

Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra**

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Abstract

In the present paper the Avalokiteśvara chapter of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra* will be examined. In this text, Avalokiteśvara appears as one of the 53 benevolent friends or *kalyāṇamitras* of Sudhana, the protagonist of the sūtra and prototype of all aspirants for bodhisattvahood. Avalokiteśvara's role in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* is rather that of a teacher and not of the "superbodhisattva", almighty savior, as in the later Mahāyāna. He teaches the method of great compassion, the aim of which is to free all sentient beings from any kind of fears in order to lead them into the supreme perfect awakening, thus being adopted in the didactic scheme of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. The relevant passages and terminological lists are presented and analyzed.

The author develops the hypothesis that the Avalokiteśvara chapter of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* reflects a very early phase of the development of the concept and

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image of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara when the cult of the latter had not yet taken shape and widely spread in the Buddhist world and he clearly remains in the shadow of the three other archetypical bodhisattvas — Samantabhadra, Mañjuśrī, and Maitreya. The present writer does not exclude the possibility that the figure of Avalokiteśvara might have been developed on the basis of syncretism of the Buddhist teaching of compassion and the cult of some local protective deity. The question of location of the mount Potalaka as the residence of Avalokiteśvara is also discussed.

On the basis of a glimpse comparison with a number of other sources (*Lotus Sūtra*, *Sukhāvataīvyūha*, *Heart Sūtra*, *Śūraṅgamasūtra*), the author concludes that in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* Avalokiteśvara represents the active way of education and meditation as he does in the *Heart Sūtra*, while in the *Lotus Sūtra* and *Sukhāvataīvyūha* the aspect of passive faith and devotion is dominant. In the *Śūraṅgamasūtra*, being a later source, the combination of those two is elaborated.

Key words: 1. *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra* 2. Avalokiteśvara 3. Mount Potalaka
4. Great Compassion 5. Way of Education 6. Way of Faith

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Introduction

Although there are plenty of works on the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara published in Western languages and much more in Chinese, Japanese, and other Asian languages, the origin of this noble and magnificent figure, however, has still remained obscure.¹ The image of Avalokiteśvara first appears in the ancient Indian Buddhist iconography of the second to third centuries C.E., in reliefs of the temples and *stūpa* complexes in Gandhāra, as a companion of the Buddha. Later, in the fifth or sixth century, it is already found throughout India as an independent figure and object of cult.² It is natural, however, to consider that there must have been a certain evolution of the concept before it found its way into religious art. Thus, the beginning of the Avalokiteśvara cult may be dated back at least a century or two earlier, that is the period between the first century B.C.E. and the first century C.E. which coincides what is commonly accepted as the time when early Mahāyāna emerged in India.³

The written sources seem to confirm this assumption. In the *Lotus Sūtra* and the larger *Sukhāvatīvyūhasūtra*, both supposedly dating back to the first or second

¹ The most recent comprehensive studies to mention are: Yü 2001, and Dung 2001, both works including extensive bibliography on the topic referred. Leighton (2003: 169) summarizes the topic: “Scholarly speculations on the origins of Avalokiteshvara as a Mahāyāna bodhisattva range from suggestions of Persian antecedents to the theory that Avalokiteshvara was a personification of Shakyamuni’s compassionate gaze. Some forms of Avalokiteshvara are thought to be derived from forms of the Indian deity Shiva. Other scholarly speculations attributes her historical origin to ancient sun-worship cults.” (See also footnote 28.)

² On the image of Avalokiteśvara in early Gandhāra art see, e.g., Rhi 2003: 165-170. On the dating of the beginning of Avalokiteśvara Cult in North India based on the study of inscriptions, see, e.g., Schopen 1987: 119-120, and Holt 1991: 30.

³ There exist a large number of special works in the modern Buddhist scholarship discussing the problems of the origin and early history of the Mahāyāna. A comprehensive compendium of the problems and the current state of the study with rich bibliography is given by Ruegg (2004); see also Harrison 2003, and Aramaki 2003. The early emergence of the Mahāyāna was, however, disputed by Schopen (1987: 124-125).

century C.E.,⁴ we meet bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara already in his full glory described in the former as the almighty savior of sentient beings from all dangers and disasters, and in the latter as the main attendant of the Buddha Amitābha in the latter's Buddha-field. Thus, these two texts reflect the phase in the development of Buddhist religion when the Avalokiteśvara cult and worship had already reached its peak. The concept and figure of Avalokiteśvara as given in later sources (*Amitāyurdhyānasūtra*, *Heart Sūtra*, *Śūraṅgamasūtra*, *Karaṇḍavyūha* et al.) are definitely based on those two earlier scriptures.⁵ None of those texts, however, casts any light on the possible origin of Avalokiteśvara.

The list of the early literary sources containing materials on the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara could, however, not be complete without the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*, another early Mahāyāna sūtra which is, for reasons unknown to me, quite rarely cited in this connection. Even when it is mentioned then merely as one of the main sources in which the mysterious mount Potalaka, the residence of Avalokiteśvara is described.⁶ Much more interesting and meaningful doctrinal issues contained in the Avalokiteśvara chapter of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, however, are almost completely ignored or overlooked by modern authors.

In this paper, I will introduce and analyze the content of the Avalokiteśvara chapter of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. This is one of the earliest sources revealing the concept

⁴ According to Nakamura (1989: 186), the central part of the *Lotus Sūtra* "had already been in existence at the end of the first century A.D., and the sūtra was completed about the end of the second century A.D..." He also assures us that the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha* was in existence before 200 A.D. (1989: 205).

⁵ Contradictory dates are given by scholars regarding the possible time of the the creation of the *Amitāyurdhyāna*. Nakamura says, it was most probably produced at the end of fifth century (Nakamura 1989: 208); Holt, however, reports that it was translated from Sanskrit into Chinese as early as in the third century (Holt 1991: 34). Nakamura (1989: 160) dates the *Heart Sūtra* in the period between 150 and 200 C.E., but Conze (1978: 1, 11) states that short *prajñāpāramitā* sūtras, including the *Heart Sūtra*, belong to the period between 300 to 500 C.E. Lopez (1988) also supports the later origin of the *Heart Sūtra* (see footnote 74). The *Śūraṅgama* and *Karaṇḍavyūha* belong to a later period, either the 5th or the 6th century (Nakamura 1989: 319; Holt 1991: 46).

⁶ See, e.g., Leighton 2003: 191; Niyogi 2001: 57.

and figure of the great bodhisattva and thus its examination and the comparison with other textual sources may allow us to see the problem of the origin and meaning of the concept and figure of Avalokiteśvara in the early Mahāyāna literature in a new light.⁷

The *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra* as a Source

Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra,⁸ in Chinese Buddhism best known under the title *Ru fajie pin* (入法界品) as the last chapter of the voluminous *Huayan jing* (華嚴經 or *Avataṃsakasūtra*),⁹ is, like the *Lotus Sūtra*, in terms of literary form and

⁷ As the 24th chapter of the *Lotus* that is fully dedicated to Avalokiteśvara seemingly belongs to the later stratum of the text, and the *Gaṇḍavyūha* most likely already existed by the end of first century C.E. (see footnote 13), we have strong reasons to assume that the latter is, indeed, the earliest extant Mahāyāna sūtra revealing the figure and doctrine of Avalokiteśvara.

⁸ In this article, the critical edition of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra* by P. L. Vaidya is used as the source-text (Vaidya 1960), henceforth indicated in the footnotes by Gv, followed by the respective page and line numbers.

⁹ The full title of the *Avataṃsaka* is *Mahāvaiṣṭyabuddhāvataṃsakasūtra* (*Dafangguang fohuayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經)—“The Great Expanded Sūtra of the Flower Garland of the Buddhas”. There exist three versions of it in Chinese. The earliest one is the *Sixty-fascicle Huayan jing* translated by Buddhābhaya (*Fotuobatuoluo* 佛駄跋陀羅) in 418-20; *Ru fajie pin* is found there in fascicles 44-60 (T 278: 9, 676a-788b). Next, called the *Eighty-fascicle Huayan jing* was translated by Śikṣānanda (*Shichanantuo* 實叉難陀) in 695-695; *Ru fajie pin* is found in fascicles 60-80 (T 279: 10, 319a-444c). The latest version is the *Fourty-fascicle Huayan jing* translated by Prajñā (*Banruo* 般若) in 796-798 and consisting only of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* portion under the subtitle *Ru busiyi jietuo jingjie Puxian xingyuan pin* (入不思議解脫境界普賢行願品) (T 293: 10, 661a-851c). There exist also two fragmentary translations of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. *Luomojia jing* (羅摩伽經) in three fascicles was translated by śramaṇa Shengjian (聖堅) between 388 and 412 (T 294: 10, 851c-876a); and *Dafangguang fohuayan jing* in one fascicle translated by Divakara (*Dipoheluo* 地婆訶羅) in 680-s (T 295: 10, 876b-878c); the latter, however, does not contain the Avalokiteśvara chapter. The phonetic translation of the title *Gaṇḍavyūha*—*Jiannapiaohe* (健拏驪訶)—appears in Fazang’s (法藏) *Huayan jing tanxuan ji* (華嚴經探玄記) (T 1733: 35,121a) and Chengguan’s

composition a compendium of didactic religious tales, composed as such, most likely, for the purpose of presenting as completely as possible all the doctrinal issues circulating at the time in the Buddhist world of India interpreted within the new framework of the Mahāyāna. The compositional unifying thread is the story of the merchant's son Sudhana (*Shancai tongzi* 善財童子), an aspirant for the bodhisattvahood, who, following bodhisattva Mañjuśrī's (*Wenshushili pusa* 文殊師利菩薩) instruction, travels round India and visits various teachers called 'benevolent friends' (*kalyāṇamitras*, *shan zhishi* 善知識), fifty-three altogether, in order to ask them about the bodhisattva conduct (*bodhisattvacaryā*, *pusa xing* 菩薩行). Each of them gives Sudhana specific instructions to contemplate, and finally these were integrated in the meditation of the vision of Maitreya's (*Mile pusa* 彌勒菩薩) magic mansion (*kūṭagāra*), leading Sudhana into the realization of the totality

(澄觀) *Dafangguang fohuayan jing shu* (大方廣佛華嚴經疏) (T 1735: 35, 524b) obviously referring to the whole collection of the *Avatamsaka*; see also Grohmann 1997: 52. The *Eighty-Huayan* is translated into English by Thomas Cleary, the *Gaṇḍavyūha* occupying a separate volume (Cleary 1989).

