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The Depiction of Hayagrīva as Companion Deity of Avalokiteśvara in Pāla Art

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ABSTRACT

The Pāla period is regarded as a pivotal era in the doctrinal and iconographic evolution of Vajrayana Buddhism in Eastern India. A distinctive feature of Buddhist sculptures of this era was that not only the statues of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas were created, but numerous associated fierce, protective, and tantric deities were also sculpted, among whom Hayagrīva held a prominent position. The Buddhist texts Sadhanamala and Niṣpannayogāvalī provides detailed descriptions of Hayagrīva's origin, form, and role as a subsidiary deity, which closely correspond to the Hayagrīva sculptures of the Pāla period. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, Hayagrīva is recognized as an independent deity; however, his form appears anthropomorphic and differs from the demonic form described in the Hindu mythological tradition. With the rise of Vajrayana Buddhism, Hayagrīva's position within the Buddhist pantheon was transformed from that of an independent deity to that of a fierce protector of Avalokiteśvara. This paper presents an iconographic analysis of Hayagrīva as the principal attendant deity of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in the Pāla period sculpture. It examines the distinctive iconographic features of Hayagrīva in Avalokiteśvara images, including the symbolic representation of the horse head; his fierce posture, the attributes and weapons associated with him. The study also undertakes a comparative examination of Hayagrīva's role in relation to other attendant figures, such as Bhṛkuṭī, Sudhanakumāra, and Tārā, who frequently appear alongside with various forms of Avalokiteśvara.

1. Introduction

In the Indian religious tradition, the forms of deities have not remained static but have continuously evolved in accordance with changes in time, region, and philosophical traditions. Hayagrīva is an important example of this change. This deity was originated in the Vedic and Purāṇic traditions and was later adopted into Buddhism, especially in the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions, where it was established with new meanings and iconographic forms. In Vajrayana tradition Hayagrīva is regarded as *Yidam* or *Iṣṭhadevatā* and regarded as a powerful protector deity. In Tibetan Buddhism, he is known as ‘Key Dorje’. he destroys evil spritis. The Hayagrīva’s terrific appearance is directed towards ego grasping and outer obstruction. His wrathfulness is said to be fierce compassion directed towards a self-cherishing attitude. Hayagrīva is popular in Tibet, Nepal and China. The word Hayagrīva is derived from the Sanskrit words *haya* (horse) and *grīva* (neck), signifying a divine figure characterized by a horse-headed or horse-necked form. The horse is mentioned in various hymns of the Ṛgveda, particularly the Dadhikrā (Dadhikrāvan) horse, which has been associated with the Sun. However, there is no clear Vedic evidence for Hayagrīva or for a distinct horse deity (Gulik, 1935, 9). Puranic texts such as the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* (2.2.49-50) and *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* (7.9.37) describe Hayagrīva as an incarnation of *Viṣṇu* who recovered the Vedas from the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha and returned it to Brahmā. In the *Harivaṃśa-Purāṇa*, he is described as an exceedingly powerful and wrathful demon. He was ultimately slain by *Viṣṇu* (Gulik, 1935, 15). Van Gulik suggests that, over time, the identities of these two Hayagrīvas gradually became merged. In this process, the asura Hayagrīva was held responsible for the theft of the Vedas, while *Viṣṇu*- Hayagrīva was assigned the role of recovering the Vedas and avenging their theft. Van Gulik argues that since *Viṣṇu*-Hayagrīva was revered as the reciter of the Vedas and the promulgator of the Sacred Word, his transformation into a *Vidyārāja* within the Buddhist tradition was entirely natural (Gulik, 1935, 28). According to Gulik, the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* mentions Hayagrīva as a *Vidyārāja* (Gulik, 1935, 24). In the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, Hayagrīva was incorporated as an important and distinctive deity. In the Mahayana pantheon, Hayagrīva is depicted in a human form that differs from the horse-faced demonic form commonly found in Hindu mythological tradition. In this representation, one or multiple horse heads emerges from his head (Sridhar, 1990, 79). He is portrayed sometimes with a gentle expression and at other times with a fierce one, symbolizing both protective and destructive aspects.

The emergence of Hayagrīva in the Buddhist tradition and his religious prominence were the result of a gradual and long-term historical process. It is believed that Hayagrīva had already been incorporated into the Buddhist tradition by the beginning of the sixth century CE. In the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, translated into Chinese in the seventh century, Hayagrīva is mentioned

in the context of the description of the Mahayana maṇḍala. In this text, he is presented as a Vidyārāja and is accorded a place in close proximity to images of Avalokiteśvara. Similarly, the Dhāraṇī Saṃgraha, which was translated into Chinese in 653 CE, contains a separate chapter devoted to the worship of Vidyārāja Hayagrīva. This reference indicates the growing religious prominence of Hayagrīva and the emergence of a distinct tradition of his worship. Furthermore, in a text translated into Chinese by Bodhiruci around 650 CE, Vidyārāja Hayagrīva is associated with Amoghapāśa. Amoghapāśa is regarded as a particular manifestation of Avalokiteśvara (Gulik, 1935, 24).

