The Origins of
Om Manipayde Hūṃ

A Study of the
Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra

Alexander Studholme
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OṂ MAṆIṆAḌME ḤŪṂ
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To my grandmother J. J. M. S. (1898–2002)
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# CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ix

INTRODUCTION
The Importance of *Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ* 1

CHAPTER 1
Background to the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* 9

CHAPTER 2
Purāṇic Influence on the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* 19

CHAPTER 3
Avalokiteśvara as the Buddhist Īśvara 37

CHAPTER 4
*Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ* and *Namaḥ Śivāya* 61

CHAPTER 5
*Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ* and the Mahāyāna 77

CHAPTER 6
The Meaning of *Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ* 105

CONCLUSION
The Original Six-Syllable Formula? 119

APPENDIX
Annotated Précis of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* 121

Notes 155

Bibliography 205

Index 215

Index to Appendix 221
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INTRODUCTION

The Importance of \textit{Om Mani padme Hum}

The six-syllable Buddhist formula \textit{Om Mani padme Hum} needs little introduction. Its form and meaning have long been discussed, though seldom, it must be said, with great accuracy, by European travelers to Tibet and its surrounding regions. In 1254, in what would appear to be the earliest such reference to the formula, the Franciscan friar William of Rubruck remarked of the Mongolians of Karakoram: “Wherever they go they have in their hands a string of one or two hundred beads, like our rosaries, and they always repeat these words, \textit{on mani baccam}, which is ‘God, thou knowest,’ as one of them interpreted it to me, and they expect as many rewards from God as they remember God in saying this.”

At the end of the twentieth century, following the Tibetan diaspora of the last forty years, the influence of \textit{Om Mani padme Hum} is no longer confined to the outer reaches of Central Asia. Just as the single syllable Om has become almost universally understood as a symbol of things both Indian and religious, so too has \textit{Om Mani padme Hum} begun to establish a place for itself in the popular consciousness of the West. That is to say, it is familiar not merely to Western Buddhists. Increasingly, as the formula appears in a wider and wider variety of different contexts, people with no obvious allegiance to Buddhism will admit to some sense of recognition at the sound or sight of the syllables \textit{Om Mani padme Hum}.

In Tibetan Buddhist culture, of course, the formula is ubiquitous: it is the most important mantra associated with the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, the Buddhist equivalent of the patron deity of Tibet. \textit{Om Mani padme Hum} is, to begin with, a prominent visual feature of the landscape, carved and painted onto the rocks that line a road or a path, written in huge letters high up on a hillside, or present in monumental form in the so-called \textit{mani}-walls (in Tibetan, \textit{mani gdong}) the glorified dry-stone walls that are constructed entirely out of rocks each inscribed with a sacred formula, which, as the name of these edifices would suggest, is most often \textit{Om Mani padme Hum}. \textit{Om Mani padme Hum} is also (with few exceptions) the formula that, in printed form, fills the “prayer wheels” (\textit{mani chos ’khor}) of the Tibetan religious
world. These are the cylinders or drums—sometimes large and sometimes small—which line the outside walls of monasteries and temples, waiting to be spun around by visitors, as well as the personal, hand-held contraptions, kept revolving by a gentle flicking of the wrist. Prayer wheels are also found, in different shapes and sizes, harnessed to the power of mountain streams, to the currents of hot air rising from butter lamps, and even, in modern times, to the flow of electric currents.³

The simple recitation of Om Mani Padme Hum, usually accompanied, as William of Rubruck observed, by the counting of prayer beads, is also the most popular religious practice of the Tibetan Buddhist system. The formula, it would be true to say, constitutes an essential part of the texture of Tibetan life. Its sound can be heard at any time of the day and in any kind of situation.² It is almost as if, as the following rather lyrical passage by the German Lama Govinda suggests, the Tibetan world is constantly humming with the subtle vibration of Avalokiteśvara’s six-syllable mantra. Govinda writes:

“The deep devotion with which this hopeful message was accepted and taken to heart by the people of Tibet is demonstrated by the innumerable rock-inscriptions and votive-stones on which the sacred formula of Avalokiteśvara is millionfold engraved. It is on the lips of all pilgrims, it is the last prayer of the dying and the hope of the living. It is the eternal melody of Tibet, which the faithful hears in the murmurings of brooks, in the thundering of waterfalls and in the howling of storms, just as it greets him from rocks and maṇi-stones, which accompany him everywhere, on wild caravan tracks and on lofty passes.”⁴

As well as being an essential component of the exoteric side of Tibetan religious life, Om Mani Padme Hum is also an important constituent of the more private or esoteric part of Tibetan religious practice. It would be practically impossible, for instance, to count every occasion on which the formula is used, incidentally, in the course of all the many different rites and rituals of Tibetan Buddhism.⁵ In general, however, the use of Om Mani Padme Hum is regarded not as an adjunct to other, more vital forms of religious procedure, but as a powerful means of spiritual development in its own right. It is a basic, foundational practice taught to children and beginners.⁶ Yet it is also a practice that not even the most advanced practitioner would ever wish to leave behind.⁷ Its recitation is one of the central pillars of the Tibetan religious system.⁸

In order to give a particular focus to this recitation, a large number of sādhana texts—step-by-step invocations of supernormal beings—connected to the formula were composed, each culminating in a concentrated session of the repetition of Om Mani Padme Hum in conjunction with the visualization of a
particular form of Avalokiteśvara. The Tibetan bsTan ’gyur contains a number of ʂaḍaksamra (or ʂaḍaksamra)—“six-syllable”—sadhanas. These works continued to be composed in Tibet long after the definitive creation of a fixed Tibetan Buddhist canon in the first part of the fourteenth century. But, possibly the most extraordinary and most mysterious application of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ is its use in the so-called Black Hat (zhva nag) ceremony of the Karma bKa’ brgyud school of Tibetan Buddhism, during which the Karmapa, the lama who sits at the head of that particular sect, is believed to manifest as a form of Avalokiteśvara while slowly reciting the six-syllable formula and while wearing a special black crown, given to the fifth Karmapa by the Chinese emperor at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

Finally, Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ plays another important role in Tibetan life as a mode of collective religious practice. On particular occasions and over the course of several days, people will gather together to recite the formula as many times as they are able. Again, though this is a form of practice which may be performed with regard to a variety of different mantras, the one most often used in this respect is, undoubtedly, Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ. I myself saw this activity going on while staying at the Tibetan refugee settlement at Clement Town in North India during the winter of 1992–93, when, at the time of the Tibetan New Year, everyone in the colony was encouraged to recite Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ. A large tent was set up in the forecourt of one of the three monasteries of the settlement precisely for this purpose and each person engaged in the practice was asked to keep a record of the number of recitations he or she had achieved, so that, at the end of the week, a grand total might be calculated and this number conveyed to Dharamsala, the seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile, where the blessings accumulated in the process might be dedicated to the well-being of the Dalai Lama. During this time, I would be woken, early each morning, by the sound of my landlord and his two young children busily muttering the formula. Later that year, in the course of a trip into Tibet itself, I discovered a group of people, mainly elderly, gathered in the courtyard of a temple in Lhasa occupied in precisely the same way, reciting Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ in order that the accumulated number of recitations might be sent to the Dalai Lama.

Given the great importance of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ in Tibetan Buddhism, an academic study devoted entirely to the history of the formula did not seem unwarranted. To this end, my original intention had been to trace the complete historical trajectory of the formula, from its original inception in India to its establishment as one of the linchpins of the Tibetan Buddhist system. Some preliminary research was, therefore, conducted into the avenues by which the formula reached Tibet from India and into the means by which it was subsequently promoted by the Tibetans themselves. However, it soon became apparent that the Kāraṇḍavyāha Sūtra, the earliest textual source for
any mention of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ and a text that has, hitherto, been largely overlooked by Western scholarship, does not just mention the formula in passing, but may, in fact, be seen as a work whose central concern is the dissemination of the formula. It seemed justifiable, then, to devote all my energies to an analysis of this sūtra, in order to see what this might reveal about the place of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ within the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism. What findings I managed to make on the later history of the formula are, occasionally, used in the support of this more modest project. Meanwhile, a complete history of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ must remain a thing of the future, involving as it would, the mastery of a wide range of Tibetan literary sources.

The first chapter of this book, then, introduces the reader to the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, discussing both the internal and external evidence for its likely date and place of origin and providing a brief survey of its treatment, to date, in Buddhist academic studies. A detailed, annotated précis of the sūtra, made from the Sanskrit edition of the text produced by P. L. Vaidya and published as part of the Mahāyāna Sūtra Saṅgṛaha by the Mithila Institute of Dharbanga in 1961, with reference, also, to the Tibetan version of the text found in the Peking edition of the bKa’ 'gyur, forms an appendix to the thesis. The making of this précis was, naturally, essential to my own analysis of the sūtra. It is, I believe, worthy of inclusion here not only because, without it, my own presentation and argument might seem a little obscure to a reader unfamiliar with the text, but also, because I hope it will be of some interest and use to scholars working in this field. No definitive Sanskrit edition of the Kāraṇḍavyūha has yet been produced—the language of the work is difficult and the text exists in a number of subtly different versions—putting a proper English translation of the sūtra beyond the scope of the present, historical study.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 set out to show that, from an historical point of view, the six-syllable formula Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ represents a Buddhist adaptation of the five-syllable Śaivite formula Namah Śivāya. Chapter 2 establishes, initially, that there is a strong connection between the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra and the non-Buddhist purānic tradition. The discussion dwells principally on an analysis of different versions of the vāmana-avatāra—the story of Viṣṇu’s incarnation as a dwarf—found both in the sūtra and in various different purāṇas. The Kāraṇḍavyūha, the chapter concludes, seems to have been written in a religious milieu in which Śiva was the dominant god, complemented harmoniously by the other great purānic deity Viṣṇu. More specifically, it is argued, the evidence suggests that there may be a particular relationship between the sūtra and the Śaivite Skanda Purāṇa.

Chapter 3 shows that, in the Kāraṇḍavyūha, Avalokiteśvara appears as an īśvara (lord) and puruṣa (cosmic man or person) in the mold of the two
great purānic deities. In keeping with the findings of the previous chapter, though, certain details of this conception of the bodhisattva betray a distinctively Śaivite, rather than Vaiśnavite, influence. We discuss the way in which this presentation of the bodhisattva is tailored to the demands of accepted Buddhist doctrine and integrated with the roles and attributes of Avalokiteśvara already established in earlier Mahāyāna sūtras. The chapter ends by tracing the evolution of the bodhisattva, from his first appearance under the original name of Avalokitasvara as an attendant of the Buddhas Amitābha and Śākyamuni, to his emergence as the supreme Buddhist tīrvana.

Chapter 4 examines the similarities—and differences—between the treatment of Oṁ Maṁipadme Hūṃ in the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra and the treatment of Namāḥ Śivāya in Śaivite texts (principally the Skanda Purāṇa and Śiva Purāṇa). Both the five- and the six-syllable formulae are presented as the hṛdaya, or “heart,” of their respective tīrvaras. Both are said to be sui generis methods of attaining liberation. Both are promoted as forms of practice that are available to everyone, regardless of social or religious status. At the same time, both are shown to be somewhat secret and difficult to obtain. Furthermore, just as Namāḥ Śivāya is explicitly presented as a developed form of the Vedic pranava Oṁ, so too is Oṁ Maṁipadme Hūṃ described in terms that indicate that it, too, is to be regarded as a kind of pranava. The presentation of Namāḥ Śivāya, however, is illustrated in the purāṇas by a story about the marriage between a king and queen, presupposing, I suggest, an understanding of the Śaivite formula in terms of the doctrine of sākṣti, the energetic, female dimension of the male deity. Such a story is noticeably absent in the sūtra.

Chapter 5 argues that the treatment of Oṁ Maṁipadme Hūṃ in the Kāraṇḍavyūha represents the reconfiguration, by the Mahāyāna monastic establishment, of a practice first propagated by lay Buddhist tantric practitioners. The sūtra is clearly written from the monastic point of view. Instead of a story about an (eventually) happy marriage, the sūtra’s long section on Oṁ Manipadme Hūṃ is prefaced by a story about the shipwreck of the seafaring king Śimhala and his subsequent escape from the clutches of a band of rākṣasts, man-eating demonesses, who are disguised as beautiful women—a tale more obviously in tune with the monastic temperament. More conclusively, the end of the sūtra also includes a teaching on monastic discipline, laying heavy emphasis on the importance of preventing non-celibate practitioners from making their homes in the monastery. Yet, the preceptor who grants initiation into the use of Oṁ Manipadme Hūṃ is said to be married. The characteristics of this man are those of an antinomian, free-living tantric yogin. This reading is supported by an association made, in the sūtra, between Oṁ Manipadme Hūṃ and the idea of the vidyādhara, the “holder of knowledge,” a figure almost synonymous with the mahāsiddha, the archetypal tantric practitioner.
The presentation of *Om Mani padme Hum* in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, it seems, describes the adaptation of a practice that originated in tantric circles to the doctrinal and ethical framework of Mahāyāna monasticism.

Doctrinally, then, the sūtra is the result of a process of creative religious synthesis. Significantly, for example, *Om Mani padme Hum* is presented in a number of different ways as analogous to the Perfection of Wisdom and, finally, as greater than the Perfection of Wisdom. This would appear to express the idea that *Om Mani padme Hum*, as a form of the *pranava*, supercedes the Perfection of Wisdom as the supreme principle of the Mahāyāna. Then, certain aspects of the tantric-style origins of the formula are preserved. Initiation into the use of *Om Mani padme Hum*, for instance, is said to be dependent on the use of a tantric-style maṇḍala. However, the central figure of this maṇḍala is not Avalokiteśvara, but the Buddha Amitābha. This is symbolic of the fact that the concise formula of Avalokiteśvara is now located within a Mahāyāna doctrinal system in which rebirth in Sukhāvatī, the pure land of Amitābha, is the overarching religious goal and, also, of the fact that the use of the formula is now to be understood as one of the many Mahāyāna practices that are believed to lead to this goal. Recitation of *Om Mani padme Hum* is no longer presented as a means of engagement with the *sakti* of the tīṣṭara, but is reconfigured as a form of the traditional Mahāyāna practice of the *nāmanusmṛti*, or “bringing to mind the name,” of Avalokiteśvara, commonly associated with the goal of Sukhāvatī.

The sūtra manages to avoid, almost entirely, any allusion to the conception of the concise formula as *sakti*. This, I suggest, is deliberate. With its sexual connotations, the characteristically tantric doctrine of *sakti* is perhaps not best suited to the training of monastic practitioners. Instead, the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* roots the use of *Om Mani padme Hum* in a scheme borrowed from the *bhakti*, or “devotional,” side of the purāṇic tradition. Recitation of the formula is said to lead to rebirth in worlds contained within the hair pores of Avalokiteśvara’s body. This is a reworking, I suggest, of a doctrine classically expressed in chapter eleven of the *Bhagavadgītā*. There, Arjuna “sees” (*paśyati*) a cosmic form of the *tīṣṭara* Kṛṣṇa that contains the whole universe and is then taught the doctrine of *bhakti* as a means of making this experience his own. By the time the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* was constructed, of course, the theology of the *Bhagavadgītā* was common to both the Vaishnavite and the Śaivite tradition alike. The so-called *Īśvaragītā* of the *Kārma Purāṇa*, for instance, presents a Śaivite version of the teaching.

In the sūtra, the cosmic form of the Buddhist *tīṣṭara* is expressed anew in Mahāyāna terms. The amazing attributes of Avalokiteśvara’s body mimic those of Samantabhadra, the great bodhisattva of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, a debt that the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* explicitly acknowledges by alluding several times to Samantabhadra and even, at one point, describing a kind of duel—a *samādhi*
contest (samañdhivigraha)—between the two bodhisattvas, which Avalokiteśvara, naturally, wins. Just as the Bhagavadgītā promotes bhakti, through the use of the Vedic praṇava Oṁ, as a means of entering the vision of the Vaishnavite tīvra, so the Kāraṇḍavyūha promotes the nāmānusmṛti of the Buddhist praṇava Oṁ Manipadme Hūṁ as a means of entering the vision of the Buddhist tīvra. The vision of the cosmic Avalokiteśvara is itself assimilated with the central Mahāyāna doctrine of Sukhāvatī, when this manifestation of the bodhisattva is said, in the sūtra, to lead beings to Amitābha’s pure land: the purāṇic doctrine of “seeing” (darśana) the tīvra is syncretized with the Mahāyāna doctrine of rebirth in the Buddha’s pure land.

Finally, chapter 6 turns to the vexed issue of the meaning of the six-syllable formula. The true meaning of Oṁ Manipadme Hūṁ, it is argued, reflects this syncretism. The middle four syllables of the mantra, “manipadme,” are not, as has been variously suggested, to be translated as the (grammatically unfeasible) “jewel (maṇi) in the lotus (padme)” or even as the vocative “(O thou) with the jewel and lotus,” but as the locative compound “in the jewel-lotus,” or “in the lotus made of jewels.” Variations of the same brief phrase are used, throughout the Mahāyāna, to describe the manner in which a person is said to appear in Sukhāvatī or in the pure lands in general. The image given in the sūtras is that of a practitioner seated cross-legged in the calyx of a lotus flower made of jewels, which then unfolds its petals to reveal the splendour of one or other of the pure lands. The formula, therefore, the hṛdaya, or “heart,” of Avalokiteśvara, the Buddhist tīvra, is also an expression of the aspiration to be reborn in Sukhāvatī.

In conclusion, then, the question remains open as to whether Oṁ Manipadme Hūṁ was, in fact, the original six-syllable formula of Avalokiteśvara or whether this particular form, which meshes so well with the overall design of the Mahāyāna sūtras, replaced an earlier mantra, used in the period before the incorporation of this doctrine into the Mahāyāna system, which has now been forgotten. The possible identity of such a mantra is considered.
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CHAPTER 1

Background to the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra

There are two separate and quite distinct versions of the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, one in prose and another in verse. With respect to editions kept, respectively, at the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Société Asiatique in Paris,¹ the one is a text of sixty-seven leaves, or one hundred and thirty-four pages, comprising two sections (nirvyūha) of sixteen and twelve chapters (prakaraṇa),² while the other is a very much longer work of one hundred and eighty-five leaves or three hundred and ninety pages, containing about four thousand five hundred verses (śloka), composed mainly in the thirty-two-syllable anustubh meter,³ in a total of eighteen chapters.

Neither version should be confused with a work by the name of the Ratnakāraṇḍa that appears in the Tibetan canon, translated by a certain Rinchen 'Tshos bsgyur. This is an entirely different text, consisting mainly of a discussion of moral and doctrinal matters in connection with the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. This work, the Ratnakāraṇḍa, or a very similar one, whose title is translated as Ratnakāraṇḍavyūha, is also to be found in the Chinese canon, translated once in 270 C.E. by Dharmaraksita and again, sometime between 435 and 468 C.E., by Gunabhadra.⁴

The Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, which is the concern of this thesis, is almost wholly devoted to the glorification of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, as is made clear by the full title sometimes given to the work: Avalokiteśvaraguna-kāraṇḍavyūha.⁵ This might provisionally be translated as “The Magnificent Array, (Contained in a) Casket of the Qualities of Avalokiteśvara.” A discussion of this translation of the title of the sūtra follows.

In a recent English translation of the two Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtras, Luis Gomez renders the term vyūha as the “magnificent display” of the wondrous qualities of the land of Sukhāvatī.⁶ This meaning might easily be attached to the use of the term in the titles of other Mahāyāna works.⁷ Vyūha, though, is also used in the Vaiṣṇavite tradition to signify both the “successive emanations” of Viṣṇu, as well as part of the “essential nature” of the god.⁸ In actual fact, the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra does, as we shall see, share many of the characteristics of the Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite purāṇas and does describe a succession
of different appearances by Avalokiteśvara (as an asura, as a brahmin, as a bee and as a flying horse) comparable to the different manifestations of Viṣṇu. It seems possible, therefore, that the vyūha of the sūtra is also being used with the Vaiśṇavite sense in mind. “Magnificent array,” then, is perhaps better than “magnificent display.”

The term kāraṇḍa, in this particular context, has usually been translated as “basket.” It might, though, be better to choose a word that conveys a sense of greater solidity and gravitas. Monier Monier-Williams also offers “covered box of bamboo wicker work.” P. C. Majumder suggests “casket.” The latter translation certainly befits the way in which the related term karaṇḍaka is employed in the Prajñāpāramitā literature. In his Materials for a Dictionary of the Prajñāpāramitā Literature, Edward Conze also translates this term as “basket” (he makes no mention of kāraṇḍa). However, the passages in which the word occurs indicate that it describes a container used for keeping relics, an object that it seems more natural to call a “casket.” In the Aṣṭasāhasrika, for instance, the effect of placing a wishing-jewel (cintāmaṇi) in a karaṇḍaka is compared to the way in which the Prajñāpāramitā pervades the relics of the Tathāgata. The karaṇḍaka, in this context, is said to be “an object of supreme longing,” which “emits radiance” and which “should be paid homage to.”

The Tibetan rendering of Kāraṇḍavyūha is Za ma tog bkod pa'i mdo, where za ma tog also seems to refer to a kind of casket. The term appears, for instance, in the Tshig gsum gnad du brdeg pa, or “The Three Statements That Strike the Essential Points,” a gter ma, or “discovered” text of the rNying ma, or “Old,” school of Tibetan Buddhism, dating from the late thirteenth or early-fourteenth century. The text is said to be the last testament of the early rDzogs Chen master dGa' rab rDorje, comprising an oral commentary on the rDo rje'i tshig gsum, or “three vajra verses.” The three verses themselves, we read, were written in melted lapis luzuli on gold, fell from the sky into the palm of dGa’ rab rDorje’s disciple Mañjuśrīmitra and were then put into a tiny thumbnail-sized vessel, which itself was then “placed within a casket,” or za ma tog, “of precious crystal” (rin po che shel gyi za ma tog sen gang ba cig snod du babs pa). There is no such thing, surely, as a “basket” made of crystal.

The Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, then is a “casket” containing the “magnificent array” of the manifestations and works of Avalokiteśvara. The implication of this title is that the sūtra is comparable, in its function, to a relic casket, which may then be made an object of homage. This is consistent with the fact that the sūtra, in the manner of the earlier Prajñāpāramitā sūtras and other Mahāyāna works, refers to itself as something to be set up and worshipped. At the end of a passage in which Avalokiteśvara is said to teach the Kāraṇḍavyūha to the asuras, the sūtra is compared to a wish-fulfilling jewel (cintāmaṇi). The asuras are then said to turn with happiness towards it, to listen to it, to develop faith towards it, to understand it, to write it, to have it written, to
Background to the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra*  

memorize it and to recite it, to worship it (*pājāyīṣyanti*), to explain it in full to others (*parebhyaśca vistāreṇa samprakāśāyīṣyanti*), to meditate on it (*bhāvayīṣyanti*) and to bow to it (*namaskūrvanti*) with great joy, respect and devotion.\(^{16}\)

The longer verse *Kāraṇḍavyūha* is later than the prose version, probably by as much as a thousand years. In the opinion of Giuseppe Tucci, this verse text is representative of the worst kind of Mahāyāna sūtra. It adds little of note to the prose, he writes, and exemplifies the somewhat banal tendency within Mahāyāna Buddhism to rejoice in the simple virtue of the prolixity of a work, not exactly for its own sake, but for the sake of the increased amount of merit earned by those who wrote, read, or recited it.\(^{17}\) The greater part of this padding out process is achieved by the addition of certain passages from the *Sīksāsamuccaya* and of almost half of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. These are both works that have been attributed to the Indian master Śāntideva, who is said to have lived in the eighth century.\(^{18}\) This, as we shall see, would be enough to show that the verse *Kāraṇḍavyūha* is the later text, as the earliest known manuscripts of the prose sūtra have been dated to a time no later than the early part of the seventh century C.E.

The most significant evidence supporting the much later date of the verse sūtra, however, is the number of striking similarities between it and a Nepalese work, the *Svayāṃbhūpurāṇa*, which scholars agree was composed around the middle of the second millennium. The most obvious of these similarities, as Tucci points out, is the fact that both works are framed by similar extended prologues and epilogues. These consist of dialogues between, first, a Buddhist sage named Jayaśrī and a king named Jinaśrī, and, second, between the great Buddhist emperor Aśoka and his Buddhist preceptor Upagupta. Both this prologue and this epilogue are entirely absent from the prose sūtra.\(^{19}\)

The *Svayāṃbhūpurāṇa* survives today in several different recensions. This, as Tucci remarks, compounds the difficulty of deciding whether the debt of influence is owed by it to the verse *Kāraṇḍavyūha* or vice versa, or even if the two works have borrowed from a third, unknown source.\(^{20}\) Both works are popular in Nepal. Despite the usual association of the purāṇas with the non-Buddhist religious traditions, the *Svayāṃbhūpurāṇa* is, in fact, a Buddhist work. There is some reason to believe that it was originally referred to as an *uddeśa*, or “teaching,” a word more commonly associated with Buddhist texts.\(^{21}\) The content of the work, though, is actually more akin to that of a *mahātmya*, a sort of guide for pilgrims, describing the holiness of certain important shrines and temples, in this instance, chiefly, the Svayāṃbhū, or “self-existent,” temple in the Kathmandu Valley.

At one point, however, the verse *Kāraṇḍavyūha* elaborates on a section in the prose sūtra, in which various gods are said to be produced from different
parts of the body of Avalokiteśvara. The verse sūtra adds, is an emanation of the Ādibuddha, or “primordial buddha,” a term that is explicitly said to be synonymous with Svayāmbhū and Ādīnātha, “primordial lord.” It seems reasonable to suggest, then, that the verse Kārāṇḍavyūha was composed as an adjunct to the Svayāmbhūpurāṇa, as part of a process synthesizing the cult of Avalokiteśvara with the cult of the Svayāmbhū. The sūtra, therefore, seems likely to be the later of the two works.

The oldest surviving manuscript of the Svayāmbhūpurāṇa is considered to have been created in 1557 or 1558. The present scholarly consensus, however, is that the very first version of the text was composed in the fourteenth century. David Gellner writes that it probably dates from the period of king Jayasthitimalla, the ruler of the Kathmandu Valley between 1382–1395. John K. Locke concludes, too, that the text belongs to the late Malla period. Allowing a certain interval, then, between the creation of the Svayāmbhūpurāṇa and that of the verse Kārāṇḍavyūha, we may perhaps conclude that the latter was composed not long after the beginning of the fifteenth century. Siegfried Lienhard suggests that it was written in the sixteenth century.

The fact that the verse sūtra is later than the prose is also supported by the linguistic character of the two texts. The Sanskrit of the verse text, despite the inclusion of some peculiarly Buddhist vocabulary, is written in almost pure classical Sanskrit, a considerable stylistic refinement of the prose text. The prose sūtra is written in a form of hybrid Sanskrit. F. Edgerton, for instance, includes the prose text in his third class of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit. Constantin Régamey comments: “According to the more detailed classification of John Brough, the [prose] Kārāṇḍavyūha would present the characteristics of the late Avadāna style and of the medieval Buddhist Sanskrit, frequent in tantric works, though not confined to them.”

The earliest existent copies of the prose Kārāṇḍavyūha Sūtra belong to the collection of Buddhist texts unearthed, during the 1940s, in a stūpa, situated three miles outside the town of Gilgit in northern Kashmir. Fragments of two different manuscripts of the sūtra have been identified amongst this find. These are both written in much the same type of script, which, according to the expert palæographic analysis conducted on one of these texts, became obsolete around 630 C.E. It is less easy to gauge when the sūtra was actually composed: this must remain, for the time being, a matter of some conjecture. In 1955, Nalinaksha Dutt, without giving any grounds to substantiate his opinion, stated simply that the sūtra is “of about the fourth century.” Such an estimate, however, would seem to be broadly supported by Adelheid Mette, who has recently produced an edition of the Gilgit fragments of the text. Where these fragments correspond, Mette observes, their wording is not always identical, indicating that the history of the text tradition had
begun much earlier. She writes: “Many of the seeming peculiarities of language are due to corruption which, perhaps already in the fifth or sixth century A.D., affected a formerly more correct Sanskrit text.”

This view would also be compatible with another aspect of the Kāraṇḍavyūha, namely, that it is representative of that stratum of Buddhist literature in which the categories of sūtra and tantra are somewhat blurred. The work is, as its name declares, very obviously a sūtra, laying great stress, for instance, on the central Mahāyāna doctrine of rebirth in Sukhāvatī. However, the promotion of the formula Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ, together with other features of the text such as the use of a maṇḍala, the role of a guru figure and the motif of the conversion of Śiva to Buddhadharma are all more characteristic of the tantra genre.

Following a discussion of this issue by the fifteenth century Tibetan lama mKhas grub rje, David Snellgrove cites three works in which the forms of sūtra and tantra seem to overlap: the Suvarṇaprabhāsā Sūtra, which includes a presentation, common in the tantras, of a fivefold arrangement of buddhas and long sections on the use of mantras, the Mañjuśrīrūmālakalpa Tantra, sections of which refer to themselves as sūtra, and the Sarvatathāgatatattvasamgraha Tantra, which, similarly, is said to be a sūtra in the colophon of its Sanskrit manuscript. This list is, of course, by no means exhaustive. However, while these texts were, subsequently, classified as tantras by the Tibetans, the Kāraṇḍavyūha has, as far as I can tell, always remained a sūtra. In this respect, it might be grouped alongside texts such as the late Prajñāpāramitā works, the Prajñāpāramitā Hṛdaya, or “Heart Sūtra,” and the Svālpaṃśarā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra. Despite their propogation of such well-known formulae as, respectively, Gate Gate Pāragate Pārasamgate Bodhi Svāhā and Oṃ Mune Mune Mahāmunaye Svāhā, these last two texts have generally—though not always—been regarded as sūtras. mKhas grub rje, for instance, writes that it seems reasonable that the Svālpaṃśarā should belong to the “mantra” category and that some assert that the Hṛdaya should also belong to the same category.

The dating of these texts, too, is a matter of informed guesswork. Snellgrove, for instance, implies that the Mañjuśrīrūmālakalpa was written in the fifth century, N. Dutt (suggesting that the text postdates the Kāraṇḍavyūha) the sixth century, and Yukei Matsunaga, in a more recent study, the seventh century. The tantric-hued Prajñāpāramitā texts are probably earlier than this. Conze suggests a fourth century date for the Hṛdaya and Svālpaṃśarā. Sounding a more definite note, R. E. Emmerick reports that, while the earliest surviving Sanskrit manuscript of the Suvarṇaprabhāsā can be no earlier than the middle of the fifth century, a more primitive version of the text seems to have been used by its first Chinese translator Dharmakṣema, a figure who arrived in China in 414 C.E. In the company of such texts, a late
fourth century or, perhaps, early-fifth century date for the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra*, does not, then, seem unreasonable.

This dating would, furthermore, be consistent with the traditional account of the earliest appearance of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* in Tibet. The text is said to have been one of the first two Buddhist works ever to have reached the Land of Snows during the reign of Lha tho tho ri, arriving either (depending on which account you read) in a casket which fell from the sky onto the roof of the king’s palace, or in the hands of missionaries from the country of Li, modern day Khotan. King Lha tho tho ri, said to have been born five generations before the first of the three great Tibetan religious monarchs, Srong btsan sgam po, who died in 650 C.E., is deemed to have lived some time between the end of the fourth and the end of the fifth century.

This putative connection with missionaries from Khotan would also fit in with the most likely place of origin of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*. The text makes one mention of the Indian province of Magadha, where Avalokiteśvara is said to bring an end to a twenty year famine. It also refers several times to the city of Vāraṇaṣi, itself situated on the borders of that province, where Avalokiteśvara is said to manifest in the form of a bee, where the preceptor, who grants initiation into the practice of *Om Maṇipadme Hūṃ*, is said to live, and where those who abuse the customs of the *Samgha* are said to be reborn as the lowliest creatures living on filth. I do not think, however, that we can conclude from these references that the sūtra was composed in the region of either Magadha or of Vāraṇaṣi. Much of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* reflects a close interaction between Buddhism and Śaivism. The use of Vāraṇaṣi, the great Śaivite city, as the backdrop to the drama of the sūtra, may surely be seen simply as a symbolic means of acknowledging the confluence of the two traditions. Similarly, the use of Magadha as a location for the action of the sūtra may merely be a way of linking the activity of Avalokiteśvara to the holy land of northeast India.

It seems more likely that the sūtra originated in Kashmir. The evidence for this, I must admit, is rather slim and highly circumstantial. First, the earliest manuscripts of the sūtra were found, at Gilgit, in Kashmir. Second, Kashmir is strongly associated with the development of Śaivite tantra and the influences of both Śaivism and of tantric-style practice are, it will be argued, strongly apparent in the sūtra. Third, as we shall see, the sūtra gives Avalokiteśvara some of the characteristics of Samantabhadra, the great bodhisattva of the *Avatāmsaka Sūtra*, a work whose origins are associated with the Central Asian regions bordering Kashmir. Finally, it is not very far from Kashmir to Khotan, from whence the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* may first have reached Tibet.

Scholars working in the first part of this century would have been resistant to the idea of a late fourth or early-fifth century date for the sūtra. They
would, similarly, have been surprised to learn that the Gilgit manuscripts of
the text were attributed to a period no later than the beginning of the seventh
century. Their preconceptions would even have been disturbed by an exami-
nation of various editions of the Tibetan canon, where the prose Kāraṇḍavyāha
is clearly shown to have been one of the many texts brought to the Land of
Snows during the first great period of Buddhist transmission, that is, at the
end of the eighth century. In the colophons of the Derge and Lhasa editions
of the bKa’gyur, the translators of the work are named as Jinamitra, Dānaśīla,
and Ye shes sde, all of whom are well-known figures from that time.54 A third
colophon lists different translators,55 Śākyaprabha and Ratnakṛṣṭa, who may
also have been working at that time: one Śākyaprabha is said, in Tāranātha’s
early seventeenth-century History of Buddhism in India, to be a contemporary
of Dānaśīla’s.56 The prose Kāraṇḍavyāha is also listed in a Tibetan catalog of
translated Buddhist texts, the sTong Thang ldan dKar, or “White Cheek of the
Empty Plain,” which was probably compiled in 812 c.e.57

For up until the 1940s, western Buddhistic scholars had consigned the
Kāraṇḍavyāha Sūtra to an imaginary corpus of late, “corrupted” Mahāyāna
literature, belonging to the ninth or tenth century.58 Linguistically, according
to Régamey, there were good reasons for thinking that the work was written
towards the end of the first millenium c.e.59 Also, the only known manuscripts
were of Nepalese origin, the earliest of which came from the twelfth century.
On top of that, the Chinese translation of the sūtra, by T’ien Si Tsai, did not
take place until as late as 983 c.e.60 (The verse sūtra is not found in Chinese
translation, a fact which is quite in accord with the probability that it was not
written until the fifteenth or sixteenth century. It is, likewise, not found in
Tibetan translation, having, almost certainly, yet to have come into existence
by the time the Tibetan bKa’gyur was first compiled by Bu ston in 1322.)

Another factor taken to support a late ninth or tenth century date for the
sūtra was the absence of any copy of the work and, it seemed, of any mention
of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ, from among the hoard of manuscripts collected from
the Silk Road oasis town of Tun Huang, whose libraries were sealed up in the
ten century.61 In 1979, however, Yoshiro Imaeda announced that the formula
(slightly altered as Oṃ ma ni pad me hūṃ myi tra sva ha, Oṃ ma ma ni pad
me hum mye, and Oṃ ma ma ni pad me hum myi) did, in fact, appear in
three different Tun Huang manuscripts. These are all versions of the same
text, a treatise known as the Dug gsum ’dul ba, or “The Purification of the
Three Poisons,” which describes how a dead person may be prevented from
taking an unfavourable rebirth by the practice, performed by relatives on his
or her behalf, of purifying (’dul ba) the three poisons (dug gsum) of greed,
hatred, and delusion. Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ (or its approximation) is associ-
ated in this text with the activity of Avalokiteśvara and is said to purify the
third poison of delusion.62 It remains a mystery, however, as to why the six-
The Origins of ❮Om Mani Padme Hum❯

The syllable formula is only found in these semicorrupted and elaborated forms and why no copy of the Kāraṇḍavyūha has been found in the hoard of sūtras and tantras discovered at Tun Huang. The caves, after all, contain a painting (executed in 836 C.E.) of the thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara, an iconographic form that is, as we shall see, central to the dogmatic purpose of the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra.

Nonetheless, this mistaken assumption that the Kāraṇḍavyūha was such a very late and, by implication, such a very heterodox Mahāyāna sūtra was probably the principal cause of a distinct lack of scholarly interest in the text. The number of academic articles on the sūtra remains small: there are four by Régamey, three on linguistic peculiarities and one on the Vaiṣṇavite and Śaivite influences discernible in the sūtra; one by Tucci, editing short passages from the verse sūtra and pointing out its connection to the Svayamabhūpurāṇa; one by Majumder on the verse sūtra that does little more than give a short précis of its contents; one by Jeremiah P. Losty on a twelfth-century Indian manuscript of the sūtra, and, lastly, a piece by Siegfried Lienhard focusing on an obscure lexicological detail. More recently, Adelheid Mette has published her edition of the Gilgit fragments (including a brief introduction to the text) and another short article on the history of the text. And that, apart from the cursory treatment given to the sūtra in the early literary surveys of Eugène Burnouf and Maurice Winternitz, is that.

No critical edition has been made of either the prose or the verse version of the Sanskrit text. Tucci seemed to have abandoned his ambition to edit the verse sūtra as soon as he had discovered it added little of value to the shorter prose version. The lack of a critical edition of the prose text is also explained, to some extent, by the difficulty and obscurity of much of the language and the many inconsistencies found between the different manuscripts. The sheer volume of these documents attests to the great popularity of the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra in Nepal. Scholars have long been familiar with Nepalese manuscripts in the libraries of Calcutta, Cambridge, London, Munich, Oxford, Paris, and Tokyo. But, as Mette adds, a team of German scholars has recently photographed more than one hundred and twenty additional Nepalese manuscripts, “some of them very early.” Jean Przyluski began, but never managed to complete, an edition of the Sanskrit prose version, using three manuscripts available to him in Paris at the time. Similarly, Régamey was prevented by illness from producing editions of the prose and verse versions of the sūtra. A complete edition of the Tibetan text was, however, completed by Lalou, who consulted a number of different recension of the bKa’gyur, as well as the Chinese tradition. This remains unpublished.

The most well-known edition of the Kāraṇḍavyūha, that of Satyavrata Sāmaśrami, first published for the Hindu Commentator in Calcutta in 1873 and based on a late-twelfth-century Nepalese manuscript, cannot be regarded
as “critical.” Reproduced by the Mithila Institute at Darbhanga in 1961, it is described by its editor P. L. Vaidya as “very corrupt.” Régamey pronounces it “noncritical” and “very peculiar”: its readings differ in almost every line from the majority of manuscripts. Moreover, Régamey writes, it is impossible to know to what degree these readings are based on a particular (and obviously very corrupt) manuscript or whether they represent Vaidya’s own emendations. This is also Mette’s view: “It seems that Vaidya too has altered the text, but without consulting any further manuscripts.”

This, however, for convenience’s sake, is the edition which I have used in order to produce a précis of the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra. I have also referred to the Tibetan translation of the text found in the Peking bKā’ gyur. There exists no published translation of the sūtra in any modern European language. I have, though, been able to consult a handwritten French translation of the sūtra, made by Eugène Burnouf in 1837. I cannot pretend, however, to have made any more than the occasional, fairly rudimentary comparison between the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of the text. Nor have I referred in any great detail to the recent edition of the Gilgit fragments prepared by Mette. The first Gilgit text, Mette remarks, shows some slight differences between the later Nepalese versions, but corresponds “on the whole,” as regards content and length. Fortunately, for present purposes, these fragments do include parts of the section of the sūtra devoted to the subject of the six-syllable formula, where the mantra’s form is unambiguously confirmed as: “Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ.”

The Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, then, on the balance of the available evidence, is a work that was composed in Kashmir at around the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century C.E. In the following chapter, we begin our examination of the different religious influences brought to bear on the construction of the text.
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CHAPTER 2

Purānic Influence on the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra

In his study, published in 1971, of the various Vaiṣṇavite and Śaivite motifs found in the Kāraṇḍavyūha, Constantin Régamey suggested that there was a definite link between the sūtra and the purāṇas, the name given to those non-Buddhist texts that, together with the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana, underpin the so-called mytho-epic period of Indian religion. Meaning literally “belonging to old or ancient times,” the purāṇas contain a great variety of different types of religious teaching, mixing discourses on philosophy, theology and doctrine with history, myth, and fable.

Régamey’s conclusion was largely based on his discovery that a verse couplet from the sūtra was almost the exact replica of a couplet found in the Śaivite Skanda Purāṇa. The verse itself is a concise statement of the doctrine of the liṅga, the central, phallic symbol of the Śaivite cult and might be translated into English as: “It is said that space is (his) liṅga and the earth his pedestal. He is the ground of all and is called liṅga because all beings dissolve into him.” The Kāraṇḍavyūha is denigrating this doctrine: the verse is said, in the sūtra, to be uttered by “the foolish common people” (adrśapṛthajānēsu sattvesu). A comparison of the two versions shows that the only differences between the Buddhist and non-Buddhist presentations are one word and one syllable. In the sūtra, we find:

\[
\text{ākāśāṁ liṅgam ity āhuḥ prthivī tasya ṗṭhiḥkā}
\text{ālayah sarvabhūtvānāṁ tīyanāl liṅgam ucye}t
\]

and in the purāṇa:

\[
\text{ākāśāṁ liṅgam ity āhuḥ prthivī tasya ṗṭhiḥkā}
\text{ālayah sarvadevānāṁ lāyanāl liṅgam ucye}
\]

The Kāraṇḍavyūha replaces the word devānāṃ, “gods,” with bhūtvānāṁ, “beings,” expressing a more inclusive view of the domain of the liṅga’s creative power. It also changes lāyanāl to tīyanāl, a unique Buddhist hybrid word
derived, like the other, from the Sanskrit root \textit{lt-}, “to dissolve.” This, according to Régamey, because of its closer phonetic resemblance to the word \textit{līṅga}, provides a more satisfying folk etymology than the more orthodox Sanskrit word.\footnote{This close similarity, then, between a verse from the sūtra and a verse from the \textit{Skanda Purāṇa}, Régamey decides, is proof that sources for the \textit{Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra} are to be sought among the purāṇas. We might, to begin with, wish to be a little more cautious. In reproducing what was, in all likelihood, a fairly common definition of the word \textit{līṅga}, the sūtra simply reveals that it springs from a Śaivite-influenced religious milieu.}

In a recent survey of the purāṇas, Ludo Rocher remarks only that these texts “have a number of points in common with Buddhist literature.”\footnote{Rocher omits Winternitz’s comment that, “by reason of the boundless exaggerations but also on account of the extravagance in the praise of \textit{bhakti},” parts of the \textit{Mahāvastu}, a non-Mahāyāna work describing the life and past lives of the Buddha, as well as Mahāyāna sūtras such as the \textit{Saddharma-puṇḍarīka} and the \textit{Kāraṇḍavyūha} itself, “remind us of the sectarian purāṇas.” He might, too, have added that the use of stories and myths in works such as the \textit{Lalitavistara}, the \textit{Mahāvastu} and the \textit{Divyāvadāna} (part of the vinaya corpus of the Mūlasarvāstivādins) is also reminiscent of the purānic tradition. The same might be said for the \textit{Kāraṇḍavyūha} itself.}

In a recent survey of the purāṇas, Ludo Rocher remarks only that these texts “have a number of points in common with Buddhist literature.”\footnote{In the Pali canon, he notes, the \textit{jātaka} tales detailing the previous lives of Śākyamuni Buddha “often treat material very similar to those of the purāṇas.” The \textit{Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa}, a Mahāyāna sūtra which, like the \textit{Kāraṇḍavyūha}, also contains tantric-style material, contains prophetic history similar in character to the history found in some of the purāṇas. The \textit{Lalitavistara}, the Mahāyāna sūtra detailing the life of Śākyamuni Buddha, refers to itself, as Maurice Winternitz also observed, as a purāṇa. There is only one major work in Buddhist literature, Rocher adds, that actually bears the name purāṇa in its title. This is the \textit{Svayaṃbhūpurāṇa}, the \textit{mahātmya} of the sacred places of Nepal, which, as we have seen, shares certain features with the verse \textit{Kāraṇḍavyūha}. But, both these works, as we have seen, are so late that any remarks made about them cannot be said to shed any light on the putative influence of the purāṇas on the original prose sūtra.}

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The story found in the sūtra, for instance, about the shipwreck of king Simhala and his team of five hundred merchants bears some resemblance to one of the central episodes of the \textit{Rāmāyaṇa}. In the sūtra, Simhala is helped to safety by Bālāha, the magical flying horse, from the \textit{rākṣast} inhabitants of an island, also known as Simhala. In the \textit{Rāmāyaṇa}, Sītā is rescued by Rāma from the monstrous Rāvaṇa and the \textit{rākṣasts} of Laṅkā, an island traditionally referred to as Simhala Dvīpa, “the island of Simhala.” These similarities are, however, only really significant enough to show that the sūtra is connected to a very broad, pan-Indian tradition of storytelling. The main elements of the
two tales—the idea of an offshore island inhabited by demons and the danger of being shipwrecked there—are almost archetypal. The story of Simhala as found in the Kāraṇḍavyūha may, in fact, be accounted for purely in terms of the Buddhist tradition. The tale also appears, as Lienhard points out, as one of the Pali jātakas, as part of the Mahāvastu and as part of the Divyāvadāna. The same basic theme is also reproduced in the Saddharmopuṇḍarīka Sūtra, where those who have set off onto the ocean in search of treasure and who have been blown onto the shore of rākṣasts are among those who are said to be protected by calling on the name of Avalokiteśvara.

Another chapter in the Kāraṇḍavyūha, however, looks very much more like the actual reworking of a purānic story. Avalokiteśvara, at one point, is said to appear in the realm of the gods in the form of the brahmin beggar Sukuṇḍala. One of the gods, being asked for alms by Sukuṇḍala, tells him that he has nothing to give. Sukuṇḍala replies that the god must give him something. When the god enters his palace, he discovers that his vessels have been miraculously filled with jewels, delicious food, and fine clothes. He then invites Sukuṇḍala inside to share in these things. This is then the cue for a discourse from Sukuṇḍala on the wondrous nature of the vihāra at Jetavana (it is strewn with jewels, inhabited by a tathāgata, full of wish-fulfilling trees, beautiful flowers, lotus pools and so on). Sukuṇḍala also explains that he is neither a god nor a man, but a bodhisattva, who feels compassion for the wretched and miserable and points out the path to awakening.

Although my research has failed to discover any specific source for this story, there seem to be good reasons to understand it to be the somewhat clumsy adaptation of a purānic folktale. First, the fact that the protagonist, Sukuṇḍala, is a brahmin suggests that this was not, originally, a Buddhist story. Second, the link between the action and the concluding sermon, which contains the doctrinal message of the piece, seems rather contrived, the sign of a crude ad hoc treatment of an old tale. Third, the chapter ends with another verse couplet, sung by the god to Sukuṇḍala, that is somewhat reminiscent of the use of the couplet commented on by Régamey. “In a meritorious field free of all faults,” the god declares, “today a seed has been sown and today an abundance of fruit has been harvested.” Again, I remain ignorant of the use of this couplet anywhere else. But it seems quite plausible that, like Régamey’s verse, it was originally a well-known saying associated with one or other of the two great purānic deities. If so, it is being used here, not as part of a Buddhist attack on purānic doctrine, but as a means of showing that Avalokiteśvara has, in some sense, usurped the position of these deities, an idea we will take up in earnest in the next chapter. The inclusion of Sukuṇḍala’s statement to the effect that he is neither a god nor a man, but a bodhisattva, might, similarly, be a reminder that the brahmin beggar is now to be regarded as a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara and not, as seems quite likely to have been
the case in an earlier version of the story, an emanation of one of the two main
purānic gods.

That the Kāraṇḍavyūha is reworking elements of the purānic tradition is, however, conclusively demonstrated in the encounter that takes place between Avalokiteśvara and Bali, the king of the asuras. This chapter represents a Buddhist adaptation of what is often referred to as the vāmana-avatāra of the Vaiṣṇavite tradition, the story of Viṣṇu’s appearance as a vāmana, or “dwarf.” This mythical episode, which appears in many different versions, describes how Bali, who has overthrown the god Indra (or Śakra) as ruler of the world, is tricked into giving up his position by Viṣṇu. Appearing as a dwarf, the god asks Bali to be given as much land as he can cover in three strides. When Bali agrees to this proposal, Viṣṇu suddenly adopts a vast form, big enough to cover both the heavens and the earth in two strides. Bali, therefore, is stripped of his dominion. He is also, in some versions of the story, bound and taken off into captivity, because he is considered to be guilty of the further crime of being untrue to his word: having given everything he has in order to satisfy Viṣṇu’s first two strides, he is simply incapable of living up to his promise of offering the god a third stride’s worth of land.

Much of Régamey’s 1971 piece on the Kāraṇḍavyūha was devoted to an analysis of the use of the vāmana-avatāra in the sūtra. It was, however, beyond his scope to search the purāṇas for similar treatments of the story and he ended the article by wondering whether “connoisseurs” of those texts might be able, eventually, to discover a “source” for the Buddhist version of the tale.17 Happily, since then, a detailed study of the vāmana-avatāra has been published by Deborah A. Soifer, making this task a good deal easier.18 As we shall see, an examination of different presentations of the myth does contribute to the sense that a connection might indeed exist between the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra and the Skanda Purāṇa, the “source” of Régamey’s verse couplet.

Soifer lists thirty different occurrences of the myth, twenty-four of which are taken from thirteen different purāṇas. The remaining six come from the great epics: three from the Mahābhārata, one from the Rāмāyaṇa and two from the Harivaṃśa, the long poem that is regarded as a supplement to the Mahābhārata, describing the life of the Vaiṣṇavite avatāra Kṛṣṇa.19 Approximately half of all these are really only allusions to the story, describing its events in a few sentences. Of the other, fuller versions, two—one from the Vaiṣṇavite Bhāgavata Purāṇa (VIII. 15–23) and the other from the Śaivite Skanda Purāṇa (I. i. 18–19)—correspond in one very important respect to the presentation of the story found in the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra.

The story, revolving as it does around the central event of the making of an offering by Bali to Viṣṇu, is almost bound to be linked, in any context, to the generalized religious virtue of “giving.” However, what is distinctive about these three versions (in the two purāṇas and the one sūtra) is the
overwhelming extent to which this theme is emphasized. Unlike other purāṇas, the Bhāgavata and the Skanda use the myth very much as a kind of moral fable designed to encourage the making of donations to religious institutions. This theme, common enough in Buddhist discourses to the laity, appears also to be the main purpose behind the inclusion of the story in the sūtra. In the course of this presentation of the myth, all three of these different versions punctuate the narrative with reflections on the limited worth of material possessions and the uselessness of such things at the time of death.

In the Vaiṣṇavite Bhāgavata Purāṇa, first of all, the dwarf responds to Bali’s greeting with the words:

> Never was any such coward king in your family who at the time of religious donations turned his face against persons who, deserving the gift, had requested for it . . .

Bali responds to the dwarf’s request for three paces of land by saying that he should ask for as much land as he needs. Viṣṇu replies:

> All the desired-most objects (or lands) that are available in the three worlds cannot be enough to satisfy a person who has not subdued his senses or the mind, oh king! He who is dissatisfied with three feet of land, cannot have his desire fulfilled with an island-continent consisting of nine varṣas (sub-continents), as he will crave to possess all the seven island-continents. . . . A contented person leads a happy life, while a discontented person who has no control over himself, is never satisfied even if the three worlds be possessed by him. It is said that non-contentment with reference to wealth and objects of enjoyment, is the cause of transmigration of man in this world, and that contentment with what one happens to get by (one’s predestined) luck, is the way to emancipation (from saṃsāra).

Bali’s preceptor Śukra recognizes that the dwarf is really Viṣṇu in disguise. Fearing the potential consequences of the god’s demands, he argues that it is better to temper the urge to make charitable or religious offerings with an element of worldly prudence:

> They (i.e. the wise) do not commend that gift as good if it endangers the means of livelihood of the donor. For in this world, charitable gifts, performance of sacrifices, austere penances and religious acts can be performed by persons with means of subsistence. A person who divides his wealth in five shares (and invests it) for the purpose of religious acts, glory, getting economic return, personal pleasure and provision of one’s relatives, becomes happy here and hereafter.
Bali agrees with these sentiments. “What has been stated by your worship is true,” he says. But, nonetheless, he goes on to argue that he must fulfill his promise. Even if the dwarf does prove to be Viṣṇu, he adds, and he is forced to give away everything he has, this will still be a good thing:

O brāhmaṇa sage! Those who lay down their lives without retreating from the battlefield are easily available, but not so the donors who, when approached by worthy recipients, reverentially give away their wealth. Poverty and affliction in consequence of satisfying the desires of (ordinary) supplicants appear graceful to a magnanimous and merciful soul. Need it be said that it is much more so in cases like yours who know the Brāhman or Vedas?

Then, at the end of the story, after he has been bound for failing to keep his promise, Bali says:

What is the use of the body which abandons one ultimately (at the time of death)? Of what worth are the robbers, designated as one’s own people (e.g. sons, kith and kin), who take away our property? Of what purpose is the wife who is the cause of transmigration in the saṃsāra? What is the use of houses to a mortal? It is sheer waste of life here. . . . It is sheer good luck that I too am brought to the presence of yourself—you who are the destroyer of both subtle and gross bodies . . . and that I am forcibly made to give up my wealth (and glorious position). And it is wealth (and position) that deprives man of his judgment and makes him incapable of understanding the uncertainties of life, due to its being within the clutches of death.

Finally, similar sentiments are voiced by Bali’s grandfather Prahlāda. He says:

I consider that great divine grace has been shown unto him (Bali) in that he has been relieved of his fortune which infatuates the mind and bewilders the soul. By wealth, even a self-controlled learned person gets deluded (and forgets the essential nature of the soul, even though known previously).

In much the same way, the vāmana-avatāra is also used to extol the virtue of making religious donations in the Śaivite Skanda Purāṇa. There, an imaginative solution is found to the problem of how a story about an offering made to Viṣṇu might be used to promote the giving of donations to Śiva. In a previous life, we read, Bali had been a roguish and sinful gambler who, undergoing a sudden change of heart, had become a great donor of gifts to
Śiva. It is this relationship with Śiva, the purāṇa says, that is both the cause of the gambler’s auspicious rebirth as Bali and, also, what eventually saves him, as Bali, from being punished. The story is preceded by some general remarks on charitable giving and the cult of Śiva. For instance:

A man seeks something and gains his object. Know that immediately (after getting the result) a sort of niggardliness besets him. Afterwards he dies and his merit becomes exhausted . . . Hence there is nothing more conducive to liberation than charitable gifts. From charitable gifts, knowledge is acquired and from knowledge, liberation is achieved undoubtedly. Devotion unto the Trident-bearing Lord (Śiva) is greater than liberation, O brahmaṇas. Sadaśiva, the lord of all, gives away everything when his mind is pleased. Śaṅkara becomes satisfied with even a very little thing that is offered, say, even water of a very little quantity. In this connection they cite this ancient legend. 27

There then follows the story of the gambler. On his way to a prostitute, he is robbed of all his ill-gotten gains and left with only a loin cloth and the flowers, betel leaves and sandal paste he had planned to take to the woman. Clasping his shoulders with his hands to cover his nakedness, he makes the sign of the swastika. Then, running on, he stumbles and falls to the ground, going into a swoon. When he regains consciousness, he finds that his mind is naturally directed towards wholesome thoughts. He is disgusted with worldly objects and repents of his past. “The scent, the flowers etc. that had fallen on the ground,” we read, “were dedicated to Śiva by that gambler unconsciously and unintentionally.” 28 Later, when he dies, it is this action that prevents him from being reborn in hell. Instead, he is given, for a short time, the position of Indra. The purāṇa then asks:

What then in the case of those people who are actuated by faith to offer large quantities of scents, flowers etc. always with great devotion to Śiva, the Supreme Spirit? (i.e. they deserve much greater reward). They will attain Śivasāyujya (identity with Śiva). They will be accompanied by Śiva’s army and acquire great joy. Indeed Śakra is the servant of such people. . . . Mahādeva is (i.e. deserves) to be worshipped and adored by all living beings knowing the truth. Thus the gambler attained the status of Indra for a period of three ghaṭikās. 29

In this new and exalted position, the gambler behaves very generously. As a result, when Indra retakes his throne, the former sinner is reborn as Bali. Bali, in turn, continues to express the same generous impulse. We read: “Thus, O brahmaṇas, Bali became eagerly devoted and engaged in munificent charitable
gifts due to the previous practice which the gambler had, because he was engaged in the worship of Śiva. Bali’s father, Virocana we read, was also very generous, to the extent that he even cut off his own head and offered it to Śakra. This prompts the following remarks:

There is nothing greater than a charitable gift anywhere. That charitable gift offered to persons in distress is highly meritorious. Anything whatsoever within one’s capacity, (if offered) is capable of infinite results. There is nothing greater than a charitable gift in all the three worlds.  

The purāṇa then tells the story of the vāmana-avatāra. At the end of the story, Bali escapes punishment. After some intercessionary pleading by his wife, Vindhyāvalī, he is told to go to the heavenly realm of Sutala. The same ending is also described in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, where Vindhyāvalī is joined by Prahlāda and the god Brahmā in pleading for clemency. Bali’s redemption in the Skanda Purāṇa is said to be due to the “favour of Śaṅkara” (a synonym of Śiva). The merit earned by the gambler’s original, unintentional offering to Śiva has, it seems, been enough to save both the gambler and Bali from going to hell. The chapter ends with a repeat of an earlier refrain and further praises to Śiva:

In his former birth as a gambler, fragrant flowers and other things that had fallen on dirty ground were offered by him to the great atman. What had fallen down was dedicated to Śiva, the great spirit, by him. What then in the case of those who worship Maheśvara with the greatest devotion? Those who devoutly offer sweet scents, flowers, fruits or even water go to Śiva’s presence . . . Mahādeva should be worshipped in the form of liṅga by those who desire salvation. There is no greater bestower of worldly pleasures and liberation than Śiva.

The same overriding emphasis on the virtue of charitable giving is also found in the version of the vāmana-avatāra in the Kāraṇḍavyūha, where the story is presented as if told by Bali to Avalokiteśvara. Both at the beginning and at the end, the bodhisattva discourses on the value of making religious donations and on the uselessness of material possessions at the time of death. First, after he has been greeted by Bali, the bodhisattva describes the various benefits of filling Buddhist alms bowls. They who regularly fill the bowls of those belonging to the Buddhist order, he says, will never be overwhelmed by sloth, will write and have written the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sātra, remember its name and listen to Dharma-teachings from it. They who fill the alms bowl of a single bodhisattva will remember, talk about, write, and listen together to the Dharma-teachings of a dharmabhāṇaka, or “Dharma-preacher.” They
who, asking for a Dharma-teaching from a tathāgata, fill his bowl with a daily meal, will become cakravartin kings, will never experience the suffering of hunger and thirst, of hell, and of being separated from loved ones, and will go to Sukhāvatī, where they will appear before Amitābha, listen to the Dharma and receive predictions of their enlightenment. Avalokiteśvara then gives a list of comparisons and examples showing the extraordinary amount of merit earned by filling the alms bowl of a tathāgata. At the end of the story, Avalokiteśvara turns his attention to the perils of clinging to worldly wealth in the face of death. Material possessions, he says, are dreamlike and will offer no protection at that time. As people are dragged down into hell, the bodhisattva explains, they will be told by the henchmen of Yama, the lord of death, that one of the causes of their suffering is the fact that they failed to make offerings to the alms bowl of a tathāgata.

Bali is also saved from final punishment in the Kāraṇḍavyūha. Having promised to do whatever Viṣṇu ordains, Bali then supplicates Avalokiteśvara, begging him to be his protector. This leads the bodhisattva to make a vyākaraṇa, or “prediction,” typical of the Mahāyāna sūtras: Bali will become a tathāgata called “Śrī”; all the asuras will be converted to the true way; there will be neither greed, nor hatred nor delusion in Bali’s buddha-field and the six-syllable formula will be obtained, the first reference to Om Maṇipadme Hūṃ in the entire sūtra.

