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## A reply to questions concerning mind and primordial knowing

An annotated translation and critical edition of  
Klong chen pa's *Sems dang ye shes kyi dris lan*

David Higgins

### Introduction

The *Sems dang ye shes kyi dri lan* (hereafter *Sems ye dris lan*) is a short treatise contained in Klong chen rab 'byams pa's (1308–1363) *Miscellaneous Writings (gSung thor bu)*<sup>1</sup> that is devoted to clarifying the central rNying ma distinction between *sems* and *ye shes*. Composed at the behest of Klong chen pa's foremost student and biographer Chos grags bzang po (14<sup>th</sup> c.), it offers a concise but very lucid response to the latter's question(s) concerning this distinction. As the author argues here and in much greater detail elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> a distinction between reifying and non-reifying modes of cognition is indispensable for making sense of Buddhist soteriology both in theory and practice. The point of the distinction, simply stated, is to facilitate the progressive disclosure of primordial knowing (*ye shes*) which occurs to the extent that the habitual self-identifications with the particular configurations of mind (*sems*) subside.<sup>3</sup> On this

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<sup>1</sup> On the two extant editions of Klong chen pa's *gSung thor bu*, see bibliography. Unless otherwise indicated, all references to the *Sems ye dris lan* and *gSung thor bu* refer to the A 'dzom 'brug pa chos dgar edition.

<sup>2</sup> These sources are identified in Higgins (forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup> This understanding of the mind/primordial knowing distinction need not imply the sort of awareness-content dualism central to many theories of consciousness according to which awareness is a bare act devoid of any phenomenal characteristics. For a trenchant criticism of this view see Dainton 2000. From a rNying ma perspective, self-occurring primordial knowing (*rang*

account, the ultimate aim of Buddhist practice is precisely the de-identification with the reifying activities of mind that both distort and conceal primordial modes of being and awareness (expressed as the inseparability of *sku* or *dbyings* and *ye shes*) that constitute our fundamental nature. The *Sems ye dris lan* synthesizes and builds on arguments for the mind/primordial knowing distinction advanced in the author's *Shing rta chen po* (*Great Chariot*; hereafter *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel*), a lengthy auto-commentary on the *Sems nyid ngal gso* (*Relaxing in Mind itself*), the first of the root texts in the author's *Ngal gso skor gsum*<sup>4</sup> (*Trilogy on Relaxation*). The result is a penetrating and systematic investigation into the nature and scope of the distinction that calls attention to its far-reaching implications for understanding and directly realizing rNying ma view (*lta ba*) and meditation (*sgom pa*).

A survey of Klong chen pa's extant writings confirms that the accounts of the *sems/ye shes* difference found in the *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel* and *Sems ye dris lan* predate Klong chen pa's reception of the rDzogs chen sNying thig (Heart Essence) teachings and constitute preliminary and exoteric treatments of a topic that would preoccupy the author throughout his lifetime, one that he repeatedly characterized as "extremely important" (*shin tu gal po che*) but also

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*byung ye shes*) or open awareness (*rig pa*) is at least minimally lucid, empty and cognizant (intransitively and pre-reflectively self-aware) (*gsal stong rig*). We can specify the difference between mind and primordial knowing by saying that the latter is *presentational* (the pre-reflective occurring of experiencing itself) while dualistic mind is *representational* (the reflective grasping or singling out and thematic elaboration of particular instances thereof). So self-occurring primordial knowing (*rang byung gi ye shes*) is nothing other than the as yet undifferentiated taking place of appearing itself while mind consists in a complex variety of transitive (object-oriented) and reflexive (subject-oriented) differentiations within the stream of experience that thematize it in terms of self and other, 'I' and 'mine.' An important point to note is that the act of reflection does not 'step outside' the flow of experiencing as if to grasp it from some transcendental standpoint: both the act of reflection (grasping) and reflected on object (grasped) arise as coterminous events with this unitary stream of experiencing.