The Chinese title *Ru fajie pin* is supposed to render Sanskrit **Dharmadhātupraveśanaparivarta* ("Chapter of the Entering into the Realm of Dharma") but no Sanskrit version of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* under this title has survived. We may only hypothetically presume that the title *Dharmadhātupraveśana* was used in some earlier versions of the sūtra, circulating in Central Asia as an independent texts, or as a part of a pre-400 C.E. *Avatamsaka* recension which was brought to China not later than the beginning of the fifth century, the time from which the first complete translation by Buddhahadra dates. The subtitle for the *Fourty-Huayan—Ru busiyi jietuo jingjie Puxian xingyuan pin* — is the rendering of Sanskrit title *Acintyavimokṣagocarapraveśanasamantabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* ("Entering into the Area of Inconceivable Liberation and the Vow of the Conduct of Samantabhadra") under which the sūtra seemingly was circulating in South India from where it was brought to China at the end of the eighth century (see, e.g., Jan 1959). The oldest surviving Sanskrit manuscript is Nepalese and dates from the end of the twelfth century. It bears the title *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*. The most comprehensive English overview of the different Sanskrit versions and Chinese translations of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* is found in Gómez 1967: xviii-xxxii; see also Hirakawa 1993: 279-282.

of the bodhisattvahood embodied in the figure of the great bodhisattva Samantabhadra (*Puxian pusa* 普賢菩薩).¹⁰

Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in the Role of a *kalyāṇamitra*

In the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, Avalokiteśvara¹¹ appears as one of Sudhana's benevolent friends, the twenty-eighth in the order visited by him. His status as a teacher is equal to the other *kalyāṇamitras*— monks, nuns, householders, merchants, kings, goddesses etc. who represent a cross-section of the intellectual elite in India at that time plus some mythological figures who, according to the understanding of Mahāyāna Buddhists, naturally belonged to the same circle being ideal archetypical teachers created in meditation but acting as real gurus in the minds of devoted adepts.¹²

Avalokiteśvara's contribution to Sudhana's bodhisattva education is thus also equal to that of other "average" *kalyāṇamitras*, in that it explores just one aspect of the bodhisattva conduct, here the one based on the concept of 'great compassion' (*mahākaruṇā*, *dabei* 大悲). Like the other benevolent friends, Avalokiteśvara

¹⁰ D. T. Suzuki is the author of the first philosophical interpretation of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* in English (Suzuki 1968: 146-226; Suzuki 1985: 68-221). A précis of the contents of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* is given in Warder 1980: 424-429. Gómez (1977) presents an intriguing interpretation of the concept of bodhisattva in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. My own preliminary vision of the study of the scripture is laid down in Läänemets 2003.

¹¹ In the *Luomo* and *Sixty-Huayan* Avalokiteśvara appears under the name *Guanshiyin* (觀世音); in the *Eighty-Huayan* and *Fourty-Huayan* the name is rendered as *Guanzizai* (觀自在).

¹² In the case of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, for example, the sūtra text itself was composed to function as a teacher in the mind of a reader, as Mäll (2005: 88-95) demonstrates. I think, many textual situations in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* may have been composed with similar purpose; the specific feature of this text, however, is that doctrinal issues are never revealed independently but only as part of the instruction of a particular *kalyāṇamitra* who represents a group whose members are literary personages and archetypical teachers at the same time. Possibility that historical figures may have been behind the personages of some benevolent friends of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* should also not be excluded but it is impossible to prove.

acknowledges, after revealing his teaching, that of all the methods within the vast scope of a bodhisattva's conduct he can only teach this particular one and is not able to impart the attitude and knowledge of the great bodhisattvas who are like Samantabhadra in their entirety.

This shows clearly that at least when the *Gaṇḍavyūha* was composed,¹³ in the religious and scholarly circles involved in this text-building process, Avalokiteśvara had not yet risen to the level of universally worshipped bodhisattvas as had Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra, and Maitreya who appear in the sūtra as “superbodhisattvas” integrating all aspects of the bodhisattva conduct.¹⁴ The

¹³ The exact date of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* is still a matter of discussion. Gómez (1967: lxviii-lxxiv), on the basis of the analysis of direct and indirect sources and referring to some archaeological material has set up both a *terminus ad quem* and a *terminus ad quo* for the *Gaṇḍavyūha* that are respectively the second half of the third century C.E. and the “period shortly after the beginning of our era.” Nakamura (1989: 195) says: “The *Gaṇḍavyūha* is likely to have been composed in the early reign of the Kuṣāṇa dynasty, i.e., 1-100 A.D.”

¹⁴ The eulogy in Mañjuśrī's address found in the Maitreya chapter contains, for example, the following superlative items: *sa kulaputra bodhisattvakoṭīniyutaśatasahasrāṇām praṇidhānaviśeṣaḥ saṃvidyate yo mañjuśriyaḥ kumārabhūtasya | viśtīrṇaḥ kulaputra mañjuśriyaḥ kumārabhūtasya caryānirhāraḥ | apramāṇo mañjuśriyaḥ kumārabhūtasya praṇidhāna-abhinirhāraḥ | apratiprasrabdho mañjuśriyaḥ kumārabhūtasya sarvabodhisattvaguṇaviśeṣa-abhinirhāraḥ | mātā mañjuśrīḥ kumārabhūto buddhakoṭīniyutaśatasahasrāṇām | avavādako mañjuśrīḥ kumārabhūto bodhisattvakoṭīniyutaśatasahasrāṇām | udyukto mañjuśrīḥ kumārabhūtaḥ sarvasattvadhātuparipākavinayāya |*

(“Son of good family! The most distinguishing vows of hundreds of thousands decillions of bodhisattvas ever known, are those of the youthful prince Mañjuśrī. Extensive, son of good family, is the accomplishment of the conduct of youthful prince Mañjuśrī. Measureless is the accomplishment of the vows of the youthful prince Mañjuśrī. Ceaseless is the accomplishment of the most distinguishing virtues of all bodhisattvas of youthful prince Mañjuśrī. Youthful prince Mañjuśrī is the mother of hundreds of thousands decillions of Buddhas. Youthful prince Mañjuśrī is the teacher of hundreds of thousands decillions of the Bodhisattvas. Youthful prince Mañjuśrī is engaged in the maturing and disciplining of the realm of all sentient beings.”) (Gv: 418, 12-18; T 278: 9, 783b; T 279: 10, 439a; T 293: 10, 836c.)

authors of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* perceived him rather as a locally venerated Buddhist saint or deity, in any case a being on a much lower level than the three bodhisattvas just mentioned. So, we may suppose that the Avalokiteśvara presented in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* was only starting his “career” as a great bodhisattva in the advancing Mahāyāna movement. Due to the present lack of supportive data at our command, we only may speculate on the role the *Gaṇḍavyūha* might have played in the development of the cult of Avalokiteśvara by including him as a bodhisattva into their soteriological system. It still seems to me that the hypothesis that the *Gaṇḍavyūha* may have played a crucial role in this process must not be excluded.

As mentioned before, bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara appears in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* in the common range together with other mundane and divine *kalyāṇamitras* from whom he did not differ formally by status or special virtues. Even more, the Avalokiteśvara chapter is one of the shortest among the *kalyāṇamitra* chapters lagging behind many others in terms of volume and richness of doctrinal explanation. This again demonstrates that the figure of Avalokiteśvara was not very prominent in the eyes of the authors of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, and so they did not make an extra effort to develop a grandiose story around his personage as they have done, for example, in the cases of most of the night goddesses and especially of bodhisattva Maitreya.

The literary form and style of the Avalokiteśvara chapter¹⁵ follow the general pattern applied throughout the *Gaṇḍavyūha* with few minor deviations. The pattern includes some standard structural units in fixed order: Sudhana’s arrival at the place of the *kalyāṇamitra*; description of the surroundings and the retinue as well as the appearance of the *kalyāṇamitra* (this is the most optional unit often being absent but present in the Avalokiteśvara chapter); Sudhana pays homage and asks for instruction; the *kalyāṇamitra*’s praise for Sudhana’s resolve to attain supreme perfect awakening (*anuttarāsamyaṣambodhi*, *anouduolo sanmiao sanputi* 阿耨多羅三藐三菩提), introduction of his or her method and the giving of instruction; the *kalyāṇamitra* acknowledges his or her limited ability and virtue which is not equal to those of the great bodhisattvas; guiding Sudhana to the next benevolent friend.

¹⁵ The Avalokiteśvara chapter is found in: Gv: 159-164; T 278: 9, 718a-718c; T 279: 10, 366c-367b; T 293: 10, 733a-735c; T 294: 10, 859c-861b; Cleary 1989: 151-156.

One or more verse sections may or may not be added. For the Avalokiteśvara chapter, the verse section poses an extra text-historical problem as it definitely is a later extrapolation, by style, language and doctrine significantly different from the prose section.

Mount Potalaka: Religious and Historical Dimensions

In the Avalokiteśvara chapter, Sudhana's arrival is described in the following way:

*atha khalu sudhanaḥ śreṣṭhidārako...anupūrveṇa yena potalakaḥ parvatas
tena-upasaṃkramya potalakaṃ parvatam abhiruhya avalokiteśvaraṃ
bodhisattvaṃ parimārgaṃ parigaveṣamāno'drakṣīd avalokiteśvaraṃ
bodhisattvaṃ paścimadikparvata-utsaṅge utsasaraḥprasravaṇa-upaśobhite
nīlataṛuṇakuṇḍalaka-jātamaṇḍuśādvalatale mahāvanavivare vajraratna-
śīlāyāṃ paryāṅkaṃ baddhvā upaviṣṭaṃ nānāratnaśīlā-talanīṣaṇṇa-
aparimāṇabodhisattvagaṇaparivṛtaṃ dharmaṃ deśayamānaṃ sarva-
jagatsaṃgrahaṇīyaṃ mahāmaitrīmahākaruṇāmukha-udyotaṃ nāma
dharmaparyāyaṃ saṃprakāśayantaṃ |¹⁶*

("Then, the merchant's son Sudhana... arrived in due order at mount Potalaka, and climbing mount Potalaka he looked around and searched everywhere for the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Finally he saw the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara on a plateau on the western side of the mountain in a clearing of large woods abounding in young grass, adorned with springs and waterfalls, and surrounded by various trees. He was sitting cross-legged on a diamond rock surrounded by a multitude of bodhisattvas seated on rocks of various jewels. He was expounding the dharma-explanation called 'the splendour of the door of great friendliness and great compassion' belonging to the sphere of taking care of all sentient beings.")¹⁷

¹⁶ Gv: 159, 2, 6-11; T 278: 9, 718a; T 279: 10, 366c; T 293: 10, 733a; T 294: 10; 859c.

¹⁷ All English translations are given in the present writer's rendering if not stated otherwise.

As we see, the location here is described in a rather trivial way as a beautiful but still worldly place leaving the impression of a very commonplace mountain slope on this earth, not of a virtual Buddha-field born in meditation which usually is made of diamonds, jewels and other precious materials. With the exception of the diamond and jewel rock seats of Avalokiteśvara himself and his bodhisattva retinue, no wondrous detail is to be found. In other words, the introduction of Avalokiteśvara in his mountain residence does not differ significantly from that of other hermits in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, Meghaśrī, Sāgaramegha or Bhiṣmottaranirghoṣa, for example. This again speaks in favour of the hypothesis that the authors of the sūtra most likely had a really existing place in their mind when they described mount Potalaka and Avalokiteśvara as a local Buddhist saint or mountain deity and not yet the universally honoured great bodhisattva who is the embodiment of great compassion.

In the verse sections, however, more details were added to the description of Avalokiteśvara's abode. The verses at the end of the previous Veṣṭhila chapter mention that mount Potalaka is located 'in the middle of the king of stormy waters' (*śirījalarājamadhye*),¹⁸ an important feature which surely had a great impact on the creation of later myths and legends connecting Avalokiteśvara's residence with the ocean or even describing it as an island.¹⁹ The two following lines describe the surroundings in the mountain generally in the same way as it is done in the prose section but stressing its jewel ground: *ratnāmayaṃ taruvaram kusuma-abhikīrṇam udyānapuṣkiriṇiprasravaṇa-upapetam* ||²⁰ ("Made of jewels, surrounded by trees, scattered with flowers, gardens, ponds and streams.")

