a merchant-banker, who receives a jewel from a wheel-turning monarch (V 249.6–262.24). At the end of the *avadāna*, she reveals that this king is Vairocana in a previous life and his mother and father are now queen Māyā and king Śuddhodana (his parents in his final birth) (V 261.15–22). Finally, in Sarvajagadrakṣāpraṇidhānavīryaprabhā's (*km#39*) *avadāna*, she is a prince named

¹⁶ Cleary's translation states that he was Mañjuśrī (C 1324).

Vijitavān, who is endowed with twenty-eight of the thirty-two characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*) of a great man (*mahāpuruṣa*) (V 272.26ff).¹⁷

A striking characteristic of these embedded narratives is the large number of characters that belong to the royal and merchant-banker classes. In seven *avadānas*, two of the goddesses are queens, two princesses, two daughters of merchant-bankers and one a prince. The ‘moral’ of these stories seems to be that good Buddhist queens, princesses, and merchant-bankers’ daughters eventually are reborn as night goddesses. Such a choice of characters indicates one possible target audience of the *Gv*: wealthy merchant-bankers and royal female patrons.

Another interesting feature of these embedded narratives is the number of wheel-turning monarchs who are previous births of Vairocana, Samantabhadra, Mañjuśrī or Maitreya. Righteous Buddhist rulers of distant ages and world-realms being reborn as rulers of the eternal Dharma-realm strengthens the connection between political and spiritual power, while asserting the superiority of the latter. Once again, these stories appear to use characters with an awareness of another probable target audience: the temporal rulers of India.

¹⁷ The final goddess visited by Sudhana is Sutejomaṇḍalaratīśrī (*km#40*), the goddess of the Lumbīni Grove. This encounter may be divided into three sections: first, the goddess teaches Sudhana about the ten bodhisattva-births (V 285.15–290.14; see Gómez 1975), then she tells him about the miraculous events surrounding the birth of Vairocana (V 290.24–295.6) and finally she relates an *avadāna* about her previous life as a nurse of Vairocana when he was a bodhisattva (V 295.9–299.16). The primary significance of this encounter is the glorification of Vairocana’s birth.

15. The Female Royalty of the Dharma-Realm

Gopā (*km#41*)

As wife of the Buddha (*śākyakanyā*), Gopā represents the queen of the Dharma-realm, and the ideal Buddhist wife. Sudhana's visit to her is the second longest section in the narrative, occupying 8.9% of the total text (V 300–338). Based on weight alone, Gopā qualifies as the second most important *kalyāṇamitra* after Maitreya.¹ But based on position and content, Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī are slightly above Maitreya,² and Māyā above Gopā within the *Gv*'s spiritual hierarchy. Gopā, then, is the fifth most important good friend, and the second most important female friend. Her position after the goddesses and before Māyā, as well as her geographical location at Kapilavastu both support this high status. A significant portion of this section is occupied by her *avadāna* about her previous life as a courtesan's daughter when she and the Bodhisattva met for the first time. The poetry within this embedded narrative indicates that Gopā (as the courtesan's daughter) represents the ideals of female beauty and virtue, traits found in several of the *kalyāṇamitras* already encountered, but perfected in her.

When our hero enters the 'palace for the bodhisattvas' assembly' (*bodhisattvasaṃgītiprāsāda*), he sees Gopā seated on a jewelled lotus surrounded by 84,000 women (V 302.24–26). Sudhana approaches Gopā and asks her how bodhisattvas perfect the Dharma-body, produce infinite form-bodies and manifest bodies with the appearance of all beings. Gopā responds by describing her own liberation called 'The Sphere Seeing All Principles of the Oceans of the Liberations of

¹ The Maitreya section occupies 11.7% of the total text, or fifty pages in the Vaidya edition (V 368–418). See chapter 16 for a detailed discussion.

² See chapter 16 for this argument.

Bodhisattvas.³ Through this liberation, she is able to enter into limitless ages in this world, and know all beings in all conditions of existence. She is also able to enter into all the ages of all other worlds, and know all beings within them including the names and attainments of all bodhisattvas and buddhas (V 305.23–308.24).

When Sudhana asks how long ago Gopā attained this liberation, she tells our hero an *avadāna* about her past life as Sualitaratiprabhāsaśrī, the daughter of a royal courtesan named Sudarśanā. During this life she meets and falls in love with a prince named Tejodhipati. Physical attractiveness is a primary concern of this *avadāna*. The Prince is ‘handsome, pleasant, attractive, and his body is adorned with the thirty-two characteristics of a great man’.⁴ As I discuss in the chapter 3, the thirty-two *lakṣaṇas* represent the perfection of beauty that only men can possess. The EN follows this statement with descriptions of each *lakṣaṇa* (V 309.24–311.26). This serves to highlight, once more, the superiority of masculine beauty. Next, the Courtesan’s daughter is said to be

...beautiful, pleasant, attractive, not too tall, not too small, not too large, not too thin, not too light, not too dark; with very dark (blue)⁵ eyes, long dark hair, with a pleasing face, a voice like Brahmā’s, her speech was sweet and pleasant ...

...*abhirūpā prāsādikā darśanīyā nātidīrghā nātihrasvā nātiśhūlā
nātikṛśā nātigaurā nātiśyāmā abhinīlanetrā abhinīlakeśī
abhirāmavaktrā brahmasvarā madhurapriyavādinī...* (V 312.27–29).⁶

Much of this embedded narrative consists of recitations by the Prince, the Courtesan and her daughter about the young couple’s virtues, beauty and love for each other. Such poetry seems more appropriate for women of a royal court than a

³ *sarvabodhisattvasamādhisāgaranayavyavalokanaviṣaya* (V 305.22).

⁴ *abhirūpaḥ prāsādiko darśanīyaḥ dvātriṃśanmahāpuruṣalakṣaṇasamalamkṛtakāyaḥ* (V 309.23–24).

⁵ In the verse translated below her eyes are compared to a blue lotus (*utpala*).

⁶ SI 404.10–12; D a236r.2–4; C 1408.

gathering of monks, and our EN may have had such an audience in mind. For example, Sudarśanā recites these verses about her daughter,

This gem of a woman appeared in the human world,
Her purity of virtue supreme.
This is the fruition of good conduct in the past,
For actions done are not destroyed.

*strīratnametaddhi manuṣyaloke
prādurbabhūvottamaśīlaśuddhyā.
na karmaṇo hyasti kṛtasya nāśaḥ
pūrve sucīrṇasya vipāka eṣaḥ* (V 318.1–4).⁷

She has very dark hair, lotus-blue eyes,
a voice like Brahmā's, a colour pure as gold.
Well dressed and adorned in garlands,
She sprung from a lotus like glorious pure light.

*sunīlakeśyutpalanīlanetrā
brahmasvarā kāñcanaśuddhavarṇā.
āmuktamālābharaṇā suveśā⁸
padmodbhavā śrīr iva nirmalābhā* (V 318.5–8).⁹

Her limbs are pure and full;
Her body, well proportioned and her figure shapely.
Illuminating all directions, she shines
Like a golden orb covered with gems.

*viśuddhagātrī samabhāgakāyā
sampūrṇagātrā suvibhaktadehā
suvarṇabimbaṃ maṇineva mṛṣṭam
virocate sarvadiśo >vabhāsyā* (V 318.9–12).¹⁰

The regal fragrance of sandalwood, risen from her body,
Pervades the directions and rises up.
And when speaking, her sweet celestial voice (emits)
A fragrance from her mouth like the wind off a blue lotus.

*gotro¹¹ dbhavaścandanarājagandhaḥ
pravāti¹² cāsyābhidiśaḥ¹³ spharivā.
rutaṃ ca divyaṃ madhuraṃ ruvatyā*

⁷ SI 408.15–16; D a239r.2; C 1412.

⁸ Read *suveṣa*. Tibetan (D a239r.3) reads *mchog cha lugs* ('best clothing').

⁹ SI 408.17–18; D a239r.2–3; C 1412.

¹⁰ SI 408.19–20; D a239r.3–4; C 1412.

¹¹ read *gotro*. Tibetan (D a239r.4) reads *lus* ('body').

¹² *pravāti* seems to be from *pru-*, in *parasmaipāda* (long *ā* from *metri causa*). Tibetan (D a239r.4) confirms this by translating the word with 'byung.

¹³ *abhidiśaḥ* seems to mean 'directions' (fem. acc. pl.). Tibetan (D a239r.4) reads *phyogs* ('direction').

gandho mukhādvāti yathopalasya (V 318.13–16).¹⁴

But Sualitaratiprabhāsaśrī is not just another pretty face. The Courtesan describes her as not jealous, envious, lustful or ill-tempered, and as honest, gentle, intelligent, and free from anger or harshness. She is always mindful, diligent, well behaved, obedient, respectful and compassionate (V 320.3–14). In fact, she says her daughter is the best woman in the entire world by virtue of her conduct, intellect and other good qualities (V 325.12–13). In defence of Sualitaratiprabhāsaśrī's social status, the Courtesan states that 'one who speaks about caste could not disgrace her, because she was produced from a lotus and therefore is stainless'.¹⁵ Not only is she virtuous, but her extremely soft limbs cure the sick on contact, her pure fragrance makes all men who smell it pure of conduct, and the sight of her golden body converts the angry and cruel to kindness (V 325.18–29).

We see in this *avadāna* that Sualitaratiprabhāsaśrī possesses a beauty that is both the karmic result (*phala*) of her past good actions and a means (*upāya*) of spiritual helping others. This attitude toward female beauty found in the *Gv* is related to the narrative's conception of power, ontology and soteriology. Physical attractiveness is a type of power to influence beings for good or ill. Because the female good friends are form-body manifestations of the Dharma-body, this power derives from their past good actions and is used for beings' spiritual benefit.