<sup>4</sup> For an annotated translation of the three root texts of the trilogy, see Guenther 1975–1976.

as “very difficult to understand” (*rab tu rtogs dka'*). Following the author’s own classification of his works,<sup>5</sup> it is possible to broadly distinguish two textual and doctrinal contexts within which he elaborates the difference between mind and primordial knowing:<sup>6</sup>

(1) *Exoteric*: elucidations of the *sems/ye shes* distinction in the early *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel* and *Sems ye dris lan*<sup>7</sup> draw upon a wide range of Mahāyāna *sūtras* with emphasis on texts ascribed to the third turning (*dharmacakra*) such as the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, Madhyamaka works such as the *Madhyamakāvātara* and epistemological (*pramāṇavāda*) treatises such as the *Pramāṇaviniścaya*. Although Klong chen pa, in these early works, cites a number of Indian Buddhist tantras in support of the distinction, the only rNying ma tantras he cites are the \**Guhyagarbhatanra* and other tantras from the *Māyājāla* cycle and certain tantras of the Mind Class (*sems sde*), most importantly the *Kun byed rgyal po*. What interests us in the author’s early ‘bridging’ works<sup>8</sup> is his systematic reading and reframing of traditional

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<sup>5</sup> This catalogue of works containing 270 titles with additional songs and prayers is appended to a biography of Klong chen pa by Chos grags bzang po entitled *Kun mkhyen dri med 'od zer gyi rnam thar mthong ba don ldan* pp. 208–226 (see also *Bima snying thig* pt. 4, in *sNying thig ya bzhi* vol. 6, 499–589). A slightly different rescension of the work known as the *dKar chag rin po che'i mdzod khang*, which is ascribed by tradition to the author himself, is translated in sMyo shul mkhan po’s *Chos 'byung* (see Barron 2005: 132ff.) For preliminary attempts to reconstruct a relative chronology of Klong chen pa’s writings see Arguillère 2007: 140ff. and Wangchuk 2008.

<sup>6</sup> The difference between these two textual-doctrinal contexts is not mirrored by a corresponding chronological sequence in the author’s corpus. The relative chronology of Klong chen pa’s works so far suggests that the author not only continued periodically writing texts from a more general Buddhist doctrinal standpoint after being introduced to the sNying thig system but devoted considerable attention to clarifying how rDzogs chen both marks the culmination of and also supercedes antecedent developments in the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist soteriological systems.

<sup>7</sup> The *Sems ye dris lan* was likely written not long after the *Shing rta chen po* to which he refers the reader for more detailed treatment. See *Sems ye dris lan* 392.

<sup>8</sup> What I am calling bridging works are those (viz. *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel*, *Yid bzhin mdzod 'grel*, *Grub mtha' mdzod* and *Sems ye dris lan*) which attempt to situate rNying ma thought and praxis within the wider context of Buddhist (and in some cases non-Buddhist) discourses and which seek to

Mahāyāna doctrine in light of a sharply drawn distinction between unconditioned and conditioned modes of consciousness. In so doing, he not only illuminates a distinction which he considered implicit, though often to the point of ambiguity, within the broad range of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna sources he draws upon. He also adumbrates a series of related arguments for the *indispensability* of the mind/priordial knowing distinction for the proper understanding and application of Buddhist doctrine.

(2) *Esoteric*: the scope of Klong chen pa's handling of the *sems/yes shes* distinction broadens dramatically from the time of his introduction by his root guru Ku mā rā dza/tsa (Skt. Kumārarāja, Tib. gZhon nu rgyal po 1266–1343),<sup>9</sup> who he met in his twenty-seventh year (i.e. 1334), to the teachings of the Heart Essence (*snying thig*) or Esoteric Guidance class (*man ngag gi sde*) of rDzogs chen teachings, particularly as systematized in the seventeen tantras. Henceforth, the author's rigorous elucidation of the distinction in a great variety of system-

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clarify the essential unity and continuity between Mahāyāna, Vajrayāna and rDzogs chen discourses within an inclusivist framework.