The development of Hayagrīva's representation in Buddhist art can be broadly divided into three phases. The first phase was characterized by representations of Hayagrīva that were strongly influenced by the ancient yakṣas, gaṇas, and other minor subordinate figures. As a result, it is often difficult to distinguish Hayagrīva's form from these earlier types of attendant figures. The second phase, particularly during the 9th–10th centuries, witnessed a significant increase in the scale and prominence of Hayagrīva's representation. His individual identity became more clearly defined, and his distinctive iconographic attributes and characteristics began to emerge more prominently. The third phase, especially from the 11th century onward, saw a gradual reduction in the size of Hayagrīva's figure. He increasingly appeared as a small attendant or subsidiary figure accompanying Avalokiteśvara and, in some instances, Tārā. This transformation reflects the changing iconographic status of Hayagrīva within Buddhist artistic traditions. (Linthore, 1999, 85)

In the Vajrayana tradition, the tantric form of Hayagrīva emerges in even more powerful manifestation which can be seen in the Pāla-period Bodhisattva sculptures. During this period, with the rapid development of Vajrayana Buddhism and the emergence of the tantric pantheon, many fierce and attendant deities were also incorporated (Bhaṭṭacharyya, 1949, 20–21), among whom Hayagrīva holds an important position. In Buddhist texts, Hayagrīva is described as a fierce manifestation of compassion. In the Vajrayana tradition, Hayagrīva is regarded as a companion deity associated with Amitābha, Akṣobhya, and Avalokiteśvara. Buddhist text describes different interpretations and narratives regarding the origin of Hayagrīva. Among these, the most prominent is the Rudra-vijaya narrative, which is described in Chapters 5–8 of the *Padma Thangyig Serteng* (*Padma Tthangyig Serteng*), an important Buddhist text of the Tibetan Vajrayana tradition. This text is an important Buddhist scripture of the Tibetan Vajrayana tradition. According to this narrative, Vajrasattva assumed the fierce form of Hayagrīva and defeated a demon named Rudra. Here, Rudra symbolizes ego and destructive power. When all gentle forces failed to subdue him, the use of fierce power became necessary to pacify and overcome him (Snellgrove, 1987, 318). Additional references associated with this narrative are also found in the literature. According to one interpretation, Hayagrīva, acting as an assistant to Vajrapāṇi engages

in a battle against Rudra. Following his defeat, Rudra vows to assume the role of a Dharmapāla. This episode indicates that within Buddhist Tantra, the emphasis is placed on the transformation rather than destruction (Davidson, 2002, 210). In the same narrative, Vajrasattva is described as assuming the form of Rudra and fathering a child with Rudra's consort Krodhīśvarī, who is subsequently identified as Hayagrīva (Linrothe, 1999, 72–75). In tantric classification, Hayagrīva is regarded as a *Heruka* of the Padmakula (Lotus family). *Heruka* denotes a tantric category comprising fierce and wrathful deity who manifests compassion in the form of intense and transformative energy (Wayman, 1977, 87).

Area of Study: This Paper examines the iconographic representation of Hayagrīva as an attendant deity in Pāla-period Bodhisattva images, with particular emphasis on his iconographic characteristics and stylistic features. The geographical sphere of the Pāla dynasty was mainly concentrated in the regions of Magadha and Vang-Deśa (present West Bengal and Bangladesh). This study focuses on eighteen images of Avalokiteśvara recovered from these regions in which Hayagrīva is depicted as an attendant or pārsva-devatā. A detailed iconographic analysis has been undertaken focusing on aspects such as attributes (āyudhas), posture (āsana), bodily disposition, and expressive gestures (Bhāva-Bhaṅgimā). Furthermore, the study contextualizes these sculptural representations through references to Buddhist textual sources, including the Sādhnamālā and Niṣpannayogāvalī which describes the canonical iconographic form and attributes of Hayagrīva. This comparative approach helps to illuminate the relationship between textual prescriptions and sculptural manifestations in the artistic tradition of the Pāla period.

2. Literature Review

In Brahmanical and Buddhist traditions, numerous literary references to Hayagrīva are found. Among them, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (V.17.11), the *Devi Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (1.5.20), the *Skanda Purāṇa* (Chs. 14–15), and the *Māhābhārata* (V.XII.326–56) are particularly notable. In this context, the work 'Hayagrīva: The horse headed deity in Indian culture' is important. Other significant literary sources include the Sādhnamālā and Benoytosh Bhattacharya's Indian Buddhist Iconography, as well as the Niṣpannayogāvalī, composed by Abhayākara Gupta. These texts provide detailed accounts of the various manifestations of Hayagrīva, including their iconographic features and associated Tantric rites. In his work, Benoytosh Bhattacharya provides a classification of Hayagrīva's emblematic features based on the Sādhnamālā. R. H. van Gulik's 'The Mantrayānic Aspects of Horse Cult in China and Japan' is another important study in this context. In this work, van Gulik briefly discusses various hypotheses concerning the origin of Hayagrīva in ancient India, his place in Vedic and Purāṇic traditions, and his incorporation into Buddhist traditions. In addition, he sheds light on the significance of Hayagrīva in

the context of horse worship in China and Japan. However, studies focusing on Hayagrīva's role as the accompanying deity of Avalokiteśvara remains limited. This research paper aims to address this gap.