Gopā concludes her story by stating that she was Sualitaratiprabhāsaśrī and that Śākyamuni, the Buddha of the present world age, was the Prince (V 329.24–330.15). Since that lifetime they have been husband and wife in every rebirth, and have worshipped countless Buddhas in innumerable worlds as they progressed along the spiritual path together. Thus Gopā represents both the highest ideal of female

¹⁴ SI 408.21–22; D a239r.4–5; C 1412.

¹⁵ *padmodbhaveyaṃ na hi jātivādaḥ // saṃdūṣaṇāmarhati nirmalatvāt* (V 325.14–15).

beauty and the ideal Buddhist wife. With perfect devotion, she aided the Bodhisattva on his quest for enlightenment through countless lifetimes until he attained buddhahood. Within the metaphor of kingship, her role in the story as the wife of the Buddha is analogous to the queen of the Dharma-realm.

Māyā (*km#42*)

Māyā represents the queen mother of the Dharma-realm and the most important female *kalyāṇamitra* in the narrative. Sudhana's visit with her is much shorter than his visit with Gopā,¹⁶ but position, geographic location and content establish her as the highest ranking female *kalyāṇamitra*, and the fourth ranking good friend overall.¹⁷ Gopā describes Māyā as 'sitting at the base of the feet of Vairocana' (V 334.6–7). According to traditional Buddhist mythology, Māyā dies shortly after the birth of the Buddha and is reborn in a heaven.¹⁸ In the *Gv*, the mother of the Buddha magically appears at the *bodhimaṇḍa* within a peaked dwelling. Statements about the Queen's form (*rūpa*) and her special attainment establish her, not only as a temporal queen and mother of the Buddha, but also as a cosmic mother of all bodhisattvas in their final birth.

Gopā directs Sudhana to return to the *bodhimaṇḍa*. Once there, our hero meets Sunetra, the lord of the *rakṣasas*. Practising according to the instructions of Sunetra, Sudhana sees arise before him a great jewelled lotus. Within the lotus he sees a wondrous peaked dwelling named 'Containing the Assemblage of Directions

¹⁶ This section is only 2.5% of the total text (V 439–349).

¹⁷ Following Sudhana's visit with Māyā, he meets nine more good friends before his encounter with Maitreya (see appendix A). The entire weight of these sections is only 4.1% of the total text (V 350–367). These *kalyāṇamitras* may be understood as 'transitional friends' who move the flow of narrative from the sacred sites of the Buddhism back to the south in preparation for our hero's meeting with Maitreya. Thus, Sudhana's visit with Māyā functions as his last encounter at the *bodhimaṇḍa* and prepares the audience for the climax of the narrative.

¹⁸ According to the *Theragāthā* and its commentary, Māyā was reborn as a man in Tusita heaven! See Malalasekera 1995b: 609.

within the Dharma-realm' (*dharmadhātudiksamavasaraṇagarbha*) made of wish-fulfilling gems, jewels, diamonds, etc. (V 342.10–17). And in the middle of the peaked dwelling he sees a throne containing a lotus made of wish-fulfilling gems adorned with countless gems, jewels, banners, flags, nets, and so forth, reflecting manifestations of all buddhas of the three times, emanating sounds of the teachings, emitting magical projections of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra that pervaded the entire Dharma-realm, etc. (V 342.17–343.4).

On this throne Sudhana sees queen Māyā. The description of her form (*rūpa*) that follows indicates that the Queen transcends her traditional role of mother of the historical Buddha. Her form is said to go beyond the triple world and all states of being. It is unoriginated, not real, has attained suchness, is not in motion, not annihilated, indefinable, uniform, like a reflection, like magic, dream-like and pervades the Dharma-realm in each instant. It is also infinite, measureless and nonconceptual. Being produced from the Dharma-realm, it is indestructible; born of the knowledge of the vows of the bodhisattvas, it is without self-nature. Finally, 'having arrived at the state of supreme coolness of the Dharma-body,'¹⁹ her form-body appears to beings according to their intentions (V 343.5–343.26). These attributes of Māyā's, particularly the references to the Dharma-body and her form-body, clearly distinguish her advanced spiritual status.

As if these statements are not enough to establish the exalted rank of the Queen, the EN continues his description saying that 'within her body she has accumulated the good deeds needed for omniscience',²⁰ she is 'endowed with the vows for the purification of the ocean of all fields',²¹ she 'purified the supreme

¹⁹ *dharmakāyaparamaśūībhāvopagatena* (V 343.30–31).

²⁰ *sarvajñatāpunyopacitaśarīrām* (V 344.7).

²¹ *sarvakṣetrasāgarapariśuddhīprañidhānasamanvāgatām* (V 344.16).

Dharma-body and manifested an infinite number of form-bodies'.²² Also, she 'undertook the vow to be the mother of all bodhisattvas and conquerers'.²³

Having had this cosmic vision, Sudhana makes his body as extensive as Māyā's and facing every direction bows to the Queen which causes him to enter an infinite number of trances (V 344.28–30).

Māyā then tells Sudhana that she has attained the liberation 'Array within Illusion through the Knowledge of the Great Vow'.²⁴ At one point in her discourse she declares,

Son of Good Family, as I receive the bodhisattva into my womb in Jambudvīpa within this blessed (world-realm of) four continents, in the same way I receive (him) in all the Jambudvīpas (in the world-realms of) four continents within this world-realm of three thousand, great thousand (worlds), by means of this miraculous array. This body of mine is neither dual nor nondual; nor does it assume the form of a unity or plurality—just as if from the eloquence of this liberation of the bodhisattvas within Illusion through the Knowledge of the Great Vow. Son of Good Family, just as I was the mother of the Lord Vairocana, so I was the mother of infinite previous *tathāgatas*.

*yathā cāhaṃ kulaputra asyāṃ bhāgavatyaṃ cāturdvīpakāyāṃ
jambudvīpe bodhisattvaṃ kuṣiṇā saṃpratīcchāmi, evaṃ
trisahasramahāsahasre²⁵ lokadhātau sarvacaturdvīpakājambudvīpeṣu
saṃpratīcchāmi anena ca vikurvitavyūhena. na cāyaṃ mama kāyo
dvayībhavati nādvayibhavati, na caikatve saṃtiṣṭhate na bahutve,
yathāpi nāma tadasyaiva mahāprañidhānajñānamāyāgatasya
bodhisattvavimokṣasya subhāṣitatvāt. yathā cāhaṃ kulaputra asya
bhagavato vairocanasya mātā abhūvam, tathā pūrvakāṇām api
tathāgatānām anantamadyānām mātā abhūvam (V346.20–25).²⁶*

After listing the three buddhas previous to Vairocana,²⁷ Māyā states that she will be the mother of all future buddhas of the 'Good Eon'.²⁸ Then beginning with Maitreya,

²² *anuttaradharmakāyapariśuddhām anantarūpakāyasamdarśanīm* (V 344.18).

²³ *sarvabodhisattvajñājanetrīprañidhānaniryātām* (V 344.27)

²⁴ *mahāprañidhānajñānamāyāgatavyūha* (V 345.5–6)

²⁵ SI 441.2 reads *–sahāsra* in compound with *lokadhātau*.

²⁶ SI 441.1–7; D a266v.7–267r.3; C 1437.

²⁷ Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni and Kāśyapa (V 346.31–347.1).

²⁸ *tathā sarveṣāṃ bhadrakalpikānām anāgatānām tathāgatānām janetrī bhaviṣyāmi* (V 347.1).

the Queen lists about 190 future buddhas.²⁹ Finally, Māyā declares that she will be the mother of all the buddhas in all worlds and all eons (V 347.11–15).

In the descriptions of Queen Māyā's form and body, and her statements about her special liberation, we witness the transformation of the worldly queen and mother of Vairocana into the cosmic genetrix of all buddhas throughout all of spacetime.³⁰ As the source of all enlightened beings, Māyā possesses a very high status in the narrative immediately after the final three bodhisattvas, Samantabhadra, Mañjuśrī and Maitreya.

²⁹ V 347.7–348.6. This list is not in Cleary's translation (see C 1437).

³⁰ This transformation seems similar to the Catholic Church's development of Mariology (special thanks to my Mother for pointing this out to me).

16. The Power Elite: The Final Three Friends

Sudhana's final three encounters are with the bodhisattvas Maitreya, Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra. Within the metaphor of kingship, Maitreya plays the role of crown prince of the Dharma-realm; while Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra, as Vairocana's primary helpers, are his chief ministers. Weight, position and content establish these final three friends as the power elite of the spiritual hierarchy and assert the superiority of the masculine spiritual ideal. In this way, the lack of female presence in the *Nidāna* and final encounters contextualises the prominent role of the female good friends in the middle sections. This narrative structure indicates that the female *kalyāṇamitras* are important Dharma teachers, but not the most important or spiritually advanced. These positions are reserved for the final three bodhisattvas.

The Maitreya section is the longest of the narrative and constitutes approximately 11.7% of the total text (V 368–418). Sudhana's visit with Mañjuśrī is extremely brief (only fourteen lines of the Vaidya edition on V 419); while his final visionary experience of Samantabhadra and the accompanying verses (the *Bhadracarī*) is 3.9% of the total (V 420–436). Based on the criterion of weight alone, Maitreya qualifies as the highest ranking *kalyāṇamitra*, but position and content indicate that Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra occupy higher positions. Let us recall the prominent role both played in the *Nidāna* and the textual symmetry that establishes them as the most important 'helpers' of 'the power' (Vairocana) in the fabula (see chapter 4). Their final positions in the narrative reinforce this role. In the concluding lines of the *sūtra*, Vairocana speaks in approval of Samantabhadra's verses (V

436.21–46). This replicates the symmetry of the *Nidāna* only in reverse, thereby creating an *inclusio* structure for the action of the story.¹

Maitreya (*km#52*)

Traditionally, Maitreya is conceived of as the ‘Future Buddha’, who succeeds Śakyamuni Buddha once the Dharma is no longer present in this world-realm.² The notion of a ‘Future Buddha’ becomes less significant within the *Gv*’s vision of ultimate reality as the interpenetration of all spacetime. Hence Maitreya plays a different role here compared to other Buddhist traditions. Within the metaphor of kingship, Maitreya, being Vairocana’s spiritual successor, is the princely heir apparent to the Dharma-realm. His peaked dwelling is his palace, constituting a gateway from the mundane world-realms to the infinitely inter-reflecting *dharmadhātu*. His role within the narrative is indicated by his attainments, and statements about his body and dwelling.

