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# Meditation and Cosmology: The Physical Basis of the Concentrations and Formless Absorptions According to dGe-lugs Tibetan Presentations

by Leah Zahler

The concentrations (*bsam gtan, dhyāna*)<sup>1</sup> and formless absorptions (*gzugs med kyi snyoms 'jug, ārūpyasamāpatti*) are important not only as a system of meditation but also because of their relationship to traditional Buddhist cosmology. Buddhist scholars have studied this relationship from two points of view, both concerned with action (*las*), or *karma*. The first places those rebirth states in the structure of the cosmology, which, in turn, provides a general map of cyclic existence (*'khor ba, saṃsāra*) and of the physical and mental states possible within it. This is the approach of chapter 3 of Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge* (*Abhidharmakośa, Chos mngon pa'i mdzod*) and its *Autocommentary* (*Abhidharmakośabhāṣya, Chos mngon pa'i mdzod kyi bshad pa*)—for Tibetans of all schools, the major Indian source for the map of cyclic existence. Chapter 4, a detailed discussion of the topic of *karma*, amplifies the general map in chapter 3 by applying many of its technical points to specific realms and levels of cyclic existence.<sup>2</sup>

Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge* and its *Autocommentary* lists only five transmigrations, whereas Tibetan cosmologies include a sixth, that of demigods (*lha ma yin, asura*). Demigods are also included in Theravāda cosmologies,<sup>3</sup> which were not transmitted to Tibet. For Tibetan descriptions of demigods, the main source seems to be stanza 102 of Nāgārjuna's *Friendly Letter* (*Suḥrillekha, bShes pa'i spring yig*), which describes them in the context of a vivid depiction of the sufferings of cyclic existence; Nāgārjuna's *Friendly Letter* influenced the dGe-lugs (Ge-luk<sup>4</sup>) stages-of-the-path (*lam rim*) tradition,<sup>5</sup>

as well as the more technical discussions of cosmology in dGe-lugs monastic textbooks (*yig cha*).

The second point of view, which presupposes the first, examines the qualities of the sentient beings (*sems can, sattva*) in the various realms and levels of cyclic existence in order to distinguish between those who are capable of cultivating and attaining the concentrations and formless absorptions and those who are not. It is from this second point of view that dGe-lugs monastic textbooks set forth the topic of the physical basis (*lus rten*) of the concentrations and formless absorptions.<sup>6</sup>

### *I. Cyclic Existence*

It may be useful to set the topic of the physical basis of the concentrations and formless absorptions against the background of a dGe-lugs presentation of cyclic existence. The contemporary dGe-lugs scholar Lati Rinbochay explains cyclic existence as consisting of the three realms and the nine levels (*kham s gum sa dgu*). The three realms are the Desire Realm (*'dod kham s, kāmadhātu*), the Form Realm (*gzugs kham s, rūpadhātu*), and the Formless Realm (*gzug med kham s, ārūpyadhātu*). The nine levels are the Desire Realm, the four main divisions of the Form Realm, and the four divisions of the Formless Realm. Since these divisions of the Form and Formless Realms correspond to the actual absorptions (*dn gos gzhi'i snyoms 'jug, maulasamāpatti*) that cause rebirth in those realms, the four main levels of the Form Realm are called the First Concentration (*bsam gtan dang po, prathamadhyāna*), the Second Concentration (*bsam gtan gnyis pa, dvitīyadhyāna*), the Third Concentration (*bsam gtan gsum pa, tritīyadhyāna*), and the Fourth Concentration (*bsam gtan bzhi pa, caturthadhyāna*). The divisions of the Formless Realm also have the same names as the actual absorptions that cause rebirth in them; they are called Limitless Space (*nam mkha' mtha' yas, ākāśānantya*), Limitless Consciousness (*rnam shes mtha' yas, vijñānānantya*), Nothingness (*ci yang med, ākimcanya*), and the Peak of Cyclic Existence (*srid rtse, bhavāgra*).<sup>7</sup> (For a chart of cyclic existence showing the three realms and the nine levels, see page 72.)

Rebirth in all these levels is held to be caused by previous

actions. Rebirth in the bad transmigrations (*ngan 'gro, dur-gati*)—those of hell beings (*dmyal ba, nāraka*), hungry ghosts (*yi dvags, preta*), and animals (*dud 'gro, tiryāṅc*)—is caused by non-virtuous (*mi dge ba, akuśala*) actions, whereas rebirth in the happy transmigrations (*bde 'gro, sugati*)—those of humans (*mi, manuṣya*), demigods (*lha ma yin, asura*), and gods (*lha, deva*)—is caused by virtuous (*dge ba, kuśala*) actions. Thus, one purpose of such presentations is ethical: it is assumed that if listeners know what types of action cause the various types of rebirth, they will try to modify their conduct accordingly so that, at the very least, they may avoid rebirth in bad transmigrations and attain rebirth in happy transmigrations. According to presentations of the topic of Grounds and Paths (*sa lam, bhūmimārga*), this is the level of the special being of small capacity (*skyes bu chung ngu khyad par can*), the lowest of the three types of religious practitioner. It is assumed to be the level of most people who listen to Buddhist teachings, whereas those of middling capacity (*skye bu 'bring*) and, especially, those of great capacity (*skye bu chen po*)—respectively, those who wish to attain freedom from cyclic existence for their own sakes and those who wish to attain Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings—are held to be few.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, Lati Rinbochay describes the Desire Realm, especially the bad transmigrations, in far greater detail than is strictly necessary for a presentation of the concentrations and formless absorptions.

Virtuous actions are said to be of two types—meritorious (*bsod nams, puṇya*) and unfluctuating (*mi g'yo ba, āniñjya*). Meritorious actions are those that cause rebirth as a human or as a god of the Desire Realm. Unfluctuating actions are those that cause rebirth in the Form and Formless Realms—the actual absorptions of the concentrations and formless absorptions. “Thus,” Lati Rinbochay comments,

from the point of view of taking rebirth in cyclic existence, these eight concentrations and formless absorptions are the best possible actions.<sup>9</sup>

But his comment raises the question of motivation: does the practitioner seek rebirth in cyclic existence or liberation from it?