Objectives

- To examine the origin of Hayagrīva within the Vajrayana deva-maṇḍala and his relationship with various Bodhisattvas.
- To identify and categorize the forms of Hayagrīva represented in Pāla-period Bodhisattva images.
- To analyze Hayagrīva's role as the attendant deity of Avalokiteśvara.
- To undertake a comparative study of the depictions of Hayagrīva in Pāla-period Bodhisattva images with the forms described in the *Sādhnamālā* and *Niṣpannayogāvalī*.

3. Methodology

This study employs an art-historical and iconographic framework to examine Pāla-period Bodhisattva sculptures from the Bihar and Bengal regions. It focuses on analyzing the stylistic features, iconographic attributes, postures, and the depiction of attendant deities associated with Hayagrīva.

4. Discussion

Iconographic representations of Hayagrīva in the *Sādhnamālā*

In the Vajrayana Buddhist tradition, the *Sadhanamala* is an extremely important tantric text. Benoytosh Bhattacharya edited this text into two parts based on eight manuscripts. The first part contains Sādhana 1 to 170, and the second part contains Sādhana 171 to 312, which include a compilation of the practices, meditation techniques, and mantras of various Buddhist deities. In the second part of this text, two Sādhana pertaining to Hayagrīva (Sādhana Nos. 259–260) are described. Hayagrīva is depicted both as the wrathful form of Avalokiteśvara and as a fierce deity associated with the Padmakula lineage. Furthermore, he is also linked with the Dhyānī Buddhas Akṣobhya and Amitābha.

*Raktavarṇaṁ mahābhayānakaṁ trinetraṁ kapilaśmaśuraudraṁ
brhadudaraṁ daṁṣṭrākarāiṇaṁ dantausthakapalāmālinaṁ
jatāmuku-ṭinaṁ Amitābhaśiraskaṁ. Dvītyamukhaṁ bhīma-
bhayānakaṁ nīlaṁ hayānanaṁ hīhikāranādināṁ Brahmā-
daśikharākrāntaṁ dvītyena bhavāgraparyantaṁ aṣṭanāgopetaṁ
kharavāmanākāraṁ vyāghracarma-nivasaṇaṁ sarvālāṅkārabhūṣitaṁ
sakaladevāsuraṁ tarjayanantarm grhīta- vajradaṇḍaṁ...vicintayet"*

(Bhaṭṭacharya, 1928, 509)

This Sādhana describes a form of Hayagrīva that emanates from Amitābha. In this manifestation, he appears extremely fearsome, with a massive belly, sharp teeth, and a crown of matted hair, bearing Amitābha's mark atop his head. His second face resembles that of a horse, is blue in color, and continuously neighs. He is adorned with tiger-skin decorated with the ornaments of eight Nāgas, has a powerful muscular body, and holds a vajra and a staff in his hands. In another Sādhana of the *Sāadhanmālā*, a highly detailed meditation on Hayagrīva arising from the Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya is also provided, which is described as follows:

*Ārya-Hayagrīvaṃ raktavarṇaṃ trimukhaṃ aṣṭabhujaṃ prati-
mukhaṃ trinetraṃ nīlasitadakṣiṇetaravadanaṃ sarpābharaṇaṃ
lalitāk-ṣepapadanyāsaṃ sakrodhadṛṣṭinirīkṣaṇaṃ, prathama-
mukhaṃ smerāṇ lalajjihvaṃ, dakṣiṇamukhaṃ daṃstrāvastabd-
hausthaṃ, vyāghracarmanī-vasanaṃ vajra-daṇḍa-karaṇamudrā-
śarodyatadakṣiṇakaracatuṣṭayaṃ tar-janikā-svakucagraha-padma-
dhanurudyatavāmakaracatuṣṭavaṃ Akṣobh-yamaulināṃ dhyāyāt.*

(Bhaṭṭacharya, 1928, 508)

According to this practice, Ārya-Hayagrīva has a red body, three faces, and eight arms, with three eyes on each face. The central face is red, the right face is blue, and the left face is white. He is decorated with snake ornaments, and his feet were in the *Lalita-Kṣepa-Padanyāsa* posture. His gaze is fierce and wrathful. The central face has a gentle smile, the right face shows the tongue sticking out between the teeth, and the left face shows a lip-biting expression. He wears a tiger skin. In his four right hands, he holds a vajra (thunderbolt), a staff, in the *Karaṇa Mudra* gesture raising a bow. In his four left hands, one hand showing a raised index finger, another touching the chest, and the remaining two holding a lotus and a bow. On his crown a statue of Akṣobhya was there, indicating its origination from Akṣobhya. (Bhaṭṭacharya, 1928, 508)