For the purpose of analysis, we may divide Sudhana’s visit to Maitreya into three parts: Sudhana’s initial sight of Maitreya’s *kūṭāgāra* and the arrival of the bodhisattva with his retinue; Sudhana’s entry into the *kūṭāgāra* and the description of its interior; and finally Maitreya’s entry into and comments about his dwelling.

This section begins with Sudhana entering a park called ‘Great Array’ (*mahāvvyūha*) in the country of Samudrakaccha where he sees a great peaked dwelling called ‘Containing the Ornaments of Vairocana’s Array’ (*vairocanavyūhālamkāragarbha*). After circumambulating the dwelling a hundred

¹ This temporal *inclusio* may be expressed algebraically as: V-S-M (Vairocana-Samantabhadra-Maījuśrī in the *Nidāna*) --> M-S-V (in the final two sections). Thus the story is bracketed on either side by ‘the power’ and his two most important ‘helpers’.

² See for example Alan Sponberg and Helen Hardacre, eds. (1988) *Maitreya, the Future Buddha*, New York: Cambridge University Press; Jan Nattier (1991) *Once Upon a Future Time: Studies in a Buddhist Prophecy of Decline*, Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press; and Lewis Lancaster (1987) ‘Maitreya’ in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 9, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

thousand times, our hero makes a number of proclamations about the *kūtāgāra* that reveal both his spiritual insight and the religious significance of the dwelling. We learn that it is ‘the undivided Dharma-realm’,³ the ‘non-self-nature of all *dharmas*’,⁴ and that one may ‘pervade the Dharma-realm through all its entrances’.⁵ As I discuss in chapter 3, such statements establish the *kūtāgāra* as an architectural representation of the *dharmadhātu*. This adds importance to Maitreya’s role as the keeper of the dwelling. Next, Sudhana recites fifty-five verses beginning with:

Here is he who has acquired great compassion, whose mind is completely pure; Maitreya, the holy benevolent one, intent upon the welfare of the world.

Abiding at the Coronation Stage, this eldest son of the conquerors dwells reflecting upon the domain of the Buddha.

*iha so mahākaruṇa lābhi viśuddhabuddhir
maitreya⁶ maitraśiri lokahitābhīyuktaḥ.
abhiṣekabhūmisthita jyeṣṭhasuto⁷ jinānāṃ
vihārāti buddhaviṣayaṃ⁸ anucintayantaḥ (V 371.32–372.2).⁹*

The most important phrase here is that Maitreya ‘abides at the Coronation Stage’ (*abhiṣekabhūmisthita*). The term *abhiṣekha* (‘coronation’ or ‘anointing’) is the name given to a bodhisattva’s tenth and highest stage. The term was also used in ancient India to indicate the coronation of a crown prince. This metaphorical connection between temporal and spiritual power has been pointed out by Ronald Davidson. He writes:

The Lokottaravādins in the *Mahāvastu* understood Maitreya to be the crown prince (*yuvarāja*), following in the footsteps of Śakyamuni, who is the Dharmarāja. With early Mahayana scriptures—particularly the *Laṅkāvatāra* and *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*—the mythic coronation ritual became firmly embedded in the bodhisattva’s assuming the tenth stage.... The myth builds on the idea that a crown prince exercises

³ *dharmadhātvasambhedavihāra*-... (V 370.6).

⁴ *sarvadharmāsvabhāvavihāra*-... (V 370.9).

⁵ *samantamukhadharmadhātuspharaṇopāya*-... (V 370.11–12).

⁶ SI 472.24 reads *maitreyamaitriśiri*.

⁷ SI 472.25 reads *jyeṣṭha suto*.

⁸ SI 472.26 reads *buddhaviṣaya anucintayantaḥ*. A 249v.3 corroborates V’s reading.

⁹ SI 472.23–26; D a294v.5–6; C 1457.

power even while waiting to become the ruler of the kingdom,... (2002: 125).

As we have seen, this ‘imperial metaphor’ (Davidson 2002: 113ff) operates also in the *Gv*. In the *Nidāna*, the metaphor establishes Vairocana as the king of the Dharma-realm. In this section, Maitreya, as buddha-to-be, occupies the role of crown prince.

Upon completion of his verses, Sudhana notices Maitreya approaching flanked by Śakra and Brahmā together with a large retinue of followers (V 377). Maitreya recites verses praising Sudhana and predicting his attainment of supreme enlightenment. Sudhana asks Maitreya his ‘Question’ formula about the course of conduct of a bodhisattva. Maitreya tells Sudhana to obtain his answer he should enter the *kūṭāgāra*. Sudhana respectfully asks to enter and with a snap of Maitreya’s fingers the gates to the peaked dwelling open. The interior of the *kūṭāgāra* is many hundreds of thousands of leagues (*yojana*) wide and as vast as the realm of space (*ākāśadhātuvipulam*). Like Vairocana’s dwelling, this one is adorned with countless parasols, banners, streamers, nets, diamonds, gems, jewels, gold and other precious substances (V 407–8). Inside the *kūṭāgāra*, are hundreds of thousands of other peaked dwellings arrayed in the same manner spread out in all directions as vast as space. Miraculously, each dwelling remains distinct while simultaneously reflecting (*pratibhāsayoga*) every other one and all of its objects (V 408.5–8).

This description of Maitreya’s dwelling illustrates three important aspects of the *dharmadhātu*. First, similar to Vairocana’s transformation of his *kūṭāgāra*, the change from finite to infinite space as Sudhana enters demonstrates the Dharma-realm’s limitlessness. Second, both dwellings are adorned with various parasols, banners, flags, diamonds, jewels, gems, gold and other precious substances. Once again, we witness a connection between wealth and a higher dimension of reality. Third, the inter-reflection of the *kūṭāgāras* and all their objects functions as a

demonstration of the *Gv*'s vision of reality: like a holographic image, all of spacetime coexists simultaneously in every point within spacetime.¹⁰

After experiencing this vision, Sudhana is overcome with bliss and bows down in all directions. At the moment of prostration, through the power (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of Maitreya, Sudhana perceives himself simultaneously in each and every *kūṭāgāra* witnessing a different scene from Maitreya's bodhisattva course of conduct (*bodhisattvacaryā*). Thus, in a single instant Sudhana sees countless eons, realms, beings, bodhisattvas and buddhas, and hears endless teachings (V 408–414). In the centre of the great *kūṭāgāra*, Sudhana sees one peaked dwelling larger than the others. Inside it he witnesses Maitreya in his final life performing the acts of a buddha, such as going forth to homeless life, sitting under the enlightenment tree, attaining omniscience and preaching the Dharma (V 410.16–30). While Sudhana is watching the endless and simultaneous practices of Maitreya in all the *kūṭāgāras*, suddenly the bodhisattva enters the peaked dwelling, snaps his fingers once more and says,

Arise, Son of Good Family! This is the nature of conditioned factors. Son of Good Family, characterised by their non-fixity, all conditioned factors are controlled through the knowledge of bodhisattvas. In this way, lacking the perfection of own-being, they are like illusions, dreams and reflections.

*uttiṣṭha kulaputra. eṣā¹¹ dharmāṇāṃ dharmatā. aviṣṭhāpana-
pratyupasthānalakṣaṇāḥ kulaputra sarvadharmā bodhisattva-
jñānādhiṣṭhitāḥ. evaṃ svabhāvāpariniṣpannā māyāsvapna-
pratibhāsoṣamāḥ* (V 415.27–29).¹²

Maitreya's statements about Sudhana's vision highlight the *Gv*'s position on all conditioned factors (*dharma*). Unlike the *dharmadhātu*, which is characterised by its

¹⁰ Thomas Cleary writes: 'The Flower Ornament Scripture [*Av*] is like a hologram, the whole concentrated in all of its parts, this very structure reflecting a fundamental doctrine of the scripture, that this is what the cosmos itself is like, everything interreflecting, the one and the many interpenetrating' (C 43).

¹¹ SI 524.1 reads *eṣāṃ*.

¹² SI 523.26–524.3; D a339r.7–339v.1; C 1498.

pure own-being (*svabhāvavimala*),¹³ all these factors lack substantiality (*svabhāva*) and are therefore ultimately unreal. It is this realisation that allows advanced bodhisattvas to control and manipulate experience in order to enlighten beings.

Both Vairocana's and Maitreya's *kūṭāgāras* are metaphorical representation of the *dharmadhātu* as supreme array (*gaṇḍavyūha*) intended to inspire religious awe through their infinite manifestations. In both peaked dwellings the centre is occupied by a buddha (Vairocana and Maitreya as a buddha) surrounded by bodhisattvas. This spatial arrangement represents a spiritual hierarchy in which those in the middle are the most spiritually advanced, while those at the periphery are less so.

Toward the end of Sudhana's visit with Maitreya, the bodhisattva declares that he has 'a body that enters into the states of existence within all world-realms',¹⁴ and that having pervaded the entire Dharma-realm, he has come to Kūṭāgrāmaka in the country Māladeśa in order to discipline people belonging to the brahmin caste (V 417.23–30). Maitreya tells our hero that he lives in the *kūṭāgāra*, but that upon passing away he will manifest in Tuṣita heaven and eventually obtain omniscience. At this point Sudhana will see him again with Mañjuśrī (V 417.30–418.7).

Maitreya's statements demonstrate the *Gv*'s dual conception of reality. The bodhisattva is able to enter all world-realms, pervade the entire Dharma-realm and appear in one particular place and time. This is possible because reality consists of the infinite *lokadhātus* and the all-encompassing *dharmadhātu*. Due to Maitreya's advanced attainment, he is fully immersed in the Dharma-realm and thus able to enter all world-realms at the same time. Given the equivalence of the Dharma-realm and the Dharma-body in the *Gv*, Maitreya's ability to transverse the *dharmadhātu* and

¹³ See chapter 3.