The Kāraṇḍavyūha is perhaps less ingenious than the Skanda Purāṇa in the way it adapts the Vaishnavite story to a non-Vaishnavite polemic. In the sūtra, the solution to this problem lies not in an account of Bali’s previous lives, but in reconsidering what Bali’s crime really is. This is now deemed to consist not, as in the traditional version, of being unable to keep his promise, but rather, in having made his offering to the wrong being. According to the Kāraṇḍavyūha, Bali should not have given to Viṣṇu at all, but to the Buddha instead. As Régamey points out, the Buddhist version of the story is framed, at the beginning and end, by a lament of Bali to precisely this effect. The same Sanskrit phrase is used twice: kukṣetre maṇḍa dānāṃ dattam, meaning: “I have put my gift in the wrong place.” Bali declares he has acted in the manner of a tīrthika (tairthikādṛṣṭiparyāpānena), the term most commonly used in the Mahāyāna literature to refer to non-Buddhists. The story, in other words, has become a parable, not just about the merit of giving to religious institutions, but about the relative worthlessness of giving to anyone other than the Buddha. The Kāraṇḍavyūha, it seems, reflects a situation in which Mahāyāna Buddhists were in competition with other sects for religious patronage.

However, despite this radical reworking of the myth, the sūtra cannot do away entirely with the idea of Bali’s failure to provide the third stride of land, so fundamental is this to the original story. Shortly before the second of Bali’s laments about his failure to put his gift in the right place, he confesses to
Viṣṇu that the third pace is not to be found. Next, the god says that where he places him, there he will stay. It is this statement, not the promise to give the three paces, that now appears to be the measure of Bali's integrity. He promises to do what the god commands, and then, being asked if he keeps the truth, says that he keeps the truth. The same clumsiness that seemed to be a feature of the sūtra’s adaptation of the story of Sukunḍalā is also apparent here. The narrative has become slightly muddled. It just does not make sense that no sooner has Bali confessed to the evil of one act—the failure to give the third pace—then he is seen, once again, to be decrying the fact that he has erred in doing something else entirely different, namely, putting his gift in the wrong place.

The question remains, however, as to whether our findings represent sufficient evidence to identify a specific purāṇa as a “source” for the sūtra, as Régamey seems to have hoped. One of the problems, here, as Rocher points out, is that the purāṇas, in general, are not monolithic texts, composed and written down at one particular time. Rather, they are composite works, made up of numerous independent sections. These, originating from different places and from different historical periods, may have been circulated quite separately from one another before eventually being gathered together in the same work. Moreover, the mode of their circulation would almost always have been oral, not textual. As Rocher writes: “The principal reason why purānic—and epic—stories can be treated with such a high degree of freedom is that, fundamentally, they do not belong in books.” Any similarities between the Kāraṇḍavyūha and an individual purāṇa is likely only to indicate that the sūtra was influenced by an oral tradition lying behind the purāṇa (or part of the purāṇa) and not that it was actually borrowing from a written document.

Nonetheless, it still seems legitimate to posit, tentatively, a link between the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra and the Skanda Purāṇa. The evidence for this, as we have seen, is the use of the same verse couplet about the linga and the similar treatments given to the vāmana-avatāra in the two works. The earliest manuscript of the Skanda has been dated, on palaeographic grounds, to sometime before the middle of the seventh century C.E. However, the dating of the written text is not really an issue here. Even if this represents the date of the “first edition” of the purāṇa, it is still perfectly possible, indeed likely, that elements of the purāṇa derive from much earlier times.

With regard to the couplet, it is, to say the least, unfortunate that Régamey was unable to give a precise reference for this verse in the Skanda Purāṇa, having come across it not in any edition of the text itself, but in a modern anthology of Indian religious scriptures compiled by Alain Daniélou. Daniélou notes only that it appears in the Skanda Purāṇa. The task of pinpointing the two lines is made somewhat difficult, not only because of the vast size of this purāṇa, but also because it exists in several different editions. Like Régamey,
I, too, have failed to discover the exact location of the couplet. I have, however, found a number of similar verses.

The purāṇa contains numerous statements about the universal practice of worshipping the linga as Śiva. For instance: “Those who continuously worship Śiva in the form of linga, whether they be women or śūdras or cāndālas or other low-caste people, do attain Śiva, the destroyer of miseries.” But, discussion of the linga in the purāṇas is, of course, by no means limited to the Skanda Purāṇa alone. It appears, to a greater or lesser degree, in all the Śaivite purāṇas and in some Vaiśṇavite ones, too. Nonetheless, my own brief survey of several of these other Śaivite works would suggest that statements like the verse couplet of the Kāraṇḍavyūha— in which the linga is defined in terms of a specific ability to absorb all things into itself—are rare. In the course of my search of other Śaivite purāṇas, I found none like this. The Skanda Purāṇa, on the other hand, contains at least two passages of this kind. Thus: “The whole range of the three worlds was pervaded in the form of linga by the great lord. It is called linga by all the Suras and Asuras because it absorbs the world within it. Devas with Brahmā and Viṣṇu at their head do not know its limits and extremities.” And, closer still to the etymological definition of the Kāraṇḍavyūha: “Since the entire universe became līna (merged) in the linga of the great Ātman (it came to be called so). Learned men say that it is called linga because of layana (merging of the universe).” The common use of this distinctive view of the Śaivite linga is, surely, a slight indication that the sūtra and the purāṇa may be connected.

As we have already observed, among the many different presentations of the vāmana-avatāra, the versions found in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the Skanda Purāṇa and the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra are unusual in the degree to which the story is used to promote the virtue of giving to religious cults. However, if either of these two purāṇas—or the oral traditions from which they derive—is to be posited as having any bearing on the way in which the Kāraṇḍavyūha took up the myth, the Skanda Purāṇa is by far the more likely candidate. This is because, as we shall see, the interface between the Buddhist and the purāṇic traditions reflected in the text of the Kāraṇḍavyūha is, essentially, a meeting between Buddhism and Śaivism. On those grounds, it is unlikely that the sūtra would have been drawing on a tradition associated with the Vaiśṇavite Bhāgavata Purāṇa. It is possible, though, that the sūtra may have taken the Skanda Purāṇa for its lead in the way a Vaiśṇavite myth might be adapted to promote the virtue of giving to a non-Vaiśṇavite cult: in the Skanda to the cult of Śiva and in the Kāraṇḍavyūha to the cult of the Buddha.

The sūtra is clearly not following the written version of the Skanda, at least not the version of the purāṇa that we are familiar with. As well as the similarities, there are also a great many differences between the respective treatments of the vāmana-avatāra. The version in the sūtra, for instance,
contains a long passage describing the imprisonment by Bali of hundreds of thousands of *kṣatriyas* and their subsequent rescue by Viṣṇu, an episode which is wholly absent from the presentation of the myth found in the purāṇas. This section of the sūtra also contains the description of Viṣṇu appearing in the different forms of a fly, a bee, a wild boar and a man, which, as Régamey writes, reflects another different strand of tradition. Régamey also points out the awkward way in which this section is introduced into the sūtra. The narrative changes abruptly from the first person singular to the third person, as Bali’s description of the preparations for his sacrifice trails off and gives way to the story of the *kṣatriyas*. It is very difficult from the present perspective to discern how this little episode adds to the general purpose of the sūtra. The disjointed nature of its place in the narrative suggests that it is a secondary addition to the original, main body of the sūtra, made for a reason that must remain, for the time being, obscure.

Similarly, both the *Bhāgavata* and the *Skanda* contain passages unique to their own particular presentation of the *vāmana-avatāra*. The story of the gambler, for instance, or the episode in which Bali’s father, Virocana, cuts off his own head are peculiar, in this context, to the *Skanda Purāṇa*. Likewise, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* includes a tale about the two brothers, Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyakṣa, not found in any other version of the myth. When the former is killed by Viṣṇu (in his boar incarnation), the latter vows to take revenge, but Viṣṇu hides himself within the warrior’s body, with the result that after a long search, Hiranyakṣa concludes that his brother’s killer must be dead. The rationale of this story, however, is connected to the idea of Virocana’s magnanimous nature, a theme, as we have seen, also found in the *Skanda Purāṇa*. The story ends by saying that, in this world, enmity continues as far as death. This, then, is immediately followed by a statement to the effect that Virocana, despite knowing that certain brahmins were really enemy gods in disguise, “still conferred his lease of life upon them.”

Such differences serve only to emphasise the final independence of all three texts from one another. They virtually rule out a scenario in which the composers of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* used a written version of a *Skanda Purāṇa* as a “source.” But the similarities between the two works are still, I think, enough to warrant taking seriously the idea that the sūtra was influenced by an oral tradition that contributed to the production of the Śaivite purāṇa. The idea may have to remain, for the time being, a working hypothesis. Nonetheless, the sūtra must have been influenced by at least one strand of the Śaivite purānic tradition. For the Buddhist encounter with Śaivism is one of the sūtra’s recurrent concerns.

As we have already indicated, Régamey’s couplet occurs in a section of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* in which Śaivite beliefs are beings deliberately disparaged. The doctrine of the *linga*, described in the couplet, is said to be the talk of
foolish, common people. Furthermore, the context in which this passage occurs takes the form of a speech made by Avalokiteśvara to Śiva (referred to as Maheśvara), in which the bodhisattva says that he (Śiva) will appear in the degenerate kaliyuga and be called the ādideva, or “primordial god,” the creator and author of the world. The beings in that time, Avalokiteśvara adds, will be deprived of the path to awakening. A clear distinction is being made here between Buddhism and Śaivism: Śaivite beliefs are presented as misleading and degenerate.

The predominant response to Śaivism reflected in the sūtra is not, however, one of hostile rejection, but, rather, one of friendly (or condescending) conversion. The Buddhist use of the subjugation myth is one of those features of the sūtra that are more commonly associated with the tantras. There, non-Buddhist deities are usually made to submit to Buddhadharma by the use of the superior force of a bodhisattva. For instance, in the conversion of Śiva described in the Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha, the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi actually kills the god and treads him underfoot, before eventually relenting and bringing him back to life to predict his future attainment of buddhahood.

In the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, on the other hand, Śiva appears to surrender himself voluntarily to Avalokiteśvara, a reflection, presumably, of the “peaceful” character of this bodhisattva, in contrast to the “wrathful” character of Vajrapāṇi.

The episode is placed near the end of the Kāraṇḍavyūha, after the story of the discovery of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ and immediately before the final section of the sūtra, the teaching on monastic discipline given by Śākyamuni to his disciple Ānanda. Śiva (referred to again as Maheśvara) appears before Avalokiteśvara and, unprompted, prostrates himself and asks for a vyākaraṇa of his future buddhahood. Like the conversion story of the Sarvatathāgata-tattvasaṃgraha, Śiva is then identified as the tathāgata Bhasmeśvara, or “Lord of Ashes.” This is an allusion to the predilection of Śiva (and the Śaivite yogin) for smearing his body with ashes and practising his meditations in charnel grounds and cemeteries. Umādevī, Śiva’s consort, also appears at this point in the sūtra and is told by Avalokiteśvara that she will become the tathāgata Umeśvara.

A similar conversion is also, as we have already seen, part of the sūtra’s presentation of the vāmana-avatāra. Bali, after confessing his wrongdoing and supplicating Avalokiteśvara, is told that he will become the tathāgata Śṛṇ. The conversion of all three figures might be said to express the same essentially triumphalist note: the Buddhist path is the superior path, taken up with enthusiasm by Bali and, even, by Śiva himself. The conversion of Śiva and Umādevī has an additional significance, however. It shows how the power of other deities may be tamed and harnessed to the Buddhadharma. The myth accounts for the synthesis of Śaivite principles into the Buddhist system.
The conversion of Śiva is also, it seems, the subject of the short chapter of the Kāraṇḍavyūha in which Avalokiteśvara appears in the form of a bee (bhramararūpa). The buzzing (ghunaghunāyamānān) of this bee is said to produce the sound namo buddhāya namo dharmāya namah samghāya. As a result, the worms and insects of the sewers of Vārāṇasi bring this formula to mind, destroy the “twenty-peaked false view of individuation” (vimśatiśikhara-samudgataṁ satkāyadrṣṭīsailaṁ) and are born, in Sukhāvatī, as bodhisattvas called “Sugandhamukha.” There, they listen to the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra in the presence of Amitābha and, like Bali, Maheśvara and Umādevī, receive vyākaraṇas of their future careers on the Buddhist path.

Avalokiteśvara, here, appears in a guise traditionally associated with the purānic gods. As the sūtra’s own presentation of the vāmana-avatāra has already demonstrated, Viṣṇu is known to manifest as a bee. It is also a form sometimes adopted by Śiva, as shown in a long list of the god’s epithets in the Śiva Purāṇa. He is, variously:

. . . the sacrifice, the performer of sacrifice, Kāla, the intelligent, the bee, the moving one, the one originating from the hedges of the trees . . .

The sound of the bee is, also, traditionally a sign of the presence of the divine. This is not unconnected to the ancient Indian notion of ruta-jñāna, the “understanding (jñāna) of the cries (ruta)” of animals, a faculty possessed by poets and sages enabling them to discern the spiritual significance of the sounds of the natural world. In Monier Monier-Williams’ definition of this term, he singles out three sounds that are particularly associated with this interpretative principle: the neighing of horses, the singing of birds, and the humming of bees. In the introduction to the version of the vāmana-avatāra in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Viṣṇu (here referred to as Hari) is surrounded by bees:

Irradiated with his special splendid vanamālā (wreath of forest flowers) resonant with a swarm of humming bees and with the kaustubha gem suspended from his neck, Lord Hari dispelled with his splendour the gloom in the house of Kaśyapa, the Lord of Creation, with his effulgence.

Similarly, as Guy L. Beck explains in his study of the use of sound in Indian religion, the buzzing of a bee is one of the sounds said to be heard in the internal world of the yogin. The Nādabindu Upaniṣad, for instance, lists a series of these noises in order of progressive refinement. The sound of the bee (bhramara) is the most subtle, coming after the sounds of the ocean (jaladhi), the cloud (jimata), the kettle drum (bharti), the waterfall (nirjhara), a small drum (mardala), a bell (ghanta), a military drum (kahala), a tinkling bell (kinkinti), the bamboo flute (vamsa) and the harp (vina).
The manifestation of Avalokiteśvara as a bee in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* conforms, then, to an established Indian convention of the appearance of the divine or supernormal. In the sūtra, the buzzing of the bee is heard by the worms and insects (*kṛmikula*) of Vārāṇasī. In the *Vidyēśvarasamhitā* section of the Śiva Purāṇa, in the course of a discussion of the significance of the *līṅga*, we read:

> The phallic emblem is of two varieties: the stationary and the mobile. Trees, hedges etc. represent the stationary. Worms, insects etc. represent the mobile. For the stationary one, tending and similar service is recommended. For the mobile one *tarpāṇa* (propitiation) is recommended.74

Vārāṇasī, of course, is the great Śaivite city. The bee bodhisattva, therefore, would appear to be exercising his influence on a Śaivite constituency, the worms and insects of the city that are, according to the purāṇa, a “mobile” form of the Śaivite *līṅga*. Śiva, as we have seen above, is worshipped as the *līṅga*. The story, in other words, seems to be a rather picaresque way of showing, once again, that Avalokiteśvara converts Śiva to the Buddhist way.

Viśṇu is also a presence in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, particularly, of course, in the version of the *vāmana-avatāra*. However, as we have seen, the use of that myth in the sūtra may be accounted for by the influence of a Vaiṣṇava tradition: the *Skanda Purāṇa* provides a precedent for the way in which the Vaiṣṇava story may be adapted to a non-Vaiṣṇava polemic. Similarly, although Viśṇu is regularly mentioned elsewhere in the sūtra, his name only ever occurs in the context of standard lists of deities that betray, if anything, a slight Śaivite bias, in so far as Śiva (or Maheśvara) is usually named before Viśṇu (or Nārāyaṇa).

Thus, in the description of the great assembly in the *vihāra* at Jetavana, a group of thirty-two gods is said to be led by Śiva and Viśṇu (or, as the sūtra says, by Maheśvara and Nārāyaṇa).75 A description of the qualities of Avalokiteśvara, relayed to Śākyamuni by the merchant Vipaśyin, begins by describing how the sun and moon are born from his eyes, Maheśvara from his brow, Brahmā from his shoulders and Nārāyaṇa from his heart.76 When the *tathāgata* Śikhin explains that Avalokiteśvara can take on whatever form is suitable to accomplish the conversion of beings, after detailing various Buddhist manifestations (*tathāgata*, *pratyekabuddha*, *arhat* and bodhisattva), the list of other such forms begins with Maheśvara and Nārāyaṇa: to beings to be converted to the true religion by Maheśvara he teaches the Dharma in the form of Maheśvara and to beings to be converted to the true religion by Nārāyaṇa he teaches the Dharma in the form of Nārāyaṇa.77 Sarvanivarana-viśkambhin, or “Preventer of all Obstructions,” the bodhisattva who is the chief protagonist and interlocutor of the second part of the sūtra, says of the
The evidence of the text would suggest, then, that the environment in which the sūtra was written was one in which the main purānic deity was Śiva. That is not to say, however, that Viṣṇu was absent from this milieu. It seems likely that, although Śiva dominated, Viṣṇu filled a significant supporting role. In the sūtra’s version of the vāmana-avatāra, for instance, it is an accepted fact that Viṣṇu is a powerful and important deity. A certain element of Vaiṣṇavite religiosity is reflected in the text. More precisely, as Régamey points out, this strand of Vaiṣṇavism is also likely to be one in which some emphasis was given to the manifestation of the deity as Rāma. When, at the beginning of the sūtra, Avalokiteśvara enters hell, Yama asks whether he is a manifestation of Maheśvara, Nārāyaṇa or the rākṣasa Rāvaṇa: the last of these three is, of course, the name of the great demon of the Rāmāyaṇa who captures and carries off Sītā, Rāma’s wife, to the island of Lankā.

Similarly, in the presentation of the myth in the Skanda Purāṇa, no attempt is made to belittle Viṣṇu. Quite the opposite: his significance is often emphasized. Virocana’s self-decapitation, for instance, is accounted for by the powerful effects of worshipping Viṣṇu. It was, we read, “very difficult to do, but by resorting to bhakti (devotion) alone of Viṣṇu, it was done by him with his mind devoted to him.” Viṣṇu is praised in fulsome terms in the course of the Śaivite purāṇa. Bali, at one point, says: “This Viṣṇu is the lord of the fruits of all karma. Certainly, those people in whose heart Viṣṇu is stationed are the most deserving persons. Everything seen in this world is called holy by his name. This Hari is the lord of the universe…” As Jan Gonda comments: “Many purānic legends indeed give evidence of the conviction that the great divine powers complement each other and that they are to co-operate for the well-being of the world and mankind.”

Gonda illustrates this remark by referring to the legend, also found in the Skanda Purāṇa, about the formation of a famous well called “Maṇikarṇikā,” or “Earring,” in Varanasi. The well is said to have been dug by Viṣṇu with his discus and filled with the perspiration from the god’s body. However, it is said to have received its name when Śiva, seeing in the well the radiance of a hundred million suns, began praising Viṣṇu and offered to give him whatever he might ask. When Viṣṇu replied that his only desire was that the other god should always live there with him, Śiva shook with delight, with the result that an ornament from Śiva’s ear, a maṇikarṇikā, dropped into the well.

This is an example of what Gonda refers to as the “complementary” relationship between the two gods. In addition, Gonda also describes what he calls a “compromise,” in which one god temporarily allows the other to hold...
sway, and “inclusivism,” in which one god subsumes the power of other deities into himself. An example of “compromise” is the Vaiṣṇavite tradition that, when in the great Śaivite city of Vārānasi, even Vaiṣṇavites worship Śiva the supreme deity. Śiva’s ability to liberate anyone who dies within the city is said, in this context, to be a privilege granted to him by Viśnū, in the form of Rāma, as a reward for the many aeons spent by Śiva in reciting the mantra of Rāma. An example of “inclusivism” is the Vaiṣṇavite tradition that, when in the great Vaiṣṇavite city of Vārānasi, even Vaiṣṇavites worship Viśnū, in the form of Rāma, as a reward for the many aeons spent by Viśnū in reciting the mantra of Rāma.

An example of “inclusivism” is the story attached to the Śaivite linga at a place in Vārānasi named “Brahmatirtha,” so called because it was said to have been brought to the city by the god Brahmā and installed by Viśnū, when the latter god’s devotion to Śiva proved to be even greater than the former’s.

Perhaps the most compact expression of this syncretistic tendency—and another instance of the “complementary” relationship between the two gods—is found in the notion of Hari-Hara, in which Hari (a synonym of Viśnū’s) and Hara (a synonym of Śiva) constitute the two halves of a single being. As we shall see, it is the opinion of Lokesh Chandra that this form was linked to the development of the thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara. The earliest known example of a Hari-Hara sculpture, Chandra writes, is an image found in a cave at Bijapur, near Mysore. Unfortunately, this bears an inscription giving it the precise date of 578 C.E., roughly two hundred years after our estimated date for the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra. But there may be earlier examples that have not survived, or are yet to be discovered.

For the moment, though, we must conclude this chapter by saying simply that, just as Régamey suspected, close similarities do exist between the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra and the purāṇas. The precise nature of this connection remains obscure. However, it seems reasonable to posit some sort of link between the sūtra and the Śaivite Skanda Purāṇa. More generally and less controversially, the sūtra clearly reflects a close interaction with a non-Buddhist religious milieu that is predominantly Śaivite, but one which is also respectful of the Vaiṣṇavite tradition. In the following chapter, we trace in more detail how this purāṇic influence shaped the sūtra’s conception of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.
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CHAPTER 3

Avalokiteśvara as the Buddhist Īśvara

The close connection between the Kāraṇḍa-vyāha and the purānic tradition is apparent, once again, in the sūtra’s presentation of the central figure of Avalokiteśvara, who boasts many of the attributes of the great purānic deities. In brief, Avalokiteśvara takes on the form of an īśvara, or “lord.”¹ This is a term predominantly associated with Śiva, but which is, nonetheless, also used to refer to Viṣṇu.² In this respect, then, its application to the figure of Avalokiteśvara might be said to be wholly in keeping with the dominant Śaivite influence apparent in the sūtra that we remarked upon in the previous chapter.

Viṣṇu, for example, is described as an īśvara when he appears in the form of Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavadgītā, a work probably composed some time before the beginning of the first millennium c.e.³ Two examples follow:

... although I am lord (tīśvaro) of beings...

And

When the lord (tīśvara) takes on a body and when he steps up out of it...

In the Śiva Purāṇa, for instance, Śiva is described as tīśvara as part of a long eulogy paid to the god:

... the lord of the three worlds, tīśvara, Hara, the bay-eyed, the cause of the dissolution of the Yugas...

The god is also often referred to as maheśvara, or great (maha-) īśvara, a term which is also used as a proper name for the god. In the Śiva Purāṇa, again, we read:

It was Śiva who did everything. There is no doubt in this. It was lord maheśvara who deluded your splendid intellect and made you suffer on account of love...
And in the Śaivite Liṅga Purāṇa:

Brahmā requested me to grant power to create. He said: “O Mahādeva, O maheśvara, grant power unto my sons.”

In the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, Avalokiteśvara is addressed as maheśvara three times: once by Yama, the lord of death, during the bodhisattva’s journey into hell,9 once by Śiva (who is also, somewhat confusingly, referred to as maheśvara devaputro at this point),10 and once by Umādevī,11 in the course of their respective conversions.

Intimately connected to the idea of an īvara is the notion of a supreme puruṣa, a great “man” or “person” who both pervades the universe and is responsible for its creation. “Thus,” according to Gonda, “the term does not signify a creator other than the created, but a principle which is eventually one with it.”12 This is an idea which finds its oldest and most influential expression in the so-called puruṣasūkta, or puruṣa hymn, of Rgveda, x, 90. Gonda comments: “This poem—which has perhaps been composed about 1000 B.C.—is in ancient India the first expression of the idea that creation is the self-limitation of the transcendent Person manifesting himself in the realm of our experience.”13 In the Śiva Purāṇa, Śiva is referred to as puruṣa, along with īvara and maheśvara in some of the long lists, found in that work, that record the many different epithets of the god. For example:

... the creator of the universe, the sustainer of the universe, the eternal puruṣa, the stable one, the presiding deity of Dharma...

Elsewhere in the purāṇa, we read:

You are a great puruṣa, the lord, beyond sattva, rajas and ātmas. You are both suguṇa and nirguṇa. You are a great lord, a cosmic witness, and free from aberration.15

In the Bhagavadgītā, references to Kṛṣṇa as puruṣa are numerous.16 Both īvara and puruṣa are found together, for instance:

In this way, lord in the highest degree (parameśvara), you have described your self; I desire to see your supreme form, greatest of persons (puruṣottama).17

And
But there is another, higher person (*puruṣa*), called the Supreme Self, the eternal lord (*Īśvara*) who, penetrating the three worlds, sustains them.\(^{18}\)

Viṣṇu is also identifiable as a *puruṣa* in some of the purāṇic versions of the *vāmana-avatāra*. Viṣṇu’s *viśva-rūpa*, or “all-pervading form,” which the god manifests in order to make his three enormous strides, is often shown to produce different parts of the created order from different parts of the god’s body. This is an idea that is classically expressed in the *puruṣasākta*. In the *Rgveda*, we read:

The Brāhman was his mouth,  
The arms were made the Prince,  
His thighs the common people,  
And from his feet the serf was born.

From his mind the moon was born,  
And from his eye the sun,  
From his mouth Indra and the fire,  
From his breath the wind was born.

From his navel arose the atmosphere,  
From his head the sky evolved,  
From his feet the earth, and from his ear  
The cardinal points of the compass:  
So did they fashion forth these worlds.\(^{19}\)

In the *Nārada Purāṇa*, for instance, Viṣṇu is praised in similar fashion:

From whose head the brahmin was born, from both his arms the *kṣatriya* arose, from his thighs the *vaishya* was born, from his feet the *śūdra* was born. From his mind the moon was born, and from his eyes the sun, from his mouth Agni and Indra, from his breath Vāyu. From his body the *Ṛg, Yajus*, and *Sāma Vedas*, whose soul exists in the seven musical notes, whose is the form of the six *vedāṅgas*, I praise him more and more.\(^{20}\)

The description of Viṣṇu’s *viśva-rūpa* in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* does not present the god as *puruṣa*-creator. Viṣṇu is merely said to be vast in size, bearing the sun and moon on his shoulders (a detail which, perhaps, carries an echo of the vedic hymn), and armed with noose, wheel, bow, javelin, and lance.\(^{21}\) Instead, it is Avalokiteśvara who is depicted as the great cosmic *puruṣa*.  

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A passage located near the beginning of the sūtra is, clearly, another improvisation on the vedic hymn. The sun and moon are said to be born from the bodhisattva’s eyes, Maheśvara from his brow, Brahmā from his shoulders, Nārāyaṇa from his heart, Sarasvatī from his teeth, the winds from his mouth, the earth from his feet and the sky from his stomach.22

The puruṣaṣaṅkta is also the inspiration for another of the features of the great bodhisattva. For the puruṣa, traditionally, has various “thousandfold” bodily characteristics. The vedic hymn begins:

A thousand heads hath puruṣa, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet. On every side pervading earth he fills a space ten fingers wide.23

This is true of Śiva. In the Kūrma Purāṇa, for instance, we read:

They saw the lord with a thousand heads, a thousand feet, a thousand shapes, and a thousand arms, with matted hair and with his coronet embellished with the crescent moon.24

And in the much earlier Śaivite work, the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, Śiva is described as follows:

A thousand heads (this) person has,
A thousand eyes, a thousand feet . . .25

It is also true of Viṣṇu. In the Bhagavadgītā, Kṛṣṇa is said to have a thousand arms:

O thousand-armed one, whose material form is the universe . . .26

Similarly, in the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, in the course of the tour of the worlds contained within the hair pores of Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva is suddenly described as appearing in a form with one hundred thousand arms (śatasahasrabhujah) and one hundred thousand koṭi of eyes (koṭiśatasa-hasranetro).27 Once again, the same basic “thousandfold” motif is apparent, in a slightly developed form. Similarly, as Chandra points out, a hymn found in the Chinese Buddhist canon which is dedicated, in its colophon, to the thousand-armed, thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara, actually begins with a salutation to the bodhisattva in which he is described as possessing a thousand feet, a thousand tongues and a thousand heads, as well as the more familiar thousand arms and thousand eyes.28

The description of the “thousandfold” form of Avalokiteśvara also contains the most explicit indication in the Kāraṇḍavyūha that the bodhisattva is
taking on the attributes of Śiva and not of Viṣṇu. We have already seen that Avalokiteśvara, like Śiva, is called “mahēśvara.” Here, the bodhisattva is said to have eleven heads (ekādaśastraḥ). This imitates a standard form of Śiva, in which the eleven heads correspond to eleven different manifestations of the god. The hairstyle of the bodhisattva also betrays a Śaivite influence. He is twice said to have a head of twisted locks of hair (jaṭamukutaḍharo), once when he appears in the hell realms and once when he appears to the dharmabhāṇaka. This is a characteristic of Indian yogins of all sects, but one which is, nonetheless, particularly associated with Śiva and his devotees.

No trace of the thousand-armed, thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara has been found on Indian soil. Probably the closest related archaeological find to date is a statue of a four-armed Avalokiteśvara found at the caves at Kanheri just north of present-day Mumbai. This image, like the hundred thousand-armed form described in the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, has eleven heads. It has been dated to the time of the Vakataka dynasty of the late fifth and early sixth century C.E. The dearth of Indian artefacts connected to the “thousandfold” form of the bodhisattva is striking. Judging by the enthusiasm with which its iconography and associated practices were eventually transmitted to the Chinese, it would seem to have been quite popular.

The first of the many images of the thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara to appear in China, for instance, is said to have been painted between 618 and 626 C.E. for the T’ang emperor, by an Indian monk known by the Chinese as Ch’u-to-t’i-p’o. The cave paintings at Tun-huang also include several depictions of this form of the bodhisattva, though the earliest of these was apparently painted over two hundred years later in 836 C.E. The apparent disparity between the amount of Indian and Chinese iconographic evidence connected to this form may, however, be consistent with the scenario that was suggested in chapter 1. Like the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra itself, the form and associated doctrine of the “thousandfold” Avalokiteśvara may have originated in Kashmir and subsequently have been taken north, but not south.

According to a survey conducted by Chandra, two different dhāraṇīs, extended incantations to the thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara, accompanied the progress of the iconographic form into China. No documents of the original Sanskrit versions of these dhāraṇīs are extant. They were first transliterated into Chinese characters over three hundred years before the earliest recorded Chinese translation of the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra (983 C.E.). The first of the two dhāraṇīs, transliterated by one Chih-t’ung in 653 C.E., praises the bodhisattva in terms of his relationship with Amitābha and the Pure Land of Sukhāvatī, recalling the role adopted by Avalokiteśvara in the Pure Land sūtras. This is an aspect of the bodhisattva which is, as we shall see, by no means forgotten in the presentation of Avalokiteśvara found in the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra.
In the context of our continuing discussion of the purāṇic influence on the conception of Avalokiteśvara, the second of these hymns is the more interesting of the two, in so far as it praises the bodhisattva in terms of an invocation to both Śiva and Viṣṇu. Three distinct versions remain. The shortest of these was also the first to be transliterated, between 650 and 661 C.E., by Bhagavaddharma, and later on by the eighth-century translator Amoghavajra (705–774 C.E.). A somewhat longer version of the dhāraṇī was transliterated between 731 and 736 C.E. by Vajrabodhi. A longer version still is preserved in Tibetan. This is a translation of a Chinese text (which no longer appears to exist) made by the Chinese translator Fa-ch’eng (known in Tibetan as Chos grub) during the reign of the ninth-century Tibetan king Ral pa can (817–836 C.E.).

The shorter version of the hymn has been reconstituted by Chandra, on the basis of the versions attributed to Bhagavaddharma and Amoghavajra. It begins, according to Chandra’s translation:

Adoration to the Triple Gem. Adoration to ārya Avalokiteśvara, bodhisattva, mahāsattva, the Great Compassionate One.

The central section reads:


To the siddha hail. To the great siddha hail. To the lord of siddha yogins hail. To Nilakaṇṭha hail. To the boar-faced one hail. To one with the face of Narasiṁha hail. To one who has a lotus in his hand hail. To the holder of a cakra in his hand hail. To one who sports a lotus in his hand hail. To Nilakaṇṭha the tiger hail. To the mighty Śaṅkara hail.

The presence of Viṣṇu is evoked twice by the vocative Hare and, also, by references to a boar and a man-lion, recalling the god’s appearances as an avatāra in those forms. There are numerous Śaivite epithets: Nilakaṇṭha, “the blue throated one” (three times); Śaṅkara, “the beneficent one”; the one who wears a black serpent as a sacred thread; the destroyer of poisons; the siddha;
Avalokiteśvara as the Buddhist Īśvara

the great siddha and the lord of siddha yogins. An introductory preamble to the hymn also states that the dhāraṇī is associated with Nilakantha. The relative status of Śiva and Viṣṇu in the hymn follows a similar pattern to the one identified, at the end of the previous chapter, in the Kāraṇḍavyūha. The two gods are repeatedly invoked one after the other, indicating that they stand in a “complementary” relationship to each other. At the same time, though, Śiva is recognizably the superior deity. Chandra decides that the hymn is an offering of veneration to the Hari-Hara form, even though Śiva is not actually invoked here as Hara. In general terms, though, the hymn clearly reflects a similar sort of purānic influence—with Śiva dominant and Viṣṇu supporting—as the one reflected in the pages of the sūtra.

Avalokiteśvara’s manifestation as a bee, as we have already seen, shows the bodhisattva taking on more of the characteristics of a purānic deity. The same, finally, is also true of a description of the bodhisattva that occurs near the end of the Kāraṇḍavyūha, at the conclusion of the tour of the worlds said to be contained within the pores of the bodhisattva’s skin. The four oceans, Śākyamuni says, emerge from the right big toe of Avalokiteśvara. But the bodhisattva’s knees, the Buddha continues, are not immersed in these waters, which fall into the “mouth of the mare” (vaḍavamukhe), extinguishing the “heap of ashes” (bhasmarāsim). Several purānic motifs are reflected here. The first is the idea that the waters of the earth flow out of the supreme īśvara. The second, not unrelated idea, is that the dimensions of the īśvara transcend the known limits of the phenomenal world. In the version of the vāmana-avatāra presented in the Skanda Purāṇa, for instance, Viṣṇu’s third step is said to break out of Brahmāṇḍa (literally Brahmā’s egg or “aṇḍa”, one of the names traditionally given to the universe), whereupon the river Ganges is said to arise from Viṣṇu’s step and flood the triple world. In both sūtra and purāṇa, then, waters emerge from the foot of the īśvara and each īśvara is shown to be bigger than the created order itself. Meanwhile, the “mouth of the mare” into which these waters, in the Kāraṇḍavyūha, are said to pour, is the name given to an entrance to the lower realms and another standard image used to describe the end of the known world. The “heap of ashes” refers to a subterranean fire believed to be the cause of the waters of the ocean evaporating and turning into rain and snow. That the waters from the toe of Avalokiteśvara extinguish this “heap of ashes” is, I suggest, a repeat allusion to the bodhisattva’s ability to put out the fires of hell, described in more detail near the beginning of the sūtra. There, Avalokiteśvara is actually shown to enter the Avīci hell, whereupon the fires of hell are said to be spontaneously extinguished, the infernal cooking vessel is burst asunder and a lotus pond—with lotus flowers the size of chariot wheels—spontaneously appears in the middle of the infernal stove.
It is not surprising to discover, however, that the identification of Avalokiteśvara as an ātāvāra is not wholly unqualified. The idea of a Buddhist ātāvāra, after all, represents the attempt to assimilate an essentially theistic doctrine (the ātāvāra idea) into an essentially nontheistic religious system (Buddhism). The presentation in the sūtra of Avalokiteśvara as the all-pervasive puruṣa, for example, tiptoes carefully around what might be considered the Buddhist heresy of depicting the bodhisattva as a creator god in the fullest sense. In the sūtra’s version of the puruṣasākta myth, only the gods are seen to emanate from the bodhisattva’s body and not the created order itself. Though it might initially appear that the sun and moon are born from Avalokiteśvara’s eyes, the Sanskrit words used for “sun” and “moon” actually refer here to the vedic gods of the sun and moon, Āditya and Candra. Similarly, when the sūtra appears to indicate that the winds come from his mouth, the earth from his feet and the sky from his stomach, this is really a reference to the gods of the winds, earth, and sky, respectively Vāyu, Dharaṇī and Varuṇa. This is made explicit in the sentence that follows on immediately afterwards. It reads: “Once these gods were born from the body of noble Avalokiteśvara (yadaite deva jātā āryāvalokiteśvarasya kāyāt), then the great bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara spoke to the god Maheśvara.”

Avalokiteśvara, thereby, is associated with one of the central tenets of the ātāvāra doctrine—the idea of the cosmic puruṣa—without offending Buddhist norms. The sūtra version of the puruṣasākta myth, in the end, reads like a variation on the classic Mahāyāna belief that Avalokiteśvara is able to manifest in different forms according to the needs of different individuals. A statement to this effect—typical of its kind—occurs at one point in the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, when Avalokiteśvara is said to teach the Dharma in whatever way is most suitable to accomplish the conversion of beings. The list of the different forms that the bodhisattva is then said to adopt includes very nearly all the gods he has, earlier, been said to produce from his body. He can appear, it is said, as a tathāgata, a pratyekabuddha, an arhat, a bodhisattva, Maheśvara, Nārāyaṇa, Brahmā, Indra, the gods of the sun, the moon, fire, the sky, and the wind (Āditya, Candra, Agni, Varuṇa, Vāyu), a nāga, Vighnapati (the lord of obstacles), a yaksṛa, Vaiśravana, a king, a king’s soldier, a mother and a father. Only Sarasvatī and Dharaṇī, from the puruṣasākta-derived section of the sūtra, are missing.

That the sūtra is anxious to distance itself from the doctrine of a creator god is also apparent in a passage that we examined briefly in the previous chapter. This is the speech, which immediately follows the sūtra’s version of the puruṣasākta, in which the bodhisattva attacks Śiva and the doctrine of the līṅga. Maheśvara, the bodhisattva says, will appear in the kaliyuga in a world of perverted beings, and will be called the primordial god (adideva), the cre-
Avalokiteśvara as the Buddhist Īśvara

ator and author of the world (ākhyāyase srasṭāraṃ kartāram).\textsuperscript{58} Régamey writes that these remarks imply that, from the Buddhist point of view, the heresy is not the belief in a primordial god, but the belief that this primordial god is Maheśvara rather than Avalokiteśvara.\textsuperscript{59} I disagree. In view of the circumscribed presentation of Avalokiteśvara as cosmic puruṣa that has gone before, it seems much more likely that the sūtra is deliberately attacking the purānic doctrine of a primordial creator god, per se.

As Régamey goes on to say, the idea of a primordial creator was, undoubtedly, specifically endorsed by at least one part of the Buddhist Saṃgha, namely, that section responsible for the composition of the later verse version of the Kāraṇḍavyūha. This, as we saw in chapter 1, includes a passage describing the birth of Avalokiteśvara not from an ādideva, but from an ādibuddha, or “primordial buddha,” said to be synonymous with the svayamṛbu, or “self-existent one” and the ādinātha, or “primordial lord.” Even in the later text, though, this primordial creator is still not identified with Avalokiteśvara himself. The bodhisattva is not the ādibuddha, but is produced from the ādibuddha. Once again, he is said only to be responsible for the emanation of gods from the different parts of his body and not for the appearance of the created order itself. The point is not, as Régamey seems to think, that the prose Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra accepts the doctrine of the primordial creator and the verse sūtra builds on that. Rather, the prose Kāraṇḍavyūha seems to reflect a Buddhist sensibility that resisted the infiltration of the creator doctrine, while the verse sūtra reflects a sensibility that had, at a later time, come to accept it.\textsuperscript{60}

It seems likely, too, that the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra deliberately glosses over another important aspect of the īśvara doctrine that clashes with standard Buddhist teaching. This is the association of the īśvara with the idea of the ātman, that is to say the real “self” or “soul” of an individual that is believed to exist independently of, or beyond, the phenomenal dimension of his or her being. This is a doctrine ostensibly at odds with the central Buddhist teaching of anātman, or “non-self,” the idea that no such ātman can be found within an individual because no such entity exists. In the Śiva Purāṇa, for instance, we read:

In his attributeless pure form he is glorified as Śiva, the supreme ātman [paramātman], maheśvara, the supreme Brahman, the undecaying, the endless, and Mahādeva.\textsuperscript{61}

And in the Skanda Purāṇa:

Through offering obeisance (bowing down) the individual soul becomes one with Śiva, the Supreme ātman.\textsuperscript{62}
In the Bhagavadgītā, Kṛṣṇa says:

I am the self (ātma), Guḍākeśa, situated in the hearts of all creatures.63

However, nowhere in the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra is any mention made of this central purānic doctrine. At a point where one might expect this term to appear—in the list of attributes ascribed to the one hundred thousand-armed form of Avalokiteśvara—it is conspicuous only by its absence. The bodhisattva, we read, is the great yogin, established in nirvāṇa, distinguished, greatly wise, a deliverer of beings, well-born, invisible, wise, in his exposition he casts no shadows on any elements and is not heard or seen by anyone.64 He is not, however, the ātman, or paramātman. Once again, it seems, the idea of Avalokiteśvara as a purānic-style tīvra has been tailored to the requirements of Buddhist orthodoxy.

The terms ātman and paramātman do, of course, appear elsewhere in the Mahāyāna corpus. In the context of some of the so-called tathāgatagarbha, or “buddha nature,” sūtras such as the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra, the ātman terminology is employed to describe the buddha nature itself. Though it remains an issue of some controversy, some scholars have argued that the buddha nature genre, like the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, was strongly influenced by purānic doctrinal thinking. In parenthesis, then, it seems worth considering whether the Kāraṇḍavyūha might be grouped alongside those buddha nature sūtras, such as the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, which, assuming they are influenced by purānic thought, demonstrate the same careful vigilance in avoiding any use of the purānic terms ātman and paramātman.65

The Kāraṇḍavyūha faces one further set of considerations in presenting Avalokiteśvara as a Buddhist tīvra. In addition to trimming this essentially purānic doctrine of elements disagreeable to the Buddhist point of view, the sūtra must also show that the bodhisattva is still recognizably the same figure that appeared in earlier Mahāyāna sūtras. The sūtra, naturally, considers itself as a development of the Mahāyāna and not as a break away from the tradition. Throughout the work, then, Avalokiteśvara is seen to fulfill, not only the role of tīvra, but also many of the functions that have previously been associated with him in earlier texts.

There are still some other elements of the presentation of the bodhisattva in the Kāraṇḍavyūha that appear to break with all precedent. In some parts of the sūtra, for instance, Avalokiteśvara, it is implied, is greater in stature than the buddhas. In describing the way in which the bodhisattva brings vast numbers of creatures to maturity, Śākyamuni comments that even the tathāgatas do not have an illumination (pratibhānāṁ) like his.66 Later, having listened to Śākyamuni’s sermon on the merit of Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva Ratnapāṇi observes that it is inconceivable, and that he has never seen or
heard of such a heap of merit (puṇyaskandhaḥ) belonging to the tathāgatas, let alone to a bodhisattva. Twice it is said, once by the bodhisattva Ratnapāṇi and once by the bodhisattva Gaganagañja, that the power (viśaya) possessed by Avalokiteśvara has never been seen or heard of as belonging to a bodhisattva and that it is not found even among the tathāgatas.

This sense of the bodhisattva’s superiority over even the buddhas is also maintained in passages connected to the presentation of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ. One of the first things that is said about the six-syllable formula, for instance, is that all the tathāgatas have wandered for sixteen kalpas for its sake, a claim which is, to some degree, illustrated by the story of the journey made by the tathāgata Padmottama in order to obtain the formula. Śākyamuni himself says that, in a previous lifetime, he traversed countless realms in search of the six syllables and served numerous tathāgatas without obtaining or hearing the formula.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that these passages reflect a new Mahāyāna doctrine in which the status of buddhahood is deemed inferior to the status of an īśvara. They are not unlike descriptions, found elsewhere in the Mahāyāna corpus, of other important Buddhist figures. As Paul Williams has shown, Mañjuśrī, the great bodhisattva of wisdom, is presented in a comparable manner: he is sometimes said to be a buddha and sometimes, even, both the father and mother of innumerable buddhas. The phenomenon of temporarily treating one great bodhisattva as preeminent in this way, apparently at the expense of the prestige of other buddhas and bodhisattvas, is entirely in keeping with Indian religious convention. In the vedic hymns, for instance, whichever god is being praised is always treated, in that instance, as the greatest god of them all.

There is one other aspect of the conception of Avalokiteśvara presented in the Karanḍavyūha Sūtra that is not found in accounts of the bodhisattva anywhere else in Mahāyāna literature. This is the idea, described immediately before and immediately after the story of the search for Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ, that the hair pores of Avalokiteśvara’s body contain different worlds. The bodhisattva Sarvanīvaranaviśkambhin is taken on a tour of these worlds by Śākyamuni. The Buddha then announces that whoever brings to mind the six-syllable formula will be born in these pores, never again to wander in saṃsāra, traveling from one pore to the next until nirvāṇa is attained. This is the cue for the start of Sarvanīvaranaviśkambhin’s quest for Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ which, as soon as it is accomplished, gives way to another, slightly shorter description of these hair pores.

Avalokiteśvara, here, is clearly taking on the characteristics of another, well-known Mahāyāna figure, namely, Samantabhadra, the great bodhisattva of the Avatamsaka Sūtra, that compendium of texts which appears to have been first translated into Chinese, in its entirety, in the early part of the fifth
century. At the end of the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*, the final work of the *Avataṃsaka* corpus, we read:

Then Sudhana, contemplating the body of the enlightening being Universally Good [Samantabhadra], saw in each and every pore (*ekaikasmin romavivare*) untold multitudes of buddhalands filled with buddhas. And in each buddhaland he saw the buddhas surrounded by assemblies of enlightening beings. And he saw that all those multitudes of lands had various bases, various forms, various arrays, various perimeters, various clouds covering the skies, various buddhas appearing, various enunciations of cycles of the Teachings.

And, just as the practitioner is said to be born into the body of Avalokiteśvara by use of the six syllables:

Then Sudhana, edified by the advice and instruction of the enlightening being Universally Good, entered into all the worlds within the body of Universally Good and developed the beings toward maturity.

Avalokiteśvara’s body, as described in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* is, perhaps, slightly less amazing than Samantabhadra’s. The worlds that Śākyamuni describes contained within the hair pores seem, in general, not actually to be buddhalands. Though they share many of the standard characteristics of buddhalands (they are made of jewels, replete with marvelous trees and lotus ponds), their inhabitants are usually not buddhas, but less exalted beings such as *ṛṣis* and *gandharvas*. Nor does there seem to be more than one land in each of Avalokitešvara’s pores, compared to the “untold multitudes” spoken of in the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*. Nor does the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* match the *Gaṇḍavyūha*’s claim that the pores interpenetrate each other in an extraordinary way. In the latter work, for instance, we read: “And just as he [Sudhana] saw this in each pore (*ekaikasmin romavivare*), so also in all pores at once . . .” Nonetheless, there can be no doubt that this aspect of the presentation of Avalokiteśvara in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* owes a direct debt to the tradition of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*.

To make explicit this connection, Samantabhadra himself appears in the sūtra on three separate occasions. Each time, he is compared with Avalokiteśvara and each time he is shown to be in some way the lesser figure. The first of these appearances occurs in a passage that does, in fact, indicate that at least some of the worlds contained in Avalokiteśvara’s body are buddhalands. In order to illustrate the ungraspable nature of the hair pores, it is said that even though Samantabhadra roamed these pores for twelve years, he still did not see them, nor the one hundred buddhas residing in each one of them. Then,
a little later on in the sūtra, after the description of the “thousandfold” form of Avalokiteśvara, Samantabhadra is singled out again. If the other self-existent tathāgatas do not see this form, Śākyamuni says, what chance is there for Samantabhadra and the other bodhisattvas.78

Finally, in a passage that indicates that Avalokiteśvara is to be understood as superceding Samantabhadra as the supreme embodiment of the bodhisattva ideal, the two bodhisattvas have a “samādhi contest” (samādhivigraha),79 a kind of duel in which the power of one bodhisattva is pitted against the other. Avalokiteśvara is said to be furnished with hundreds of samādhis (anekaiḥ samādhīs ātāḥ samavāgataḥ),80 a characteristic shared by Samantabhadra in the Avatāṃsaka Sūtra. There, for instance, we read:

Then the enlightening being Universally Good arose from this concentration; when he did so, he rose from media of oceans of concentrations numerous as atoms in all oceans of worlds.81

In the “samādhi contest” of the Kāraṇḍavyūha, the two bodhisattvas compare seven pairs of samādhis,82 and then reveal their hair pores to one another.83 Samantabhadra then appears to admit defeat when he congratulates Avalokiteśvara on possessing such brilliancy (yastvamādṛśaṃ pratibhānanvān).84

The notion of Avalokiteśvara as a being greater than Samantabhadra and greater even than the tathāgatas might appear, initially, to outstrip and leave behind the more modest conception of the bodhisattva described in the so-called Pure Land sūtras. There, Avalokiteśvara is, though extremely wondrous, a subordinate, servile figure: an attendant of the Buddha Amitābha. In the longer Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra, a text translated into Chinese during the second century C.E.,85 Avalokiteśvara and the bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta are said to have left the buddhafield of Śākyamuni to be reborn in Sukhāvatī, the “Land of Bliss,” Amitābha’s buddhafield. There, the light they emanate is said to shine throughout the world.86 A similar scenario is described in the third of the great Pure Land sūtras, sometimes given the Sanskrit name Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛti Sūtra or the Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra.87 In the text, it is said at one point that Amitāyus (who is Amitābha by a different name)88 “appeared in the sky with the two great beings, Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, standing in attendance to his left and right.”89 Later, in the same sūtra, we read: “These two bodhisattvas assist Amida80 Buddha in his work of universal salvation.”91

However, despite the undoubted aggrandisement of Avalokiteśvara in the Kāraṇḍavyūha, the conception of the bodhisattva as a servant of Amitābha is not forgotten. Avalokiteśvara is, for instance, shown to obey the orders of Amitābha. In order to receive the six-syllable formula, the buddha Padmottama first asks for it from Amitābha, who tells Avalokiteśvara to bestow it.92 Then,
on receiving the formula, Padmottama offers Avalokiteśvara a string of pearls. The bodhisattva accepts this gift, before offering it, in turn, to Amitābha. In so doing, the bodhisattva indicates that his ability to bestow the formula depends upon the generosity of the buddha. Near the beginning and near the end of the sūtra, Avalokiteśvara is depicted as a kind of emissary of Amitābha. Appearing in the Jetavana grove, he prostrates himself before a buddha and offers him some lotus flowers that he has brought from Amitābha in Sukhāvatī.

Other traits of Avalokiteśvara, familiar from earlier texts, are also preserved in the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra. In the Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra, for instance, the bodhisattva is presented chiefly in terms of the development of his compassion. He is discovered by Sudhana seated on the summit of Mount Potalaka, expounding a doctrine called “the light of the medium of great love and compassion,” which concerns the salvation of all sentient beings. When asked for instructions on how to learn and carry out the practice of a bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara describes a practice called “undertaking great compassion without delay.” Later, he says: “I have only attained this way of enlightening practice through unhesitating great compassion.”

The bodhisattva is frequently linked to the same quality in the course of the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra. At the beginning of the text, in the course of coming to the aid of the pretas and, a little later, of the yaksas and rākṣasas, he is said to generate a mind of great compassion (mahākaruṇācittotpādaya). As he sets off to meet Bali, he is said to have a heart full of great compassion (mahākaruṇāsaṃpūdayo). He or she who recites Om Maṇipadme Hūm is said to become furnished with great compassion (mahākaruṇāyā samanvāgato bhavati). Upon receiving the formula, Sarvanīvaranāvīṣkambhin is said to enter several samādhis, one of which is called “rejoicing in loving kindness and compassion” (maitrīkaruṇāmudito nāma samādhiḥ).

The treatment of Avalokiteśvara in the Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra also includes an account of the bodhisattva’s ability to manifest in whatever form is most suitable for particular beings, a trait that, as we have already observed, is also described in the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra. In the Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra, Avalokiteśvara says:

I also develop sentient beings by appearing in various forms: I gladden and develop them by purity of vision of inconceivable forms radiating auras of light, and I take care of them and develop them by speaking to them according to their mentalities, and by showing conduct according to their inclinations, and by magically producing various forms, and by teaching them doctrines commensurate with their various interests, and by inspiring them to begin to accumulate good qualities, by showing them projections according to their mentalities, by appearing to them as
members of their own various races and conditions, and by living together with them.\textsuperscript{103}

The fullest exposition of this doctrine, however, occurs in the twenty-fourth chapter\textsuperscript{104} of the \textit{Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra}, a text first translated into Chinese by Dharmarakṣa in 286 C.E.

In some worlds, young man of good family, the bodhisattva \textit{mahāsattva} Avalokiteśvara preaches the law to creatures in the shape of a buddha; in others he does so in the shape of a bodhisattva. To some beings he shows the law in the shape of \textit{pratyekabuddha}; to others he does so in the shape of a disciple; to others again under that of Brahmā, Indra, or a \textit{gandharva}. To those who are to be converted by a goblin (\textit{yakṣa}), he preaches the law assuming the shape of a goblin; to those who are to be converted by \textit{īśvara}, he preaches the law in the shape of \textit{īśvara} . . .\textsuperscript{105}

. . . and so on, with regard to the shape of a \textit{maheśvara}, a \textit{cakravartin}, a \textit{piśāca} (a kind of demon), Kubera (\textit{vaishravana}, the chief of the yakṣas), Senāpati (the general of an army and a name given to Śiva in the \textit{Mahābhārata}),\textsuperscript{106} a brahmin and the bodhisattva Vajrapāni.\textsuperscript{107}

Like the \textit{Saddharmapuṇḍarīka}, the \textit{Kāraṇḍavyūha} also prefaces its account of this doctrine with a section describing the benefits of the use of Avalokiteśvara’s name. The \textit{Kāraṇḍavyūha} is quite brief here. Happy are they in this world, it is said, who hold in their minds the name (\textit{nāmadheyamanus-maranti}) of Avalokiteśvara.\textsuperscript{108} They are liberated from the anguish and suffering of old age, death, disease, grief, and lamentation. They do not experience the sufferings of \textit{saṃsāra}. Dressed in brilliant white, like swans flying as fast as the wind, they go to Sukhāvatī, where they hear the Dharma from the \textit{tathāgata} Amitābha.\textsuperscript{109}

The much longer and more detailed presentation of the \textit{Saddharmapuṇḍarīka} is rather different. Rebirth in Sukhāvatī is not, in fact, linked to the use of the name here. Instead, the effects of using the name that are described in chapter twenty-four of the \textit{sūtra} seem to fall into two broad categories. First, calling upon the bodhisattva or bringing to mind his name is said to save the individual from a wide variety of perilous situations. Second, the practice is said to produce a huge amount of merit. For instance:

If a man given up to capital punishment implores Avalokiteśvara, young man of good family, the swords of the executioners shall snap asunder. Further, young man of good family, if the whole triple chiliosm were teeming with goblins and giants, they would by virtue of the name of the
bodhisattva mahāsattva Avalokiteśvara being pronounced lose the faculty of sight in their wicked designs . . . 110

And:

He who adores a number of Lords Buddhas equal to sixty-two times the sands of the river Ganges and cherishes their names, and he who adores the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Avalokiteśvara and cherishes his name, have an equal accumulation of pious merit . . . 111

The Avalokiteśvara of the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, then, despite his assumption of the role of great Buddhist ṭśvara, is still identifiably the same bodhisattva that appears in earlier Mahāyāna sūtras. How, though, are we to understand, did the bodhisattva become this supreme ṭśvara figure?

The doctrine of the chameleon-like nature of Avalokiteśvara, does not, I think, constitute a wholly satisfactory explanation for this change. It is true that it is explicitly stated, in the relevant passages from the Saddharmapuṇḍarika, Gaṇḍavyūha and Kāraṇḍavyūha, that Avalokiteśvara can adopt the shape of an ṭśvara. But these passages almost certainly originate from a time before the bodhisattva had been conceived of as the Buddhist ṭśvara. They refer, surely, to the ability of the bodhisattva to appear, not as a Buddhist ṭśvara, but as a non-Buddhist ṭśvara. Avalokiteśvara, in this context, adopts the temporary disguise of this kind of non-Buddhist being. The Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra as a whole, though, describes a very different situation. There, the role of ṭśvara is not incidental to Avalokiteśvara’s activity. It has become a central, permanent part of his being. Furthermore, he is not Śiva or Viśṇu, but a separate, distinctively Buddhist ṭśvara.

The bodhisattva’s transformation in this regard must be accounted for, rather, by the mechanism described in the subjugation myth. The conversion of Śiva by Avalokiteśvara that is, as we have seen, a feature of the Kāraṇḍavyūha, carries with it the implication that through taming Śiva and his power, the bodhisattva is able to take on the characteristics of the god. This absorption of the personalities of different, lesser deities into the being of a single, greater figure is a process described in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist texts. As Robert Mayer writes: “Just as the Hindu conquering deities appropriate the accessories of their victims . . ., so also the Buddhist conquerors appropriate the accessories of their victims . . .” 112 By defeating the Śaivite ṭśvara, Avalokiteśvara is able to manifest as the Buddhist ṭśvara.

The name of Avalokiteśvara might, of course, be taken as an indication that the bodhisattva was regarded as an ṭśvara from the very start. In a part of the later verse version of the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, for instance, “Avalokiteśvara” is said to mean “the lord” (-ṛśvara) who “looks down”
Avalokiteśvara as the Buddhist Isvara 53

(avalokita-) “with compassion.” This discussion, however, forms part of the epilogue dialogue between Asoka and his preceptor Upagupta and is wholly absent in the earlier, prose version of the sûtra: an indication that it probably belongs to a relatively late stage of reflection on the nature of the bodhisattva. In actual fact, the original name of the bodhisattva was almost certainly not Avalokiteśvara, but was, instead, Avalokitasvara.114

The name Avalokitasvara does not, it is true, appear in any known surviving complete Sanskrit manuscripts. It does, however, feature in a set of early Sanskrit fragments of the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra, discovered in eastern Turkestan and first commented on by N. D. Mironov in 1927. The documents, Mironov states, can be assigned to the end of the fifth century C.E. on palæographical grounds. There are three fragments of the twenty-fourth chapter where the name of the bodhisattva is spelt Avalokitasvara. “As the name occurs five times on an incomplete leaf,” he comments, “the possibility of a clerical error is hardly admissible.”115

Moreover, with one exception, all the early Chinese translations of the Mahāyāna sūtras (up until the middle of the seventh century) show that the name of the bodhisattva always ended in -svara, translated by the Chinese character transliterated as -yin. Kuan-yin, the term that remains in popular use to this day, is a translation of Avalokita-svara. The earliest reference to the use of this name, according to a survey conducted by Chandra, is found in a sixth-century commentary on Kumārajīva’s separate translation of the twenty-fourth chapter of the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra. This is rather late. However, Chandra also points out that a translation of the Vimalakirtinirdesa Sūtra made between 223 and 228 C.E. by Chih Ch’ien, refers to the bodhisattva as K’uei-yin, an alternative Chinese form of the same Sanskrit name. In a translation of the same sûtra made by Kumārajīva in about 400 C.E., the name of the bodhisattva appears as Kuan-shih-yin, another common Chinese rendering of the name, reflecting the Sanskrit Avalokita-loka-svara.

The use of Kuan-shih-yin is widespread. According to Chandra, it appears in: translations of the Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra and a text called the Gṛhapati Ugra Paripṛcchā, made by Saṃghavarman in 252; a text called the Kuan-shih-yin-ying-yen-chi, written between 374 and 426; a translation of the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra made by Kumārajīva in 406; a translation of the Karuṇāpūṇḍarīka Sūtra made by Dharmakṣema between 414 and 421; a translation of the Avatamsaka Sūtra made by Buddhhabhadra between 418 and 422; another version of the Kuan-shih-yin-ying-yen-chi produced in 501 and a translation of the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra made by Jñānagupta and Dharmagupta in 601. In addition, a translation of the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sutra made by Dharmarakṣa in 286, uses the slight variant Kuang-shih-yin, where kuang means “light” or “splendor.”116
Meanwhile, the earliest known instance of the Sanskrit form Avalokiteśvara, with the -tśvara ending, occurs later than all the above references. It is first apparent in the so-called Petrovsky manuscript of the Saddharma-pundarīka Sūtra found at Kashgar, which has been dated to the seventh century C.E. Similarly, the Chinese rendering of Avalokiteśvara, Kuan-tzu-tsai, does not seem to occur in any manuscript written before the middle of the same century. Its earliest known appearance occurs in the work of the famous traveling scholar and translator Hsuan Tsang. We find it, for instance, in his translation of the Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra made between 693 and 713; a translation of the same sūtra made by Fa Hien between 973 and 1001, and a translation of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra made by Śīksānanda between 695 and 699.¹¹⁷

It is also interesting to note that though Hsuan Tsang was convinced that Avalokiteśvara was the correct form, his Chinese biographers were not. In a note added to the third chapter of his travelogue, the Si Yu Chi, or “Buddhist Records of the Western World,” written in 646 C.E., Hsuan Tsang asserts that the old Chinese versions of the name—Kuan-shih-yin, corresponding to Avalokitolokasvara, and Kuan-shih-tzu-tsai, corresponding to Avalokítalokeśvara—are wrong, and that the alternative form of Kuan-tzu-tsai, or Avalokiteśvara is correct.¹¹⁸ Nonetheless, the nineteenth-century English translator of Hsuan Tsang’s travelogue, Samuel Beal, remarks: “It is singular, if the expression (Kuan-shih-yin) is erroneous, that Hsuan Tsang, or rather Hwui-lih (the traveler’s biographer) uses it constantly in his biography.”¹¹⁹ This shows, presumably, that Kuan-shih-yin was the accepted form in seventh-century China and continued to be used by Hsuan Tsang’s biographer, while Kuan-tzu-tsai was the translation of a new form of the bodhisattva’s name—Avalokiteśvara—discovered to be in use in India by Hsuan Tsang.