<sup>9</sup> rNying ma sources generally refer this to influential rDzogs chen master by the Tibetanized Sanskrit epithet *Ku mā rā dza* or its variants *Ku ma rā dza/Ku mā rā tsa*, all based on the Sanskrit Kumārarāja. Occasionally, this teacher is referred to by the Tibetan translation of Kumārarāja gZhon nu rgyal po. The Tibetan shortening of the Sanskrit *kumāra* to *ku mā* probably reflects the tendency in Indian vernaculars to drop the final *a*, as evident in the contemporary Indian use of Kumār rather than Kumāra as a proper name. See comments by Arguillère (2007: 88 n. 187). Wangchuk (2008) sees it as a possible instance of the more general linguistic phenomenon of haplology, the elimination of a syllable when two consecutive identical or similar syllables occur. As well as being the root teacher of Klong chen pa, Kumārādza was also a teacher of Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339), a collaboration no doubt important in the establishment of the little known Karma sNying thig tradition. Kumārādza is credited in the *Chos 'byung* of Dudjom Rinpoche with establishing a philosophical language to communicate the rDzogs chen sNying thig teachings. In this regard, mention should be made of the recently discovered *rDzogs pa chen po tshig don bcu gcig pa* of mKhas pa Nyi ma 'bum (1158–1213), a philosophical synopsis of the seventeen tantras structured according to eleven key 'topics' (*tshig don : padārtha*) of the sNying thig system. This work likely served as a prototype for Klong chen pa's similarly structured but more extensive *Tshig don rin po che'i mdzod* (*Precious Treasury of Topics*).

atic treatises,<sup>10</sup> poetic works and commentaries will centre around the very detailed elaborations of the *sems/ye shes* and *kun gzhi/chos sku* distinctions presented in these and a number of related tantras. The mind/primordial knowing distinction in particular forms the doctrinal nucleus of a wide range of distinctive rDzogs chen teachings that include: (1) onto-cosmogenic theories concerning the ground of being (*gzhi*) and its phenomenal manifestation (*gzhi snang*); (2) contemplative practices aimed at direct recognition of Mind's nature (particularly *Khregs chod* instructions); (3) theories and practices concerned with the elicitation of 'embodied *ye shes*,' viz. *ye shes* as residing within and animating the subtle structure of gnostic lamps (*sgron ma*), energy channels, currents, and potencies (*rtsa, rlung, thig le*) that make up the energy body (*rdo rje'i lus*) (and which figure importantly in the *Thod rgal* teachings); (4) death and dying traditions concerned with realizing primordial knowing in the intermediate state (*bar do*); and (5) non-gradual conceptions of the path and goal-realization.

Viewed in relation to Klong chen pa's esoteric treatments of the mind/primordial knowing distinction, *Sems ye dris lan* should thus be regarded as a relatively early contribution to a complex subject that he would return to again and again in his writings. By situating the distinction within the broader framework of Buddhist doctrine and praxis, Klong chen pa is able to employ it as a kind of hermeneutical key for understanding the nature and import of the Buddhist path in its entirety, a path consisting in the progressive disclosure of primordial knowing. Thus the chief importance of the *Sems ye dris lan* lies in its concise and systematic overview of the formative elements of classical rNying ma doctrine from a scholar-practitioner who did more than anyone to define its character and determine its direction.

In literary form, the *Sems ye dris lan* is a classic example of the *Response to Questions (Dris lan)* genre of Tibetan scholastic literature.<sup>11</sup> Though we have no way of knowing the precise ques-

<sup>10</sup> In particular, see *Theg mchog mdzod* pt. 1 1037.2ff. and *Tshig don mdzod* 1038.1ff.

<sup>11</sup> Works designated as *dris lan* are found in many of the collected writings of Tibetan masters of all orders. There has to date been no systematic study of this genre. Works designated as *dris lan* in many cases consist of a question or series of questions followed by the teacher's replies as recorded

tion or questions to which Klong chen pa composed this response, a short passage from the *Chos 'byung* of sMyo tshul mkhan po (1932–1999) indicates that the proper understanding and realization of the mind/primordial knowing distinction was a matter of central concern to both student and teacher – one that played a formative role in their spiritual relationship:

Chos grags bzang po developed an unshakeable faith in the great Omniscient One. When Klong chen pa questioned him about the difference between mind and primordial knowing, his erudition... earned the master's praise. Klong chen pa in turn gave extensive answers to his student's questions about mind and primordial knowing and discussed the classification of ground, path and goal. With this, the uncontrived conviction that his guru was truly a buddha arose in Chos grags bzang po, and he bowed at Klong chen pa's feet, begging to be taken under his care.<sup>12</sup>

Like many of the author's other works, the subject matter of the *Sems ye dris lan* is thematically structured according to the three basic categories of ground, path and goal. The first section sets out to elucidate how primordial awareness is ever-present as the ground of being (*gzhi*) – our abiding, existential condition (*gnas lugs*, *yin lugs*) – despite its being obscured by adventitious cognitive-emotional defilements. The next section proceeds to clarify how this implicit mode of being and awareness is disclosed through a path (*lam*) of familiarization with it in which *nonideational* forms of meditation<sup>13</sup> play a crucial role. The third and final section discusses how goal-realization (*'bras bu*), the full disclosure of primordial awareness (*ye shes*) and its spiritual embodiments (*sku*),

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for posterity by someone present. The *Sems ye dris lan* exemplifies another, less common, type which consists in an author's systematic written response to such question(s).

<sup>12</sup> *Rang bzhin rdzogs pa chen po'i chos 'byung rig 'dzin brgyud pa'i rnam thar Ngo mtshar nor bu bai du rya phreng ba* vol. 2, 46b.5. See English translation by Barron (2005: 358) which is here altered slightly for sake of consistency.

<sup>13</sup> I here draw on David Fontana's useful distinction between meditation with ideation and meditation without ideation on which further details are provided below in section 3.

occurs once the discursive proliferations of mind and mental factors have ceased.

The work was composed at a relatively early period of the author's literary career, probably during the author's eight year tenure at the seminary (*bshad grwa*) of gSang pu<sup>14</sup> (famous for its rigorous curriculum of Buddhist logic and epistemology) where Klong chen pa took up residence at age nineteen. It was here that he first met Chos grags bzang po who would become his foremost disciple and successor in maintaining the rDzogs chen snying thig lineage. On the basis of textual analysis and comparison, the *Sems ye dris lan* can be chronologically placed some time after Klong chen pa had completed at least the first part of his trilogy entitled *Ngal gso skor gsum*, namely the *Sems nyid ngal gso* and its two auto-commentaries, and before his introduction by his root teacher Kumaradza to the sNying thig system.<sup>15</sup> The place of its composition, as we learn from the colophon, is Gangs ri thod dkar ('Snow Capped Mountain'), site of the cave hermitage Orgyan rdzong where the majority of Klong chen pa's writings were committed to writing. The hermitage is located about 500 meters above Shug gseb, today a flourishing nunnery with about 250 inhabitants that is a two hour road journey from gSang pu monastery and on a slope overlooking the sKyid chu river valley.

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<sup>14</sup> gSang phu Ne'u thog monastery was founded in 1073 by rNgog bLo ldan shes rab's uncle rNgog Legs pa'i shes rab, a direct disciple of Atiśa. It remained a vital centre for all subject areas of Tibetan scholasticism well into the fourteenth century.

<sup>15</sup> This teacher introduced Klong chen pa to the seventeen Atiyoga tantras that are quoted nowhere in the first two parts of the trilogy (*Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel*, *bSam gtan ngal gso 'grel*). The third part, however, contains a few quotations from this corpus, e.g. *Rig pa rang shar* at *sGyu ma ngal gso 'grel*, in *Ngal gso skor gsum* vol. 2, 600.1 and *rDo rje sems dpa' snying gi me long*, 624.6. However, Wangchuk proposes that the *bSam gtan ngal gso 'grel* may have been composed after *sGyu ma ngal gso 'grel* (although the author assigns it to the second part of the trilogy in his general commentary) because the former refers to the latter. See Wangchuk 2008: 213. The supposition that the second and third parts were written after the first is supported by the occurrence of references to the *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel* in both *bSam gtan ngal gso 'grel* and *sGyu ma ngal gso 'grel*. See Wangchuk 2008: 213.