¹⁴ *sarvalokadhātūpapattiyantargatena kāyena* (V 417.23).

simultaneously appear in various locations within the *lokadhātus* implies that he possesses both the *dharmakāya* and limitless *rūpakāyas*.

The section concludes with Maitreya performing the final utterance of the standard ‘Go and Ask’ formula wherein he tells Sudhana to go to Mañjuśrī. Here we witness the *inclusio* structure of the narrative: following fifty-two encounters with the good friends, our hero is instructed to return to the bodhisattva who originally sends him on his quest. Before Sudhana leaves, Maitreya eulogises Mañjuśrī, stating such things as, ‘the princely Mañjuśrī is the mother of hundreds of thousands of *niyutas* of *koṭis* of buddhas’,¹⁵ ‘princely Mañjuśrī is one whose range has come far from within the principles of all liberations’,¹⁶ and ‘he has penetrated into the course of conduct of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra’.¹⁷ These statements suggest Mañjuśrī’s spiritual superiority to Maitreya. Maitreya’s final declaration leaves little room for doubt:

Sudhana, as many good friends as you have seen, as many entrances into courses of conduct as you have heard, as many principles of liberations as you have penetrated, as many properties of vows as you have plunged into—all should be seen as the authority (*anubhāva*) and power (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of the princely Mañjuśrī. Moreover, that princely Mañjuśrī has obtained the highest perfection.

yāvanti tvayā sudhana kalyāṇamitrāṇi dṛṣṭāni, yāvanti caryāmukhāni śrutāni, yāvanto vimokṣanayā avatīrṇāḥ, yāvantaḥ praṇidhānaviśeṣā avagādḥāḥ, sarvaṃ mañjuśriyaḥ kumārabhūtasyānubhāvo >dhiṣṭhānaṃ ca draṣṭavyam. sa ca mañjuśrī kumārabhūtaḥ paramapāramitāprāptaḥ (V 418.27–29).¹⁸

Mañjuśrī (km#1)

Sudhana travels to more than one hundred and ten cities looking for Mañjuśrī until he comes to Sumanāmukha, where he stays and meditates upon the bodhisattva (V 419.1–3). Mañjuśrī then stretches out his arm over a hundred and ten cities, places it

¹⁵ *mātā mañjuśrīḥ kumārabhūto buddhakoṭīniyutaśatasahasrāṇām* (V 418.16).

¹⁶ *dūrāgatagocaro mañjuśrīḥ kumārabhūtaḥ sarvavimokṣanayeṣu* (V 418.20–21).

¹⁷ *avatīrṇaḥ samantabhadrabodhisattvacaryāyām* (V 418.21).

¹⁸ SI 528.20–24; D a344r.5–6; C 1502.

on Sudhana's head and praises him. He tells our hero that those who have not developed the necessary faith, roots of merit, etc., can not know the nature of conditioned factors (*dharmatā*), their principle (*naya*), their range (*gocara*), or their abode (*vihāra*). Then having aided Sudhana in numerous ways, the bodhisattva causes him to penetrate into 'the *maṇḍala* of the course of conduct of Samantabhadra',¹⁹ and establishes him in his 'own place' (*svadeśe*).

I interpret this last statement to indicate that Mañjuśrī returns Sudhana to Dhanyākara, his hometown. The general *inclusio* structure of the narrative points to this: Sudhana begins his quest in Dhanyākara at the instruction of Mañjuśrī, and at its conclusion he sees the bodhisattva once more. In order to bring the narrative full circle, Mañjuśrī returns our hero to his home, where he has his final encounter with Samantabhadra.

Samantabhadra (*km#53*)²⁰

As the embodiment of the bodhisattva's course of conduct (*bodhisattvacaryā*), Samantabhadra resides at the top of the spiritual hierarchy of good friends. Five statements in this section suggest that, although he is a bodhisattva, he possesses the spiritual status of a buddha. Thus Sudhana's encounter and union with

¹⁹ *samantabhadracaryāmaṇḍale* (V 419.13). This could be translated as, 'the *maṇḍala* of the universally good course of conduct'.

²⁰ The surviving Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of the Samantabhadra section may be divided into two parts: the initial prose portion of the text (V 420.1–428.22), and the verse portion known as the *Bhadracarī* (V 428.23–436.20). As Gómez demonstrates (1967: xxv–xxviii), the first two Chinese translations do not contain the *Bhad*; rather the narrative ends with verses praising all bodhisattvas. Thus the *Bhad*, most likely due to its liturgical popularity, was added to the end of the *Gv* sometime between the end of the 7th and the end of the 8th centuries CE. The content of the *Bhad* also clearly does not fit with either this section or the narrative as a whole. Therefore, I shall focus my analysis on the prose portion of Sudhana's final encounter.

Samantabhadra represent the completion of his spiritual quest. This last section unfolds as a revelation of the bodhisattva in five stages.²¹ These are:

- 1) ten signs occur (V 420.31–421.8),
- 2) ten great lights appear (V 421.10–28),
- 3) Samantabhadra manifests before Sudhana (V 421.29ff),
- 4) the bodhisattva places his right hand upon Sudhana’s head (V 425.8ff), and
- 5) Sudhana penetrates all world-realms that are inside the body of Samantabhadra (V 427.27ff).

In the first two stages of revelation, the ten signs and ten lights purify all buddha-fields and transform the mundane world-realm through clouds of multi-coloured lights, flowers, gems, and so forth, into the limitless Dharma-realm. Through their transformation of the world-realm, these signs and lights foreshadow the appearance of Samantabhadra and emphasise the extraordinary importance of Sudhana’s encounter with this bodhisattva.

After seeing the ten signs and ten lights, our hero achieves the third stage of revelation: a vision of Samantabhadra sitting before Vairocana Buddha reflecting all of spacetime within every pore of his body (V 423.29–424.29). In the description of this vision we learn that he has ‘obtained equality with all *tathāgatas*’ (V 422.13). ‘Equality’ or ‘sameness’ (*samatā*) represents the absolute sameness of all phenomena due to their inherent emptiness (*śūnyatā*) of self-nature (*svabhāva*). Those who realise the undivided Dharma-realm comprehend this sameness and simultaneously attain equality with other enlightened beings. Therefore, the statement that Samantabhadra has obtained equality with the *tathāgatas* is our first suggestion that the bodhisattva is equal to a buddha.

The fourth stage of revelation occurs when the bodhisattva places his right hand upon Sudhana’s head causing him to attain *samādhis* equal in number to the dust particles in all buddha-fields. Following this mystical experience, Samantabhadra

²¹ For a detailed analysis and English translation of this section, see Osto 1999.

asks Sudhana, ‘Did you see my miracle?’ Our hero replies, ‘I saw, Noble One. But [only] an understanding *tathāgata* would understand a miracle so inconceivable’.²² Assuming that the bodhisattva understands the miracle that he himself imparts to Sudhana, then our hero’s reply is our second clue that Samantabhadra possesses a buddha’s spiritual status.

The bodhisattva then explains that through engaging in spiritual practises for untold eons he eventual attained ten powers (*bala*). One of these is the power (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of the *tathāgatas* (V 425.27–28). We have already noted that in the *Gv*, the *adhiṣṭhāna* of the buddhas is the highest form of spiritual power. Those that possess it can generate and manipulate illusory phenomena in order to enlighten beings, as well as inspire them to speak the Dharma. Therefore, Samantabhadra’s statement that he possesses the power of the *tathāgatas*, is our third suggestion that he has a spiritual status equal to a buddha.

Samantabhadra’s declaration about the purity of his Dharma-body and the omnipresence of his form-body is our fourth clue that he is fully enlightened:

I have obtained the Dharma-body that is absolutely pure and non-differentiated within the three times. I also purified a supreme form-body, which is conformable everywhere, is intent upon all buddha-fields, has a universal basis, makes visible all miracles in every direction, and is to be seen in all worlds.

... *atyantapariśuddho dharmakāyaḥ pratilabdhaḥ sarvatry-
adhvāsambhinnāḥ. anuttaraś ca rūpakāyaḥ pariśodhitaḥ sarva-
lokābhyudgataḥ sarvajagadyathāśayaviññāpanaḥ sarvatrānugataḥ
sarvabuddhakṣetrprasṛtaḥ samantapratīṣṭhānaḥ sarvataḥ
sarvavikurvitasaṃdarśanaḥ sarvajagadabhilakṣaṇīyaḥ* (V 426.31–
427.2).²³

²² *dr̥ṣṭam te kulaputra mama vikurvitam? āha—dr̥ṣṭam ārya. api tu tathāgataḥ prajānan prajānīyāt tāvad cintyam idaṃ vikurvitam* (V 425.27–28).

²³ SI 540.15–19; D a356r.5–356v.1; C 1510.

Next, the bodhisattva says, ‘Moreover, Son of Good Family, beings who hear about the complete purity of my buddha-field are reborn within pure buddha-fields’.²⁴ This statement by a bodhisattva referring to his own buddha field seems odd, unless Samantabhadra is considered equal to a buddha. Although the *Gv* never states that Samantabhadra is a buddha, his status as the primary helper of Vairocana is so exalted that it blurs the distinction between bodhisattvahood and buddhahood. As we have seen from our examination of the *Nidāna*, Vairocana, although the supreme spiritual power, plays primarily a passive role in the narrative. His spiritual power is always present, but in the background. The good friends are his agents active throughout the limitless world-realms. Within the metaphor of kingship Samantabhadra is Vairocana’s chief minister. As such he possesses all of his lord’s power and authority. Thus Samantabhadra’s statement about his ‘buddha-field’ is our fifth and final clue that his spiritual status is on par with the buddhas.