One of Hsuan Tsang’s pilgrim predecessors, the Chinese monk Fa Hien, who visited the so-called Western Buddhist kingdoms between 399 and 414 C.E., refers to the bodhisattva as Kuan-shih-yin, once when students of the Mahāyāna are said to make offerings to the bodhisattva (as well as to the Prajñāpāramitā and to Mañjuśrī) and once when, in very rough seas, he is said to “think with all his heart” of the bodhisattva.¹²⁰ This suggests that the name Avalokiteśvara was still not much used in India during the first part of the fifth century and that it only became popular over the course of the following two hundred years, after which time it was noticed by Hsuan Tsang. It is possible, though, that the name Avalokiteśvara was, in fact, already in use in India during the time of Fa Hien’s travels and that the Chinese pilgrim simply stuck to the older and (what was to him) the more familiar form in his travelogue.

Another early example of the dilemma over which of these titles to use—Kuan-tzu-tsai or Kuan-shih-yin—occurs in a commentary on the Avataṃsaka
Sūtra, the Ta Fang Kuang Fo Hua-yen Ching Su, written between 784 and 787 C.E. It reads: “In the Sanskrit originals themselves two different names of the bodhisattva occur. It is due to this difference in the Sanskrit originals that the Chinese translators of these same originals differ as to the names of the bodhisattva.”

A Sanskrit-Chinese dictionary, the Fan-i Ming-Chi, compiled in 1151 C.E., seems to consider Avalokiteśvara correct, but comments that sūtra texts found north of the Himalayas maintain the use of the -svara ending. Once again, this points to a situation in which Avalokiteśvara was a name that emerged in India at a later time, after texts containing the original form of Avalokitasvara had been taken over the Himalayas and translated into Chinese.

There can be no reasonable doubt, then, that the original name of the great bodhisattva ended in -svara, denoted by the Chinese -yin, either as in Avalokitasvara, Kuan-yin, or as in Avalokitalokasvara, Kuan-shih-yin. The translation of the last two syllables of these names, -svara, is relatively straightforward: it means “sound,” “noise,” or “voice,” being used, for instance to denote the different notes of a musical scale. The first five syllables, avalokita-, are slightly more problematic however, being a past participle form of a verb avalok, usually translated to mean “to look upon or at, view, behold, see, notice, observe.”

The natural translation of Avalokitasvara, then, would be something like “the sound that is seen,” which makes little obvious sense.

However, in an irregularity of Sanskrit grammar, some past participles can sometimes take an active, rather than a passive sense. In her study of Avalokiteśvara, Marie-Thérèse de Mallmann cites three different scholars who support this view. Eugène Burnouf, commenting on the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, wrote that there was some precedent for such a peculiar usage and that, besides, this would not have been the first time that the Buddhists had stretched the grammatical rules of brahmanical composition. Louis Renou points to the Sanskrit form hataputra, meaning “the killer of a son” and not, as one would normally expect, “the son (that has been) killed.” Louis de la Vallée Poussin notes another analogous form, parijita, which would normally mean “(having been) conquered,” but which, in one particular context, seems much more likely to mean “conquering.” He also concludes that there are likely to be other instances of the grammatical irregularity.

Avalokitasvara, then, might be translated as “sound viewer,” or “sound seer.” “Sound perceiver” is, perhaps, a better translation. The significance of this title refers, it seems, to the bodhisattva’s ability to respond to the cries of the beings who call upon him in distress. He is the “perceiver” of the “sounds” made by those who need his help, as described in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka. This etymological explanation does, in fact, appear in an early Chinese translation of that sūtra. Śākyamuni responds to a question about the meaning of the great bodhisattva’s name in the following way:
Illustrious youth! Though there were untold millions of creatures in the universe all suffering from miseries incidental to their several conditions, they need only hear this name of Kuan-shih-yin bodhisattva, and with one heart invoke it, and Kuan-shih-yin, immediately perceiving the sounds of the voice so pronounced, shall deliver them all.  

Here, the Chinese character transliterated as -yin is not only the third syllable of the bodhisattva’s name, it is also the character translated here as “sounds.” The name of the bodhisattva, in other words, is shown to refer to the activity of “perceiving” (avalokita-) “sounds” (-svāra).

The role of the “sound perceiver,” then, might be said to fill the gap between the mundane world and the transcendent realm of the buddhas. According to Tucci, Avalokiteśvara (or Avalokitasvara) was not necessarily intrinsically connected to Amitābha from the very start. Tucci refers to another Mahāyāna text, the Śrīmahadevvyākarana, in which Avalokiteśvara is connected to the activity of Śākyamuni preaching in Sukhāvatī. This link between the bodhisattva and the Buddha is also apparent in the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra. Avalokiteśvara is seen to prostrate himself before Śākyamuni on several different occasions: once, as we have already seen, when he appears in the Jetavana vihāra bringing lotus flowers from Amitābha and once again, just before the Buddha’s final teaching on monastic discipline. Also, when the bodhisattva returns to the Jetavana vihāra at both the beginning and the end of the sūtra, he makes a report of his work to Śākyamuni. “Just as the Lord has ordered (yathājñapto bhagavatā),” he says at the end, “thus have I established the levels of my activity (evaṃ ca mayā karmabhūmirnispādita).” The Buddha then congratulates him. The “sound perceiver,” then, acts as an intermediary for both Amitābha and Śākyamuni. On behalf of the two buddhas, he enters the different realms of saṃsāra in order to save beings from suffering and, in particular, to lead them to the pure land of Sukhāvatī. His name, as Tucci suggests, may derive from the compassionate gaze of the buddhas—avalokana—said, for instance, to have been shown by Śākyamuni before he entered into the human world as the buddha of our own historical period.

It is interesting to note that the Sanskrit edition of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra used by H. Kern reads very differently at this point from the Chinese translation quoted above. Śākyamuni’s reply, in this version, reads simply:

All the hundred thousands of myriads of koṭis of creatures, young man of good family, who in this world are suffering troubles, will, if they hear the name of the bodhisattva mahāsattva Avalokiteśvara, be released from that mass of troubles.
The Sanskrit text clearly reflects a time when the original name of the bodhisattva had been supplanted by the later Avalokiteśvara form. As a result, the explanation of the bodhisattva’s name in terms of “sounds” loses its force, because -svara, the Sanskrit word for “sound” and the original ending of the name, has been replaced by the -ṭvara ending, meaning “lord.” Mironov comments: “The obvious inappropriateness of the explanation of the name Avalokiteśvara in this passage was early felt. When Avalokitavasra was abandoned and supplanted by Avalokiteśvara, the text...was remodelled, viz. the words ‘voice,’ ‘invoke,’ preserved in Chinese, were eliminated.”

To conclude this investigation into the original name of the bodhisattva, it remains only to show that this was Avalokitasvara, translated in Chinese as Kuan-yin, and not Avalokitalokasvara, as suggested by the popular Chinese form Kuan-shih-yin. First of all, as we have already noted, the name Avalokitasvara is found in the fifth-century Sanskrit fragments of the *Saddharma-pundarīka Sūtra* commented on by Mironov. Second, although Kuan-shih-yin does appear, overall, to be the more popular version of the name in the early Chinese translations, we should remember that a Chinese translation of Avalokitavasra, not as Kuan-yin but as K’uei-yin, does occur in a translation of the *Vimalakirtinirdeśa Sūtra* made between 223 and 228 C.E.

The Chinese form Kuan-shih-yin, it seems likely, arose due to the influence of a folk etymology of the original Sanskrit name Avalokitasvara. The bodhisattva was, it seems, understood to be the perceiver (avalokita-) of the sounds (-svara) of the world (loka). Loka, the Sanskrit word for “world,” though in actual fact absent from the name, was nonetheless felt to be “implied,” as Chandra puts it, by the third syllable in Avalokitasvara. Unlike the Sanskrit, of course, the Chinese name Kuan-yin carried no trace of this sense, so shih, the Chinese character for loka was simply added to the name, resulting in the emergence of a new form, the popular Kuan-shih-yin. The Sanskrit equivalent of Kuan-shih-yin, Avalokitalokasvara, however, almost certainly never existed: it has never been found in any Sanskrit manuscript. The same may also be said for Avalokitalokeśvara, the hypothetical Sanskrit equivalent of Kuan-shih-tzu-tsai, another Chinese form of the bodhisattva’s name mentioned by Hsuan Tsang.

That Kuan-shih-yin was a Chinese invention is conclusively demonstrated by the contents of the *Fan-i Ming-i Chi* and the *Ta Fang Kuang Fo Hua-yen Ching Su*, the texts A. von Staël-Holstein uses to show that both the -svara and -ṭvara endings of the bodhisattva’s name were known to the Chinese. Both texts, he writes, “regard Kuan-shih-yin (Avalokitalokasvara) as an exact equivalent of Avalokitavasra, which is of course wrong. The character shih (loka) is not represented in their transliterations, which transcribe merely the forms Avalokiteśvara and Avalokitasvara.” In other words, despite the fact
that the Sanskrit versions of these texts clearly used the names Avalokiteśvara and Avalokitasvara, the Chinese translators nevertheless still insisted on using what had become the preferred form of the name, Kuan-shih-yin.

In passing, brief mention should also be made of the fact that the bodhisattva is sometimes referred to by the abbreviated form Avalokita. This name is used, for instance, in the Bodhicaryāvatāra, the poetic exposition of the Mahāyāna path attributed to the Indian ācārya Śāntideva. The Tibetan name for the bodhisattva, spyan ras gzigs, is also an honorific form of the Sanskrit Avalokita. Chandra suggests, plausibly, that this version of the name became popular during the period in which people were confused about whether to use the original name of the bodhisattva, Avalokitasvara, or the new name, Avalokiteśvara. AVALOKITASVARA eventually became Avalokiteśvara, it seems likely, due once again to the force of another folk interpretation of the name, here based upon the identification of the bodhisattva as a lokeśvara. This is a generic term meaning, literally, “lord” (-śvara) “of the world” (loka-), applied to a wide range of supernormal beings in Indian religious thought. Bearing in mind, then, that very few people would ever have seen the name of the bodhisattva in written form, it is quite understandable that the pronunciation of the -asvara ending should have slipped to the homophonic -eśvara, thereby producing a name—Avalokiteśvara—that would actually have seemed a more appropriate title for a being understood to be a great lokeśvara. Even in written form, the two names may have been easily confused. Meiji Yamada writes: “In fact, if corrupt forms of both Avalokitasvara and Avalokiteśvara had been written in Karošṭhī orthography in North-West India, the two forms probably would have been the same.” The subsequent identification of the bodhisattva as the Buddhist śvara was, no doubt, facilitated by the use of the new name Avalokiteśvara.

It is beyond the scope of this study to explore the development of the many different forms of Avalokiteśvara. These are represented in schemata such as the arrangement of one hundred and eight manifestations of the bodhisattva that is famously depicted in the Macchandar Vahal temple in Kathmandu and in the group of thirty-three forms of Kuan-yin that is so popular in the Far East. In brief, the appropriation of these different forms can, I think, be accounted for both by the process of subjugation and conversion (when the bodhisattva takes the form of a deity) and by the chameleon-like ability of the bodhisattva (when he takes on the form of a particular human being). The only one of these forms alluded to in the Kāranḍavyūha Sūtra appears to be Cunda, a manifestation of the bodhisattva familiar as a member of a scheme of six Kuan-yins that has been preserved in the Japanese and Korean traditions. Shortly after Sarvanīvaṇāvīśkambhin receives ṪMANIPADME ḤAṂ, what is now generally agreed to be Cunda’s own concise
formula, *Om Cale Cule Cunde Svaha*, appears as a *dhāraṇī* said to be spoken by seventy-seven families of *tathāgatas*. However, there is no clear indication that *Cuṇḍā* is actually conceived of, here, as a form of Avalokiteśvara. No further comment is made about the formula and the text reverts immediately to the second part of Śākyamuni’s description of the worlds contained within the hair pores of Avalokiteśvara.

In conclusion, then, the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* presents Avalokiteśvara as an *tīvara* in the mould of the two great purānic deities, but particularly of Śiva. The sūtra shows that the bodhisattva is recognizably the same figure that appears in earlier Mahāyāna literature. The evolution of the conception of the bodhisattva can be traced from his early appearance as Avalokitasvara (the “sound-perceiver” attendant of Amitābha and Śākyamuni), to his appearance under the name of Avalokiteśvara (due to his being identified as a *lokeśvara*), to his eventual manifestation as the supreme Buddhist *tīvara* (due to his subjugation and conversion of the Śaivite *tīvara*). The next chapter, then, will compare the presentations of *Om Mani padme Hum* in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* and of *Namaḥ Śivāya* in the purāṇas, examining to what extent the six-syllable formula of the Buddhist *tīvara* can be regarded as analogous to the five-syllable formula of the Śaivite *tīvara*. 
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CHAPTER 4

Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ and Namaḥ Śivāya

A superficial scanning of the Kāraṇḍavyūha reveals that the six syllables Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ actually only occur twice in the entire text. This is not to say, however, that the presentation of the mantra in the sutra is incidental to the main thrust of the work. A substantial proportion of the Kāraṇḍavyūha is devoted to explaining the significance of the formula. It is, however, referred to throughout the text by the Sanskrit phrase ṣaḍakṣarā mahāvidyā, or “the six-syllable great formula,” vidyā, literally “knowledge,” referring in this instance to a particular type of mantra.

The different uses of the term vidyā may be divided into three basic categories. The word may refer, first, to a “science,” or “field of knowledge.” In the vedic tradition, for instance, there are generally said to be four principle vidyās of this kind: trayā, the science of the triple Veda; ānvikṣikā, the science of logic and metaphysics; đaṇḍanātī, the science of government and vārttā, knowledge of the practical arts, such as agriculture, commerce, and medicine.1 Vidyā may also be used as a synonym for “mantra,” which, like the more conventional sciences, is traditionally held to bestow a kind of mental control over different aspects of reality. In the Aṣṭasahāsrika, for example, the term is used derogatorily in this fashion. In a section outlining the qualities of an irreversible bodhisattva, we read: “He [the bodhisattva] does not in any way embark on those spells (vidyā), mutterings, herbs, magical formulae, medical incantations, etc., which are the work of women.”2 Vidyā, finally, may refer to “knowledge” in the more crucial sense of “insight,” “realization,” or “enlightenment.” In the Kāraṇḍavyūha, for instance, one of the titles regularly given to the buddhas is the standard epithet vidyācārānasāmpannāḥ, or “accomplished (sāmpannāḥ) in knowledge (vidyā-) and conduct (-cārānā-),”3 and Avalokiteśvara himself is addressed at one point as vidyādhipataye, or “O lord (adhipataye) of knowledge.”4

At some stage, however, the latter two meanings have coalesced to describe a mantra believed to be capable of bringing about both magical effects and enlightenment itself. In the Aṣṭasahāsrika, in a passage that must be part of a later recension of the text than that which includes the passage quoted
immediately above, the Perfection of Wisdom itself is said to be a *vidyā* of this kind: “A great lore (*vidyā*) is this Perfection of Wisdom, a lore without measure, a quite measureless lore, an unsurpassed lore, an unequalled lore, a lore which equals the unequalled.” It has protective power: “When they bring to mind and repeat this Perfection of Wisdom, the calamities which threaten them from kings and princes, from king’s counsellors and king’s ministers will not take place.” And it also leads to enlightenment: “For thanks to this lore (*vidyā*), i.e., the Perfection of Wisdom, the buddhas of the past have known full enlightenment. Thanks to it the buddhas of the future will know it. Thanks to it, the buddhas of the present do know it. Thanks to it, I [Śākyamuni] have known it.” The formula promoted in the *Hṛdaya Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*—*

Gate Gate Parāgata Parāsamgate Bodhi Svāhā*—is an example of the Perfection of Wisdom as such a *vidyā*. *

*Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ,* then, as the śaṅkāra mahāvidyā, may be said to be a mantra of this type. Furthermore, as a feminine noun, *vidyā,* when applied to a formula, usually denotes the fact that the formula in question is itself, in some sense, female in gender. This, as we shall see, is a qualification that also applies to *Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ.*

The śaṅkāraḥ mahāvidyā is first properly introduced as the means by which people may be born into the worlds contained within the hair pores of Avalokiteśvara. The bodhisattva Sarvanīvaranāvīkambhin then asks Śākyamuni how he might obtain this formula. Put very briefly, the Buddha’s reply consists of a long description of the many extraordinary benefits of reciting the six syllables, together with an account of the search for the formula made by the *tathāgata* Padmottama. Before Padmottama is granted initiation into its use, the text introduces a colored maṇḍala made out of the dust of precious stones. Sarvanīvaranāvīkambhin is next told that he must seek out a suitable *dharma-bhāṇaka:* a man who bears the formula in mind (*dhārayati*), speaks it (*vācayati*) and pays proper attention to it (*yoniśaśca manasi kurute*), and who, in addition, lives in the city of Vāraṇāsī. The bodhisattva then sets off with a retinue of followers to meet this preceptor. After another sermon on the marvelous qualities of *Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ,* the *dharma-bhāṇaka* finally grants initiation into the use of the mantra.

It is only at those two moments in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha,* when first Padmottama and then Sarvanīvaranāvīkambhin receive the formula, that the six syllables “*Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ*” are explicitly spelled out in the text. This economy of use is surely a deliberate ploy to build up a sense that the formula is something of enormous value and that the personal discovery of the actual identity these syllables represents a rare and precious opportunity. The dissemination of the formula may, in fact, be regarded as one of the most important concerns of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha,* as an examination of the overall structure of the work shows. The edition of the text edited by Vaidya, for example, consists of approximately fifty pages of Sanskrit, divided into two parts.
(nirvyāhāḥ) of more or less the same length. The section dealing with *Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ* takes up about nine pages of text and is the central section of the second part of the sūtra.\(^{16}\)

The first part (nirvyāhāḥ) of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* is predominantly concerned with descriptions of the salvific adventures of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. The sūtra begins, in typical Buddhist style, with a description of the gathering of beings around Śākyamuni Buddha in the Jetavana grove. This assembly is then said to become illuminated by a gorgeous light shining out of the Avīci hell,\(^{17}\) which the bodhisattva Sarvanīvaraṇaviśkambhin is told emanates from Avalokiteśvara.\(^{18}\) There follow descriptions of the great bodhisattva’s compassionate visitations to a number of different locations: to hell; to the ghost realm; to the asuras; to a place known as the “level made of silver” (*rūpyamāyāṃ bhāmyāṃ*) populated by “four-legged beings with the souls of men” (*catuspādikāni sattvāni puruṣapudgalāni*); to the level made of iron (*ayomāyāṃ bhāmyāṃ*) where Bali is bound; to the yaksas; to the gods; to the rākṣasts of Śimhala; to the worms and insects of Vārāṇasī and, finally, before returning to the Jetavana grove, to the famine-stricken inhabitants of Magadha.

In between these accounts of Avalokiteśvara’s travels, the sūtra also includes sections detailing other attributes of the bodhisattva: the theophany of various gods from different parts of his body; the emergence of different colored light rays from his mouth; the transformation of the Jetavana grove, upon his entrance, into a fragrant, bejewelled paradise akin to the pure lands of the buddhas; the inconceivable amount of merit accrued by the bodhisattva; the enormous benefits of bringing to mind his name and his ability to manifest in numerous different forms.

The second half of the sūtra begins with a fairly lengthy presentation (taking up four pages of Vaidya’s edition) of the story of Śimhala’s voyage to the island of rākṣasts and his subsequent rescue by the magical, flying horse Bālāha. There then follows the first part of a tour of the worlds contained within the hair pores of the bodhisattva, which includes the sight of his “thousandfold” form. This is immediately followed by the long section wholly concerned with matters pertaining to *Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ*.\(^{19}\) Once this is over, the sūtra returns to a second, somewhat shorter description of more of these worlds. Avalokiteśvara then proceeds back to the assembly in the Jetavana grove. Finally, after accounts of the conversion of Maheśvara and Umādevī by the bodhisattva and the “sāmaṭdi-contest” between Avalokiteśvara and Samantabhadra, the sūtra ends with a teaching on monastic discipline, given by Śākyamuni to his disciple Ānanda.

The *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, then, like the purāṇas, is a composite work consisting of stories, as well as doctrinal and ethical teachings, gathered together and placed within the “casket” (*kāraṇḍa*) of a single book. It seems reasonable to
suggest, moreover, that the two sections of the work correspond to two separate stages of recension. Each section, for example, contains a story about the bodhisattva’s visit to the island of rakṣasts, the details of which contradict each other. In the first instance, Simhala is the name of the island, which is visited by Avalokiteśvara in the guise of an anonymous brahmin. The bodhisattva then overcomes the rakṣasts by preaching the Dharma to them, thereby transforming them into well-behaved Buddhists. In the second half of the sūtra, Simhala is both the name of the island and the name of the merchant shipwrecked there, who is not Avalokiteśvara, but the Buddha Śākyamuni in one of his past lives. Rather than overcoming the rakṣasts by his own power, Simhala is saved from them by the flying horse Bālāha, who is a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara.

The aim of the first section might be said, in simple terms, to generate devotion towards the figure of the Buddhist āvara, by detailing the various inspiring deeds and qualities of Avalokiteśvara. There is, however, in this half of the sūtra, no instruction about any form of practice related to the bodhisattva, apart that is from a few lines in one short chapter (chapter eight in Vaidya’s edition), where the immense benefits of bringing to mind the name of Avalokiteśvara are recounted. However, it does not appear as if the text is giving any great emphasis to this practice (its description occupies a mere nine lines of text), and it seems likely that it is included principally as a necessary part of a recapitulation of the classic presentation of the bodhisattva found in chapter twenty-four of the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra. As in that work, the value of calling upon Avalokiteśvara is immediately followed by an account of the many different forms the bodhisattva may adopt in order to save different kinds of beings. Oṁ Maṇipadme Hūṁ is, in fact, alluded to once in the first part of the sūtra: as part of the vyākaraṇa given to him by Avalokiteśvara, Bali is told that the six-syllable formula will be obtained. But the complete isolation of this reference to the mantra makes it not unlikely that it is a later addition to the sūtra’s own presentation of the vāmana-avatāra.

The principal purpose of the second part of the Kāraṇḍavyūha, I suggest, precisely to fill this gap left by the first section and to promote, in the recitation of Oṁ Maṇipadme Hūṁ, a particular practice by which the presence of Avalokiteśvara might be invoked. The great importance of the mantra is, first of all, indicated by the extensive length of its presentation. Although only nine pages are obviously involved with descriptions of the glories of the mantra, it actually seems reasonable to think that all the other elements of this second part of the sūtra spring from the central intention of promulgating the six syllables.

The worlds contained within the hair pores of Avalokiteśvara and the appearance of the “thousandfold” form of the bodhisattva constitute the components of a vision of the bodhisattva brought about through the recitation of
Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ. The ethical teachings at the end of the sūtra and the story of Simhala both promote the celibate, monastic ideal, a specific response to the challenge presented to the Mahāyāna establishment by the kind of non-celibate practitioners that originally promoted the doctrine of the Buddhist tūṣṇāra and his concise formula. The conversion of Maheśvara, finally, together with the fact that the dharmabhūṣṇāka resides in the great Śaivaite city of Vārāṇasī, are descriptive of the way in which this doctrine has been taken over from the Śaivaite tradition, before being remodeled and absorbed into the categories of the Mahāyāna Buddhist system. How, then, does Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ, the six-syllable formula of the Buddhist tūṣṇāra Avalokiteśvara, compare to the pañcākṣara, or “five-syllable” formula Namah Śivāya of the Śaivaite tūṣṇāra Śiva?

Our discussion of this issue revolves principally around the presentation of Namah Śivāya in the Śaivaite Skanda Purāṇa, the work which, as we saw, may be linked in some way to the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra. In addition to many occasional references to this five-syllable formula, the purāṇa contains one chapter wholly devoted to its description.24 Our analysis is supplemented, too, by a consultation of the Śiva Purāṇa, which includes one chapter on the five-syllable formula and the single syllable Oṃ together,25 and a group of three chapters that discuss the qualities and the correct use of Namah Śivāya alone.26 In addition, passages from the Liṅga Purāṇa, which also contains a chapter on the glory of the five-syllable mantra, will be taken into account.27

The relevant chapter in the Skanda Purāṇa begins with an introductory passage paying homage to Śiva. The sages then demand to hear of the greatness of the god’s mantras.28 The sūta replies that the performance of the repeated utterance of formulae (japayajñā) “is proclaimed as greater than all the yajñās of meritorious nature and cause of excellent welfare.”29 Next, Namah Śivāya is first introduced, not in its normal five-syllable form, but in the common, variant six-syllable form Oṃ Namah Śivāya. This is said to be “the great means of securing prosperity,” “of divine nature,” and “the greatest of all mantras.”30 The chapter immediately reverts to descriptions of the formula in its more familiar form. Namah Śivāya, it is said, is “the bestower of salvation on those who repeatedly mutter it.” It is “resorted to by all excellent sages desirous of supernatural powers.” Even Brahmā, we read, is unable to describe its greatness. The śrutis are said to “reach the ultimate principle therein and became fully satisfied.” Śiva “revels” in it. It was “evolved out of all the Upaniṣads.” By means of the formula, “all the sages attained the Supreme Brahman, free from all ailments.” It is “of the nature of Supreme Brahman.” It is the “primordial mantra” uttered by Śiva himself, who desired “the welfare of all embodied ones fettered by the noose of worldly existence.”31

Once the formula is “fixed in the heart,” to what avail, the sūta asks, are the many other mantras, holy places, penances, and sacrifices connected to
The Origins of \textit{Om Manipadme Hum}

Śiva? As long as embodied beings do not utter the formula “even once,” then they will continue to “move round and round in the terrible mundane world infested with miseries.” It is “the supreme king of the kings of all the mantras,” “the crest-jewel of all the Vedāntas,” “the storehouse of all spiritual knowledge,” “the illuminating lamp on the path of salvation,” “the submarine fire unto the ocean of ignorance,” and “the forest fire of great woods of heinous sins.” It is, therefore, “the bestower of everything.”

Its use is openly available to women, 

\textit{śūdras} and men of mixed social class and birth, and involves neither special initiation, nor \textit{homa}, consecration, water-libation, special occasion, nor special process of instruction. It is “ever pure.” It can destroy great sins and grant salvation. It should be acquired, the \textit{purāṇa} then says, from an excellent preceptor, who is described as free from impurities, quiescent, well-behaved, of few words, free from lust and anger, with control over the sense organs and possessed of good conduct. If then repeated in a sacred place, the formula immediately brings inordinate or supernatural power. Six holy places are then listed which are conducive to the attainment of such powers: Prayāga, Puṣkara, the “charming” Kedāra, Setubandha, Gokarṇa and Naimiśāranya.

There then follows what is said to be an ancient anecdote “conducive to auspiciousness to those who listen to it once or on many occasions.” This concerns the marriage between a king called “Dāśārha” of the Yadu dynasty of Mathurā and a princess called “Kalāvatī,” the beautiful daughter of the king of Kāśī. On their wedding night, despite Dāśārha’s repeated entreaties, Kalāvatī is disinclined to join him in bed until, eventually, the king attempts to take her by force. Kalāvatī, however, orders the king not to touch her, telling him that she is “under a vow of observance.” “You do know what is Dharma and what is Adharma,” she says, “Do not be rash with me.”

“Sexual union increases pleasure, if both husband and wife are equally keen and desirous,” she continues. She and the king, she says, will only sleep together when love has been aroused in her. No man, she says, should lustfully approach a woman who is either displeased, sickly, pregnant, observing a religious fast or a vow, in her monthly course, or who is “not keen in love-sport.” A loving husband who wants to enjoy the delights of a woman, she concludes, should only approach her “after fondling and pleasing her, after a great deal of coaxing and cajoling, and after looking into her requirements with sympathy and smoothness.”

The king ignores this rebuke, however, and presses himself upon Kalāvatī, only to discover that her body is red hot, scorching him and causing him to cast her off in great fright. Struck with wonder, he then listens as she tells him that, during her childhood, an eminent sage imparted to her the five-syllable formula of Śiva. By reciting this mantra, her body became free of sins and impurities, to the extent that she can no longer be touched by sinful
people. The king, she reminds him, habitually consorts with whores and other liquor-drinking women, fails to take a daily bath, repeats the mantra without purity of mind and body and does not propitiate Iśāna (Śiva). “How can you be fit to touch me?” she asks.\(^{36}\)

The king then implores his wife to initiate him into the practice of the five-syllable formula in order that, after purifying himself of all sins, he may eventually be fit to sleep with her. The queen tells him he must approach the preceptor Garga for this initiation. They then go together to Garga, who takes them to the banks of the river Kālindī. There, the king is told to fast and to bathe in the holy waters, to sit facing the east and to bow at the feet of Śiva. The preceptor then places his hand on the king’s head and imparts the mantra. Immediately, thousands of crows fly out of the king’s body, screaming and falling to the earth, where they are burnt to ashes.\(^{37}\)

These crows, the preceptor explains, are the king’s innumerable sins accumulated over thousands of lifetimes. Now that his soul has become sanctified, he is told, he may go and “sport about” with his wife as he pleases. The delighted couple take leave of the preceptor and, “shining lustrously,” return to their palace. The king then embraces the queen, whose body, by now, is said to be cool “like sandalpaste.” Dāśārha, finally, is said to achieve exquisite satisfaction “like a penurious wretch after acquiring wealth.” By way of a conclusion, the story and the chapter as a whole ends by observing that the five-syllable formula is “an ornamental jewel unto the entire range of Veddas, Upaniṣads, purāṇas and other scriptural texts” and “spells destruction of sins.”\(^{38}\)

In many obvious respects, this presentation is clearly very different from the way in which \textit{Oṁ Maṇipadme Hūṁ} is written about in the \textit{Kāraṇḍavyūha}. At the same time, however, it is not very difficult to discern that both the purāṇas and the śūtra are promoting a similar type of religious phenomenon. The Śaivite formula is \textit{pañcākṣara}, “five syllables,” while the Buddhist formula is \textit{śaḍākṣara}, “six syllables.” Although \textit{Namaḥ Śivāya} seems, in general, to be referred to as a mantra, it is also, like the Buddhist six syllables, described as a \textit{vidyā}.\(^{39}\) Both formulae are, furthermore, said to be the \textit{hrdaya}, or “heart” of the \textit{Īśvara}: \textit{Oṁ Maṇipadme Hūṁ}, in the \textit{Kāraṇḍavyūha}, is repeatedly referred to as the \textit{paramahṛdaya}, or “innermost heart”\(^{40}\), \textit{Namaḥ Śivāya}, in the \textit{Liṅga Purāṇa}, as \textit{hrdaya} (This mantra . . . is my heart . . . )\(^{41}\) and in the \textit{Śiva Purāṇa} as \textit{mahāhṛdaya}, or “great heart” (This Śaiva mantra is my great heart).\(^{42}\)

Both the Śaivite and the Buddhist formulae are also promoted as sui generis means of attaining liberation. In the \textit{Skanda Purāṇa}, for instance, \textit{Namaḥ Śivāya} is “the bestower of salvation on those who repeatedly mutter it.” It is the bestower of everything, the means by which “the ultimate principle” is reached and the Supreme Brahman is attained. Similarly, in the \textit{Śiva Purāṇa}, we read: “(But) he who worships me even once with devotion repeating the five-syllabled mantra, attains my region through the weightiness of the
mantra alone.” And in the Linga Purāṇa: “It is the excellent knowledge leading to salvation.”

Om Maṇipadme Hūṃ, meanwhile, is said early on in the sūtra’s presentation, to bring about liberation (mokṣa). Whoever knows (jānāti) this paramahṛdaya, we read, knows liberation (mokṣaṃ jānāti). A little later, it is said that whoever is given solace by Om Maṇipadme Hūṃ is said to become an irreversible bodhisattva and, before long, a fully enlightened buddha. The formula is the incomparable teaching on supreme enlightenment and nirvāṇa. Bringing it to mind leads to the destruction of all evil and the attainment of enlightenment. Reciting it brings sublime liberation. Without Namah Śivāya, the Skanda Purāṇa says, beings will “move round and round in the terrible mundane world infested with miseries.” Om Maṇipadme Hūṃ, likewise, is said to be the cause of the destruction of rebirth in the five realms of samsāra, leading to the drying up of the hellish kleshas and also to the end of the animal realms.

Both Namah Śivāya and Om Maṇipadme Hūṃ are presented, in the same somewhat paradoxical manner, as formulae whose use may be enjoyed by almost everyone, regardless of any distinctions of class or gender, but which are yet, at the same time, extraordinarily difficult to come by. Similarly, though at one moment various complicated ritual processes appear to be absolutely necessary for effecting initiation into the use of these formulae, at another such procedures appear to be entirely dispensable. In the Skanda Purāṇa, for instance, Namah Śivāya is said, on the one hand, to be recited by women, śūdras and men of mixed caste and birth: categories that would have been excluded from participation in many other Indian religious practices. Its use, moreover, is said to involve no special initiation, homa (sacrifice), consecration, water libation, occasion nor special process of instruction. On the other hand, though, in the story of Dāśarha and his bride, the king pleads with his wife to grant him the five-syllable mantra, as if initiation into its use was something rather extraordinary. Although his preceptor Garga is said to grant him use of the formula by the simple expedient of placing his hand on the king’s head, Dāśarha is also said, somewhat in contradiction of the earlier spirit of the text, to undergo a series of fairly rigorous preparatory practices before this moment is reached. He fasts, bathes in the sacred river Kālindī, sits facing the east, and bows to the feet of Śiva.

The same pattern is apparent in the Śiva Purāṇa. At some points, the text stresses the democratic nature of the practice of reciting Namah Śivāya. We read: “A person steady in the japa of the five-syllabled mantra is released from the cage of sins whether he be a śūdra, base-born, fool or a learned man.” And later: “Since this mantra functions without references to castes, the defects found in the other mantras are not found in this mantra.” Yet, a little earlier in the purāṇa, a preliminary procedure is described which would surely deter any but the most determined devotee. The initiant, we read, is
required to propitiate his preceptor mentally, verbally, physically, and monetarily. If he is affluent he should give him horses, elephants, chariots, ornaments, grains, and riches. Next, he should serve the preceptor for a year. On an auspicious day and in an auspicious place, he should bathe the preceptor and dress him in considerable finery. The preceptor will then repeat the mantra “with due accents,” make the disciple repeat it, and, finally, declare everything to be auspicious. “Thus,” it is said, “the preceptor shall impart the mantra and allow him to practise it.” Elsewhere, as Rocher has pointed out, it is said that the secret of the formula is known by Śiva alone (rahasyaµ śivamantrasya śivo jānati nāparaḥ). It is imparted by Śiva himself: to Brahmā and Viṣṇu, and to others, such as the sūta.

Likewise, in the Kāraṇḍavyuha Sūtra, the use of Oṃ Maniṣpadme Hūṃ is also shown to cut across social and religious class barriers. Either a son or a daughter of noble family (kulaputra và kuladuhitā và) is said to be able to enter the maṇḍala of the six-syllable formula. Either a son or a daughter of noble family who recites the formula is said to achieve an indestructible luster. No mention is made of any restrictions concerning matters of social class with regard to the use of the formula (as is only to be expected in a Buddhist text). When Sarvanīvaranāvishkambhin sets out for Vārānasi in order to find his preceptor, he is said to gather around him a retinue of many different types: bodhisattvas, householders, renunciants, boys and girls. Most strikingly, in the course of instructions attributed to Avalokiteśvara about the preparation of the maṇḍala connected to Oṃ Maniṣpadme Hūṃ, initiation into the use of the mantra is said not to be restricted to followers of the Mahāyāna alone, but to be available to Buddhists of any persuasion. The text reads:

\[
\text{athavā śraddhādhumuktakasya dātavyā / athavā mahāyānaśraddhād himuktakasya dātavyā / na ca tṛṭhikasya dātavyā} \]

The formula, in other words, is to be given (dātavyā) either (athavā) to one who has exhibited faith (śraddhādhimuktakasya), or (athavā) to one who has exhibited faith in the Mahāyāna (mahāyānaśraddha-). Oṃ Maniṣpadme Hūṃ, it seems, may be used by adherents of both the Mahāyāna, or “great vehicle,” and the contrasting Hinayāna, or “lesser vehicle.” The text here provides valuable support for the view that the original distinction between these two vehicles was based not in their use of different practices, but in different motivations: different visions of the ultimate goal of the Buddhist endeavor. Whereas in the Mahāyāna, the practitioner is said to set out with the aim of becoming a buddha in order to help bring about the buddhahood of all sentient beings, the Hinayāna Buddhist sets out with the more limited aim of achieving only his or her own liberation. The Kāraṇḍavyuha indicates, at this
point, that Buddhists of both persuasion lived together in the same communities and engaged in the same forms of practice, including, it seems, the recitation of *Om Mani padme Hum*.

The passage, then, is not concerned with the putative division between these two different classes of Buddhist, but with maintaining a division between Buddhist and non-Buddhists. Though the formula may be given to Mahāyāna or non-Mahāyāna Buddhists, we read, it is not to be given (na . . . dātavya) to the tṛthika (tṛthikasya), or non-Buddhist. The important implication of this statement, surely, is that there were occasions when these tṛthikas did apply for initiation into the use of the *Om Mani padme Hum*. This, in turn, is an indication that this Buddhist practice may not have been very obviously different from non-Buddhist practices. It may, for instance, have been perceived as a simple variant of the non-Buddhist, Śaivite formula *Nāma Śiva*ya. The original proponents of worship of the Buddhist ēvara by means of his concise formula may not, it seems, have appeared very different from worshippers of Śiva. The Kāraṇḍavyūha, however, is at pains to stress the Buddhist identity and application of the six-syllable formula. Nonetheless, within those parameters, *Om Mani padme Hum* is promoted as a universal practice, available to all Buddhists.

At the same time, the formula appears to be something that is almost impossibly secret and elusive. Sarvanvāraṇaṇaviśkambhin’s first enquiries about the formula, for instance, are met with the reply that it is difficult to obtain and that it is not known by the tathāgatas, let alone by bodhisattvas.62 Yogins and tathāgatas know it to be difficult to obtain and unfathomable, let alone bodhisattvas.63 As the tathāgatas have wandered for sixteen kalpas for its sake, who knows when the bodhisattvas will know it?64 Such warnings are immediately illustrated by the tale of the tathāgata Padmottama’s arduous search for the formula and, then, by the search of Sarvanvāraṇaṇaviśkambhin himself. Just as *Nāma Śiva*ya is said to come from Śiva, so, too, in the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, is *Om Mani padme Hum* shown to be the gift of Avalokiteśvara, first when the bodhisattva (prompted by Amitābha) bestows the formula on Padmottama65 and second when, according to the preceptor in Vāraṇaṣī, Avalokiteśvara grants it to Sarvanvāraṇaṇaviśkambhin.66 Finally, initiation into the use of *Om Mani padme Hum* is said to be dependent on the extremely costly construction of a special maṇḍala. Avalokiteśvara is reported as saying that the formula should not be given to one who has not seen the maṇḍala.67 This diagram, we then read, should be four-cornered and about the size of five hands, containing a depiction of the buddha Amitābha made out of the powder of sapphires, rubies, emeralds, quartz, gold, and silver.68

However, it quickly becomes apparent that this represents an ideal situation. A few sentences later on in the text, Amitābha tells Avalokiteśvara that if someone is unable to afford these precious substances, colored dyes and
flowers may be used instead.\textsuperscript{69} If even these are unavailable, the maṇḍala may simply be meditated upon by the preceptor for a month before he gives instruction on the mantra and the relevant mudrās.\textsuperscript{70} The initiant, in other words, does not actually need to see the maṇḍala at all, relying, instead, on the previous visualization practice of his preceptor. Indeed, when Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣṭakambhin eventually comes to receive the formula, no mention is made of the use of any maṇḍala: the dharmabhaṣṇaka simply gazes into the sky, where he sees Avalokiteśvara, and tells Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣṭakambhin that he has been granted the formula by the great bodhisattva.

Both sūtra and purāṇa, then, suggest that \textit{Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ} and \textit{Namaḥ Śivāya} were promoted as popular practices, available to one and all. Nonetheless, by virtue of the fact that their use was deemed to be dependent upon the good will or grace of the Buddhist or the Śaivite śvara, these formulæ are presented as rare and wondrous treasures, a conceit occasionally reinforced by the performance of elaborate initiation rituals. The necessity of a qualified preceptor is consistently stressed. King Daśārha approaches the guru Garga. The bodhisattva Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣṭakambhin has to seek out the dharmabhaṣṇaka of Vārāṇasi. Similarly, in the Śiva Purāṇa, we read: “A japa without the behest of the preceptor, holy rites, faith and the prescribed fees is fruitless though the behest might have been secured.”\textsuperscript{71} And, in the same work: “O brahmins, the devotee shall take instruction from his preceptor, sit comfortably on the ground cleaned well, and start the japa.”\textsuperscript{72} Initiation into the use of either formula might be a more or less extravagant affair, it seems reasonable to suppose, according to the economic resources of the initiants, to the occasion and to the whim of the preceptor.

But perhaps the most arresting of all the similarities between \textit{Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ} and \textit{Namaḥ Śivāya} is the way in which both sūtra and purāṇa appear to reflect a common understanding of the two formulæ as forms of the praṇava. This term, derived from the verb praṇu, meaning “to hum,” or “reverberate,” describes what Gonda refers to as a “numinous primeval sound.”\textsuperscript{73} This is a phenomenon which is, of course, most famously expressed in the form of the mantra \textit{Oṃ}, the single syllable that is the subject of so much speculation in the Vedas and the Upaniṣads. In the \textit{Taittirīya Upaniṣad}, for instance, we read: “\textit{Oṃ} is Brahman. \textit{Oṃ} is the whole universe.”\textsuperscript{74} And in the \textit{Māṇḍākya Upaniṣad}: “What was and is and is yet to be, / All of it is \textit{Oṃ}; / And whatever else the three times transcends, / That too is \textit{Oṃ.”}\textsuperscript{75}

In the \textit{Śiva Purāṇa}, as Rocher observes, \textit{Namaḥ Śivāya} is explicitly identified as a form of the praṇava. In the course of its discussion of the five-syllable mantra, the purāṇa, first of all, lists a number of different folk etymologies for this term. It is the best of boats (nava) for crossing the ocean of worldly existence (pra, as in prakṛti, the created order). It is that which produces no (na) diffusiveness (pra) for you (va). It is the ideal (pra) guide (na)
to mokṣa, or “liberation,” for you (va). It is the ideal way (pra) to provide new (nava) wisdom. The praṇava also, the puraṇa goes on to explain, has both a subtle (stūksma) and a gross (sthūla) form. The former is ekākṣara, made up of “one syllable” and the latter is pāncākṣara, made up of “five syllables.” We read: “The subtle one is of a single syllable where the constituent five syllables are not differentiated clearly (avyakta). The gross one is of five syllables where all the constituent syllables are manifest (vyakta).” The subtle praṇava and the gross praṇava are, then, Oṃ and Namāḥ Śivāya.

This conception of Namāḥ Śivāya as a form of the praṇava illuminates many aspects of its presentation. Just as Oṃ is also believed to be the means for attaining all one’s goals, for instance, so, too, is Namāḥ Śivāya. In the Kaṭha Upaniṣad, for instance, Oṃ is described as follows: “Who so this imperishable (aṅkṣara) comes to know, what he desires is his.” Similarly, in the Śiva Purāṇa: “A man can achieve everything by means of the japa of the five-syllabled mantra.”

Oṃ is also regarded as both the essence and source of all religious teachings and practices. In the course of the discussion of Oṃ found in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, for instance, we read: “Hymns, sacrifices, rites and ordinances, / What was and what is yet to be, / (All) that the Vedas proclaim, / All this does he who is possessed of creative power emit / From that (same syllable) . . .” Similarly, in the Skanda Purāṇa, Namāḥ Śivāya is: “evolved out of all the Upaniṣads,” “the supreme king of all the mantras,” “the crest-jewel of all the vedāntas,” “the storehouse of all spiritual knowledge,” and “an ornamental jewel unto the entire range of Vedas, Upaniṣads, puraṇas, and other scriptural texts.” The Śiva Purāṇa states of Namāḥ Śivāya: “Then all the Vedas, scriptures etc. are stationed in the five-syllabled mantra.”

Like Namāḥ Śivāya, Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ is also said to have the qualities characteristic of a praṇava. We have already seen how the six syllables are repeatedly said, in the Kāraṇḍavyūha, to be self-sufficient means of achieving many different kinds of religious goals. The Buddhist formula is also presented, in the sūtra, as the condensed expression of all religious teachings. Whoever writes Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ, we read, is said to have written “the eighty-four thousand dharmas” (caturaśṭīdharmanandhasahasrāṃśi), shorthand for the idea of the complete Buddhist literary corpus. The formula is also, a little later on, said to be the means by which “the twelvefold wheel of Dharma is turned” (dvādaśakāraṃ dharmarandhracakramāvartayaeyam), referring to another well-known phrase used to denote the entirety of all Buddhist teaching. It is, elsewhere, said to be the indestructible instruction on all wisdom.
The idea of *Namaḥ Śivāya* as both the essence and source of all things is conveyed in terms of a simple, though nonetheless evocative image. The formula is repeatedly described as the seed of a banyan tree. In the Śiva Purāṇa, for instance, in the course of a discussion of the six-syllable *Om Namah Śivāya*, we read: “The first mantra consisting of six syllables is the seed of all lores. It is very subtle but serves a great purpose. It shall be known like the seed of the banyan tree.” Likewise, in the Liṅga Purāṇa presentation of *Namaḥ Śivāya*: “It is very subtle and its meaning is great; it is like the seed of the holy banyan tree.”

The use of this image appears also to be another aspect of the presentation of *Namaḥ Śivāya* derived from a conception of the formula as a form of the *praṇava*. It is evocative of similar images found in the Upaniṣads to describe *Om*. In the Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa, for instance, increasingly refined levels of the created order are described as the *rasa*, the “juice” or “sap,” first of the Vedas and then of the levels of creation that have already emerged. Thus, *prthi*, “the earth” is said to be the *rasa* of the *Ṛg Veda* and *agni*, “fire,” the *rasa* of *prthi*. Eventually, however, the creator god Prajāpati is said to reach a syllable from which he is unable to take the sap, implying that he has now reached the very essence of all reality. This is *Om* (*athaikasya-ivāksarasasya rasaṁ nāsaknod ādātum Oṁ īty etasyaiva*).

*Om*, the *sūkṣma prāṇava*, is the *rasa* of the cosmic fruit. *Namaḥ Śivāya*, the *sthūla prāṇava*, is the essential seed of a banyan tree.

A similar sort of image—also derived from nature—is used to describe *Om Maṇipadme Hūṁ*. The Buddhist formula, in the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, is said to be like a grain of rice. As such, the formula is both the regenerative seed (like the banyan seed *Namaḥ Śivāya*) and also the essential, nourishing part of the plant (like the *rasa* *Om*). This conception of *Om Maṇipadme Hūṁ* is not just mentioned in passing, but is developed over the course of several lines of the text. The six-syllable formula, we read, is “the grain of rice of the Mahāyāna” (*taṇḍulavatsāraṁ mahāyānasya*). It is, once more, the condensed expression of Buddhist teaching: its recitation is the equivalent of the singing of many Mahāyāna sūtras and the teaching of a great variety of texts. It is a sui generis means of achieving the great religious goals: its simple recitation brings sublime liberation (*japitamātreṇa śivam mokṣam*).

To obtain the formula, the sūtra explains, is to possess the pith (*sāram*), just as one obtains the pith of rice grains, by taking them home, filling jars with them, drying them in the sun, threshing them, and leaving them for four years. All other yogas are like chaff (*tuṣasadrśaḥ*). The six-syllable formula is like the rice grain.
husk and the seed within a fruit, for instance, are, respectively, the third and sixth of nine similes used to describe the tathāgatagarbha in the Mahāyānatattvaratanastra.\textsuperscript{92}

The six-syllable Buddhist formula is also, like the Śaivite formula, personified as a female deity. In the Śiva Purāṇa, for instance, Namaḥ Śivāya is described as follows:

> It is the goddess, my own expression coming out of my mouth at first. The goddess having the splendour of molten gold, plump, lifted-up breasts, four arms, three arees \([?]\), and the crescent moon as the crest-jewel. Her hands are as tender as lotuses. She is gentle with the gesture of boon and protection; she is possessed of all characteristics. She is bedecked in ornaments. She is seated on a white lotus. Her tresses are blue and curly. She has five colours with beaming discs, viz., yellow, black, smoky, golden and red.\textsuperscript{93}

\textit{Oṁ Maṇipadme Hūṃ}, or śaḍākṣaṇa mahāvidyā as the formula is dubbed, also appears as a goddess in the maṇḍala presented in the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra. She has four arms, is “autumn yellow” in color (saratkāṇḍagauravarna), is decorated with many ornaments, holds a lotus (padmaḥ) in her outer left hand and a string of prayer beads in her outer right, with her two inner hands joined in the mudrā of sarvarājendrā.\textsuperscript{94} The latter, which probably means “the lord of all kings” is identified by some scholars with the aśjālīmudrā, the gesture of holding the two hands in front of one’s chest, fingertips pointing upwards, with the palms together, though slightly cupped.\textsuperscript{95} This description of the personified formula in the maṇḍala, however, represents the limit of sūtra’s presentation of \textit{Oṁ Maṇipadme Hūṃ} as a female person.

In the Śaivite text, on the other hand, the personification of Namaḥ Śivāya as a goddess is part and parcel of a wider presentation of the formula as an expression of Śiva’s śakti. The latter term, of course, refers to the creative dimension of the deity, perceived sometimes as inherent to the god’s own nature, but often as his female partner—separate from him, though nonetheless joined to him in the intimate union of their marriage.\textsuperscript{96} Thus, in the discussion of the five syllables in the Śiva Purāṇa, we read: “Protected by my śakti they do not perish.”\textsuperscript{97} Elsewhere in the purāṇa, it is explained: “The mantra is of the nature of Śiva.”\textsuperscript{98} And a little later on: “The presence of the goddess continues to be felt as long as the mantra continues to be repeated.”\textsuperscript{99}

The relationship between Śiva and the goddess was also, in some sense, to be acted out in the actual physical relationship between a practitioner and his (or her) consort. In another description given in the Śiva Purāṇa of the procedure for gaining initiation into the use of Namaḥ Śivāya, the aspiring devotee is required to bring together five, well-established practitioners, each
of whom represents a different form of the deity. The first of these five acts as the preceptor. The wife of this individual, it is said, should be regarded as the god’s female partner. Thus:

For the sake of the worship he shall invite five great devotees of Śiva along with their wives. One of those shall be an excellent preceptor who shall be assigned the Sāmba form, another will represent Isāna, the third will represent the Aghora aspect of Śiva, the fourth will represent the Vāma aspect of Śiva and the fifth will represent the Sadyojata aspect of Śiva.¹⁰⁰

And then:

The preceptor’s wife must be considered as the great goddess. The wives of the other devotees Isāna and the rest shall be duly worshipped and honoured . . .¹⁰¹

The idea that the engagement of a practitioner with Namah Śivāya and his (or her) engagement with a sexual partner may, in some sense, be seen as equivalent, in so far as both are means of reenacting the union of Śiva and śakti is, surely, exactly what is expressed in the Skanda Purāṇa’s story of king Daśārha and queen Kalāvatī. There, the two themes, first, of a man’s approach towards sexual union with his wife and, second, of his attempts to engage successfully with the practice of reciting the five-syllable mantra are woven together into one seamless whole. Queen Kalāvatī may be understood, simultaneously, as a woman, as a personification of Namah Śivāya and as a goddess.¹⁰²

Such a doctrine is, inevitably, going to pose a challenge to any religious community rooted in celibate, monastic discipline, no matter how much stress is given to a symbolic, nonliteral interpretation of the teaching. This was the problem, it seems likely, that confronted that section of the Mahāyāna Buddhist establishment responsible for the creation of the Kāraṇḍavyūha. The previous chapter has, I think, demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that the figure of Avalokiteśvara in the sūtra has taken on many of the attributes of Śiva. This chapter, similarly, has shown that the six-syllable Buddhist formula Oṁ Maniṣpadme Hūm represents an adaptation of the five-syllable Śaivite formula Namah Śivāya. Both are concise vidyās, the hṛdayas of their respective tāvaras, sui generis means of attaining liberation, universally available, though of rare value and somewhat secret. Both are also, it has been argued, conceived of as forms of praṇava. Their close similarity, it seems, even led non-Buddhists to seek initiation into use of the Buddhist formula. The Kāraṇḍavyūha, however, contains nothing remotely like the story of king Daśārha.
The next chapter, then, will explore the way in which the sūtra describes a secondary stage of the Buddhist appropriation of this Śaivite doctrine and mode of practice, integrating the use of the concise formula of Avalokiteśvara into the orthodox doctrinal and ethical categories of the Mahāyāna mainstream. As we shall see, the basis for the use of the concise formula is no longer the tantric śakti idea. Instead, Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ is linked, primarily, to a scheme borrowed from the bhakti side of the purānic tradition, which is reconfigured in the terms of the Mahāyāna. This scheme, in turn, is linked to the central Mahāyāna religious goal of rebirth in the Buddhist pure land of Sukhāvatī.
CHAPTER 5

Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ and the Mahāyāna

The Kāraṇḍavāyuḥa Sūtra is clearly written from the point of view of a monastic establishment governed by a rule of celibacy. It is striking, for instance, that while the practice of reciting the Śaivite formula Namaḥ Śivaya is illustrated by a story about the consummation of the marriage between a king and his young bride, the presentation of the use of the Buddhist mantra Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ is prefaced by the tale of a shipwrecked sailor and his narrow escape from the seductive allure of a collection of attractive women, who, he is made aware, are really a band of man-eating demonesses. Women are seen as goddesses in the purāṇa, but as monsters in the sūtra.

The legend of the mariner Śimhala is placed at the beginning of the second part of the Kāraṇḍavāyuḥa, immediately after a passage describing the many different samādhis achieved by the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. After a storm at sea, so the story goes, Śimhala and his five hundred companions are washed up on the shore of a desert island and greeted by a host of beautiful women, who ask the sailors to become their husbands. The men agree and begin to enjoy a pleasurable married existence. One night, however, Śimhala discovers that these women are, in fact, rākṣasts, female monsters, who, after an initial period of amorous indulgence, are in the habit of transferring their lovers to the confines of a walled compound, where these unfortunate men are kept imprisoned until, eventually, they are cannibalized. Śimhala, though, manages to find his way back to the safety of the mainland by climbing aboard the back of the magical flying horse Bālāha. His shipmates, however, all perish, because, while on the flying horse, they ignore the orders of Bālāha to keep their eyes shut and not to look back at the island. Seeing their rākṣast wives weeping and wailing, they fall back into the sea and are promptly eaten.

After the story has been told, the Buddha Śākyamuni reveals that it was he himself who experienced suffering in a former life as the bodhisattva caravan leader (Śimhala) and who was liberated from the fear of death by Avalokiteśvara, who was Bālāha, the king of horses. It is impossible, Śākyamuni continues, to calculate the amount of merit accrued by Avalokiteśvara. He will, instead, he says, give a brief discourse on the individual hair pores of the great
bodhisattva. A description of the different lands contained within these pores ensues. Śākyamuni then says that those who bring to mind the six-syllable formula will be born in these very hair pores, never again to wander in saṃsāra, traveling from one pore to another until they achieve the state of nirvāṇa. This is then the cue for the beginning of the long section describing the qualities of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ and its discovery by the bodhisattva Sarvanīvaraṇaśīkhabhin.

The story of Siṃhala is being used here not simply as an incidental warning about the spiritual dangers of becoming involved with sex and marriage. It must be seen, rather, as part of a general policy of the Kāraṇḍavyūha to advocate, not just the virtue of celibacy, but, more specifically, the actual ordination of individuals into the Buddhist monastic life. This interest is explicitly expressed at the end of the sūtra when, after the section dealing with Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ, the conversion of Maheśvara and Umādevī and the samādhi contest between Avalokiteśvara and Samantabhadra, Śākyamuni’s disciple Ānanda—who was a monk—appears and asks to be given a teaching on moral conduct (śikṣāsaṃvaram). The Buddha’s discourse lists a number of conditions prerequisite to monastic ordination, a series of punishments to be expected by those who abuse the rules of the Saṅgha and the rewards promised to those who do manage to uphold the moral precepts. It begins with the instruction that those wishing to enter the monastery should first of all look carefully at a suitable cell and declare it to be clean: free of any bones or filth.

This promotion of the process of monastic ordination is also, I think, detectable within the sūtra’s version of the story of Siṃhala. As Siegfried Lienhard has pointed out, the legend, as it has come down to us in a variety of different forms, may be divided up into three different sections. The first ends with the safe return of Siṃhala to his native country, the second describes his coronation there, and the third shows how he then goes on to wage a successful war against the demonesses of the island. The Kāraṇḍavyūha, like the Pāli Valahassajātaka, a Prakrit Jain, and a Khotanese Buddhist presentation of the story, contains only the first part of the story; the Lokottaravādin Mahāsaṅghika work, the Mahāvastu, contains a version which includes the first two parts; the Mūlasaṅghāstivādin Divyāvadāna, meanwhile, actually only articulates the last two, stating simply, after describing the embarkation of the mariners, that there then follows the rakṣast sūtra, assuming the reader’s familiarity with the events that take place on the island and passing straight on to Siṃhala’s return home.

What is peculiar about the presentation of the story in the Kāraṇḍavyūha and absent in the versions found in the Valahassajātaka, the Mahāvastu, and the Divyāvadāna, is the description, first, of certain procedures acted out by Siṃhala prior to his flight to safety on the back of the flying horse and,
The preparations for his escape are said to take place over the course of two days. To begin with, Simhala is brought an array of many different offerings by his own råk˚asast wife. After eating these, he lets out a sigh, saying that the men of JambudvIPA delight in their own country. Asked by his hostess why this is so, when the island they are on is so well-provided with food, water, clothes, gardens, and lotus pools, Simhala remains silent. This is how the first day passes. On the second day, he makes a succession of different offerings and finalizes his affairs. On the third day, he sets out at dawn with his companions. They convene outside the town and Simhala tells them that noone must ever look back at the island of Simhala. They find the horse Bålåha, who eats a herb called “All White” (tam sarvaśvetanåmauśadhmåsvådayati), turns around on “the place of golden sand” (asvådayitvå suvar¶avålukåsthale åvartanaµ karoti), stretches out his body (sarîram pracchoÂayati) and shakes the island (simhaladvåpaµ calati). He asks three times the question: “Who is going to the other side?” (kaµ parågåmi). He then gives the warning that no one should look back at the island or open their eyes when he stretches out his body.

There seem to be good reasons for identifying this sequence as an allegorical description of the steps involved in an initiation of some sort, comprising, as it does, a final valedictory meal (served by the female råk˚asast), a declaration of intent to leave an old form of life (on the island of Simhala) for a new one (on JambudvIPA), preparatory rituals (on the second day) and a dawn ceremony involving certain other rituals (the precise significance of the eating of the herb, the place of the golden sand, the turning around, the stretching of the body, and the shaking of the body remains obscure). The threefold repetition of Bålåha’s question is somewhat reminiscent of the standard threefold declaration of “going for refuge” to Buddha, Dharma and Samgha. This impression is supported by an earlier incident in the story, when Simhala first describes the horse Bålåha to his comrades: having explained the danger they are all in, he asks them whom they have refuge in (asmåkaµ gati˙ ñara¶aµ paråya¶aµ).