From this point of view, the presentation of the Form and Formless Realms as states within cyclic existence suggests that, for dGe-lugs-pas, directing the mind inward is not in itself a guarantee of liberation; even if extremely subtle states are reached, they may lead, not to liberation, but only to subtle states of suffering—that is, to rebirth in high levels within cyclic existence.

Not all beings are capable of attaining those states, however. The limitations of those who are not capable of attaining them, as well as the capacities of those who are, depend to a great extent on those beings' previous actions. The topic of the physical basis of the concentrations and formless absorptions deals with the question of who—that is, what types of person (*gang zag, pudgala*)—can achieve the concentrations and formless absorptions. From the practitioner's point of view, the topic answers the question, "Am I included among those who can do it?"

## *II. The Meaning of "Physical Basis"*

The meaning of "basis" (*rten, āśraya*) in the term "physical basis" (*lus rten*) requires some explanation. Tibetan writers and scholars often refer to persons "in," or "having," a basis of the Desire, Form, or Formless Realm. In this somewhat awkward phrase, "basis" is a technical term referring to the collection of aggregates (*phung po, skandha*) in dependence upon which the person is designated—that is, the basis of designation (*gdags gzhi*) of the person, since, according to Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamika tenets (*grub mtha', siddhānta*), the person is not any of the aggregates and is not the collection of aggregates but, rather, is *designated* in dependence upon the collection of aggregates. Thus, beings of the Desire and Form Realms—technically, persons "in" or "having" Desire or Form Realm bases—have all five aggregates, so that person is designated in dependence upon the collection of the form aggregate (*gzugs kyi phung po, rūpaskandha*) and the four mental aggregates, or the body and mind. This is the basis of the person.

In the topic of the physical basis, the term "physical basis" is used loosely, since it refers to beings of all three realms.

Strictly speaking, only those of the Desire and Form Realms have a *physical* basis, since only they have a form aggregate—a body—as well as the four mental aggregates. Beings of the Formless Realm have only the mental aggregates and, therefore, have no bodies. Nevertheless, they are also discussed under this heading, since the term “mental basis” (*sems rten*) is used technically in a completely different context. The topic of mental bases deals with relationships between consciousnesses; specifically, it deals with the ways in which certain consciousnesses do or do not support (that is, act as bases of) certain other consciousnesses—for example, the way in which an actual absorption of a concentration becomes the mental basis of the path of preparation (*sbyor lam*, *prayogamārga*), the second of the five paths leading to liberation from cyclic existence and, in the Mahāyāna, to Buddhahood; the person cultivating the path of preparation in this way would be someone on the first of the five paths, the path of accumulation (*ishogs lam*, *sambhāramārga*), who has attained an actual concentration.

### *III. Classes of Beings Who Cannot Achieve the Concentrations and Formless Absorptions*

dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po (Gön-chok-jik-may-wang-bo) begins his exposition of his own system by enumerating and eliminating those persons who cannot achieve the concentrations and formless absorptions. Lati Rinbochay and Gedün Lodrö both follow this method in their oral presentations.<sup>10</sup> From among the six transmigrations of cyclic existence, the main groups of those who cannot are beings in the three bad transmigrations; demigods; humans of the northern continent, Unpleasant Sound (*sgra mi nyan*, *kuru*); the higher types of gods of the Desire Realm, and the gods of no discrimination (*'du shes med pa'i sems can*, *asamjñisattva*) in the Great Fruit Land (*'bras bu che*, *vṛhatphala*) of the Fourth Concentration.<sup>11</sup> All these are said to have “strong fruitional obstructions” (*rnam smin gyi sgrib pa*, *\*vipākāvaraṇa*), which Gedün Lodrö explains as meaning “that the actions (*las*), or *karmas*, that caused such persons to be reborn” as beings of any of those transmigrations “prevents such persons from engaging in virtuous activity”—at any rate,

the type of virtuous activity required for generation of the concentrations and formless absorptions.<sup>12</sup>

Additional reasons are given for the inability of such beings to achieve the concentrations and formless absorptions. According to Lati Rinbochay, beings in the three bad transmigrations cannot because their suffering gives them no opportunity to do so.<sup>13</sup> Gedün Lodrö explains the sufferings of the bad transmigrations in great detail in this context: “Hell beings not only have physical suffering but are particularly tormented by mental suffering”; hungry ghosts “are troubled by the sufferings of hunger and thirst” and, therefore, “are tremendously afflicted with jealousy of those who have food and drink,” and animals, although they have less physical and mental suffering than hell beings and hungry ghosts, are too stupid to focus on an object of observation (*dmigs pa, ālambana*); Gedün Lodrö notes that “the faculties of hell beings and hungry ghosts are sharper than those of animals.”<sup>14</sup> In addition to stupidity, animals also have the sufferings enumerated by Lati Rinbochay in his description of cyclic existence: they eat one another or constantly have to search for food or are used for human purposes.<sup>15</sup>

The fruitional obstruction of demigods is such that they “are strongly afflicted by jealousy.”<sup>16</sup> As Gedün Lodrö explains, this occurs

because their rebirths as demigods are impelled by an action (*las, karma*) conjoined with a mind of jealousy regarding the wealth and resources of the gods.<sup>17</sup>

According to Lati Rinbochay, humans of the northern continent, Unpleasant Sound, and the higher types of gods of the Desire Realm cannot achieve the concentrations and formless absorptions because they are unable to analyze. They cannot analyze because they

experience a continuous wonderful fruition of past actions. Thus, they do not have untimely death; things go well for them, and they experience the fruition of good past actions so strongly that they do not have much to think about and, therefore, do not have strong power of thought.<sup>18</sup>

Gedün Lodrö cites commentaries on Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge* as the sources for this point. He also suggests that the pleasant lives of such beings are mostly given over to ethically neutral (*lung du ma bstan pa, avyākṛta*) activity, since "they do not have any strong force of thought to engage in either virtue or nonvirtue."<sup>19</sup>

Lati Rinbochay and Gedün Lodrö differ as to which of the higher Desire Realm gods cannot achieve the concentrations and formless absorptions and, to some extent, with regard to the reason. According to Lati Rinbochay, the three higher types cannot—mainly because, like humans of the northern continent, they cannot analyze. According to Gedün Lodrö, however, the four higher types of gods of the Desire Realm cannot do so. He divides the six types of Desire Realm gods into those who depend on the earth and those who are in the sky and holds that only the two lowest types, which depend on the earth, can generate the concentrations and formless absorptions; the four higher types, those who are in the sky, cannot because they cannot see the faults of the Desire Realm.<sup>20</sup> dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po, however, gives a somewhat different presentation; according to him, all six types of gods of the Desire Realm can newly generate the concentrations and formless absorptions because all "have new generation of concentrative discipline" (*bsam gtan gyi sdom pa, dhyānaśamvara*;<sup>21</sup> for a discussion of the topic of concentrative discipline, see pages 64–68).