In the verse section in the middle of the Avalokiteśvara chapter,²¹ the ocean

¹⁸ Gv: 158, 23. In the *Eighty-Huayan* and *Fourty-Huayan* the verse is translated as 海上有山 (T 279: 10, 366c; T 293: 10, 732c). The verses are absent in the *Sixty-Huayan* as well as in the *Luomo* which proves their later origin.

¹⁹ See, e.g., Leighton 2003: 191-192.

²⁰ Gv: 158, 25-26.

²¹ Gv: 161, 10-12. This extensive verse section containing twenty-two stanzas in the Sanskrit version, is completely absent in all Chinese translations except *Fourty-Huayan*. There, in turn, an eulogy in verses is added which is spoken by Sudhana when he

or other kinds of “stormy waters” are not mentioned any more. The abode of the bodhisattva, however, is described as a ‘jewel mountain’ (*ratnaparvata*) and Avalokiteśvara’s place there as a ‘cave’ (*kandara*) on the ‘diamond slope of the mountain adorned with jewels’ (*vajramaye giritaṭe maṇiratnacitre*). A list of mythological creatures such as ‘gods’ (*deva*), ‘demigods’ (*asura*), ‘serpent-demons’ (*bhujaga*), ‘centaurs’ (*kinnara*), and ‘demons’ (*rakṣasa*) is added as part of his retinue.²² The epithets ‘wise’ (*dhīra*) and ‘hermit’ (*rṣi*) are used for Avalokiteśvara in the verses. Since the verse section is considered to be a later interpolation, we become witness to the changes occurring in the description and the transference of an originally realistic and natural place of beauty to a supramundane adamantine realm. Even more, a direct hint at Avalokiteśvara’s own Buddha-field is found in the verse section.²³

Ancient and modern authors have made attempts to localize mount Potalaka in the real geographical space of India. The most famous passage in this regard, cited and examined again and again by scholars is, that of the Xuanzang’s (玄奘) description of mount Potalaka (*Budaluojia shan* 布坦洛迦山)²⁴ in his *Records on the Western World* (*Datang xiyu ji* 大唐西域記):

“To the east of the Malaya mountains [*Molaye shan* 秣刺耶山]²⁵ is Mount

addresses Avalokiteśvara, and that part is lacking in Sanskrit version from Nepal. This again demonstrates that all verses in the Avalokiteśvara chapter are later interpolations added when Avalokiteśvara worship developed into a popular and widely practised cult in India, and that in India too different versions of the text were circulating.

²² Gv: 163, 10-15.

²³ Gv: 163, 23 (19th stanza); see also footnote 80.

²⁴ The mountain is named differently in the various Chinese translations of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* based obviously on different names in earlier Sanskrit versions. In the *Luomo*, it is called *Jinganglun zhuangyan gaoxian* 金剛輪莊嚴高顯 (*Vajramaṇḍalavyūhābhyudaya*), in the *Sixty-Huayan*— *Guangming* 光明 (*Prabhā*), in both the *Eighty-Huayan* and *Fourty-Huayan* *Budaluojia* 補怛洛迦 (*Potalaka*). The possible Sanskrit versions of the two earlier names are given according to Gómez (1967: xxvii).

²⁵ Chinese characters with *hanyu pinyin* romanization in square brackets are added by the present writer.

Po-ta-lo-kia [*Budaluoja shan* 布坦洛迦山] (Pôtalaka). The passes of this mountain are very dangerous; its sides are precipitous, and its valleys rugged. On the top of the mountain is a lake; its waters are clear as a mirror. From a hollow proceeds a great river which encircles the mountain as it flows down twenty times and then enters the southern sea. By the side of the lake is a rock-palace of the Dêvas. Here Avalôkitêśvara [*Guanzizai pusa* 觀自在菩薩] in coming and going takes his abode. Those who strongly desire to see this Bôdhisattva do not regard their lives, but, crossing the water (*fording the streams*), climb the mountain forgetful of its difficulties and dangers; of those who make the attempt there are very few who reach the summit. But even of those who dwell below the mountain, if they earnestly pray and beg to behold the god, sometimes he appears as Tsz'-tsai-t'ien [*Zizaitian* 自在天] (Îśvâra-dêva), sometimes under the form of a yôgi [*tuhui waidao* 塗灰外道] (*a Pâmśupata*); he addresses them with benevolent words and then they obtain their wishes according to their desires.

"Going north-east from this mountain, on the border of the sea, is a town; this is a place from which they start for the southern sea and the country of Săng-kia-lo [*Sengjialuo guo* 僧迦羅國] (Ceilon). It is said commonly by the people that embarking from this port and going south-east about 3000 li we come to the country of Simhala."²⁶

We do not know whether Xuanzang really visited this place or whether his record is based only on what he heard from the locals.²⁷ Still, in his record the mount Potalaka is described as a real place in South India and we are informed that the

²⁶ Beal 1983: 233-234; T 2087: 51, 932a.

²⁷ Watters (1996: 229), for example, is of the opinion that Xuanzang did not personally visit the countries western of Andhra including Malakuta and, of course, mount Potalaka. He also mentions that Xuanzang may have been inspired directly by the *Gaṇḍavyūha* in his search and description of the mount Potalaka. Lee (1994) even elaborates the theory that the Chinese pilgrim may have tried to follow the route of Sudhana in his travelling in India. He does, however, in his intriguing comparative work not discuss the problem of the location of mount Potalaka.

approximate location of the Potalaka is “to the east of the Malaya mountains” not far from the sea. That must be somewhere in modern Tamilnadu in South-West India, not far to the north from the southern tip of India.

We also learn from Xuanzang’s *Records* that in the first half of the seventh century a kind of mixed Avalokiteśvara-Īśvaradeva (Śiva – ?) cult was practised at this mountain. However, we do not know whether this was in harmony with mainstream Mahāyāna practice at that time or whether we deal with a more or less independent rudimentary local cult. Still, what Xuanzang says seems to support the theory of Avalokiteśvara-Śiva connections.²⁸ The *Gaṇḍavyūha* itself also gives some indirect hints in favour of this theory as the next *kalyāṇamitra* Sudhana was guided to from mount Potalaka by another bodhisattva accompanying

²⁸ There are many modern works discussing this issue. The two following passages represent the current understanding of Avalokiteśvara-Śiva relations in cult and iconography. Niyogi (2001: 58) says: “Avalokiteśvara has been identified with some Hindu gods. He attributes may be compared with Brahmā, his functions as preserver and defender as Viṣṇu, his colour, symbols, etc., with that of Śiva. From this it appears that his origin cannot be traced from any cult or religion, but is the idea of divine compassion represented with such materials as the art and mythology of the day offered. Not only is Avalokiteśvara identified with some Hindu gods but there are supreme forces of Hinduism embodied within the deity.” Williams (1991: 233), citing a number of related works, summarizes the topic as follows: “There is undoubtedly an iconographical connection of Avalokiteśvara with the Hindu god Śiva. We have seen already that Avalokiteśvara bestows upon Śiva his place in the Hindu pantheon. Nevertheless, Avalokiteśvara himself is also called Maheśvara in the *Karaṇḍavyūha*—Great Lord, a standard epithet of Śiva. He is described as ‘a beautiful man...wearing a diadem on his matted hair, his mind filled with the highest friendliness, and looking like a disc of gold.’ This could be a description of Śiva, for whom the mated hair is a symbol as Lord of the Yogins. In a lovely Kashmiri brass sculpture from c. 1000 CE, Avalokiteśvara is shown seated on Potalaka, his mountain home, with matted hair and deer. Behind is what initially looks very much like Śiva’s trident. Śiva too dwells in the mountains as a yogin, and is associated with animals in his role of Lord of the animals. Elsewhere Avalokiteśvara is described as ‘blue-throated’, a term for Śiva embedded in Śaivite mythology.” See also Holt 1991: 41-42.

Avalokiteśvara, Ananyagāmin, was the god Mahādeva (*Datian* 大天) who resided in the great temple in the city of Dvāravatī.²⁹

Here it should be a matter of interest to refer to the modern Japanese scholar Shu Hikosaka's work. On the basis of his study of Buddhist scriptures, ancient and medieval Tamil language literary sources, as well as field survey, he proposes the hypothesis that, the ancient mount Potalaka, the residence of bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara described in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and Xuanzang's *Records*, is the real mountain Potikai or Potiyil situated at Ambasamudram in Tirunelveli district, Tamilnadu, lat. 8° 36', long. 77° 17'. With 2072.6 m, it is the highest mountain in the Tinnevely range of Ghats.³⁰ In his work, Shu also develops an interesting theory concerning the etymology of the name Potalaka. According to him, the original Tamil name Potiyil is a derivation from *bodhi-il*, where *bodhi* is a loan from Āryan languages meaning 'Buddhism and Buddhists', and the Tamil word *il* means 'place, residence'. Thus the whole name indicates 'the residence of Buddhists or Bauddha ascetics'. The word *kai* in Potikai is colloquial Tamil and has the same meaning as *il*.³¹ In Sanskrit and Prākṛit Mahāyāna texts another change took place—the *il* was translated back as *loka*, 'the world or place'. Thus Potalaka is a corrupted form of *Buddha-loka*, 'the place of Buddhists'.³² Shu also says that mount Potiyil/Potalaka has been a sacred place for the people of South India from time immemorial. With the spread of Buddhism in the region beginning at the time of the great king Aśoka in the third century B.C.E., it became a holy place also for Buddhists who gradually became dominant as a number of their hermits settled there. The local people, though, mainly remained followers of the Hindu religion. The

²⁹ The city's name is rendered differently in the various Chinese versions: *Poluoboti* 婆羅波提 in the *Luomo* and *Sixty-Huayan*, *Duoluobodi* 墮羅鉢底 in the *Eighty-Huayan*, and *Menzhu* 門主 in the *Fourty-Huayan*. We are not able to identify it with any historical site. The Mahādeva chapter is found in: Gv: 367-368; T 278: 9, 719a-719c; T 279: 10, 368a-368b; T 293: 10; 736a-737c; T 294: 10, 861b-862b.). The figure of Ananyagāmin is discussed at the end of this paper.

³⁰ Shu 1989: 185.

³¹ *Ibid.*: 181ff.

³² *Ibid.*: 187.

mixed Hindu-Buddhist cult culminated in the formation of the figure of Avalokiteśvara. The worship of Śiva Pāṃṣupata, however, remained popular too and blended with that of Avalokiteśvara.³³

If Shu is right, the possible historical logic of the development of the concept and image of Avalokiteśvara may have been as follows. (1) In pre-Buddhist times, Mount Potiyil/Potalaka was revered as a sacred place, the abode of deities and protective ghosts, by the local people. We do not know its original ancient name. (2) With the spread of Buddhism in South India, the place became popular among Buddhists as many of their hermits settled there. (3) Gradually the association with Buddhism became dominant and the new name Potiyil/Potalaka or “Place of Buddhists” was popularly used. (4) As Buddhists preached compassion, the new teaching merged with the old worship of a protective deity into a new cult. The conscious efforts of the Buddhist settlers, who possibly were responsible for the creation and introduction of the title *Avalokiteśvara* too, may have been the decisive factor that launched this process.³⁴ (5) Gradually, the concept and figure of Avalokiteśvara became universally known and worshipped by all Buddhists and found its way into texts and iconography while mount Potalaka was mythologized in the course of time. (6) The triumph of Hinduism in the second half of the first millennium C.E. led to the merger of the cult of Avalokiteśvara with that of Hindu gods, e.g. Śiva.³⁵

³³ *Ibid.*: 187ff.