That the initiation rite in question is, in fact, a form of the ordination ceremony is strongly suggested by the events that take place at the end of the story. There, Simhala’s parents appear to show their approval of their son’s heroic actions, while also absolving him of the need to perform the filial duty of looking after them financially in their old age, actions entirely appropriate to the occasion of a married couple’s witnessing the entry of a son or daughter into monastic life. On his return from the island, the parents embrace Simhala tearfully and say that, since he is still alive, they have no need of money. Nonetheless, they continue, he is their support in old age (jaråkåle yaśtifhåto), in the darkness he shows them the path (andhakåre mårgasyopadaråsakaµ), at
the time of death he gives them the “sacred cake” (maraṇakāle pīṇḍadātā), he offers protection to the dead (mṛtasya sanāthikaraṇīyam) and, like a cooling wind, he is a giver of delight.17 Though a monk is unable to provide for his parents materially, the sūtra seems to suggest, they should nonetheless be happy that he will be able to take care of them spiritually.

Not content with promoting ordination, the Kāraṇḍavyūha is, also, it seems, intent on redressing certain aspects of corruption in the monastery. For the sūtra appears to reflect a situation in which these celibate institutions had been infiltrated not only by practitioners that were simply badly behaved, but also, more damagingly perhaps, by practitioners who were, in fact, accompanied by sexual partners. After specifying the need to find a suitable cell, Śākyamuni states that neither ordination (nopasampādayitavyam) nor the “motion” (na ca jñaptirdātavya)18 should be given by mendicants of bad moral character (duḥśilena bhikṣunā), an ambiguous definition, but one which, in the context, immediately suggests those who are unable to keep the vow of celibacy.19

“Why?” (kiṃ bahunā) the sūtra asks. The answer is that a cell should not be made by these mendicants of bad moral character, let alone the “fourth proposal” (bhikṣavo duḥśilena bhikṣunā nānāvāsaṃ na kartavyam, prageva jñapticaturtham).20 They do not obey the rules (śasanadūṣakaḥ).21 These mendicants of bad moral character should not be given a cell among the moral and the venerable (duḥśilānām bhikṣunām śīlavatānām dākṣināyānām madhye āvāso na dātavyaḥ), but outside the vihāra (teśām bahirvihāre āvāso dātavyaḥ). No saṅgha food should be given them (saṅghālāpa no dātavyaḥ).22 They are neither worthy of the rank of the saṅgha (na ca teśām saṁghikī bhūmimarhati), nor are there any genuine monks among them (na ca teśām kimcidbhikṣubhāvam saṁvidyate).23

The Buddha then lists the unpleasant rebirths awaiting those who misbehave in various different ways: those who “misuse the teeth-cleaning wood” (dantakāśṭhamasaparibhogena paribhūnijante) of the community will be born among the creatures of the sea;24 those who “misuse the rice and grains” (tilatāṇḍulakodrakulattadhānyadinasaparibhogena paribhūnijante) of the community will be reborn in the city of pretas (where they will endure various misfortunes and tortures associated with their unsatiable hunger and thirst);25 those who “misuse the food and drink” (ānapānāderanyayena paribhogam kūrvantī) of the community will be reborn (hideously deformed) in low-caste families,26 and those who “misuse the rank of the Saṅgha” (saṅghikīm bhūmimasaparibhogena paribhūnijante) will be reborn in hell, where they will live for twelve kalpas, before being reborn as blind beggars back in the the land of Jambudvīpa.27

At the head of this succession of warnings, however, is the announcement that rebirth in the form of the creatures that live among the filth of
Vārāṇasī is the fate awaiting those who hold the title of householder in the monastery (ye vihāre grhusaṃjñāṇam dhārayiṣyantī), who are surrounded by sons and daughters (te dārakadārikāpāriṣṭā bhaviṣyantī), who misuse their cells by filling them with high seats and comfortable beds (te sāṃghikām maniçekṣaptīṁ vamṣikopabimbopadhānakāṁ sayanāsanāṁ asatparībhogena parībhokṣyante), and who “make excrement and urine on the customs of the Saṅgha” (ye ca sāṃghikopacāre uccāraṇ prasāvaṇaṃ kuryanti).28

It is, one might say, ironic that, of all the characters that appear in the pages of the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, the one that conforms most closely to this type of reviled married practitioner also happens to be one of the most highly revered personages in the whole work. The dharmabhāṇaka, the preceptor from Vārāṇasī whom Sarvanāraṇavīṣakhambhin is told to seek out in order to receive the six-syllable formula, is described as being without moral code or moral behaviour (siṭāvippañnaḥ acaravipanno), surrounded by wives and children (bhāryāputraduhitābhiḥ pāriṣṭāḥ), wearing a robe covered in urine and excrement (kāśyoccāraprasāvaparipūrṇaḥ) and being non-celibate (asaṃvṛttyāpathaḥ).29 Yet, he should be seen, we are told, as the same as a tathāgata (dharmaṃbhāṇakastathāgataśaṃ doṣṭavyaḥ), as like a heap of merit (pūṇyakīṭaḥ iva), like all the sacred bathing places of the Ganges (sarvatthā gāṇgeva), like one who does not speak lies (avitathavādīva), like one who speaks the truth (bhūtavādīva), like a heap of jewels (ratnarāṣīrīva), like a boon-giver and a wish-fulfilling jewel (varadāścintāmaṇīrīva), like a Dharmaking (dharmaṃrāja iva), and like a rescuer of the world (jagaduttāraṇa iva draṣṭavyaḥ).30 The unkempt family man, in this instance, escapes censor. It is not his behaviour or modus vivendi as such, it seems, that is being condemned. Indeed, as a dharmabhāṇaka, he is clearly to be treated with the utmost respect. It is only, we may deduce, when such a practitioner makes his home in the monastery that he is criticized, for at that point he becomes guilty of the serious offense of defiling the moral code of the monastic way of life.

The description of this dharmabhāṇaka goes beyond the normal configuration of a Mahāyāna preacher. The difficulty of seeing through a dubious exterior to the true, inner nature of such a teacher was not, to be sure, a problem that was without precedent. In as early a Mahāyāna text as the Aṣṭasahasrika Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, for instance, the bodhisattva Sādaprudita is advised that his teacher’s apparent involvement with the phenomenal world is merely a display of his upāya, or “skillful means.” “For there is always Māra, the Evil One,” he is told, “who may suggest that your teacher tends, enjoys and honours things that can be seen, heard, smelled, tasted or touched, when in actual fact he does so from skill in means, and has really risen above them. You should therefore not lose confidence in him . . .”31 The idea, meanwhile, that a layman (and not a monk) might fulfill the role of
preacher is also to be found in earlier Mahāyāna literature. In the chapter from the \textit{Saddharmapūṇḍarīka Sūtra} devoted wholly to the figure of the \textit{dharmabhāṇaka}, we read: “Again, Bhaisajyāraja, if some creature vicious, wicked and cruel-minded should in the (current) age speak something injurious in the face of the \textit{tathāgata}, and if some should utter a single harsh word, founded or unfounded, to those irreproachable preachers of the law (\textit{dharmabhāṇakānām}) and keepers of this \textit{sūtrānta} (\textit{asya sūtrāntasya dhārakānām}), whether lay devotees (\textit{grhaśthānām vā}), or clergymen (\textit{pravraj-}


Nevertheless, in his ownership of many wives and children, his shabby bearing and the emphasis given to the amorality of his manner, the \textit{dharmabhāṇaka} of the \textit{Kāraṇḍavyūha} is no ordinary Mahāyāna preacher. He is, surely, representative of another type of practitioner. The sketch given in the sūtra of his unconventional demeanor is evocative of nothing more than the figure of the antimonial tantric yogin, epitomised by the great \textit{mahāsiddhas}, the “great (\textit{maha-}) accomplished ones (\textit{-siddhas})” championed by both the Buddhist and the Śaivite traditions. Furthermore, quite apart from his outward appearance, the ability of the \textit{Kāraṇḍavyūha’s dharmabhāṇaka} to grant initiation into the use of \textit{Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ} suggests that he is, in fact—true to the nature of such yogins—more of a “guru” than a “preacher,” more involved with the transmission of tantric practices than with the elucidation of the sūtras. Indeed, on one of the occasions Śarvanīvaraṇaśīkṣākṛta asks to be given the six-syllable formula, he addresses the preceptor as “guru” (\textit{evam gurudādasve me saḍakṣarīṃ mahavidyaśaśrīnī . . . }).


The tantric affiliations of \textit{Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ} are more clearly apparent in the sūtra in the connection that is made between the formula and the idea of the \textit{vidyādhara}, the “holder (\textit{-dhara}) of \textit{vidyā}.” In the course of Śākyamuni’s first discourse to Sarvanīvaraṇaśīkṣākṛta on the qualities of the six syllables, it is said that he or she who recites the formula will become indestructible (\textit{akṣaya-pratibhāno}), purified by esoteric wisdom (\textit{jñanaśuddho}), furnished with great compassion (\textit{mahākarunāyaṃ samanvagato}) and will, every day, fully accomplish the six perfections (\textit{dīne dīne śaṭparamitāḥ paripūrayatī}). Next, it is said, he will receive the \textit{abhiṣeka}, or “consecration,” of the \textit{vidyādhara-cakravartin} (\textit{vidyādhara-cakravartyabhisekaṃ pratiḥabhat}), or the “emperor (\textit{cakravartin}) of \textit{vidyādhara}.”


A \textit{vidyādhara} also appears in the maṇḍala connected to the formula. The central figure of the diagram, which is said to be four-cornered (\textit{nimittāṃ caturasram}) and about the size of five hands (\textit{paṇcāhastapramāṇaṃ sāmantakena}) is the Buddha Amitābha (\textit{madhye maṇḍalasyāmitābhāṃ likhet}), made out of the powder of sapphires, rubies, emeralds, quartz, gold, and silver (\textit{indranīlacūrṇaṃ padmarāgacūrṇaṃ marakatacūrṇaṃ sphaṭikacūrṇaṃ swarṇarūpyacūrṇaṃ amitabhasya tathāgatasya kāye saṃyojayitavyāni}).
On his right is a bodhisattva called “Mahāmanidhara,” or “holder (-dhara) of the great jewel (mahāmanī-),” or “the great (mahā-) holder of the jewel (-manidhara).” On his left is the six-syllable formula, described, as we saw in the previous chapter, in the form of a goddess. The vidyādhara stands at her feet (tasyāḥ sādakṣarimahāvidyāyāḥ padamṭilā vidyādharāṃ pratisthāpayitavyam), holding a spoon of smoking incense in his right hand (dakṣiṇahaste dhūpaka-tacchukāṃ kartavyaṃ dhūmāyamānam) and a basket of various ornaments in his left (vāmahaste nānāvidhālamkāraparipūrṇam piṭakaṃ kartavyam).

(To complete the description, at the four doors of the maṇḍala stand four great kings (mahārājaḥ) holding various weapons and at its four corners stand four jars full of precious stones.)

Comparatively little in the way of critical scholarship has been produced on the subject of the vidyādhara. In brief, therefore, the term seems to refer, originally, to a being who may, at one time, have been an ordinary man, but who, through his own exertions, has transcended his limitations to become something much more than a man: a magician, wizard or genie, perhaps, possessed of supernatural powers which, the tradition says, enable him to demonstrate miraculous behavior, such as the ability to fly. The term vidyā, as we have seen, may describe both a mantra and enlightenment itself. A vidyādhara, then, literally a “holder (-dhara) of vidyā,” is one who is both adept in the use of esoteric formulae and who is, to some degree at least, enlightened. The vidyāadhara is not a uniquely Buddhist phenomenon. Together with his feminine counterpart the vidyādharti, he is the hero of countless folktales told in regions as far flung as Nepal, Persia and the Tamil world of South India. The most famous collection of such stories is probably the Brhatkatha, a Kashmiri Śaivite work dated to sometime towards the end of the first millennium C.E.

In the early Mahāyāna Buddhist texts, the vidyāadhara is mentioned only obliquely. In the Ratnakunyasamcayagathā, the bodhisattva who “does not come to a standing place in the suchness of the Dharma-element” is said to “become as one who, like a cloud, stands in the sky without anywhere to stand on,” and “as a sorcerer (vidyāadhara) who, like a bird, rides on the wind which offers him no support.” The implication is not, I think, that the bodhisattva is a vidyāadhara. The text simply means to say that the state of coursing in the Perfection of Wisdom may be understood as analogous to the experience of flying through the sky, which is, according to the stories, one of the things that the vidyāadhara is, literally, able to do.

The vidyāadhara, however, is much more prominent in the literature of Buddhist tantra, where, in some texts at least, “vidyāadhara-hood” is presented as one of the main goals of tantric religious endeavor. In seventh-century India, the Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing remarks upon a large collection of texts devoted to tantric ritual, one hundred thousand stanzas long, known as the
vidyādharapīṭaka, or the “basket (-piṭaka) of the vidyādharas,” in contrast to the sūtra collection of the bodhisattvapiṭaka, or “basket of bodhisattvas.” In Tāranātha’s History of Buddhism in India, tantric practitioners are explicitly referred to as vidyādharas and are said to attain the siddhi of the vidyādhsara. We read: “Not that the esoteric yoga and anuttara tantras were not prevalent among the fortunate people before their time. Shortly after the spread of the Mahāyāna doctrine, there were a hundred thousand vidyādharas,” and, “People of the earlier generations had the capacity of keeping the secret. Therefore, nobody could know them as practising the guhya- (secret) mantra so long as they did not attain the vidyādhsara-siddhi.” In the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa, a work which, as we saw in chapter one, like the Kāraṇḍavyūha, straddles the divide between sūtra and tantra, the vidyādhsara appears both as a human magician and as part of the extraordinary retinue of the great bodhisattva Vajrapāni. Like the Kāraṇḍavyūha, this text also advertises the possibility of becoming a vidyādhsara-cakravartin.

The vidyādhsara is also to be found in the purāṇas. There, he is often mentioned in the same breath as the mahāsiddha (or siddha). Passages taken from the presentations of the vāmana-avatāra found, respectively, in the Vaiṣṇavite Bhāgavata Purāṇa and the Śaivite Padma Purāṇa, for instance, depict these two types of beings as hovering together, in attendance of the supreme deity, in the company of other rarefied beings. The former passage, in translation, reads: “Hosts of siddhas and vidyādharas, along with kimpuruṣas and kinnaras (beings which are half man-half animal), cāraṇas (celestial singers), yakṣas (semidivine beings) and rakṣas (guardians), suparṇas (eagles), best of serpents, and the attendants of gods sang and danced. Highly extolling the Lord, they showered flowers on the hermitage of Aditi and its premises.” The latter reads: “The group of gandharvas (spirit beings) sang with notes full of emotion; and the groups of heavenly damsels, mingling with their lords, and full of emotions, danced there (i.e. in the heaven). In the same way, groups of vidyādharas and siddhas wandered in (i.e. being seated in) aeroplanes.”

The fact, then, that a vidyādhsara is found at the base of the maṇḍala employed in the initiation into the use of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūm and that recitation of the formula is said to lead to the abhiṣeka of the vidyādhsara-cakravartin strongly suggests that the concise formula of the Buddhist tūṣvara is a practice derived, originally, from tantric-style religious circles. It also confirms the impression, derived from his unconventional appearance, that the dharmabhāṣyaka responsible for conferring this initiation may be understood as a tantric-style yogin.

As we have already seen, the use made of the vāmana-avatāra in the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra reflects a situation in which Buddhists were having to compete with non-Buddhists for lay patronage: Bali is continually advised of
the benefits of filling the alms bowl of a bodhisattva or a tathāgata and, also, of the dangers of not doing so, until eventually, the whole story is turned around so that Bali’s great crime is not, as is usually the case, the failure to keep his promise, but instead, the fact that he has made his offering to the wrong being (kūkṣetra mayā dānanām dattam). The same competitive sentiment is expressed in another passage in the sūtra, in which the dharmabhāṇaka makes a list of those who have become consecrated in various different places (nānāsthāneṣu dīkṣante), into various religious orders (mokṣārtheṣu nānāpaṭeṣu dīkṣante) and into the cult of different maheśvaras (divasanīrākṣakā maheśvareṣu dīkṣante). These other practitioners, the Buddhist dharmabhāṇaka concludes, will not achieve liberation and there will be no end to the eternal round of their births and rebirths. 51

We have, also, previously remarked upon the instruction given in relation to the maṇḍala connected to Oṁ Maṇipadme Hūṃ, to the effect that it may be given to Mahāyāna or non-Mahāyāna Buddhists, but not to tīrthikas. This, it was argued, was expressive of an inclusivist aspect of the practice of reciting the formula, showing that Oṁ Maṇipadme Hūṃ might be used by any Buddhist, regardless of their status. The stricture against tīrthikas, moreover, indicates that some non-Buddhists were applying for initiation into the use of the Buddhist formula and had to be stopped. The corollary of this, presumably, is that, one of the reasons why a non-Buddhist practitioner might have thought there was nothing wrong in taking a Buddhist initiation was because, superficially at least, the appearance and practices of Buddhist and non-Buddhist tantric circles were quite alike.

To recap, then, the Kāraṇḍavyūha is written from the point of view of a Mahāyāna monastic establishment entering into an uneasy alliance with the religious circles gravitating around the charismatic presence of tantric yogins. The sūtra reacts to what it sees as the deplorable infiltration of the monasteries by these non-celibate, married practitioners by deliberately advocating the process of ordination into the monastic life and by reasserting the core ethical values of monastic life. Yet, at the same time, the central teaching of the sūtra—the worship of an śvara by means of a concise formula—is one that, as the depiction of the dharmabhāṇaka indicates, has itself been derived from these very yogins. The spiritual impetus gathering behind the tantric methods employed by these characters was, presumably, simply too strong to be ignored by the monastics. The central problem faced by the sūtra, therefore, was to show how this new form of practice—the use of Oṁ Maṇipadme Hūṃ—could be understood in terms of the conventions of the Mahāyāna monastic tradition. First of all, it had to be seen as distinct from similar practices found in circles of non-Buddhist tantrics living close by. Second, it had to be described within the orthodox doctrinal categories of the Mahāyāna. Third, its expression should not offend the monastic moral code. The practice of reciting
The Origins of Ōṃ Maṇīpadme Hūṃ

Ōṃ Maṇīpadme Hūṃ, then, might be seen to enrich the Mahāyāna monastic way without in any way compromising the integrity of the tradition.

We have already observed how the sūtra accomplishes this task in its presentation of the Buddhist ṭīvra. Avalokiteśvara is an ṭīvra in the mould of the Śaivite deity. Yet, he is very clearly distinguished from Śiva. The verse couplet outlining the central Śaivite doctrine of the līṅga is dismissed as that which is spoken by the “common people” (tṛṣaprthajāneṣu sattveṣu sāmkathyaṃ), at a time when beings are “deprived of the path to awakening” (bodhimārgena viprahīṇā). Maheśvara (Śiva) and his consort Umādevī subjugate themselves to Avalokiteśvara in the conversion sequence at the end of the sūtra. Avalokiteśvara is never identified with the ātman and, although he is depicted as a supreme purusa, he is never portrayed as the creator of the universe. He is, moreover, recognizably the same figure that is described in earlier Mahāyāna sūtras. He is still the servant of Amitābha and Śākyamuni, as supremely compassionate and as capable of taking on whatever form is most suitable for the conversion of different individuals.

In addition, on a number of different occasions, Avalokiteśvara is explicitly shown to be different not only from Maheśvara, but also from the gods in general. The first instance of this occurs when, at the beginning of the sūtra, the bodhisattva’s entry into hell is reported to Yama, the lord of death. Yama asks himself which god this might be (kasya punardevasyāyaṃ prabhāvahāvahāh): Maheśvara, Nārāyaṇa, one of the other gods, or the great rākṣasa, or “demon,” Rāvaṇa. He looks around hell and sees a great number of gods and asks himself which one of these it could be. He looks around again, though, and sees Avalokiteśvara, “the great bodhisattva” (bodhisattvaṃ mahāsattvavante paśyati sma). Then, when Avalokiteśvara, in the shape of a beggar, visits the brahmin, he is specifically asked whether he is a man or a god (aṭhavā tvam devo ’si, manuṣyo ’si vā). In reply, he says that he is not a god, but a man that has become a bodhisattva (na deva, api tu mānuṣo ’haṃ bodhisattvabhūtah), feeling compassion for the wretched and miserable and pointing out the path to awakening. Lastly, when Avalokiteśvara produces showers of food and clothing to put an end to the famine in Magadha, the people ask which god could be responsible for this miraculous deed (kasya devasyāyaṃ prabhāvahāh). At this juncture, an old man appears and tells them that this could be the work of no god, but only of Avalokiteśvara (na yuṣmākamanyadevasya kasyacidśrāvah prabhāvo bhavati nirahitadavalokiteśvarasya). Although evidently an ṭīvra, Avalokiteśvara, the sūtra shows, may still be coherently understood as the same Avalokiteśvara (or Avalokitasvara) that appears in other Mahāyāna works, as different from and superior to Maheśvara, and as a bodhisattva not a god.

A similar analysis may be made of the presentation of Ōṃ Maṇīpadme Hūṃ in the Kāraṇḍavyūha. The sūtra, for instance, as we saw in the previous
chapter, seems to inherit a conception of the concise formula as a kind of *pranava*: the depiction of the six syllables as a means of attaining all religious goals and as the essence and source of all religious teaching, as well as the image of the “rice grain” used to describe the formula all point to this conclusion. However, unlike the *Śiva Purāṇa*, which explicitly identifies *Namah Śivāya* as the *pranava* (albeit a *sthūla*, or “gross,” form, in comparison with the *sūkṣma*, or “subtle” *Oṃ*), there is no mention of the word *pranava* in the sūtra. This is not necessarily a deliberate omission: *Namah Śivāya* appears not to be referred to as the *pranava* in the *Skanda Purāṇa*. However, the fact remains that the idea of the *pranava* is not part of orthodox Mahāyāna doctrine. What the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* does, though, in order to integrate this Buddhist *pranava* into the Mahāyāna system, is to present the formula in the same terms used to describe the Perfection of Wisdom in the earlier Perfection of Wisdom sūtras. *Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ*, the sūtra implies, has taken the place of the Perfection of Wisdom as the supreme principle of the Mahāyāna.

The constant repetition of the term *ṣaḍāksarā mahāvidyā*, the “six-syllable great formula,” is, to begin with, reminiscent of the continual stress on the word *prajñāpāramitā*, “Perfection of Wisdom,” in those early sūtras. A little more tellingly, though, *Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ*, just like the Perfection of Wisdom, is praised as the cause of greater merit than practices connected with *stūpas*. In the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, Śākyamuni tells Sarvanvāraṇavīṣkambhin that the fruit of making *stūpas*, made of gold and jewels, for as many *tathāgatas* as there are dust particles and “depositing relics in them each day” (*ekadine dhātvāvaroṇaṃ kuryāt*), is equivalent only to the fruit of a single syllable of the great six-syllable formula.61 This has much the same ring to it as passages from the *Aśṭasāhasrika*, such as:

Greater would be the merit of the devotee of the Perfection of Wisdom compared not only with that of a person who would build many *koṭis* of *stūpas* made of the seven precious things, enshrining the relics of the *tathāgata*. It would be greater than the merit of one who would completely fill the entire Jambudvīpa with such *stūpas*.62

The recitation of *Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ* is also said to lead, automatically, to the accomplishment of the six perfections, a claim that echoes earlier statements to the effect that the accomplishment of the Perfection of Wisdom somehow entails the accomplishment of the other five perfections. In the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, we read that those who recite the formula will daily accomplish the six perfections,63 and, at another point in the sūtra, that a single recitation of the formula accomplishes the six perfections.64 In the *Aśṭasāhasrika*:
It is therefore because it has dedicated the wholesome roots to all-knowledge that the Perfection of Wisdom controls, guides and leads the five perfections. The five perfections are in this manner contained in the Perfection of Wisdom, and the term “Perfection of Wisdom” is just a synonym for the fulfilment of the six perfections. In consequence, when the Perfection of Wisdom is proclaimed, all the six perfections are proclaimed. 65

The same pattern is also detectable in the narrative structure of the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, where the description of the search for Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ shares many of the traits of the discovery of the Perfection of Wisdom by the bodhisattva Sadāprarudita, as told in the Aṣṭasahasrika. 66 The latter story is the paradigm example of what Stephan Beyer has dubbed the Mahāyāna “vision quest,” a narrative form consisting of three essential stages: an aspiring Dharma-practitioner has a visionary experience; he or she is then inspired to go on a “quest”; finally, the practitioner experiences another vision, sometimes a repetition of the initial experience, which represents either the end of the path, or a stage of irreversible attainment some way along the path. 67

Beyer detects the presence of this underlying structure in a number of different sūtras. The whole of the Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra, for example, may be seen as one long “vision quest,” in which the main protagonist, the boy Sudhana, travels from one spiritual adviser to the next before finally experiencing the vision of the tower of Maitreya. Short tales such as the story of Sudatta, in chapter nine of the Pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhavasthitasamādhi Sūtra, Beyer remarks, “manifest the same basic themes.” 68 Sudatta is taught the samādhi of the sūtra’s title, “the samādhi of the bodhisattva who stands face-to-face with the buddhas of the present,” by the tathāgata Kṣemarāja, an event which eventually leads to a time when, after a kind of long journey in which he is aided by two other buddhas, the tathāgatas Vidyuddeva and Raśmirāja, he becomes fully awakened. 69

Beyer also draws attention to the structure of the Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛti Sūtra, 70 where queen Vaidehi, imprisoned by her son, is first granted a vision of buddhalands by Śākyamuni Buddha. She then states her particular desire to be reborn in the land of Sukhāvatī, is taught several different meditations and is, eventually, said to see Sukhāvatī and gain insight into the non-origination of all existence. Similarly, in the Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra, the monk Dharmākara is first granted an experience of the buddhafields of billions of buddhas through the teaching of a tathāgata. Making numerous vows to create the most perfect buddhafield himself, he practices the bodhisattva path until he himself, as the Buddha Amitābha, teaches the Dharma in the pure land of Sukhāvatī. 71 Both the monk and the queen, Beyer writes, “learn to do for themselves what was given them in the first episode.” 72 Finally, in the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra,
the bodhisattva Sadāparibhūta, instead of seeing a vision, hears the verses of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka śūtra* on his deathbed. This event prolongs his life and enables him to preach the sūtra to vast quantities of beings, so that, when his days really do come to an end, he meets thousands of buddhas to whom he also preaches the sūtra. Eventually, like Dharmākara, he reaches the level of buddhahood, as the Buddha Śākyamuni.73

However, each of these examples differs in some significant way from the story of Sadāprarudita in the *Aṣṭasahasrikā*. In the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, for instance, the vision of Maitreya that Sudhana experiences at the end of the sūtra is not anticipated in any way at the beginning of the text, when, before setting out on his journey, he is merely given a wide-ranging *Dharma*-teaching by Mañjuśrī.74 Apart from Sadāprarudita’s, though, Sudhana’s “quest” is the only one that actually involves travel, in the normal sense of that word. In the *Pratyutpanna śūtra*, Sudatta’s journey does not take place across space and time, but over the course of a series of different rebirths, first as a god and then as a brahmin. Moreover, his progress is described not as the re-creation of a visionary experience after a fallow period of searching, but as a continuous development of the *samādhi* he has been taught at the outset. Queen Vaidehi’s “quest” simply involves listening to a series of teachings describing different meditations, Dharmākara’s the practice of the conduct of a bodhisattva (in particular, the making of a series of powerful vows) and Sadāparibhūta’s the preaching of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka śūtra*. The latter’s initial experience is, also, not something that he tries to recreate, but is, instead, the means by which he is able to attain sufficient merit in order that he may eventually achieve buddhahood.

Bearing in mind all the differences between these various “vision quest” narratives, it is striking how closely the story of Sarvanīvaraṇaviśkambhin’s search follows the basic structure of Sadāprarudita’s odyssey. Both stories begin by showing that the respective objects of these quests—the Perfection of Wisdom in one and *Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ* in the other—are means of achieving *samādhis* and visionary experience. In the *Aṣṭasahasrikā*, Sadāprarudita, standing in a remote forest, is told by a *tathāgata* about the marvelous qualities of the town of Gandhavatī, which is a bejewelled and fragrant place, full of lotus ponds and pleasure palaces, where the bodhisattva Dharmodgata demonstrates the Perfection of Wisdom. Sadāprarudita becomes jubilant and, without going anywhere, hears Dharmodgata demonstrating the Perfection of Wisdom. As a result, he enters various different *samādhis* and sees countless buddhas in the ten directions teaching the Perfection of Wisdom to bodhisattvas.75

Sarvanīvaraṇaviśkambhin’s journey is given a similar preliminary context. The second part of the *Karaṇḍavyūha śūtra* opens with a short section in which Śākyamuni states that Avalokiteśvara has attained an immeasurable
number of samādhis and is furnished with samādhis, listing sixty-two of them. There are, the Buddha adds, hundreds of thousands of samādhis in each of the bodhisattva’s hair pores (tasyaikakaromāvivare samādhisatasahasraṁ śanti). Then, after the story of Simhala, Śākyamuni describes the worlds contained within the hair pores of Avalokiteśvara’s body. Those who “bring to mind the name” of the six-syllable formula, the Buddha says, will be reborn in those hair pores, implying, presumably, that they will also experience the samādhis contained in those pores. Sarvanīvaranaṇaviśkambhin’s search then begins. Like Sadāprarudita, he is inspired by an initial period of visionary experience (although Sadāprarudita actually enjoys these experiences himself, while Sarvanīvaranaṇaviśkambhin is only told about them). In both cases, the motivation for each bodhisattva’s “quest” is the re-creation of these (first- or second-hand) experiences.

Like Sadāprarudita, Sarvanīvaranaṇaviśkambhin is described as going on an actual journey: the one travels to the magical city of Gandhavatī, while the other goes to the more worldly city of Vārānasī. Both bodhisattvas have to seek out a particular individual in order to receive their respective teachings: the former the bodhisattva Dharmodgata and the latter the dharmabhāṇaka. Both stories also end in the recapitulation of the initial experiences. In the Aṣṭasahasrikā, Sadāprarudita is said to enter different samādhis and see visions of the tathāgatas as soon as he hears the Perfection of Wisdom expounded by Dharmodgata. In the Kāraṇḍavyūha, when Sarvanīvaranaṇaviśkambhin receives Oṃ Maṇīpadme Hūm, the earth trembles in “six uncommon ways” (sadvikaram prthivī prakampitā) and the bodhisattva is said to obtain samādhis (ime samādhayah sarvanīvaranaṇaviśkambhinaḥ pratilabdhāḥ), seven of which are listed. Then, after a brief interlude, the sūtra returns abruptly to further descriptions of the lands contained in the hair pores of Avalokiteśvara’s body.

A final parallel presents itself in the fact that both stories include the motif of self-mutilation. Sadāprarudita is asked by the god Śakra, disguised as a young man, to give him his heart, blood, and the marrow of his bones because, the deity says, they are needed by his father for a sacrifice. Full of joy, the bodhisattva draws blood by piercing his right arm with a sword, cuts flesh from his thigh, and strides up to a wall in order to break one of his bones. Later, he draws blood once again, in order to sprinkle the ground and prevent dust clouds rising up in the place where Dharmodgata is about to teach. Sarvanīvaranaṇaviśkambhin, meanwhile, offers to use his own skin, blood, and bones if no bark, ink, or reeds can be found with which to write the six-syllable formula. The motif of self-mutilation is also, of course, to be found in other Mahāyāna sūtras: in the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra, for instance, the bodhisattva Bhaiṣajyarāja recounts how, in a previous life, he burned his own body as an offering, and, at the end of the Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra, Samantabhadra
recalls how he gave away different parts of his body to beggars. But, among all the “vision quest” narratives we have considered, it is only found in the stories of Sadāprarudita and Sarvanīvaraṇāvīṣkambhin.

The Kāraṇḍavyūha is not suggesting that Oṃ Maṇīpadme Hūṃ makes the Perfection of Wisdom redundant. In the Dhvajāgra hair pore of Avalokiteśvara’s body, groups of tathāgatas are said to teach the six perfections—including, of course, the Perfection of Wisdom—to the people of Jambudvīpa. Similarly, sūnyatā, or “emptiness,” the central doctrine of the Perfection of Wisdom sūtras, is specifically said to be contemplated by the bodhisattvas who inhabit the Mahoṣadhīḥ pore of Avalokiteśvara’s body. The sūtra is, however, quite explicit in showing that the formula is not simply equivalent, in some way, to the Perfection of Wisdom, but is, also, in some way, superior to it. Before Oṃ Maṇīpadme Hūṃ is granted to Sarvanīvaraṇāvīṣkambhin, he is told by the dharmabhāṣaka that all the tathāgatas are born from the Perfection of Wisdom and that the Perfection of Wisdom is the mother of all the tathāgatas. This, of course, is a straightforward reiteration of a traditional Mahāyāna doctrine also found in the Aṣṭasāhasrikā. But the dharmabhāṣaka goes on: if she (the Perfection of Wisdom) makes obeisance with hands clasped to the great six-syllable formula, then so much more will the tathāgatas, arhats, samyaksambuddhas, and multitudes of bodhisattvas. Oṃ Maṇīpadme Hūṃ, the dharmabhāṣaka implies, is, in some sense, greater than the Perfection of Wisdom and greater than the tathāgatas, arhats, samyaksambuddhas, and bodhisattvas.

This sentiment might, I suppose, be taken as another expression of the convention, remarked upon in chapter 3, by which the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, the chief subject of the sūtra, may—like Mañjuśrī elsewhere in the Mahāyāna—be presented as greater even than the buddhas. But this explanation would fail to address the issue of why the sūtra goes to such great lengths to show that the formula is also, in some way, the equivalent of the Perfection of Wisdom. Far more satisfactory, surely, is the interpretation that this passage is informed by a tacit recognition of Oṃ Maṇīpadme Hūṃ as a form of the praṇava. Indeed, it is immediately followed by the presentation of the formula as the “rice grain of the Mahāyāna” (taṇḍulavatsāraṃ mahāyānasya), an image which, as we have argued, is redolent precisely of similes used to describe both the “gross” (sthāla) and “subtle” (sāksma) forms of the praṇava, respectively Namah Śivāya and Oṃ. As a form of the praṇava, Oṃ Maṇīpadme Hūṃ is, by definition, second to no one and nothing. As a Buddhist praṇava, the formula may be said to supercede the Perfection of Wisdom as the supreme principle of the Mahāyāna. Thus, the Perfection of Wisdom, together with the tathāgatas, arhats, and samyaksambuddhas bow to it, an event which graphically demonstrates the incorporation of the formula into the Mahāyāna. How, though, does the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra employ the conventions of the
The Origins of Oṁ Maniṣpadme Hūṃ

Mahāyāna tradition to describe the use of this prāṇava and its corresponding “vision.”

To begin with, in the simple fact that a maṇḍala is used to confer initiation into the use of Oṁ Maniṣpadme Hūṃ, the sūtra confirms the original tantric-style character of the practice: a maṇḍala is almost a sine qua non of tantric initiation. The maṇḍala’s depiction of the six syllables as a goddess is also, as we have seen, consistent with the idea of the concise formula as ṣakti, one of the central doctrinal tenets of tantra. The sūtra, too, specifies that whoever wishes to “enter the maṇḍala” (maṇḍalam praveśṭum) should write out the names of all the various “clans” (sarovatasyāparamparaśya nāmāni lihitavyāni), before throwing these names into the diagram (maṇḍale prathamataram tāni nāmāni prakṣīpet). The throwing of a token into a maṇḍala is, once again, a type of procedure that is entirely typical of the tantric tradition, both Buddhist and Śaivite.

As Snellgrove explains, the word gotra is generally used in pre-tantric Mahāyāna texts to describe the different spiritual capacities of beings, arranged according to their different spiritual goals. The Sandhinirmocana Sūtra, for instance, employs a threefold arrangement: the gotra of the śrāvaka, or “disciple,” the gotra of the pratyekabuddha, or “solitary buddha,” and the gotra of the tathāgata, the latter “clan” encompassing the path of the bodhisattva, the being whose motivation is the attainment of buddhahood for the sake of all other sentient beings. In the tantric texts, however, beings of differing spiritual capacities are arranged in terms of the particular kula, or “family,” to which they belong. Again, the presentation of these kulas varies from text to text: perhaps the most well-known are a threefold scheme involving the tathāgata-kula, or “buddha family,” the padma-kula, or “lotus family,” and the vajra-kula, or “vajra family,” as found in some earlier tantric works such as the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa and a fivefold scheme, comprising these last three, together with the ratna-kula, or “jewel family,” and the karma-kula, or “action family,” as found in yoga tantras such as the Sarvatathāgatatattva-saṃgraha. The fact that some parts of the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa, as Snellgrove also points out, includes groupings usually classified as gotra (śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas etc.) under the kula rubric, is another indication of the transitional character of that text, sharing the characteristics of both the sūtra and tantra genres. The same observation might be made about the Kāraṇḍavyūha in the way it employs the sūtra-style term gotra in association with the use of tantric-style maṇḍala. The throwing of the names into the maṇḍala, then, was presumably a means of determining which class of gotra the initiant belonged to.

To continue the main thread of our argument, however, it becomes apparent that, although the exterior form of the maṇḍala is tantric in style, the practice described by the interior arrangement of the diagram is not. For
Oṃ Manipadme Hūm and the Mahāyāna

Avalokiteśvara, the Buddhist īśvara that one might expect to be the focus of the diagram, is conspicuous by his absence. Instead, the central figure of the maṇḍala is the Buddha Amitābha. What this immediately suggests is that the use of the Oṃ Manipadme Hūm is being presented, here, not in terms of the union of the lord and his šakti—with all the implicit ethical difficulties this doctrine would present to a celibate monastic establishment—but, instead, as a form of practice that leads to what Gregory Schopen has referred to as the Mahāyāna’s “generalized religious goal,” the achievement of rebirth in the presence of Amitābha in his pure land of Sukhāvatī.99 Surveying a number of Mahāyāna sūtras, Schopen demonstrates that rebirth in Sukhāvatī is posited as the reward of a wide range of practices and procedures.100 This approach to the idea of Amitābha’s pure land, he calculates, may already have been an established phenomenon by the beginning of the second century C.E.101 The central presence of Amitābha in the maṇḍala connected to Oṃ Manipadme Hūm suggests that the use of the formula is also being promoted as a practice leading to the same end.

Rebirth in Sukhāvatī is certainly a recurrent theme throughout the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra. It is, for example, twice linked to the hearing of the sūtra itself (augmented in the first instance by practices that include turning towards the sūtra, developing faith towards it, understanding it, writing and having it written, memorizing it, reciting it, worshipping it, reflecting on it, decorating it with finery, displaying it, and bowing to it with great joy, respect, and devotion). At the time of death, the text says, those individuals who have listened to the sūtra will be met by twelve tathāgatas who will tell them to have no fear for, because they have heard the Kāraṇḍavyūha, they will go to Sukhāvatī.102

In the story of Avalokiteśvara’s appearance in Vārānasī in the form of a bee, the traditional threefold homage to Buddha, Dharma, and Saṃgha is said to lead to rebirth in Sukhāvatī. The worms and insects of the sewer hear the buzzing of the bee as the sound of this homage. As a result, they are said to “bring to mind the name” (nāmamansūrayanti: namo buddhāya namo dharmāya namah saṃghāya. Merely by bringing to mind the name of the Buddha (buddhanāmasmaranamātreṇa), the text then states (referring in shorthand, presumably, to the repetition of the threefold homage), they destroy the “twenty-peaked false view of individuation” (vimsatiśikharasamudgataṁ satkāyadrṣṭiśailam) and go to Sukhāvatī.103

When the bodhisattva enters the city of the pretas, the sound of the Kāraṇḍavyūha is said to come forth, whereupon the inhabitants of that realm are miraculously established as bodhisattvas in Sukhāvatī.104 Later, in the course of Avalokiteśvara’s encounter with Bali, the bodhisattva’s first speech describes how the actions of requesting a Dharma teaching from the tathāgatas and of daily filling the offering bowl of a tathāgata with a daily meal lead to rebirth
in Sukhāvatī. A near the end of this section, Avalokiteśvara promises that Bali will go to Sukhāvatī, having been purified of evil by listening to the Dharma.

Avalokiteśvara himself visits Sukhāvatī. When Śākyamuni relates how he was told about the qualities of the great bodhisattva by the Buddha Śikhin, he describes how rays of light emerged from the mouth of that tathāgata, traveled to all the different worlds in space and then returned to the tathāgata, circumambulating him three times, before re-entering his mouth. When asked why this happened, Śikhin replies that he produced this display because Avalokiteśvara was arriving in Sukhāvatī. Upon his arrival, the text continues, various marvelous phenomena, such as wonderful trees and lotus ponds, manifested, and, when the bodhisattva left Sukhāvatī, the whole of creation is said to have trembled in six different ways. Similarly, near the end of the sūtra, Avalokiteśvara is said to produce rays of colored light that appear in the Jetavana grove, that circumambulate Śākyamuni three times and then proceed on to the Avīci hell, which they freeze over. They also produce various wonderful phenomena in the Jetavana grove. Avalokiteśvara is then said to leave Sukhāvatī and appear in the vihāra. The Kāraṇḍavyūha, it is no exaggeration to say, is pervaded by the idea of Sukhāvatī. The appearance of Amitābha at the center of the maṇḍala is, we may assume, merely another aspect of this recurring theme.

The exact meaning of the maṇḍala, however, depends on how one interprets the figure of the bodhisattva Mahāmanidhara, who is said to be positioned on the right of Amitābha. The appearance of the concise formula as a goddess, stationed to the left of the buddha, may, in this context, be regarded as simply a convenient convention that the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra inherits and reproduces, without intending to lay any stress on the idea of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ as śakti. How else might the formula have been depicted in the maṇḍala, one might ask? Unlike the six-syllable formula, though, no details are given of the color, mudrā or any other attributes of Mahāmanidhara: his identity and function are not immediately clear to the modern reader.

My belief is, though, that Mahāmanidhara is the personification of the central Mahāyāna virtue of bodhicitta, the “awakened-” or “awakening mind” of the bodhisattva. The term maṇidhara occurs once again in the sūtra, shortly after the description of the maṇḍala, as the first of what are said to be a total of eight hundred samādhis that are to be taken hold of by whoever recites Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ. In the Tibetan translation, meanwhile, Mahāmanidhara (the bodhisattva) and maṇidhara (the samādhi) both appear as nor bu rin po che ’dzin, the “bearer of a precious jewel.” The term nor bu rin po che, in turn, is sometimes used to translate the Sanskrit term cintāmāni, the “wish-fulfilling jewel.” Cintāmāni, finally, is also sometimes used as a simile to describe bodhicitta. The sūtra, it seems reasonable to suppose, means to state, firstly in the context of the maṇḍala, that in conjunction with the mind
of bodhicitta, recitation of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ leads to rebirth in Sukhāvatī and, second, that recitation of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ leads to a samādhi characterized by bodhicitta.

The word employed most often in the Kāraṇḍavyūha to describe the recitation of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ is the widely used Sanskrit term *japa*, meaning literally “mutter.” Meritorious are they, the sūtra reads, who are constantly engrossed in reciting (japabhīyuktā) the six-syllable formula;116 any son or daughter of noble family who recites (japanti) this six-syllable formula becomes one of indestructible brilliance117 . . . (a list of other benefits follows, ending) . . . this is the consequence of reciting (japamānasya) the formula;118 the amount of merit of one recitation (ekajāpasya) of the formula is incalculable;119 meritorious are they who recite (japanti) the formula;120 merely to recite it (japitamātreṇa) brings sublime liberation and great happiness;121 by one recitation (ekajāpena) the six perfections are accomplished.122 *Japa* is also used to describe the recitation of the five-syllable formula. The Śīva Purāṇa describes various distinct modes of the *japa* of Namaḥ Śivaya: upāmśu japa (in a low voice), for instance, is said to be a hundred times as efficient as vācika japa (out loud) and mānasā japa (mentally) a thousand times as efficient.123

Elsewhere in the Mahāyāna, however, there appears to be very little precedent for this connection between the *japa* of a mantra and rebirth in Sukhāvatī.124 What the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra does, though, in order to facilitate the process of integrating Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ into the Mahāyāna system, is to indicate that recitation of the formula may also be thought of as a form of nāmānusmṛti, the “bringing to mind of a name,” an extremely common Mahāyāna practice and one that is, also, often said to have as its end rebirth in Sukhāvatī. Just as the Kāraṇḍavyūha is saturated with references to Amitābha’s pure land, so, too, is it replete with instances of nāmānusmṛti.

Perhaps the most important expression of this type of practice (and the textual basis of one of the most popular Buddhist “pure land” practices to have survived into present times) occurs in the shorter Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra, where mental concentration on the name (the Sanskrit term used here is manasikarisyati) of the Buddha Amitāyus is said to ensure rebirth in Sukhāvatī.125 In the Kāraṇḍavyūha, however, the use of a name of a buddha is only referred to in passing. In the course of Avalokiteśvara’s sermon to Bali about the fate suffered by worldly beings at the time of their death, the failure to “hold fast to the name of a buddha” (na buddhanāma grhitam) appears as one of a list of sins of omission (together with the failure to make offerings to a tathāgata, the failure to listen to Dharma-teachings, the failure to take delight in seeing pleasant offerings, and the failure to keep to the left of stūpas).126

The Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, of course, is primarily concerned with developing the cult of Avalokiteśvara. The bringing to mind of the name of the bodhisattva
The Origins of Om Mani Padme Hūm

is famously described in chapter twenty-four of the Sadharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra. There, following Kern’s translation, “listening to the name” (nāmadhayaṁ śṛṇuyuh),127 “keeping the name” (nāmadheyaṁ dhārayiṣyanti),128 “imploring” the bodhisattva (ākrandam kuryuh),129 “pronouncing the name” (nāmadheyagrhaṇena),130 “invoking” the bodhisattva (ākrandet),131 with the phrase, “Adoration, adoration be to the giver of safety, to Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva” (namo namas tasmai abhayamدادyavalokiteśvarāya bodhisattvāya mahāsattvāya), “adoring” the bodhisattva (nāmadheyaṁ ca dhārayiṣyati)132 and “bringing to mind” the bodhisattva (smarato)133 are said to lead to protection from a wide range of troubles and tribulations, such as fire, shipwreck, and capital punishment. In addition, “adoring the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Avalokiteśvara and cherishing his name” (avalokiteśvarasya bodhisattvasya mahāsattvasya nāmadheyaṁ ca dhārayiṣyati)134 is said to be the cause of great merit, more, indeed, than is produced by the worship of sixty-two times as many buddhas as there are sands in the Ganges.

The Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra extols the use of the name of Avalokiteśvara on four separate occasions. Twice, the benefits it is said to bestow are rather imprecise. Once, in the Ratnakunḍala hair pore, the female gandharvas who “bring to mind the name” three times in a row (trikālamanusmaranti) are said to procure all good things135 and once, in the Vajramukha pore, the kinnaras who “bring to mind the name” (nāmānusmaranti) are said to become endowed with all benefits.136 Twice, however, (where the Sanskrit phrase used in both instances is nāmadheyamanusmaranti) the “bringing to mind” of the bodhisattva’s name is specifically said to lead to rebirth in Sukhāvatī. The first occasion is when an assembly of tathāgatas announce that they who perform this action are happy, are liberated from the anguish of the suffering of old age, death, disease, grief, and lamentation, are free from the sufferings of saṁsāra and will, dressed in brilliant white, fly like swans to the realm of Sukhāvatī, where they will hear the Dharma from Amitābha.137 Next, Bali says that this practice liberates those who engage in it from the hell realms, the preta realms and from suffering in general, and will lead them eventually to Sukhāvatī, where they will hear the Dharma from Amitābha.138

The sūtra also promotes the “bringing to mind” of other phrases. As we have already seen, “bringing to mind the name” (nāmānusmarayanti) of the homage, namo buddhāya namo dharmāya namaḥ saṁghāya, is said to lead to rebirth in Sukhāvatī. Otherwise, on two separate occasions, the “bringing to mind of the name” (kāraṇḍavyūhāya mahāyānasūtra-ratna-rājasya nāmānusmaranti) is recommended.139 At one point, Avalokiteśvara advocates this latter practice in conjunction with the “bringing to mind” (nāmadheyam) of a single syllable of the Kāraṇḍavyūha and the writing of a four-line stanza of the sūtra (catuspādikāmapi gāthāṁ likhāpayiṣyanti).140 Finally, the
bodhisattvas of the Amṛtabindu hair pore are said to bring to mind the diverse Mahāyāna (vividhmaḥ ca mahāyānamanumānasranti), referring, presumably, to the use of the titles of the sūtras rather than their contents. Each of these latter passages, though, while listing a wide range of accompanying rewards to these practices, never actually includes rebirth in Sukhāvatī as one of them.

Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ, meanwhile, is twice said to be the object of nāmānuṣmṛti and twice the object of what is surely a functionally equivalent term, nāmagrahaṇaṃ. First, at the conclusion of the first part of the guided tour of the pores contained within Avalokiteśvara’s body, Sākyamuni states that those who “bring to mind the name” (nāmānuṣmṛti) of his six-syllable formula, will be born in these pores, never again to wander in saṃsāra, being seated in one pore after another, until they reach the bhūmi, or “level” of nirvāṇa. A little later on, Sākyamuni asks the tathāgata Padmottama for the six-syllable formula and is told that merely by bringing it to mind (nāmaṁśaranamāntreṇa), all evil is destroyed and the enlightenment that is hard to gain is attained (durlabhāḥ bodhiḥ pratilabhate). Then, just before Sarvanivaranavīṣkambhin asks the dharmabhāṇaka for the six syllables, he is told that it is extraordinary to “grasp” this “name” (nāmagrahaṇaṃ). Merely to “grasp the name once” (ekavāraṇāmagrahaṇaḥ), he is told, is equivalent to the action of offering robes, begging bowls, beds, seats, and medicine to the tathāgatas.

It is striking, however, that in none of these examples is Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ ever explicitly said to lead to rebirth in Sukhāvatī. Instead, the link between the use of the formula and Amitābha’s pure land remains implicit and unspoken. For instance, “grasping the name once” (ekavāraṇāmagrahaṇaḥ) of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ is said to be the equivalent of making offerings to the tathāgatas. In the sūtra’s presentation of the vāmana-avatāra, requesting a Dharma-teaching and daily filling the offering bowl of a tathāgata is said to be rewarded by rebirth in Sukhāvatī. It follows, then, more or less logically, that “grasping the name once” of the formula may also be a cause of rebirth in the pure land. Similarly, it is said that “simply by bringing to mind the name” (nāmaṁśaranamāntreṇa) of the formula all evil is destroyed and enlightenment attained. Bali is also told that he will go to Sukhāvatī as a result of the purification of evil. Therefore, “simply by bringing to mind the name” of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ will also, it would seem reasonable to suppose, lead to rebirth in Sukhāvatī.

Furthermore, the way the formula is first properly introduced in the sūtra suggests that its use is to be seen not just as an indeterminate form of the practice of “bringing to mind the name,” but, more specifically, as a form of the practice of the “bringing to mind the name of Avalokiteśvara.” In the Vajramukha pore, the last to be visited in the first part of Śākyamuni’s tour of these lands, the kinnaras are “always bringing to mind the name of
Avalokiteśvara” (satatākalamavalokiteśvarasya nāmāṇusmarantī). Breaking off the tour at this point, the Buddha then says that it is difficult (durlabhaḥ) to grasp his name (tasya nāmagrahaḥ), where tasya, or “his,” must refer to Avalokiteśvara. This is immediately followed by the statement that “those who bring to mind the name of his six-syllable formula” (ye ca tasya saḍaḥkṣaṭarthaḥvidyādnāmāṇusmarantī) will be born in those pores, where tasya must again refer to the bodhisattva. The juxtaposition of these statements is such that it is hard to avoid the conclusion that recitation of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ is to be seen as a variant of the more straightforward “bringing to mind the name” of the bodhisattva. As the latter practice is twice said, in the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, to be the cause of rebirth in Sukhāvatī, this is yet another indication that the use of the formula is implicitly connected to the attainment of that central Mahāyāna goal.

The question remains, then, as to why the Kāraṇḍavyūha avoids declaring a direct link between Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ and Sukhāvatī, when, doctrinally speaking, this would seem to be an entirely legitimate option. The answer to this would seem to be that the sūtra wishes to communicate a sense that the use of the formula is connected, first and foremost, to the attainment of an alternative religious goal. As we have seen, the “vision” that inspires Sarvanīvaraṇaviśkambhin’s “quest” for the six-syllable formula is not a simple presentation of rebirth in Amitābha’s pure land, but the extensive descriptions of the worlds contained within the hair pores of Avalokiteśvara. It is birth into these pores (teṣu romaṇvivareṣu jāyante) that is explicitly said to be the result of “bringing to mind the name” of the formula. The tour of Avalokiteśvara’s body is, also, the context for the appearance of the hundred thousand-armed form of the bodhisattva, which is inserted, somewhat abruptly, after the pores of Suvarṇa, Kṛṣṇa and Ratnakunḍala and before the pores of Amṛtabindu and Vajramukha. Once again, what seems to be going on here is that the sūtra is reproducing another purānic doctrine associated with the āvara idea and the use of a concise formula, and recasting it in the accepted terminology of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Beyer develops his remarks on the “vision quests” by using the Bhagavadgītā to posit a connection between the Mahāyāna sūtras and what he refers to as the “visionary theism” of the purānic tradition. He identifies what he considers to be a number of striking resemblances in diction and imagery between the Bhagavadgītā and the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra. Both Kṛṣṇa and Śākyamuni, he observes, are referred to as the “father of the world”; the “visions” described by both texts include the image of a blazing, stretched-out tongue or mouth; both texts advocate the offering of a single flower and both texts emphasize the quality of equanimity that is shown towards all beings by their respective lords.
Beyer also points out that the *Bhagavadgītā* employs the words *smṛti* and *anusmṛti*—terms commonly used in the Mahāyāna sūtras—as equivalents of the important purānic term *bhakti*, or “devotion,” to denote the means by which visionary experience is attained. In a verse from the end of chapter seven, the īśvara Kṛṣṇa announces that he is reached through *bhakti*, while at the beginning of chapter eight he says that he is reached through *smṛti*. The former reads: “Those who worship the gods go to the gods, but those who are devoted to me (*madbhaktā*) go to me.” The latter: “And whoever dies, remembering me alone (*mām eva smaran*) at the time of death, attains to my state once he is liberated from the body.” Chapter eight continues to use *smṛti* (and *anusmṛti*) and *bhakti* alongside each other: “. . . whatever state he calls to mind (*smaran*) as he abandons his body at its end . . .” (verse six); “. . . think of me (*mām anusmara*) at all times and fight . . .” (verse seven), and, “. . . disciplined with the power of yoga and with devotion (*bhaktyā*), having correctly installed his vital breath between the eyebrows, meditates (*anusmared*) . . .” (verses nine and ten).

The *Bhagavadgītā*, furthermore, enjoins the utterance of the single syllable *praṇava Oṃ*, in conjunction with the practice of *anusmṛti*, as a means of achieving religious success: “The man who, abandoning his body, dies pronouncing the one-syllabled Brahman, *Oṃ (om ity ekākṣaram brahma vyāharaṇa)*, while thinking on me (*mām anusmaran*), attains the highest goal.” Beyer suggests a parallel between this and the injunction to repeat the name of the Buddha Amitābha in the *Amitāyurbuddhanusmṛti Sūtra*.

Finally, Beyer compares the central vision of the *Bhagavadgītā*, the theophany of Kṛṣṇa before Arjuna in chapter eleven, with elements of the Mahāyāna approach. He comments on the way in which Kṛṣṇa first grants Arjuna the vision (“By showing favour to you, Arjuna, through my own power I have made manifest this supreme form of mine . . .”) and then tells him that the experience may only be reproduced through *bhakti* (“But by exclusive devotion (*bhaktyā tv*), Arjuna, I can be known (*jnātum*) and seen (*dṛṣṭum*) thus, as I really am, and entered into (*praveṣṭum*) . . .”). This, Beyer writes, is “strikingly reminiscent,” of the way in which queen Vaidehi, in the *Amitāyurbuddhanusmṛti Sūtra*, is taught the various different meditation techniques after first of all receiving, involuntarily, the vision of the buddhafields. He also writes that Arjuna’s vision of “blazing light” is analogous to the visions of dazzling, bejewelled buddha lands found in the Mahāyāna sūtras. Had Beyer consulted the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, however, he would have found a very much more striking set of parallels between the theology of the *Bhagavadgītā* and the “buddhology” of the Mahāyāna. For the central vision of the sūtra appears to be quite a faithful reworking of precisely the kind of theophany that is described in chapter eleven of the *Gītā*. 
In the *Bhagavadgītā*, Kṛṣṇa is said to manifest in such a way that he encompasses the whole world: “Now see, Guđākeśa, here in my body (*dehe*) the entire universe of moving and unmoving things, and whatever else you desire to behold (*draśṭum icchasi*).”\(^{167}\) Many divine and semidivine beings live in this body: “O God, I see (*paśyāmi*) in your body the gods and all kinds of beings come together, Lord Brahmā on his lotus seat, all the seers and the divine serpents.”\(^{168}\) This cosmic manifestation of Kṛṣṇa is also synonymous with the thousand-armed form of the deity: “O thousand-armed one (*sahasrabīho*), whose material form is the universe, assume your four-armed shape.”\(^{169}\) Although this form is predominantly something “to see” (*draśṭum*), it is also something, as noted above, “to enter” (*praveśṭum*).\(^{170}\) Emphasis is given to the difficulty of seeing this form: “I rejoice that I have seen (*drśtvā*) what has never before been seen (*adṛśtapṛvaµ*...,”\(^{171}\) and, “This form of mine, which you have seen (*drśtvān*), is very hard to see (*sudurdarśam*).”\(^{172}\) The gods themselves have difficulty seeing it: “Even the gods crave incessantly for a glimpse (*nityaµ darśanakå©k˚i¶a˙*) of this form.”\(^{173}\) Kṛṣṇa originally grants Arjuna a special faculty to enable him to see this vision: “But you will not be able to see (*drśtuµ*) me with your natural eye, so I give you a divine (*divyaµ*) eye (*cak˚u˙*)...”\(^{174}\) Later, however, Arjuna is told that he will see Kṛṣṇa through bhakti, or devotion alone (*bhaktyā tu*).\(^{175}\)

The vision of Avalokiteśvara detailed in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* contains nothing, it is true, of one of the most memorable aspects of this vision of Kṛṣṇa: the manifestation of the purāṇic deity is continually shown to be something that is extremely frightening. He is seen to consume the universe in his manifold, fiery mouths and to chew up human beings in his teeth. “Viśnu,” Arjuna cries, “you lap up all the worlds with your flaming mouths, ubiquitously devouring; your fierce rays engulf the entire universe in brilliance, roasting it.”\(^{176}\) Friend and foe alike, Arjuna reports, “flow into your terrifying fang-distended mouths. Some can be seen lodged between your teeth, their heads crushed to a pulp.”\(^{177}\) The gods praise Kṛṣṇa “in dread” (*bhŨṭå˙*),\(^{178}\) “the worlds reel” (*lokå˙ pravyathitås*),\(^{179}\) Arjuna is “shaken to the core” (*pravyathitåntaråtmå*),\(^{180}\) and “terrified demons scatter to the winds...,”\(^{181}\) when they see this “terrible form” (*r£paµ ghoram*).\(^{182}\) The Buddhist śvara of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, in contrast, is a consistently benign being, characterized as unwaveringly compassionate from the beginning of the sūtra to the end.

This understanding of Kṛṣṇa as a source of terror is, at least in part, derived from an understanding of the deity as the embodiment of time. “I am time (*kålo*) run on,” Kṛṣṇa says, “destroyer of the universe, risen here to annihilate worlds. Regardless of you, all these warriors, stationed in opposing ranks, shall cease to exist.”\(^{183}\) In the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, Avalokiteśvara is also linked to the concept of time, not as a destroyer though, but in terms of the
very much less alarming quality of appearing to beings at unforeseeable moments. When Sarvanīvaraṇaṇaśākambhin, immediately after the description of the hundred thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara, asks Śākyamuni how he might see (paśyāmi) the great bodhisattva, he is told that Avalokiteśvara appears in this realm in order to see, praise and give worship to the Buddha. When Sarvanīvaraṇaṇaśākambhin asks if the great bodhisattva is coming, he is told that Avalokiteśvara first arrives (prathamataramāgacchati) when he (meaning, presumably, the lesser bodhisattva) is “mature in spirit” (sattvaparipāko). When he asks when, in this time (asmin kale), Avalokiteśvara will come, Śākyamuni laughs and laughs (hasati vyavahasati ca), and says that the appointed time of his coming (āgamanakālasamayaḥ) is unpredictable (akālaste).

In many other respects, however, the two visions correspond very closely to one another. Just as Kṛṣṇa’s body is said to contain the whole universe, so, too, does Avalokiteśvara: in his hundred thousand-armed form, he is said to have an omnipresent body (viśvarūpā) and in the hair pores of his skin he contains whole worlds. Next, like Kṛṣṇa, his body contains divine and semidivine beings, whose ranks also include buddhas and bodhisattvas: the hair pore of Suvarṇa, for instance, is inhabited by gandharvas, the hair pore of Vajramukha by kinnaras, the hair pore of Indrarāja by bodhisattvas, and the hair pore of Dhvajagrā by tathāgatas, who, gathered in their apartments, teach the six perfections to the people of Jambudvīpa.