Because of their fruitional obstruction, gods of no discrimination in the Great Fruit Land of the Fourth Concentration are also prevented from achieving the concentrations and formless absorptions by inability to analyze—in their case, according to Lati Rinbochay, because they are born into a meditative absorption without discrimination as a result of having cultivated such an absorption in the previous lifetime.<sup>22</sup> dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po also includes gods of no discrimination among those having a strong fruitional obstruction.<sup>23</sup> Gedün Lodrö, however, includes these gods in a "secondary group" of gods and humans unable to achieve the concentrations and formless absorptions—a group consisting of "humans or gods at a time of sleeping, fainting, the meditative absorption of cessation (*'gog pa'i snyoms 'jug, nirodhasamāpatti*),

or the meditative absorption of non-discrimination (*du shes med pa, asaṃjñā*).<sup>24</sup> According to Gedün Lodrö, those who are born as gods of no discrimination have cultivated a meditative equipoise of non-discrimination because of intense concern with overcoming “coarse states of mind”; they have also achieved an actual concentration. They

mistake the factor which is pacification of coarse minds for liberation; thus, they view the meditative absorption of no discrimination as being a path to liberation and see birth in that level as liberation.<sup>25</sup>

#### *IV. Exceptions Among Beings Otherwise Qualified to Generate the Concentrations and Formless Absorptions*

The remaining types of sentient beings—that is, humans of the three continents other than Unpleasant Sound, the lower types of Desire Realm gods, and Form Realm gods other than those of non-discrimination—can achieve the concentrations and formless absorptions. Even among them, however, there are exceptions based on inability to analyze, disqualification due to genital abnormality, and the presence of strong karmic obstructions.

*Inability to analyze.* Gedün Lodrö lists as “the main human exceptions ... those who are insane, those whose elements are physically disturbed, and beings emanated by another being.”<sup>26</sup> He explains that beings of the last type cannot generate calm abiding (*zhi gnas, śamatha*) or the concentrations and formless absorptions because they do not have minds of their own: they “are incapable of deciding to generate calm abiding because they depend on the mind of the emanator.”<sup>27</sup> He also includes among the main exceptions those humans who are “overpowered by poison”; such persons are suffering from a type of craziness, but not the natural insanity referred to above; rather, their minds are temporarily “affected by certain substances,” including drugs such as marijuana and *datura*, as well as manufactured drugs (in both the Tibetan and Western systems).<sup>28</sup> “These,” he notes, “are the main cases of the mind’s

not abiding in a normal state.”<sup>29</sup> Of humans in this main type, he adds that “not only can these people not generate calm abiding or an actual concentration; they also cannot generate a vow of individual emancipation, a *bodhisattva* vow, or a tantric vow.”<sup>30</sup>

*Genital abnormality.* Among the humans of the three continents other than Unpleasant Sound who cannot generate the concentrations and formless absorptions are those disqualified because of genital abnormality. It is important for modern Westerners to bear in mind that the abnormalities referred to here are anatomical abnormalities and the mental distortions thought to accompany them; there is no mention of sexual orientation.

According to dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po, persons so disqualified are neuter persons (*za ma, śaṇḍha*), eunuchs (*ma ning, paṇḍaka*), and androgynes (*mtshan gnyis pa, ubhayavyañjana*); Lati Rinbochay gives the second category as “the impotent” and appears to include what we generally think of as eunuchs among the neuter—those who “have neither male nor female organs or . . . lose their organs through sickness, through the application of medicine, or through the organs’ being cut off by a weapon.” He explains impotent persons as those who have male or female organs but lack the sexual capacity of males and females. Androgynous humans, according to both Lati Rinbochay and Gedün Lodrö, are those who have both male and female organs.<sup>31</sup>

According to dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po, the reason people with genital abnormalities cannot newly generate the concentrations and formless absorptions is that they have strong afflictive obstructions (*nyon mongs kyi sgrib pa, kleśāvāraṇa*).<sup>32</sup> Lati Rinbochay explains that

their minds are continuously held by such afflictions as desire, anger, and jealousy. Because there is no time at which they are free of these afflictions, they have no opportunity to cultivate paths

and, therefore, cannot newly attain the concentrations and formless absorptions.<sup>33</sup>

Gedün Lodrö distinguishes between the incapacity for such meditation of the neuter and the androgynous. According to him,

Neuter beings, like those in the northern continent, are unable to carry anything to a conclusion. They do not have a sufficiently strong force of thought.<sup>34</sup>

The androgynous, however, are prevented from attaining calm abiding or the concentrations and formless absorptions because they have too many afflictions:

Androgynous humans, those who have both male and female signs, have the afflictions of both male and female and thus have too many afflictions to be able to generate calm abiding [or the concentrations and formless absorptions].<sup>35</sup>

With regard to the afflictions of male and female, Gedün Lodrö explains:

In general, we refer to the three poisons, the six root afflictions (*rtsa ba'i nyon mongs, mülakleśa*), and the twenty secondary afflictions (*nye ba'i nyon mongs, upakleśa*). Both males and females have all these. The male and female afflictions that I was referring to are the desire each has for the other. Males have an attraction to females and females, to males. A person who had both types of desire would have a great deal.<sup>36</sup>

It is important to note that people with genital abnormalities cannot *newly* attain calm abiding and the concentrations and formless absorptions. dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po does not say of them, as he does of those with strong karmic obstructions, that they "can neither newly generate absorptions nor keep what has already been generated"; he says only that those with genital abnormalities "do not have generation of these [absorptions]."<sup>37</sup> According to Gedün Lodrö, those who had previously attained calm abiding or any of the concentrations and formless absorptions and later fell into one of the categories of genital abnormality through accident or illness would not necessarily lose their attainments;

some people would be able to use their previous understanding to hold on to their attainments, but in the case of a strong accident, the attainment would deteriorate.<sup>38</sup> Thus, although humans capable of generating the concentrations and formless absorptions must be genitally normal males and females, Gedün Lodrö's qualification shows that the criterion of genital normality is not applied mechanically.