³⁴ We may only speculate whether the emergence of the name ‘Avalokiteśvara’, meaning ‘The Observing Lord’, has not at least in part its roots in human psychology. The hermits living on the top of the mountain constantly exposed to a vast view downwards on the abodes of human and other beings could have brought forth in their visionary meditations an extremely strong feeling of compassion which then mingled with the perception of the figure of the local deity. This then gave birth to the image of the great bodhisattva they consequently started to preach.

³⁵ Niyogi (2001: 57) carefully expresses a similar point of view: “There are some of the facts about the identification Potala or Potalaka. It is not unlikely that it may be located in south India from where the sea is not far away. In this context reference may be made to some Buddhist deities associated with Potalaka: Potalaka Bhagavī(vatī) Tārā Śaṣṭaparivartta(r)āriṣaḥ; Śrī-Potalaka Lokanāthaḥ; Śrī Potalakā Bhṛkutī Tārā; etc. From

The *Gaṇḍavyūha* seems to reflect the earliest phase of the new cult of Avalokiteśvara; the *Lotus Sūtra*, *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, *Amitāyurdhyānasūtra*, and *Heart Sūtra* its culmination in the Mahāyāna tradition, and the *Śūraṅgama*, *Karaṇḍavyūha* as well as Tantric texts (*Dhāraṇīs* and *Sādhana*s) its late developments.³⁶ Xuanzang's notes, however, seem to describe the situation when Buddhism was already declining in India and Hindu motives became dominant again in the cult of Avalokiteśvara at its original place.

Appearance of Avalokiteśvara

Now let us return to the analysis of our text. As we saw, no details about Avalokiteśvara's appearance were given in the above passage except mention of his cross-legged posture. Instead, some preliminary references regarding the content of his teaching with a focus on the concept of compassion are provided there.

After Sudhana had paid homage, the bodhisattva, however, makes a gesture through which some details of his noble and grandiose appearance became visible.

*atha khalu avalokiteśvaro bodhisattvo jāmbūnadasuvarṇavarṇaṃ
vicitra-aprameyaprabhājālavāhavyūhameghapramuñcanaṃ
dakṣiṇaṃ bāhuṃ prasārya lakṣaṇa-anuvyañjanavisṛtavividhavidhavalakṣaṇa-
amitakāyacittaprahlādasamjananaraśmipratānasamkusumitaṃ
pāṇiṃ sudhanasya śreṣṭhīdārakasya mūrdhni pratiṣṭhāpya evamāha...*³⁷

this it appears that Potalaka is not only associated with Avalokiteśvara but also with other Buddhist deities as mentioned above. Probably it was an important Buddhist centre where some gods and goddesses became popular and were thus associated with the place-name."

³⁶ The analysis of the second and third phases of this development as represented in the texts as well as later Chinese sources, is given by Yü (2001: 31-91).

³⁷ Gv: 160, 5-8. The description of Avalokiteśvara putting his hand on Sudhana's head is, again, absent in all Chinese versions save *Fourty-Huayan* where it is rendered as: 爾時，觀自在菩薩摩訶薩，放閻浮檀金妙色光明，起無量色寶焰網雲，及龍自在妙莊嚴雲，以照善財，即舒右手，摩善財頂，告善財言。(T: 10, 293, 733a). The attributes of the bodhisattva's appearance are, however, described in greater detail in the hymn in praise of Avalokiteśvara which is also found only in the *Fourty-Huayan* but absent in all other versions including the Sanskrit text from Nepal (T 293: 10, 735b).

(“Then bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara extending his right hand with the splendour of the purest gold, releasing clouds of arrays of perfect networks of immeasurable light, and putting his palm which was like a blossom with tendrils, adorned with marks and tokens, distinctive, taintless, producing immeasurable beams of lights which cool mind and body, on Sudhana’s head said ...” [The routine praise of Sudhana’s resolve to attain supreme perfect awakening follows.]

Such a description of the bodhisattva’s appearance, however, is not specific to Avalokiteśvara since the *Gaṇḍavyūha* uses similar elements for several other *kalyāṇamitras*. The golden colour of a saint’s body described in the sūtra is an obligatory detail. Emanation of light is also a routine way to express the extraordinary power of the buddhas, bodhisattvas and *kalyāṇamitras* to create “virtual realities” in the meditative states of their minds.³⁸

Thus we hardly discover in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, with the exception of the verses of the *Fourty-Huayan*, any germ of the rich iconographic material in later descriptions of several forms of Avalokiteśvara found in the *Sādhana*s unless we suppose that the description of the bodhisattva’s palm as ‘like a blossom with tendrils’ could be the prototype of the form of Avalokiteśvara/Guanyin holding

³⁸ Compare, for example, description of the appearance of the night-goddess Vāsantī, the thirty-second *kalyāṇamitra*: *sa* [Sudhana] ... *adrakṣīd vāsantīm rātridevatām...vicitra-anupamamaṇikūṭāgāre sarvavaragandhapadmagarbhamaḥāratnasimha-āsane niṣannām suvarṇavarṇena kāyena abhinīlamṛdubahukeśīm abhinīlanetrām abhirūpām prāsādikām darśanīyām sarva-ābharāṇa-alaṃkāravibhūṣitaśarīrām raktavara-ambaranivasanām candramaṇḍala-alaṃkārabrahmajātām akuṭadhāraṇīm sarvatārāgrahanakṣatrajyotiṛgaṇapratibhāsasaṃdarśanaśarīrām |*

(“He...saw the night goddess Vāsantī...in the mansion of brilliant, incomparable jewels sitting on the great lion throne in the calyx of a lotus replete with all distinctive fragrances; her body of golden colour, with soft rich black hair and black eyes, her appearance extremely beautiful, her body adorned with all ornaments, wearing a red robe, her coiffure adorned with the disc of the Moon on her forehead, her body reflecting all the stars and constellations.”) (Gv: 171, 13-17; T 278: 9, 720a; T 279: 10, 369a; T 293: 10, 738b.)

lotus.³⁹

Based on the above analysis we may conclude that for the authors of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* the description of the surroundings and the appearance of Avalokiteśvara was of far less importance compared with the revelation of the doctrine. Thus the next portion of the prose text where the teaching attributed to Avalokiteśvara is presented offers us much more of interest. We already have read in the passage above that the bodhisattva was teaching the “dharma-explanation called ‘the splendor of the door of great friendliness and great compassion’ belonging to the area of taking care for all sentient beings.” ‘Great friendliness’ (*mahāmaitrī*, *daci* 大慈), ‘great compassion’ (*mahākaruṇā*, *dabei* 大悲) and ‘taking care for all sentient beings’ (*sarvajagatsaṃgraha*, *sheshou yiqie zhongsheng* 攝受一切眾生) are given here as the key words of Avalokiteśvara’s doctrine. The bodhisattva’s instructions are given to the merchant’s son Sudhana in the form of several lists of related statements. In the following sections, all these lists will be presented in their Sanskrit original together with translation and some analysis.

Avalokiteśvara’s Method of Great Compassion: An Analysis of Related Lists

We start our observation with the presentation of Sudhana’s virtues as they were perceived and described by Avalokiteśvara. Though one may say that this list actually does not belong to the very doctrine of Avalokiteśvara, in the wider context of the didactic scheme of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* it still must be taken into consideration as a part of it since the text considers the maturity and readiness of the adept to receive certain teachings as a matter of crucial importance. Thus the virtues listed may be considered as a paradigm for a Mahāyāna adept ripe enough to receive and practice the doctrine of great compassion. Avalokiteśvara in the role of Sudhana’s benevolent friend therefore first ascertains the mental attitude and level of maturity of the disciple, and only then reveals his own “method” to him. The following eighteen items thus describe the attitude and attainment of the merchant’s son Sudhana in the moment when he met bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.

³⁹ On various descriptions of Avalokiteśvara in the Buddhist-Tantric iconography see, e.g., Bhattacharyya 1987: 124-144; Niyogi 2001: 59-69.

List 1

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. <i>anupama-udāra-acintyamahāyānasamprasthita</i> | ‘set out for the incomparable, lofty, inconceivable Great Vehicle’ |
| 2. <i>jātamūlakavividhaduḥkha-upadruta-apraṭisāraṇasarvajagatparitrāṇa-āśaya</i> | ‘disposed to save all sentient beings who have no protection and are oppressed by various sufferings rooted in inborn conditions’ |
| 3. <i>sarvaloka-atikrānta-anupama-aprameyā sarvabuddhadharma-adhyakṣata-abhilāṣin</i> | ‘seeking for direct access to all supramundane, incomparable, immeasurable buddha-dharmas’ |
| 4. <i>mahākaruṇāvega-āviṣṭa</i> | ‘filled with the energy of great compassion’ |
| 5. <i>sarvajagatparitrāṇamati</i> | ‘intent to save all sentient beings’ |
| 6. <i>samantabhadradarśanacaryā-abhimukha</i> | ‘turned toward the conduct of Samantabhadra’ |
| 7. <i>mahāpranidhānamaṇḍalapariśodhanacitta</i> | ‘intent on purifying the sphere of great vows’ |
| 8. <i>sarvabuddhadharmameghasaṃdhāraṇa-abhilaṣitakuśalamūla-upacaya-atrpta-āśayakalyāṇamitra-anuśāsanīsamyakpravṛtta-mañjuśrījñānasāgarasaṃbhūta</i> | ‘born from the ocean of knowledge of Mañjuśrī, perfectly set out for the instructions of benevolent friends, eagerly accumulating wholesome roots, seeking to gather clouds of all buddha-dharmas’ |
| 9. <i>guṇakamala-ākara</i> | ‘being the mine of the lotuses of virtue’ |
| 10. <i>buddha-adhiṣṭhānapratilābha-abhimukha</i> | ‘approaching toward attainment of the authority of the Buddha’ |
| 11. <i>samādhi-ālokavegapratilabdha</i> | ‘having attained the energy of the light of concentration’ |
| 12. <i>sarvabuddhadharmameghasaṃdhāraṇa-abhilaṣitacitta</i> | ‘seeking to keep in mind clouds of all buddha-dharmas’ |
| 13. <i>buddhadarśanaprītiprasādavega-praharṣitamānasa</i> | ‘with a mind delighting in the energy of gratitude and joy while seeing the Buddha’ |
| 14. <i>acintya-apramāṇasucaritavega-abhiśyanditacetas</i> | ‘the mind flowing over with the energy of inconceivable, immeasurable good conduct’ |
| 15. <i>guṇapratipattivegaśuddhapuṇyajñānakośa</i> | ‘being a treasury of pure meritorious knowledge by the energy of complete virtue’ |
| 16. <i>svayamabhiññāmukhasarvajñajñānāmātravegaparasamdarśa-abhiprāya</i> | ‘wishing to show others the energy of the measure of omniscient knowledge accessible by one’s own ultimate knowledge’ |
| 17. <i>mahākaruṇāvegavipannamūla</i> | ‘firmly rooted in the energy of great compassion’ |

18. *tathāgatajñāna-ālokavega*
*saṃdhāraṇamati*⁴⁰

‘intent to keep the energy of the light of the
 knowledge of Buddha’

All the features in this list, obviously understood as the characteristics of a bodhisattva (or rather these of one who still is on the way to the bodhisattvahood), are repeated in various wordings and combinations again and again in the teachings of different *kalyāṇamitras* throughout the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. However, a comparative study of them remains outside the scope of the present article.⁴¹ For preliminary analysis, we may systematize those eighteen items into the following basic tasks the bodhisattva-to-be must have accomplished: (1) devotion to the selected way and methods, i.e. the buddha-dharma and Mahāyāna as well as the bodhisattva conduct and vows [1., 6., 7., 10., 13., 14.]; (2) development of an altruistic and compassionate resolve and energy [2., 4., 5., 17.]; (3) increasing knowledge through Buddhist education in order to get access to all buddha-dharmas, i.e. doctrines and

⁴⁰ Gv: 159, 20-28; T 278: 9, 718a; T 279: 10, 366c; T 293: 10, 733a; T 294: 10, 860a.