From the above description, it is evident that Hayagrīva's form is not merely that of a fierce deity, but an expression of meditation, symbolism, and spirituality. While his fierce face reflects intense anger, a subtle smile hints at the underlying stream of compassion. This duality of expression embodies the Vajrayana concept in which ferocity and compassion are not opposites but complementary forces of spiritual transformation. Hayagrīva's red complexion signifies his active, energetic, and tantric operational nature. The horse's head marks his distinctive identity, setting him apart from ordinary bodhisattva forms and establishing him as a unique guardian deity. The wearing of serpent ornaments can be seen as a symbol of tantric power, control, and dominion over negative forces. His dynamic posture with one leg raised represents the active subjugation of demons and the destruction of ignorance.

Iconographic representations of Hayagrīva in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*

The Buddhist text *Niṣpānnyogāvalī*, composed by the great scholar Abhayākara Gupta of Vikramashilā Māhāvihāra, is a famous Buddhist scripture in the Vajrayana tradition. The text was edited in 1949 by Benoytosh Bhattacharya. It contains 26 maṇḍalas which are important for understanding the ritual and iconographic traditions of Buddhism. The 12th maṇḍala (Sambar maṇḍala) describes the form of Hayagrīva, in which Hayagrīva is depicted as having three eyes, a single face, adorned with a crown of matted hair in a dynamic posture with raised feet, adorned with a necklace of skulls, wearing a tiger-skin and having four arms. He holds a vajra in his left hand and a drum in his right hand. He has a terrifying face with fangs. In the 20th maṇḍala of this text (*Trichatvarishadātmakamanjvājramaṇḍala*), the form of Hayagrīva is described as follows:

Pāścime Hayagrīvo raktaḥ raktanīlasitamūlasavyavāmamukhaḥ śaḍbhujah Savyaivajradaṇḍam kuṇḍapam bāṇam ca vāmaistarjanipāśam kucam cāpam ca bibharti

(Bhattacharya, 1949, 51)

In this maṇḍala, Hayagrīva is said to be situated in the western direction. His faces are red, blue, and white. The six-armed Hayagrīva holds a vajra, a skull, and an arrow in his right hands, and a pointing gesture (*tarjani-mudrā*), a pāśa and a bow in his left hands. In the *ṣaṭchakravartī* maṇḍala, Hayagrīva is described as follows:

dvāreṣu mahābalaratnavajrahayagrīvā [kā] śagarbhāhkrṣṇāhvajravajraghaṇṭhastābhyāmāliṅgita cakravegākhaṇḍarohāśaundīnī-cakravarmiṇyaḥ pītāḥ kroḍayanti.

(Bhattacharya, 1949, 80)

In this maṇḍala, Hayagrīva is described as being situated at the gate of Vajrasattva, along with the deity named Ākāśagarbha, who is dark-colored. He is embraced by his powers, who hold the vajra and the vajra-bell. This verse also mentions Hayagrīva's shakti, Shaundini. Based on the description of Hayagrīva in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, it can be said that he is the lord of protective powers who guard practitioners from obstacles on their spiritual path. In the Manjuvajra maṇḍala, Hayagrīva is depicted as one of the ten wrathful guardians, serving as the protector of the Vayavya (northwest) direction. His body is red colored and his three faces are arranged as follows: the central face is red, the right face is blue, and the left face is white (Bhattacharya, 1949, 27). His most distinctive feature is the blue horse-shaped crest on his head, known as the 'Nīlahayamukha. The horse-shaped crest on his head symbolizes his indomitable power and the neighing that awakens the world. Within

the Dharmadhātuvāgiśvara maṇḍala, a more detailed and fearsome form of Hayagrīva is described (Bhaṭṭacharyya, 1949, 58). He is generally depicted as *ṣaḍ-bhujā* (six-armed) and being associated with Amitābha's *Padma-kula*, radiates a blazing red aura. His right hands held weapons such as the vajra, sword, and jewel, while his left hands held the lotus, Vitark mudrā and bell. This form is so formidable that it terrifies enemies in the form of ignorance. The horse crest on his head represents wisdom that pierces through the clouds of ignorance (Bhaṭṭacharyya, 1949, 59).