In the beginning of the fifth and final stage of Sudhana’s revelation, Samantabhadra tells our hero, ‘Those beings who see the purity of my body are reborn within my body. Son of Good Family, see the purity of my body!’²⁵ Upon beholding the bodhisattva once more Sudhana sees all bodhisattvas, buddhas and realms, and penetrates all world-realms inside the body of Samantabhadra. In every instant of thought, he enters infinite oceans of fields throughout all time within every single pore of the bodhisattva, and brings all beings to spiritual maturity. Through this experience, Sudhana attains thirteen equalities (*samatā*), the most important of which are: ‘equality with the ocean of vows concerning the course of conduct of the

²⁴ *ye khalu punaḥ kulaputra sattvā mama buddhakṣetrapariśuddhiṃ śṛṇvanti, te pariśuddheṣu buddhakṣetresūpapadyante* (V 427.15–16).

²⁵ *ye mamātmabhavapariśuddhiṃ paśyanti, te mamātmabhāve upapadyante. paśya kulaputra imāṃ mamātmabhāvapariśuddhiṃ* (V 427.16–17).

bodhisattva Samantabhadra',²⁶ 'equality with all *tathāgatas*',²⁷ 'equality in accomplishing the vision of the miracle of perfect enlightenment',²⁸ and 'equality with regard to the inconceivable miracle of the liberation of the bodhisattvas'.²⁹ Thus by entering into the body of Samantabhadra, Sudhana attains equality with him and all *tathāgatas*. This equality is none other than the acquisition of the *dharmakāya*, entry into the *dharmadhātu* and the realisation of supreme enlightenment.³⁰

As an omniscient bodhisattva, Samantabhadra skilfully resolves an ideological tension within the narrative between the mandates of devotionism and the attainment of enlightenment for the sake of all beings. Buddhas do not worship other buddhas. According to the worldview of the *Gv*, as long as one remains an omniscient bodhisattva, one can worship infinite buddhas, while possessing all the powers of a buddha in order to aid beings. Sudhana's entry into the bodhisattva's body indicates that he has become, like Samantabhadra, the perfect devotee and saviour. Within the metaphor of kingship, this means that Sudhana, the merchant-banker's son, has achieved the highest goal attainable by someone of his station. He has become a chief minister to the king of the Dharma-realm.

²⁶ *samantabhadrabodhisattvacaryāprañidhānasāgarasamatām* (V 428.16).

²⁷ *sarvatathāgatasamatām* (V 428.16).

²⁸ *abhisambodhivikurvitasamdarśanapāraṇasamatām* (V 428.17).

²⁹ *acintyabodhisattvavimokṣavikurvitasamatām* (V 428.19).

³⁰ Sudhana's attaining enlightenment in one lifetime by merging with Samantabhadra strongly suggests to me yet another proto-Tantric element in the *Gv*. See Osto 1999: 57, n. 25.

Conclusion

I begin this thesis stating that I would tell a story about wealth, gender and power in the *Gv* using textual theory, worldview analysis and contemporary narratology. I propose to use the legitimate means of knowledge of my time and place (Anglo-American academic discourse) to analyse the worldview of the *Gv* in its original Indian context. I make four presuppositions with regard to such an approach. 1) There is no neutral position within which to analyse a worldview. Therefore, I begin by outlining the basic structure of worldviews according to their conceptions of reality, society and the individual. After doing this, I disclose my own position within Modernism as the starting point of my analysis. 2) The meaning of narratives and texts are derived from their roles within a worldview. 3) Literature is a system that possesses a regulatory body that extends patronage to it. And 4) within a religious worldview, scriptures derive their authority from (a) transcendental source(s) often mediated by a priestly caste.

In part I, 'Text and Context', I provide a genealogy of the *Gv* and argue for Dhanyākara in the 3rd century CE as a possible time and place for the text's origins. Investigating the role of Buddhist monasticism within Indian society during the Buddhist Middle Period (0–500 CE), I argue that the *Gv* was composed by monks, possibly from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa during the Ikṣvāku dynasty, for an urban, wealthy elite in which women were important patrons of Buddhism.

In part II, 'Structures', I apply the categories of worldview and narrative to an analysis of the *Gv*. In my examination of worldview (chapter 3), I demonstrate a fundamental bifurcation between a conventional and spiritual level of experience: reality is divided into the world-realms (*lokadhātu*) and the Dharma-realm (*dharmadhātu*); society

into mundane society and the society of good friends (*kalyāṇamitra*); and the individual into form-bodies (*rūpakāya*) and the Dharma-body (*dharmakāya*). The *Gv* asserts that the highest goal of any individual is to become a member of the spiritual society through visiting and worshipping the good friends. Such activities eventually lead to entry into the Dharma-realm, which is synonymous with obtaining the Dharma-body and achieving omniscience.

During my discussion of the *Gv*'s narrative structures (chapter 4), I propose that the story may have been viewed as a Mahāyāna *avadāna* about Sudhana's quest for enlightenment. Then I outline Bal's structural narratology in order to develop a vocabulary and set of analytical tools, such as 'text', 'fabula', 'story', 'external narrator', 'embedded narrative', 'the power' and 'focalization', with which to explore the text's principle narrative forces. I also discuss the criteria of weight, position and content as a means to assess the status of the good friends within the *Gv*'s spiritual hierarchy.

In part III, 'Forces', using ideas developed by Derrida (2001) and Gibson (1996), I explore the narrative's conceptions of wealth, gender and power as they unfold sequentially within the story. Having done this in chapters 5–16, I shall now summarise the results of my observations.

Wealth

In the introduction to part III, I state that wealth in the *Gv* takes three forms: its possession by individuals, its magical appearance, and the transformation of mundane landscapes into jewelled lands. Wealth is introduced at the very beginning of the *sūtra* when Vairocana transforms his *kūṭāgāra* and the Jeta Grove into an infinitely vast paradise adorned with

countless, priceless objects (chapter 5). This miraculous event sets the stage for a theme that runs throughout the entire story: wealth functions as a sign of spiritual status. As such it possesses both an ethical and ontological aspect. Throughout the narrative the ethical dimension of wealth is expressed by statements about previous roots of merit (*kuśulamūla*) and past good deeds (*puṇya*). The ontological dimension finds expression in jewelled buildings and landscapes that symbolically represent the Dharma-realm divided into levels. The transformation of Vairocana's peaked dwelling and the Jeta Grove introduces these two aspects.

The centrality of wealth in the *Gv* becomes apparent during Sudhana's first encounter with Mañjuśrī (chapter 6). Here, the reason why Sudhana, the merchant-banker's son, is called 'Good Wealth' is explained with a narrative aside about the magical appearance of fabulous treasures at his conception and birth. The EN's description of these treasures proves Sudhana's spiritual status as one worthy to quest for enlightenment. The significance of both our hero's name, 'Good Wealth', and title, the 'merchant-banker's son', should not be underestimated. Sudhana's name and social status are compelling evidence that the monastic composers of the *sūtra* had a particular audience in mind: wealthy merchant-bankers.¹

The theme of wealth continues to develop during Sudhana's meetings with the good friends. The monk Sāgaramegha describes his vision of a jewelled lotus (chapter 7). Megha, the grammarian, showers our hero with priceless gifts (chapter 8). Queen Āśā is adorned with fabulous jewels and her park is made entirely of gems (chapter 8). Her statement that beings who have not planted the roots of merit, or embraced good friends do

¹ Further evidence of this is provided by the six good friends also connected to the merchant-banker class (see chapter 8).

not see her demonstrates the ethical and ontological aspects of wealth. Maitrāyaṇī's and Prabhūta's abodes (chapter 10) are made of innumerable riches and function as representations of the Dharma-realm divided into levels.

The most definitive statements about wealth are found when Sudhana encounters the kings Anala and Mahāprabha (chapter 11). After revealing to our hero the inconceivable riches of his palace, Anala asks Sudhana, 'would such a karmic result arise for evil doers?'² This is the clearest indication that wealth functions as proof of one's goodness (ethical aspect). During Sudhana's visit to Mahāprabha, the EN informs us that our hero is not at all distracted by the King's wondrous bejewelled city. Sudhana's reaction here is prescriptive for would-be bodhisattvas: the correct attitude toward wealth is detachment. Later in this section, Mahāprabha explains that only the spiritually advanced see the jewelled city; others experience a city of clay and mud. Here we find the most explicit connection between wealth and spiritual attainment on the ontological level. The jewelled city represents the Dharma-realm divided into levels; while the city of clay and mud exists within the mundane world-realm.

Descriptions of fabulous riches continue throughout the remainder of the *sūtra*.³ However, the topic of wealth as the primary subject of the narration occurs only twice more: during Sudhana's encounters with the god Mahādeva and when he meets the goddess Sthāvarā (chapter 13). Both give our hero inconceivable amounts of wealth. Mahādeva tells Sudhana to 'take these and give gifts... teach the world through giving'.⁴

² ...*pāpakāriṇām evaṃrūpaḥ karmavipāko > bhinirvartate?* (V 122.28)

³ See for example the descriptions of Siṃhavijṃbhita's park (chapter 12), Sudhana's vision of Māyā (chapter 15) and Maitreya's *kūṭāgāra* (chapter 16).

⁴ ...*grhītvā dānāni deli... dānena lokam śikṣaya* (V 168.1-2).

Sthāvarā exhorts him to ‘Take from them and do that which should be done!’⁵ These encounters serve three functions within the narrative. First, they demonstrate Sudhana’s worthiness to receive such gifts and therefore indicate his advanced spiritual status. Second, they extol the Buddhist virtues of generosity and detachment toward material goods. And third, they function as thematic and geographic transitions within the narrative. Mahādeva is the last good friend Sudhana visits in south India (*dakṣiṇāpatha*) before he travels to the *bodhimaṇḍa* in Magadha to see Sthāvarā. Since it is the site of the Buddha’s enlightenment, the *bodhimaṇḍa* functions as thematised sacred space. Thus the EN focuses attention on these two gifts of wealth in order to mark a geographic transition and to indicate Sudhana’s worthiness to enter one of Buddhism’s most sacred places.