*Strong karmic obstructions.* Some humans are prevented from generating the concentrations and formless absorptions by strong karmic obstructions (*las sgrib, karmāvaraṇa*).<sup>39</sup> These karmic obstructions are the actions of abandoning the doctrine (*chos spong*) and the five heinous crimes (*mtshams med pa, ānantarya*). Abandoning the doctrine, in the narrowest technical sense, involves partisanship among Buddhists; it is a Buddhist's disparagement of another Buddhist position. The five heinous crimes, which bring immediate retribution at death, are those of killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing a Foe Destroyer (*dgra bcom pa, arhan*), maliciously causing the body of a *tathāgata* to bleed, and causing division in the spiritual community (*dge 'dun, saṃgha*).

According to 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa (Jam-yang-shay-ba), the reason karmic obstructions prevent attainment of the concentrations and formless absorptions is that they "obstruct the Superior ('*phags pa, ārya*) paths and the special faith, and so forth, that are the virtuous roots for training in them."<sup>40</sup> Obviously, if even the virtuous roots necessary for training in the Superior paths are obstructed, it will be impossible to attain the Superior paths themselves. 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa's reason is based on a passage concerning the Superior paths in Vasubandhu's *Autocommentary on the "Treasury of Manifest Knowledge"*;<sup>41</sup> in this context, 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa is treating the concentrations and formless absorptions as analogous to the Superior paths. Thus, the virtuous roots necessary for training in the concentrations and formless absorptions are also obstructed. By his mention of virtuous roots, 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa seems to imply that even to train in the Superior paths and the concentrations and formless absorptions one needs to accumulate a certain amount of merit; this position, based on the above-mentioned passage in Vasuban-

dhu's *Autocommentary on the "Treasury of Manifest Knowledge,"* also accords with the assumptions of Tibetan practice generally.

Karmic obstructions are not held to be irreversible, however; Tibetan presentations of the concentrations and formless absorptions agree that persons who have committed the actions in question can become capable of generating the concentrations and formless absorptions if they engage in a means of purifying those actions. This position, too, accords with the assumptions of Tibetan practice. As Hopkins points out, "purification here probably refers to the four powers explained in the context of confession of misdeeds."<sup>42</sup> The four are: (1) the object, or base; (2) contrition; (3) "an aspiration toward restraint"; (4) application of an antidote; this last, according to the rNying-ma scholar Khetsun Sangpo Rinbochay, "can be any virtuous practice."<sup>43</sup>

#### *V. Concentrative Discipline*

'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa says of several types of beings that they cannot generate the concentrations and formless absorptions because they cannot generate concentrative discipline (*bsam gtan gyi sdom pa, dhyānaśamvara*).<sup>44</sup> He uses this line of reasoning in relation to humans of the northern continent, Unpleasant Sound, who "do not have either the discipline of individual emancipation (*so mthar gyi sdom pa, prātimokṣaśamvara*), concentrative discipline (*bsam gtan gyi sdom pa, dhyānaśamvara*), or bad discipline (*sdom min, aśamvara*)";<sup>45</sup> he also uses it in relation to humans with genital abnormalities and beings of the three bad transmigrations.<sup>46</sup> He concludes from Vasubandhu's silence concerning demigods that they, too, are unable to generate the concentrations and formless absorptions because they lack concentrative discipline, although he also mentions their "obstructions of jealousy."<sup>47</sup> Similarly, he gives ability to generate concentrative discipline as the reason that humans of the three continents other than Unpleasant Sound and "the six types of gods of the Desire Realm and transmigrators of the Form Realm" can generate the concentrations and formless absorptions.<sup>48</sup>

dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po, in his condensation of 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa's text, follows 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa closely, although he does not mention concentrative discipline in relation to demigods; apparently, he considers their "very strong obstructions of jealousy and of [being that kind of] transmigrator" sufficient reason for their inability to generate the concentrations and formless absorptions.<sup>49</sup>

As the source for this discussion of concentrative discipline, 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa cites chapter 4 of Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge* and its *Autocommentary*.<sup>50</sup> According to the *Treasury*, concentrative discipline is one of the three types of discipline (*sdom pa*, *saṃvara*); the other two are the discipline of individual emancipation (*so sor mthar pa*, *prātimokṣa*) and uncontaminated (*zag med*, *anāsrava*) discipline.<sup>51</sup> 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa's reason cited above (page 64) also mentions bad discipline (*sdom min*, *asaṃvara*)—literally, "non-discipline." All these, according to both the Vaibhāṣika and Prāsaṅgika schools of tenets, are types of form—specifically, non-revelatory form (*rnam par rig byed ma yin pa'i gzugs*, *avijñaptirūpa*).<sup>52</sup> According to Hopkins, non-revelatory forms are so called because they

are continuations of virtue or sin and arise from revelatory actions of body or speech or arise from cultivating meditative stabilization [*ting nge 'dzin*, *saṃādhi*]. Since the motivations of these actions are not knowable by others, they are called 'non-revelatory forms.'<sup>53</sup>

Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge* lists three types of non-revelatory form: discipline, bad discipline, and something that is neither.<sup>54</sup>

Although the word "discipline" is used by Hopkins as a translation of 'dul va (*vinaya*), I am following La Vallée Poussin's translation of Vasubandhu's *Treasury* in using "discipline" to translate *sdom pa* (*saṃvara*) in this context, since it is probably the only English (and French) word that conveys both senses of *saṃvara*—"vow" and "restraint."<sup>55</sup> In the case of individual emancipation (*so sor thar pa*, *prātimokṣa*), the meaning is closer to that of "vow," whereas, for the other two types of *saṃvara*, the meaning is closer to that of "restraint."

The discipline of individual emancipation is a vow taken from someone else. Thus, 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa states that humans of the northern continent do not have the discipline of individual emancipation because "they [can]not take something supreme [that is, a vow] from another [person, who is giving it]."<sup>56</sup> The last two, obviously, are not mentioned in Vasubandhu's *Treasury*, but it is worth noting that Gedün Lodrö remarks of humans whose minds are not in a normal state that they "cannot generate a vow of individual emancipation, a Bodhisattva vow, or a tantric vow."<sup>58</sup> A sGo-mang (Go-mang) scholar and, therefore, a follower of 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa, he implicitly extends 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa's line of reasoning, based on Vasubandhu's *Treasury*, to the other two types of *saṃvara* used in contemporary Tibetan practice.