Iconographic representation of Hayagrīva in Avalokiteśvara sculptures of the Pāla period

In the Mahayana Buddhist tradition, Avalokiteśvara is a prominent Bodhisattva whose origin is believed to be from Dhyanī Buddha Amitābha and his consort Pandara (Bhaṭṭacharyya, 1958, 32). In the present Bhadrakalpa, during the period between the nirvana of Śākyamunī Buddha and the advent of the future Buddha Maitreya, Avalokiteśvara is considered to be actively engaged in the welfare of all sentient beings. In the Mahayana, numerous sutras related to Avalokiteśvara are found, among which the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra (Lotus Sūtra), Karaṇḍavyūha Sūtra, Ekādaśamukha Dhāraṇī Sūtra, and Sukhāvatī Sūtra are particularly noteworthy. The Saddharmapuṇḍarīka (Lotus Sūtra) is generally regarded as the earliest authoritative text that expounds the Doctrine of Avalokiteśvara. Chapter 25 of this text is dedicated to Avalokiteśvara, in which he is described as a compassionate Bodhisattva who hears the cries of all living being and continuously works to assist those remember and recite his name. According to the *Karaṇḍavyūha Sutra*, he made a vow not to attain nirvana until all beings are endowed with the knowledge of enlightenment (bodhi). He also assumed various forms to preach the Dharma. In the *Sādhnamālā*, sādhanas 6 to 43 are devoted to the various forms of Avalokiteśvara. In these sādhanas, his attributes, the number of arms, postures, and gestures are depicted in diverse ways. His principal characteristic is the image of Amitābha engraved on his crown. The *Sādhnamālā* describes several forms of Avalokiteśvara, including Ṣaḍakṣarī Lokeśvara, Lokanātha, Hālāhala, Vajradharma, Khasarpaṇa, Simhanāda, Padmanarteśvara, Harīharīharivāhanodbhava, Trailokyavaśāṅkara, Nīlakaṇṭha, Māyājālakrama, Lokeśvara, Sugatisandarśana, and Pretashatarpita (Bhaṭṭacharya, 1958, 124–144).

This paper examines 18 Pāla-period images of Avalokiteśvara in which Hayagrīva is depicted as an attendant or subsidiary deity.

1. Khasarpaṇa Lokeśvara with Hayagrīva: The image of Khasarpaṇa Lokeśvara discovered from South Bihar (Bhaṭṭacharyya, 2000, 66–68) depicts the Bodhisattva standing upon a double-petalled lotus. (Fig.1) He is shown wearing a lower garment adorned with floral decorations. Around his

neck is a necklace, along with a long sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*) made of pearls. Above the left shoulder, a fully blossomed lotus bud with leaves is shown emerging from a stalk. A particularly noteworthy feature is that on the lotus leaf of this stalk, a vessel is placed, within which pearls and ornaments are kept. On this basis, the figure is identified as a form of Avalokiteśvara known as Khasarpaṇa Lokeśvara. As attendant figures, Tārā is depicted on the right, Hayagrīva on the left, and Bhṛkuṭī is also shown alongside them. Near the lotus stalk on the left side of Avalokiteśvara stands Hayagrīva in *ālīḍha mudrā* with his left foot placed upon a lotus. He is depicted as short in stature, with a stout body and a protruding belly. His face is damaged, and his right hand is raised in a gesture of expression (*abhinaya mudrā*) while the elbow of the left-hand rests upon a mace or staff. The form of Hayagrīva described here corresponds to the depiction found in the *Sādhnamālā* (Bhaṭṭacharyya, 1928, 509–10). A similar image of Khasarpaṇa Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 2) is preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta (Huntington, 1984, fig. 75) where he is depicted along with four attendant deities. Among them, Tārā appears on the right side, Bhṛkuṭī on the left side, Sudhanakumāra in the lower right and Hayagrīva in the lower left. In Pāla-period Buddhist tantric sculptures, the presence of subordinate attendant deities in the lower register often signifies specific dimensions of the principal deity's divine power. In this image, Avalokiteśvara is seated in *lalitāsana* on a double-tiered, petalled lotus throne, with his right foot placed upon a separate lotus pedestal. He is adorned with a necklace, sacred thread (*upavīta*), anklets, and a girdle (*mekhalā*). The folds of his garment are clearly visible. He holds a lotus in his left hand while the right hand is damaged, though it was likely originally depicted in the *varada mudrā* (gesture of boon-giving). The depiction of Hayagrīva seated in the lower section of the composition indicates his role as a subordinate yet active protective force within the tantric power of Avalokiteśvara.

A stone sculpture of Khasarpaṇa Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 3) is preserved in the collection of the Patna Museum (Huntington, 1984, fig. 84). Just below the lotus pedestal of this image, four attendant deities are carved on the base. On the right side are Tārā and Sudhanakumāra while on the left are the four-armed, Bhṛkuṭī and beside her, Hayagrīva, depicted with the characteristics described above. Similarly, a Bodhisattva sculpture from Bodh Gaya (Fig. 4) represents an exemplary manifestation of Avalokiteśvara in the Khasarpaṇa form and includes the five Tathāgata, is preserved (Bhaṭṭacharyya, 2000, fig. 2.19). In this sculpture, the two-armed bodhisattva is seated on a small lotus pedestal, with the right hand in *varadamudrā* and the left hand holding the stem of a fully bloomed lotus. The figure is adorned with various ornaments. The attendant deities are also depicted alongside the bodhisattva: on the right side are Tārā and Sudhanakumāra and on the left are Bhṛkuṭī and Hayagrīva. All four are represented with their traditional gestures and characteristic weapons.