The Buddhist vision of the cosmic bodhisattva, like the theophany of the Bhagavadgītā, is also expressed, in shorthand, in terms of the puruṣa with the various “thousand-fold” attributes, derived from the conventions established in the Vedic puruṣasūkta. The sūtra switches from the description of the bodhisattva’s hair pores, to his appearance in the form of the Vedic puruṣa and then back to the description of the hair pores. Having followed the Buddha’s account of the worlds contained within the pores of Suvarṇa, Kṛṣṇa and Ratnakunḍala, Sarvanīvaraṇaṇaśākambhin expresses his desire to go (gamāyīmi) and see (dṛṣṭukāmo) these hair pores. The Buddha, however, tells him that the pores are ungraspable and untouchable (agrāhyā asaṃsparyayā), just as the dimension of space is ungraspable and untouchable. The great bodhisattva Samantabhadra, the buddha says, roamed these pores for twelve years, but still the pores and the hundred buddhas residing in each one were not seen by him (tenāpi na dṛṣṭānti). What chance, then do other bodhisattvas have? The “hair pore” (romavivaram) was not seen (na dṛṣyate) by Śākyamuni himself, he explains, despite investigation and exploration (vikṣamāṇena parimārgaṃ āpāyena). Then there follows the description of Avalokiteśvara as one hundred thousand-armed (śatasahasrabhujah) and having one hundred thousand koṭis of eyes (koṭiṣṭasahasrasrnetro). The sūtra then returns to descriptions of the hair pores of Amṛtabindu and Vajramukha. It is not that the hundred thousand-armed
Avalokiteśvara somehow appears within his own hair pores, but rather, that this form is another way of describing the cosmic form of the bodhisattva.

Like Kṛṣṇa, the vision of Avalokiteśvara, too, is said to be encountered both by entering into it and by seeing it: Śākyamuni tells Sarvanīvaraṇaviśkambhin that those who “bring to mind the name” of the six-syllable formula will be “born in” these hair pores (teṣu romavivareṣu jāyante), while the people of Jambudvīpa are, after being taught the six perfections by the tathāgatas of the Dhvajāgara pore, said to “see” (paśyanti) the hair pores of the bodhisattva. The vision of the bodhisattva is also, like the vision of Kṛṣṇa, very elusive. In the description of the hundred thousand-armed form, Avalokiteśvara is said to be neither heard (na śruto) nor seen by anyone (na kenacid drṣyate). And while the gods are said to crave a glimpse of Kṛṣṇa, it is clear from Śākyamuni’s response to Sarvanīvaraṇaviśkambhin’s wish to go and see the hair pores, that it is equally difficult for the buddhas and bodhisattvas to catch sight of Avalokiteśvara.

Finally, just as Arjuna is first given access to a visionary encounter of Kṛṣṇa through the gift of the “divine eye” and then, immediately afterwards, told that he can re-create this experience through bhakti, so, too, is Sarvanīvaraṇaviśkambhin first given an account of the worlds contained within the hair pores of Avalokiteśvara and of the hundred thousand-armed form of the bodhisattva, and then, immediately afterwards, told that they who “bring to mind the name” (nāmānnusmaranti) of the six-syllable formula are the ones who will be born in these pores. Though the bhakti taught to Arjuna may indeed, as Beyer suggests, be reflected in the meditations given to queen Vaidehi in the Amitāyuruddhānusmṛti Sūtra, it is, at least in one of its forms, very precisely mimicked in the principle practice propagated in the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra: the anusmṛti of the single-syllable (ekākṣara) praṇava Om is echoed in the nāmānusmṛti of what we have suggested is the six-syllable (ṣaḍākṣara) Buddhist praṇava, Om Mani Padme Hūṃ.

This type of vision of the cosmic īśvara is not, of course, unique to the Bhagavadgītā and the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra. Several purāṇas, both Vaiṣṇavite and Śaivite, contain gītā sections, most of which, as Rocher points out, are directly modeled on the Bhagavadgītā. All the main elements of the theophany of Kṛṣṇa and the “buddhophany” of Avalokiteśvara are also, for instance, reproduced in the theophany of Śiva contained in the Īśvaragītā of the Kārma Purāṇa, a Śaivite text considered to have been composed by the beginning of the eighth century C.E. There, like Kṛṣṇa’s, Śiva’s body encompasses the world and he contains all beings: “All this universe consisting of the mobiles and immobiles has been pervaded by me. All beings exist in me.” And like Kṛṣṇa, he is perceived to consume the created order with fire: “They saw the Lord, the creator of the universe dancing and emitting flames of fire and thereby burning (as it were) the entire universe.”
In the Īśvaragṛtā, Śiva is once again described in terms of the “thousand-fold” form of the puruṣasākta: “They saw the lord with a thousand (i.e. innumerable) heads, a thousand feet, a thousand shapes, and a thousand arms . . .” While he contains all beings, he is, also, the object of “seeing” and “knowing,” though again, this aspect of the deity is very elusive: “The sages, the pitṛs (celestial forefathers) and the heaven-dwellers do not see me. Nor do the others of well-known prowess such as Brahmā, the Manus, and Śakra (the king of gods) know me,” and, “All the worlds, god Brahmā, the grand-sire of the world, do not perceive me.” He cannot be encountered without the practice of bhakti: “Without ardent and excellent devotion it is impossible to know me.” Like the Bhagavadgṛtā, the Īśvaragṛtā also advertises the use of the single-syllable prāṇava Oṁ: “The syllable Oṁ, the seed of liberation, is your (expressive) symbol.” Unlike the Bhagavadgṛtā or the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, however, the Īśvaragṛtā integrates the sakti doctrine into this essentially bhakti-derived scheme. For instance: “What need there is of prolixity, the entire universe is constituted of my potency (śakti).”

In conclusion, then, although, in its depiction of the dharmaḥpanaka, its use of the vidyādhara idea and its description of the maṇḍala, the Kāraṇḍavyūha appears to acknowledge the tantric-style origins of the concise formula of the Buddhist īśvara, it presents the practice primarily within a scheme borrowed from the bhakti side of the purānic tradition. The sūtra is, as we have shown, informed by the need to reassert the central values of monasticism in the face, it seems, of the infiltration of celibate communities by married tantric-style practitioners. The decision to describe the use of the six-syllable formula as a tool of bhakti and not, as would appear to have been a possibility, in terms of the tantric-style idea of an engagement with the sakti of the īśvara, may have been motivated by a desire to avoid the sexual associations of the latter doctrine that would, almost inevitably, have proven problematic to the rule of celibacy.

This purānic scheme is integrated into the Mahāyāna system through a number of ingenious ploys. As we have seen, the six-syllable formula—a form of the prāṇava—is shown, in the Kāraṇḍavyūha, to take the place of the Perfection of Wisdom as the supreme principle of the Mahāyāna. The formula is co-opted into a Mahāyāna scheme that is dominated by the idea of rebirth in Sukhāvatī, the pure land of Amitābha. The connection between the formula and Sukhāvatī is most powerfully expressed in the central position given to Amitābha in the maṇḍala described in the sūtra. The sense of this connection is maintained, however, throughout the Kāraṇḍavyūha: rebirth in Sukhāvatī is a constant refrain; use of the formula is said to bring about a variety of effects which are, elsewhere in the sūtra, themselves said to lead to rebirth in Sukhāvatī; japa, or “muttering,” of the formula is recast as a form of the Mahāyāna activity of “bringing to mind the name” (nāmānusmṛti) or “taking
hold of the name” (nāmagrahaṇam), and, implicitly, as a form of “bringing to mind the name” of Avalokiteśvara, a set of practices strongly linked to the Sukhāvatī idea.

But the use of the formula is, as we have observed, never explicitly said to lead to rebirth in Sukhāvatī. This, it was suggested, was a deliberate omission on the part of the sūtra, made in order to be true to the fact that the formula was originally associated with the “entry into” or “seeing of” the vision of the cosmic tūrva. The primacy of this association is communicated in the structure of the sūtra: the account of Sarvanīvaraṇaṇaśīkhaṇḍin’s initiation into the use of the formula is, basically, told in the form of a quest for a means of experiencing this vision. The first instructions on the use of the formula make no mention of rebirth in Sukhāvatī, but state, instead, that “bringing to mind the name” leads to birth in the hair pores of this cosmic figure.

This purānic vision is itself reconfigured by the Mahāyāna. The idea of the all-encompassing size of the body of the tūrva is recast in terms of the vision of the Avatamsaka Sūtra: Avalokiteśvara takes on the characteristics of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra, a being so vast that even the hair pores of his skin contain worlds. In the end, however, even this vision feeds back into the central religious goal of rebirth in Sukhāvatī. Immediately after the description of the characteristics and attributes of the hundred thousand-armed form of Avalokiteśvara and just before the return to the account of the worlds contained within the hair pores of the bodhisattva, Śākyamuni makes the following remarks. This inconceivable one (acintyo ‘ya), he says, referring to the hundred thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara, manifests miracles and brings to maturity countless numbers of bodhisattvas, whom he stands on the path of Dharma. Having established them thus, he leads them to the realm of Sukhāvatī, where, in the presence of Amitābha, he teaches them Dharma. This passage encapsulates the syncretistic polemic that lies at the heart of the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra: the experience of seeing (or entering) the cosmic tūrva is to be understood as inseparable from the experience of rebirth in the pure land of the buddha. As we shall see in the next chapter, the unity of these two ideas is reflected in the meaning of Om Maṇipadme Hūṃ.
CHAPTER 6

The Meaning of $O\text{m} \, M\text{a}\text{n}\text{i}p\text{a}d\text{m}\text{e} \, H\text{\d{u}}\text{\d{u}}\text{m}$

An enquiry into the meaning of any mantra can quickly become a very complicated business. Mantric utterance involves the use of syllables, words, phrases, and sometimes even whole sentences that is, in a number of different ways, quite distinct from ordinary speech. Questions about what we mean by the meaning of mantras and, even, whether mantras have any meaning at all have held Indian thinkers in thrall for many centuries. In recent times, these meditations have been augmented by the work of scholars attempting to test mantras against the rubric of modern linguistic theory.\(^1\) Such considerations now constitute a philosophical and philological jungle of quite considerable proportions which, unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this study to explore. In the simplest possible terms, then, the following discussion of the “meaning” of $O\text{m} \, M\text{a}\text{n}\text{i}p\text{a}d\text{m}\text{e} \, H\text{\d{u}}\text{\d{u}}\text{m}$ is essentially concerned with the semantic content of the middle four syllables of the formula: how, in other words, the short Sanskrit compound $m\text{a}\text{n}\text{i}p\text{a}d\text{m}\text{e}$ should be correctly parsed and translated into English. It will be the contention of this chapter that the same syncretistic process that has been shown to inform the creation of the $K\text{\dd{a}}\text{r\dd{a}}\text{n\dd{a}}\text{\dd{a}}\text{\dd{a}}\text{\dd{u}}\text{\dd{a}}\text{\dd{h}}\text{\dd{a}} \, S\text{\dd{u}}\text{\dd{t}}\text{\dd{r}}\text{\dd{a}}$ as a whole is also evident, in microcosm, in the form of those four syllables. The “meaning” of $O\text{m} \, M\text{a}\text{n}\text{i}p\text{a}d\text{m}\text{e} \, H\text{\d{u}}\text{\d{u}}\text{m}$ may, in this way, be seen to be linked to the historical origins of the formula.

Nevertheless, to concentrate exclusively on this slight semantic point would be to present a very narrow and potentially very misleading view of the true significance of $O\text{m} \, M\text{a}\text{n}\text{i}p\text{a}d\text{m}\text{e} \, H\text{\d{u}}\text{\d{u}}\text{m}$. Etymologically, as Gonda points out, Sanskrit words in $-\text{tra}$ (like the Indo-European $-\text{tro}$) often signify instruments of some sort. Thus, $\text{s\text{o}t\text{r}a\text{m}}$, or “ear,” is the instrument of hearing and $\text{j\text{\dd{a}}t\text{r}a\text{m}}$, or “intellect,” is the instrument of knowing. $\text{M\text{a}n\text{t}\text{r}a}$, similarly, is an instrument ($-\text{tra}$) of the mind ($\text{m\text{a}n\text{-}}$), being derived from the same root as $\text{m\text{n\text{a}r\text{s}}\text{-}}$, denoting “mind” in the very broadest sense, encompassing the activity, not only of thought, but also of the emotions, the imagination, and the spiritual faculty of a human being.\(^2\) A mantra, in brief, is a tool for doing something with this mind. What is really important, therefore, about phenomena such as $O\text{m} \, M\text{a}\text{n}\text{i}p\text{a}d\text{m}\text{e} \, H\text{\d{u}}\text{\d{u}}\text{m}$ is not their meaning, but their function. As
Gonda remarks: “A mantra is always a source of activity, it is always a potential means of achieving a special effect.”

In the words of a contemporary Tibetan lama, “A mantra is a series of syllables whose power resides in its sound, through the repeated pronouncing of which one can obtain control of a given form of energy.” In the case of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ, this energy is conceived of as the power of Avalokiteśvara. As we have seen, the formula is repeatedly referred to as the paramahṛdaya, or “innermost heart,” of the bodhisattva. Gonda comments: “The essence of a mantra is the presence of the deity: only that mantra in which the devatā has revealed his or her particular aspects can reveal that aspect. The deity is believed to appear from the mantra when it is correctly pronounced. It is indeed true that the term mantra, because of the power considered to be inherent in formulated inspired thoughts and uttered words, also implied that the ‘formula’ was a means of wielding supranormal power.” According to this point of view, then, Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ might be said to be a means both of entering into the presence of Avalokiteśvara and of appropriating some of the bodhisattva’s power.

The implications of such a belief are, of course, spelled out at great length in the Kāraṇḍavyūha. Entry into the presence of Avalokiteśvara is, it seems to me, described in three different ways in the sūtra. First of all, those who bring to mind the six-syllable formula are said to be born in the pores of the bodhisattva’s body. Second, as we have argued, birth into these pores is conceived of as synonymous with the elusive “seeing” (darśana) of the bodhisattva in his “thousand-fold” form. That Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ is connected to the attainment of many different samādhis may also, I think, be understood as a third expression of the same idea. Avalokiteśvara himself is said to possess an immeasurable number of samādhis, unattainable even by the tathāgatas. There are hundreds of thousands of samādhis in each of his pores. To enter into one of these mental absorptions, then, may surely be considered equivalent to entering into the being of the bodhisattva himself. Sarvanīvaraṇaśīkambhin is first told by Śākyamuni that recitation of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ leads to the attainment of eight hundred samādhis. Then, as soon as he has been given the formula and has begun to take it up (udgṛhitumārabḍhaḥ), Sarvanīvaraṇaśīkambhin is said to obtain seven samādhis.

As we have also seen, one of the chief characteristics of Avalokiteśvara is his great compassion. One would, as a result, expect the appropriation of the power of the bodhisattva to be connected with an increase of this quality. It is fitting, then, that one of the samādhis said to be attained by Sarvanīvaraṇaśīkambhin after taking up Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ is the samādhi called “rejoicing in loving kindness and compassion” (maitrīkaruṇāmudito nāma samādhiḥ). Similarly, we may recall, he or she who recites Oṃ Maṇipadme
Hūṃ is said to become furnished with great compassion (mahākaruṇāya samanvāgato bhavati). 13

Avalokiteśvara is also identified as the repository of huge amounts of puṇya, or "merit." In the course of the Kāraṇḍavyūha, Śākyamuni gives two long sermons on the amount of merit accrued by the great bodhisattva. The first of these takes up the whole of the seventh chapter of the first part of the sūtra, 14 and the second occurs near the end of the text, when Avalokiteśvara has returned to the Jetavana vihāra. 15 (His samādhis, incidentally, are described as the greatest collection of his merit.) 16 Concomitantly, the recitation of the bodhisattva's six-syllable formula is said to result in the accumulation of immeasurable merit, also described, at great length, in similar fashion. 17 Though, for instance, it is said to be possible to count each drop of water in the oceans, it is said to be impossible to calculate the amount of merit accrued by Avalokiteśvara. 18 Likewise, though it is said to be possible to calculate the number of grains of sand in the oceans, it is said to be impossible to calculate the amount of merit accrued by one recitation (ekajāpa) of the six-syllable formula. 19 Once again, the use of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ is shown to be a means of taking on some of the power of the great bodhisattva.

Another way of taking hold of the power of a supranormal being is said to be to call upon his or her name, a belief not merely confined to the Indian religious traditions. 20 Appropriately enough, the presentation of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ in the Kāraṇḍavyūha would seem to imply that the six-syllable formula is also to be regarded as a form of the name of Avalokiteśvara. Recitation of the formula, we have observed, though chiefly referred to by the word japa, is, in addition, frequently described by other terms—nāmañusmṛti, nāmadheyamanusmṛti, nāmagrahaṇa—that denote the bringing to mind of a name.

The presentation of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ in the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra is certainly consistent with one aspect of the classic presentation, found in the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra, of the use of the actual name of Avalokiteśvara. In the latter work, the use of the bodhisattva's name, like the use of the six-syllable formula, is also connected to the accumulation of huge amounts of merit. However, there does seem to be one significant difference between the effect of using the mantra and the effect of using the actual name. For a particular stress is laid, in the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, on the association of the latter with the protective power of the bodhisattva. Calling upon the name, for instance, is said to effect miraculous rescue from such very palpable dangers as falling into fire, shipwreck, capital punishment, and imprisonment. 21

In contrast, Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ is only described as an instrument of protection in passing, in much less emphatic and dramatic terms. The comparable Śaivite formula Namah Śivāya is explicitly said to have protective power. "In the age of Kali," we read, "there is no greater protective factor than
Meanwhile, one who wears the Buddhist formula on the body or around the neck is said, for instance, to be known as having a body made of *vajra* (*vajrakāyaśartrā*). He or she who recites the formula is said to become one of indestructible brilliance (*akṣayapratibhāna*). The *Kāraṇḍavyūha* does, of course, attribute various interventionary powers to Avalokiteśvara in the course of the narrative sections of the sūtra. The bodhisattva, for example, is said to have saved the people of Magadha from famine. *Om Manipadme Hūṃ*, then, as the *paramahṛdaya* of the bodhisattva, might implicitly be believed to be a means of activating such miraculous saving power. Nonetheless, it remains true that the sūtra contains no express presentation of *Om Manipadme Hūṃ* as a protective device.

*Om Manipadme Hūṃ*, then, is both the *paramahṛdaya*, or “innermost heart,” of Avalokiteśvara and a form of the *nāma*, or “name,” of the bodhisattva. It is also, as we have seen, a *mahāvidyā*, a mantra capable of bringing about the “great knowledge” of enlightenment itself, or perhaps, in this context, a means of acquiring, or entering into, the enlightened mind of the great bodhisattva. He who knows the formula, it is said, knows liberation (*mokṣaṁ jānati*). One who wears the formula on the body or around the neck is said to be known as the ultimate in the wisdom of the *tathāgatas*. Merely to bring it to mind is to destroy all evil and to attain extraordinary enlightenment (*bodhiṃ*).

*Om Manipadme Hūṃ*, finally, we have argued, is to be regarded as a kind of Buddhist *prāṇava*. It is the “rice grain” of the Mahāyāna (*taṇḍul-avatsāraṁ mahāyānasya*), that which is both the nourishing essence of the whole plant and, also, the seed from which the whole plant springs. Merely to recite it is to bring sublime liberation (*śivaṁ mokṣaṁ*). It is, moreover, the indestructible instruction on all wisdom (*sarvajñānasya akṣayaṁ nirdeśaṁ*). To write it is equivalent to writing the eighty-four thousand parts of the *Dharma*. It is that by which the twelve-fold wheel of *Dharma* is turned. It is the equivalent of many Mahāyāna sūtras being sung and of a great variety of Buddhist texts being taught. The six syllables of *Om Manipadme Hūṃ* are believed to contain, in some sense, all the teachings of the Mahāyāna.

One method of explicating this aspect of the formula has been to make each of its syllables stand for one of the elements of a variety of six-part doctrinal schemes. In this way, the recitation of the formula may be said to become imbued with the force and effect of a number of different *Dharma*-teachings. This convention has played a prominent part in the transmission of the formula by contemporary Tibetan lamas. The six syllables, for instance, are commonly said to correspond to the six *pāramitās*, or “perfections” and the six realms of *samsāra*, recitation of the formula leading, respectively, to the ac-
The Meaning of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ

complishment of the former and liberation from the latter. The same strategy is also found in some of the purāṇic presentations of Namah Śivāya. In the Śiva Purāṇa, for instance, those five syllables are related to the five elements (ether, air, fire, water, and earth) and to the five senses (hearing, touch, sight, taste, and smell). A more complex set of correspondences is presented in the Līṅga Purāṇa, where each syllable of Namah Śivāya is associated with a color, a point of the compass (the fifth point being upwards), a deity, a poetic metre, and a sage.

It is somewhat surprising, then, to discover that this treatment is not part of the presentation of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ set out in the Kāraṇḍavyūha. Use of the six syllables is, in fact, thrice linked, in the sūtra, to the six pāramitās. He or she who recites the formula is said to accomplish the six perfections daily. One of the samādhis said to be attained through recitation of the formula is called “the samādhi that points out of the six perfections” (satpāramitānirdeśo nāma samādhiḥ). Finally, a single recitation of the formula is said to accomplish the six perfections. However, in none of these instances is there any sign that each syllable of the formula is believed to correspond to one of the six perfections. Rather, it is the recitation of the one formula that is said to achieve the one overall effect of accomplishing the six perfections. The Kāraṇḍavyūha is, moreover, completely ignorant of the idea of linking each of the six syllables to one of the six realms of saṃsāric existence. On the contrary, the sūtra employs a different conception of saṃsāra and describes Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ as bringing about the destruction of rebirth in five such realms (unmūlanam saṃsārasya pañcagatikasya).

The popular use of different correspondence schemes to fill out an understanding of the six-syllable formula would appear, therefore, to postdate the Kāraṇḍavyūha.

What we have referred to as the “meaning” of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ should, I think, be understood to be of comparable import to these correspondence schemes. That is to say, the precise semantics of the syllables maṇipadme should not be regarded as defining the limits of the significance of the formula. Instead, like each correspondence scheme, the “meaning” of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ should be viewed as a means of bringing out an aspect of the multifaceted significance of the formula, as another conceptual expression of the energy believed to be harnessed by the formula and, consequently, as another means by which the practitioner may develop his or her appreciation of this energy. The “meaning” of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ represents a means by which the intellect may be involved in the integration of the individual with the energy of Avalokiteśvara through the use of the mantra.

The power of a mantra is said to lie in its sound. The purely sonic or musical dimension of Avalokiteśvara’s formula should not, then, go overlooked. Indeed, it is surely not insignificant that the arrangement of the six syllables
“om-ma-ni-pa-dme-hum” does yield a naturally pleasing reverberation when recited. The sounds of the syllables “om” and “hum,” at the beginning and end of the formula, tend to merge together into a continuous hum, while the four middle syllables bring a certain liveliness and movement to this single tone. In addition, the fact that the second syllable “-ma-” begins with a nasal consonant, just as the first syllable “om-” consists in the nasalization of a vowel (anusvara), facilitates the easy flow of this recitation. The Vedic mantras were said to be sutāṣṭa, or “well-fashioned,” in the hearts of the rśis. When Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ was first wrought within the inspired mind of a Buddhist vidyādhara, the sound of the compound maṇipadme, as well as its meaning, is likely to have contributed to its inclusion in the formula.

For such a little phrase, maṇipadme has provoked a great many different interpretations, a symptom largely of the ambiguities of the Sanskrit language. It has been popularly understood to refer to “the jewel (maṇi-) in the lotus (-padme),” a phrase that has been taken, predominantly, as symbolic of the conjunction of the Buddhist coefficients of wisdom and compassion, of the union of male and female, and the appearance of a buddha (or bodhisattva) in the mind (or heart). But though padme may be correctly parsed as a masculine or neuter locative (the noun may be either gender), there appears to be no grammatical precedent for reading maṇi here as the nominative form, which would normally be maṇī. According to the laws of classical Sanskrit, maṇi- is the stem form, making maṇipadme a compound noun.

The possible readings of such a compound are, once again, numerous. It has been parsed as a nominative neuter dvandva, or “co-ordinative,” compound, meaning “jewel and lotus,” where the formula is understood to be an expression of a corresponding arrangement of buddhas, in which Oṃ, Maṇi, Padme, and Hūṃ are each linked to individual buddhas. There are, it seems to me, three major drawbacks to this interpretation. In order to connect the formula to an orthodox fivefold scheme of buddhas, it becomes necessary to lengthen the formula by the arbitrary addition of the extra syllable Hṛṅ (the associated bīja, or “seed syllable,” which is traditionally used as a symbol of the potentiality of Avalokiteśvara or that from which the bodhisattva may manifest). It is also odd that some of these buddhas should be represented by a single syllable and some of them by a noun. Finally, it depicts the formula not as a particularly “well fashioned” device, but rather, as something clumsily and convolutedly contrived.

A more promising approach might appear to consist in treating maṇipadme as a bahuvrthi, or “exocentric,” compound, in which, as in the English expressions “redhead,” or “paperback,” the characteristics of a person or object can also be used as means of referring to the person or thing itself. Maṇipadme, here, could describe a “jewel-lotus” (a “lotus made of jewels”) or a “jewel and lotus,” in the sense of someone or something who is, in some
way, a “jewel-lotus” or a “jewel and lotus.” Interpretations of this sort have
tended to view the compound as a vocative, directed towards a person who has
the attributes of a “jewel and a lotus.” This, occasionally, has been understood
to be a means of addressing Avalokiteśvara himself. However, that would be
to treat *manipadme* as a masculine vocative, an extremely heterodox reading. In
classical Sanskrit, the -e ending denotes the vocative only of nominal stems
of all genders ending in -i or of feminine stems ending in -a. *Manipadme*
might, then, be a mode of address to a female person Maṇipadmā, who bears
the attributes of a “jewel and lotus” or, even possibly, a “jewel-lotus.” Who,
then, might that person be?

Maṇipadmā, it is argued, is the name of a female partner of Avalokiteśvara.
She might, it seems, be the personification of the six-syllable formula itself,
which is, as we have seen, presented as a female deity in the maṇḍala of the
*Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra*. But two important objections prevent this idea from
being particularly compelling. First of all, the attributes of the personified
formula in the sūtra are not a jewel and a lotus, but a string of prayer beads
(*akṣamālā*) and a lotus (*padmaḥ*). Second, although the comparable Śaivism
formula *Namaḥ Śivāya* is also personified as a female deity or śakti in the
purāṇas, those five syllables include no sense of feminine gender. Despite its
embodiment in female form, *Namaḥ Śivāya* remains, semantically, an address
to the deity himself in the masculine dative.

A positive identification of Maṇipadmā has never, in fact, been made. The
name does not appear among the female bodhisattvas sometimes said to ac-
company Avalokiteśvara. In the second chapter of the *Mañjuśrīmālakalpa*, for
instance, these are listed as Pāṇḍaravāsinī, Tarā, Bhrukūṭi, Uṣṇīṣarājā,
Prajñāpāramitā, together with the female *tathāgata* Locanā. It is, of course,
conceivable that Maṇipadmā might be a covert pseudonym for one such fig-
ure, but there seems to be no good reason for why this should be the case. Maṇipadmā, finally, has been understood to be the unseen female counterpart
of a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara called Maṇipadma Lokeśvara, who is found,
for example, among the one hundred and eight forms of the bodhisattva illus-
trated in the Macchandar Vahal temple in Kathmandu. In support of this
hypothesis, it might be pointed out that the attributes of this form are the
same as those of the personified formula in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*. Manipadma is
four armed, his two principle hands joined together at the chest, with the
other two holding a lotus and a string of prayer beads.

The problem with this account of the original “meaning” of *Om Maṇipadme Hūṃ* is that the conception of the figure of Maṇipadma Lokeśvara,
far from being an influence on the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* and the six-syllable formula
promoted therein, appears actually to represent a doctrinal development that
has been derived from the sūtra. The attributes of Maṇipadma Lokeśvara are
identical to another figure in the Macchandar Vahal known as Śaṭākṣarī
Lokeśvara, the “six-syllable” lord. In the Indian Sādhanamālā, the colophon of one of the four sādhanaṇas devoted to the worship of this Śaḍakṣart Lokeśvara explicitly acknowledges a debt to the Kāraṇḍavyuḥa. The practice is described as: kāraṇḍavyuḥāmnāyena racitam sādhanaṃ, “a sādhana produced (racitam) from the sacred tradition (āmnāyena) of the Kāraṇḍavyuḥa.” Similarly, one of the Avalokiteśvara sādhanaṇas contained in the Peking bsTan 'gyur is called the “Kāraṇḍa-vyūha-āmnāya-kṛta-śaḍakṣart-sādhana,” the “six-syllable sādhana made (kṛta) from the sacred tradition of the Kāraṇḍavyuḥa.” Here, the form of the bodhisattva is only very slightly different. Four-armed, he holds a rosary in his right hand (phyag gyas na bgrang ’phreng bsnams pa) and a lotus and jewel in his left (phyag gyon na padma dang nor bus rnam par brgyan pa), while his other two hands are joined together at the heart (phyag gnyis thal mo sbyar ba / rgyal ba’i dbang po kun gyi phyag thugs kar gnas po’i). These sādhanaṇas, then, would appear to have extrapolated a single iconographic form of Avalokiteśvara from the figures described in the sūtra’s maṇḍala. The Indian version has simply changed the gender of the personified formula. The Tibetan version has either, I suggest, amalgamated the attributes of the personified formula with the defining characteristic of the bodhisattva Mahāmaṇḍhadhara, “the holder of the great jewel,” who sits opposite the personified six-syllable in the configuration detailed by the sūtra, or simply assumed, from the first part of the name Maṇipadma, that the lokeśvara should be holding a jewel. The appearance of Maṇipadma is, it seems likely, a consequence of the prior appearance of the personified Maṇipadma Lokeśvara. The original formulation of Maṇipadme Hūṃ could not, in that case, be said to have been dependent on Maṇipadma Lokeśvara. The intrinsic “meaning” of the formula remains unexplained.

The promotion of Maṇipadme Hūṃ is, we have argued, one of the chief practical concerns of the Kāraṇḍavyuḥa. The doctrinal agenda of the sūtra, moreover, is dominated by the syncretism of the purāṇic tīvra idea with the orthodox categories of the Mahāyāna and, in particular, with the goal of birth into the pure land of Sukhāvati. It seems reasonable, then, to ask whether or not the concise formula of the Buddhist tīvra Avalokiteśvara, a phenomenon whose basic six-syllable form represents a simple adaptation of the purāṇic five-syllable formula, might also reflect something of the Mahāyāna Buddhist conceptual scheme in its “meaning.” Might not the original “meaning” of maṇipadme be illuminated by a reading of the Mahāyāna sūtras?

The image of the lotus is found throughout Indian religion. The Mahāyāna is no exception to this rule and uses the flower in many different ways, so that it eventually becomes a symbol that is immediately redolent of a network of interconnected doctrines. The instances of this application are far, far too numerous to be listed exhaustively, but a brief presentation may convey some
of its impact. The lotus is, perhaps most fundamentally, expressive of the idea of purity, due to the way in which the flower emerges pristine from out of even the muddiest and murkiest of waters. In the long Sukhāvattvyūha Sūtra, for instance, those born in the pure land are said to be “like the lotus” (padmasadṛśāh), because they remain untainted everywhere in the world. In the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra, the followers of Śākyamuni are said to be “untainted as the lotus (padumāṃ) is by water.” The buddhas themselves, in the same work, are compared to “a great multitude of lotuses” (padmarāśīḥ). In the Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra, bodhisattvas are said to be “supreme lotuses of humanity” (paramapuruṣapuṇḍarīka).

The lotus is a symbol of spiritual fruition. In the Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra, for instance, the monk Sāgaramegha meditates on the ocean. “While I was engaged in these thoughts,” he says, “an enormous lotus (mahāpadmaṃ) from the bottom of the ocean appeared before me.” “That great lotus (mahāpadmaṃ),” he explains, “is born from the transcendental roots of goodness of the enlightened . . . is produced by pure deeds . . .” and so on. Later, it is said of the bodhisattva Sudhana that, “the lotuses of his mind (cittapuṇḍarīko) opened like a blooming lotus pond (kamalākaraḥ) by the instructions of spiritual benefactors.” In the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, the bodhisattva Gadgadasvara plunges into a meditation so deep that there spontaneously appear “eighty-four hundred thousand myriads of koṭis of lotuses” (-padma-).

The lotus is, also, a prominent feature of the pure lands. Sukhāvattv, we read in the long Sukhāvattvyūha Sūtra, is “carpeted in every direction with lotus flowers (padmaiḥ).” Furthermore, “above in the open sky there are . . . lotus ponds scattered with blue water lilies, lotuses, white water lilies, and white lotuses . . . (nārātaṇapadmotapalakumudapuṇḍarīkākārīṇām).” These lotuses, moreover, like so many of the features of the pure land are made out of jewels. The carpet of lotus flowers is “made of the seven precious substances” (saptaratnamayaḥ). The lotus flowers of the ponds are “all made of many kind of jewels” (nārātapatpadma-). Similarly, the lotus flower seen by Sāgaramegha is said to be “adorned with a million pure jewels (-maṇiratna) in orderly arrays, containing a million radiant jewels (-maṇiratna-), blazing with the great splendor of a million dazzling jewels (-maṇiratna-), shining endlessly with a million jewels (-maṇiratna-) from various sources, adorned with a million jewels (-maṇiratna-) symbolic of earth arrayed all around . . . blazing with the light of an endless array of a million wish-fulfilling jewels (-cintārājamaṇiratna).” The dazzling and irradiant “jewel-lotus” is, in short, a standard feature of the Mahāyāna vision.

In this vision, buddhas and bodhisattva are often to be seen seated upon these flowers. As Sāgaramegha says: “Also I saw an embodiment of buddha clearly manifest sitting cross-legged on that great lotus (mahāpadmaṃ . . . paryāṅkāparisphuṭaṃ).” Elsewhere in the Gaṇḍavyūha, Sudhana sees the
bodhisattva king Anala sitting on a throne “in a lotus calyx made of magic
gems” (vaśirājamaṇiṇiratnamayapadmagarbhe). King Mahāprabha appears
upon a Dharma-throne “in the shape of the calyx of a lotus made of wish-
fulfilling gems” (cintārājamaṇiṇiratnapadmagarbhe mahādhammāsane). Sudhana himself is said to have “sat on a lotus seat of jewels” (sarvaratnamag-
iharpadmāsananisaṃñaññah) at the end of the sūtra. He then sees the bodhisattva
Samantabhadra sitting “on a lion seat in the calyx of a great jewel lotus” (mahārata
apadmagarbhe simhāsane), and later on, seated “on a jewel lotus
calyx lion seat” (mahāratnapadmagarbhāsimhāsane). In the Saddharma-
puṇḍarīka, the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī is seen seated “on a centifolious lotus” (sahasrapatre padme) that is as large as a carriage yoked with four horses.
When Mañjuśrī speaks, thousands of lotuses spontaneously rise from the bot-
tom of the sea. “On those lotuses (teṣu ca padmeṣu),” we read, “were seated
many thousands of bodhisattvas . . .”

The lotus is also generative. Spontaneous birth from a lotus is a mark, once again, of great purity. In the Gaṇḍavyūha, for instance, a beautiful cour-
tesan is said to be “born from a lotus” (padmodbhayeṣu), her body “unde-
filed like a lotus” (nirālakapadmagarbhaḥ). The king of a prosperous and
peaceful city is said to be spontaneously born “in the calyx of a lotus” (padmagarbhe). Sudhana sees the bodhisattva Maitreya “being born in a
lotus calyx (padmagarbhagataṃ).” In the carpet of lotus flowers described in
the longer Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra, it is said that “from each jewel lotus
(ratnapadmāt) issue in every direction thirty-six million rays of light. And
from the tip of each of these rays emerge thirty-six hundred thousand million
buddhas . . .”

All these different connotations may be said to inform what is perhaps
the most central usage of the symbol of the lotus in the Mahāyāna, the
doctrine that the mode of entry into the pure lands of the buddhas is to
appear seated in such a flower. In the Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra, for instance,
when Śākyamuni transforms this world into a buddhafied by touching
the ground with his big toe, everyone in his assembly is said to be filled with
wonder, “each perceiving himself seated on a throne of jewelled lotuses
(ratnapadmāvahāsana).” The Saddharmapuṇḍarīka states: “And in the
buddhafied where he is to be born, he shall appear by metamorphosis on a
lotus of seven precious substances (saptaratnamaye padme), face-to-face
with the tathāgata.”

This is the mode of entry into Sukhāvatī. A woman who hears the chap-
ter from the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra on the bodhisattva Bhaisajyārajā is
said to be reborn (as a man) in Sukhāvatī in front of the Buddha Amitāyus. We
read: “There will he (who was formerly a female) appear seated on a throne
consisting of the interior of a lotus (padmagarbhe).” The vow made by the
bodhisattva Samantabhadra at the end of the Gaṇḍavyūha, includes the aspi-
ration to appear before Amitāyus. “Let me abide in the circle of that buddha,” he says, “born in a beautiful lotus (padmaṇeva).” In the longer Sukhāvatīvyāha Sūtra, some human beings in Sukhāvatī “dwell inside the closed calyces of immense lotus flowers (padmeṣu),” while some “appear sitting cross-legged on the lotus flowers (padmeṣu).” The former, it is explained, have planted the roots of merit to be born in the pure land but still entertain doubts, while the latter have also planted these roots but are entirely free of such a handicap.

The symbol of the lotus continues to appear throughout the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra. Avalokiteśvara himself is repeatedly described in terms of his “lotus” qualities. Yama greets the bodhisattva with the title padmaśriye, “the one who has the auspiciousness of the lotus,”85 Bali calls him śubhapadmaḥasta, “the one who holds the beautiful lotus,” and padmaśriyālaṁkṛtaśuddhakāya, “the one whose beautiful body is adorned with the auspiciousness of the lotus.”86 The dharmabhāṣaka also sees (paśyati) the bodhisattva as subhapadmahastam and padmaśriyālaṁkṛtam.87 Maheśvara praises (nāma) him as padmaśriye, subhapadmahastaya, padmadhāraṇya, “the one who holds a lotus,” padmāsanāya, “the one who is seated on a lotus,” and padmapriyāya, “the one who is beloved of the lotus,”90 while Umādevi uses the expression, “the one who has the auspiciousness of a beautiful lotus” to call upon the bodhisattva.91

The lotus is a common feature of the worlds contained within the pores of Avalokiteśvara and in the realms that are purified by the bodhisattva’s presence. There are said to be “lotus pools” (puṣkariṇya) in each of the Kṛṣṇa, Amṛtabindu and Vajramukha pores.92 When, for instance, the light rays coming from Avalokiteśvara in the Avīci hell transform the Jetavana vihāra, “hundreds of thousand of lotus ponds” (puṣkarinśatasaḥsahāraṃ) are said to manifest.93 In the Avīci hell itself, the bodhisattva’s power leads to the appearance of a “lotus pool” (puṣkariniṇī) in the middle of the infernal cooking stove, together with “lotuses” (padmāni) the size of chariot wheels.94 When Avalokiteśvara arrives before Śakyamuni in the first part of the sūtra, a “rain of lotuses” (padmavarṣaḥ) falls.95 Then, as at the end of the sūtra, he presents the buddha with “lotuses” (padmāni) originally given to the bodhisattva by Amitābha.96

Finally, on two separate occasions, the Kāraṇḍavyūha describes the goal of reaching Sukhāvatī in terms of being born or being seated “in a lotus.” Those who bring to mind the name (nāmadheyaṁmanusmaranti) of Avalokiteśvara are, at one point, said to go to Amitābha’s pure land.97 There, they are said not to remember the suffering of dwelling in the womb (garbhāvasaduḥkham), for they are born “in that lotus” (tasminneva padme jāyante).98 Next, Bali is told by Avalokiteśvara that he will go to Sukhāvatī, where, a “lotus throne made of the seven jewels” (saptaratnamayam padmāsanam) will be produced for him. Then, seating himself “in the jewel-
lotus” (ratnapadme) in the presence of Amitābha, he will listen to the
Kāraṇḍavyūha Śūtra.⁹⁹

The cumulative effect of all these examples is to show that the signifi-
cance of the four middle syllables of the six-syllable mahāvidyā would have
been quite obvious to anyone remotely familiar with the idiom of the Mahāyāna.
The use of manipadme connects the paramahṛdaya of Avalokiteśvara with one
of the central symbols of the Mahāyāna vision, the “jewel-lotus,” or “lotus
made of jewels.” The expression should be parsed as a tatpurusa, or “determi-
native,” compound in the (masculine or neuter) locative case, meaning “in the
jewel-lotus,” referring to the manner in which buddhas and bodhisattvas are
said to be seated in these marvelous blooms and, in particular, to the manner
in which more mundane beings are believed to appear in the pure land of the
buddhas. Given the predominance, in the Kāraṇḍavyūha and in the Mahāyāna
in general, of the religious goal of the pure land of Amitābha, it may be safely
assumed that manipadme would have been quite naturally associated with the
mode of the rebirth of human beings there. The recitation of Oṃ Manipadme
Hūṃ, then, the bringing to mind of the name of the Buddhist
śūra, includes
a declaration of the manner in which a person is reborn in Sukhāvati: “in
the jewel lotus.” The doctrinal syncretism that is set out, in large, in the
Kāraṇḍavyūha as a whole, is also apparent, in minutia, in the sūtra’s six-
syllable formula.

There is, as we have seen, considerable precedent in the Mahāyāna sūtras
for the use of padma and the locative -e ending to convey this particular sense
(not to mention the plural locative ending -eṣu). The use of the simple prefix
maṇi-, however, is comparatively rare. Indeed, the alternative word for “jewel,”
ratna-, is much more frequently found in this context. Nonetheless, maṇiratna-
is common. The conjunction of maṇi- and -padma is also found occasionally.
The Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra, for instance, describes one “lion throne in the calyx
of a lotus of radiant jewels” as vairocanaManipadmagarbhasinhāsanaṃ.¹⁰⁰
In the end, though, when the formula was originally “fashioned,” the syllables
Manipadme, rather than, say, ratnapadme, were probably preferred due to the
quality of their sound. Oṃ- flows more easily into the syllable -Ma- than it
would do into the syllable -Ra-. The enunciation of “maṇi” is more discreet
and compact than the mouthy “ratna.”

For the sake of completeness, a few remarks should be made about the
two surrounding syllables of the formula, Oṃ- and -Hūṃ. Neither, of course,
has any intrinsic semantic meaning. Both are laden, however, with symbolic
import. The Dalai Lama, for instance, presents Oṃ as made up of the three
letters A, U and M, signifying both the impure body, speech, and mind of the
practitioner and the pure, exalted body, speech, and mind of buddhahood.
Hūṃ, the seed syllable of the Buddha Akṣobhya, “the immovable one,” is said
to indicate indivisibility. Maṇi and Padme, meanwhile, are said to symbolise
The Meaning of Oṁ Maṇipadme Ὡṁ

the factors of method and wisdom. “Thus,” the Dalai Lama explains, “the six syllables oṁ maṇi padme Ὡṁ mean that in dependence on the practice of a path which is an indivisible union of method and wisdom, you can transform your impure body, speech, and mind into the pure exalted body, speech, and mind of a buddha.”

It seems worth suggesting, however, that Oṁ and Ὡṁ may also have a more direct significance. For it cannot be wholly unlikely that the frequent use of these two syllables to begin and end different mantras was originally derived from the same use that is made of the two similar syllables A- and -Haṁ. A is the first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet and Ha the last, encompassing all the other letters in between. A- and -Haṁ together also make up the word ahaṁ, meaning “I.” The use of those two syllables at either end of a mantra, then, conveys a sense of both the identity and the all-inclusive nature of the mind engaged in mantric utterance. According, for instance, to the eleventh-century Kashmiri Śaivite master Kṣemarāja, ahaṁ, “is the supreme level of speech, the great unspoken Mantra which, eternally manifest, is the life of all beings . . . it is called the vibration of the Lord because it unfolds pulsating within one’s own being as does the movement of this divine universe.”

Mantras that did not begin with a and end with m,” he writes, “would be (as useless) as autumn clouds.” Oṁ and Ὡṁ are only slightly modified versions of A and Haṁ (the same Sanskrit characters are used with different marks above and below the letters) and may, once again, be preferred for their sound. Oṁ Maṇipadme Ὡṁ, on this account, might be read as a declaration of, or aspiration for, the manifestation of the “I (Oṁ . . . Ὡṁ) in the jewel-lotus (Maṇipadme).”

In conclusion, it would be churlish to insist that such presentations of maṇipadme as the “jewel in the lotus,” or as a vocative to “the one with the jewel and the lotus” are nonsensical, even though, strictly speaking, they are semantically incorrect. Like the various correspondence schemes, the “meaning” of Oṁ Maṇipadme Ὡṁ is merely an explication of the function of the formula. In so far as these other “meanings” are appropriate to a proper appreciation of this function and assist in “the turning of the twelvefold wheel of Dharma,” they make sense. Nevertheless, the discovery of what would seem to be the original “meaning” of the formula does beg the question of why it has been interpreted so differently throughout the ages. Already, for instance, in a ninth-century Tibetan grammatical treatise, Oṁ Maṇipadme Ὡṁ is treated as an example of the Sanskrit vocative.

Two reasons present themselves. The first is that the conception of the formula as a name of Avalokiteśvara and the personification of the formula in female form would both tend to relate Oṁ Maṇipadme Ὡṁ to the idea of calling upon a person, making the vocative interpretation an immediately attractive option from a very early stage. The second is that the Tibetans, the
custodians of the formula for the last millennium, would be unlikely to be aware of the connection of *Om Manipadme Hūṃ* with the idiom of the Mahāyāna sūtras, due to the fact that these works would generally be read in Tibetan translation. *Padme* becomes *pad ma'i nang du* in Tibetan, which provokes no immediate association with *Om Manipadme Hūṃ*.105

Notwithstanding all these difficulties, the original “meaning” of *Om Manipadme Hūṃ* does seem to have been kept alive in Tibetan minds despite, though not because of, any analysis of the “meaning” of the formula. Instead, recitation of the six syllables has remained linked, in the collective consciousness, to the idea of rebirth in Sukhāvatī due to an appreciation of the close relationship between Avalokiteśvara and Amitābha. The indignation with which the French explorer and early Tibetologist Alexandra David-Neel berates the Tibetan people on this point is, in retrospect, ironic. She writes:

Passing to the following words of the formula, *mani padme* means “the jewel in the lotus.” Here we seem to find a meaning that is immediately intelligible, and yet the usual Tibetan interpretation takes no account whatsoever of this literal meaning, the majority of devotees being completely ignorant of it. The latter believes that the mechanical repetition of *Aum mani padme hum!* secures for them a happy birth in *Nub dewa chen*: the Occidental paradise of bliss.106
CONCLUSION

The Original Six-Syllable Formula?

In historical terms, the six-syllable formula *Om Mani padme Hum*, we have argued, represents a Buddhist adaptation of the five-syllable Śaivite formula *Namaḥ Śivāya*. The practice of worshipping Avalokiteśvara, the Buddhist ātara, by means of a concise ṛddaya mantra was, it seems likely, first developed in lay Buddhist circles, centred around the archetype of the vidyādhara or mahāsiddhā, the persona of the dharmabhāṣaka who grants initiation into the use of *Om Mani padme Hum* in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra*. In its concluding chapter on monastic discipline, the sūtra reflects the uneasy meeting of these lay practitioners with the monks of the Mahāyāna establishment. The sūtra, more generally, describes the absorption of the doctrine of the ātara and his formula into the conceptual framework of the Mahāyāna sūtras. The actual form and “meaning” of the formula, it has been shown, actually reflects this process of religious syncretism.

There are two stages of doctrinal development going on here. The first, that took place prior to the writing of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, involves the original development of the idea of the Buddhist ātara and the formula. The second, encapsulated by the sūtra, involves the merging of this idea with the categories of orthodox Mahāyāna doctrine and, in particular, with the goal of rebirth in Sukhāvatī. However, if the form and “meaning” of *Om Mani padme Hum* are informed by the processes of this secondary stage of doctrinal development, it seems quite possible, indeed highly likely, that the six-syllable formula of Avalokiteśvara took a completely different form during the first stage. The earlier form, then, would probably have been “well-fashioned” without any consideration of the goal of rebirth in Sukhāvatī. What, then, might this formula have been?

I can only give a provisional answer to this question. A satisfactory response would require the further study of material connected to Avalokiteśvara, especially, it would seem, material found in the tantras. However, one possibility does present itself. The thousand-armed bodhisattva, the form that displays the characteristics of the purānic ātara, is also described in the *Taizokai* maṇḍala of the Japanese Shingon Buddhist tradition, based on
another Mahāyāna work, the *Vairocana Sūtra*, a text itself first translated into Chinese by Subhakarasimha in 724 C.E. This maṇḍala has been commented on at length by Beatrice Lane Suzuki.¹ There, the formula of the thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara is listed as *Om Vajradharma Hriḥ.*²
APPENDIX

Annotated Précis of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra*

The edition of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra*, in the collection of Mahāyāna sūtras edited by P. L. Vaidya and published in 1961 by the Mithila Institute of Darbhanga, India, begins with the entry of its fuller title, *Avalokiteśvaragunjakāraṇḍavyūhah*, and then by praise to the Three Jewels and to Avalokiteśvara, “the great compassionate one” (*āryāvalokiteśvarāya bodhisattvāya mahāsattvāya mahākāruṇikāya*). There then follows the heading of the first chapter:¹

**PART ONE (PRATHAMO NIRVYŪHAH)**

Chapter One (*prathamaḥ prakaraṇam*): The Description of the Assembly in the *Vihāra* at the Jetavana Grove

The sūtra begins, in typical fashion, with the words usually translated as “thus I have heard” (*evaṃ mayā śrūtam*), launching straight into a description of the assembly in the Jetavana grove. Śākyamuni is said to be dwelling at Śrāvasti, in the *vihāra* at the Jetavana grove of the merchant Anathapindada, surrounded by an assembly of one thousand three hundred monks and many bodhisattvas.²

The names of the first of these bodhisattvas are listed, in order, as: Vajrapāni, Jñānadarśana, Vajrasena, Guhagupta, Ākāśagarbha, Śūryagarbha, Anikṣiptadhura, Ratnapāni, Samantabhadra, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Sarvanvaraṇaviśkambhin, Sarvasūra, Bhauṣajyasena, Avalokiteśvara, Vajramati, Śāgaramati, Dharmadhara, Pṛthivivaralocana, Āśvāsahasta, and Maitreyā.³

There is also said to be a group of thirty-two gods, led by Maheśvara and Nārāyaṇa, then by Śakra, the chief of the gods (*devanāmindro*), Brahmā Sahāmpati, and then by Candra, Āditya, Vāyu, Varuṇa, and others. There are also gathered many hundreds of thousands of semidivine beings: nāga kings, gandharva kings, kinnara kings, nāga daughters, gandharva daughters, and kinnara daughters, some of whom are named. There are also many hundreds of thousands of unnamed male and female lay followers, together with wandering mendicants and hermits.⁴
Then, light rays come out of the Avîci hell and arrive in the Jetavana grove. All the beautiful features of the vihāra are seen (drśyante). There are pillars adorned with precious jewels, upper apartments covered in gold, doors and staircases of silver and gold, silver terraces with gold pillars studded with jewels and gold terraces with silver pillars studded with jewels. In the garden, there are various sorts of wish-fulfilling trees whose gold branches bear silver leaves, religious and nonreligious garments, food and many different kinds of jewelry. In this beautiful light, hundreds of thousands of wish-fulfilling trees manifest. There are staircases made of vajra and inner doors adorned with pearls. Many hundreds of thousands of lotus ponds (puśkarinīśatasahasrāṇi) manifest, some of which are full of the water endowed with the eight qualities, and some with a variety of different sorts of lotuses (upalapadma-) and other flowers.

Chapter Two: The Destruction of Hell

The bodhisattva Sarvanīvaraṇaviśkambhin asks where these rays of light are coming from and which tathāgata is responsible for them. The Lord replies that it is not a tathāgata, but the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara who, saving beings in hell and proceeding to the preta realm, produces these rays.7

Sarvanīvaraṇaviśkambhin then asks how it is possible for Avalokiteśvara to enter Avîci, describing many of the horrible aspects of the hell.8 The Lord replies that Avalokiteśvara enters hell in the same way that a cakravartin king enters a garden made of different kinds of jewels (divyaśatamayodyāne). The bodhisattva’s body is not harmed in any way. The fires of hell are extinguished as he approaches. The henchmen of Yama, the Lord of Death, become agitated and extremely frightened, asking who it is that has produced such inauspicious signs in Avîci. When Avalokiteśvara enters hell, lotuses (padmāni) the size of chariot wheels appear, the infernal cooking vessel is burst open and a lotus pool (puśkarinī) appears in the middle of the infernal stove.9

These events are relayed to Yama by his henchmen, whose report begins with the explanation that these signs took place when a being, assuming the appearance (kāmarūpī) of a man (puruṣaḥ), with a head of twisted locks of hair (jaṭāmukutadhara), with a body adorned with divine ornaments (divyālaśkarabhūṣitaśartraḥ), with a mind of the utmost friendliness (paramamaitramānasah) and like a golden orb (suvarṇabimbamiva) was seen (drśyate).10

Yama asks himself which god this could be a manifestation of: Maheśvara, Nārâyana,12 one of the other gods, or the great rākṣasa Rāvana?13 Looking with his divine eye, he sees a host of gods, but asks himself which of these it could be. Then, looking again around hell, he sees the great bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.14
Yama then prostrates himself before Avalokiteśvara and delivers a long hymn of praise, consisting of greetings (namo) to fifty-nine different titles of the bodhisattva, beginning with Avalokiteśvara, Maheśvara and “to the one who has the auspiciousness of the lotus” (padmaśriye).\(^{15}\)
Completing these praises, Yama makes three circumambulations and is gone.\(^{16}\)

Chapter Three: The Liberation of the Ghost Realm

Sarvanīvaraṇaviśkambhin then asks when Avalokiteśvara will arrive. The Lord replies that, after leaving Avīci, the great bodhisattva enters the city of the pretas, where the hideously deformed and suffering pretas call upon him. When Avalokiteśvara appears, the realm begins to cool down, Indra’s thunderbolts cease to rain down and the doorkeeper, much to his own surprise, adopts a mind of incessant friendliness.\(^{17}\)

Seeing this hoard of beings, Avalokiteśvara generates a mind of great compassion (mahākaruṇācittamutpāda). Rivers of water flow out from his ten fingers, his ten toes, and from the pores of his skin. When the pretas drink this water, their throats are widened, their bodies are completely restored, and their hunger is satiated. They then turn their thoughts to human beings, commenting, at some length, on how happy are they who live in Jambudvīpa. Sixteen examples are given, beginning with the happiness of those who enjoy cool shade, of those who always honor their mother and father and of those who always maintain links with a spiritual friend (kalyāṇamitra).\(^{18}\)

From among the pretas there then comes forth the sound of the precious king of Mahāyāna Sūtras, the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, whereupon all the pretas are established in the realm of Sukhāvatī as bodhisattvas. Thereupon, Avalokiteśvara leaves the city of the pretas.\(^{19}\)

Chapter Four: The Birth of the Moon and so forth

Sarvanīvaraṇaviśkambhin then asks whether Avalokiteśvara will be arriving today. The Lord replies that the bodhisattva has to bring trillions of creatures to maturity (paripācayati), that every day he brings beings to maturity and that there is not an illumination (pratibhāna), even of the tathāgatas, that is comparable to that of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.\(^{20}\)
Śākyamuni explains that, in a previous life, he (Śākyamuni) was called “Sugandamukha”, the son of a merchant, and heard of the qualities of Avalokiteśvara from the tathāgata Vipaśyin.\(^{21}\)

The sun and moon are born from his eyes, Maheśvara from his brow, Brahmā from his shoulders, Nārāyaṇa from his heart, Sarasvatī from his teeth, the winds from his mouth, the earth from his feet and Varuṇa from his stomach.
Once these gods (devå) have been born from the body of Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva tells Maheṣvara that, during the káliyuga, he (Maheṣvara) will appear in a degenerate realm (kaśtasattvadvhatusam) and will be called the primordial god (ādideva), the creator and author (sraṣṭāram karāram) of the world. The beings in this realm at that time will be deprived of the path to awakening (bodhimārgena) and the talk among those common people (idṛṣapṛthagjaneṣu satteṣu sāṃkhyayām) will be: “It is said that space is his līṅga and the earth his pedestal. He is the ground of all (alayaḥ sarvabhūtānām) and is called līṅga because all beings dissolve into him.”22

Subsequently, Śākyamuni reveals that, in a previous life as the bodhisattva Dānaśūra, he heard of the qualities of Avalokiteśvara from the tathāgata Śikhin.23

Chapter Five: The Emergence of Various Light Rays

Sarvanīvaraṇavīṣakambhin then asks about this teaching given by Śikhin. Śākyamuni explains that the tathāgata gave the teaching in the middle of an assembly of nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, rākṣasas, asuras, marutas, garuḍas, kinnaras, mahoragas, and men. From the mouth of the tathāgata emerged various light rays of different colors: blue, yellow, red, white, dark red, crystal, silver, and gold. Then, having gone to all the worlds contained within the ten cardinal and intermediate points of space, and having made three circumambulations of the tathāgata, these light rays re-entered the mouth of the tathāgata Śikhin.24

This concludes the first section (kāṇḍaḥ) known as the conversation with Sarvanīvaraṇavīṣakambhin.25

Chapter Six: The Conversation with the Tathāgata

Next, from among this assembly, the bodhisattva Ratnapāṇi asks Śikhin the reason for this. The tathāgata replies that he displayed this phenomenon because Avalokiteśvara was coming from the realm of Sukhāvatī.26

He continues to explain that when Avalokiteśvara arrives, various wish-fulfilling trees, mango trees, fragrant oleander flowers, and campaka trees appear, together with lotus pools (puṣkarinyah) abundant with flowers and hundreds of wondrous jewel trees. Flowers, jewels, various marvelous mango trees, and divine garments fall like rain. Near the vihāra, the seven jewels appear (hasṭiratnaṁ, maṇiratnaṁ, aśvaratnaṁ, strīratnaṁ, grhapatiratnaṁ, pariṇāyakaratnaṁ). The ground is seen (sandṛṣyate) to be bright gold. When Avalokiteśvara leaves Sukhāvatī, the whole of creation trembles in six ways.27
Questioned again by Ratnapāṇi, Śikhin says that this heralds the arrival of Avalokiteśvara. When the great bodhisattva walks, a beautiful rain of lotuses (padmavarśaḥ) falls. Holding brilliant, shining lotuses (padmāni . . . grhītvā), with golden stems and a thousand petals, he approaches the Lord, prostrates, offers him the flowers and says that they are sent by the tathāgata Amitābha, who wishes him freedom from disease, bodily ease, and happiness. Śikhin, having taken the flowers and placing them on his left, puts to the test the qualities of Avalokiteśvara. He asks what he has achieved in the hell and preta realms, reeling off a number of hells by their respective names. Avalokiteśvara replies that he has brought the beings in these realms to maturity and that they will all be established in complete and perfect enlightenment. But, as long as Śikhin had not come to full enlightenment, then the beings from the ten directions and all times could not be established in that exceptional nirvāṇa.28

Thereupon, having given the assembly food for thought, Avalokiteśvara prostrates himself before the Lord and vanishes into space in a ball of blazing fire.29

Chapter Seven: Concerning the Heaps of Merit of Avalokiteśvara

The bodhisattva Ratnapāṇi then asks about the mass of merit (puṇya) of Avalokiteśvara. The Lord begins by saying that the amount of merit accrued by making the customary offerings (medicine, incense, perfumes, ointments, robes, parasols, flags, bells, beds, seats, and so on) to as many tathāgatas as there are grains of sand in the Ganges is only equal to the merit contained in a hair’s breadth (avālāgre) of Avalokiteśvara.30 For instance, even though it would be possible to count each drop of rain in a downpour over the four great islands which lasted, day and night, for all twelve months of a year, and even though it would be possible to count each drop of water in the oceans, and even though it would be possible to count each hair on all the quadruped animals on the four islands, nonetheless, it would be impossible for the tathāgata to calculate the amount of merit accrued by Avalokiteśvara.31 Similarly, even though the merit could be calculated if a son or daughter of good family made, and worshipped daily, enormous stūpas for as many buddhas as there are atoms, and even though the number of leaves in a forest could be counted, it would be impossible for the tathāgata to calculate the amount of merit accrued by Avalokiteśvara. The amount of merit accrued by all the men and women and sons and daughters in the four great islands, whether they be “stream-enterers,” “once-returners,” “non-returners,” arhats or pratyekabuddhas, is less than the merit contained in the tip of a hair of Avalokiteśvara.32
Chapter Eight: The Dharma-Teaching on Conversion to the True Way

The bodhisattva Ratnapāṇi then says that all this is inconceivable and that he has never seen or heard of such a heap of merit belonging to the tathāgatas, let alone to a bodhisattva, as the heap of merit belonging to the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Śikhin replies that were there as many buddhas like himself as there are grains of sand in the Ganges, all honored with the customary offerings, all of them would not be able to calculate the amount of merit of Avalokiteśvara. Formerly, he continues, he had coursed in this realm and had asked how it was possible to speak of such an amount of merit. In answer to this question, all the tathāgatas in the ten directions of space had replied in the following way.33

Happy are those beings in this world (loke), they said, who hold in their minds the name of Avalokiteśvara (nāmadheyamanusmaranti). They are liberated from the anguish and suffering of old age, death, disease, grief, and lamentation, they do not experience the sufferings of saṃsāra and, dressed in brilliant white, like swans flying as fast as the wind, go to the realm of Sukhāvati in order, happily, to hear the Dharma from the tathāgata Amitābha. Hearing the Dharma, they are not troubled by the physical sufferings of saṃsāra, nor by greed, hatred and delusion, nor by old age and death, nor by hunger and thirst. Nor do they remember the suffering of dwelling in the womb, for they are born in “that particular lotus” (tasminneva padme jāyante).34 They remain settled in this realm, their minds permeated by the essence of Dharma, until Avalokiteśvara’s promise is fulfilled: that all beings should be liberated from all suffering and reach complete awakening.35

Ratnapāṇi then asks when this promise will be fulfilled. The tathāgata answers that, for many reasons, beings transmigrate in saṃsāra, but that the god (Avalokiteśvara?) brings beings to maturity (devatā sattvān paripācayati) and establishes them on the path to awakening. Taking whatever form is suitable to accomplish the conversion of beings (vaīneyah sattvah), he teaches the Dharma (dharmam deśayati). So, for instance, for those for whom the form of a tathāgata is suitable, he teaches the Dharma as a tathāgata (tathāgatarūpaṇa). On the same principle, he also takes the form of a pratyekabuddha, of an arhat, of a bodhisattva, of Maheśvara, of Nārāyaṇa, of Brahmā, of Indra, of Āditya, of Candra, of Agni, of Varuṇa, of Vāyu, of a nāga, of Vighnapati, of a yakṣa, of Vaśravaṇa, of a king, of a king’s soldier (rājabhaṭa), and of a mother or of a father. In whatever form is suitable, he teaches the Dharma. Thus, Avalokiteśvara teaches the Dharma to beings, matures them and establishes them in nirvāṇa (nirvāṇabhūmi).37
Chapter Nine: The Reviving of the Asuras

Ratnapāṇi then expresses his astonishment, saying that such power as Avalokiteśvara’s has never been seen or heard of before. Nor, he says, is it found among the tathāgatas.38 The tathāgata replies. In Jambudvīpa, there is a cave called “Vajrakukṣi,” the domain of countless asuras, where Avalokiteśvara teaches the Dharma in the form of an asura. He teaches the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, with the effect that the asuras develop minds of friendliness, peace, pity and happiness in the presence of beings (maitracittāḥ śantacittāḥ dayācittāḥ sattvānāmantike hitasukhacittā).39 The asuras, then, turn with happiness towards the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, which is like a wish-fulfilling jewel. They listen to it, develop faith towards it, understand it, write it, have it written, memorize it, recite it, worship it, reflect on it, explain it in full to others, meditate on it and bow to it with great joy, respect and devotion. They destroy the five acts of immediate retribution (pañcāṅantarāyāni karmāni),40 honor it with purified bodies and recall their previous lives (jātismarā). At the time of death, Ratnapāṇi is told, the dying person is taken to the other side (upasāṃkramiṣyanti) by twelve tathāgatas and is revived by all the tathāgatas. He is told not to be afraid, for those who have heard the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra will go to Sukhāvatī, where a highly decorated canopy and throne awaits them (vivitra ca te chatraṃ simhāsanaṃ sajjāt).41 This is how Avalokiteśvara shows the asuras the path to nirvāṇa, for the sake of quelling their evil minds and establishing them on the path to supreme nirvāṇa. Ratnapāṇi prostrates.42

Chapter Ten: The Approach to the Level “Made of Gold” and so forth

Sarvanīvaraṇaṇvīṣkambhin says that it is extremely difficult (atidurlabham) to hear of the qualities and actions of Avalokiteśvara. The Lord then tells him how, in one of his previous lives, as a rishi by the name of Kṣāntivādin, living in a mountain cave away from the world of men, he heard of the qualities and activites of Avalokiteśvara from the tathāgata Viśvabhū. There is a level called “Kāñcanamayī,” where Avalokiteśvara teaches the Dharma to downcast beings. He teaches the noble eightfold path to nirvāṇa. Then, leaving that place, he enters the level made of silver (rūpyamayyām), where he sees four-legged beings with the personalities of men (catuspādikāni sattvāni puruṣapudgalāni) and teaches the Dharma to them.43 Then, all these men stand before Avalokiteśvara and say: “Recover your breath and be a guide to the blind, a protector to those without protection, a
shelter to those without shelter, a last resort, a mother and a father, a lamp
to those whose path is lost and to those in darkness. Be benevolent and, out
of compassion, show the path to liberation. Happy are they who constantly
bring to mind and extol your name (nāmamanusmaranti, uḍrayanti ca). And
just as they may be spared the most violent suffering, so also may we.”