Concentrative and uncontaminated disciplines are restraints rather than vows. They are induced by the mere attainment of certain minds—the former, by the mere attainment of a mind of the Form Realm (that is, by the initial attainment of calm abiding<sup>59</sup>) and the latter, by the mere attainment of an uncontaminated path. The mere attainment of such a mind leads the practitioner to refrain from certain actions. Thus, he or she acquires a restraint, or discipline.<sup>60</sup> Since concentrative discipline is form—non-revelatory form—beings of the Formless Realm, although able to generate the concentrations and formless absorptions, are not said to have concentrative discipline. 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa cites Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge* (4.44a–b) and its *Autocommentary* to establish this point but do not discuss it.<sup>61</sup>

Bad discipline is an absence of restraint, a non-revelatory form produced by non-virtue—for example, the action of a butcher in killing animals.<sup>62</sup>

According to 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa, then, many of the beings who cannot generate calm abiding and the concentrations and formless absorptions cannot do so because they cannot generate concentrative discipline; of some, he adds that they also cannot generate the other two types of discipline. The problem with this line of reasoning is its apparent circularity. 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa is saying that such beings cannot generate calm abiding and the concentrations and formless absorptions because they cannot generate something—a

form—that is induced by the mere attainment of calm abiding. He seems to be saying that such beings cannot achieve the cause because they cannot achieve the effect; as Hopkins remarks, this, “in general, is not very suitable reasoning.” It is also somewhat misleading in this context, since it suggests that “concentrative discipline must be something beyond the discipline that takes place when one attains a [level of] concentration, and it is not.”<sup>63</sup>

Georges Dreyfus holds that it is best not to emphasize the fact that concentrative discipline comes only with the attainment of a level of concentration. Rather, the argument should be based on the inability of such beings to generate any discipline at all. According to him, such beings lack ethical commitment. Therefore, they cannot have the discipline of the individual emancipation and, for the same reason, cannot attain any type of meditative stabilization. Thus, they do not have concentrative discipline.<sup>64</sup>

Hopkins, perhaps more plausibly, takes the circularity of 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa's reasoning into account and argues that it comes from the way the topic is presented in 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa's sources. It is as though 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa were saying, “Although there are no direct statements that such beings cannot attain the concentrations, we know that they cannot because there are explanations that they cannot have concentrative discipline.”<sup>65</sup>

'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa's source is Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge* and its *Autocommentary*. Vasubandhu's discussion of calm abiding and the concentrations and formless absorptions is divided among chapter 6, which includes a presentation of calm abiding; chapter 8, which presents the concentrations and formless absorptions as meditative states without stating what types of beings cannot and can attain them; chapter 3, which lists and describes the Form and Formless Realm rebirth states; and chapter 4, which deals with the topic of *karma*. In the context of *karma*, Vasubandhu discusses concentrative discipline not in relation to the attainment of meditative states but in relation to the non-revelatory forms that carry continuations of virtuous and non-virtuous actions. It is from this discussion of non-revelatory forms that 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa, whose concern is meditative states, must

extrapolate his presentation of the types of beings that cannot and can attain those states.

*VI. Additional Points Discussed by dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po and Gedün Lodrö*

dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po and Gedün Lodrö, who follow 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa, discuss several other points concerning the physical basis. One of the most important concerns the capacity of beings in the bad transmigrations for acting virtuously and the difference between the type of virtuous action involved in generating the concentrations and formless absorptions, on the one hand, and the altruistic mind of enlightenment (*byang chub kyi sems, bodhicitta*), on the other. dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po establishes, in a debate, that beings in the three bad transmigrations can attain great love (*byams pa chen po, mahāmaitri*), great compassion (*snying rje chen po, mahākāruṇa*), and the altruistic mind of enlightenment but cannot attain the four immeasurables (*tshad med bzhi, catvāry apramāṇāni*).<sup>66</sup> They can attain the altruistic mind of enlightenment, as well as great love and great compassion, because they can newly generate the seven cause-and-effect quintessential instructions (*rgyu 'bras man ngag bdun*) for attaining the altruistic mind of enlightenment—great love and great compassion being the fourth and fifth of these.<sup>67</sup> However, they cannot generate the four immeasurables because the four immeasurables are actual absorptions of concentrations, which cannot be attained in the bad transmigrations.

Gedün Lodrö, following 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa's more detailed version of this debate in the *Great Exposition of the Concentrations and Formless Absorptions*,<sup>68</sup> discusses the problem presented by a *sūtra* statement that "there are cases of hell beings who newly saw the truth." The problem is that

"newly seeing the truth" means that one is achieving the path of seeing (*mtshong lam, darśanamārga*), and in order to achieve that path it is necessary to achieve the path of preparation (*sbyor lam, prayogamārga*), the sign of which is the attainment of the meditative stabilization which is a union of calm abiding and special

insight (*lhag mthong*, *vipaśyanā*). Thus, before that path, one must have achieved a full-fledged calm abiding.<sup>69</sup>

There are two answers. One is that, in this statement, “the word ‘truth’ does not refer to the path of seeing but to the generation of the altruistic mind of enlightenment”; Gedün Lodrö adds, “Indeed, many sūtras say that there are cases of hell beings, hungry ghosts, and nāgas (*klu*) who newly generate the altruistic mind of enlightenment during that lifetime and become Bodhisattvas.”<sup>70</sup> The other is that ‘seeing the truth’ really does mean achieving the path of seeing, and the moment such a person attains the path of seeing, he or she ceases to be a hungry ghost or a hell being.”<sup>71</sup>

The first answer, which Gedün Lodrö appears to favor, raises the question of how someone who cannot achieve calm abiding can nevertheless generate the altruistic mind of enlightenment. Gedün Lodrö’s answer turns on the difference between wisdom analyzing an object and great faithful interest in and aspiration toward it. For calm abiding, a strong factor of wisdom is necessary:

Although one does not engage in a great deal of analysis during [the cultivation of] calm abiding, being told about an object by someone else is not sufficient to cause that object to appear to your own mind; you yourself must investigate it carefully. For the generation of an altruistic mind of enlightenment, however, it is enough to be told that there is such a thing as Buddhahood, and if you come to believe that and can thereby generate great effort, the altruistic mind of enlightenment can be attained.<sup>72</sup>

According to Gedün Lodrö, it is better if one engages in analysis even in the generation of the altruistic mind of enlightenment, but analysis is not necessary; “non-artificial, spontaneous experience” of the altruistic mind of enlightenment—that is, the arising of the altruistic mind of enlightenment as strongly outside meditation as in a strong meditation session—is possible even without analysis.<sup>73</sup> Thus, beings such as hell beings and hungry ghosts, who are incapable of analysis because of their intense sufferings and therefore cannot generate the concentrations and formless absorptions, can nevertheless generate the altruistic mind of enlightenment.

dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po also discusses whether absorptions attained in a former rebirth can be retained—in particular, whether beings of the three bad transmigrations or humans of the northern continent, Unpleasant Sound, who cannot newly generate the concentrations and formless absorptions, can retain “possession of actual absorptions already attained” in a previous lifetime in the Form or Formless Realm.<sup>74</sup> He establishes that they cannot, since the absorption—or, one might say, the mind—of a being of the Form or Formless Realm who is about to die and who will definitely be reborn in the next lifetime in a bad transmigration or as a human of the northern continent degenerates before death. Such a being, just before death, has manifest afflictions of the Desire Realm such as gross craving and, since it is impossible to manifest such afflictions and an actual absorption simultaneously, the absorption is necessarily lost—not at the point of rebirth, as we might think, but just before death from the Form or Formless Realm.<sup>75</sup>

He makes several other points about beings in transition—beings of various types who are about to be reborn. Some of these points seem merely to involve verbal faults in debate. Others emphasize the changes such beings undergo—especially, that they become intermediate-state (*bar do*, *antarābhāva*) beings between their death at the end of one lifetime and their birth in the next; these points about such changes counteract the tendency to think of the status of the beings in question as fixed, even for the duration of a lifetime. For example, it is wrong to say that beings in the bad transmigrations necessarily have strong karmic obstructions in their mental continua (*rgyud*, *saṃtāna*). To someone who takes this position, he cites as a counterexample “someone in a bad transmigration who, having used up his [or her] strong karmic obstructions, is about to die and is definite to attain a [human] basis of leisure and fortune in the next life.”<sup>76</sup> The point seems to be that one cannot make such generalizations about the entire lifetime of a being in a bad transmigration; beings change during the course of a life in one of the bad transmigrations and have other predispositions in their continua; therefore, although they have strong karmic obstructions in their continua at the time of their birth in a bad transmigration, the karmic obstructions that caused them to be born there can be used up in that lifetime.

*Conclusion*

The topic of the physical basis of the concentrations and formless absorptions is more than a mere list of types of person. Elementary though the topic seems, it presupposes essential Buddhist doctrines. The doctrine of selflessness (*bdag med, nairātmya*), for instance, is implied by the very term "physical basis," with its reference to the basis of designation of the person—the collection of aggregates in dependence upon which the person is designated.

Of more obvious importance is the doctrine of actions and their effects. The classes of beings who cannot and can achieve the concentrations and formless absorptions are first delineated in terms of the six transmigrations of cyclic existence—the traditional Buddhist cosmology, which is produced by *karma*. Then, within the broad categories of beings who can achieve the concentrations and formless absorptions, exceptions are set forth—being whose obstructions, like the six transmigrations themselves, are also produced by *karma*. What results from this method of delineation is a hierarchical ranking of present capacity, changeable in the long run by actions but often fixed for the duration of any given lifetime if a physical manifestation limits the mind based on it. Over many lifetimes, however, all beings are considered capable of attaining not only the concentrations and formless absorptions but also liberation from cyclic existence and Buddhahood. Given an audience of humans capable of cultivating and attaining calm abiding and the concentrations and formless absorptions, the hierarchical ranking presented in the topic of the physical basis of concentrations and formless absorptions serves both to assure the members of the audience of their present capacity and to spur them to effort.

## CYCLIC EXISTENCE

### *The Three Realms and Nine Levels*

(Read from bottom to top)

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p>3. Formless Realm<br/>(<i>gzugs med khams,</i><br/><i>arūpyadhātu</i>)</p> | } | <p>9. Peak of Cyclic Existence<br/>(<i>srid rtse,</i><br/><i>bhavāgra</i>)</p> <p>8. Nothingness<br/>(<i>ci yang med,</i><br/><i>akimcanya</i>)</p> <p>7. Limitless Consciousness<br/>(<i>rnam shes mtha' yas,</i><br/><i>vijñānānantya</i>)</p> <p>6. Limitless Space<br/>(<i>nam mkha' mtha' yas,</i><br/><i>ākāśānantya</i>)</p>                               |
| <p>2. Form Realm<br/>(<i>gzugs khams,</i><br/><i>rūpadhātu</i>)</p>           | } | <p>5. Fourth Concentration<br/>(<i>bsam gtan bzhi pa,</i><br/><i>caturthadhyāna</i>)</p> <p>4. Third Concentration<br/>(<i>bsam gtan gsum pa,</i><br/><i>tritīyadhyāna</i>)</p> <p>3. Second Concentration<br/>(<i>bsam gtan gnyis pa,</i><br/><i>divitīyadhyāna</i>)</p> <p>2. First Concentration<br/>(<i>bsam gtan dang po,</i><br/><i>prathamadhyāna</i>)</p> |
| <p>1. Desire Realm<br/>(<i>'dods khams,</i><br/><i>kāmadhātu</i>)</p>         |   | <p>gods (<i>lha, deva</i>)<br/>demigods (<i>lha ma yin, asura</i>)<br/>humans (<i>mi, manuṣya</i>)<br/>animals (<i>dud 'gro, tiryak</i>)<br/>hungry ghosts (<i>yi dwags, preta</i>)<br/>hell beings (<i>dmyal ba, nāraka</i>)</p>   |

## NOTES

P = *Tibetan Tripiṭaka*, Peking edition (Tokyo-Kyoto: Tibetan Tripiṭaka Research Foundation, 1956).