2. Khasarpaṇa Lokanātha with Hayagrīva: The image of Khasarpaṇa Lokanātha (Fig. 6) presently preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum (Bhaṭṭasali 1972, 25), is accompanied by four attendant deities— Tārā, Sudhanakumāra, Hayagrīva, and Bhṛkuṭī. In this sculpture, the figure of Hayagrīva may be identified on the left side of the Bodhisattva. The deity is represented as a corpulent, seated figure displaying the *tarjani mudrā* (gesture of admonition). Although the head of the figure is no longer extant, its identification as Hayagrīva is substantiated by the presence of a tiger-skin garment, a characteristic attribute, as well as by its ornamented appearance. This representation of Hayagrīva corresponds closely with the description provided in the *Niṣapannayogāvalī*, particularly in relation to the Śambara Maṇḍala (Bhaṭṭacharyya 1949, 26). This correspondence supports the identification of the figure as Hayagrīva and indicates that the sculptural depiction likely follows established textual iconographic conventions.

3. Avalokiteśvara with Hayagrīva: A stone-made image of Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 7), currently preserved in the State Archaeological Museum, Patna, is in a highly fragmented condition (Bhaṭṭacharyya, 2000, 53). The Bodhisattva is depicted seated in *lalitāsana* posture upon a large, double-petalled lotus pedestal. On his right side, the stout and fierce-looking Hayagrīva is shown seated as an attendant deity. Another black stone image of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 8) preserved in the Brooklyn Museum, Bangladesh, is depicted seated in *lalitāsana* posture upon a large *viśva-padma* (cosmic lotus) (Bhaṭṭacharyya, 2000, fig. 20.3). His right foot rests upon a small lotus flower. His right hand is in *varada-mudrā* (gesture of boon-giving), while in his left hand he holds the stalk of a fully blossomed lotus. Another fully bloomed lotus flower is also carved on his right side. Avalokiteśvara is adorned with an ornate *jaṭāmukuta* (matted crown) and various precious ornaments. As attendant deities, Sudhanakumāra is depicted on his right side, while Hayagrīva appears on the left, both shown in their traditional hand gesture, namely the *vandana-abhinaya mudrā* (gesture of reverence). An image of Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 9), preserved in the Malda Museum, also corresponds to the above description. Here, Sudhanakumāra is depicted on the right side of Avalokiteśvara, while Hayagrīva appears on the left; both are shown seated as attendant deities on their respective lotus seats. Another image of Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 10), currently preserved in the Museum of Berlin, depicts the fierce deity Hayagrīva seated in the lower section upon a *pañcaratha* pedestal.

An image of Avalokiteśvara (Fig. No. 11) discovered in Bihar, which is presently preserved in the Ashutosh Museum, Calcutta, depicts the Bodhisattva in a tribhaṅga (three-bend) posture. Along with him are four attendant deities: on the right are Tārā and Sudhanakumāra, and on the left are Bhṛkuṭī and Hayagrīva. Hayagrīva is shown wearing a serpent as a *yajñopavīta* (sacred thread), and a staff is depicted in his hand as his weapon. According to the *Sādhana-mālā*, Avalokiteśvara should be represented seated in *lalitāsana* or

ardhaparyaṅkāśana along with four attendant deities. However, the present image shows him in a tribhaṅga posture, which differs from the prescriptions described in the *Sādhanaṃālā* (Bhaṭṭacharyya, 1928, 128).

A four-armed image of Avalokiteśvara (Fig. No. 12) discovered at Surajkuṇḍ, Ghosravan near Pavapuri, district Nalanda, Bihar, is presently preserved in the Indian Museum (Huntington, 1984, 119). In this image, only one attendant is visible who is a two-armed Hayagrīva. He is depicted as short in stature with a protruding abdomen. His hair is styled upward like flames, and instead of a sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*), he is shown wearing a serpent and is covered with a tiger skin. In his two arms, the left hand holds a staff-like weapon while the right hand is shown in *vitarka mudrā*. A six-armed image of Avalokiteśvara discovered at Bargaon just north to the ruin of ancient Nalanda Mahavihar, (Fig. No. 13) is presently preserved in the collection of the Indian Museum, Calcutta, where he is depicted seated in *lalitāsana* on a small *padmāsana* (Mukharjee, 2002, 146). Among the six arms, the upper right hand holds an *aksasutra* (rosary), the middle right hand is shown in *abhaya mudrā* and the lower right hand in *varada mudrā*. On the left side, the primary hand holds a lotus (*padma*), the middle-left hand holds a book and the lower left hand holds a *kamaṇḍal*. His attendant Hayagrīva is depicted in a seated posture, with both of his arms holding a staff (*Daṇḍa*).