Gender

Like most Buddhist literature, the *Gv* is an androcentric text. One has only to read the *Nidāna* to realise this: ‘the power’ (Vairocana), his chief ‘helpers’ (Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra) and his retinue are all gendered male. The narrative’s hero and several male characters demonstrate the premium placed on the young, male body as the physical and spiritual ideal. The ideology of the ‘great man’ (*mahāpuruṣa*) possessing the thirty-two characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*) reinforces this. Buddhas and the most advanced bodhisattvas are always masculine in gender. But unlike many Buddhist texts, the *Gv* contains no negative statements about women. Nor does it disparage the female body, or deny a woman’s ability to attain enlightenment. So how do we assess the status and role of women in this text?

⁵ *tebhyaḥ tvaṃ grhītvā yatkāryaṃ tat kuruṣva* (V 169.23).

In chapter 4, I propose three criteria to determine the status of the *kalyāṇamitras*: weight, position and content. The combined weight of Sudhana's encounters with the female good friends is 51.1% of the total text. This indicates their strong presence in the narrative. Sudhana's visits are arranged roughly according to a hierarchy whereby later good friends rank higher. Therefore, the relative position of the female *kalyāṇamitras* must be considered. But structural features such as weight and position alone do not supply a definitive assessment of a good friend's status. Content also provides crucial information about status, particularly statements about wealth, social position, attainments and the body. Based on my sequential investigation of the female *kalyāṇamitras* using these criteria, I would like to proffer the following observations about the status and role of the female good friends in the *Gv*.

Queen Āśā is the first female *kalyāṇamitra* Sudhana visits. The weight and position of this section indicate its significance.⁶ She possesses three attributes worthy of note. First, she is royalty. Second, she owns fabulous wealth. Third, only those with the necessary roots of merit can see her, and those that do become irreversible from their path toward supreme, perfect enlightenment.

The second, third and fourth female *kalyāṇamitras* are Maitrāyaṇī (*km#11*), Prabhūtā (*km#14*) and Acalā (*km#20*). The total weight of these sections is 3.2%. Maitrāyaṇī and Prabhūtā are endowed with inconceivable wealth, and all three are described as physically attractive. Maitrāyaṇī is a princess who embodies the Buddhist virtue of generosity. Acalā represents the ideal of chastity and tells an *avadāna* of a past life when she was a princess. Thus, these sections continue to develop the association of

⁶ The weight of this section is 1.8% of the total text. Although this seems insignificant, only 14 visits are longer (see appendix A). Āśā's position as the first female *kalyāṇamitra* is also narratologically significant.

the female good friends with wealth and royalty. These friends also introduce the text's conception of female beauty and its positive spiritual effects.

The fifth and sixth female friends are the nun *Siṃhaviḥṛmbhitā* (*km#25*) and the courtesan *Vasumitrā* (*km#26*) (chapter 12). The combined weight of these sections is 2.1%. These two represent an idealised vision of the perfect Buddhist nun and courtesan. Both *kalyāṇamitrās* are surrounded by countless treasures. *Siṃhaviḥṛmbhitā* is depicted as a particularly powerful Dharma teacher. The two different attitudes of the townspeople expressed toward *Vasumitrā* (that Sudhana should not see her and that he should) reveal that the spiritual hierarchy of *kalyāṇamitrās* is not always known to members of mundane society. *Vasumitrā*'s description of her ability to assume the female form of any being she is teaching demonstrates the paradox of female beauty in the *Gv*: rather than inspiring passion (*rāga*), beauty leads here to dispassion (*virāga*). The courtesan's method of teaching the Dharma with embraces and kisses is particularly striking, and foreshadows later Buddhist Tantric sexual yoga. Thus these two sections strengthen the female *kalyāṇamitrās*' connection to wealth and beauty.

The ten goddesses (*kms#31–40*; chapter 14) constitute the largest single group of *kalyāṇamitrās* and the narration of these encounters occupies 29.6% of the total text. Their position in the middle third of the story, as well as their geographical location at the *bodhimaṇḍa*, Kapilavastu and Lumbinī grove indicate their importance. Sudhana's meetings with the eight night goddesses (*rātridevatā*) possess three narrative features relevant to this study. First, the night goddesses' *maṇḍalic* arrangement around the *bodhimaṇḍa* symbolises that they are Vairocana's harem. Second, statements about goddesses' bodies explicitly indicate or strongly suggest that they possess the

Dharma-body (*dharmakāya*), thus demonstrating their advanced spiritual attainment.

Third, the embedded narratives in these sections feature numerous characters that belong to the royal and merchant-banker classes. Two of the goddesses are queens, two are princesses, two are daughters of merchant-bankers and one is a prince. The ‘moral’ of these stories seems to be that good Buddhist queens, princesses, and merchant-bankers’ daughters eventually are reborn as night goddesses. Such a choice of characters suggests a particular target audience: wealthy merchant-bankers and royal female patrons.

Sudhana’s visit to Gopā, the wife of Buddha (*śākyakanyā*), is the second longest section in the narrative, occupying 8.9% of the total text (chapter 15). Based on position and content, Gopā is the fifth most important good friend, and the second most important female friend. Her position after the goddesses and before Māyā, as well as her geographical location at Kapilavastu both corroborate her status. As wife of the Buddha, Gopā represents the queen of the Dharma-realm, and the ideal Buddhist wife. A significant proportion of this section is occupied by the *avadāna* about her previous life when she and the Bodhisattva met for the first time. The poetry within this embedded narrative indicates that Gopā (as the courtesan’s daughter) represents the ideals of female beauty and virtue, traits found in several of the earlier *kalyāṇamitras*, but perfected in her.

Sudhana’s visit with Māyā, the mother of the Buddha, is much shorter than his visit with Gopā (2.5% of the total text) but position, geographic location and content establish her as the highest ranking female *kalyāṇamitra*, and the fourth ranking good friend over-all (chapter 15). The Queen’s form (*rūpa*) and her special attainment establish her, not only as a temporal queen and mother of the Buddha, but also as the cosmic mother of all

bodhisattvas in their final birth. In this way, Māyā represents the queen mother of the Dharma-realm and the most important female *kalyāṇamitra* in the narrative.

Based on this analysis we cannot but conclude that several of the female good friends possess a high spiritual status, and play an important role as Sudhana's teachers. Several of them represent idealised types (generous and chaste Buddhist laywomen, nun, courtesan, wife and mother). Their wealth and royal status establish their important social positions within the mundane sphere. Their beauty and spiritual attainments signify their importance within the spiritual society of good friends. Gopā's and Māyā's particularly high ranking as queen and queen mother of the Dharma-realm demonstrates the centrality of the metaphor of kingship within the story's conception of power.

Power

As I discuss in my introduction to part III, power within the *Gv* may be divided into three hierarchies: economic, political and spiritual. Within the narrative there is considerable overlap among these three. The significant number of wealthy *kalyāṇamitras* points to an overlap in economic and spiritual hierarchies. The considerable number of wealthy kings, princes, queens and princesses in the narrative and embedded narratives adds the political dimension and demonstrates an overlap among all three hierarchies.

As a Mahāyāna Buddhist *sūtra*, the *Gv* places the highest value on spiritual power. This power may be defined both in a narrow and broad sense. The narrow sense is encompassed by the term *adhiṣṭhāna*. *Adhiṣṭhāna* is the power to generate, manipulate and control reality. It is also the power to induce visions in others and inspire them to speak the Dharma. More broadly defined, spiritual power is the ability to enter trances (*samādhi*)

and attain liberations (*vimokṣa*), lights of knowledge (*jñānāloka*) and entrances into the Dharma (*dharmamukha*). As the power to command, authority is also an important theme within the story.

A sequential investigation of spiritual power in the *Gv* reveals the text's ideological overcoding in relation to temporal power. In the *Nidāna*, Vairocana is introduced as the spiritual monarch of the Dharma-realm (chapter 5). This metaphor of kingship functions as the governing paradigm for the narrative's spiritual hierarchy. Textual symmetry at both the beginning and conclusion of the *sūtra* establishes Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī as the Buddha's chief ministers (chapters 5 & 16). The *mahāsrāvakas*' inability to see the Buddha's transformation in the *Nidāna* (chapter 5), and Mañjuśrī's conversion of Śāriputra and the sixty monks (chapter 6) both assert the superiority of the *Gv*'s Mahāyānist spiritual path while incorporating it within the meta-narrative of mainstream Buddhism.

Sudhana's encounters with the first three monk *kalyāṇamitras* (chapter 7), the brahmin Jayoṣmāyatana (chapter 9) and king Anala (chapter 11) contain important information about spiritual authority. Given the likely monastic authorship of the narrative, the position of the monks after Mañjuśrī and before the first lay good friends, may be the EN's attempt to maintain the religious authority of monastic *kalyāṇamitras* over lay teachers. When Sudhana questions the integrity of Jayoṣmāyatana and Anala, divinities appear and tell him he must not doubt the good friends. These statements affirm the absolute spiritual authority of the *kalyāṇamitras* and establish complete devotion to them as a prerequisite for enlightenment.

Sudhana's meetings with (outwardly appearing) non-Buddhist good friends, the sage Bhīṣmottaranirghoṣa and the brahmin Jayoṣmāyatana (chapter 9), raise a question

about the religious context of the *Gv*'s origins. If the narrative originated among the Ikṣvākus, the inclusions of these *kalyāṇamitras* may be an attempt to recognise the validity of religious practitioners patronised by the kings and princes. Thus, their inclusion would help maintain friendly relations between the Buddhist monastic institution and the royal male patrons of Brahmanical religion. This suggests that the text may have been written with such a royal audience in mind.

The *avadānas* of the night goddesses also suggest a royal, male target audience (chapter 14). In these embedded narratives Vairocana, Samantabhadra, Mañjuśrī and Maitreya are described as wheel-turning monarchs (*cakravartin*) in a previous life. By connecting the spiritual elite to the highest achievement of temporal power, the composers of the *Gv* strengthen the metaphorical connection between buddhahood and kingship. Because the Buddha and these advanced bodhisattvas continued to spiritually develop after being *cakravartins*, these stories also assert the superiority of rulership within the Dharma-realm over worldly power. The ideological message here is that good Buddhist rulers can spiritually advance to become rulers of the eternal Dharma-realm.