1. When both Tibetan and Sanskrit forms of technical terms are given, the Tibetan is given before the Sanskrit, since Tibetan is the language of the texts discussed here and since even Sanskrit works, such as Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge* (*Abhidharmakośa*, *Chos mngon pa'i mdzod*), are cited by Tibetan writers in Tibetan. However, an exception is made for the titles of works such as Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge*, since those works are generally known to Western scholars by their Sanskrit titles.

2. Vasubandhu, *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge* and *Autocommentary on the "Treasury of Manifest Knowledge,"* P 5590 and 5591, vol. 115; *Abhidharmakośa & Bhāṣya of Achārya Vasubandhu*, ed. by Dwarikadas Shastri, part 2 (Varanasi: Bauddha Bharati, 1971), cited hereafter as Shastri; Louis de La Vallée Poussin, trans. and ed., *L'abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu, Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques* 16:2-3 (reprinted 1971), cited hereafter as La Vallée Poussin.

3. La Vallée Poussin cites Buddhaghosa, *Atthasālinī* 62 (La Vallée Poussin, 16:2, p. 1).

4. To make the pronunciation of Tibetan names accessible to readers, transliterated Tibetan names are phoneticized, at their first occurrence in the text, according to a system developed by Jeffrey Hopkins. However, the names of contemporary Tibetans are given in the phoneticized forms they prefer to use in the West and are not transliterated.

5. Nāgārjuna, *Friendly Letter* (*Suhrillekha*, *bShes pa'i spring yig*), P 5409, vol. 103; Lozang Jampal, Ven. Ngawang Samten Chopel, and Peter Della Santina, *Nagarjuna's Letter to King Gautamiputra* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978), pp. xv, 53, 105 (Tibetan text).

6. The sources for this discussion of the topic are the relevant sections of two dGe-lugs monastic textbooks, both from sGo-mang College of 'Bras-spung Monastic University, and two oral presentations. The two monastic textbooks are:

dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po (1728–91), *Condensed Statement of ('Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa's) "Great Exposition of the Concentrations and Formless Absorptions"* (*bsam gzugs chen mo las mdor bsdus te bkod pa*); cited hereafter as dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po, *Condensed Statement*

'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa (1648–1721), *Great Exposition of the Concentrations and Formless Absorptions* (*bsam gzugs chen mo*), the extensive work on which it is based; cited hereafter as 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa, *Concentrations*.

For full bibliographical details, see the bibliography.

The two oral presentations, by Lati Rinbochay (*rin po che*) and Geshe (*dge bshes*) Gedün Lodrö, are found in:

Lati Rinbochay, Denma Lochö Rinbochay, Leah Zahler, Jeffrey Hopkins, *Meditative States in Tibetan Buddhism* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1983); cited hereafter as *Med. States*

Geshe Gedün Lodrö in Geshe Gedün Lodrö and Jeffrey Hopkins, "Calm Abiding and Special Insight" (edited transcripts of lectures given at the University of Virginia, 1979); cited hereafter as Gedün Lodrö.

The transliteration of Tibetan follows the system of Turrell Wylie ("A Standard System of Tibetan Transcription," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 22 [1959], 261–67), except that, in text-titles and proper names, the root letter rather than the first is capitalized. With regard to phoneticization, see note 2.

7. *Med. States*, pp. 41, 45.

8. "Grounds and Paths: Lectures by Denma Lochö Rinbochay on dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po's 'Presentation of the Grounds and Paths: An Ornament Beautifying the Three Vehicles'" (unpublished transcript of lectures given at the University of Virginia, 1977), pp. 4–12. dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po, *Presentation of the Grounds and Paths*, 422.1–424.3. Jules Brooks Levinson, II, "The Process of Liberation and Enlightenment in the Buddhism of Tibet" (unpublished thesis: University of Virginia, 1983), pp. 12–17.

This differentiation of the three types of religious practitioner according to motivation is derived from Atiśa's *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* (*Bodhipathapradīpa*, *byang chub lam gyi sgron ma*), stanzas 2–5 (*A Lamp for the Path and Commentary of Atiśa*, trans. and ann. by Richard Sherburne, S. J. [London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983], p. 5; P 5344, 20.4.3–6).

9. *Med. States*, p. 47.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 48–50; Gedün Lodrö, pp. 44–55.

11. *Med. States*, pp. 48–49.

12. Gedün Lodrö, p. 47; dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po, *Condensed Statement*, 543.2.

13. *Med. States*, p. 48.

14. Gedün Lodrö, p. 44, 45.

15. *Med. States*, pp. 35–36.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 48; Gedün Lodrö, p. 45; dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po, *Condensed Statement*, 543.4.

17. Gedün Lodrö, p. 45.

18. *Med. States*, p. 49.

19. Gedün Lodrö, p. 46.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 54; *Med. States*, p. 223, n. 1

21. dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po, *Condensed Statement*, 543.5–6.

22. *Med. States*, pp. 43, 49.

23. dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po, *Condensed Statement*, 543.2.

24. Gedün Lodrö, p. 48.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 54. This absorption, which is a Form Realṅ absorption, differs from the formless absorption of nothingness because "in the level of Nothingness there is no appearance of form, and one does not have the mistaken discrimination that the absorption of no discrimination is a path to libera-

tion and that birth at that level is liberation” (idem). Georges Dreyfus (Geshe Sangs-rgyas-bsam-sgrub) points out that the formless absorption of nothingness is achieved through contemplation of the faults of form, whereas an absorption of no discrimination is not achieved in this way. Moreover, since gods of no discrimination are born in the Form Realm, they perceive form at the times of birth and death there, although probably not at other times (Georges Dreyfus in conversation).