⁴¹ Still, I would like to present here for comparison the list of Sudhana’s virtues seen through the eyes of Mañjuśrī which describes the attitude and maturity of a person just starting on his path of a bodhisattva’s “higher education”. Sudhana here is described as: *pūrvajīnakṛta-adhikāra* ‘having revered past buddhas’; *avaropitakuśalamūla* ‘having planted wholesome roots’; *udāra-adhimuktika* ‘imbued with great zeal of devotion’; *kalyāṇamitra-anugata-āśaya* ‘disposed to follow benevolent friends’; *anavadyakāyavāñmanaskarmasamudācāra* ‘impeccable in bodily, verbal, and mental deeds’; *bodhisattvamārgapariśodhanaprayukta* ‘engaged in purification of the bodhisattva path’; *sarvajñatā-abhimukha* ‘turned toward omniscience’; *bhājanībhūto buddhadharmāṇām* ‘having become a vessel of the Buddha-dharmas’; *āśayagamanapariśuddha* ‘having purified his disposition’; *asaṅgabodhicittapariniṣpanna* ‘having perfected his independent awakening mind’ (Gv: 40, 31 – 41, 1-3; T 278: 9, 688c; T 279: 10, 332b; T 293: 10, 677c). The difference between these two lists is obvious since Avalokiteśvara’s clearly describes the characteristics of a much more advanced Mahāyāna adept than Mañjuśrī’s. Other lists containing similar elements are to be found for example in the Sāgaramegha chapter (Gv: 51, 18-28; T 278: 9, 690b; T 279: 10, 335a; T 293: 10, 680c) and Maitreya chapter (Gv: 394, 22-27; T 278: 9, 772b; T 279: 10, 428c; T 293: 10, 824a).

ways of their explanation and realization [3., 8., 12., 15., 16., 18.]; (4) cultivation of *samādhi* (*sanmei* 三昧) or a concentrated state of mind [11.]; (5) being the mine of virtue [9.] which is more or less meant to include all the items mentioned in the list.⁴² It is significant to point out the frequent use of the word “energy” or “impetus” (*vega*) describing a necessary and pervasive component of the adept’s attitude and practice.

After characterising Sudhana, Avalokiteśvara introduces his very doctrine or method for educating bodhisattvas, namely ‘entry into the bodhisattva conduct called immediate entry into the great compassion’ (*mahākaruṇāmukha-avilambanāma bodhisattvacaryāmukha*).⁴³ Right away the didactic rationale is given to explain the purpose to which this method is targeted:

Statement 1

*etacca kulaputra mahākaruṇāmukha-avilambam bodhisattvacaryāmukham
sarvajagadasambhinnasattvapariṣkāvinayanapravṛttam*

⁴² Of course, this scheme is only one possible way to systematize the items presented in the list in a quite scattered and, most likely, to some degree corrupted form (as is rather typical of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*) and in no way presumes to be ultimately and exclusively true. Still I hope it facilitates the comprehension of what the authors of the sūtra who were so eager to create such lists aimed at and wanted to express.

⁴³ In the Chinese versions the name is rendered as *piluomojie sanmei dabeifamen* 毘羅摩伽三昧大悲法門 in the *Luomo*, *dabei famen guangming zhi xing* 大悲法門光明之行 in the *Sixty-Huayan*, *pusa dabeixing jietuomen* 菩薩大悲行解脫門 in the *Eighty-Huayan*, and *pusa dabeifamen jietuomen* 菩薩大悲速疾行解脫門 in the *Fourty-Huayan*. The most intriguing among these names is the one given in the *Luomo* which differs from all the others and contains obviously the phonetic transcription of an unknown Sanskrit word—unless *piluomojie* is the translator’s version of *avilamba* (‘immediate’) which, however, would violate the rules of transliteration. *Piluomojie* as phonetic translation of *vilomaka* (‘inverted, reversed’) as proposed by Gómez (1967: xxiv) is also rather baseless. The most interesting issue, however, is that the title of this translation corresponds to a part of the name of the *samādhi* in question.

samantamukhasrotavijñaptisattvasaṃgrahavinayaparyupasthānam ⁴⁴

(“And, son of the good family, this entry into the bodhisattva conduct called immediate entry into the great compassion continuously encompasses all sentient beings with the precepts of bringing sentient beings to maturity and serving them with the precepts of taking care, and makes them known the flow of the universal entries.”)

Bringing sentient beings to maturity (*paripāka*), ‘taking care’ (*saṃgraha*) of them, and ‘precept’ (*vinaya*, *vinayana*) are the key terms here and in the didactic conception of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* in general. All activity of a bodhisattva aims at bringing sentient beings to maturity and taking care of them by applying certain precepts for this purpose. Generally, we may interpret those two activities as an expression of “education” in the Buddhist sense of the word, enabling sentient beings to attain ‘supreme perfect awakening’ (*anuttarā samyaksambodhi*) and ‘omniscience’ (*sarvajñatā*) being the ultimate aim of this education as stated countless times in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*.

Education as a complex of precepts for maturing must first of all include the methods to release sentient beings from various negative states and take them out of unfavourable conditions, i.e. from inner and outer obstructions. This is what Avalokiteśvara’s teaching and method particularly points out (see List 4 below).

The next statement, however, informs us that this method is based on nothing else but all Buddhas (Thus-Gone, *tathāgata*, *rulai* 如來) and is to be implemented in the sphere of the affairs of all beings, thus, serving as the link between Buddhahood and the worldly realm of sentient beings.

Statement 2

*so’ham kulaputra mahākaruṇāmukha-avilambabodhisattvacaryāmukhe
pratiṣṭhitāḥ sarvatathāgatānāṃ ca pādamūlān na vicalāmi*

⁴⁴ Gv: 160, 9-11; T 278: 9, 718b; T 279: 10, 367a; T 293: 10, 733b; T 294: 10, 860a.

sarvasattvakāryeṣu ca abhimukhastiṣṭhāmi ⁴⁵

(“So, I, son of the good family, being established into the entry of the bodhisattva conduct called immediate entry into the great compassion, do not distance myself from the feet of all Buddhas and stay face to face to the affairs of all sentient beings.”)

Four groups of distinctive means or ways of actions are then listed in order to explain how Avalokiteśvara’s method actually benefits sentient beings through involvement in their field of action with the purpose of taking care (*saṃgrhṇati*, *sheshou* 攝取) of them.

List 2

<i>dāna</i>	‘generosity’
<i>priyavaditā</i>	‘kind speech’
<i>arthakriyā</i>	‘beneficial actions’
<i>samāna-arthatā</i> ⁴⁶	‘universal benefit’

The further ten means to bring sentient beings to maturation (*paripācayati*, *chengshu* 成熟),⁴⁷ are listed (all the items in the text are in the instrumental case):

⁴⁵ Gv: 160, 11-13; T (*ibid.*).

⁴⁶ Gv: 160, 13-14; T (*ibid.*). It is interesting to note that in the *Luomo* five further *pāramitās* are listed following *dāna*. We do not know whether this is the result of the translator’s creativity or whether he had, indeed, a differing Indian text at his disposal. The other Chinese versions, however, follow the Sanskrit where *dāna* is not taken as a *pāramitā*; in the *Sixty-Huayan*, however, the passage is given in slightly abbreviated form.

⁴⁷ In the Chinese translations both *sheshou* 攝取 and *chengshu* 成熟 are randomly used for *paripāka/paripācana/paripācayati* (‘bringing to maturity’) the first being also employed for *saṃgraha/saṃgrhṇati* (‘taking care’). In the Sanskrit text, however, these two terms are not treated as synonyms.

List 3

<i>rūpakāyavidarśana</i>	‘being visible in bodily form’
<i>acintyavarṇasaṃsthānarūpadarśana- viśuddhyā raśmijāla-utsargeṇa-api sattvān prahlādyā</i>	‘cooling sentient beings with the emission of a network of beams of light thus purifying inconceivable visible appearances and established forms’
<i>yathā-āśayaghoṣa-udāhāra</i>	‘utterance in a voice according to [their] disposition’
<i>yathā-abhimata-īryāpathasaṃdarśana</i>	‘showing observances according to [their] inclinations’
<i>vividha-adhimuktisabhāga- dharmadeśanā</i>	‘teaching dharma in accordance to [their] distinctive devotion’
<i>nānārūpavikurvita</i>	‘transfiguring into various forms’
<i>kuśaladharmā-upacayapravṛtta- sattvacittasaṃcodanā</i>	‘urging beings to involve their minds with the accumulation of wholesome dharma’
<i>āśaya-anurūpavicitra-aparimāṇa- nirmāṇasaṃdarśana</i>	‘showing immeasurable projections of different appearances according to [beings’] disposition’
<i>nānājāti-upapannasattvasabhāgarūpa- saṃdarśana</i>	‘showing appearances that are the same as those of the sentient beings obtained according to [their] various classes’
<i>eka-āvāsanivāsa</i> ⁴⁸	‘living together in the same abode’

The four items of ‘taking care’ (List 2) may be classified as belonging to the sphere of “everyday” social life and summarised as nothing but a careful and attentive attitude towards others and corresponding actions. The ten items for ‘maturing’ sentient beings (List 3), however, are more metaphysical by nature expressing the ability of advanced bodhisattvas to create ‘transfigurations’ (*vikurvita*, *shenbian* 神變), i.e. to appear at will in various bodily forms according to sentient beings’ ‘mental dispositions’ (*yathā-āśaya*) or their different ability to perceive and accept them as such and receive the guidance they offer. The concept of ‘transfigurations’,

⁴⁸ Gv: 160, 14-19; T (*ibid.*).

interpreted by some modern scholar as the bodhisattvas' actions of "magic" or "thaumaturgy"⁴⁹ but still understood by the author rather as a way of portraying the concept of 'skillful means' (*upāyakaśālya*, *fangbian* 方便), is one of the corner-stones of the metaphysics of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. It is thus no wonder that it is also adopted here in the description of Avalokiteśvara's method.

The tenth item of List 3 may be taken as an integration of the social and metaphysical aspects of 'taking care' and 'maturing' respectively since both verbs are used in this case (*eka-āvāsanivāsenā-api sattvān saṃgrhṇāmi paripācayāmi*).