Avalokiteśvara puts into their ears the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, which they
subsequently put into the ears of one another. They are then established at the
irreversible level, utterly happy and perfected.

Then, his heart full of great compassion (mahākarunāsamptiḥādhyādayo),
Avalokiteśvara leaves the level made of silver and enters the level made of iron,
where Bali, the chief (indra) of the asuras, is bound. In the vicinity of Bali he
changes form, so that, resplendent, like a golden orb (suvarṇabimbamiva)
and sending out multicolored light rays, he is seen by the chief of the asuras
from some distance away.

Chapter Eleven: The Consolation of Bali

Seeing Avalokiteśvara from afar, Bali (with his retinue of asuras, and
hunchbacks, dwarves, and so on) throws himself at the feet of the bodhisattva
and sings of his joy in four stanzas of verse. Then, having offered Avalokiteśvara
a bejeweled throne (ratnapāhaka) and having prostrated himself once again,
he beseeches the bodhisattva’s protection and help, both for himself and all
other beings, using a variety of standard expressions.

Avalokiteśvara replies that those who give rise to nonviolent thoughts
towards beings, who regularly fill the alms bowls of those belonging to the
order of the tathāgatas (tathāgataśasane piṇḍapātramuprayacchanti) and
who are never overwhelmed by sloth; who write and have written the
Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, remember its name and listen to Dharma-teachings
from it; who offer alms to a bodhisattva just once, or to the reciters of this
discourse on Dharma, its guardians, chanters, scribes, and listeners; who offer
a meal on just one day to a tathāgata for the sake of this discourse on Dharma,
will all attain the realm of cakravartin kings. They will never experience the
suffering of hunger and thirst, of the bondage of hell, and of being separated
from loved ones. They will be released from all suffering and will go to Sukhāvatī,
where, before Amitābha, they will listen to the Dharma and obtain a predic-
tion of their future enlightenment (vyākaraṇānanupāpsyanti).

Avalokiteśvara tells Bali to hear him speak about the fruit of giving
(śrūyatām dānapālam) and says he will describe the amount of merit derived
from filling the alms bowl of a tathāgata. It is, in fact, incalculable, a fact
which is emphasized, at some length, by a number of impressive comparisons
and examples.
Expressing his delight in this teaching, a tearful and sobbing Bali speaks. What deed has he done, what offering has he given (karma kṛtaṁ dānam dattam), he asks rhetorically, to become a prisoner in this life? He has, he concludes, put his offering in the wrong place (kukṣetre mayā dānam dattam) and is now experiencing the fruit of this action (karmanāḥ phalamanubhavāmi). If he had thrown a handful of ashes into the place of omniscience (sarvajñakṣetre), it would have yielded immortality.53

Instead, he made his offering out of ignorance, acting in the manner of a tīrthika, with a mind still gripped by false notions (taīrthikadṛṣṭiparyāpānena māṇagrasṭamānasena).54 Just as he was beginning to make a huge offering, a malicious beggar (yācanako hiṁsraḥ), in the form of a dwarf (vāmanakarṇaḥ), appeared. Bali then lists all the many different and extraordinarily valuable things in his possession he was prepared to give to this character. Thus, he concludes, I was about to give this offering to unworthy receptacles (tatra mayā pātrabhāteṣvidam dānam dātumārbhādam).55

He then makes a confession of an old sin. He has, it seems, broken the hearts of the pregnant kṣatriya women, by depriving their sons and daughters of life, incarcerating thousands of kṣatriyas in an elaborate prison. He is visited by the son of Daśaratha, but, as this personage appears from one day to the next in the different forms of a fly, a bee, a wild boar, and a man, Bali does not recognize him. Thus, he prepares to make his offering.56 The son of Daśaratha (also referred to as Nārāyaṇa) now appears, destroys Bali’s fortifications and liberates the imprisoned kṣatriyas, who begin to prepare themselves for battle.57

The son of Daśaratha next manifests in the form of a brahmin dwarf, dressed in a deerskin and carrying a bamboo staff and a seat. After an exchange with Bali’s gatekeepers, he is offered a jeweled throne (ratnapātham) by the king of the asuras. Bali’s preceptor (upādhyāya) Śukra advises him that his visitor means to do him harm. But Bali, reasoning that Nārāyaṇa will surely recognize the repentance that his offering represents (vivintya avaśyaṁ dānasya vipratisāram),58 asks the god what his wish is.59

Nārāyaṇa asks for two paces of earth, to which Bali responds by offering three, a proposal which is accepted, along with some water, some sesame seeds, and some gold. Śukra continues to tell Bali that he has acted unwisely, whereupon Nārāyaṇa, having briefly left the scene of the action, reappears. He is vast in size, carrying the sun and moon on his shoulders and is armed with noose, wheel, bow, javelin, and lance.60

Bali falls trembling to the ground and laments that he has given the god poison to eat, that the two paces are completely filled (dvipadāni paripūritāni) and the third pace is not to be found (tṛtiyaṁ padaṁ na saṁvidyate). What evil, he asks himself, has he done?61 The god replies that where he places him,
there he will stay (yatṛāmaṃ sthāpayāmi tatra tvāyā sthātavyam). Bali then says that he will do what the god ordains and promises to be true to his word (satyaṃ satyaṃ karomyaham). Thus, he is bound by the fetters of his oath (tena satyapāśairbaddhaḥ).62

The place of sacrifice and all the precious offerings are then destroyed before Bali departs, supplicating the god and once more repeating the lament that he put his gift in the wrong place (bhātāpārvam kurukṣeṭre mayā dānam dattam) and hence must experience the fruit of this action.63

He then breaks into a supplicatory speech to Avalokiteśvara. He asks him to be his protector and addresses him in various ways, including: “you who holds the beautiful lotus” (śubhapadmahasta); “you whose body is adorned with the auspiciousness of the lotus” (padmaśriyālaṃkṛtaśuddhakāya) (these first two are repeated again later in the same speech); “I bow my head to the one who has the image of Amitābha” (amitābhamūte śirasā namāmi);64 “you who wear a crown of a wish-fulfilling jewel in the middle of your matted locks” (jaṭārdhamadhye cintāmanipimukṭadharāya); “you who are adorned with the auspiciousness of a lotus” (padmaśriyā samalamkṛtyā); “you who wear a crown of matted locks” (jaṭāmukṣaṭadharāya); and “you who teach the six perfections (ṣaṭpāramitānirdeśanakāraṇa).65 Next he extemporises on the theme of how happy are they who remember the great bodhisattva’s name (nāmadheyamanusmaranti). They are liberated from various hells, the city of the pretas and from suffering in general, and go to Sukhāvatī, where they remember and listen to the Dharma (dharmamanusmaranti śṛṇvanti) of the tathāgata Amitābha.66

Avalokiteśvara then predicts that Bali will become the tathāgata Śrī, that all the asuras will become converted to the true way, that there will be neither greed, nor hatred, nor delusion in his buddhafield, and that the six-syllable formula will be obtained (ṣaḍakṣaṭ mahāvidyā labdhalābha bhaviṣyatī). Bali offers him, as a fee for the Dharma-teaching (dharmadakṣiṇā) a very valuable string of pearls, a crown, earrings, and many different kind of jewels.67

The bodhisattva then delivers the following sermon. He says that those who think only of worldly wealth and their own families are ignorant, because the things to which they cling are dreamlike. At the time of death, none of these things will be any protection. As they see Jambudvīpa being turned inside out, they will be led away into hell (with all its various tortures), asking what evil they have done.68

Yama’s henchmen will tell them that they did not make offerings to the alms bowl of a tathāgata, did not listen to Dharma-teachings, did not hold fast to the name of the Buddha (na buddhanāma grhitam), did not take delight in seeing pleasant offerings, and did not keep to the left of stūpas.69
These people then say that they had no faith (aśraddho), that they clung to evil and abandoned Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha, were surrounded by evil friends and abandoned spiritual friends. The henchmen reply that they will experience the fruit of their actions. They are then led away to hell (whose tortures are described at some length). Thus, Avalokiteśvara tells Bali, there will be no protection at death (paraloke) and that he should, therefore, exert himself in making merit (punyaṃ). 70

He should, henceforth, be careful in his behavior and be fearful of doing evil. But, having heard this Dharma-teaching, his collection of evil is completely purified. He is to go to Sukhāvatī, where a lotus throne made of the seven jewels (saptaratnamayaṃ padmāsanaṃ) will be produced for him and, having seated himself on the bejeweled lotus (ratnapadme), in the presence of the tathāgata Amitābha, he should listen to the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, which extinguishes all suffering and evil, accomplishes the end of all bad rebirths, and is the instruction on endless, precious, great merit (-puṇya-). Thereafter, he will fulfill the prediction (vyakaranaṃ upāśaya), first taking birth as a bodhisattva called “Supariśuddhabodhicittālaṃkāra,” before becoming a completely awakened buddha. 71

Avalokiteśvara then takes his leave, saying that there is a great gathering in the Jetavana vihāra. 72

Chapter Twelve: The Consolation of Yakṣas and so forth

Avalokiteśvara emanates rays of multicolored light which appear in front of the tathāgata Viśvabhū, whereupon the beings in the vihāra fall to the ground. The bodhisattva Gaganagañja asks where these rays come from and is told that they come from Avalokiteśvara in the realm of Bali. Gaganagañja then asks how he might see Avalokiteśvara and is told that, when the great bodhisattva leaves the realm of Bali, showers of flowers will fall in the vihāra and hundreds of very beautiful and heavily ornamented wish-fulfilling trees, countless blossoming trees with red branches and gold leaves, and countless lotus pools (puṣkarinīsatānī) full of very beautiful flowers will appear. 73

Gaganagañja asks if Avalokiteśvara is not coming. He is told that, having left the dwelling place of Bali, the great bodhisattva goes to a terrible place called “Tamondhakāra,” home of hundreds and thousands of yakṣas and rākṣasas, which is lit only by the light of a wish-fulfilling jewel called “Varada,” instead of by the sun and the moon. Seeing Avalokiteśvara, the yakṣas and rākṣasas prostrate themselves and say that it has been a long time since he visited their world. The bodhisattva replies that he has many things to do, that he does not manifest merely for one being, but that he generates a mind of great compassion for all beings. 74
The yakṣas and rākṣasas then produce a bejeweled, golden lion throne (divyasuvarṇaratnamesīṁhasane), with a canopy made of many different flowers (puṣpamayaḥ), upon which Avalokiteśvara is seated and from which he begins to teach Dharma. He says that those who even listen to a four-pāda stanza (catuspādikāmapi) of the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra and then remember it, study it, promulgate and pay proper attention to it, will create a huge amount of merit. There then follows a number of similes illustrating the incalculable merit of a four-pāda stanza of the sūtra. Avalokiteśvara continues to explain that he who writes or has written the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra is doing the equivalent of writing eighty-four thousand teachings and will become a king, a cakravartin and a lord of the four continents (caturdvīpeśvara), who will bear a thousand brave, heroic sons, who, in turn, will destroy their enemies. He also describes the great benefits experienced by those who constantly bear in mind the name (nāmanusmaranti) of the sūtra, by those who remember (nāmadheyam) a single syllable of the sūtra, and by those who have written a four-pāda stanza of the sūtra.

Hearing this, some of the yakṣas and rākṣasas attain the fruit of the “stream-enterer,” some the fruit of the “once-returner,” some the fruit of the “non-returner,” some the fruit of the arhat and some supreme enlightenment. The yakṣas and rākṣasas then implore Avalokiteśvara to stay, even after the bodhisattva explains that there are many beings who need his help in putting them on the path to awakening. Finally, Avalokiteśvara tells them to go away. Eventually, having prostrated and circumambulated, they depart.

Chapter Thirteen: Wandering in the Realm of the Gods

Avalokiteśvara vanishes into space in a ball of blazing fire and reappears in the realm of the gods, in the form of a brahmin, a sad beggar called “Sukunḍala,” saying that he is hungry and thirsty. When a god replies that he has nothing, the brahmin says that he must be given something. The god then enters his palace and discovers that his vessels are, in fact, full of precious jewels, delicious food, and sweet smelling garments. Concluding that the person at the door must be a worthy person (satpatro), having attained such riches by seeing him for a moment (darśanamātrena), the god invites the brahmin inside. The brahmin then accepts some jewels, eats some of the delicious food, puts on some of the excellent garments and, having eaten, wishes the god good luck. When the god asks him where he comes from, the brahmin says he comes from the great vihāra at Jetavana. When asked what kind of place it is, he replies that it is a delightful and very beautiful place, strewn with jewels, lived in by a tathāgata,
where wish-fulfilling trees and lovely flowers appear, where many lotus pools are seen (\textit{vividhå˙ pu˚kari¶yo d®ßyante}), pervaded by those with good qualities and morality, and where many miracles of the \textit{tathågata} are to be seen (\textit{d®ßyate}).

Not doubting the brahmin, the god then asks him if he is a god or a man, because he has never seen a man like him. The brahmin replies that he is not a god but a man, who has become a bodhisattva, feeling sympathy for the wretched and miserable (\textit{hìnadìnånukampako}) and pointing out the path to awakening. Finally, the god, presenting the brahmin with a crown and earrings, sings a song of praise: in a meritorious field free of all faults, today a seed has been sown and today an abundance of fruit has been harvested.

Chapter Fourteen: Wandering in Simhala

The brahmin then leaves the realms of the gods and goes to the island of Simhala, where he appears before the \textit{råk˚asƒs}. When they try to seduce him, he says that, provided they obey one command, he will do whatever they want. Thereupon, he teaches them the eightfold noble path, the workings of karma (\textit{karmapathåni}) and the four \textit{ågamas}.

The \textit{råk˚asƒs} then attain one or other of the various Buddhist “fruits,” from stream-enterer to \textit{pratyekabuddha}. They are no longer bound by greed, hatred, or delusion, no longer have murderous intent, and take up the moral life (\textit{ßik˚åsaµvaram}). They promise not to take life, but to live, no longer like \textit{råk˚asƒs}, but (like the people of Jambudvåpa) on “rice and water” (\textit{annena pånena}), and to uphold the discipline of a lay donor (\textit{upåsakasaµvaraµ}). Then, with an unwavering gaze on that person (\textit{tasyaiwa purušasya purato ‘nimišairnayanaıḥ}), they depart.

Chapter Fifteen: Wandering in Vårå¶asƒ

Avalokiteśvara leaves Simhala and enters Vårå¶asƒ, where vast numbers of worms and insects (\textit{krmikula}) infest the sewer of the great city (\textit{mahånagaryåmuccårprasråvasthåne}). The bodhisattva then adopts the form of a bee, whose buzzing (\textit{ghu¶aghu¶åyamå¶am}) produces the sound: \textit{namo buddhåya namo dharmåya namo saµghåya}. These creatures bring this formula to mind (\textit{nåmamanusmårayanti}). By so doing (\textit{buddhanåmasmaraµ-treµ}), they destroy the “twenty-peaked false view of individuation” (\textit{viµßatißikharasamudgatåm satkåyadråśtśailåm}) and go to Sukhvåti, where they are born as bodhisattvas called “Sugandhamukha,” listen to the \textit{Kåra¶Âavy£ha S£tra} in the presence of Amitåbha and receive predictions about their future enlightenment (\textit{vyåkaraµñåni}).
Chapter Sixteen: Wandering in Magadha

Avalokiteśvara leaves Vārāṇasī and goes to Magadha, whose inhabitants have begun to eat each other, having suffered from famine and drought for twenty years. The bodhisattva produces showers of rain, then cakes (piṣṭakāṇi), a variety of grains and pulses, clothes, and so on, until, eventually, everyone’s desires are satisfied. The people ask which god could be responsible for this, at which point an old man, many hundreds of thousands of years old (anekavarśaśatasahasrayusikah) appears. He tells them that this could be produced by no god, but only by Avalokiteśvara. Asked about the characteristics of Avalokiteśvara, the old man begins to expound on the qualities of the bodhisattva.87

Happy are they, he says, who bring to mind the name (nāmamanus-maranti) of the bodhisattva. He also says that those who offer Avalokiteśvara the four-cornered diagram (caturasram maṇḍalakaṇṭa) become cakravartin kings, attended by the seven great jewels. At the end of his talk, everyone, including the old man, returns to his own home. Avalokiteśvara disappears into space (ākāś 'ntarhitah)88 and conceives an intention to go back to the Jetavana vihāra. He returns there, circumambulates the tathāgata Viśabhū three times and takes a seat on his left.89

Avalokiteśvara tells the assembled company what he has been doing. The bodhisattva Gaganagañja says that he has never seen or heard of such power (viṣayaṇ) belonging to a bodhisattva and that it is not found even among the tathāgatas. He asks Avalokiteśvara if he is tired or worn out. The great bodhisattva replies that he is not tired or worn out. The two bodhisattvas then sit down in silence.90

Then the Lord teaches the six perfections, after which each member of the assembly proceeds to their respective domains and all the bodhisattvas go to their respective buddhafields. This is said to conclude the first part (prathamo nirvyuhah) of the Kārṇḍavyūha Śūtra.91

PART TWO (DVITYO NIRVYŪHAH).

Chapter One: The Story of the King of Horses

Sarvanīvaraṇavishkambhin asks to be told about the many different samādhis achieved by Avalokiteśvara. The Lord replies that these are immeasurable and that they cannot be counted by the tathāgatas. He then gives a list of sixty-two of these different samādhis. Avalokiteśvara, he concludes is, furnished with (samanvāgataḥ) samādhis. There are hundreds of thousands of samādhis in each of his hair pores. This is the
greatest collection of merit (paramapunyaśaṁbhāraḥ) of the great bodhisattva. Such a collection of merit is not be found among the tathāgatas, let alone among the bodhisattvas.⁹²

Ṭākyamuni then tells the story of how, in a past life, he was born as the bodhisattva king Siṃhala, who set out to visit the island of Siṃhala with a band of five hundred merchants. The rākṣasts that live on the island send a storm that shipwrecks the boat. They then appear in the form of beautiful women, meeting the castaways on the shore and seducing them all into becoming their lovers. Siṃhala himself goes to live with the oldest of these rākṣasts.⁹³

One night, he is warned by his bedside lamp (ratikara)⁹⁴ that his lover is really a rākṣast and that she will eventually kill him. In order to convince him of this, the lamp tells him to take the road to the south where there is a place, fortified by a very high iron wall, where other merchants are imprisoned among the bones and corpses of their former comrades. Siṃhala sets out in the moonlight to find this place and climbs a tree besides the fortress walls. The incarcerated merchants tell him that, every day, one of their number is taken away by the rākṣasts to be eaten and that the bones are then thrown back into the iron fortress.⁹⁵ Siṃhala hurries back and asks the lamp if there is a means of escape. There is, he is told, a king of horses named Bāḷāha, who feels sympathy for the wretched and miserable (himaṁmaṇukampakaḥ). This horse, having eaten the herbs called “All White” (sarvaśvetānāmausadhīṁ buktvā), having turned round and round and round on the place of golden sand (suvarṇavalukāsthale avartana-parivarṇa-saṁparivarṇaṁ kṛtvā), will stretch out his body (śarīraḥ pracchayati)⁹⁶ and make this address (pratyāhāraṁ kurute): “Who is going to the other side? Who is going to the other side? Who is going to the other side?” Siṃhala, he is told, should say: “I, master, am coming to the other side (ahaṁ deva pāraṇaṁ).” Returning to bed, he explains to his suspicious lover that his body is cold because he has been outside to relieve himself.⁹⁷

The next day, Siṃhala gathers his band of merchants together outside the town and tells them that their wives (whose great love and generosity they have been discussing among each other) are, in fact, rākṣasts. The frightened merchants are persuaded, reflecting on the fact that rākṣasts are, traditionally, the inhabitants of the island of Siṃhala. “Truly, truly,” they say, “by the Buddha, Dharma and Saṁgha, she is not a woman but a rākṣast.” Siṃhala asks them if they have a source of refuge (gatiḥ saṁraṇaṁ parāyaṇaṁ) and describes Bāḷāha in almost exactly the same terms as given above. He tells them that they will leave in three days time and that each man should bring his own provisions (saṁbalaṁ).⁹⁸
Upon returning to their homes, the merchants are told by the rakṣastīs that they look tired and are asked whether they have seen the pleasant gardens and hundreds of pleasant lotus pools (puṣkariṇīsatāni). No, they reply, they have not seen them at all. The rakṣastīs then explain that there are many different gardens on the island of Siṃhala, containing hundreds of lotus pools full of different colored lotuses. The merchants reply that, on the third day, they will go to the other side in order to see the place of the gardens and the lotus pools. Then, having picked various lotuses (puṣpāṇi grhitvā), they will return.99

The merchant alternates between thinking about the body of the rakṣastī and wondering if the rakṣastīs know his plan and are going to kill him. He is quiet. The rakṣastī then brings him many offerings. When he has eaten them, he lets out a sigh, explaining that the men of Jambudvīpa delight in their own country. The rakṣastī asks him why, when the island of Siṃhala is so well provided with food, water, clothes, gardens, and lotus pools. He remains quiet. This is how the first day passes.100 The second day passes in a rapid succession of making offerings and finalizing preparations.101

On the third day, the merchants leave at sunrise and convene outside the town. Siṃhala says that none of them must ever look back at the island of Siṃhala and they hurry on to find Bālāha. The horse is, once again, described in the same terms. He eats the herb, turns around on the place of golden sand, stretches out his body and shakes (calati) the island of Siṃhala. He asks, three times: “Who is going to the other side?” and repeats the warning that, when he stretches out his body, none of them should look back at the island of Siṃhala or open their eyes. Siṃhala and the merchants then climb aboard the horse, whereupon the rakṣastīs begin to weep and wail. Opening their eyes and looking back, the merchants fall headlong into the sea, where they are eaten by the rakṣastīs.102

Siṃhala, therefore, returns to Jambudvīpa alone, where he makes three circumambulations of Bālāha on the shore. He then proceeds to his home. His parents embrace him and, once they can see through their tears, begin to look at him (draṣṭumārabdhau). After Siṃhala has told them his story, his parents say that, since he is still alive, they have no need of money (nāsmakāṁ dravyena kṛtyam). In their old age, they say, he is their support; in the darkness he shows them the path; at the time of death he gives them the sacred cake (marāṇakaḷe piṇḍadātā); he offers protection to the dead and like a cooling wind, he is a giver of delight.103

This, Śākyamuni tells Sarvanvaranāvīskambhin, is how he experienced suffering as the bodhisattva caravan leader. Because Avalokiteśvara was Bālāha, the king of horses, so he, Śākyamuni, was liberated from the fear of death. As it is impossible, he says, to calculate the amount of merit of Avalokiteśvara, he offers to give a brief discourse on the individual hair pores, one by one.104
Chapter Two: The Description of the Hair Pores

The first pore described by Śākyamuni is called “Suvarṇa”. A huge number of gandharvas live there, no longer bound by the sufferings of saṃsāra (tena ca saṃsārikena duṣkhenā na bādhyante), enjoying supreme happiness and heavenly riches. They are not bound by greed, hatred, or delusion. They think no aggressive or violent thoughts, constantly practise the eightfold noble path and are always thirsting for Dharma. There is a wish-fulfilling jewel called “Avabhāsaṃ,” which spontaneously grants all desires.

Leaving Suvarṇa, the second pore is called “Kṛṣṇa.” Huge numbers of ṛṣis live there, with one, two, three, four, five, or six of the supernatural faculties (abhiñña). The ground is made of silver, the mountains of gold, which are studded with rubies and have summits made of silver, like the seventy-seven mountains, which are each home to sixty thousand ṛṣis. There are wish-granting trees, with red branches and gold and silver leaves.

On each side of the pore (ekaikapārśva romavivare) there are four lotus pools (puṣkarinyah), some of which are full of water endowed with the eight qualities and others which are full of flowers (kecitpuspaparipūrṇah). Nearby, there are sweet-smelling trees and beautiful wish-granting trees, bearing jewelry of various kinds and gold leaves. In each of these trees reside a hundred gandharvas, whose music and singing instills a desire for emancipation (saṃvegam) in the animals and birds, who ponder the suffering of saṃsāra experienced by the people of Jambudvīpa. The animals and birds bring to mind the name (nāmānusmaranti) of the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, whereupon delicious food, sweet-smelling substances and divine clothes appear before them. All their wishes are granted.

Sarvanivraṇaṇaヴィkambhin expresses his astonishment that the bringing to mind the name (nāmānusmaranti) and the remembrance of the name (nāmadheyamātreṇa) of the sūtra should possess such power. Happy are they, he says, who listen to the sūtra, have it written, remember it, speak it, study it, and fundamentally make it their own. Even those who have written a single syllable of the sūtra do not see (paśyanti) the suffering of saṃsāra, are not born into families of the lowest or mixed social level (caṇḍalakukkurakuleśu) and have bodies that are strong and free from deformity and disease of various kinds. Śākyamuni expresses his approval of such an illumination (pratibhānam). Numerous gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras, mahoragas, men, women, and thousands of lay followers are gathered around. Such a Dharma-talk (dharmasaṃkathyaṃ) is equivalent to the illumination of the vaipulya sūtras (vaipulya pratibhānāḥ).

Sarvanivraṇaṇaヴィkambhin says that when the Lord answers in such a way, there is born an unbreakable faith in the sons of the gods (devaputreṇa).
Sākyamuni again expresses his approval and says that the bodhisattva must ask the *tathāgata* again and again for instruction.110

Leaving Krṣṇa, the next pore is called “Ratnakūḍāla,” where many beautiful and brilliantly adorned female *gandharvas*, or *apsaras*, live. They are not bound by the suffering of greed, hatred, or delusion. Nor do they experience the bodily suffering of human beings. They bring to mind the name (*nāmamamunusmarantī*) of Avalokiteśvara, which, on the third instance, produces all good things.111

Sarvanīvaraṇaviśkambhin then expresses his desire to go and see these hair pores, only to be told by the Buddha that these pores are ungraspable (*agrāhyāste*) and untouchable (*asaṃsparśa˙*), just as the dimension of space is ungraspable and untouchable (*yathā ākāśadhatu agrāhyo ’saṃsparśa˙*). The great bodhisattva Samantabhadra, he is told, roamed these pores for twelve years, but the pores and the hundred buddhas residing in each one were not seen (*na . . . dṛṣṭaṁ*) by him. What chance, then, do other bodhisattvas have?112

Sākyamuni explains that the pores were not seen (*na dṛṣṭaye*) by himself, despite investigation and exploration. This one (*ayaṁ*), he concludes, is a master of illusion (*māyāvi*), beyond being mastered (*asādhyāḥ*) and subtle (*sūkṣma*): only in this way can he be perceived (*evamanudṛṣṭaye*). He has a great, pure (*nirāṇjano*) body, with one hundred thousand arms (*śatasahasrabhuja˙*), one hundred thousand *koṭiḥ* of eyes (*koṭissatasahasranetro*), an omnipresent body (*viśvarūpā*), and eleven heads (*ekādaśaśirṣa˙*). He is the great yogin (*mahāyogā*), established in *nirvāṇa* (*nirvāṇabhūmīvyavasthitāḥ*), distinguished (*sucetano*), greatly wise (*mahāprajñā*), a deliverer of beings (*bhavottāraṇya*), well-born (*kulino*), invisible (*anādarśt*), wise (*prājñā*) and in his exposition he casts no shadows on any elements (*nirdesastathācchāyābhūtāḥ sarvadharmeśu*). He is not heard or seen by anyone (*na śruto na kenacit dṛṣṭa˙*). The other self-existent (*svabhāvakā*) *tathāgatās* do not see (*na paśyanti*) him, and nor, therefore, do Samantabhadra and the other bodhisattvas. This inconceivable one (*acintyō*) manifests miracles (*prātihāryāṁ samupadarśayati*) and brings to maturity (*paripācayati*) countless numbers of bodhisattvas, whom he stands on the path of *Dharma* (*bodhimārge prati˚†hayati*). He leads them to the realm of Sukhāvatī, where, in the presence of Amitābha, he teaches them *Dharma* (*dharmamānuśṣṭotī*).113

Sarvanīvaraṇaviśkambhin asks the Buddha how he might see (*paśyāṁ*) the great bodhisattva. Sākyamuni replies that Avalokiteśvara comes to this realm in order to see, praise and give worship to him (the Buddha) (*mama darśanāya vandanāya pariyupāsanāya*). Sarvanīvaraṇaviśkambhin asks when the great bodhisattva is coming. Sākyamuni replies that when he is mature in spirit (*yada . . . sattvaparipāko bhavati*), then Avalokiteśvara will come. Sarvanīvaraṇaviśkambhin reflects on the chronic attachment to evil (*pañcāpatena*) that has deprived him from seeing (*-darśana–*) Avalokiteśvara. He then,
again, asks when the great bodhisattva will come. Śakyamuni laughs and laughs
(hasati vyavahasati). The appointed time of Avalokiteśvara’s coming, he says,
is unpredictable (akālaste).114

Leaving Ratnakuṇḍala, the next pore is called “Amṛtabindu,” where
numerous sons of the gods (devaputra) live. Great bodhisattvas live there,
established on any one of the ten levels (bhumiḥ). There are sixty
mountains made of gold and silver, sixty thousand yojanas high, with ninety-nine
thousand summits, covered in gold and jewels. On its slopes, bodhisattvas live
in one-pointed concentration (ekacittotpādikā). On the king of mountains,
numerous gandharvas live, who sustain a constant chant. There are numer-
ous, brilliantly decorated palaces, where bodhisattvas prepare Dharma-talks
dharmasāmkathyāṃ) before proceeding to their respective promenades
camṣkramanāṃ). In each of these promenades, there are numerous lotus
pools (puṣkarinīḥ), some of which contain water endowed with the eight
qualities and others which are full of many different kinds of lotuses
(utpalapadma-). There are also many marvelous wish-granting trees. During
the night, the bodhisattvas promenade (camṣkramantī, bringing to mind the
diversity of the Mahāyāna (vividham ca mahāyānamanuṣṭhānti), meditating
upon (anuvicintayati) the state of nirvāṇa and the sufferings of saṃsāra and
thinking about (cintayanti) the state of hell, causing them to develop loving-
kindness (maitrīṃ bhāvyanti).115

Leaving Amṛtabindu, the next pore is called “Vajramukha.” Numerous
kinnaras live there, constantly thinking positively (abhiprasannāḥ) towards
Buddha, Dharma and Saṃgha, one-pointedly delighting in loving-kindness,
reflecting on patience, thinking of nirvāṇa and longing for the emancipation
of human beings (saṃvegamānuṣṭhānāḥ). The kinnaras thirst for Dharma.
There are numerous mountain chasms (parvatavivarāṇi), some of which are
made of vajra, some of rubies, some of sapphires, and some of the seven
jewels. There are also numerous marvelous trees, lotus pools, and palaces,
where the kinnaras prepare Dharma-talks on the six perfections and walk
about on their own respective promenades. These promenades are also heavily
ornate, some made of gold, all enlivened by marvelous trees, which are like
homes to the kinnaras. The kinnaras meditate on saṃsāra and cry out aloud
about the sufferings of birth, old age, death, and poverty, about the suffering
of being separated from what one loves and wants, and about the suffering of
being joined to what one does not love. They also meditate on the sufferings
of a variety of hells, of the city of the pretas and, finally, of all beings. They
meditate on the state of nirvāṇa and, thirsting for Dharma, constantly bring
to mind the name (nāmaṃnuṣṭhānti) of Avalokiteśvara. Thereby, they become
endowed with all benefits (sarvopakaraṇairupasthita).116

How difficult to meet (durlabhāḥ), Śakyamuni concludes, is Avalokite-
śvara, who is, to all beings, both mother and father, giver of fearlessness,
The Origins of Om Manipadme Hum

Chapter Three: The Description of the Glory of the Six-Syllable Formula

Sarvanīvaraṇavīṣkambhin asks how the six-syllable formula may be obtained. Śākyamuni replies that the formula is difficult to obtain (durlabhā) and that it is not known by the tathāgatas, let alone by the bodhisattvas. When asked why, the Lord explains that the formula is the innermost heart (paramahṛdayam) of Avalokiteśvara. Whoever knows this innermost heart knows liberation (mokṣaṁ jānāti). Sarvanīvaraṇavīṣkambhin asks if anyone knows the formula and is told that no one knows it. The yogins and tathāgatas (yogināstathāgata) know it to be difficult to be met with (durāsadā) and immeasurable (aprameyā): so much more so do the bodhisattvas. All the tathāgatas have wandered for sixteen kalpas in this cause and the bodhisattvas will do so for even longer.118

This is the innermost heart (paramahṛdayaḥ) of Avalokiteśvara. But he who wanders in this world does not know the formula.119 Meritorious are they (punyavartiṣṭe) who are always and utterly engrossed in reciting (japābhīyukta) the formula. At the time of reciting it (tasyā japakāle), as many tathāgatas as there are sands in the waters of the ninety-nine Ganges and as many bodhisattvas as there are atoms assemble. They stand at the door of the six perfections (satpāramitā dvāraśāḥ). Another three thousand two hundred groups of sons of gods assemble. The four kings rule the four directions. The nāga kings rule the earth (dharaṇī parirakṣanti). The yakṣas rule space. In each hair pore, kotis of tathāgatas sit and express their approval.120

Well done (sādhu), the tathāgatas say, to those who have attained this wish-fulfilling jewel. Seven generations of their family will be saved. Those who have taken bad rebirth will become irreversible bodhisattvas. Those who keep it (dhārayet) on their body (kāyagataṁ) or around their neck (kuladuhitā) (kula-puṭro va kuladuhitā va) who recites (japanti) the formula will become one of indestructible brilliance (akāyapratibhāno), purified by esoteric wisdom (jñānasaṁvāgato) and will, every day, fully accomplish the six perfections. He will receive the initiation of a vidyādhara-cakravartin (vidyādharacārī)—
kravartyaḥ bhisekaṁ pratilabhate). Whoever is given solace (praśvāsaṁ) by it, whether by a friend or an enemy (maitryā vā dvēṣeṇa vā), will become an irreversible bodhisattva and, soon, a fully enlightened buddha. Even those who merely touch the garments (vastrāsparśanēpi) of those who bestow the formula will become “last-existence” bodhisattvas (caramabhavikā). Even by merely seeing (darśanamātreṇa) one such person,121 men, women, children, and animals, will become “last-existence” bodhisattvas, free of the suffering of birth, old age, sickness, and death, inconceivable (acintyā) and accomplished (yoginaśca). These are the consequences of reciting (japamānasya) the six-syllable formula.122

Sarvanivarṇaviṇkambhin asks how he might obtain the formula, this inconceivable method (acintyō yogānām) and inconceivable, immeasurable meditation (aprameyadhyānānām), the incomparable teaching on supreme enlightenment and nirvāṇa (aparisthitaścānuttarāyaṁ samyaksambodhau nirvāṇasyopadarsakaḥ). He wishes, he says, to hear this entrance to liberation (mokṣasya praveśanam), this cessation of greed and hatred (rāgadveśasya vypaśamanam), this supreme Dharma-king (dharmarājasya paripāraṁ), destruction of rebirth in the five realms of saṃsāra (unmūlanaṁ saṃsārasya pańcagatiśya), drying up of the hellish kleśas (saṃśoṣaṁ nārakāṁ kleśānm), destruction of the animal realms (saṃuddhatanamuttāraṇāṁ tiryagyoniṭanāṁ), definitive taste of dharma (āsvādo dharmāṇāṁ paripuraṁ) and indestructible instruction on all wisdom (sarvajñānasya aksayāṁ nirdesaṁ). He will give the four continents full of the seven jewels to whoever bestows (anuprayacchati) the formula on him. If no bark, ink, or reed can be found with which to write the formula, his own skin, blood, and bones may be used. He (who bestows on him the formula) will become his mother and father and the guru of gurus (gurīmapi guruśca).122

Śākyamuni then says that he remembers (smarāmyahaṁ) how, for the sake of the formula, he traversed countless realms and served numerous tathāgatas, but was still not able to obtain or hear the formula. However, there was one tathāgata called “Ratnottama,” before whom Śākyamuni (in a previous life as a bodhisattva) prostrated himself in tears. He is advised to go to the realm called “Padmottama,” home of a tathāgata called “Padmottama,” who will teach him the formula. So, taking leave of Ratnottama and finding Padmottama, before whom he once again prostrates, Śākyamuni asks to be given the six-syllable formula by which, merely through bringing to mind its name (namānusmaraṇamātreṇa), all evil is destroyed, and enlightenment (bodhiṁ) is attained. He asks that his wearisome search may not be in vain.123

Padmottama then brings to mind the qualities of the formula (mahāvidyāguṇāṁ saṃsmārayati), a long speech consisting of elaborate similes and examples of vast numbers and huge quantities which are, nonetheless, deemed calculable. In contrast, however, the amount of merit accrued by even
one recitation (ekājāpasya) of the formula is said, repeatedly, to be incalculable. For example, he says, although it would be possible to count the number of all the atoms of dust, it is not possible to calculate the amount of merit accrued in one recitation of the six-syllable formula. For example, although it would be possible to calculate the number of grains of sand in the four oceans, it is not possible to calculate the amount of merit accrued in one recitation of the six-syllable formula.

For example, although, if a man built a house a thousand yojanas wide and five hundred yojanas high and filled it to the brim with sesame seeds, it would be possible to calculate the amount of time it would take for the house to become empty if a man (free from old age and death) were to stand at the door and, after every hundred kalpas, throw out one seed, it is not possible to calculate the amount of merit accrued in one recitation of the six-syllable formula. For example, although, if all the four islands were sown with barley, wheat, rice, beans, sesame seed, pulses, and other seeds, and if these crops grew and were harvested, if Jambudvīpa was made into a threshing floor and was filled with all these crops, it would be possible to count each grain, it is not possible to calculate the amount of merit accrued in one recitation of the six-syllable formula. For example, although it would be possible to count each drop of water in all the great rivers (whose names are given) of Jambudvīpa which, together with each one’s five thousand tributaries, run night and day to the sea, it is not possible to calculate the amount of merit accrued in one recitation of the six-syllable formula.

For example, although it would be possible to count each hair on all the four-legged animals (examples of which are given) in the four islands, it is not possible to calculate the amount of merit accrued in one recitation of the six-syllable formula. For example, there is a great mountain called “Vajrāṅkaśa” ninety-nine thousand yojanas high and eighty-four thousand yojanas deep, on one face of which, eighty-four thousand yojanas high, there is a man (free from old age and death) who wipes the mountain with a silk cloth once every kalpa; although it would be possible to calculate the number of years, months, days, hours, minutes, and seconds it would take before the mountain was completely destroyed by this process, it is not possible to calculate the amount of merit accrued in one recitation of the six-syllable formula.\[^{125}\] For example, although it would be possible to count each drop of water in the great ocean, eighty-four thousand yojanas deep and extending as far as the mare’s mouth (vaḍavāmukhaparyantam), it is not possible to calculate the amount of merit accrued in one recitation of the six-syllable formula.\[^{126}\]

For example, although it would be possible to count the number of leaves in a forest of acacia trees, it is not possible to calculate the amount of merit accrued in one recitation of the six-syllable formula. For example, the amount of merit that would be accrued if all the men, women, boys, and girls
of the four islands became tenth-level bodhisattvas is equivalent to the amount of merit accrued in one recitation of the six-syllable formula. For example, although it would be possible to count each drop of water if the gods made it rain night and day for a kalpa of years made up, not of twelve, but of thirteen months, it is not possible to count the amount of merit accrued in one recitation of the six-syllable formula. Indeed, if several koṭis of tathāgatas were gathered together in one place and, over the course of a divine kalpa, were made offerings of such things as clothes, alms bowls, beds, seats, and medicines, these tathāgatas would not be able to calculate the amount of merit of the six-syllable formula. 127

Padmottama now says that he wandered alone in this world. He developed a state of accomplishment, through inconceivable meditation and effort, which was the achievement of the innermost heart essence, that is the subtle Dharma, the imperceptible Dharma and the future Dharma (sa ca sākṣmo dharmah āvyakto dharmah anāgato dharmah paramahṛdayaprāptah). He established himself in the skillful means (upāyakusalairdharmaiḥ pratiṣṭhāḥ) of Avalokiteśvara. In this state (evaṁ), for the sake of achieving the skillful means of the six-syllable formula, he traversed many realms, before arriving in front of the tathāgata Amitābha. He prostrated himself before Amitābha, weeping with desire for the Dharma.128

Amitābha asks him if he wishes to attain the method (bhāvanāyogāmanuyuktah) of the formula. In reply, Padmottama outlines the great lengths to which he has gone to attain the formula and asks the tathāgata to be his protector, refuge, and last resort (trātā bhava, śaraṇaṃ parāyaṇam), the eyes of one who is blind, the guide to one who is lost, and so on.129

Amitābha alerts Avalokiteśvara with the sound of a cuckoo (lambikarutena svareṇa nirghosenaśārocayati), points out the great pains to which Padmottama has gone for the sake of the formula, tells him to give (dadasva) it to the tathāgata and wanders off (paribhramati).130

Chapter Four: The Description of the Maṇḍala of the Six-Syllable Formula

Avalokiteśvara says that it should not be given to one who has not seen the maṇḍala (adṛṣṭamanaṇḍalasya na dātavyāṃ). How can he take on the mudrā of the sign of the lotus (kathāṃ bhagavatpadmāṅkamudrāmanugṛṇāti)? How can he make his own the mudrā of Maṇḍhara (kathāṃ maṇḍharaṃ mudrāṃ samjñante)? How can he make his own Sarvarājendrā (kathāṃ sarvarājendrāṃ samjñante)? How can he make his own the purification of the maṇḍala (maṇḍalaparīśuddhim kathāṃ samjñante)?131

In the middle of the maṇḍala, which is four-cornered and about the size of five hands (paṇcachastapramāṇaṃ sāmantakena), should be drawn Amitābha,
using the powder of sapphires, rubies, emeralds, quartz, gold, and silver. The bodhisattva Mahāmaṇḍhindara should be on the right. The six-syllable formula should be on the left (vāmapārśve saḍaḥkṣari mahāvidyā kartavyā), with four arms, the color of autumnal yellow (saratkāṇḍagauravarmā), decorated with many ornaments (nānālaṃkāra-viśūṣita), holding a lotus (padmā) in the left hand, a string of prayer beads (aksamālā) in the right, with her two joined hands in the mudrā of Sarvarājendra. At the feet of the six-syllable formula stands a viṣṇudhara, holding a spoon of smoking incense (dhāpakaṭacchukam dhūmāyamānam) in his right hand and a basket of various ornaments (nānāvidhālamaṇkāra-paripūrṇaṃ piṭakaṃ) in his left. At the four doors of the maṇḍala are the four great kings holding various weapons. At the four corners of the maṇḍala are four jars full of various precious stones.

Whichever son or daughter of noble family wishes to enter the maṇḍala, should write the names of all the various clans (sarvagotrasyāparaṃparasya nāmāni) and throw them into the maṇḍala (maṇḍale prathamataraṃ tāni nāmāni prakśipet). They will then all become “last-existence” bodhisattvas, free of human suffering and, before long reach full enlightenment. It is not to be given by a preceptor in an unsuitable manner (asthāne). It may be given to one who has exhibited faith (śraddhādhimuktakasya) or to one who has exhibited faith in the Mahāyāna (mahāyānaśraddhādhimuktakasya), but not to a tīrthika (na ca tīrthikasya dātavyā).  

Amitābha then tells Avalokiteśvara that if someone is poor and cannot obtain the precious stones, gold and so on, then colored dyes, flowers, and other fragrant substances (gandhāiḥ) may be used. If even this cannot be obtained, in the case of someone who has come from abroad (desāntaragatasya) or who has fallen on hard times (sthānapadacyutasya), then the maṇḍala may be conceived of mentally by the preceptor (ācaryena nānasikam maṇḍalam cintitavyam), who will teach the mantras, mudrās and other details (mantramudralakṣaṇānyupadarśayitavyāni).

Chapter Five: The Teaching of the Formula

Padmottama then asks Avalokiteśvara to give him the six-syllable formula, by which he (Padmottama) might liberate from suffering numerous beings, who will subsequently achieve complete enlightenment. Avalokiteśvara then bestows (anuprayacchati) the formula: Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ. At that moment, the four islands shake, the four oceans are churned about and yakṣas, rākṣasas, kumbhāṇḍas, and the female mahākāla deities run away. Padmottama offers a valuable string of pearls to Avalokiteśvara who, in turn, offers the string of pearls to Amitābha. Padmottama then returns to the realm called Padmottama. This, says Śākyamuni, is what he heard from Padmottama in a previous lifetime.
Sarvanāvaraṇaśīkambhin asks how he might obtain the formula. Just as those who have tasted immortality, he says, cannot be satisfied with something tasteless, so he cannot be satisfied with merely hearing about the formula. For meritorious are they who recite (japanti), listen (sṛṇvanti), meditate on (cintayanti) and mentally hold on to (adhyāśayena dhārayanti) the formula. Śākyamuni replies that anyone who has written the formula has written the eighty-four thousand parts of the Dharma (caturāṣṭṭhidharmaskandhasahasrāṇi). The fruit of making as many stūpas for as many tathāgatas as there are atoms, made of gold and jewels and filled each day with relics (ekadine dhatvāvaropanam kuryāt) is equivalent only to the fruit of one syllable of the formula. Whoever recites (japet) the formula, attains eight hundred different samādhis, some examples of which are given, beginning with the samādhi called “holding the jewel” (manidhara). The others are the samādhis of: the purifying of hell (narakatīryakṣamśodhana); vajra-armour (vajrakavaca); going about properly established (supratīṣṭhitacarāṇa); entering into all skilful means (sarvopāyakauśalyapraśeṣaṇa); changing one’s state (vikirīṇa);137 seeing all buddhafields (sarvabhuddhakṣetrasaṃdarsana); entering into all dharmas (sarvadharmapraśeṣa); the ornament of meditation (dhyanalāṃkara);138 riding the chariot of Dharma (dharmarathābhīrāḥ);139 liberation from greed, hatred, and delusion (rāgadveśahaparimokṣaṇa); endless years (anantavatsa);140 pointing out the six perfections (ṣaṭpāramitānirdeśa); holding the great Meru (mahāmerudhā); viewing all the tathāgatas (sarvatathāgatavyavaloṣana) and the well-established seat (supratīṣṭhitāṣaṇa).141

Chapter Six: The Description of the Maṇḍala of the Formula

Sarvanāvaraṇaśīkambhin asks where he must go to obtain the formula and is told that there is, in the great city of Vāraṇasī, a dharmabhāṇaka who remembers the formula (dhārayati), speaks it (vācyati) and pays proper attention to it (yoniśca manasi kurute).142 He says that he will go to the city in order to see, praise and give worship (darśanāya vandanāya paryupāsanāya) to this dharmabhāṇaka. Śākyamuni congratulates him and tells him that the dharmabhāṇaka is difficult to meet (durlabhaḥ) and is to be seen as the same as a tathāgata (tathāgatasamo durlabhī), as like a heap of merit (puṣyakāiva durlabhī), as like the Ganges with all its sacred bathing places (sarvatīrthī gangeva durlabhī),143 as like one who does not speak lies (avitathavādva durlabhī), as like one who speaks the truth (bhūtavādva durlabhī), as like a heap of jewels (ratnarāśiriva durlabhī), as like a boon-giver and a wish-fulfilling jewel (varadaścintāmaṇiriva durlabhī), as like a Dharma-king (dharmarājā iva durlabhī) and as like a rescuer of the world (jagaduttārāṇa iva durlabhī). Having seen (durlabhī) the dharmabhāṇaka, he should not
146 The Origins of Oṃ Mani padme Hūṃ
develop a mind of doubt (vicikitsācittamutpādayitavyam). Having attained the level of a bodhisattva (bodhisattvaḥbhumēṣcuytava), he should not fall back into a lower state (mā . . . adāye prapatsyase). The dharmabhāṇaka neglects moral precepts and proper behavior (śīlavipannahaḥ acaravipanno), is surrounded by wives and children (bhāryaputraduhitrībhīḥ pariṇtah), has a robe covered in urine and excrement (kāśyoccāraprasravaparipāṇaḥ) and is not a celibate (asaṃvṛtteryāpathaḥ).

Sarvanīvaranaviśkambhin says he will do as Śākyamuni says. Gathering a retinue of bodhisattvas, householders, renunciants, boys and girls, as well as a huge number of choice offerings with which to worship the dharmabhāṇaka, he sets out for Vārāṇasi. He finds the dharmabhāṇaka, prostrates before him and sees him to be without moral code and moral behavior and to be a non-celibate (sa tena drṣṭaḥ śīlavipanna acaravipanno ‘saṃvṛtteryāpathaḥ). Having made his offerings (pūjam kṛtvā), he praises the dharmabhāṇaka. He is, he says, a great storehouse of Dharma. When he preaches the Dharma, he is surrounded by gods, nāgas, yakṣas, and so on. Many beings are bound in saṃsāra, but meritorious are they who live in Vārāṇasi, who can see (paśyanti) and pay homage (parigrahaµ kurvanti) to him. Merely by seeing him (darsanamātrena), all evil is destroyed, just as a forest is destroyed by fire. The tathāgatas are taught by him (jānante tava tathāgata) and numerous bodhisattvas worship him (tava pūjakarmanā upaśaṃkrāmantī). He is also worshipped by Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśvara, Candra, Āditya, Vāyu, Varuṇa, Agni, and Yama, the other Dharma kings and the four great kings.

The dharmabhāṇaka tells Sarvanīvaranaviśkambhin not to beget wickedness (mā tvam kulaputra kaukṛtyamutpādayasi). How many fools, obscurations, and enjoyments are there, he says, that are produced in saṃsāra which give rise to birth in the wheel of life. But, he says, those who know (jānante) the six-syllable formula are not tainted by greed, hatred, and delusion; they are not attached to gold. Those who wear the formula on their body (saḍakṣārī mahāvidyā kāyagata) will not be tainted by bodily greed, hatred, and delusion.

Embracing the feet of the dharmabhāṇaka, Sarvanīvaranaviśkambhin beseeches him to act as the eyes of one who is blind, to teach the noble eightfold path, and to refresh with the taste of Dharma one who anxiously longs for the Dharma. He asks to be given (dadasva) the formula, which is described as the seed of enlightenment (bodhibijām) for one deprived of complete and perfect enlightenment, as a space of dharmas (dharmāṇāṃavakāśaṃ), as the complete remedy to obtain perfect bodily health (supratīṣṭhitārpāṇaṃ kāypariśuddhim). Everyone, he says, speaks of this melodious phrase (vākyam madhupacayam) as the accomplishment of indestructible blessings (abhedyānāṃ kusalanāṃ pratilambha iti). Give me, he says, the six-syllable formula by which I may soon be deeply versed in complete and perfect enlight-
enment, turn the twelvefold wheel of Dharma (dvādaśākāraṃ dharmacandhрав- cakramāvarṭaṁgyam), and liberate all beings from the suffering of saṃsāra. Asking twice more for the formula, he ends by beseeching the dharmabhaṇaka to be his protector, refuge and last resort (trātā saṇāṃ parāyaṇam), and finally an island to those without an island (advipāṇaṃ dvīpo).

The dharmabhaṇaka replies by saying that the six-syllable formula is a phrase (-padam) which is: a vajra without equal (asamavajrapadam); an indestructible vajra (abhedyavajrapadam); supreme wisdom (anuttarajñānadārśanapadam); supreme (niruttarapadam); the entrance to liberation (mokṣapravēṣanapadam); the complete purity of the wisdom of the tathāgatas (tathāgatajñānavisuddhipadam); an escape from the suffering of saṃsāra caused by greed, hatred, and delusion (rāgaśamohasaṃsāraduḥkhaparivarjanapadam); all skillful means (sarvopāyakauśalyapadam); completely filled with meditation, liberation, and samādhis (dhyānavimokṣasamādhisamāpātipadam); entering into all dharmas (sarvadharmapraviṇipadam) and constantly striving for the divine (nityakālandeśavāhikānkapadam).

Then, the dharmabhaṇaka points to those who have taken various robes (nānāsthāneṣu dīkṣante / mokṣārtheṣu nānāpaṭeṣu dīkṣante / tadyathā indrapaṭṭaṃ śvetapāṭaṃ dhyuṣītapaṭaṃ) and ascetics who are consecrated into the Mahēśvaras and other sects (divasaniṁirśakā mahēśvareṣu dīkṣante / bailmaṇegarudreṣu nagnaśramaṇeṣu ca). They who have taken these various consecrations will not achieve liberation (esi śthāneṣu dīkṣante / na teṣāṃ mokṣaṃ saṃvidyate). There will be no end to their eternal round of birth and rebirth (anādigatikānāmapi nāpi nāsā bhavati). All the gods, Brahmā, Viśṇu, Maheśvara, and so on, are constantly longing for the six-syllable formula.

Sarvanivāraṇaviśkambhin asks again how to obtain the six-syllable formula, by which we may quickly become better (yena vayam kṣiprarā bhavāmaḥ). The dharmabhaṇaka replies that all the tathāgatas are born from the Perfection of Wisdom and the Perfection of Wisdom is said to be the mother of the tathāgatas (prajñāpāramitānirjñātāḥ sarvatathāgataḥ / tatprajñāpāramitā sarvatathāgatanām ca netriyakhyāyate). If she makes obeisance, with hands clasped, to the six-syllable formula, then so much more so will the tathāgatas and the bodhisattvas (sāpi ca saḍākṣarāḥ mahāvidyārajaḥ praṇamate kṛtāṅjalipūṭaḥ bhavanti, prāgava tathāgata arhatanāḥ samyaksaṃ-buddhā bodhisattvaganāḥ).