The *Sems ye dris lan*'s clear and concise formulation of what would become an increasingly central focus of the author's later works<sup>16</sup> – the distinction between conditioned and unconditioned modes of being and awareness (*kun gzhi* vs *chos sku* and *sems* vs *ye shes*) – provides a valuable early summation of the author's views on the following topics:

- 1) The nature of Mind and primordial knowing
- 2) Buddha nature and hermeneutics of the three turnings (*dharma-cakra*)
- 3) Meditation and the Buddhist path

While each of these topics merits detailed investigation, my modest aim here is to shed some light on the historical-doctrinal background against which these points are formulated in the *Sems ye dris lan*. Those familiar with classical rNying ma exegesis will find little new here, though it strikes me as somewhat surprising that Klong chen pa's treatments of these topics have garnered so little critical attention outside of the rNying ma tradition itself. It is therefore hoped that this annotated translation will serve as a preliminary introduction to these subjects and as an incentive to further research.

### *1.1 The nature of mind and primordial knowing*

The distinction between mind and primordial knowing is a cornerstone of classical rNying ma doctrine and provides a valuable key to understanding its complex soteriology. As I have elsewhere examined Klong chen pa's central philosophical arguments for the distinction, and also shown how it builds on typologically similar distinctions found in a number of Buddhist and Brahmanical philosophical schools,<sup>17</sup> I will only touch briefly on a few central points here. The basic argument, adumbrated in a number of the author's

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<sup>16</sup> *Theg mchog mdzod* pt. 1 ch. 14, *Tshig don mdzod* ch. 4, *Chos dbyings mdzod 'grel* ch. 10, and *Zab don snying po* (in *Zab mo yang tig* vol. 1, 446–467).

<sup>17</sup> Both subjects are discussed in my forthcoming doctoral thesis.

works, is that the entire edifice of Buddhist doctrine becomes incoherent in theory and amiss in practice when one fails to (a) recognize the primacy of a primordial, non-dual mode of awareness and to (b) distinguish it from the subjectivizing and objectifying reifications of mind which are seen as both deriving and deviating from it. It is a distinction, in phenomenological terms, between (a) the self-manifesting (*rang snang*) of experience itself (*sems nyid, ye shes*) and (b) derivative representations of and self-identifications with particular intentional contents thereof (*sems*). These latter activities are regarded both as self-reifying (making of self-manifestation something it is not) and self-concealing (failing to see it as it is). It is in this sense that rDzogs chen texts speak of dualistic mind (*sems*) as intimately associated (*mtshungs par ldan pa*)<sup>18</sup> with igno-

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<sup>18</sup> In Buddhist epistemology, the relation of association (*samprayukta : mtshungs par ldan pa*) has been defined in a number of ways. It has been analyzed as a mereological relation between wholes and parts (*ekadeśaikadeśibhāva*), an example being a body and its limbs, or as a semantic relation between universals and a specific instances (*sāmānyaviśeṣabhāva*), as in the example of a forest and its individual trees. For a discussion of these and other aspects of *samprayukta*, see Eltschinger 2009: 66. Both the above senses imply a priority relation of something primary and generic (e.g. *citta*) to something ancillary and specific (e.g. the *caittas*). The rDzogs chen qualification of ignorance as ‘fundamental’ – as in the expression “mind is associated with fundamental ignorance (*sems ni rtsa ba ma rig pa dang mtshungs par ldan pa*)” (see n. 20) – is important as it suggests that ignorance be viewed as the whole or universal of which mind can be regarded as a part or specific instance. This appears to be supported by rDzogs chen statements to the effect that mind entails this fundamental ignorance. “Ignorance pervades mind,” says Klong chen pa, “but it does not pervade open awareness.” (*Theg mchog mdzod* pt. 1 1042.1f.). On this view, mind is pervaded by ignorance which is in turn pervaded by open awareness. This asymmetrical entailment relation sets the rDzogs chen view of ignorance apart from Buddhist Abhidharma and *pramaṇavāda* interpretations of ignorance as one among many mental factors associated with the mind. A related point of divergence is that the Abhidharma account of ignorance interprets the privative *a-* in the specific sense of an antonym or opposite, akin to the opposites friend (*mitra*) and enemy (*amitra*). Thus we read in AK 3.28cd (pp. 88–89): “The non-friend or enemy (*amitra*) is the opposite (*vipakṣa*) of a friend and not (1) the not-friend, that is to say, anyone other than a friend, or (2) the absence of a friend.” Along these lines, ignorance is neither (1) non-knowledge (i.e. different from knowledge) nor (2) the absence of knowledge but rather “the opposite of clear