The *Gv* concludes with visits to the three highest ranking *kalyāṇamitras*: Maitreya, Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra (chapter 16). Our hero's visionary experience of Maitreya's peaked dwelling is the narrative's climax. This section is the longest of the story and constitutes approximately 11.7% of the total text. Within the metaphor of kingship, Maitreya plays the role of crown prince of the Dharma-realm. His peaked dwelling is his palace, constituting a gateway from the mundane world-realms to the infinitely inter-reflecting *dharmadhātu*. His role within the narrative as the third ranking good friend

derives from the position and weight of this section, his attainments, and statements about his body and dwelling.

Sudhana's visit with Mañjuśrī is extremely brief. At the conclusion of this section, the bodhisattva establishes our hero in his 'own place' (*svadeśe*). I interpret this last statement to indicate that Mañjuśrī returns Sudhana to Dhanyākara, his hometown. The general *inclusio* structure of the narrative points to this: Sudhana begins his quest in Dhanyākara at the instruction of Mañjuśrī, and at its conclusion he meets the bodhisattva once more. In order to bring the narrative full circle, Mañjuśrī returns our hero to his home, where he has his final encounter with Samantabhadra.

Sudhana's visionary experience of Samantabhadra and the accompanying verses constitute 3.9% of the total text. As the embodiment of the bodhisattva's course of conduct (*bodhisattvacaryā*), Samantabhadra resides at the top of the spiritual hierarchy of good friends. Five statements in this section suggest that, although he is a bodhisattva, he possesses the spiritual status of a buddha. Thus Sudhana's encounter and union with Samantabhadra represent the completion of his spiritual quest.

Samantabhadra is Vairocana's chief minister. As such he possesses all of his lord's power and authority. As an omniscient bodhisattva, Samantabhadra skilfully resolves an ideological tension within the narrative between the mandates of devotionism and the attainment of enlightenment for the sake of all beings. Sudhana's entry into the bodhisattva's body indicates that he has become, like Samantabhadra, the perfect devotee and saviour. Within the metaphor of kingship, this means that Sudhana, the merchant-banker's son, has achieved the highest goal attainable by someone of his station: chief minister to the king of the Dharma-realm.

A Target Audience for the *Gaṇḍavyūha*

Throughout this study I point out clues indicating an original target audience for the *Gv* consisting of wealthy merchants, and royal men and women. Our first clue is Sudhana's name, 'Good Wealth', and his title as the 'merchant-banker's son' (*śreṣṭhidāraka*). The central theme of wealth as a sign of one's spiritual status is our second clue that the rich were among the early target audience for the *sūtra*. The high status and important roles played by wealthy and royal female *kalyāṇamitras* provides additional evidence that the composers of the story had female royalty in mind. Finally, the non-Buddhist and king *kalyāṇamitras*, the *cakravartins* in the night goddesses' *avadānas* and the metaphor of kingship itself, all suggest that kings and princes were among the *Gv*'s original target audience.⁷

Given the ideological influence of patronage upon literature, this textual evidence is consistent with what we know about the approximate time and place of the *sūtra*'s composition. Indian Buddhist monasticism during the Middle Period was an institution dependent on the patronage of the rich and powerful for survival. The *Gv* emerged from a monastic context (possibly near Dhanyākara during the Ikṣvāku rule) at a time when Buddhist monasteries were not only places of study and contemplation, but also repositories of tremendous wealth donated by the rich and powerful men and women of the day. The *Gv* as a narrative meant to be heard (and possibly read) by these men and women

⁷ Of course we have no hard evidence that these social groups made up the original audience of the *Gv*. We do know that the Empress Wu of China adopted the Hua-yen school of Buddhism and its emphasis on the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* in the 7th century (Williams 1989: 129). Also, the king of Orissa gave his own personal copy of the *Gv* to the emperor of China at the end of the 8th century (see chapter 2). Later, the *Gv* was the most important text of Barabudur in Java built by the Śailendra dynasty in the 8th/9th century. Thus from the 7th to the 9th century, at least, the story of Sudhana achieved a certain popularity among wealthy and royal men and women in Asia.

exalts its wealthy, male and female characters as important spiritual teachers. Within its governing paradigm of spiritual power (the metaphor of kingship), Vairocana, Maitreya, Gopā and Māyā are the royal family of the Dharma-realm, and Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī's its chief ministers. In this way, Sudhana's union with Samantabhadra at the narrative's conclusion symbolically represents his ascension to chief minister of the Dharma-realm. Thus the 'noble *Gaṇḍavyūha*, the royal gem among Mahāyāna *sūtras*'⁸ is not only the story of a young man's quest for enlightenment, but also of a ruling class's dream for eternal wealth and power.

⁸ *āryagaṇḍavyūho mahāyānasūtraratnarājaḥ* (V 436.28).

Appendix A: List of *Kalyāṇamitras*¹

Name (Skt)	G ²	Title	V ³	% ⁴
1. Mañjuśrī	M	bodhisattva	36–47	2.8
2. Meghaśrī	M	bhikṣu	48–50	.69
3. Sāgaramegha	M	bhikṣu	51–54	.92
4. Supratiṣṭhita	M	bhikṣu	55–58	.92
5. Megha	M	dramiḍa	59–62	.92
6. Mukta	M	śreṣṭhin	63–67	1.1
7. Sāradhvaja	M	bhikṣu	68–78	2.5
8. Āśā	F	upāsikā	79–86	1.8
9. Bhīṣmottaranirghoṣa	M	ṛṣi	87–89	.69
10. Jayoṣmāyatana	M	brāhmaṇa	90–95	1.4
11. Maitrāyaṇī	F	kanyā	96–98	.69
12. Sudarśana	M	bhikṣu	99–101	.69
13. Indriyeśvara	M	dāraka	102–104	.69
14. Prabhūtā	F	upāsikā	105–109	1.1
15. Vidvān	M	gṛhapati	110–113	.92
16. Ratnacūḍa	M	dharmaśreṣṭhin	114–116	.69
17. Samantanetra	M	gāndhikaśreṣṭhin	117–119	.69
18. Anala	M	rājan	120–123	.92
19. Mahāprabha	M	rājan	124–130	1.6
20. Acalā	F	upāsikā	131–136	1.4
21. Sarvagāmin	M	parīvrājaka	137–139	.69
22. Utpalabhūti	M	gāndhikaśreṣṭhin	140–142	.69
23. Vaira	M	dāśa	143–144	.46
24. Jayottama	M	śreṣṭhin	145–147	.69
25. Siṃhavijṛmbhitā	F	bhikṣuṇī	148–153	1.4
26. Vasumitrā	F	bhagavatī	154–156	.69
27. Veṣṭhila	M	gṛhapati	157–158	.46
28. Avalokiteśvara	M	bodhisattva	159–164	1.4
29. Ananyagāmin	M	bodhisattva	165–166	.46
30. Mahādeva	M	deva	167–168	.46

¹ For a similar list see V XII–XVII.

² (G)ender is either (M)ale or (F)emale.

³ Page numbers in the Vaidya edition.

⁴ This is a percentage of the total text arrived at through dividing the number of pages in a section by 436 (the total number of pages in the Vaidya edition), multiplying by 100, and rounding off to one or two decimal places. The top five percentages have been put in bold type.

Name (Skt)	G	Title	V	%
31. Sthāvarā	F	pr̥thidevatā	169–170	.46
32. Vāsantī	F	rātridevatā	171–182	2.8
33. Samantagambhīraśrī- vimalaprabhā	F	rātridevatā	183–187	1.1
34. Pramuditānayanajagadvirocanā	F	rātridevatā	188–202	3.4
35. Samantasattvatrāṇojaḥśrī	F	rātridevatā	203–219	3.9
36. Praśāntarutasāgaravatī	F	rātridevatā	220–232	3.0
37. Sarvanagararakṣāsāmbhava- tejaḥśrī	F	rātridevatā	233–242	2.3
38. Sarvavṛkṣapraphullana- sukhasaṃvāsā	F	rātridevatā	243–264	5.0
39. Sarvajagadrakṣāpraṇidhāna- vīryaprabhā	F	rātridevatā	265–284	4.6
40. Sutejomaṇḍalaratiśrī	F	lumbhinīvanadevatā	285–299	3.4
41. Gopā	F	śakyakanyā	300–338	8.9
42. Māyādevī	F	bodhisattvajanetrī	339–349	2.5
43. Surendrābhā	F	devakanyā	350–351	.46
44. Viśvāmitra	M	dārakācārya	352–352	.23
45. Śilpābhijñā	M	śreṣṭhidāraka	353–354	.46
46. Bhadrōttamā	F	upāsikā	355–355	.23
47. Mukṭāsāra	M	hairaṇyaka	356–356	.23
48. Sucandra	M	gṛhpati	357–357	.23
49. Ajitasena	M	gṛhpati	358–358	.23
50. Śivarāgra	M	brāhmaṇa	359–359	.23
51. Śrīsaṃbhava & Śrīmatī	M&F	dāraka & dārikā	360–367	1.8
52. Maitreya	M	bodhisattva	368–418	11.7
1. Mañjuśrī	M	bodhisattva	419–419	.23
53. Samantabhadra	M	bodhisattva	420–436	3.9

Appendix B: Concordance of Sanskrit Editions and ms. A

Name of <i>kalyānamitra</i> (Skt)	V ¹	SI ²	A ³
1. Mañjuśrī	36	46	24v
2. Meghaśrī	48	59	31r
3. Sāgaramegha	51	62	33r
4. Supratiṣṭhita	55	67	36r
5. Megha	59	72	38v
6. Mukta	63	77	41r
7. Sāradhvaja	68	84	44v
8. Āśā	79	100	53r
9. Bhīṣmottaranirghoṣa	87	111	59r
10. Jayoṣmāyatana	90	115	61v
11. Maitrāyaṇī	96	123	65v
12. Sudarśana	99	127	67v
13. Indriyeśvara	102	131	70r
14. Prabhūtā	105	136	72v
15. Vidvān	110	142	76r
16. Ratnacūḍa	114	147	79r
17. Samantanetra	117	151	81r
18. Anala	120	155	83r
19. Mahāprabha	124	160	86r
20. Acalā	131	170	91r
21. Sarvagāmin	137	179	95v
22. Utpalabhūti	140	182	97r
23. Vaira	143	186	99r
24. Jayottama	145	189	101r
25. Siṃhaviḥṛmbhitā	148	192	103r
26. Vasumitrā	154	201	107v
27. Veṣṭhila	157	205	110r
28. Avalokiteśvara	159	208	111v
29. Ananyagāmin	165	216	115v
30. Mahādeva	167	218	117v
31. Sthāvarā	169	221	118r
32. Vāsantī	171	223	119r

¹ First page number of the section in the Vaidya edition.