The formula, the dharmabhaṇaka says, is the grain of rice (taṇḍulavatsāraṃ) of the Mahāyāna, equivalent to the many Mahāyāna sūtras being sung (geyam) and the teaching of a great variety of Buddhist texts (vyākaranagathānidānetivrttaśāstakavaipulyaḥdhitadharmaḥ). Merely reciting it (jaipitaṃturṇa) brings sublime liberation (śīvam mokṣaṃ) and happiness (kuśala). To obtain it is to possess the pith (sāraṃ), just as one obtains the pith of rice grains,
by taking them home, filling jars with them, drying them in the sun, threshing them, and leaving them for four years. What is the pith? The rice grain.\(^{155}\)

Just so, all other yogas are like chaff, while the six-syllable formula is to be seen as like the rice grain of all yogas. For its sake, bodhisattvas practice the six perfections. By one recitation (ekajāpena), the six perfections are accomplished. Merely by touching the garment (of one who grants the formula) one attains the irreversible level. Thus, it is difficult (durlabham) to grasp its name (nāmagrahanam). Merely grasping its name once (ekavāranāmagrahanena) is equivalent to all the tathāgatas being offered robes, alms bowls, beds, seats, and medicine.\(^{156}\)

Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin then asks to be given the formula. The dharmabhāṇaka pauses for reflection (saṃcintya saṃcintya vyavasthitāḥ) and a voice sounds from space (ākāše Šabdo niścarati sma), telling him to give (dadasva) the formula and saying that the bodhisattva has undergone various hardships. Again, the dharmabhāṇaka reflects (saṃcintayati) on the question of where the voice is coming from (kutaḥ śabdo niścarati)\(^{157}\) and, once again, almost exactly the same instructions are heard.\(^{158}\)

The dharmabhāṇaka gazes into space (ākāṣaṃ vyavaloṣaṃ sma) where he sees (paśyati) a figure (sartram) the yellowish color of arrow shafts (śaratkāṇḍagauravarṇaṃ), wearing twisted locks (jaṭāmukuṭadharam), with the omniscient one on his head (sarvajñāśirasikṣṇaṃ), holding a beautiful lotus (śubhapadmahastaṃ) and adorned with the auspiciousness of the lotus (padmaśriyālaṃkṛtaṃ). Seeing such a figure (tādṛśaṃ rūpaṃ drṣṭvā) the dharmabhāṇaka tells Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin that the formula is granted to him (anujñātaste) by Avalokiteśvara. Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin eagerly joins both hands together and begins to recite (udgṛhitumārabdhaha): “Oṃ Manipadme Hūṃ.”\(^{159}\)

Immediately, the earth trembles in six uncommon ways (ṣaḍvikāraṃ prthivī prakampita). Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin obtains seven different samādhis called: “to give birth to the subtle state” (sūkṣmajana); “rejoicing in loving-kindness and compassion” (maitrīkaraṇātikārta); “conduct of yoga” (yogācāro); “abiding at the entrance to liberation” (mokṣapraśeṣavayavasthāno); “spreading light all around” (sarvālokakaro); “king of display” (vyāharājo), and “holding Dharma” (dharmaḥdharo).\(^{160}\) He then begins to offer, as payment to his teacher, the four islands full of the seven jewels. This, however, is refused by the dharmabhāṇaka, who says that as not even one syllable (ekasyaḥ kāryaḥ api) can be paid for (na bhavati dakṣina), how can six. He tells him that, having become a bodhisattva, he (Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin) is an ārya and not a non-ārya and that he is converted (vaineyaśca). Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin offers him a very valuable string of pearls, which is also refused. Instead, he is told to take it to Śākyamuni. So, prostrating himself once again, Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin leaves his preceptor for the Jetavana vihāra, taking with him his
heart’s desire (labdhamanorathah). He prostrates himself before Śākyamuni and stands to one side.\textsuperscript{161}

Chapter Seven\textsuperscript{162}

Śākyamuni asks if he has achieved his aim. Sarvanīvaraṇaṇavishambhin replies that wisdom has been obtained (jñānaṃ saṁjñānte), whereupon seventy-seven families of buddhas assemble and begin to speak the following dhāraṇī: “Namaḥ Saptānāṃ Samyaksamābuddhakotiṇām Oṁ Cale Cule Cunye Svāhā,” the dhāraṇī known as “Spoken by seventy-seven families of completely perfect buddhas” (saptasaptatisamyaksamābuddhaḥkotiḥbhiruddkā nāma dhāraṇī).\textsuperscript{163}

The narrative abruptly returns to the tour of Avalokiteśvara’s marvelous body, the text stating simply that after leaving one hair pore there is another pore called “Sūryaprabha.” This is inhabited by numerous bodhisattvas, in a familiar landscape of fabulous mountains, trees, and lotus pools, together with a wish-fulfilling gem called “Sārada,” which endows bodhisattvas with all services (saranapakaraṇairupasthānāṁ). The bodhisattvas enter top floor apartments (kūṭāgārāṁ), bring to mind (anusmānti) the six-syllable formula and see (paśyanti) Avalokiteśvara. Having seen him (drṣṭvā), they know his “mind-brightness” (cittaprasādāṁ janayanti).\textsuperscript{164} Then, leaving the apartments, some walk about on promenades, while others go either to gardens made of precious jewels, or to lotus pools, or to mountains made of rubies. Once there, they sit down cross-legged with a straight back and focus their minds upon happiness (prāṇidhāya abhisukhāṁ smṛtimupasthāpya).\textsuperscript{165}

Leaving this pore, the next pore is called “Indrarājaṁ,” containing numerous irreversible bodhisattvas who inhabit a landscape of eighty thousand mountains made of gold and jewels, in the middle of which there is a wish-fulfilling jewel called “Padmāvabhāsa.” The bodhisattvas do not experience the suffering of saṁsāra and are not tainted by the kleśas of saṁsāra, their minds being all the time absorbed in nirvāṇa (nirvāṇacintā).\textsuperscript{166}

Thence to the pore named “Mahoṣadhīṁ,” inhabited by numerous bodhisattvas in whom has arisen the “first thought” (prathama-citītotpādikā). They inhabit a landscape of ninety-nine thousand mountains, each of which, individually, is made either of gold, or of silver, or of a jewel, and each of which contains eighty thousand resplendent and jewel-studded summits, upon which gandharvas make music. The bodhisattvas contemplate emptiness and signlessness (sānyatānimittam cintayanti)\textsuperscript{167} and bewail the sufferings of birth, old age and death, of being separated from what is dear, and of being born either in the Avīci hell or in the city of the pretas. They are then said, in exactly the same terms used to describe the bodhisattvas in the pore of Sārada, to sit cross-legged and to focus their minds upon happiness.\textsuperscript{168}
In the next pore, “Cittarāja,” pratyekabuddhas perform miracles of shining, heating, lightning, and raining (jvalanatapanavidotanavaraṇapratihāryāṇī kurvanti). There are a hundred thousand mountains made of the seven jewels, containing wish-granting trees. The pratyekabuddhas give teachings to one another on the sūtras and on other texts (sūtrageyavyakaraṇagathodanetivṛttakājātakāvaipulyaṅgat). ¹⁶⁹

Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin now enters the final pore, which is called “Dhvajāgra.” It is vast and contains eighty thousand bejewelled mountains and a variety of different kinds of marvelous trees, a level made of vajra and ninety thousand brilliantly decorated apartments, in which groups of tathāgatas are teaching Dharma (dharmaṃ deśayanti). They teach the six perfections to the people of Jambudvīpa, who thus see (paśyanti) the hair pores of Avalokiteśvara. This statement is immediately followed by the statement that there is a gathering in the vihāra at Jetavana of gods, nāgas, yakṣas and so on, Maheśvara and Nārāyanī, sons of gods and bodhisattvas. ¹⁷⁰

Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin then asks if there are any more pores to be met with. Íśkaṃmuṇi replies that the four oceans emerge from the right big toe of Avalokiteśvara (dakṣināṃ pādaṅgūṣṭham yatra te cāvāro mahāsamudrāḥ paribhramantī), but his knees are not immersed (na ca jānanyavagāhayanti). When the waters pour out from there, they fall into the mouth of the mare (vāvamukhe), ¹⁷¹ whereupon they extinguish the heap of ashes (tadā bhasmarāśimanugacchanti). Thus, the blessing (adhiṣṭhānaṃ) of Avalokiteśvara is experienced. Asked if there is another pore to be met with, Śākyamuni replies that there is not. ¹⁷²

Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin then asks if Avalokiteśvara is coming and is told that he is indeed coming to the great vihāra at Jetavana, in order to see, praise, and worship Śākyamuni (mama darśanāya vandanāya paryupāsanāya) and also to give a prediction to Maheśvara of his future enlightenment (vyākaraṇam-) in the Sahā world system. ¹⁷³

Next, Avalokiteśvara produces rays of multicolored light. These arrive in the Jetavana vihāra and circumambulate Śākyamuni three times. Many wonderful phenomena now manifest in the vihāra, such as fragrant trees and lotus pools. The light rays then proceed on to the Avīci hell, which they freeze over. ¹⁷⁴

Avalokiteśvara is then said to leave Sukhāvatī and to appear in the vihāra, where he prostrates himself before Śākyamuni and takes a seat to one side. In a voice which resembles the sound of a cuckoo (kalavinkarasvarabhinirghoṣena), Śākyamuni asks Avalokiteśvara where he has come from and if he has brought beings to maturity (kṛtaste sattvaparipākeh). “Just as the Lord has ordered,” replies Avalokiteśvara, “thus have I established the levels of my activity (evaṃ ca mayā karmabāhūṁmirmispādita).” The Buddha congratulates him. Then, Avalokiteśvara presents Śākyamuni with some lotus flowers
(padmāṇyupanāmayati). They are, the bodhisattva reports, sent by the tathāgata Amitābha, who asks that Śākyamuni be free from pain and disease, and have good health and enjoyment of the senses (prccchatyalpābdhatām ca alpātanākatām ca laghāthānātatām ca sukhasparsavihāratātām ca). Śākyamuni accepts the lotuses and places them on his left. 175

Maheśvara (maheśvaro devaputro) appears and prostrates himself at the feet of Śākyamuni and asks how he might receive a prediction of his future enlightenment (uṣṭakaraṇanirdeśasya). He is told to go to Avalokiteśvara, before whom he prostrates and praises (namo) with various epithets, including: “Maheśvara” (maheśvarāya); “you who holds a lotus” (padmādhārāya); “you who is seated on a lotus” (padmaśanāya); “you who is beloved of the lotus” (padmapriyāya); “you who holds a beautiful lotus” (śubhapadmahastāya), and “you who has the glory of the lotus” (padmaśriye). 176

Maheśvara stands quietly to one side and is asked why he does so by Avalokiteśvara. He replies by asking to be given a prediction of his future enlightenment (vyākaraṇa). Avalokiteśvara then says that he will be a tathāgata called “Bhasmeśvara.” 177

Umādevi now appears, prostrating herself before Avalokiteśvara, whom she addresses (namo) in similar terms: “Maheśvara” (maheśvarāya); “you who gives life” (prāņamdadāya); “you who rules the whole world” (prthivivaralo- canakarāya); “you who has the auspiciousness of a beautiful lotus” (śubhapadmaśriye); “you who turns the world” (parivṛtāya); “you who has set out for nirvāṇa” (nirvāṇabhūmisanprasthitāya); “you who is benevolent” (suchetanakarāya); “you who holds the Dharma” (dhrmadharāya). She then asks to be liberated from the disgusting state of womanhood (strābhāvajugu- psanāyāt) and from the suffering inherent in a body full of the impurities of the kali age (kalimalaparipūrṇagarbhaśaduhkhāt). Avalokiteśvara replies that she will be a tathāgata called “Umeśvara” and that her realm will be the right flank of the great Himalaya mountain (himavata-parvalarājasya). 178

Śākyamuni points out to Sarvanīvaraṇaviśkambhin that just as Avalokiteśvara has transformed Umādevi, so he brings all beings to complete enlightenment. This concludes the story (khyāta) called the description of Maheśvara (maheśvaranirvyūho). 179

Chapter Eight

Sarvanīvaraṇaviśkambhin rejoices in the fact that Avalokiteśvara has arrived and asks Śākyamuni to expound on the qualities of the great bodhisattva. This he does, in typical fashion, by means of similes demonstrating the incalculable enormity of Avalokiteśvara’s merit. 180

Śākyamuni then says that Avalokiteśvara is furnished with (samanvāgataḥ) hundreds of samādhis and proceeds to name thirty-seven of them. 181
Next, Śākyamuni says that, in a previous life as a bodhisattva called Dānaśūra, during the time of a tathāgata named “Krakucchanda,” he saw a “samādhi-contest” (samādhi-vigraha maya drṣṭaḥ) between Avalokiteśvara and Samantabhadra, made on the basis of blessedness and so on (bhadrādibhiḥ). The contest takes the form of Samantabhadra obtaining (samāpede) one specific samādhi and Avalokiteśvara another: seven pairs, or duels, are mentioned. Then, Samantabhadra displays (duddhāṭayati) his hair pores and Avalokiteśvara reveals his (apāvṛtoti), at which point Samantabhadra congratulates (sādhu sādhu) Avalokiteśvara on possessing such brilliancy (pratibhānāvan). Finally, Krakucchanda tells Dānaśūra that this is just a small part (alpam) of the brilliancy of Avalokiteśvara and that such brilliancy is not met with among the tathāgatas.¹⁸²

Sarvanīvaraṇaśīvākambhin now asks Śākyamuni to teach him the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra, so that he might be refreshed by the taste of the Dharma. Śākyamuni replies that those who hear the sūtra will no longer experience the obscurations produced by their previous actions. The sūtra liberates from all evil all those attached to evil, such as adulterers, butchers, those who have killed their mother and their father, those who have broken into stūpas (arhaddhātastāpabhedaḥ) and those who have developed evil thoughts in front of a tathāgata (tathāgatasayantike duṣṭacittarudhirotpādakāḥ).¹⁸³

Sarvanīvaraṇaśīvākambhin asks how he should view (kathām jānāmy-ahām) the sūtra. Śākyamuni replies that on the right flank of Mount Sumeru there are two pools (tṛthau), one pure and one impure (malanirmalau), created (parikalpitau) by seven tathāgatas and arranged (vikalpitau) by Śākyamuni himself. The accumulation of evil should be seen in the same way that a white garment becomes dark. The sūtra destroys all evil and makes everything spotlessly white, just as the rainy season gives a darker color to all the grass, bushes, herbs, and trees, and just as the nāga king Śatamukha, emerging from his realm, destroys all this plant life. Happy are they who hear the sūtra. They should not be spoken of as ordinary men (prthajāna), but should be seen as like irreversible bodhisattvas (avaivartikā bodhisattvā iva draṣṭavyāḥ). When they die, twelve tathāgatas will console them, telling them to have no fear, on account of having heard the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra. They will be told that they will no longer wander in saṃsāra, experience birth, old age and death, or separation from what is dear. They will go, the tathāgatas will say, to Sukhāvatī, where they will listen unceasingly to the Dharma of Amitābha. They will have a happy death (sukhamaraṇaḥ). Then, Avalokiteśvara prostrates himself before Śākyamuni and stands to one side. Sarvanīvaraṇaśīvākambhin stands up, together with a gathering of all the gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras, mahoragas, humans, and nonhumans.¹⁸⁴

The venerable Ānanda now appears, asking to be given a teaching on monastic moral conduct (ṣikṣāsaṃvaram). Śākyamuni replies that those wish-
Annotated Précis of the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra

ing to be ordained (upasaṃpadabhāvam) should first of all go and look carefully at their cell (avāsaµ samyagavalokayitavyam) and pronounce it to be clean: free of any bones or filth. 185

Śākyamuni continues by saying that neither ordination nor “proposal” should be given by a mendicant of bad moral character (duḥṣlēna bhikṣunā nopasaṃpadādayitavyam / na ca jnaptirdatavya). 186 Why not? A cell should not be made by mendicants of bad moral character, let alone the “fourth proposal” (bhikṣavo duḥṣlēna bhikṣunā nānāvāsām na kartavyam, prageva jnapticaturtham). 187 They do not obey the rules (śāsanadakå). 188 These mendicants of bad moral character should not be given a cell among the moral and the venerable (duḥṣlēna bhikṣunā śālāvatām daksināyam madhye āvāso na datavyaḥ), but outside the vihāra (teśām bahirvihāre āvāso datavyaḥ). No Saṃgha food should be given them (saṃghalāpo na datavyaḥ). 189 They are neither worthy of the rank of the Saṃgha (na ca teśām saṃghikā bhūmimarhati), nor are there any genuine monks among them (na ca teśām kimcādībhikṣubhāvam saṃvidyate). 190

Śākyamuni says that such characters will only become worthy of offerings three hundred years after he has passed away as a tathāgata (tṛtye vargaśatatgate mamā parinirūtasya tathāgatasya tārādaksināyā bhavisyanti). 191 They who hold the title of householder in the vihāra (ye vihāre guhisaµjñām dhārayiyyanti), who are surrounded by sons and daughters (dārakadārikāparivṛtya bhavisyanti), who misuse their cells by filling them with high seats and comfortable beds (te saṃghikam maṃcapītham vamśikopabimbopadhānakaṃ sayanāsanaṃ asatparibhogena paribhokṣyante), who make excrement and urine on the customs of the Saṃgha (ye ca saṃghikopacāre uccāram prasrāvam kurvedi), 192 will be born as creatures in the filth of Vārāṇasi (te vārāṇasyaṃ mahānagaryāmuccāraprasravē gūḍhamṛttikodāre prāṇino jayante). 193 Those who misuse the teeth-cleaning wood (dantakāśṭhamasatparibhogena paribhūjyante) will be born among the creatures of the sea (kūrmaṇakaramatsyeṣu jayante). 194 Those who misuse the community rice and grain will be reborn in the city of the pretas, where they will endure various misfortunes and tortures. Those who misuse the community food and drink will be reborn hideously deformed in low-caste families (alpaśrutesu kuleṣu jayante). Those who misuse the rank of the Saṃgha (saṃghikām bhūmim), will be reborn in hell for twelve kalpas, where they will suffer terribly before eventually taking rebirth in Jambudvīpa as blind beggars (daridrā jātyandhāḥ). That, Śākyamuni concludes, is why the precepts are to be kept (tasmattē hyanindāṅguttārāṇi saṃghikāni vasmīṇi rakṣitavyāni). 195

Śākyamuni continues by saying that a monk should have three robes: one for while he is with the Saṃgha (saṃghasya viśvāsena saṃghaparibhogyāya), one for visiting dignitaries (rājakuladvāragamanāya) and one for going to the towns and villages (grāmanagaranigamapallīpatīnāsa). Those possessed of moral discipline, quality, and wisdom will hold and spread these
moral precepts (ye śīlavanto gūṇavantaḥ prajñāvantastairbhikṣava imāni śikṣāpadāni mayā prajñāptāni dhārayitavyāni). Misconduct should never be indulged in. That which relates to the community (śāṅghikam vastu) is like a vase of fire (agnīghatopamam), a poison (viṣopamam), a vajra (vajropamam), a burden (bharopamam). It is possible to make an antidote to poison, but it is not possible to make an antidote to misuse of that which relates to the community (viṣasya pratīkāram kartum śakyate, na tu śāṅghikasya vastunāḥ pratīkāram kartum śakyate).

Ānanda then tells Śākyamuni that those mendicants who uphold the moral precepts (ājñāptāni bhagavata śikṣāpadāni) will arrive at forbearance and liberation (pratimokṣasaṃvarasaṃvṛtā), be inclined towards the vinaya and the kośa (vinayābhimukhā bhavanti / kośābhimukhā bhavanti), and be prosperous and accomplished (śīkṣākuśala bhavanti / tāṇi ca bhagavataḥ śīkṣāpadāni bhavanti). Then Ānanda prostrates himself before Śākyamuni. The great śrāvakas go to their respective buddhafields and all the gods, nāgas, yaksas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras, and men disappear. All the assembly rejoices in what Śākyamuni has said. This is said to conclude the Maheśvara, the display of the dhāraṇīs, the jewel-king of Mahāyāna sūtras, the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra (-ratnarājasya dhāraṇīvyūhaḥ maheśvaraḥ samāptaḥ).
NOTES

Introduction


For a recent survey of the various Western treatments of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ see the chapter entitled “The Spell,” in Prisoners of Shangri La, Tibetan Buddhism and the West, by Donald S. Lopez (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

2. Robert Ekvall has described the various uses of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ in Tibetan society in the course of a discussion of chos 'don, or “express verbalized religion.” He writes, at one point: “When a Tibetan takes a vow of silence for a period of time, the only utterance permitted is the verbalization of religion; therefore, in theory he is bound to the utterance of prayers alone. In such a case, the mantra Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ may serve many conversational needs. The tent wife who is bound by a vow of silence for the day may shout it in your ear to call attention to the fact that she waits to fill your tea bowl, and I have seen many a trespassing dog rise and depart with speed when told Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ.” See Robert Ekvall, Religious Observances in Tibet: Pattern and Function (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 98–149.


5. For instance, Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ is used as a means of preliminary purification in the practice, often performed early in the morning, of making an offering of sang, or incense.

6. A text attributed to the late-eleventh- and early-twelfth-century Tibetan teacher Ma cīg Lab kyi sgron ma says: “...infants learn to recite the six-syllable (mantra) at the very same time that they are beginning to speak...” Karma Chags med, Thugs rje chen po, translated in Matthew Kapstein, “Remarks on the Maṇi bKa’ bum and the Cult of Avalokiteśvara in Tibet,” in Tibetan Buddhism, Reason and Revelation, Steven D. Goodman and Ronald M. Davidson eds. (Albany: State University of New York, 1992), p. 85.

Thang stong rgyal po, the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Tibetan yogin who was highly influential in the propagation of the use of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ by his countrymen, is said, as a youth, to have taught a group of traders to recite the mantra

7. This point is particularly well illustrated in a story about the thirteenth-century rNying ma guru Chos kyi dbang phyug, who, when asked by a disciple whether he had achieved siddhi, or supernatural power, through his meditations, replied: “I have reached the real point of their practical application, but because I devote myself to reciting the mantra Ōṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ I have no leisure to practise them.” The guru, though capable of performing magic, considered it more important to recite the six-syllable mantra. See Dudjom (bDud ’joms) Rinpoche, The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism (Boston: Wisdom, 1991), p. 767.

8. In the 'Drol ba zang mo, a play depicting the struggle to establish Buddhism within the Tibetan cultural realm that is performed at the Mani Rim ‘Dus festival held at Tengboche monastery in Nepal, Ōṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ is treated as if it is the essence of Buddhist practice. For instance: “The basis of religion is reciting the six-syllable prayer.” Regions which have not been converted to Buddhism are described as follows: “They did not know how to pronounce the magic formula of six syllables.” Luther G. Jerstad, trans., Mani Rimdu: Sherpa Dance Drama (Washington: University of Washington Press, 1969), pp. 22 and 24.

See also Dilgo Khyentse, The Heart Treasure of the Enlightened Ones (Boston: Shambhala, 1992), for a presentation of Ōṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ as the distilled essence of the complete Buddhist path.

9. I have counted ten of these sādhana texts listed in the index of the Peking bsTan ’gyur.

10. One of the most famous of these is the 'Gro don mkha’ ma, “For All Beings Throughout Space,” composed by Thang stong rgyal po. See Janet Gyatso, “An Avalokiteśvara Sādhana,” in Religions of Tibet in Practice, Donald S. Lopez, ed. (NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 266–270.


12. See the chapter entitled “The Great Festival of the Mani Prayer” (maṇi rgya bzhag), in Journey Among the Tibetan Nomads, by Namkhai Norbu (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1997), for an account of this collective practice as performed by Tibetan nomad communities.

See also Lama Thubten Zopa, Teachings from the Mani Retreat (Weston: Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive, 2001), for teachings given to a group of western Buddhists engaged in this kind of practice.

13. Hereafter, referred to simply as “Vaidya,” together with the page and line number of each reference.

14. Hereafter, referred to simply as “Peking,” with the number of the Tibetan page and line number (rather than the number of the page of the bound photocopied edition published by the Suzuki Research Foundation, Tokyo, 1962).
15. Vaidya’s edition cannot be regarded as “definitive.” See the discussion of this issue in chapter 1.

Chapter 1: Background to the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra


2. The prose version in Vaidya’s edition is divided up into two sections of sixteen and eight chapters.


4. Nanjio 168 and 169, or Taisho 461 and 462, respectively.

5. Vaidya, p. 258, l. 1. Majumder “The Kāraṇḍavyūha,” p. 294 also gives Āryāvalokiteśvaraguṇakāraṇḍavyūha as the full title of the verse text.


7. That is, the Sarvatathāgatādhisthānasattvalokanabuddhakṣetrasan-darśanavyūha Sūtra and the Māñjuśrībudhakṣetraṇugṛṇavyūha Sūtra.


The term za ma tog seems also to have been used by the Tibetans to refer to the large, round object often seen, in Tibetan religious painting, sitting beside mahāsiddhas and vidyādharas, such as dGa’ rab rDorje. See for instance, Namkhai Norbu, *The Dzogchen Ritual Practices* (London: Kailash Editions, 1991), p. xi: “By his [dGa’ rab rDorje’s] left side is a spherical object known as a za ma tok [sic]. This was a yogi-practitioner’s
personal kit container in which he kept his ritual implements, sacred relics, medicine, and the like.”

See, for instance, Aśṭasāhasrikā, 57 ff. (Conze, The Perfection of Wisdom, p. 105f.) for an example of the way in which the Prajñāpāramitā (implicitly, in book form) is said to be copied and worshipped in the same way.


18. As Tucci points out, although the verse sūtra contains four hundred and fifteen of the nine hundred and thirteen verses of the Bodhicaryāvatāra, it contains no trace of the tenth chapter, an omission which would support the hypothesis that this chapter was not actually written by Śāntideva and was a later addition. See Tucci, “La Redazione,” p. 616.


20. Ibid., p. 609.


22. Maurice Winternitz writes that the work “is not really a Purāṇa, but a Mahātmya.” See Maurice Winternitz, A History of Indian Literature (Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press, 1933), II: 375f.


24. I am relying, here, on Burnouf’s summary of the verse sūtra. See Burnouf, L’Introduction, p. 198.


26. This supercedes Winternitz’s judgment that the date of these sixteenth century manuscripts also represents the time of the work’s original creation. See Winternitz, A History of Indian Literature, II: 376.

27. See Gellner, Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest, p. 21.


30. See F. Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953) I: xxv. The third class is one in which Middle-Indic or Prakritic forms have almost all been transposed into Sanskrit, leaving a residue of Prakritic grammatical peculiarities, as well as a distinctively Buddhist vocabulary. Other texts in this category include: *Mulasarvastivada Vinaya, Divyavadana, Avadana Sataka*, *Pratimoksastra* of the Sarvastivadins, *Arya Manjusrimalakalpa*, *Bodhisattvabhumī, Aṣṭasahasrika Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Satasahasrika Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Mahāmāyūrti, Bhikṣūnīkarmavacanā, Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, Vajracchedikā, Jatakamāla*.


33. See N. Dutt, *Gilgit Manuscripts* (Calcutta: Calcutta Oriental Press, 1939) I: 42. “The script used in the manuscripts is mostly Upright Gupta of a date little later than those used in the manuscript remains found in Eastern Turkestan and similar to the script found in the Bower manuscript. The script of the Bower manuscript is assigned to the sixth century A.C., and so the Gilgit manuscript may also be dated in the sixth or at the latest in the seventh century A.D.”


39. He also writes that it seems reasonable that the *Suvarṇāprabhāsa* should belong to the tantras. He presents the *Manjusrīmūlatantra* as “the chief tantra of the Master of the Family,” and the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasamgraha* as “the fundamental one of all the Yoga Tantras.” See F. D. Lessing and A. Wayman, *mKhas-grub-rje’s Fundamentals of the Buddhist Tantras* (The Hague/Paris: Mouton, 1978), pp. 107ff and p. 215.

41. N. Dutt, “Religion and Philosophy,” p. 263.


Mention of missionaries from Li, or Khotan, is found in The Blue Annals of Gos Lo tsa ba and the Chos ’byung rin po che’i gter mdzod of kLong chen rab ’byams.

46. Tarthang Tulku, for instance, argues that Lha tho tho ri is most likely to have been born in 374 C.E. See Tarthang Tulku, Ancient Tibet, p. 166f.


47. See Vaidya, p. 282, l. 8. This may, of course, refer to an actual historical event. I have, however, been unable to identify any such occurrence.


49. Vaidya, p. 298, ll. 23, and 31.


51. See, particularly, the “samādhi-contest” (samādhivigrahaḥ) between Avalokiteśvara and Samantabhadra (Vaidya, p. 306, ll. 1–18). The descriptions of Avalokiteśvara’s body (Vaidya, pp. 288, l. 18–292, l. 8 and pp. 301, l. 15–303, l. 2), which contains worlds in its hair pores, is also clearly indebted to the conception of Samantabhadra’s body found in the Avatāṃsaka Sūtra. See Thomas Cleary, trans., The Flower Ornament Scripture, A Translation of the Avatāṃsaka Sūtra, (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1993), p. 1510.

52. See Paul Williams, Mahāyāna Buddhism, (London: Routledge, 1989) p. 121: “The original texts translated as the Avatāṃsaka Sūtra were brought to China from Khotan, in Central Asia. The texts refer to China and Kashgar, so it is likely that compilation and even authorship of at least some portions of the comprehensive work took place within the Indic cultural sphere of Central Asia.”

53. The Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra does not, however, appear to be among those Mahāyāna works that have so far been found, mainly in fragmentary form, at Khotan. See R. E. Emmerick, A Guide to the Literature of Khotan (Tokyo: Studia Philologica
Buddhica, Occasional Paper Series III, 1979), pp. 15 ff. The text may, however, as we shall show in the course of this thesis, be linked to some of the works that seem to have been most widely represented at Khotan: for instance, the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra, the Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra and the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras. Also, in the retelling of the jātaka story of Simhala and the man-eating rākṣasas, the Kāraṇḍavyūha displays one of the characteristics of the Khotanese literature, “a continuing interest in the quasi-historical life of Sākyamuni Buddha and the stories of his previous rebirths.” See Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, p. 336 f.

54. See, for instance, Snellgrove, Ibid., p. 439f.


See also Burnouf, 1844, p. 196: “Parmi les traités que je viens de désigner, il en est deux auxquels le titre de sūtra n’a vraisemblablement été appliqué qu’après coup, ou, ce qui revient au même, qui, malgré leur titre de Mahāyāna Sūtra, ou sūtra servant de grand véhicule, ne peuvent prétendre à être classés au nombre des sūtras primitifs, ni même des sūtras développés.”

59. Régamey, “Motifs Vichnouites,” p. 418f.: “Ces caractéristiques du contenu, de même que l’état corrompu de la langue dont certaines tournures syntaxiques font déjà penser aux structures néo-indiennes, étaient des raisons valables pour assigner à ce texte une date tardive, au moins celle du IXe siècle.”

60. Taisho 1050 and Nanjio 782. T’ien Si Tsai was a Kashmiri who left the great Buddhist university of Nālandā for China in 980. The precise date of the translation of the sūtra is given in a catalogue of Buddhist texts translated into Chinese between 982 c.e. and 1011 c.e. See Y. Imaeda, “Note Prélminaire sur la Formule Oṃ Maṭi Padme Hūṃ dans les Manuscrits Tibétains de Touen-Houang,” in Contributions aux Études sur Touen-Houang (Genève-Paris: Libraire Droz, 1979), p. 71.

61. See M. Lalou, “A Tun-huang Prelude,” p. 400. Lalou refers to P. Pelliot, T’oung Pao, vol. 30, 1934, p. 174 and a reference in Bibliographie Bouddhique, 6, no. 273, whose judgment about the late date of the formula is probably based on the date of the Chinese translation of the Kāraṇḍavyūha. Lalou’s article concerns a Tun Huang
text called the ‘gShin lam bstan ba,’ or ‘Teaching on the Path of the Dead,’ which, like the text discussed by Imaeda, describes how a dead person may be prevented from taking an unfortunate rebirth. One of the striking features of this text is that Avalokiteśvara, who is said to be able to save the dead person from a great hell, is invoked not by the formula Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ, but by Oṃ hri hung pad ma pri ya sva ḍa. The text also includes a shortened version of the Bālahajātaka, a long version of which is also found in the Kāraṇḍavyūha, leading Lalou, on the basis of her belief in the late date of the sūtra, to dub the gShin lam bstan ba, “A Tun-huang Prelude to the Kāraṇḍavyūha.”


64. I am grateful to Burkhard Quessel, Curator of the Tibetan Collections at the British Library, for drawing my attention to this article.

65. See bibliography for detailed references to these books and articles.


67. See Régamey, “Motifs Vichnouites,” p. 418. “La composition du Kāraṇḍavyūha est très incohérente, même dans la rédaction des détails. La langue dans laquelle ce texte est rédigé, sans être ce qu'on appelle le ‘sanskrit hybride,’ est extrêmement incorrecte, dépassant par ses incongruités grammaticales et syntaxiques même la langue des Avadāna.”

Also, Burnouf, L’Introduction à l’Histoire, p. 197: “D’ailleurs, le manuscrit du Kāraṇḍa en prose est si incorrect, qu’il m’aurait été beaucoup plus difficile d’en donner un extrait parfaitement exact, qu’il ne me le serait de traduire intégralement le poème.”


69. Ibid., p. 511.

70. Ibid., p. 511.

71. Ibid., p. 511.

72. See, Ibid., p. 513, n. 1. According to p. 230 of Cecil Bendall’s, Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts in the British Museum (London: Longmans, 1902), Sāmasrami’s edition is based on a palm leaf manuscript (No. 542 = Or. 3345) of the India Office Library, dated Newār 316 (1196 C.E.)

73. See Régamey, “Lexicological Gleanings,” p. 1. Régamey was preparing a critical edition of the text based on Nepalese manuscripts dated from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries.


75. Régamey gave this translation high praise. See Régamey, “Le Pseudo-Hapax ratikara et la Lampe qui Rit dan le ‘Sūtra des Ogresses’ Bouddhique,” Études
Notes 163


76. Mette, “Remarks on the Tradition of the Kārandavyūha,” p. 514. Régamey remarks that the first Gilgit text is the most fantastical and incoherent of any manuscript known to him and that it is extremely carelessly edited with regard to grammar and spelling. See Régamey, “Motifs Vichnouites,” p. 418 and Régamey, “Le Pseudo-Hapax,” p. 183.

77. See Adelheid Mette, Die Gilgitfragmente, p. 87.

Chapter 2: Purānic Influence on the Kārandavyūha

1. A fuller discussion of the place of this couplet in the Skanda Purāṇa occurs later in this chapter.

2. Vaidya, p. 265, l. 6.

3. Vaidya, p. 265, l. 7f.


5. See Ibid., p. 432: “Il prouve que pour les textes dans le genre du Kārandavyūha ces sources sont à chercher avant tout dans la vaste littérature des Purāṇa.”


7. Ibid., p. 90.

8. Ibid., p. 90.

9. Ibid., p. 90.

10. Ibid., p. 91.


The Origins of Oṃ Mani padme Hūṃ

15. The only Sukuṇḍala I am aware of is one of the one hundred sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra listed in the Mahābhārata. See P. Lal, trans., The Mahābhārata (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1969), 12: 32.

16. Vaidya, p. 280, l. 29; Peking, p. 244b, l. 6. My rendering of the song of praise is quite free. The Sanskrit (Vaidya, p. 280, ll. 28 and 29) reads: aho guṇamayaṃ kṣetram sarvadośavivarjitaṃ / adyaiva vāpitam bijaṃ adyaiva phalaśampadām /


19. Ibid., p. 132


25. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, VIII. 22. 9–11.


29. Skanda Purāṇa, I. i. 18. 69–73. One ghaṭikā is said to be equivalent in duration to twenty-four minutes.

30. Skanda Purāṇa, I. i. 18. 143.


32. Skanda Purāṇa, I. i. 19. 63.


34. Vaidya, p. 271, ll. 20–24.


37. Vaidya, p. 271, l. 31–p. 272, l. 23.

39. Vaidya, p. 275, ll. 12–18.
40. Vaidya, p. 275, ll. 23–27.
41. Vaidya, p. 272, l. 28.
42. Vaidya, p. 272, l. 30.
43. Vaidya, p. 274, l. 31.
44. Vaidya, p. 274, l. 32.
45. Vaidya, p. 275, l. 1.
46. Vaidya, p. 275, l. 9f.
48. Ibid., p. 237. Rocher refers to a manuscript, written in Gupta script, in the Durbar library in Kathmandu.
51. *Skanda Purāṇa*, I. i. 32. 62f.
52. *Skanda Purāṇa*, I. i. 6. 34–35.
54. Vaidya, p. 273, l. 28f.
56. Ibid., p. 425.
59. Vaidya, p. 265, l. 4ff.
61. Vaidya, p. 303, l. 32f.
62. See Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, p. 140. To be absolutely precise, Śiva is called “Bhasmeśvaranirghoṣa,” or “Soundless Lord of Ashes” in the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha*.

Vaidya, p. 304, l. 8 f.
63. Vaidya, p. 304, l. 16f.
64. Vaidya, p. 275, l. 23ff.
66. Vaidya, p. 281, l. 27f.
68. Vaidya, p. 281, l. 31f.
69. Vaidya, p. 273, l. 28.
70. Śiva Purāṇa, Rudrasaṅhitā, Section V, introduction to ch. 45.
72. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, VIII. 18. 3.
75. Vaidya, p. 258, l. 19.
76. Vaidya, p. 265, l. 1ff.
77. Vaidya, p. 268, l. 21f.
78. Vaidya, p. 299, l. 1f.
79. Vaidya, p. 262, l. 23f. See also Régamey, “Motifs Vichnouites,” p. 426f.
80. Skanda Purāṇa, I. i. 18. 130.
81. Skanda Purāṇa, I. i. 19. 3ff.
84. See Gonda, Viṣṇuism and Śāivism, p. 101f. He cites the Rāmottaratāpanīya Upaniṣad, l. 4.
Chapter 3: Avalokiteśvara as the Buddhist Īśvara

1. As Gonda writes: “It was the term īśvara which was preferred when the concept of the personal God had arisen.” See Gonda, “The Concept of a personal God in ancient Indian religious thought,” *Selected Studies* (1968; reprint, Leiden: Brill, 1975), p. 7.


4. *Bhagavadgītā*, iv, 6. All Sanskrit quotations from the *Bhagavadgītā* are taken from the edition edited by Christopher Chapple and translated by Winthrop Sargeant, published by the State University of New York, 1984. The English translation is that of W. J. Johnson, Ibid.

5. *Bhagavadgītā*, xv, 8.


7. *Śiva Purāṇa, Rudrasamhitā*, Section I, ch. 4, l. 39f.

8. *Līṅga Purāṇa*, Part I, ch. 85, l. 13. See the English translation produced by a board of scholars and edited by Professor J. L. Shastri (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1973). The text has been dated to between the fifth and eleventh century C.E. See Rocher, *The Purāṇas*, p. 187f. It is worth recalling the observation, made in the last chapter, that the purāṇas are composite works and that individual sections of a text may be much earlier in origin than the date of the completed text.

9. Vaidya, p. 262, l. 29f.

10. Vaidya, p. 304, l. 2ff.


14. See, for instance, *Śiva Purāṇa, Rudrasamhitā*, Section V, introduction to ch. 49.


16. See, for instance, *Bhagavadgītā*, x, 12, and 15; xi, 18, and 38.


23. Ṛgveda, x, 90, 1.

24. Kūrma Purāṇa, II. 5. 8. The text has been dated to around the eighth century C.E. See Rocher, The Purāṇas, p. 186.


27. Vaidya, p. 290, l. 14; Peking, 253a, l. 5f.: lag pa brgya stong pa / mig bye ba brgya stong pa / One koṭi is 10 million or, in Indian parlance, a crore.


29. Vaidya, p. 290, l. 15.

30. In the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, for instance, Rudra (or Śiva) is said to have been born from the forehead of Brahmā, who was frowning at the indifference displayed towards his creation by his sons, Sanandana and others. Rudra is then said to have divided himself into a male and a female form, and the male form is, finally, said to have divided, once again, into eleven bodies.


32. For instance, Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, p. 140, writes: “...Śiva, as lord of yogins, frequents cemeteries as a naked ascetic, covered in matted hair and besmeared with ashes.”


37. Taisho 1060; Nanjio 320; Korean Tripitāka 294.

38. Taisho 1064 and 1113B. Neither version is cataloged in either the Nanjio or the Korean Tripitāka.

39. Taisho 1061; Korean Tripitāka 1270. It is not found in the Nanjio.


41. Chandra, *The Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara*, p. 133. This version of the hymn is used, to this day, as one of the three basic texts for recitation in the Zen Buddhist monasteries of China, Korea and Japan. See Chandra, Ibid., p. 92.

42. Śiva is said to have deliberately swallowed some poison that appeared while the gods, in order to obtain ambrosia, were churning the ocean of milk. His throat turned blue when his consort Pārvati put her hands around his neck in order to prevent the poison reaching his stomach. See T. A. G. Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography* (1914; reprint, Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1971) II: 48.


44. Ibid., 1988, p. 274. He writes: “The attributes in the hymns make it clear that Hari-Hara is the subject of veneration.”

45. Vaidya, p. 303, l. 4f.

46. Vaidya, p. 303, l. 5.

47. Vaidya, p. 303, l. 5f.


49. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 915. He, however, gives *vaḍava* as a corruption of *vaḍaba*, meaning “mare.” He also writes that *vaḍabāmukha* is synonymous with *vaḍabāgni*, the fire of the mare, a compound which combines the sense of the opening of the mouth and the subterranean fire lying below.


51. Vaidya, p. 262, ll. 5 and 7–9.


54. Vaidya p. 265, l. 3f.
55. Vaidya, p. 268, ll. 18f. and 31f.

56. This figure is sometimes regarded as a nāga king and sometimes as a lord of the yakṣas, guardian of the north. He is also sometimes confused with Vaiśravana [sic], the lord of wealth. See F. Edgerton, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, II: 513.

57. Vaidya, p. 268, l. 15–p. 269, l. 3.

58. Vaidya, p. 265, ll. 3–5.

There is here, surely, an echo of the age-old Buddhist argument against the doctrine of the primordial creator god as found, for instance, in the Brahmajāla Sutta. See, for instance, Dīgha Nikāya, ed. T. W. Rhys Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter (London: Pali Text Society, 1890), I: 17f. I am grateful to Dr. Rupert Gethin for pointing this out to me.

Régamey provides an analysis of the peculiar grammar of the expression ādideva ākhyāyase sraṣṭāraṃ kartāram in Régamey, “Motifs Vichnouites,” p. 428, n. 44.

59. Ibid., p. 430.

60. The doctrine of a kind of Buddhist creator is also evident, for instance, in a Tibetan work, the Kun byed rgyal poʻi mdo, or “The Sūtra of the All-Creating Sovereign,” the main scriptural source of the sans sde, or “mind class,” teachings of the rdzogs chen system of Tibetan Buddhism. Here, the creator is the mind. According to Tibetan tradition the text was translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan in the eighth century, though no Sanskrit edition is extant. Like the Kāraṇḍavyūha, the Kun byed rgyal poʻi mdo also straddles the divide between sūtra and tantra: though it declares itself to be a sūtra (mdo) in its title, it refers to its own sections as tantras and is usually referred to as a tantra by Tibetans. According to Eva K. Neumaier-Dargyay, the text was influenced by the doctrines of Kashmiri Śaivism. John Reynolds, however, while admitting that there is certain plausibility to this point of view, wants to resist it. He also argues against a theist understanding of the text.


61. Śiva Purāṇa, Rudrasamhitā, i, 4, 33.

62. Skanda Purāṇa, III, iii, 1, 14, p. 244.

63. Bhagavadgītā, x, 20.

64. Vaidya, p. 290, ll. 15–17.

65. See Williams, Mahāyāna Buddhism, p. 98.

66. Vaidya, p. 264, l. 21f.

67. Vaidya, p. 267, l. 28f.

68. Vaidya, p. 269, l. 5–7 and p. 283, l. 17.


71. Vaidya, p. 293, l. 25.


74. See Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism*, p. 120.


77. Ibid., p. 1510. Vaidya, 1960a, p. 427, l. 22f.

78. Vaidya, p. 290, l. 17 f.

79. Vaidya, p. 306, l. 4f.

80. Vaidya, p. 305, l. 17f.


82. Vaidya, p. 306, ll. 6–14.


84. Vaidya, p. 306, l. 15f.


86. See Gomez, *The Land of Bliss*, p. 97f., and 193.

87. The position of this sūtra in our argument is somewhat problematic, as though the work is said to have been translated into Chinese by Kālayāśas towards the beginning of the fifth century, no Sanskrit original survives, the reason being, it has been suggested, that no Sanskrit text ever existed, the sūtra being a Chinese composition originating in Central Asia or China itself. But, without wishing to enter into this particular argument, it is surely reasonable to suppose, even were the latter hypothesis to be true, that the doctrinal details of the text were, at the very least, influenced by the Indian Mahāyāna, there being a strong possibility that they may even be a faithful record of practices and beliefs that were common in India.


I have used the English translation of the sūtra, entitled *The Sūtra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life*, produced by the Ryukoku University Translation Centre, Kyoto, under the direction of Meiji Yamada, 1984.

88. Amitābha means “Endless Light,” and Amitāyus “Endless Life.” The two names of the Buddha are discussed in the longer *Sukhāvatvyāha Sūtra*. See Gomez, *The Land
of Bliss, p. 83. “And, Ānanda, the measure of the life span of the Blessed Amitābha the Tathāgata is immeasurable. . . . Therefore that tathāgata is called ‘Amitāyus.’ ”


90. “Amida” is a transcription of the Japanese rendering of “Amitābha” or perhaps even a simpler form such as “Amita.”

91. Yamada, Sūtra of Contemplation, p. 77.


95. Cleary, Flower Ornament Scripture, p. 1275; Vaidya, 1960a, p. 159, l. 10f.: . . . sarvajagatsaṅgrahaviṣayaṃ mahāmaitrīmahākaraṇāmukhyotatam nāma . . . /

96. Cleary, Flower Ornament Scripture, p. 1276; Vaidya, 1960a, p. 160, l. 9: . . . mahākaraṇāmukhyāvilambam nāma . . . /

97. Ibid., p. 1277; Vaidya, 1960a, p. 160, l. 32f.: etamaham kulaputra mahākaraṇāmukhyāvilambasya bodhisattvacaryāmukhasya labhī /

98. Vaidya, p. 263, l. 23f. and p. 278, l. 2.


100. Vaidya, p. 293, l. 7.

101. Vaidya, p. 300, l. 25f.

102. Vaidya, p. 268, l. 18–p. 269, l. 2.

103. Cleary, Flower Ornament Scripture, p. 1276.

104. I am following the scheme of chapters of the Sanskrit version of the sūtra reproduced by Kern, Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra; and P. L. Vaidya, ed., Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1960). The chapter on Devadatta was added, as a new twelfth chapter, to the Chinese translation of the sūtra made by Kumārajīva in 406 C.E., making the chapter on Avalokiteśvara the twenty-fifth in most editions of the Chinese version of the sūtra.

105. See Williams, Mahāyāna Buddhism, p. 142.


108. Vaidya, p. 268, l. 5f.


111. Ibid., p. 410.

112. See Mayer, *A Scripture of the Ancient Tantra Collection*, p. 115. The Hindu deity Khaṇḍobā, he writes, takes on the accessories of Malla and Maṇi, and the Buddhist *herukas* take on the *kāpālika* apparatus of Rudra or Bhairava.


116. The details of the above two paragraphs are taken from Chandra, *The Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara*, pp. 18–23.

117. See Ibid., p. 22f.


119. Ibid., part I, p. 128, n. 28.

120. See James Legge, trans., *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms* (1886; reprint, New York: Dover, 1965), pp. 46 and 112. The bodhisattva’s name appears as *Kwan-she-yin* in Legge’s transliteration scheme.


124. Ibid., p. 103.


126. de Mallman, *Introduction à l’Étude*, p. 67. Renou’s evidence took the form of a verbal communication to de Mallman.

127. Ibid., p. 68. She refers to L. de la Vallée Poussin in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (Edinburgh—New York: 1909), p. 257, n. 4, where he writes: “Parijita (*Mahāvyutpatti*, 126, 63) seems quite clearly to mean *parijitavān*, and it is quite possible that there are other examples.”


131. Vaidya, p. 307, l. 6f.


See also Vaidya, p. 266, ll. 21–27.


136. Chandra, *The Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara*, p. 22. Many widely used folk etymologies of Sanskrit words are based on readings of the words that are, strictly speaking, grammatically incorrect, such as the understanding of the word *mantra* as something which “saves” (from *trā-, to save, or rescue) whoever “meditates” on it (from *man-, to think, or meditate). See Jan Gonda, “The Indian Mantra,” in *Selected Studies*, by Jan Gonda (1963; reprint, Leiden: Brill, 1975), p. 252.


The bodhisattva is often referred to in Tibetan texts as *sPyan ras gzigs dBang phyug*, the second part of the expression being a translation of *tīvara*.


142. The bodhisattva is, it appears, specifically called a *lokeśvara* in the twenty-fourth chapter of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, where he is referred to, at one point, as: *lokeśvara rāja nāyako*. See Vaidya, ed., *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, p. 256; l. 17.

143. These painting are probably of eighteenth century origin. Bhattacharyya, for instance, writes: “The painting appears to be at least two hundred years old . . .” Texts describing an arrangement of one hundred and eight forms of Avalokiteśvara
(slightly different from the one depicted in the Macchandar Vahal temple) were, however, translated into Chinese in 985 C.E. and into Tibetan, anonymously, at an unknown date.


144. Among the thirty-three forms of Kuan-yin, Nilakantha Kuan-yin preserves the relationship between the bodhisattva and Šiva. See Chandra, *The Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara*, p. 45, and Piyasilo, *Avalokiteśvara: Origin, Manifestations and Meanings* (Malaysia: Petaling Jaya, 1991), pp. 44–47, and Piyasilo, *Avalokiteśvara*, ch. 6. The absorption of such deities into the figure of Kuan-yin may account, at least in part, for the way in which the bodhisattva is often depicted, in the Far East, as a rather androgynous, asexual figure and is usually, in fact, conceived of as female.


According to Piyasilo, there are a number of accepted variations of her name: Cundi, Cundra, Candra, Canda, Cunda, Cunda. Lokesh Chandra refers to her as Cundi. Her popularity is attested to by the three separate Chinese translations of her extended *dharāṇī* made at the end of the seventh and beginning of the eighth centuries. The extended *dharāṇī* was translated by Divakara around 685 C.E. (Nanjio 344, Taisho 20, 185), by Vajrabodhi around 723 C.E. (Nanjio 345, Taisho 20, 173), and by Amoghavajra (Nanjio 346, Taisho, 20, 78). See Piyasilo, *Avalokiteśvara*, p. 54.

146. See Vaidya, p. 301, ll. 12–14

Piyasilo writes: “The first mention of Cunda Avalokiteśvara is in the Kāraṇḍavyūha, where we find her mantra: ‘Oṃ cale cule cunde svāhā.’” See *Avalokiteśvara*, Piyasilo, p. 54.

Vaidya’s Sanskrit edition seems to contain a misprint. There, the formula appears as: Oṃ Cale Cule Cunye Svāhā. The Peking edition of the Tibetan text, however, reads: oṃ tsa le tsu le tsun de svāhā. This corresponds to the version given by Piyasilo: Oṃ Cale Cule Cunde Svāhā.

Chapter 4: Oṃ Mani曷pade Hūṃ and Namaḥ Śivāya


3. See, for instance, Vaidya, p. 264, l. 24; p. 265, l. 11; p. 275, l. 24, and p. 304, l. 9 and 17, where the term *vidyācaraṇa­samparṇa* is applied, respectively, to the *tathāgatas* Vipaśyin, Śikhin, Śri (Bali’s future identity as a *tathāgata*), Bhasmeśvara (Maheśvara’s future identify as a *tathāgata*) and Umeśvara (Umādevī’s future identity as a *tathāgata*).
The epithet is also found throughout the Nikāyas. See, for instance, *Dīgha Nikāya*, vol. I, p. 49. I am grateful to Dr. Rupert Gethin for pointing this latter point out to me.

4. See, Vaidya, p. 263, l. 10, where Yama addresses Avalokiteśvara in this way.


7. Ibid., 73; Ibid., p. 109.

8. See Conze, *The Short Prajñāpāramitā Texts*, p. 141. The *vidyā* is often prefixed by the additional syllable *Om*.

9. See, for instance, the discussion of this issue by Alex Wayman in “The Significance of Mantras, from the Veda down to Buddhist tantric practice,” in A. Wayman, *Buddhist Insight* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984).


11. Vaidya, p. 292, l. 16f.


13. Vaidya, p. 298, l. 3f.


15. Respectively, Vaidya, p. 297, l. 3 and p. 300, l. 23.


17. Vaidya, p. 260, l. 32.


23. Vaidya, p. 275, l. 26f.

24. This is the first chapter of the third section, the *Brāhmottara Khanda*, of book three, the *Brāhma Khaṇḍa*.

25. Chapter 17 of the *Vidyēśvara Samhītā* near the beginning of the purāṇa.

26. Chapters 12–14 in the second section of the *Vāyavyasamhitā*, near the end of the purāṇa.

27. Chapter 85 of the first part of the purāṇa.


30. *Skanda Purâṇa*, III, iii, 1, 8f.
34. *Skanda Purâṇa*, III, iii, 1, 28–36.
40. Vaidya, p. 292, ll. 19f and 25
42. Śiva Purâṇa, Vāyavyasamhitā, 14, 51.
43. Śiva Purâṇa, Vāyavyasamhitā, 13, 12.
44. *Liṅga Purâṇa*, I, 85, 39f.

It should be noted that the comparable Vaiṣṇavite formulae, the eight-syllable *Om Namo Nārāyaṇaḥ* and the twelve-syllable *Om Namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya*, are described in the same all-encompassing terms. In the *Liṅga Purâṇa*, for instance, we read: “The mantra *Om Namo Nārāyaṇaḥ* is the means for achieving all objects. Hence, one should repeat the mantra *Om Namo Nārāyaṇaḥ* on all occasions.” (*Liṅga Purâṇa*, ch. 7, ll. 9–14) The twelve-syllable formula, meanwhile, “destroys the great sins of those who read and listen to it. The man who repeats this unchanging twelve-syllabled mantra continuously attains the divine, incomparable great region of Viṣṇu even if he follows a sinful conduct.” (*Liṅga Purâṇa*, ch. 7, ll. 28–33)
45. Vaidya, p. 292, l. 20.
46. Vaidya, p. 293, ll. 8–10.
47. Vaidya, p. 293, l. 16f.
48. Vaidya, p. 294, l. 4.
49. Vaidya, p. 300, l. 1.
50. Vaidya, p. 293, l. 18f.
51. Śiva Purâṇa, Vāyavyasamhitā, 12, 37.
52. Śiva Purāṇa, Vāyavyasamhitā, 14, 74.
53. Śiva Purāṇa, Vāyavyasamhitā, 14, 1–15.
55. Śiva Purāṇa, Vidyeśvarasamhitā, 18, 158.
56. Śiva Purāṇa, Vidyeśvarasamhitā, 10, 25f.
57. Śiva Purāṇa, Vidyeśvarasamhitā, 7, 2.
Rocher points out that the sūta explains to the sages that he knows the formula due to the mercy of Śiva (śivasya kṛpayaiś). See Rocher, “Mantras,” p. 183.
58. Vaidya, p. 296, l. 16.
59. Vaidya, p. 293, l. 5f.
60. Vaidya, p. 298, ll. 12–14.
61. Vaidya, p. 296, l. 20f.
63. Vaidya, p. 292, l. 22f.
64. Vaidya, p. 292, ll. 23–25.
65. Vaidya, p. 297, l. 1f.
66. Vaidya, p. 300, l. 20f.
67. Vaidya, p. 296, l. 5.
68. Vaidya, p. 296, ll. 7–9.
70. Vaidya, p. 296, ll. 25f.
71. Śiva Purāṇa, Vāyavyasamhitā, 14, 1.
72. Śiva Purāṇa, Vidyeśvarasamhitā, 17, 35.
76. Śiva Purāṇa, Vidyeśvarasamhitā, 17, 4–9. I have followed the discussion of this passage in Rocher, The Purāṇas. The subtle praṇava is itself subdivided into a long and a short form, the long one separating out the single sound of the short form into the components “A,” “U,” and “M.”
78. Śiva Purāṇa, Vidyeśvarasamhitā, 17, 34.
Notes 179

79. Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, IV, 9. See Zaehner, Hindu Scriptures, p. 211.

80. So, too, was it said of the seventh-century South Indian Śaivite singer-saint Appar: “Just as the Vedas and their six branches were the precious jewel to the (ancient) Brāhmaṇas, so was Namah Śivaḥ to himself (Appar) and his followers.” See K. A. Nilakantha Sastri, “An historical sketch of Śaivism,” in The Cultural Heritage of India (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission, 1956), IV: 70.

81. Śiva Purāṇa, Vaiyāvyasyamhita, 12, 23.

82. Śiva Purāṇa, Vaiyāvyasyamhita, 12, 39.

83. Liṅga Purāṇa, I, 85, 9.

84. Vaidya, p. 297, l. 17f.

85. Vaidya, p. 299, l. 13f.

86. Vaidya, p. 293, l. 19f.: . . . sarvajñānasya akṣayaṁ nirdeśam . . . /

87. Śiva Purāṇa, Vaiyāvyasyamhita, 12, 7.

88. Liṅga Purāṇa, I, 85, 32.

89. Strictly speaking, this work, also known as the Talavakāra Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa, belongs to the Āraṇyaka, or “forest treatise” literature that prefigures the more purely philosophical Upaniṣads. See Jan Gonda, Vedic Literature (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974), I: 319, and 431.


91. Vaidya, p. 299, l. 31–300, l. 5.


93. Śiva Purāṇa, Vaiyāvyasyamhita, 12, 40–43.

94. Vaidya, p. 296, l. 9f.

95. See Fredrick W. Bunce, A Dictionary of Buddhist and Hindu Iconography (New Delhi: Printworld, 1997) and Gosta Liebert, Dictionary of the Indian Religions (Leiden: Brill, 1976). The Tibetan translation is rgyal po’i dbang po thams cad (Peking, 260a, l. 3).

96. See for instance Sanjukta Gupta, “The Pāñcarātra Attitude to Mantra,” in Alper, Understanding Mantras, p. 225f. “God’s causal relation to the universe is regularly expressed in terms of his sakti. All creation is considered to be a special state of his being (bhūti) and a result of the action of his sovereign will, acting in the light of his omniscience. Thus, god’s sakti is said to manifest herself in two aspects. Dynamically viewed, she is god’s omnipotent creative activity, kriyāsakti. More statically viewed, she is god manifest as the creation, bhūtīsakti.”
97. Śīva Purāṇa, Vāyartyasamhitā, 12, 24.
98. Śīva Purāṇa, Vidyeśvarasamhitā, 17, 132.
99. Śīva Purāṇa, Vidyeśvarasamhitā, 17, 135.
100. Śīva Purāṇa, Vidyeśvarasamhitā, 17, 43f.
101. Śīva Purāṇa, Vidyeśvarasamhitā, 17, 50. The term śakti is not actually used here, but the alternative parā. The essential point, I think, remains the same.

102. It seems likely that this was a well-known story: a footnote to the English translation of the Skanda Purāṇa, published by Motilal Banarsidass, states that it is also found in the Pañcakṣara Mahātmya of the Śīva Purāṇa, although, perplexingly, it is, in fact, absent from the English translation of that purāṇa produced by the same publishers.

Chapter 5: Oṃ Manipadme Hūṃ and the Mahāyāna

1. Vaidya, p. 284, l. 1–p. 288, l. 11.
3. Vaidya, p. 307, l. 9f.
8. Vaidya, p. 287, ll. 22f.
12. Vaidya, p. 287, l. 29f.
14. Vaidya, p. 286, l. 32.
15. Vaidya, p. 288, l. 6f.
17. Vaidya, p. 288, ll. 9–11.
18. F. Edgerton, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, II: 244 explains that ājñapti refers to a “motion” or “proposal” put before the monastic assembly, usually in connection with
matters to do with initiation. The jñaptimuktika, or “isolated” jñapti refers to a proposal put forward without a separate question as to whether the monks approve and a jñaptidvittham to a proposal put forward with a single additional question. The jñapticaturtham, by extension, is a proposal put forward with three such questions.

20. Vaidya, p. 307, l. 15; Peking, p. 273a, l. 4: dge slong dag tshul khrims dang mi ldan pa’i dge slong gis ni sna tshogs kyi gnas su yang ’gro bar mi byin gsol ba dang / bzhi ba bya ba lta ci smos te /

21. Vaidya, p. 307, l. 16. The Tibetan omits this sentence. Peking, p. 273a, l. 5: de dag ni ston pa’i bstan pa ’jig par byed ba’o / “They should not sit upon the teacher’s seat.”


23. Vaidya, p. 307, l. 18; Peking, p. 273a, l. 6.
24. Vaidya, p. 307, l. 24f
29. Vaidya, p. 298, ll. 10–12.

I am following Lalou’s translation of the last of these epithets (asamvrter-gyäpathal). See Marcelle Lalou, Les Religions du Tibet (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), p. 38: “... ce dharmaṅbhāṅka est né dans une mauvaise voie (gati); il a une conduite dégradée; il est entouré d’épouses, de fils et de filles; son vêtement religieux est plein d’excréments et d’urine; il n’est pas un abstinent.” The relevant Tibetan phrase (Peking p. 262a, l. 6) is: spyod lam ma bsdams pa yin no.

30. Vaidya, p. 298, ll. 6–9.
33. See Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, p. 157
34. Vaidya, p. 299, l. 13.
35. Vaidya, p. 293, ll. 5–7.
36. Vaidya, p. 293, l. 8. The Tibetan (Peking, p. 256b, l. 4) reads: de rigs 'dzin gyi 'khor los sgyur ba'i dbang thob par 'gyur ro /

37. Vaidya, p. 296, ll. 7–9.

38. Vaiyda, p. 296, l. 9.

39. Vaidya, p. 296, ll. 10–12.

40. Vaidya, p. 296, ll. 12–14.


41. Vaidya, p. 296, ll. 14–16.

See the discussion of four “door guardians” in the Vajradhātu maṇḍala in the Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha Tantra in Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, p. 222f.