A statue of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Fig. No. 14) is presently preserved in the collection of the Indian Museum. On its pedestal, Hayagrīva is depicted in his traditional form. In two images of the twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara discovered in Bihar (Plate Nos. 15 and 16), Hayagrīva is shown in a fierce (*ugra*) form between Bhṛkuṭī and the Bodhisattva depicted with a beard and moustache (Sattar, 2015, 90–106). His hair is represented in a flame-like (*jvalakara*) form. In an eight-armed image of Avalokiteśvara preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta (Fig. No. 17), Hayagrīva can also be seen seated beside Bhṛkuṭī. In a fragmented image of Avalokiteśvara discovered from Jaynagar, Munger (Fig. No. 18), Hayagrīva is depicted in a wrathful form on the pedestal to the right side of Sudhanakumāra.

5. Conclusion

The incorporation of Hayagrāva into the Buddhist tradition and the gradual establishment of his religious status constituted a long and complex historical process. By the beginning of the sixth century CE, Hayagrāva had already emerged as a significant divine figure within the Buddhist tradition. In Pāla-period art, Hayagrāva is frequently depicted alongside images of Avalokiteśvara, appearing as an attendant or associated deity. In Pāla-period sculpture, the presence of Hayagrīva as a attendant deity of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara is not merely an element of aesthetic representation; rather it is a tangible expression of the Vajrayāna tradition in which compassion and protective

power are depicted together. On one hand, Avalokiteśvara embodies compassion and empathy toward humanity while on the other, Hayagrīva appears as a fierce, active, and tantric symbol of protection against dangers. This combination also reflects the religious landscape of that period where spiritual practice was not limited solely to compassion. Therefore, Hayagrīva's role as an attendant is also associated with the idea of the removal of obstacles as reflected in the practices described in texts such as the *Sādhnamālā*. In these images, Hayagrīva's form, expressions, and gestures can be observed in accordance with the descriptions found in *Sādhnamālā* and *Niṣpannayogāvali* revealing the sculptors' knowledge of iconographic conventions. These artists gave tangible form to religious ideas, thereby establishing a seamless connection between the devotee and the divine. Thus, the depiction of Hayagrīva as the attendant of Avalokiteśvara represents a beautiful synthesis of human sentiment, tantric belief and artistic expression within the Buddhist tradition of the Pāla period.

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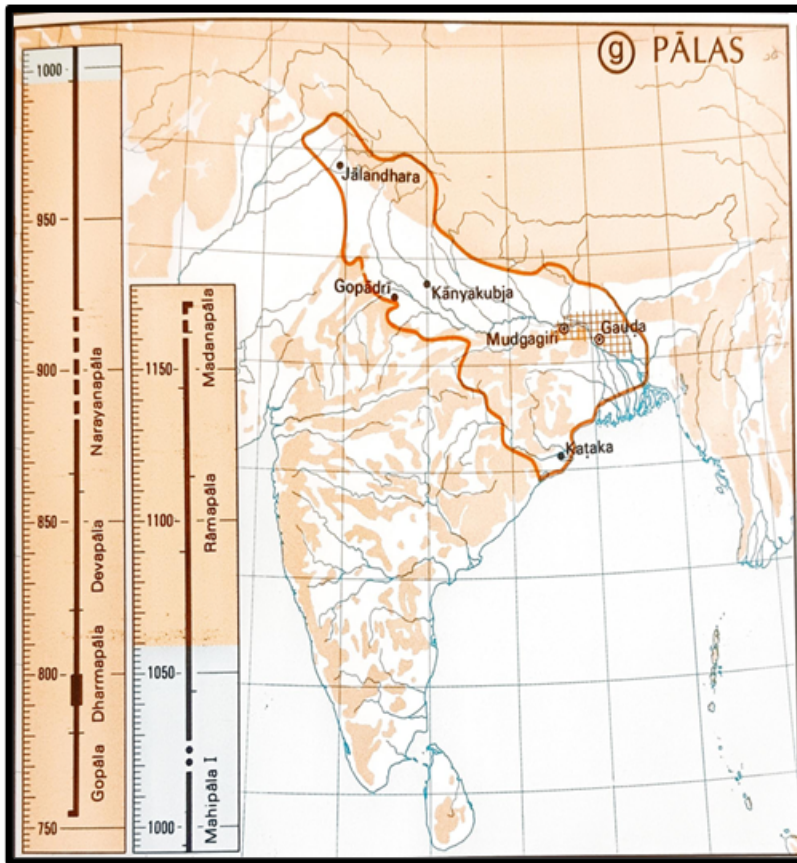
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Table 1: Avalokiteśvara Images of Pāla Period