The next section of the exposition of Avalokiteśvara's method must be considered as a central one. Here the list of 19 negative states of mind of sentient beings defined as 'fears' (*bhaya*, *bu* 怖 or *kongbu* 恐怖) is presented including a general state of 'suffering and depression' (*duḥkhaḍaurmanas*).⁵⁰ The bodhisattva has set out to free all beings from those fears having taken a vow to protect all sentient beings and purifying his method.

Statement 3

*tena mayā kulaputra idaṃ mahākaruṇāmukha-avilambam
bodhisattvacaryāmukhaṃ pariśodhayatā sarvajagatpratiśaraṇapranīdhir-
utpāditam*⁵¹

("I, son of the good family, purifying this entry into the bodhisattva conduct called immediate entry into the great compassion have taken the vow to offer protection to all sentient beings.")

Several verbal derivatives with the meaning of 'freeing', 'annihilation' etc. are used

⁴⁹ See, e.g., Gómez 1977.

⁵⁰ Although *bhaya* may also mean 'danger, peril', I prefer here the translation 'fear' as it seems to me that the accent in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* is laid first of all on freeing sentient beings from the inner, psychological obscurations rather than from outer perils, since the very term *duḥkhaḍaurmanas* also refers to the 'suffering mind'.

⁵¹ Gv: 160, 19-20; T (*ibid.*).

in the Sanskrit text as the final part of parallel compound words. Those are formed following the pattern: *sarvasattva* + fear + verbal derivative in the dative case and thus mean together with the above statement “...have taken the vow to offer protection to all sentient beings for ending (annihilating etc.) such-and-such fear in all sentient beings.” However, these verbal derivatives probably have no specific terminological value but simply express the style of the authors of the sūtra: to use as many synonyms as possible to present an important idea, perhaps in order to exert stronger influence on the mind of the readers (or listeners) by creating more associations in their mental space. Thus, in all Chinese versions all the synonyms are rendered with one and the same word *li* 離 ‘remove’ (in *Sixty-, Eighty- and Forty-Huayan*) or *yuanli* 遠離 ‘to keep far away’ (in *Luomo*). Below the full list of the fears is presented with the respective Sanskrit verbal derivative adduced in each case. The comparative lists of the ‘fears’ of all four Chinese versions are presented in the additional table.

List 4

<i>prapātabhaya</i>	‘fear of degradation’	(<i>vigama</i> ‘ending’)
<i>saṃtrāsakabhaya</i>	‘fear of horrors’	(<i>praśamana</i> ‘pacifying’)
<i>saṃmohabhaya</i>	‘fear of ignorance’	(<i>vinivartana</i> ‘ceasing’)
<i>bandhanabhaya</i>	‘fear of bondage’	(<i>samuccheda</i> ‘annihilating’)
<i>jīvita-uparodha-</i> <i>upakramabhaya</i>	‘fear of attacks on their lives’	(<i>vy-ā-avavartana</i> ‘turning away’)
<i>upakaraṇavaikalyabhaya</i>	‘fear of insufficient means to support life’	(<i>apanayana</i> ‘removing’)
<i>jīvikābhaya</i>	‘fear of living’	(<i>vy-upaśamana</i> ‘stopping’)
<i>aślokaḥbhaya</i>	‘fear of bad reputation’	(<i>samatikramaṇa</i> ‘overcoming’)
<i>sāṃsārikabhaya</i>	‘fear of saṃsāric states’	(<i>upaśamana</i> ‘calming’)
<i>parśacchāradyabhaya</i>	‘fear of surrounding crowds’	(<i>vigama</i> ‘ending’)
<i>maraṇabhaya</i>	‘fear of death’	(<i>vy-atikrama</i> ‘neglecting’)
<i>durgatibhaya</i>	‘fear of miserable conditions’	(<i>vinivartana</i> ‘ceasing’)
<i>tama-undhakāraṇaḥbhaya</i>	‘danger of creating	(<i>apraty-ud-āvartya-</i>

	darkness'	<i>avabhāsakaraṇa</i> 'not resisting to making light')
<i>viṣabhāgasamavadhānabhaya</i>	'fear of contact with poison'	(<i>aty-antaviḡama</i> 'ending completely')
<i>priyaviprayogabhaya</i>	'fear of separation from the pleasant'	(<i>nirodha</i> 'keeping off')
<i>apriyaśaṃvāsabhaya</i>	'fear of co-existence with the unpleasant'	(<i>apanayana</i> 'removing')
<i>kāyaparipīḍābhaya</i>	'fear of physical pains'	(<i>viśaṃyoga</i> 'separating')
<i>cittaparipīḍanabhaya</i>	'fear of mental pains'	(<i>nirmokṣaṇa</i> 'releasing')
<i>duḡkhadaurmanas</i> ⁵²	'suffering and depression'	(<i>upāyāsasamatikrama</i> 'overcoming skillfully')

List 4a

<i>Luomo</i> ⁵³	<i>Sixty-Huayan</i> ⁵⁴	<i>Eighty-Huayan</i> ⁵⁵	<i>Fourty-Huayan</i> ⁵⁶
嶮難惡道恐怖	險道恐怖	險道怖	險道怖
熱惱恐怖	熱惱恐怖	熱惱怖	熱惱怖
愚癡恐怖	愚癡恐怖	迷惑怖	迷惑怖
繫縛恐怖	繫縛恐怖	繫縛怖	繫縛怖
殺害恐怖	殺害恐怖	殺害怖	殺害怖
—	—	—	王官怖
貧窮恐怖	貧窮恐怖	貧窮怖	貧窮怖
不活恐怖	不活恐怖	不活怖	不活怖
諍訟恐怖	諍訟恐怖	惡名怖	惡名怖
—	—	於死怖	於死怖
大眾恐怖	大眾恐怖	大眾怖	—
—	—	—	諸病怖

⁵² Gv: 160, 20-28.

⁵³ T 294: 10, 860b.

⁵⁴ T 278: 9, 718b.

⁵⁵ T 279: 10, 367a.

⁵⁶ T 293: 10, 733b.

—	—	—	懈怠怖
死恐怖	死恐怖	—	—
墮四惡道恐怖	惡道恐怖	惡趣怖	—
諸趣恐怖	諸趣恐怖	—	—
—	—	黑闇怖	黑暗怖
不同意恐怖	不同意恐怖	—	—
—	—	遷移怖	遷移怖
愛不愛恐怖	愛不愛恐怖	愛別怖	愛別怖
一切惡恐怖	一切惡恐怖	怨會怖	怨會怖
逼迫身恐怖	逼迫身恐怖	逼迫身怖	逼迫身怖
逼迫心恐怖	逼迫心恐怖	逼迫心怖	逼迫心怖
愁憂恐怖	愁憂恐怖	憂悲怖	憂悲愁歎怖
懈怠恐怖	—	—	—
邪婬貪色恐怖	—	—	—
生老病死憂悲苦惱	—	—	—
所求不得	—	—	所求不得怖
愛別離苦	—	—	—
怨憎會苦	—	—	—
爲脫一切眾生苦畏海	—	—	—
—	—	—	大眾威德怖
—	—	—	流轉惡趣怖

The lists in the Sanskrit text and the different Chinese versions are not completely identical. In all Chinese versions a few items are absent, and some to be found in *Luomo* and *Fourty-Huayan* have no equivalents in the Sanskrit text. There are also minor differences in the order of items. However, since most items in all lists coincide, we may conclude that all five versions are most likely based on different recensions of one and the same archetypical text.

In the next section, Avalokiteśvara explains how the protection (*pratiśaraṇa*, *qiu hu yiqie zhongsheng* 救護一切眾生) against ‘fears’ he has promised and taken a vow to offer really works through three kinds of means he has established for sentient beings. He says:

Statement 4

anusmṛtimukhaṃ ca me sarvaloke 'dhiṣṭhitam sarvasattvabhaya-
upaśamanāya | svanāmacakraṃ me sarvaloke 'bhivijñaptam
sarvasattvabhayavigamāya | sarvajagadananta-ākṛtibhedaśamatho me
kāye 'dhiṣṭhito yathākālajagatprativijñaptaye |⁵⁷

(“I have established the method of recollection in the whole world in order to calm all fears of sentient beings. I have made thoroughly known the sphere of my name to the whole world in order to end all fears of sentient beings. I have established the pacification of all sentient beings in infinite distinctive forms in my body which I reveal to sentient beings at the proper time.”)

Avalokiteśvara’s three means of ‘recollection’, ‘making know the sphere of name’ and ‘pacification sentient beings in his body’ most likely describe a kind of three-fold combined meditational practice with the concept and figure of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara as its basis. We do not know whether *anusmṛti* (nian 念) here means recollection of the image of the great bodhisattva only, or the faculty, psychic power of remembering, mindfulness, and contemplation as such. Devotional, cultic interpretation may prefer the first, philosophical-psychological interpretation the second. The text leaves both ways open. But, as it is said, the bodhisattva has ‘established the method (*mukha, men* 門) of recollection in the whole world’, so the philosophical interpretation seems to be more valid. This means, in order to become free from all kinds of fears, sentient beings must continuously develop the faculty of recollection by remembering the horrors of fears, and counteracts them getting inspiration in the noble figure of Avalokiteśvara whom they also have continuously to keep in their mind.

‘Making thoroughly known on the sphere of my name to the whole world’ may similarly have two meanings: first, urging adepts to recite Avalokiteśvara’s name or his mantra (as it became widely practiced later), and second, hinting the wider area

⁵⁷ Gv: 160, 28-30; T 278: 9, 718b; T 279: 10, 367a; T 293: 10, 733b; T 294: 10, 860b.

of verbal instructions (texts) to be learned, and so based on thorough knowledge to remove all fears. Since the term used in this passage is *svanāmacakra* ('the sphere of my name') and not *svanāma* ('my name'), we may again assume that the second interpretation was more valid in the original context of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*.⁵⁸

'Establishing pacification of all sentient beings in his body' may mean the higher, integrative level of the *samādhic* practice, a kind of identification of the practitioner with the great bodhisattva, the former having accomplished all instructions of the latter and, as a result, freed him—or herself from all fears and other mental obscurations. The timing is also mentioned here as an important item meaning, most likely, that the great bodhisattva actualizes in the practitioner's mind only when his or her learning and practice have reached a certain advanced level or when the situation needs it.

⁵⁸ The Chinese versions translate and interpret the three items of Statement 4 in two different ways. In the *Luomo* we find: 出生現在正念救護三世一切眾生怖畏正念法，名字法輪法門。爲脫輪轉三界眾生故，入論議法門。住此法門故，示現一切眾生等身。（“I bring forth a method of right mindfulness in which I am properly mindful in the present to protect all sentient beings in the three worlds from dangers, and which is called ‘the name sphere dharma method’. In order to liberate the sentient beings who cycle around in the three worlds I enter the dharma method of doctrinal explanations. Since I maintain this dharma method, I manifest a body which equals all sentient beings.”) In the *Sixty-Huayan*, the passage is translated respectively: 我出生現在正念法門，名字法輪法門故；出現一切眾生等身。（“Since I bring forth the dharma method of right mindfulness in the present which is called ‘the name sphere dharma method’, I manifest a body which is equal to all sentient beings.”). These two earlier translations obviously tend to explain the philosophical meaning of the original text. In the *Eighty-Huayan* and *Forty-Huayan*, however, the passage is translated in a simplified way, no longer in philosophical-educational terms of universal meaning but unequivocally aimed at the evocation of Avalokiteśvara's image: 若念於我，若稱我名，若見我身（“...no matter whether they are mindful of me or utter my name or behold my body...”). This clearly shows that an increasingly devotional and cultic attitude has strongly influenced the later translations. (I am indebted to Friedrich Grohmann for his kind help to make the English translation of these passages more smooth in style and precise in expression.)