26. Gedün Lodrö, p. 46.
27. Idem.
28. Ibid., pp. 46, 52.
29. Ibid., p. 46.
30. Idem.
31. dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po, *Condensed Statement*, 543.1; *Med. States*, pp. 49, 38; Gedün Lodrö, p. 47.
32. dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po, *Condensed Statement*, 543.1.
33. *Med. States*, p. 49.
34. Gedün Lodrö, p. 47.
35. Idem.
36. Ibid., p. 52.
37. dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po, *Condensed Statement*, 543.1. Cf. *ibid.*, 542.7.
38. Gedün Lodrö, p. 53, and *Med. States*, p. 233, n. 2.
39. dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po, *Condensed Statement*, 542.7–543.1; *Med. States*, p. 49; 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa, *Concentrations*, 21.2 ff.
40. 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa, *Concentrations*, 21.5.
41. Vasubandhu, *Autocommentary of the “Treasury of Manifest Knowledge,”* commentary to 4.96 (P 5591, vol. 115, 216.4.5; Shastri, p. 723; La Vallée Poussin, 16:3, p. 203).
42. Jeffrey Hopkins in conversation.
43. Khetsun Sangpo Rinbochay, *Tantric Practice in Nying-ma* (Ithaca, NY: Gabriel/Snow Lion, 1982), p. 142, where the four powers are explained in relation to the Vajrasattva meditation. They are also explained in relation to taking refuge, pp. 121–22.
44. The usual term for concentrative discipline in Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge* (4.13d) and its *Autocommentary* is *dhyānaja* (*bsam gtan skyes*), “born of concentration,” although *dhyānasamvara* also occurs (P 5591, vol. 115, 197.2.7; Shastri, p. 605; La Vallée Poussin, 16:3, p. 43).
45. 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa, *Concentrations*, 23.1.
46. Ibid., 23.5–24.2.
47. Ibid., 24.3–5; “the bases of concentrative discipline are definitive as only [those of] gods and humans, and Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge* here does not explain demigods as gods.” To support his description of the demigods, 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa cites Nāgārjuna, *Friendly Letter*, stanza 102.
48. Ibid., 24.5–7, 25.1.
49. dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po, *Condensed Statement*, 543.4; dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po paraphrases Nāgārjuna, *Friendly Letter*, stanza 102, but does not cite it.

50. 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa, *Concentrations*, 24.3, 24.5 ff.  
 51. Vasubandhu, *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge*, 4.13c–d (P 5591, vol. 115, 197.2.7; Shastri, p. 605; La Vallée Poussin, 16:3, p. 43).  
 52. Jeffrey Hopkins in conversation.  
 53. Jeffrey Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1983), p. 234.  
 54. Vasubandhu, *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge*, 4.13a–b (P 5591, vol. 115, 197.2.6; Shastri, p. 605; La Vallée Poussin, 16:3, p. 43).  
 55. Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness*, p. 532. Vasubandhu, *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge*, 4.13; La Vallée Poussin, 16:3, p. 43.  
 56. 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa, *Concentrations*, 23.3.  
 57. Jeffrey Hopkins in conversation, citing Geshe Bel-den-drak-pa.  
 58. Gedün Lodrö, p. 46 (see above, page 12).

59. According to dGe-lugs monastic textbooks, calm abiding is the first Form Realm mind but does not cause rebirth in the Form Realm; it is also considered to be the first preparation for a concentration or formless absorption. 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa cites Vasubandhu's *Autocommentary on the "Treasury,"* 4.26a–b—"Those who possess concentration unquestionably possess concentrative discipline. Here the preparations (*nyer bsdogs, sāmāntaka*) are also indicated within the mention of concentrations"—to establish that those who have attained even a preparation for a concentration have concentrative discipline. ('Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa, *Concentrations*, 23.5; see P 5591, vol. 115, 198.2.2–3; Shastri, p. 618; La Vallée Poussin, 16:3, p. 59.)

In their presentation of the preparations for the concentrations and formless absorptions, the dGe-lugs textbook writers combine Vasubandhu's mere mention of a preparation—that is, a period of preparation—for each of the concentrations and formless absorptions with Asaṅga's subtler presentation, in his *Grounds of Hearers (śrāvakahūmi, Nyan sa)* and *Compendium of Manifest Knowledge (Abhidharmasamuccaya, mNgon pa kun btus)*, of the stages through which a meditator pass must during that period. Asaṅga lists seven mental contemplations (*yid la byed pa, manaskāra*), the first six of which he explicitly calls preparations. (The last of the seven is not a preparation but an actual absorption.)

Although Asaṅga does not include calm abiding among the seven mental contemplations and does not explicitly call it a preparation, the textbook writers demonstrate, by a close reading of Asaṅga's *Grounds of Hearers*, that he refers to it as a mental contemplation in another passage; he also explains that it is attained before the first of the seven. Therefore, the dGe-lugs textbook writers conclude that calm abiding must precede the first of the preparatory mental contemplations mentioned by Asaṅga and that it is the first of the preparations for a concentration or formless absorption. (Gedün Lodrö, pp. 336–37, 341, 342.)

60. Georges Dreyfus in conversation.

61. 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa, *Concentrations*, 25.2. P 5591, vol. 115, 204.7–205.1.1; Shastri, p. 651; La Vallée Poussin, 16:3, p. 105. La Vallée Poussin notes that the Tibetan version he used skips part of this verse; it is also missing in P, but the version cited by 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa agrees with Shastri and La Vallée Poussin and not with P.

62. Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness*, p. 234. Vasubandhu, *Autocommentary*, 4.36c-d. (P 5591, vol. 115, 202.5.6-203.1.4; Shastri, pp. 640-42; La Vallée Poussin, 16:3, p. 91.)
63. Jeffrey Hopkins in conversation.
64. Georges Dreyfus in conversation.
65. Jeffrey Hopkins in conversation.
66. The four immeasurables are love (*byams pa, maitri*), compassion ( *snying rje, kârūṇa*), joy (*dga' ba, muditā*), and equanimity (*btang snyoms, upekṣā*).
67. The seven cause-and-effect quintessential instructions are (1) recognition of all sentient beings as having been one's mother, (2) mindfulness of their kindness, (3) the wish to repay their kindness, (4) great love, (5) great compassion, (6) the high resolve to free all beings from suffering, (7) the decision to achieve Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings. Donald S. Lopez, Jr., notes, "These seven were derived by Tsong-kha-pa in his *Lam rim chen mo* from a statement by Atiṣa in the *Bodhimārgapradīpapañjikā*, in commentary on the tenth stanza of his *Bodhipathapradīpa*." (Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *The Heart Sūtra Explained: Indian and Tibetan Commentaries* [Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988], p. 212, n. 5.)
68. 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa, *Concentrations*, 9.1-10.2.
69. Gedün Lodrö, p. 48.
70. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
72. *Idem.*
73. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
74. dKon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po, *Condensed Statement*, 539.3.
75. *Ibid.*, 539.3-5.
76. *Ibid.*, 540.7-541.1.

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