

Title of Paper: Motifs of Miniatures on Illuminated Manuscripts of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha-sūtra* and its Cultural Background

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The *Kāraṇḍavyūha-sūtra* (*KV*) is one of the earliest sources of the six-syllable formula, *Oṃ maṇipadme hūṃ*, which represents the essence of the compassionate Buddhist deity, Avalokiteśvara. The *KV* includes various episodes of Avalokiteśvara saving sentient beings in the world of metempsychosis. The earliest Sanskrit version of this Sūtra was probably written in the northwest part of India around 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D., based on the fact that two Gilgit manuscripts (ca. A.D. 630) of the *KV* were found in Kashmir. A. Mette edited the Sanskrit versions based on the two Gilgit manuscripts. (Both are incomplete, and one of them is a fragment). On the other hand, S. Sāmaśrami edited a Sanskrit version of the *KV* based on a Nepalese palm leaf manuscript dated A.D. 1196 (complete), and this edition was reproduced by P. L. Vaidya.

In addition to the above mentioned versions, there exist many Sanskrit manuscripts of the *KV*, and some of them are illuminated by miniatures. J.P. Losty published an article on an Indian illuminated manuscript of the *KV* that is preserved at the British Library (Or. MS 13940, incomplete, ca. 12<sup>th</sup> century) wherein he pointed out that the motifs of the miniatures depicted in the manuscript are related to the episodes concerning Avalokiteśvara that are described in the *KV*.

In addition to this manuscript, some Nepalese illuminated manuscripts are preserved at the British Library (Or. MS 14236, complete, A.D. 1804), the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (#88. 134. 2, incomplete, A.D. 1777-1799), the Nagoya City Museum (Japan)(complete, ca. 19<sup>th</sup> century), and others. These contain interesting and valuable iconographical material showing how episodes of Avalokiteśvara in the *KV* are depicted in the Nepalese Buddhist tradition. But no study of these illuminated manuscripts has been undertaken till date.

This paper aims at describing those episodes of Avalokiteśvara described in the *KV* that were selected as motifs of the miniatures and how these motifs are depicted by taking into consideration the cultural background of Nepal. It also points out several reasons for the selection of these episodes.