In the following statement, this advanced level is described as ‘supreme perfect awakening’, the universal aim of all Buddhists, and ‘attainment of all buddhadharmas’, the latter to be understood as the omniscience (*sarvajñatā*), a term appearing regularly together with “supreme perfect awakening” in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. This aim, however, can only be reached if one applies the three means (*upāya*) of contemplation described in the Statement 4.

Statement 5

*so'haṃ kulaputra, anena-upāyena sattvān sarvabhayebhyaḥ parimocya
anuttarāyāṃ samyaksaṃbodhau cittam utpādyā avivartyān karomi
buddhadharmapratilābhāya* |⁵⁹

(“Thus, son of good family, releasing sentient beings from all fears and setting their mind on supreme perfect awakening by those means, I cause them not to fall back from the attainment of all buddhadharmas.”)

The last list in the chapter describes the virtues of the great bodhisattvas which Avalokiteśvara declares, he is not able to know or talk about since he has only attained and accomplished one single method, not all aspects of the bodhisattva conduct.

Statement 6

*etam ahaṃ kulaputra mahākaruṇāmukha-avilambasya
bodhisattvacaryāmukhasya lābhī | kiṃ mayā śakyaṃ samantabhadraṇāṃ
bodhisattvānāṃ ... caryāṃ jñātuṃ guṇān vā vaktum* |⁶⁰

(“I, son of the good family, have attained this entry of the bodhisattva conduct called immediate entry into the great compassion. How could I

⁵⁹ Gv: 160, 31-32; T (*ibid.*).

⁶⁰ Gv: 160, 32 – 161, 1, 6.

know the conduct of bodhisattvas like Samantabhadra or talk about their virtues ...”)

This is an important moment as Avalokiteśvara defines the bodhisattvas on a par with Samantabhadra, thus acknowledging the supremacy of the latter compared to himself. This feature surely reflects the attitude of the authors of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* who regarded Samantabhadra as the highest archetype of the bodhisattvahood in its completeness while Avalokiteśvara merely represents one single aspect of it. The list contains the following items of mainly general character describing the virtues of these bodhisattvas.

List 5

<i>sarvabuddhapraṇidhānamāṇḍalaviśuddha</i>	‘who have purified the sphere of the vows of all buddhas’
<i>samantabhadrabodhisattvacaryāgatiṃgata</i>	‘who are going along the way of the conduct of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra’
<i>kuśaladharmā-abhisamkāra-avyavacchinnaśrota</i>	‘who are uninterruptedly performing wholesome dharmas’
<i>sarvabodhisattvasamādhiśrotrasadāsamāhita</i>	‘who are always concentrated on hearing all samādhis of bodhisattvas’
<i>sarvakalpasamvāsacaryā-avivartyasrota</i>	‘who are irreversibly carrying out the conduct dwelling through all eons’
<i>sarvatra adhīvanayā-anugatasrota</i>	‘who are constantly reaching everywhere’
<i>sarvalokadhātva-āvartaparivartasrotakuśala</i>	‘who are familiar with the changing currents of all worlds’
<i>sarvasattva-akuśalacittavy-upaśamakarasrota</i>	‘who are continuously decreasing the bad minds of all sentient beings’
<i>sarvasattvakuśalacittasamvardhanasrota</i>	‘who are continuously increasing the good minds of all sentient beings’
<i>sarvasattvasaṃsārasrotovinivartikarasrota</i> ⁶¹	‘who are continuously working to turn away all sentient beings from the currents of saṃsāra’

⁶¹ Gv: 160, 32; 161, 1-6; T (*ibid*).

Avalokiteśvara Chapter in the Didactic Scheme of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*

Let me now once again summarize the method of the dharma of great compassion as revealed in the Avalokiteśvara chapter to demonstrate its structural cohesiveness in the larger didactic scheme of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*.

The practical, functional purpose of the method is ‘taking care of’ (*saṃgraha*) and ‘maturing’ (*paripācana*) sentient beings by using certain ‘precepts’ (*vinaya*). These three items may be put together into the working meta-term “education” which is a unifying factor of all methods introduced in the sūtra and the guiding principle of the ‘bodhisattva conduct’ (*bodhisattvacaryā*). Avalokiteśvara’s specific ‘method’ or ‘entry’ (*mukha*) in particular relies on ‘great compassion’ (*mahākaruṇā*), an issue widely accepted and discussed within the universal framework of bodhisattva education.⁶²

The first section of the scheme is the description of the adept’s ability and attainment (List 1), which may be defined, in the terms of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, as the store of ‘wholesome roots’ (*kuśalamūla*), enabling him to receive and understand the instructions of the *kalyāṇamitras*.

Avalokiteśvara introduces and explains his method in the second section (Statements 1 and 2), repeating again that it works through the precepts (*vinaya*) of taking care of sentient beings and bringing them to maturity, that its very source and foundation are all the buddhas and the sphere of carrying it out are the ‘affaires of all sentient beings’ (*sarvasattvakāryāṇi*).

The third section gives details about how the method really works as an educational means (*upāya*). They are divided into two groups: the means of ‘taking care’ (*saṃgraha*) (List 2) and the means of ‘maturing’ (*paripācana*) (List 3). The items in the List 3 are understood as an elaboration of the important metaphysical

⁶² Actually, ‘great compassion’ is considered one of the basic issues of the bodhisattva conduct. In the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, Buddha himself and many other *kalyāṇamitras* emphasise it together with ‘omniscience’ or ‘omniscient knowledge’ (*sarvajñatā* or *sarvajñajñāna*) as the main source of their effort and activities. Still, only here in the Avalokiteśvara chapter, great compassion is mentioned and described as the basis of a distinctive method.

and soteriological concept of ‘transfigurations’ or ‘manifestations’ (*vikurvita, nirmāṇa*) of various appearances (*varṇa*) and bodily forms (*rūpakāya*) etc. by advanced bodhisattvas in order to educate sentient beings.

The fourth section exposes the essential content of Avalokiteśvara’s teaching as a practical method by presenting a list of negative mental states defined as ‘fears’ (*bhaya*) (Lists 4 and 4a) which cause ‘suffering and depression’ (*duḥkhaḍaurmanas*) and are to be eliminated by the application of this method. In the Statement 3, the latter is defined as ‘purifying’ (*pariśodhana*) the method which means ‘taking the vow to protect all beings’ (*sarvajagatpratiśaraṇapraṇidhi*) and carrying out this altruistic devotion.

The fifth section introduces a threefold devotional meditation (Statement 4) which includes ‘recollection’ (*anusmṛti*), ‘making known the sphere of his [Avalokiteśvara’s] name’ (*svanāmacakram abhivijñaptam*), and ‘establishing the pacification of all sentient beings in his body’ (*sarvajagad...śamatho me kāye’dhiṣṭhitah*). This method is not detailed further leaving it open for different interpretations.

The sixth section establishes the ultimate purpose of the method (Statement 5) which consists in ‘setting the [beings’] mind on supreme perfect awakening’ (*anuttarāyām samyakṣambodhau cittam utpādyā*) ‘cause beings not to fall back from the attainment of buddha-dharmas’ (*avivartyān karomi buddhadharmapratilābhāya*). This is the ultimate aim of all methods of Buddhism, its soteriology or lysiology.⁶³

Finally, the seventh section (Statement 6 and List 5) acknowledges that the revealed method of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara still represents only one possible way leading the adept to bodhisattvahood, but is not ultimate bodhisattvahood itself. The latter is understood in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* as the integration of all methods which is available only to those great bodhisattvas who are matured to the level of Samantabhadra.

⁶³ The term ‘lysiology’ meaning the “doctrine of liberation” and intended as Western equivalent for Indian *mokṣadharmā* was introduced in the end of 1960s by Linnart Mäll in his groundbreaking article “A Possible Approach towards Understanding *Śūnyavāda*”; see Mäll 2005: 16-24.

The scheme containing all the basic elements of the concept of bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and his soteriological functions is elaborated in texts contemporary with the *Gaṇḍavyūha* as well as later Mahāyāna scripture, especially the four sūtras mentioned at the beginning of this article. In the final part of this paper I will draw some very brief comparisons.

Few Comparisons with Other Sources: Educational and Devotional Ways

The philosophical-metaphysical statements found in the List 3 correspond to the theory of the numerous bodily forms of bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara as revealed in the *Samantamukha* chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*⁶⁴ and further developed in the *Śūraṅgamasūtra* (*Shoulengyanjing* 首楞嚴三昧經).⁶⁵ In both texts, all of the 33 and, respectively, 32 bodily forms Avalokiteśvara may take in our *Saḥaloka* can be interpreted in the terminology of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* as ‘transfigurations’ (*vikurvita*) and ‘projections’ (*nirmita*).⁶⁶ In the *Karaṇḍavyūha* (*Dasheng zhuangyan baowang jing* 大乘莊嚴寶王經) a list of twenty transfigurations is found.⁶⁷ All three lists include four Buddhist categories of perfect beings (buddhas, bodhisattvas, *śrāvakas*, and *pratyekabuddhas*), several categories of human beings, both men and women, as well as gods and other mythological creatures. In the *Śūraṅgama*, Avalokiteśvara says that he transforms himself into thirty-two bodily forms “for the purpose of visiting all countries in saṃsāra (to convert and liberate living beings).”⁶⁸ In the *Lotus Sūtra* it is said that the ability of transforming his bodily form is ‘the area of skillful means’ (*upāyakaṣālyaviṣaya*) of the bodhisattva-mahāsattva

⁶⁴ Dutt 1986: 159-166; English translations: Kern 1963: 406-418; Watson 1993: 298-306.

⁶⁵ Luk 1978: 136ff; T 642: 15, 629b-645a.

⁶⁶ In the Sanskrit version of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the list is much shorter, see Dutt 1986: 261-262; Kern 1963: 410-411; the English translation by Watson (1993: 301-302) follows the Chinese translation by Kumārajīva (T 269: 9, 57a-57b) and contains the full list. On the analysis of the lists, see e.g. Yü 2001: 45-48, and Dung 2001: 138-139.

⁶⁷ T 1050: 20, 50c-51a; see also Yü 2001: 48.

⁶⁸ Luk 1978: 136.

Avalokiteśvara⁶⁹ because he offers protection, safety, or literally, ‘fearlessness’ (*abhaya*) to all sentient beings:

eṣa kulaputra avalokiteśvaro bodhisattvo mahāsattvo bhūtānāṃ sattvānāṃ abhayaṃ dadati | anena kāraṇena abhayaṃdada iti saṃjñāyata iha sahāyāṃ lokadhātau |⁷⁰

(“Son of good family! This great bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara offers fearlessness to frightened beings. Doing so he is known here in the Saha-world as the Giver of Fearlessness.”)