rance (*ma rig pa*, *avidyā*), a fundamental condition of ontological forgetfulness in which one remains oblivious to open awareness (*rig pa*, *vidyā*).<sup>19</sup> Following the traditional Indian philosophical un-

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knowledge (*vidyā*), a real, separate factor (*dharmāntara*).” It is further said to be “a cause or condition (*pratyaya*) of the *samskāras*, from which it follows that it is not a mere negation.” See Mejer 2002. In the rDzogs chen account, ignorance is subordinate to *rig pa*, a derivative and delusive mode of cognition that marks a basic failure to recognize *rig pa*, one’s basic nature. This relation of structural asymmetry expressed in the rDzogs chen dictum “*ma rig pa* depends on *rig pa* but *rig pa* does not depend on *ma rig pa*” precludes construing the relation as one of simple opposition (as is done in AK 3.28).

<sup>19</sup> See *Theg mchog mdzod* pt. 1 1037.4: “Mind (*sems*) is closely associated with fundamental ignorance (*rtsa ba ma rig pa*): it is simply *samsāra* as defiled phenomena, similar to clouds insofar as it obscures the sun of primordial knowing. Primordial knowing (*ye shes*) is closely associated with *dharmakāya*. Similar to the sun, it is undefiled and does not coexist with the reflective thought patterns of mind.” *sems ni | rtsa ba ma rig pa dang mtshungs par ldan pa dri ma dang bcas pa’i chos ’khor ba rang ka ma ye shes kyi nyi ma sgrib pas sprin dang ’dra la | ye shes ni | chos kyi sku dang mtshungs par ldan pa dri ma med cing sems kyi dran bsam dang lhan cig mi gnas pa nyi ma lta bu ste//* I employ the term ‘ignorance’ as a translation of *avidyā* (Tib. *ma rig pa*) with some of the reservations Matilal has raised in his analysis of this concept (1980). One possible source of confusion that Matilal draws attention to is the negative interpretation of the English term ‘ignorance’ as a complete lack or absence of knowledge. I submit, however, that ‘ignorance’ is seldom actually *used* in this strong sense. The more usual weaker sense of ignorance is deficient knowledge. For example when we say of the Republican vice-presidential candidate in the 2008 U.S. federal election that she is ignorant, we do not imply that she has no knowledge at all but that the knowledge she *does* possess is in crucial respects deficient, distorted or misguided. The Indian logical argument that a simple absence cannot exert any conditioning influence applies here as well; i.e. the candidate’s ignorance would in this case be perfectly harmless. Thus ‘ignorance’ in ordinary language very often implies culpability. This clarification aside, Matilal is quite right in pointing out that ‘ignorance’ taken in the stronger sense (e.g. when used with reference to infants, animals or cognitively impaired humans) makes a poor translation of *avidyā*, a term which, in Indian philosophical contexts, implies not a simple lack of knowledge but a kind of knowledge that is erroneous and deluded. This weaker sense is supported by grammatical glosses of the term that take the privative prefix *a-* (= *nañ*) in *avidyā* not as a non-affirming (explicit) negation but as an affirming (implicit) negation. (This grammatical interpretation is borne out in the Tibetan trans-

derstanding of ignorance as both (a) not seeing things as they are ('innate ignorance' *lhan cig skyes pa'i ma rig pa* : *sahaja avidyā*) and (b) (mis)taking them for something they are not, viz. independently existing entities ('reifying ignorance,' *kun tu brtags pa'i ma rig pa* : *parikalpita/vikalpita avidya*), the author specifies two basic types of ignorance<sup>20</sup> (*Sems ye dris lan* 381.2):

lation of *avidyā* as *ma rig pa* rather than *rig pa med pa*.) The difference is that a non-affirming negation is a simple denial of existence (e.g. the negation of *x*) whereas the affirming negation selectively negates only those elements that are 'applicable' (e.g. negation of all that is *not x*) so as to affirm what remains. In the case of *avidyā*, then, what is denied (negated) is not knowledge per se but those forms of knowledge that obscure or misrepresent what originally presents itself to knowledge.