² First page number of the section in the Suzuki and Idzumi edition.

³ First page number of the section in ms. A ('Hodgson 2', Royal Asiatic Society, London). The numbering is based on the Newari (see Cowell and Eggeling 1875: 50). 'r' represents recto, 'v' verso of the folio.

Name of <i>kalyānamitra</i> (Skt)	V	SI	A
33. Samantagambhīraśrīvimalaprabhā	183	236	126r
34. Pramuditānayanajagadvirocanā	188	241	128v
35. Samantasattvatrāṇojahśrī	203	262	138r
36. Praśāntarutasāgaravatī	220	286	151r
37. Sarvanagararakṣāsambhavatejahśrī	233	303	159v
38. Sarvavṛkṣapraphullanasukhasamvāsā	243	317	166v
39. Sarvajagadrakṣāpraṇidhānavīryaprabhā	265	341	179v
40. Sutejomaṇḍalaratīśrī	285	365	192v
41. Gopā	300	385	203r
42. Māyādevī	339	429	226r
43. Surendrābhā	350	446	233r
44. Viśvāmitra	352	448	236r
45. Śilpābhijñā	353	448	236r
46. Bhadrōttamā	355	451	238r
47. Muktsāra	356	452	238v
48. Sucandra	357	453	238v
49. Ajitasena	358	453	239r
50. Śivarāgra	359	454	239r
51. Śrīsaṃbhava & Śrīmatī	360	455	239v
52. Maitreya	368	466	245v
1. Mañjuśrī	419	529	278v
53. Samantabhadra	420	529	278v

Appendix C: Concordance of Three Tibetan Editions

Name of <i>kalyānamitra</i> (Tib.) ¹	D ²	P ³	T ⁴
	ga	si	ca
1. 'Jam dpaḷ	313v	85v	75r
2. Sprin gyi dpaḷ	324v	96v	89r
3. rGya mtsho'i sprin	328r	101r	93v
4. Shin tu brtan pa	332v	105v	99v
5. Sprin	337v	110v	105v
6. bTang brjod	342r	115r	111v
7. rGya mtsho'i rgyal mtshan	349r	123r	121v
8. Yid bzhin	364r	138v	141v
9. 'Jigs mchog dbyangs	375r	150v	157v
10. rGyal ba'i drod kyi skyem ched	380r	154v	163v
11. Byams ma	387r	162v	172v
12. blTa na sdug pa	392r	166v	177r
13. dBang po'i dbang phyug	a.1v	170v	182r
14. Phul du byung ba	5v	175r	187r
15. mKhas pa	11r	181r	194v
16. Rin chen gtsug phud (T: pud)	16r	186v	201v
17. Kun tu blta ba (T: lta ba)	19r	190r	205r
18. Me	22v	193v	209r
19. 'Od chen po	27r	199r	215v
20. Mig yo ba	35v	209r	227r
21. Thams cad du 'gro ba	43r	217v	236r
22. Longs spyod ut pa la (P: ud pa la)	45v	221r	240r
23. mNyam pa dpa' bo	48v	224r	244r
24. rGyal ba dam pa	51r	227v	247v
25. Seng ge rnam par bsgyings pa	54v	231r	252r
26. lHa' bshes gnyen ma	62r	239r	262r
27. Nan khugs	65v	243r	267r
28. sPyan ras gzigs kyi dbang po	68v	246r	270v
29. gZhan du mi 'gro ba	73v	251r	277r
30. lHa chen po	75v	252v	279r

¹ Tibetan names are based on the Derge. Variations are in brackets indicating the edition and different spelling.

² First page number of the section in the Derge Kanjur edition (Tibetan numbering). For details, see (1991) *The Tibetan Tripitaka: Taipei Edition* in the bibliography.

³ First page number of the section in the Peking Kanjur edition, volume 26 (Tibetan numbering). See Suzuki 1956–61, for details.

⁴ First page number of the section in Tog Palace Kanjur, volumes 33 (ca) and 34 (cha) of the Phal po che (Tibetan numbering). For details, see (1975–80) *The Tog Palace Manuscript of the Tibetan Kanjur* in the bibliography.

Name of <i>kalyānamitra</i> (Tib.)	D	P	T
	a	si	ca
31. brTan ma (P,T: pa)	77v	254v	282r
32. dPyid dang ldan pa	79v	256v	284r
33. Kun tu zab pa'i dpal dri ma med pa'i od	91r	268r	299r
34. Rab tu dga' ba'i mig 'gro bar rnam par snag ba	95v	273v	304v
35. Sems can kun tu skyong ba'i gzi brjid dpal	113r	hi.1r	325v
36. sGra rgya mtsho rab tu zhi ba dang ldan pa	133v	22v	cha.1
37. Grong kyher thams cad bsrung ba 'byung ba'i gzi brjid dpal	147v	37r	22v
38. Shing thams cad gyi me tog rgyas pa bde bar gnas pa	159r	49r	38r
39. 'Gro ba thams cad bsrung ba'i smon lam la brtson pa'i 'od	179v	69v	64r
40. gZi brjid kyi dkil 'khor bzang pos dga' ba'i dpal	201v	92v	93v
41. Go pa	219r	112v	119r
42. lHa mo sgyu ma	255v	149v	167r
43. lHa dbang 'od	271v	165v	188v
44. Kun gyi bshes gnyen	273r	167v	190v
45. bZo mngon pa shes pa	273v	167v	191r
46. bZang mo'i mchog	276r	170v	195r
47. gCes pa gtong ba	277r	171r	196r
48. Zla ba bzang po	277v	171v	196v
49. Mi 'pham sde	278r	172r	197r
50. 'Dzin mchog	278r	172v	198r
51. dPal 'byung ba & dPal gyi blo gros ma	279r	173r	198v
52. Byams pa	288v	183r	212r
1. 'Jam dpal	344v	236r	286v
53. Kun tu bzang po	345r	237r	287v

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Errata Corrigenda

- page 2, line 10 ‘...as likely time...’ —> read ‘...as the likely time...’
page 2, line 20 ‘...narrative’ —> read ‘...narrative.’
page 7, line 10 ‘...of the the *Gv*’ —> read ‘...of the *Gv*’
page 25, line 9 ‘...possible from...’ —> read ‘...possibly from...’
page 97, line 14 ‘...bodhisattva to...’ —> read ‘...bodhisattvas to...’
page 105, line 11 ‘...women’s spiritual...’ —> read ‘...women’s spiritual...’
page 107, line 13 ‘...bodies; the...’ —> read ‘...bodies: the...’
page 120, line 9 ‘...and the ideological...’ —> read ‘...and ideological...’
page 121, line 15 ‘...space in analogous...’ —> read ‘...space is analogous...’
page 123, line 12 ‘MacMahan’ —> read ‘McMahan’
page 130, line 2 ‘...the concept of...’ —> read ‘...the concepts of...’
page 132, line 4 ‘...the *Gv* worldview...’ —> read ‘...the *Gv*’s worldview...’
page 132, line 15 ‘Description...’ —> read ‘Descriptions...’
page 138, line 7 ‘...good friend enjoy...’ —> read ‘...good friends enjoy...’
page 141, note 1, line 2 ‘the...’ —> read ‘The...’
page 145, line 3 ‘...who is be both...’ —> read ‘...who is both...’
page 150, line 9 ‘associating’ —> read ‘association’
page 162, note 11, line 1 ‘*khula*’ —> read ‘*khalu*’
page 168, line 11 ‘...city of Dhama-king...’ —> read ‘...city of the Dharma-king...’
page 172, line 7 ‘...the flower made...’ —> read ‘...the flower is made...’
page 178, line 19, ‘who’ —> read ‘whom’
page 178, line 22, ‘...bodhisattvas not...’ —> read ‘...bodhisattvas do not...’
page 179, note 3, line 1 ‘*varṣsais*’ —> read ‘*varṣais*’
page 180, note 5, line 6 ‘...story composition.’ —> read ‘...story’s composition.’
page 187, line 8 ‘...vision experience.’ —> read ‘...visionary experience.’
page 194, line 19 ‘for’ —> read ‘from’
page 207, line 3 ‘...on the each...’ —> read ‘...on each...’
page 208, note 10, line 2, ‘Buddhism’ —> read ‘Buddhist’
page 211, line 22 ‘know’ —> read ‘known’
page 227, line 23 ‘Buddhas’ —> read ‘buddhas’
page 228, note 17, line 4 ‘...of the Buddhism...’ —> read ‘...of Buddhism...’
page 241, line 7 ‘...eventual attained...’ —> read ‘...eventually attained...’
page 244, line 15, ‘Dhanyākara’ —> read ‘Dhānyakaṭaka’
page 247, line 17 ‘...of the narration...’ —> read ‘...of narration...’
page 250, line 17 ‘29.6%’ —> read ‘30%’
page 256, line 16 ‘Dhanyākara’ —> read ‘Dhānyakaṭaka’