The last statement harmonizes well with the theory of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* as presented in Statement 3 and List 4. Both the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Śūraṅgama* seem to be based on the soteriological schemes elaborated in the verse section of the Avalokiteśvara chapter of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*.⁷¹ The great difference between the two schemes, however, is found in terms of method. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* is talking about ‘taking vows’ and ‘purification the method’ with the purpose of protecting sentient beings and freeing them from fears. The decisive moment in this process is everybody’s personal effort in using *upāya*. In the *Lotus Sūtra*, however, hearing the name of Avalokiteśvara is stated as the most effective way to be released from sufferings.

iha kulaputra yāvanti sattvakoṭīṇayutaśatasahasrāṇi yāni duḥkhāni prati-anubhavanti tāni śaced avalokiteśvarasya bodhisattvasya mahāsattvasya nāmadheyam śṛṇuyus te sarve tasmād duḥkhaskandhād parimucyeraṇ |⁷²

(“Whatever sufferings, son of good family, hundreds of thousands of decillions of sentient beings are experiencing, on hearing the name of the

⁶⁹ Dutt 1986: 261.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*: 262.

⁷¹ As mentioned above (see e.g. footnotes 18 and 21), the verse section certainly belongs to a later stratum of the text than the prose section.

⁷² Dutt 1986: 259.

great bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara they all will be released from that mass of sufferings.”)

I would like to conclude with a discussion of the two ways in which the Mahāyāna sūtras present the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and his liberating power: the active way of learning and meditation (education) of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, and the passive way of faith and devotion of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the latter also reflected in the verse section of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. The first focuses on eliminating fears understood as negative states of the person’s inner, psychic realm by way of active intervention through certain meditative means, while the latter emphasizes avoiding fire, floods, evil demons, robbers, bandits, imprisonment, death caused by weapons and similar dangers and perils in the outer realm by way of deep faith and devotion.⁷³

In its historical development, as expressed by the texts, the first way culminated in the *Heart Sūtra* where Avalokiteśvara is teaching the essence of the *prajñāpāramitā*: “Here, O Śāriputra, form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form; emptiness does not differ from form, form does not differ from emptiness; whatever is form that is emptiness, whatever is emptiness that is form.”⁷⁴ Further, we see that the lysiological model presented in the *Heart Sūtra* is similar to that in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. In the *Heart Sūtra*, however, instead of the practice of great compassion the practice of ‘transcending awareness’ (*prajñāpāramitā*) is said to lead bodhisattvas causatively from the defiled mind to nirvāṇa:

tasmācchāriputra aprāptitvād bodhisattvasya prajñāpāramitām āśritya

⁷³ A similar paradigm is also presented in the Vāsantī chapter of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* where the night goddess introduces herself as protector of sentient beings freeing them from these and many further dangers: Gv: 172, 6 – 175, 19; T 278: 9, 720b-721b; T 279: 10, 369b-370a; T 293: 10, 738c-739c.

⁷⁴ Conze 1972: 81. Lopez (1988: 7) explains the appearing of Avalokiteśvara here in the role of teacher: “His presence is another indication of the relatively late date of the sūtra, suggesting that the sūtra was written at the time when the cult of the Bodhisattva of compassion, textually associated with the twenty-fourth chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* and with the Pure Land Sūtras, had become well-established.”

*viharaty-acittavarāṇaḥ | cittāvaraṇa-nāstivād atrasto viparyāsa-atikrānto
niṣṭhā-nirvāṇaprāptaḥ* |⁷⁵

(“Therefore, Śāriputra, because the bodhisattva is free from attainment and relies on the transcending awareness, he dwells in the non-obstructed mind. Because his mind has no obstructions he is not trembling, has overcome the delusions and finally attained nirvāṇa.”)

The second way reached its peak in the *Sukhāvatīvyūhasūtra* where Avalokiteśvara appears as the companion of the Buddha Amitābha together with another bodhisattva, Mahāsthama-prāpta as Buddha explains to Ananda: “There are two bodhisattvas who are the most esteemed. The radiant light of their majestic presence shines everywhere over the three-thousandfold, great-thousandfold world. ...One is called Avalokiteshvara, Who Watches Over the Cries of the World, and the other, Mahasthamaprapta, Possessed of Great Vigor. These two bodhisattvas cultivated the bodhisattva practice in this, my Buddha-realm, and when their lives came to an end, they will reborn by magical transformation in that Buddha-field of the Buddha Amita.”⁷⁶

In the *Śūraṅgama*, the devotional aspect is combined with the complex of meditation on sound, thus here no longer understood as the mere hearing of the bodhisattva’s name being the way out of suffering but as a specific meditative technique of concentrating on and analyzing of the perception of sound. To explain it, Avalokiteśvara says: “Since I myself do not meditate on sound but on the meditator, I cause all suffering beings to look into the sound of their voices in order to obtain liberation.”⁷⁷

Of course, to view the development of the concept and figure of Avalokiteśvara narrowly through the lens of such a dualistic view is an obvious oversimplification since in each text cited we find statements in favor of both ways. In the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, Statement 4 no doubt contains both meditational and devotional aspects. In the verse

⁷⁵ Conze 1972: 93.

⁷⁶ Gómez 1996: 193.

⁷⁷ Luk 1978: 139.

section that was classified as mainly representing the devotional aspect, we find a statement where Avalokiteśvara's method of liberation (*vimokṣamukha*) is called 'the matrix of the knowledge of clouds of compassion of all Victors' (*sarvajināna karuṇāghanajñānagarbha*), thus emphasizing the knowledge.⁷⁸ A similar statement is found in the stanzas of the *Lotus Sūtra*:

*ṛddhibalapāramigato vipulajñāna-upāyaśikṣitaḥ | sarvatra daśadviśī jage
sarvakṣetreṣu aśeṣa dṛśyate ||*⁷⁹

("With the power of accomplishment going beyond he practices the extensive knowledge and skill going everywhere in the ten directions and being entirely seen in all fields.")

In the Avalokiteśvara chapter of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, we do not find any hint at Buddha Amitābha or his connection with Avalokiteśvara, but there are stanzas in the verse section which say that pious devotees who make offerings and remember Avalokiteśvara's name have direct access to Avalokiteśvara's own Buddha-field and thus can see all buddhas in the ten directions and listen their dharma-teaching.⁸⁰ These verses apparently reflect some influence from the *Sukhāvatī* "school" on the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. The interaction between those two, however, may have happened in the opposite direction as well since we find statements on Amitābha — Avalokiteśvara connections in the concluding verses of the Samantabhadra chapter of the earlier versions of the sūtra (*Sixty-and Eighty-Huayan*) and few hints at Amitābha and his Buddha-field in the *Samantabhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* verses (Sanskrit text and *Fourty-Huayan*).⁸¹

In association with Avalokiteśvara, though, a mysterious bodhisattva called

⁷⁸ Gv: 161, 25.

⁷⁹ Dutt 1986: 265.

⁸⁰ Gv: 263, 19-27 (stanzas 19-20); T 293: 10, 734b.

⁸¹ T 278: 9, 786b; T 279: 10, 443a; Gv: 434, 31; 435, 8, 20 (stanzas 49, 59, and 62); T 293: 10, 848a, 848b.

Ananyagāmin (“Not Going Elsewhere”) appears in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*.⁸² He arrives at mount Potalaka by air from the East, from the buddha-field of the Thus-Gone Samantaśrīsaṃbhava in the world-system called Śrīgarbhavatī and, after Avalokiteśvara, becomes Sudhana’s 29th *kalyāṇamitra* teaching him the bodhisattva liberation called ‘speeding forth in all direction’ (*samantamukhanirjavana*). Before instructing Sudhana he warned him that this bodhisattva liberation is beyond comprehension of all beings “who are not under the tutelage of spiritual benefactors [*kalyāṇamitras*], who are not under the attention of buddhas, who have no accumulated roots of goodness [*kuśalamūla*], who have not purified their intentions, who have not attained the faculties of enlightened beings, who do not have the eye of wisdom.”⁸³ The content of it, in brief, is that this method enables bodhisattvas to penetrate all buddha-fields, within each conscious instant (*cittakṣaṇa*), in all ten directions, to see all buddhas and make offerings to them, and also to have access to all sentient beings and teach them Dharma according to their inclinations and interest. Ananyagāmin is thus fulfilling the very same function Avalokiteśvara does only expressed in different terms and another vision.

The question about the identity of this bodhisattva, who is completely unknown from other sources remains. Is Ananyagāmin’s chapter a rudimentary passage of an unknown, vanished Indian “Pure Land” tradition or is it an artificial creation by the authors of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* who tried to add a “cosmic” dimension to Avalokiteśvara? Could Ananyagāmin be the prototype of Mahāsthāmaprāpta or Tārā or any other Avalokiteśvara’s “consort”?⁸⁴

⁸² The name of the bodhisattva is rendered as *Wuyixing* (無異行) in the *Luomo*, as *Zhengqu* (正趣) in the *Sixty-* and *Eighty-Huayan*, and *Zhengxing Wuyixing* (正性無異行) in the *Fourty-Huayan*.

⁸³ Gv: 165, 13-16; here Thomas Cleary’s translation is used (Cleary: 1989, 156).

⁸⁴ A number of them are mentioned in Niyogi 2001: 58: Tārā, Maṇidhara, Śaḍakṣarī, Mahāvidyā, Sudhanakumāra, Bhṛkuṇī, Hayagrīva, Prajñā, Śakti, etc. However, there is no hint whatsoever in the text that Ananyagāmin himself was a female figure as McMahan (2002: 125) states emphatically.

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《華嚴經》〈入法界品〉 (*Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*) 中之觀自在菩薩

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提要

本篇論文將討論《華嚴經》〈入法界品〉中之觀自在菩薩章。該品之主人公善財童子是發心修行菩薩道者的典型，而觀自在菩薩在該品之中，是以善財童子所參訪的五十三位善知識中之一位的身份出現。觀自在菩薩在〈入法界品〉中的角色是一位良師，而非如後期大乘所見的救苦救難、法力無邊之大菩薩。在〈入法界品〉所採用之教化體系中，他教導使眾生解脫一切怖畏的大悲法門，俾將眾生導入無上正覺。本篇論文中提出與此相關之章節與專門術語，並詳作分析。

作者得到的一個假設，是根據〈入法界品〉中之觀自在菩薩章所反映的，於觀音思想演變最初期，一般人心目中的觀自在菩薩之觀念和形象。當時觀音信仰尚未成形並廣泛流傳於佛教世界，而他顯然還停留在普賢、文殊、彌勒等其他三位原型菩薩的陰影底下。作者也不排除，觀自在菩薩這個人物是以佛教的慈悲教義，以及某些地方性的保護神崇拜的融合信仰為基礎，所演變而成的。論文中也討論到觀自在菩薩以補怛洛迦山為居處的問題。

依據與《法華經》(*Lotus Sūtra*)、《無量壽經》(*Sukhāvatīvyūhasūtra*)、《心經》(*Heart Sūtra*)、《楞嚴經》(*Śūraṅgamasūtra*)等若干經典的概略比較，作者推斷，〈入法界品〉中之觀自在菩薩，正如他在《心經》中一樣，代表教化與禪觀的積極面；而他在《法華經》與《無量壽經》中代表的，則是以消極信仰面為主。《楞嚴經》出現較晚，故把這兩方面合併在一起闡述。

關鍵詞：1.《華嚴經》〈入法界品〉 2.觀自在菩薩 3.補怛洛迦山 4.大悲法門
5.教化方式 6.信仰方式

(中文提要由謝安健譯)