<sup>20</sup> These two types of ignorance may have developed from the two kinds of personalistic false views (*satkāyadr̥ṣṭi* / °*darśana*) – viz. *sahajāsatkāyadr̥ṣṭi* and *parikalpitasatkāyadr̥ṣṭi* – or false views of self (*ātmadr̥ṣṭi* / °*darśana*) that are distinguished in *Yogācārabhūmi* and *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. See Eltschinger 2009 where this typology is discussed in the context of examining Dharmakīrti's identification of ignorance with personalistic false views (67). For Dharmakīrti, ignorance is equated primarily with the innate personalistic false view, and not the reifying personalistic false view which was deemed to characterize non-Buddhist (Brahmanical, Jain) doctrines of the self. Whatever its genealogy, the distinction in the present context is between an *inherent* type of ignorance (*lhan cig skyes pa'i ma rig pa*), viz. the *non-recognition* of one's natural condition, and a secondary *acquired* type of ignorance (*kun tu brtags pa'i ma rig pa*) comprising myriad forms of *mis-recognition* stemming from the mistaken identifications and reifications of experience and consisting in the (mis)perception of independently existing subject and objects.

Tibetan thinkers of the dGe lugs tradition likely followed Dharmakīrti's lead in viewing co-emergent ignorance as an innate or congenital tendency to reify phenomena that is present in all sentient beings, whereas conceptually elaborated ignorance is a language-dependent formulation of a realist view. Klong chen pa, however, interprets this two-fold schema as consisting in (a) co-emergent ignorance on account of not recognizing the factor of open awareness to be primordial knowing in and as oneself and (b) conceptually elaborated ignorance that grasps what derives from oneself as 'other'. In short, ignorance comprises not only an innate type of non-recognition but also an acquired type of mis-recognition, viz., an active, distorted intelligence (*kliṣṭaprajñā*) that reifies persons and entities, thus creating the conditions for the arising of attachments, aversions and delusions that perpetuate cyclical existence. *Zab mo yang tig* vol. 2: 240.5f.: *dbye na rig pa'i cha la*

Thus, the non-recognition of one's abiding condition is the 'fundamental ignorance' (*rtsa ba'i ma rig pa*).<sup>21</sup> From the context of what is the ground or seed or founding basis for the development of this incipient error, the [ensuing] upwelling of hypostates based on dualistic beliefs constitutes the 'reifying ignorance' (*kun tu brtags pa'i ma rig pa*).

Klong chen pa takes up and criticizes a number of Indo-Tibetan views that are deemed to arise from the failure to distinguish mind and primordial knowing: (a) One view popular in 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century Indian Mahāyāna circles and criticized or defended by scholars of practically all Tibetan schools from as early as the 9<sup>th</sup>, among them the famous translator Ye shes sde (9<sup>th</sup> c.), Rong zom chos kyi bzang po (11<sup>th</sup> c.), and sGam po pa bsod nams rin chen (1079–1153), proposes that all knowledge (Skt. *jñāna* = Tib. *ye shes*) ceases on the level of Buddhhood.<sup>22</sup> (b) Another view that strongly influenced early Indian Buddhist soteriological and contemplative systems maintains that the cessation of mind (*cittanirodha*) leads to the goal of an insensate, unconscious state devoid of all mental activity.<sup>23</sup> (c) A related Indo-Tibetan view which Klong chen pa considered a serious misunderstanding of the \*Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka tradition

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*rang nyid ye shes su mi shes pa'i chas lhan cig skyes pa dang | rang las gzhan du 'dzin pa kun tu brtags pa'i ma rig pa gnyis so |*