On the Brhatkatha, see Felix Lacôte, Essai sur Ganâḍhyâ et la Brhatkatha (Paris: Leroux, 1908). Lacôte (p. 276) writes that the conception of the vidyādhara is an amalgamation of the traits of the gandharva, the yogin and the arhat: “... création de l'imagination populaire où s'amalgament les traits de l'antique gandharva, du yogin et de l'arhat...”


45. See Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, ed., Tārānātha’s History of Buddhism in India (1970; reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990), p. 151. “Their”: Tārānātha is referring to important Buddhist philosophers of the fifth century C.E., such as Asaṅga and Vasubhandu.

46. See Ibid., p. 151.


See, also Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, p. 135. He concludes: “These [the vidyādharas] can be human or supramundane beings, just as Bodhisattvas can be either. Thus, the term can be a synonym for mahāsiddha; ‘great adept’ in the sense of highly perfected yogin, or it can refer to powerful divinities of the kind that one might expect to find in Vajrapāṇi’s following.”

49. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, VIII, 18, 9f.


The identity of the different sects listed here remains obscure, though the readings of Monier-Williams and Edgerton suggest they include both Śaivite and Jain groups.

52. Vaidya, p. 265, l. 5 f.
53. Vaidya, p. 303, l. 32–p. 304, l. 22.
55. Vaidya, p. 262, l. 24f.
56. Vaidya, p. 262, l. 25–27.
57. Vaidya, p. 280, l. 23f.
58. Vaidya, p. 280, l. 25f.
59. Vaidya, p. 282, l. 18f.
63. Vaidya, p. 293, ll. 5–7.
64. Vaidya, p. 300, l. 8.
68. Ibid., p. 332.

70. I am using a reconstructed Sanskrit title for this Pure Land text, whose origins have been discussed briefly in chapter 3.
184 The Origins of *Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ*

76. Vaidya, p. 294, ll. 3–30.
77. Vaidya, p. 284, ll. 27–29.
78. Vaidya, p. 292, l. 12f.
79. Vaidya, p. 292, l. 16f.
82. Vaidya, p. 301, l. 15.
84. Ibid., p. 296.
85. Vaidya, p. 293, ll. 21–23.
86. See Kern, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, p. 379f.
88. Vaidya, p. 302, ll. 26–32.
89. Vaidya, p. 302, l. 9f.
90. Vaidya, p. 299, l. 29.
92. Vaidya, p. 299, l. 30f.
93. Vaidya, p. 299, l. 31.
94. Vaidya, p. 296, l. 16–18.
95. See, for instance, Alexis Sanderson, “Vajrayāna: Origin and Function,” from *Buddhism into the Year 2000: International Conference Proceedings* (Bangkok: Dhammakaya Foundation, 1994), pp. 87–102. Sanderson comments in detail on an initiation ceremony described in one of the Buddhist Yogāntarātantras, which involves throwing a flower into the center of a maṇḍala. He remarks (p. 92): “The present author’s view is that almost everything concrete in the system is non-Buddhist in origin even though the whole is entirely Buddhist in its function.”
97. Ibid., pp. 192, and 240f.

98. Ibid., p. 192, n. 130.


100. In the Bhaisajyaguru Sūtra, for instance, monks, nuns, laymen, and women who undertake a fast with the intention of being reborn in Sukhāvatī are said to achieve this end if, at the time of their death, they hear the name of the tathāgata Bhaisajyaguru-vaṭūryaprabha, a buddha who has his own buddha field and who is not normally associated with Sukhāvatī. See Schopen, “Sukhāvatī,” p. 177f.


104. Vaidya, p. 264, ll. 11–14.


106. Vaidya, p. 276, l. 25f. Like the above, this passage appears neither in the Peking edition, nor in Burnouf’s translation.


108. Vaidya, p. 266, l. 12f.


110. Vaidya, p. 303, l. 20–22.

111. Vaidya, p. 303, l. 23.

112. Vaidya, p. 297, l. 21f.: yah kulapuro vā kuladuhitā vā imān sādakṣaśarāṃ mahāvidyāṃ japet, sa imān samādhiṃ pratilabhate / tadyathā—maṇidharo nāma samādhiḥ, . . .

113. Peking, p. 260a, l. 1: gyaś phyogs su ni byang chub sems dpa’ nor bu rin po che ’dzin par bgyi’o / Peking, p. 261b, l. 2: nor bu rin po che ’dzin ces bya ba’i ting nge ’dzin dang /


115. See E. Conze, trans., Abhisamayālaṅkāra (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1954), i, 19. However, the Tibetan translation of cintāmaṇī here is not nor bu rin po che, but yid bzhin nor bu. See, Conze, Materials for a Dictionary of the Prajñāpāramitā Literature, p. 175.


117. Vaidya, p. 293, l. 5f.
118. Vaidya, p. 293, l. 14f.

120. Meritorious, also, are they who listen, meditate on, and mentally bear in mind the formula. Vaidya, p. 297, l. 15f.: \textit{punyavastate sattvā ya imam śaḍakṣarīṁ mahāvidyāṁ japanti śṛvanti cintayanti adhyāśayena dhārayanti}

121. Vaidya, p. 300, l.1.
122. Vaidya, p. 300, l. 8.

123. \textit{Śiva Purāṇa, Vāyavīyasamhitā}, 14, 26–29. See also Rocher, \textit{The Purāṇas}, p. 180, whose Sanskrit transliteration I have borrowed.

124. Schopen identifies one instance in which \textit{japa}, as a surrogate practice to the offering of flowers to the \textit{tathāgatas}, is linked to Sukhavati. See Schopen, “Sukhāvatī,” p. 188f.


126. Vaidya, p. 276, l. 9–12.
129. Ibid., p. 406. Ibid., p. 250, l. 11.
131. Ibid., p. 408. Ibid., p. 250, l. 31.
132. Ibid., p. 408. Ibid., p. 251, l. 4.
133. Ibid., pp. 413–418. Ibid., p. 252–257.
134. Ibid., p. 409. Ibid., p. 251, l. 16.
137. Vaidya, p. 268, ll. 5–9.
139. Vaidya, p. 278, l. 30–p. 279, l. 6 and p. 289, ll. 8–11.
140. Vaidya, p. 279, l. 6–13.
141. Vaidya, p. 291, l. 16 f.

142. Schopen, “Sukhāvatī,” p. 184. Schopen points out that such ambiguity is common in the Prajñāpāramitā literature and may also be observed in passages from the \textit{Samādhīrāja Sūtra} and the \textit{Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra}. 
144. Vaidya, p. 294, l.3f.
145. Vaidya, p. 300, ll. 9–11.
146. Vaidya, p. 292, ll. 6–8.
147. Vaidya, p. 292, l. 10f.
149. Vaidya, p. 292, l. 11f.: ye ca tasya śaḍākṣaṇatmahāvidyānāmanusmaranti,
tadā teṣu romavivareṣu jāyante /
sweeping over the whole of northern India, influencing Hindu contemplatives as well
as the [Buddhist] yoga masters of Kashmir.”
152. Ibid., p. 338.
153. Bhagavadgītā, ix, 17 and xi, 43.
195, l. 13).
Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra, ch. 20—beginning of prose section (Kern, 1884,
p. 364)
Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra, ii, 93 (Kern, 1884, p. 51f. and Vaidya, 1960, p. 36,
l. 23ff.)
156. Bhagavadgītā, ix, 29.
Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra, ch. 5—the parable of the rain (Kern, 1884, p. 119).
158. Bhagavadgītā, vii, 23.
159. Bhagavadgītā, viii, 5.
Bhagavadgītā, viii, 7.
Bhagavadgītā, viii, 9 and 10.
162. Beyer, “Notes on the Vision Quest,” p. 334. Once again, we are arguing that
even if this Pure Land text was composed outside India, it is not unlikely that its
contents reflect practices that did originate in India.
163. *Bhagavadgītā*, xi, 47.
166. Ibid., p. 334.
171. *Bhagavadgītā*, xi, 45.
172. *Bhagavadgītā*, xi, 52.
175. *Bhagavadgītā*, xi, 54.
177. *Bhagavadgītā*, xi, 27.
182. *Bhagavadgītā*, xi, 49.
183. *Bhagavadgītā*, xi, 32.
188. Vaidya, p. 288, l. 19f.
189. Vaidya, p. 291, l. 19f.
190. Vaidya, p. 301, l. 27f.
192. Kṛṣṇa is twice identified as the *puruṣa* in the chapter: *Bhagavadgītā*, xi, 18, and 38.
Chapter 6: The Meaning of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ

1. See Alper, “The Cosmos as Śiva’s Language Game,” passim.
   Gonda also comments on the folk etymology of mantra as that which “saves” (from trā-, “to save,” or “rescue”) whoever “meditates” on it (from man-, “to think,” or “meditate”).
3. Ibid., p. 253.
7. Vaidya, p. 304, l. 2f.
8. Vaidya, p. 284, l. 28.
10. Vaidya, p. 300, l. 22.
12. Vaidya, p. 300, l. 25f.
14. Vaidya, p. 267, ll. 1–27
16. Vaidya, p. 304, l. 28f.
17. Vaidya, p. 294, l. 6 - p. 295, l. 16.
20. In his essay on the Indian mantra, Gonda reminds us that the use of the
to name of Jesus in the Christian tradition (Mark, xvi, 17) is believed to be a means of
22. Śiva Purāṇa, Vāyānyasaṃhitā, 12, 62.
23. Vaidya, p. 293, l. 3f.
24. Vaidya, p. 293, l. 5f.
25. Vaidya, p. 282, l. 4 - p. 283, l. 28.
27. Vaidya, p. 293, l. 3–5.
28. Vaidya, p. 294, l. 4.
30. Vaidya, p. 300, l. 1.
31. Vaidya, p. 293, l. 19f.
32. Vaidya, p. 297, l. 16f.
34. Vaidya, p. 299, l. 32.
35. See, for instance, Bokar Rinpoche, *Chenrezig, Lord of Love* (San Francisco: Clearpoint Press, 1991), pp. 39–41, where the six syllables are also related to six impure “veils,” to six wisdoms, to six buddhas and, lastly, to five aspects of buddhahood, the final syllable *hūṃ* being used, in this instance, to “gather the grace” of those different aspects.

36. *Śiva Purāṇa, Vidyēśvarasamhitā*, 17, 16ff.


38. Vaidya, p. 293, l. 7.


40. Vaidya, p. 300, l. 8.

41. Vaidya, p. 293, l. 18.

42. See Gonda, “The Indian Mantra,” p. 256. He refers to *ṚgVeda*, i, 67, 4; vii, 7, 6, and vii, 32, 13.

43. See, for instance, Marylin Rhie and Robert Thurman, *Wisdom and Compassion, The Sacred Art of Tibet* (New York: Abrams, 1991), p. 34: “OM! the jewel in the lotus (itself a symbol of the union of compassion and wisdom, male and female, and so on) HUM.”

44. See, for instance, Daniel Cozort, *Highest Yoga Tantra* (New York: Snow Lion, 1986), p. 177: “For instance, in the mantra of Avalokiteśvara, OM MAṆI PADME HŪṅ, Avalokiteśvara is the jewel (MAṆI) that arises in the lotus (PADME), that is, the deity that appears at the heart.”

45. See R. S. Bucknell and Martin Stuart-Fox, *The Twilight Language* (London: Curzon, 1986), pp. 132–134: “. . . we have here a *dvandva* or “co-ordinative,” compound, *maṇi-paḍme*, meaning ‘jewel and lotus.’ On this interpretation, the mantra is simply a list of five items: *Oṃ*, jewel, lotus, *Hūṃ, Hṛṇḥ*. This list contains two of the the five *dhyāṇi* Buddha emblems (jewel and lotus) and three of the five *bījas* (*Oṃ, Hūṃ, Hṛṇḥ,*).

46. See, for instance, Bokar Rinpoche, *Chenrezig*, p. 38: “Saying MANI PADME names Chenrezig through his attributes: ‘the one who hold the jewel and the lotus’.”

47. Edgerton notes the occasional use of nominative singular endings (-o, -u, and perhaps -e) for vocative of stems in -a. See Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit*, I: 8, 28.

48. Vaidya, p. 296, l. 11.


50. See, for instance, F. W. Thomas, “Oṃ Maṇi Padme Hūṃ,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1906): 464: “On the analogy of other *dhāraṇī* such as Oṃ Vajragandhe hūṃ, Oṃ Vajraloke Hūṃ, Oṃ Vajrapuspe hūṃ, would it not be more probable that *manipadme* is a vocative referring to a feminine counterpart of that Bodhisattva, that is, Tara?”


53. See Bhattacharya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, p. 178.

54. See Benoytosh Bhattacharya, ed., *Sadhanamala* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1968) I: 30, and B. Bhattacharya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, (1924), p. 33f. As we would expect, Śaḍākṣarī Lokeśvara holds a lotus in the left hand, a rosary in the right, with the other two hands held together against the breast (vāmataḥ padmadharam daksinato kṣaṇūtraḥdharmaḥ aparābhyaḥ hastābhyaḥ hṛdi sampuṣṭañjalisthitam dhyaṇayāt).

55. See Peking bsTan 'gyur, rgyud 'gre Du, p. 90b, l. 4–92a, l. 4.

56. The four-armed Avalokiteśvara that has become popular in the Tibetan tradition involves another slight modification of this form. While the bodhisattva continues to hold a string of prayer beads in right hand and lotus flower in left, the jewel is held between the two central hands. Amitābha is also often seated in miniature in the headdress of the bodhisattva. See, for instance, the statue described on p. 145 of Rhie and Thurman, *Wisdom and Compassion*, and the 'gro don mīkha’ ma, “For All Beings Throughout Space,” the famous sadhana composed by the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Tibetan yogin Thang stong rgyal po. See Janet Gyatso, “An Avalokiteśvara Sādhana,” in *Religions of Tibet in Practice*, Donald S. Lopez, ed. (NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 266–270.

Avalokiteśvara also appears with Amitābha in his headdress in the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra. Bali addresses the bodhisattva as “you who have the form of Amitābha on your head” (amitābhamūrtte śirasā). See Vaidya, p. 275, l. 13f. The dharmabhāṇaka also sees him as “the one with the omniscient one on his head” (sarvajñāśirasākṛtaḥ), which is, I think, another reference to the same detail. See Vaidya, p. 300, l. 19.


61. Ibid., p. 1184; Ibid., p. 52, l. 4.

62. Ibid., p. 1184; Ibid., p. 52, l. 19ff.

63. Ibid., p. 1231; Ibid., p. 105, l. 5f.


66. Ibid., p. 103; Ibid., p. 248, l. 21.
68. Ibid., p. 103; Ibid., p. 248, l. 21.
70. Ibid., p. 1184; Ibid., p. 52, l. 23f.
71. Ibid., p. 1243; Ibid., p. 120, l. 19f.
72. Ibid., p. 1247; Ibid., p. 126, l. 3f.
73. Ibid., p. 1503; Ibid., p. 420, l. 21.
75. Ibid., p. 1507; Ibid., p. 424, l. 18.
77. Ibid., p. 249; Ibid., p. 160, l. 2.
79. Ibid., p. 1317; Ibid., p. 207, l. 27f.
80. Ibid., p. 1493; Ibid., p. 410, l. 20.
84 Ibid., p. 389; Ibid., p. 242, l. 12.
87. Vaidya, p. 262, l. 30.
88. Vaidya, p. 275, l. 13f.
89. Vaidya, p. 300, l. 19.
90. Vaidya, p. 304, l. 3.
91. Vaidya, p. 304, l. 12.
94. Vaidya, p. 262, l. 8f.
The Origins of \textit{Om Manipadme Hūṃ}

95. Vaidya, p. 266, l. 16.

96. Vaidya, p. 266, l. 18, and p. 303, l. 29. In the first instance, the lotuses are “brilliant and shining, with golden stems and a thousand petals” (\textit{sahasrāpatrāṇi padmāni suvarṇaśrāṇi vaidūryanirbhasāni gṛhitvā}).

97. Vaidya, p. 268, l. 4ff.

98. Vaidya, p. 268, l. 11.

99. Vaidya, p. 276, l. 27

100. Cleary, \textit{The Flower Ornament}, p. 1373; Vaidya, p. 273, l. 3ff.


105. This is the translation of \textit{padmē} in the \textit{Kāraṇḍavyāha Sūtra}. See Vaidya, p. 268, l. 11, and Peking, p. 243b, l. 4.

106. Alexandra David-Neel, \textit{Initiations and Initiates in Tibet} (London: Rider, 1931), p. 77. \textit{bde ba can} is the Tibetan for \textit{Sukhāvatī}, which is believed to be located in the west (\textit{nub}).

\section*{Conclusion}


\section*{Appendix: Annotated Précis of the \textit{Kāraṇḍavyāha}}

1. Vaidya, p. 258, l. 4; Peking, p. 222a, l. 8. The Tibetan omits the preliminary praises and merely transliterates the simple title \textit{Ārya Kāraṇḍavyāha Nāma Mahāyāna Sūtra}, in Tibetan, \textit{\textit{phags pa za ma tog bkod pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo}} /
2. Vaidya, p. 258, l. 8; Peking, p. 224b, l. 2.
3. Vaidya, p. 258, l. 18; Peking, p. 224b, l. 8.
4. Vaidya, p. 260, l. 31; Peking, p. 227b, l. 4.
5. Vaidya, p. 261, l. 13; Peking, p. 228a, l. 2.
6. Vaidya, p. 261, l. 17; Peking, p. 228a, l. 5.
7. Vaidya, p. 261, l. 25; Peking, p. 228b, l. 1.
8. Vaidya, p. 262, l. 2; Peking, p. 228b, l. 5.
9. Vaidya, p. 262, l. 9; Peking, p. 229a, l. 2.
11. Vaidya, p. 262, l. 20; Peking, p. 229a, l. 6. The Tibetan omits the last two epithets.
12. Vaidya, p. 262, l. 22. Nārāyana is referred to by the title pañcamahāsamudrānamaskṛtasya, or “he who is paid homage to by the five great oceans.” The Tibetan omits this title.
14. Vaidya, p. 262, l. 27; Peking, p. 229b, l. 1.
15. Vaidya, p. 262, l. 30; Peking, p. 229b, l. 2.
16. Vaidya, p. 263, l. 13; Peking, p. 230a, l. 5.
17. Vaidya, p. 263, l. 22; Peking, p. 230b, l. 2.
18. Vaidya, p. 264, l. 11; Peking, p. 231a, l. 1.
19. Vaidya, p. 264, l. 16; Peking, p. 231a, l. 3.
20. Vaidya, p. 264, l. 22; Peking, p. 231a, l. 5.
21. Vaidya, p. 264, l. 27. Peking, p. 231a, l. 8. Both the Vaidya and Peking editions omit a passage in the text used by Burnouf, in which the “eyes” of Avalokiteśvara are said to be the same as those of all the tathāgatas (sarvatathāgatasya eva mahāvalokiteśvarasya cakṣuṣo).
22. Vaidya, p. 265, l. 8; Peking, p. 231b, l. 5.
23. Vaidya, p. 265, l. 15; Peking, p. 231b, l. 8.
24. Vaidya, p. 265, l. 25; Peking, p. 232a, l. 4.
25. Vaidya, p. 265, l. 27. This paragraph is not in the Peking edition.
26. Vaidya, p. 266, l. 3; Peking, p. 232a, l. 7.
27. Vaidya, p. 266, l. 13; Peking, p. 232b, l. 4.
28. Vaidya, p. 266, l. 27; Peking, p. 233a, l. 4.
29. Vaidya, p. 266, l. 29; Peking, p. 233a, l. 5.
30. Vaidya, p. 267, l. 9; Peking, p. 233a, l. 8.
31. Vaidya, p. 267, l. 17; Peking, p. 233b, l. 5.
32. Vaidya, p. 267, l. 25; Peking, p. 234a, l. 3.
33. Vaidya, p. 268, l. 5; Peking, p. 234a, l. 8.
34. Vaidya, p. 268, l. 11; Peking, p. 234b, l. 4: *chos kyi ros bskyod nas de nyid du pad ma'i nang du skye bar 'gyur te /
35. Vaidya, p. 268, l. 14; Peking, p. 234b, l. 5.
37. Vaidya, p. 269, l. 2; Peking, p. 235b, l. 1.
38. Vaidya, p. 269, l. 7; Peking, p. 235b, l. 3.
39. Vaidya, p. 269, l. 13; Peking, p. 235b, l. 5.
40. Vaidya, p. 269, l. 18f.; Peking, p. 235b, l. 6f. The five acts of immediate retribution are: the killing of mother, father, or an arhat, causing dissension in the order of monks or deliberately causing the blood of a tathāgata to flow.
41. Vaidya, p. 269, l. 22; Peking, p. 235b, l. 8. However, the Tibetan refers only to an elaborate canopy and makes no mention of a simhasanam, or “lion throne.”
42. Vaidya, p. 269, l. 27; Peking, p. 236a, l. 2.
43. Vaidya, p. 270, l. 13; Peking, p. 236a, l. 8. The men, presumably, have been reborn as animals.
44. Vaidya, p. 270, l. 19; Peking, p. 236b, l. 2.
45. Vaidya, p. 270, l. 22; Peking, p. 236b, l. 3.
46. Vaidya, p. 270, l. 26. This epithet is not found in the Peking edition.
47. Vaidya, p. 270, l. 26; Peking, p. 236b, l. 5.
48. Vaidya, p. 271, l. 9; Peking, p. 236b, l. 7.
49. Vaidya, p. 271, l. 10; Peking, p. 236b, l. 8: . . . rin po che'i khri . . . /
50. Vaidya, p. 271, l. 19; Peking, p. 237a, l. 2.
51. Vaidya, p. 271, l. 30. This paragraph is found neither in the Peking edition nor in Burnouf’s translation.
52. Vaidya, p. 272, l. 23; Peking, p. 237b, l. 6.
53. Vaidya, p. 272, l. 29; Peking, p. 238a, l. 1.

54. Vaidya, p. 272, l. 30. These instrumental compounds are omitted in the Peking edition.

55. Vaidya, p. 273, l. 18; Peking, p. 238b, l. 2.

56. Vaidya, p. 273, l. 30; Peking, p. 238b, l. 8.

57. Vaidya, p. 274, l. 10; Peking, p. 239a, l. 6.

58. Vaidya, p. 274, l. 21; Peking, p. 239b, l. 3: *de nas mthu bo ches des par sbyin*<br> *pa la 'gyod par 'gyur ro /

59. Vaidya, p. 274, l. 23; Peking, p. 239b, l. 4.

60. Vaidya, p. 274, l. 28; Peking, p. 239b, l. 7. Régamey has “terre” instead of the sun and adds “flèches” to the list of weapons. Vaidya’s edition, however, corresponds to the Peking edition at this point.

61. Vaidya, p. 274, l. 32; Peking, p. 240a, l. 1.

62. Vaidya, p. 275, l. 2; Peking, p. 240a, l. 2.

63. Vaidya, p. 275, l. 11; Peking, p. 240a, l. 6.

64. Vaidya, p. 275, l. 13. I take this epithet (not found here in the Peking edition) to be a reference to the common iconographical feature of Avalokiteśvara, in which the bodhisattva is depicted as carrying a small image of Amitābha in his head-dress. See, for instance, Rhie and Thurman, *Wisdom and Compassion*, p. 136.

65. Vaidya, p. 275, l. 18; Peking, p. 240b, l. 1.

66. Vaidya, p. 275, l. 22; Peking, p. 240b, l. 4.

67. Vaidya, p. 275, l. 28; Peking, p. 240b, l. 8.

68. Vaidya, p. 276, l. 8; Peking, p. 241a, l. 7.

69. Vaidya, p. 276, l. 12: Peking, p. 241a, l. 8. The third and fourth of these sins of omission are not found in the Peking edition.

70. Vaidya, p. 276, l. 21; Peking, p. 241b, l. 6.

71. Vaidya, p. 276, l. 32. This paragraph is found neither in the Peking edition nor in Burnouf’s translation.

72. Vaidya, p. 277, l. 4; Peking, p. 241b, l. 7.

73. Vaidya, p. 277, l. 22; Peking, p. 242a, l. 8.

74. Vaidya, p. 278, l. 2; Peking, p. 242b, l. 4.

75. Vaidya, p. 278, l. 24; Peking, p. 243a, l. 6.

76. Vaidya, p. 279, l. 13; Peking, p. 243b, l. 6.

77. Vaidya, p. 279, l. 17; Peking, p. 243b, l. 7.
78. Vaidya, p. 279, l. 31; Peking, p. 244a, l. 2.
79. Vaidya, p. 280, l. 4; Peking, p. 244a, l. 3.
80. Vaidya, p. 280, l. 11; Peking, p. 244a, l. 6.
81. Vaidya, p. 280, l. 22; Peking, p. 244b, l. 3.
82. Vaidya, p. 280, l. 29; Peking, p. 244b, l. 6. My rendering of the song of praise is quite free. The Sanskrit (Vaidya, p. 280, lls. 28 and 29) reads: aho guṇamayaṃ kṣetram sarvadosāivarjitaḥ / adyaiva vāpiitaṃ bijam adyaiva phalasaṃpadam /
83. Vaidya, p. 281, l. 12; Peking, p. 245a, l. 2.
84. Vaidya, p. 281, l. 21; Peking, p. 245a, l. 5.
85. Vaidya, p. 281, l. 24; Peking, p. 245a, l. 5. The Tibetan phrase used in the place of Vāraṇasī is: 'jig gi grong khyer chen po. The same comparison may be made elsewhere, for instance between: Vaidya, p. 298, l. 2, and Peking, p. 261b, l. 8; Vaidya, p. 298, l. 23, and Peking, p. 262b, l. 4.
86. Vaidya, p. 281, l. 32; Peking, p. 245a, l. 8. The Tibetan merely states that they are reborn as bodhisattvas called Sugandhamukha: . . . kha na spos kyi dri . . . /
87. Vaidya, p. 282, l. 23; Peking, p. 245b, l. 7.
88. Vaidya, p. 283, l. 4; Peking, p. 246a, l. 7.
89. Vaidya, p. 283, l. 11; Peking, p. 246b, l. 4.
90. Vaidya, p. 283, l. 21; Peking, p. 246b, l. 8.
91. Vaidya, p. 283, l. 28; Peking, p. 247a, l. 3.
92. Vaidya, p. 284, l. 30; Peking, p. 248a, l. 5.
93. Vaidya, p. 285, l. 22; Peking, p. 248b, l. 7.
95. Vaidya, p. 286, l. 7; Peking, p. 249a, l. 6.
96. Vaidya, p. 286, l. 16; Peking, p. 249b, l. 3.
97. Vaidya, p. 286, l. 20; Peking, p. 249b, 5.
98. Vaidya, p. 287, l. 6; Peking, p. 250a, l. 5.
100. Vaidya, p. 287, l. 22; Peking, p. 250b, l. 4.
101. Vaidya, p. 287, l. 23; Peking, p. 250b, l. 5.
Notes

102. Vaidya, p. 288, l. 4; Peking, p. 251a, l. 2.

103. Vaidya, p. 288, l. 11; Peking, p. 251a, l. 5.

104. Vaidya, p. 288, l. 16; Peking, p. 251a, l. 8.

105. Vaidya, p. 288, l. 20; Peking, p. 251b, l. 1: de dag ’khor ba’i sdu gbsngal bar mi ’gyur zhing . . . / This does not mean that these gandharvas are fully enlightened buddhas. Rather, it shows that they have reached the first of the ten stages of the bodhisattva path outlined by the Daśabhūmika Sūtra, the so-called stage of joy, upon which the bodhisattva is said to be “cut off from all evil and states of misery.” See Cleary, The Flower Ornament, p. 703.

106. Vaidya, p. 288, l. 26; Peking, p. 251b, l. 2.

107. Vaidya, p. 289, l. 1; Peking, p. 251b, l. 7.

108. Vaidya, p. 289, l. 11; Peking, p. 252a, l. 6.

109. Vaidya, p. 289, l. 24; Peking, p. 252b, l. 4.

110. Vaidya, p. 289, l. 27; Peking, p. 252b, l. 5.

111. Vaidya, p. 290, l. 2; Peking, p. 253a, l. 1.

112. Vaidya, p. 290, l. 8; Peking, p. 253a, l. 4.

113. Vaidya, p. 290, l. 21; Peking, p. 253b, l. 2.

114. Vaidya, p. 290, l. 31; Peking, p. 253b, l. 8.

115. Vaidya, p. 291, l. 18; Peking, p. 254a, l. 6.

116. Vaidya, p. 292, l. 8; Peking, p. 255b, l. 1.

117. Vaidya, p. 292, l. 13; Peking, p. 255b, l. 5.

118. Vaidya, p. 292, l. 25; Peking, p. 256a, l. 3.

119. Vaidya’s Sanskrit actually reads that those who wander in this world do know the formula. However, this makes little sense, in view of the preceding passage in which even tathāgatas are said not to know it, and is surely a mistake. The Peking edition of the Tibetan translation says that those who wander in this world do not know the formula. Vaidya, p. 292, l. 25f.: yo ’apyayaṇaḥ paribhramati jāganmandale kaśeṣijjānte saḍakṣaṛt mahāvidyām / Peking, p. 256a, l. 4: ’gro ba’i dkyil ’khor na yongs su ’khyam yang / sus kyang yi ge drug pa’i rig snga’gs chen mo sus kyang mi shes so /

120. Vaidya, p. 293, l. 1; Peking, p. 256a, l. 8.

121. Vaidya, p. 293, l. 10 and 11. Neither vastrasparśanena nor darśanamatreṇa have an object, but I have assumed that they refer to the dharmaḥiṇaka or guru who has the authority to bestow the formula.

123. Vaidya, p. 293, l. 24; Peking, p. 257a, l. 5. Once again, the text does not specify the identity of the subject of the sentence. In this instance, it is indisputably the guru or dharmabhāṣaka who bestows the formula.

124. Vaidya, p. 294, l. 5; Peking, p. 257b, l. 5.

125. I have used hours, minutes, and seconds instead of the Indian units of time specified in the text. Vaidya, p. 295, l. 2: . . . muhārta- (48 minutes) nāḍī- (24 minutes) Kalāḥ (1.6 minutes).

126. Vaidya, p. 295, l. 6; Peking, p. 258b, l. 6. Although Vaidya's edition omits the term “ekajāpasya,” meaning “of (or in) one recitation,” I have kept this phrase in my précis because it does appear both in Burnouf's translation and in the Peking edition: . . . lan cig bzlas pa . . . /

127. Vaidya, p. 295, l. 16; Peking, p. 259a, l. 3. Once again Vaidya's edition omits the term “ekajāpasya.” This time, I have remained faithful to his version, because although Burnouf’s translation does include the phrase (“. . . ne fut ce même qu’une seule fois . . .”), the Peking version also omits the term.

128. Vaidya, p. 295, l. 22; Peking, p. 259a, l. 7.

129. Vaidya, p. 295, l. 29; Peking, p. 259b, l. 3.

130. Vaidya, p. 296, l. 2; Peking, p. 259b, l. 6.

131. Vaidya, p. 296, l. 7; Peking, p. 259b, l. 8.

132. Vaidya, p. 296, l. 16; Peking, p. 260a, l. 5.

133. Vaidya, p. 296, l. 21; Peking, p. 260a, l. 8.

134. Vaidya, p. 296, l. 26; Peking, p. 260b, l. 3.

135. Vaidya, p. 297, l. 12; Peking, p. 261a, l. 4.

136. Vaidya, p. 297, l. 19; Peking, p. 261a, l. 8: . . . nyin cig tu ring srel 'jug pa . . . /

137. Vaidya, p. 297, l. 24. According to Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary, p. 954, the Sanskrit verb vikṛ can also mean “to destroy, annihilate.” The Tibetan, Peking, p. 261b, l. 3, reads: 'thor ba zhes bya ba'i ting nge 'dzin dang / Jāschke, A Tibetan-English Dictionary, p. 246, translates 'thor ba as “to be scattered, to fly asunder, to be dispersed, to fall to pieces, to decay, to burst . . .”

138. Vaidya, p. 297, l. 25; Peking, p. 261b, l. 4: bsam gtan gyi rgyan ces bya ba'i ting nge 'dzin dang /

139. Vaidya, p. 297, l. 25; Peking, p. 261b, l. 4: chos kyi shing rta la 'jug pa zhes bya ba'i ting nge 'dzin dang /

140. Vaidya, p. 297, l. 26. The Sanskrit word vatsa as well as “year,” can also be translated as “calf,” a meaning which seems to have been reproduced by the Tibetan (Peking, p. 261b, l. 7): mtha' yas be'u zhes bya ba'i ting nge 'dzin. “Endless calf”? See Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary, p. 915.
141. Vaidya, p. 297, l. 29; Peking, p. 261b, l. 7.

142. Vaidya, p. 298, l. 4; Peking, p. 262a, l. 1: \ldots tshul bzhin yid la byed pa \ldots /

143. Vaidya, p. 298, l. 7. This phrase is omitted in the Peking version.

144. Vaidya, p. 298, l. 11; Peking, p. 262a, l. 5: tshul khrims nyams pa / spyod pa nyams pa / In translating these two phrases, I have tried to convey the fact that the dharmabhāṇaka's mode of behavior may break certain taboos, but is not wicked.

145. Vaidya, p. 298, l. 12; Peking, p. 262a, l. 6. I am following Lalou's translation of the last of these epithets (asaṃvertyapathaḥ). See Lalou, Les Religions du Tibet, p. 38, quoted above in note 29 of chapter five. The relevant Tibetan phrase is: spyod lam ma bsdams pa yin no /

146. Vaidya, p. 299, l. 3; Peking, p. 263a, l. 4.

147. Vaidya, p. 299, l. 4; Peking, p. 263, l. 5: rigs kyi bu khyod 'gyod pa ma sked cig. Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary, p. 315, gives “evil doing, wickedness,” and “repentance” for kaukṛtya. The former meaning seems more fitting in this context, even though Jäschke, A Tibetan-English Dictionary, p. 98, gives “to repent, to grieve for, repentance” for 'gyod pa, which is the Tibetan equivalent.

148. Vaidya, p. 299, l. 5; Peking, p. 263a, l. 5.

149. Vaidya, p. 299, l. 8; Peking, p. 263a, l. 7.

150. Vaidya, p. 299, l. 16; Peking, p. 263b, l. 4.

151. Vaidya, p. 299, l. 21; Peking, p. 263b, l. 7. The Tibetan for the last of these is: rtag tu lha mams 'dod par byed pa'i tshig go /

152. Vaidya, p. 299, l. 26; Peking, p. 264a, l. 2.

153. Vaidya, p. 299, l. 26f. The Sanskrit mistakenly uses a masculine relative pronoun here. The Tibetan differs at this point too, stating that the motive for gaining the formula is in order to apply oneself diligently towards liberation. Peking, p. 264a, l. 2f: \ldots thob par 'gyur thar pa la gzhol bar 'gyur /

154. Vaidya, p. 299, l. 31; Peking, p. 264a, l. 4.

155. Vaidya, p. 300, l. 6; Peking, p. 264a, l. 8.

156. Vaidya, p. 300, l. 11; Peking, p. 264b, l. 4.

157. Vaidya, p. 300, l. 15; Peking, p. 264b, l. 6: de naschos smra pa de sgra ga las byung zhes bsams pa dang /

158. Vaidya, p. 300, l. 17; Peking, p. 264b, l. 7.

159. Vaidya, p. 300, l. 23; Peking, p. 265a, l. 1.

160. Vaidya, p. 300, l. 28; Peking, p. 265a, l. 4. In the Tibetan, these samādhis are: \ldots mi zad ba'i chos nyid \ldots byams pa dang nying rje dang dga' ba \ldots rnal 'byor
spyod...thar pa la 'jug par 'jog...thams cad snang par byed...bkod pa'i rgyal po...chos 'dzin pa...

161. Vaidya, p. 301, l. 6; Peking, p. 265b, l. 1.

162. Vaidya, p. 301, l. 8. No title is given to this chapter in Vaidya’s edition.

163. Vaidya, p. 301, l. 14; Peking, p. 265b, l. 3. The Tibetan transliteration of the dhāraṇī is slightly different, reading: om tsa le tsu le tson de svāḥa (=...cunde svāḥa in Sanskrit).

164. Vaidya, p. 301, l. 23. The Peking edition diverges quite significantly at this point, omitting any reference to cittaprasādam and describing a slightly different sequence of events, in which, having brought to mind the formula, the bodhisattvas reach nirvāṇa, where they perceive seven tathāgatas. They then see Avalokiteśvara, thereby generating faith. Peking, p. 265b, l. 7ff.

165. Vaidya, p. 301, l. 26; Peking, p. 266a, l. 2.

166. Vaidya, p. 302, l. 2; Peking, p. 266a, l. 6.

167. Vaidya, p. 302, l. 10; Peking, p. 266b, l. 2:...stong pa nyid dang mtshan ma med pa la sems te /

168. Vaidya, p. 302, l. 13; Peking, p. 266b, l. 4.

169. Vaidya, p. 302, l. 20; Peking, p. 267a, l. 2.

170. Vaidya, p. 303, l. 2; Peking, p. 267b, l. 3.

171. See also Vaidya, p. 295, l. 5.

172. Vaidya, p. 303, l. 9; Peking, p. 267b, l. 7.

173. Vaidya, p. 303, l. 13; Peking, p. 268a, l. 1.

174. Vaidya, p. 303, l. 22; Peking, p. 268a, l. 4.

175. Vaidya, p. 303, l. 31; Peking, p. 268b, l. 2.

176. Vaidya, p. 304, l. 4; Peking, 268b, l. 6. The others are:...parivṛtāya... jagadāsvādanakarāya...prthivivaralocanakarāya...prahlādanakarāya.../

177. Vaidya, p. 304, l. 10; Peking, p. 269a, l. 2. Bhasmeśvara, it is said, will appear in a particular realm, called viṛtāyaṃ lokadhātau, “the realm of the opened ones” (?). The Tibetan, Peking, p. 269a, l. 1, reads: jiṅ ṛten gyi kham phyə pa zhes bya bar...According to Jäschke, A Tibetan-English Dictionary, p. 398, kha phyə ba can mean “to open, to begin to bloom.”

178. Vaidya, p. 304, l. 19; Peking, p. 269b, l. 1.

179. Vaidya, p. 304, l. 22; Peking, p. 269b, l. 2.

180. Vaidya, p. 305, l. 17; Peking, p. 270b, l. 1.
181. Vaidya, p. 305, l. 32; Peking, p. 271a, l. 2.

182. Vaidya, p. 306, l. 18; Peking, p. 272a, l. 1.

183. Vaidya, p. 306, l. 24; Peking, p. 272a, l. 5.

184. Vaidya, p. 307, l. 8; Peking, p. 272b, l. 8.

185. Vaidya, p. 307, l. 13; Peking, p. 273a, l. 3.

186. Vaidya, p. 307, l. 14. Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit*, II, p. 244 explains that jñaptī refers to a “motion,” or “proposal” put before the monastic assembly, usually in connection with matters to do with initiation. The jñaptimuktika, or “isolated” jñaptī refers to a proposal put forward without a separate question as to whether the monks approve and a jñaptidviṭtyam to a proposal put forward with a single additional question. The jñapticaturtham mentioned here is, by extension, a proposal put forward with three such questions.

187. Vaidya, p. 307, l. 15; Peking, p. 273a, l. 4: dge slong dag tshul khrims dang mi ldan pa’i dge slong gis ni sna tshogs kyi gnas su yang ’gro bar mi byin gsol ba dang / bzhi ba bya ba lta ci smos te /

188. Vaidya, p. 307, l. 16. The Tibetan omits this sentence. Peking, p. 273a, l. 5: de dag ni ston pa’i bstan pa ‘jig par byed ba’o / “They should not sit upon the teacher’s seat.”


190. Vaidya, p. 307, l. 18; Peking, p. 273a, l. 6.

191. Vaidya, p. 307, l. 21; Peking, p. 273a, l. 7: nga mya ngan las ’das nas lo sum brgya na de ‘dra ba’i sbyin gnas dag ’byung ste /

192. Vaidya, p. 307, l. 23; Peking, p. 273b, l. 1: dge ’dun dag gi nye bar sbyod pa la gshad pa dang / bci bar byed do /

193. Vaidya, p. 307, l. 24. The Tibetan is quite different here. Peking, p. 273b, l. 1: mchil ma dag kyang ’dor zhing las kyi rnam par smin pa mi zhes so / gang dge ’dun kyi nye bar spyod ba la mchil ma ’dor ba de dag ni le bcu gnyis su shid sa la’i ’tshal du kha khab kyi mig tsam gyi srog chags su skye’o /

194. Vaidya, p. 307, l. 25. The Tibetan is also slightly different here. Peking, p. 273b, l. 2: gang dge’ dun na gyi so shing la spyod du ma ’os pa la spyod ba de dag ni ru sba (?) la dang /

195. Vaidya, p. 308, l. 11; Peking, p. 274a, l. 6.

196. Vaidya, p. 308, l. 18; Peking, p. 274a, l. 8.

197. Vaidya, p. 308, l. 29; Peking, p. 274b, l. 4. The Tibetan ending is shorter and reads simply: ’phags pa za ma tog bkod pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po’i mdo rdzogs so /
BIBLIOGRAPHY

THE MAIN TEXT AND TRANSLATION


MAHĀYĀNA SŪTRAS AND TRANSLATIONS


205


**Purāṇas and Translations**


**Other**


The Origins of \textit{Oṃ Manipadme Hūṃ}


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INDEX

Alper, Harvey P., 194 n. 103
Amitābha,
at centre of maṇḍala, 82, 93, 103
master of Avalokiteśvara, 49–50, 56, 59, 86
overarching doctrinal figure, 6–7, 93
prompts bestowal of Om Mani padme Hum, 70
Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛti (Amitāyurdhyāna) Sūtra, 49, 99
Vaidehī, vision quest of, 88–89, 102
Aṣṭasāhasrika, 10, 61–62, 87–91
dharmabhāṇaka, 81
Sadāprarudita, vision quest of, 88–91
Avalokiteśvara
ādibuddha (creator) doctrine, 12, 44–45, 86
Amitābha (servant of), 49–50, 56, 59, 86
ātman doctrine, 45–46, 86
as Avalokitavasara, 53
as Bālāha (flying horse), 63–64, 77–79
as bee, 32–33, 93
bhakti doctrine, 102–103
compassion of, 50, 106
conversion of Śiva, 31–33, 52, 63, 65, 78, 86
as Čuṇḍa, 58–59
darsana doctrine, 7, 102, 104, 106
dhāranī hymns, 41–43
eleven-headed, 41
four-armed, 41, 112, 192 n. 56
hair pores, 62–64, 77–78, 90–91, 96–98, 101–102, 104
hundred and eight forms, 58, 111
as īśvara, 4, 7, 37–59, 86
jaṭāmukuta (twisted locks), 41
Jetavana vihāra (transforms), 63
as Kuan-yin (and variants of), 53–58
like Kṛṣṇa, 100–103
light rays from mouth, 63
lotus qualities, 115
as maheśvara, 38
manifold forms, 44, 50–51, 63
name (calling upon), 51–52, 63–64, 95–98, 107–108
name (meaning of), 52–59
pre–eminent, 46–47
punya, 107
as puruṣa, 4, 38–40, 44, 86
sPyan ras gzigs, 58
samādhis of, 49–50, 63, 90, 106
Śākyamuni (servant of), 56, 59, 86
and Samantabhadra, 6, 14, 47–49, 63, 78, 104
as Sukunḍala (brahmin beggar), 21, 28
theophany from body, 40, 44, 63
thousandfold form, 16, 35, 40–41, 63–64, 101, 106
in vāmana-avatāra, 26–28
vidyadhipataye (title), 61
Avatamsaka Sūtra, 6, 14, 47–49, 53–54
Chinese commentary on, 55, 57
Bālāha (flying horse), 63–64, 77–79
Bali, story of, 22–32, 85, 93, 95, 96, 115
bhasmarāśim (heap of ashes), 43
Beal, Samuel, 54, 174 n. 128
Beck, Guy L., 32
Bendall, Cecil, 162, n. 72
Beyer, Stephan, 88, 98–99, 102
The Origins of "Om Manipadme Hûm"

Bhagavadgîtâ, 37–40, 46
and Mahâyâna vision, 6–7, 98–103
Bhâgavata Purâṇa, 22–24, 26, 29, 30, 32, 84
bhakti doctrine, 6, 20, 34, 76, 99, 103
Bhattacharya, Benoytosh, 192 n. 54
Bodhicaryâvatâra, 11, 58
Bokar Rinpoche, 191 nn. 35 and 46
Brough, John, 12, 174 n. 141
Bucknell, R. S., 191 n. 45
Buitenen, J. A. B. van, 179 n. 90, 182 n. 42
Burnouf, Eugène, 16, 17, 55, 161 n. 58, 162 n. 67
Chandra, Lokesh, 35, 40–43, 53, 58
Chos kyi dbang phyug, 156 n. 7
Conze, Edward, 10, 13
Cozort, Daniel, 191 n. 44
Cunḍâ, 58–59
Dalai Lama, 3, 116–117
Daniélon, Alain, 28
darśana doctrine, 7, 99–104, 106
David-Neel, Alexandra, 118
dharmabhâṇaka, 26, 34, 41, 62, 65, 71, 91, 115
as tantric yogin, 81–85
Divyâvadâna, 20, 21, 78
rDorje'i Tshig gSum, 10
Douglas, Nik, 156, n. 11
Dowson, John, 169 n. 50
Dudjom Rinpoche, 156 n. 7
Dug gsum 'dul ba, 15
Dutt, Nalinaksha, 12, 13
Dyczkowski, Mark S. G., 194 n. 102
Edgerton, F., 12
Emmerick, R. E., 13, 160, n. 53
Ekvall, Robert, 155 n. 2
Fa Hien, 53

Gâṇḍavyûha Sûtra, 48, 50–52, 90, 113–114, 116
Sudhana, vision quest of, 88–89
dGa’ rab rDorje, 10
Gellner, David, 12
Gethin, Rupert, 170 n. 58
Gomez, Luis, 9
Gonda, Jan, 34, 38, 71, 105–106
Govinda, Lama Anagarika, 2
Grhapati Ugra Pariprçchâ, 53
Gupta, Sanjukta, 179 n. 96
Gyatso, Janet, 156, nn. 6 and 10, 192 n. 56
Hari-Hara, 35, 43
Harivamśa, 22
Hinüber, O. von, p. 159 nn. 33 and 34
Hṛdaya Sūtra, 13, 62
Hsuan Tsang, 54, 57
Imaeda, Yoshiro, 15
Īśvaragṛttâ, 6, 102
I-Tsing, 83

Jaimînya Upaniṣad Brâhmaṇa, 73
Jerstad, Luther G., 156 n. 8
Kapstein, Matthew, 155 n. 6
Karmapa,
“black hat” ceremony, 3
Karmay, Heather, 169 n. 36
Kâraṇḍavyûha Sûtra,
academic articles on, 16
arrival in Tibet, 14–15
bhakti doctrine, 20
and Bhagavadgîtâ, 100–103
and Buddha Nature sūtras, 46, 73–74
Chinese translation of, 15
dating of, 11–17
different Sanskrit editions, 4, 9, 16–17
Gilgit manuscripts, 12–13, 17
meaning of title, 9–10
monastic origins, 5, 77–81, 85, 103
nâmamanusmṛti doctrine, 96
place of origin, 14, 17
Tibetan translation, 4, 17
verse version, 9, 11–12, 15
western translations of, 17
worship of, 10
Karunapundarikasutra, 53
Katha Upanishad, 72
mKhas grub rje, 13
Khyentse, Dilgo, 156 n. 8
Krshna, 22
atman doctrine, 46
as tvarapuru sa, 37–40
and Mahayana vision, 98–102
thousandfold form, 40
Ksemaraja, 117
Kuan-yin (and variants of), 53–58
Kuan-shih-yin-yen-yen-chi, 53
Karma Purana, 6, 40, 102
Kors, Alexander Csoma de, 161 n. 55

Lacote, Felix, 182 n. 42
Ladner, Lorne, 155 n. 3
Lalitavistara, 20
Lal, P., 164 n. 15
Lalou, Marcelle, 161 nn. 58 and 61, 181
n. 29, 182 n. 44
La,kavatara Sutra, 46
Legge, James, 173 n. 120
Lessing, F. D., p. 159 n. 39
Lewis, Todd T., 163 n. 12
Lha tho tho ri, 14
Lienhard, Siegfried, 12, 16, 20, 78
Linga Purana, 38, 65, 67–68, 72–73,
109
Locke, John K., 12
Lopez, Donald S., 155 n. 1
Losty, Jeremiah P., 16
lotus, significance of, 112–116

Macchandar Vahal, 58, 111
Ma cig Lab kyi sgron ma, 155 n. 6
Mahabharta, 19, 22
Mahaparinirvana Sutra, 46
Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra, 54
mahasiddha, concept of, 5, 82–84
Mahavastu, 20, 21, 78
Mahayanoitaratrantrasstra, 74
Majumder, P. C., 10, 16

Malla, p. 158, n. 25
Mallmann, Marie-Therese, 55
Mamfakya Upanishad, 71
Manipadma (and Manipadma), 111–112
Manju,srmulakalpa Tantra, 13, 84, 92,
111
mantra etymology, 105, 174 n. 136, 189 n. 2
function, 106
suta, 110
Matsunaga, Alice, 168, n. 35
Matsunaga, Yukei, 13
Mayer, Robert, 52, 165 n. 60, 173, n. 112
Mette, Adelheid, 12–13, 16–17
Michell, G., 168 n. 34
Mironov, N. D., 53, 57
Monier-Williams, Monier, 10

Nadabindu Upanishad, 32
Nama,h Sivaya, 4, 65–76
correspondence of syllables, 109
Dasarha and Kalavati, story of, 66–
68, 71, 75
as goddess, 74
as hrdaya, 5, 67
as pranava, 5, 71–75, 87, 91
protective power, 107–108
as sakti, 74–76
seed of banyan tree, 73
six-syllable variant, 65
vidya, 67

Narada Purana, 39
Neumaier-Dargyay, E. K., 170 n. 60
Norbu, Namkhai, 156 n. 12, 157 n. 15,
189 n. 4

Om (pranava)7, 65, 71–73, 87, 91, 99,
102–103

Om Manipadme Ham, 67–76
Amitabha (in ma,ala of), 82, 93,
103
bhakti doctrine, 76, 102–103
compassion, produces, 50, 106–107
correspondence of syllables, 108–109
darsana doctrine, 102–104, 106
dharmabhakya, 34, 62, 71, 81–84
The Origins of Oṃ Manipadme Hūṃ

Oṃ Manipadme Hūṃ (continued)

as goddess, 74, 92
hair pores of Avalokiteśvara, 62, 97–98, 102, 104, 106
ḥṛdaya (paramahṛdaya), 5, 67, 106, 108
japa, 95, 103, 107
manḍala, 62, 70–71, 82–85, 92–95
meaning, 7, 105–118
nāmānusmṛti doctrine, 95, 97–98, 102–103, 107–108
Prajñāpāramitā (supercedes), 87–91, 103
prājñā, 5, 71–75, 87, 91, 102–103, 108
prayer wheels, 1–2
protective power, 107–108
puṇya, 107
rice grain, 73, 87
as śakti, 6, 76, 92–93, 103
samādhī, 50, 94, 106, 109
search for, 62, 70, 88–91
six pāramitās, 87, 109
Sukhāvatī (rebirth in), 93, 97–98, 103–104, 116, 118
Tun Huang, 15
worn on body, 108
written, 108
vidyā (mahāvidyā), 61–62, 67, 108

Padma Purāṇa, 84
Pas, J. F., 171 n. 87
Pelliot, Paul, 161 n. 61
Piyasfllo, 175 nn. 144, 145 and 146
Poussin, Louis de la Vallée, 55, 173 n. 127
Prajñāpāramitā (Perfection of Wisdom), 5, 10, 54, 62, 87–91
Pratyutpanna Sūtra,
Sudatta, vision quest of, 88–89
Przybłski, Jean, 16, 182 n. 47
Puruṣasūktā (Ṛgveda, x, 90), 38–40, 44, 101
Rāma, 20, 34–35
Rāmāyaṇa, 19, 20, 22
Rao, T. A. G., 169 n. 42

Ratnaguṇasamcayagāthā, 83
Ratnakāraṇḍavyāha (Ratnakārāṇḍa), 9
Rāvaṇa, 20, 34, 86
Régamey, Constantin, 12, 16, 17, 19–22, 28, 30, 34, 35
Renou, Louis, 55
Reynolds, John Myrdhin, 157 nn. 14 and 15, 170 n. 60
Rhie, Marylin M., 191 n. 43, 192 n. 56
Richardson, Hugh, 160 n. 46
Rocher, Ludo, 20, 28, 69, 71, 102
Rockhill, William W., 155

Śaṭākṣari Lokeśvara, 111–112
Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra, 90, 113–114
and Bhagavadgītā, 98
bhakti doctrine, 20
dharmabhāṇaka, 82
edition of H. Kern, 56, 96
manifold forms of Avalokiteśvara, 51
name (calling upon) of Avalokiteśvara, 21, 51–52, 96, 107
name (meaning of) of Avalokiteśvara, 52–57
Sadāparībhūta, vision quest of, 89

Sādhanamālā, 112
Śākyamuni (master of Avalokiteśvara), 56, 59, 86

Samantabhadra, 14, 47–48, 104
samādhīvigrāha (samādhi contest), 6–7, 49, 63, 78
Sanderson, Alexis, 184 n. 95
Sarvatathāgatatattvasamgraha Tantra, 13, 31, 92
Sastri, K. A. Nilakantha, 179 n. 80
Schopen, Gregory, 93
Shastri, M. D., 167 n. 2
Śīkṣasamuccaya, 11

Simbīhal, king, 5, 20, 64, 65, 77–80, 90
island, 20, 63, 64
Śīva, 42

ādideva (creator) doctrine, 31, 44–45
ātman doctrine, 45–46
as bee, 32
as Bhasmeșvara, 31
conversion of, 13, 31–33, 52, 63, 65, 78, 86
as tśvara, 37–38
jaṭāmukuta (twisted locks), 41
linga, 19–20, 28–30, 33, 44, 86
as mahēșvara, 31–34, 37–38, 40, 44
as Nilakaṇṭha, 42–43
as puruṣa, 38
as Śaṅkara, 25–26, 42
as siddha, 42–43
thousandfold form, 40, 103
in vāmana-avatāra, 24–26
and Viṣṇu, 4, 33–35, 42
Skanda Purāṇa, 4, 5, 19, 22–30, 33–35, 43, 45, 65, 72
Dāśārha and Kalāvatī, story of, 66–68, 71, 75
Snellgrove, David, 13, 92
Soifer, Deborah A., 22
Śrīmahādevīyākaraṇa, 56
Staël-Holstein, A. von, 57
Sukhāvatī, 41, 49–50, 51
Sukhāvatī,
and Avalokiteśvara, 41, 49–51, 94, 104
generalized religious goal, 6–7, 13, 93
and Oṁ Manipadme Ham, 93, 97–98, 104, 116, 118
Sukhāvatīvyāha Sūtra,
long, 9, 49, 53–54, 56, 113–115
short, 9, 95
Dharmākara, vision quest of, 88
Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra, 13
Suzuki, Beatrice Lane, 120
śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, 40, 72
Śvalpākṣara Sūtra, 13
Śravaṇabhaṭṭapurāṇa, 11–12, 16, 20
Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 71
Taizokai maṇḍala, 119–120
Takasaki, J., 179 n. 92
Tārānātha, 15, 84
Thang stong rgyal po, 155 n. 6
Thartang Tulku, 160 n. 46
Thomas, F. W., 191 n. 50
sTong Thang lDan dKar, 15
Tucci, Giuseppe, 11, 16, 56
Tun Huang, 15–16, 41
Umadevī, conversion of, 31–32, 63, 86
vaḍavamukha (mouth of the mare), 43
Vaidya, P. L., 4, 17, 62
Vairocana Sūtra, 120
Valāhassajātaka, 78
vāmana-avatāra, 4, 22–34, 39, 43, 84–85
Vārāṇasī, Avalokiteśvara as a bee, 14, 32–33, 63
city of Śiva, 33–35, 65
home of dharmabhāșaka, 14, 62, 65, 69–71
Verhagen, P. C., 194 n. 104
vidyā, concept of, 61–62, 67
vidyadhara, concept of, 5, 82–84
Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra, 53, 57, 114
Viṣṇu (Nārāyaṇa)
as bee, 30, 32
as Hari, 32, 34, 42
as tśvara, 37
other avatāras, 30
as puruṣa, 39
and Śiva, 4, 33–35, 69, 86
thousandfold form, 40
as vāmana, 4, 22–30, 39, 43
and vyāha, 9
Waley, Arthur, 169 n. 36
Wayman, Alex, 176 n. 9
William of Rubruck, 1
Williams, Paul, 160 n. 52
Winternitz, Maurice, 16, 20
Yamada, Meiji, 58
Zopa, Lama Thubten, 156 n. 12
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INDEX TO APPENDIX
Précis of Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra

Amitābha,
master of Avalokiteśvara, 143–144, 151
in maṇḍala, 143
Ānanda, 152–154

Avalokiteśvara
Amitābha, wearing image of, 130
in asura realm, 127
in Avīci hell, 122–3
as Bālāha (flying horse), 135–136
and Bali, 128–130
as bee, 133
compassion, 123, 128, 131
in deva realm, 132–133,
eleven heads, 138
hair pores, 134, 137–140, 149–150, 152
jaṭāmukuṭa (twisted locks), 122,
130, 148
Jetavana vihāra, transforms, 122,
124, 131, 150
in Kāñcana-mayāy, 127
in level made of silver, 127
light rays, 122, 128, 131, 150
in Magadhā, 134
as Maheśvara, 123
Maheśvara (conversion of), 151
manifold forms, 126
name (calling upon), 126, 128, 130,
134, 138–140
in preta realm, 123
punya, 125–126, 135, 151
samādhis, 134–135, 151, 152
and Samantabhadra, 152
on Simhala (island of), 133
as Sukuṇḍala (brāhmin beggar),
132–133
svarṇabimbamiva (like golden
orb), 122, 128
theophany from body, 123–124
thousandfold form, 138
in yakṣa and rākṣasa realm, 131

Bali, 128–130
bhasmarāsim (heap of ashes), 150
Cunḍā, dhāraṇī of, 149
darśana,
of Avalokiteśvara, 138, 148–150
of dharmabhāṇaka, 145–146
of Jetavana vihāra, 122, 133
of Śākyamuni, 150
dharmabhāṇaka, 145–148
Jetavana vihāra, 121–122, 124–125,
131–134, 148–151

Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra,
name of, 137
sound of, 123
in Sukhāvatī, 133
taught by Avalokiteśvara, 127–128,
132
taught by Śākyamuni, 152
worshipped, 127
written, 132

221
light rays
from Avalokiteśvara, 122, 128, 131, 150
from *tathāgata* Śikhin, 123
lotuses
    in Avīci hell, 122
    gifts of Avalokiteśvara, 125, 150
    in hair pores, 139, 149
    in Jetavana *vihāra*, 122, 124, 131, 133, 150
    *padme*, 126
    *ratnapadme*, 131
in story of Śimhala, 136

Mahāmaṇidhara, 144
Mahēśvara,
    *ādideva* (creator) doctrine, 124
    Bhasmeśvara, 151
conversion of, 151
in Jetavana *vihāra*, 121,
    *linga*, 124
and Nārāyaṇa, 121–122, 146
title of Avalokiteśvara, 123, 151
monasticism, 152–154

Nārāyaṇa,
in Jetavana *vihāra*, 121
and Mahēśvara, 121–122, 146
*vāmana* (dwarf), 129
other *avataras*, 129

*Oṃ Manipadme Hūṃ*,
and Bali, 130
bestowal of, 144, 148
compassion, 148
hair pores of Avalokiteśvara, 140, 149
initiation of *vidyādhara-cakravartin*, 140

*Japa*, 140, 145, 148
manḍala, 143–144
as a name, 140, 148–149
-padam, 147
paramahṛdaya, 140
and Prajñāparamita, 147
*puṇya*, 141–143, 145
rice grain, 147–148
*saṃādhīs*, 145, 148
six *pāramitās*, 140, 145, 148
worn on body, 140, 146
written, 141

Rāvaṇa, 122

Śākyamuni,
in Jetavana *vihāra*, 121
master of Avalokiteśvara, 138, 150, 152
searches for *Oṃ Manipadme Hūṃ*, 141
as Śimhala, 135–136
teaches *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra*, 152

Samantabhadra, 138, 152
Śimhala,
    island of, 133, 135
    king, 135–136

Umādevī, 151

*vāḍavamukha* (mouth of the mare), 150

Vārānasī,
    Avalokiteśvara as bee, 133
    and *dharmabhāṣaka*, 145
rebirth in filth of, 153

*vāmana* (dwarf), 129
*vidyādhara*, 140, 144