S. No.	Bodhisattva Images	Findspot	Present Location & Acc. No.	Attendant Deity	Depiction of Hayagrīva
1	Khaṣarpana Avalokiteśvara	Magadh	Museum Fur Indische Kunst, Berlin, 11156	Tārā, Hayagrīva, Bhṛkuṭī	Between Bodhisattva and Bhṛkuṭī
2	Khaṣarpana Avalokiteśvara	Chandimau, Patna	Indian Museum Calcutta, N.S.76	Tārā, Sudhanakumāra, Bhṛkuṭī, Hayagrīva	Seated Mudrā
3	Khaṣarpana Avalokiteśvara	Giriyek, Patna	Patna Museum, 1632	Tārā, Sudhanakumāra, Bhṛkuṭī, Hayagrīva	Seated Mudrā, Beside Bhṛkuṭī
4	Khaṣarpana Lokanātha	Belasa, Tippera, Bangladesh	Bangladesh National Museum	Tārā, Sudhanakumāra, Bhṛkuṭī, Hayagrīva	Hayagrīva In Tarjjani Mudrā
5	Avalokiteśvara	Bodhgaya	Site Museum Bodhgaya	Tārā, Sudhanakumāra, Bhṛkuṭī, Hayagrīva	Left side
6	Avalokiteśvara	Bangladesh	Brooklyn Museum Of Art, New York	Sudhanakumāra, Hayagrīva	Hayagrīva In Abhinay Mudrā
7	Avalokitesvara	Malda, West Bengal	Malda Museum, BAV 3	Sudhanakumāra, Hayagrīva	Hayagrīva in left side
8	Avalokiteśvara	Magadh	Weddel collection 31, MIK, Berlin, Inv no. IC35608	Tārā, Bhṛkuṭī, Hayagrīva	Krodhi Hayagrīva
9	Avalokiteśvara	Bihar	Ashutosh Museum of Indian Art, 2002.1147/21096	Tārā, Sudhanakumāra, Bhṛkuṭī, Hayagrīva	Standing Mudrā
10	Avalokiteśvara	Bihar	Ashutosh Museum of Indian Art, 690	Tārā, Sudhanakumāra, Bhṛkuṭī, Hayagrīva	Beside Bhṛkuṭī

S. No.	Bodhisattva Images	Findspot	Present Location & Acc. No.	Attendant Deity	Depiction of Hayagrīva
11	Avalokiteśvara	Surajkund, Ghosrawan, Patna	Indian Museum Calcutta, 3962/A24123	Hayagrīva	Vyāghracharm-adhārī
12	Crowned Avalokiteśvara	Bargain, Ancient Nalanda	Indian Museum Calcutta, 4473/A24143	Bhṛkutī, Hayagrīva	Seated Beside Bhṛkutī
13	Avalokiteśvara	Bihar	Indian Museum Calcutta, 3600	Tārā, Sudhanakumāra, Bhṛkutī, Hayagrīva	On the Pedestal
14	Twelve-Armed Avalokiteśvara	Bihar	Indian Museum Calcutta	Tārā, Bhṛkutī, Hayagrīva	Hayagrīva beside Tārā to the right Side
15	Twelve-Armed Avalokiteśvara	Bihar	Indian Museum Calcutta	Tārā, Bhṛkutī, Hayagrīva	Fierce form of Hayagrīva
16	Eight Armed Avalokiteśvara	Bihar	Indian Museum Calcutta	Tārā, Bhṛkutī, Hayagrīva, Suchimukha	Seated Mudrā
17	Avalokiteśvara	Munger, Bihar	Indian Museum Calcutta	Sudhanakumāra, Hayagrīva	Right to Bodhisattva
18	Avalokiteśvara	Unknown	State Archaeological Museum, Patna, 1632	Sudhanakumāra, Hayagrīva	Fierce form of Hayagrīva



Map: Territorial Extent of the Pāla Dynasty
 ('A Historical Atlas of South Asia', edited by Joseph E. Schwartzberg, 1978, p. 146,
 Plate XIV.2.)

Avalokiteśvara Images of Pāla Period



Figure No.-1 (Picron, Claudine B., 1980, Pl.- 50)



Figure No.-2 (Huntington, S. L., 1984, Fig.- 75)



Figure No.-3 (Patna Museum, Bihar)



Figure No.-4 (Bhattachali, N. K., 1920, Pl.- VI.a)



Figure No.-5 (Bhattacharya, G., 2000, Pl.- 2.19)



Figure No.-6 (Bhattacharya, G., 2000, Pl.- 2.19)



Figure No.-7 (Bhattacharya, G., 2001, Page - 25)



Figure No.-8 (Picron, Claudine B., 1980, Pl.- 49)



Figure No.-9 (Ashutosh Museum of Indian Art)



Figure No.-10 (Ashutosh Museum of Indian Art, Kolkata)



Figure No.-11 (Indian Museum, Kolkata)



Figure No.-12 (Indian Museum, Kolkata)



Figure No.-13 (Indian Museum, Kolkata)



Figure No.-14 (Indian Museum, Kolkata)



Figure No.-15 (Indian Museum, Kolkata)



Figure No.-16 (Indian Museum, Kolkata)



Figure No.-17 (Picron, Claudine B., 1980, Fig.- 2)



Figure No.-18 (Bhattacharya, G., 2000, Pl.- 4.2)