<sup>21</sup> rDzogs chen snying thig sources frequently introduce a third and still more primary kind of ignorance termed 'ignorance of single identity' (*[rgyu] bdag nyid [g]cig pa'i ma rig pa*) that marks the very inception of error. According to the 12<sup>th</sup> century rDzogs chen snying thig master mKhas pa nyi 'bum, this kind of ignorance consists in "not recognizing the singular cause of both awareness and ignorance (*ma rig rig rgyu cig pa*) as being in reality non-dual (*don gyis gnyis med*), like the front and back of one's hand." *rDzogs pa chen po tshig don bcu gcig pa* 31.19. The three modes of ignorance are sometimes characterized as the failure to recognize the three modes of primordial knowing that are expressions of the ground-manifestation (*gzhi snang*): viz. essence (*ngo bo*), nature (*rang bzhin*) and responsiveness (*thugs rje*). See *bLa ma yang tig* vol. 1, 422.3 and vol. 2, 158.1.

<sup>22</sup> A detailed historical and doctrinal analysis of this Indo-Tibetan controversy with emphasis on clarifying Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po's position is offered by Almogi (2009).

<sup>23</sup> See Griffiths 1991 for a study of Indian Buddhist cessation of mind doctrines.

of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti understands the goal of all spiritual practice to consist in a vacuous state of sheer emptiness devoid of anything whatsoever. Klong chen pa argues that such views commonly proceed from a failure to distinguish the invariant structure of pre-reflective non-dual awareness from the reflective superimpositions of subject and object deriving from it. A central theme running through many of Klong chen pa's works, the *Sems ye dris lan* included, is that one becomes aware of consciousness simpliciter to the extent that the reifying and distorting self-identifications with its contents subside. This radical clearing of dualistic tendencies and attendant familiarization with the implicit awareness from which they have arisen is known as the path. As Klong chen pa states in his *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel*:

When the turbulence of mind and its mental factors have come to rest, Mind itself – luminous primordial knowing – arises from within. We describe the progressive familiarization with this [primordial knowing] as the path of awakening.<sup>24</sup>

### 1.2 *Hermeneutics of the three turnings and buddha-nature*

Given Klong chen pa's emphasis on the primacy of primordial knowing and his description of the path as the clearing of what obscures it, it is not surprising that in his interpretation of the so-called three turnings of the wheel of the dharma (*dharmacakra*), the meditative practices of de-identification formulated in second turning teachings on emptiness and no self are considered to be of merely provisional meaning (*drang don*) or in need of further interpretation. On the other hand, those third turning teachings that emphasize one's natural condition (*yin lugs*), primordial knowing, buddha-nature are taken as definitive (*nges don*).<sup>25</sup> In his *Sems nyid*

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<sup>24</sup> *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel* vol. 1, 130. *gang gi tshe sems dang sems las byung ba'i rnyog pa zhi ba na sems nyid 'od gsal ba'i ye shes khong nas 'char ba ste / de nyid goms par byed pa byang chub kyi lam zhes brjod de //*

<sup>25</sup> It is worth noting that many rNying ma scholars including Rog Shes rab 'od (1166–1244), Mi pham rnam rgyal (1846–1912) and, more recently, Dil mgo mkhyen brtse rin po che (1910–1991) and bDud 'joms rin po che (1904–1987) have maintained that the last two turnings are both of definitive

*ngal gso 'grel*, Klong chen pa outlines his position on the three turnings:

Those who put on false airs and who are blind-folded by the golden veil of wrong views turn their back on the intended meanings of *sūtras* and tantras that are of definitive meaning. They declare that what is of quintessential meaning is of provisional meaning and that the main import [of the teachings] is that the ‘effect’ [goal-realization] occurs only if one trains in its ‘causes’ [such as the two accumulations]. Hey handsome one, wearing your lotus garland, you truly do not understand the intentions that were conveyed in the three turnings of the Buddha-word. You are certainly attached to the extreme of emptiness! In this regard, the first turning of the Buddha-word was intended for those who were neophytes and who were of lower capacity. Thus in order to have them turn away from *samsāra* by taking the four truths in terms of things to be abandoned [suffering and its cause] and their antidotes [the cessation of suffering and the path], [the first turning] was a skillful means for them to gain complete liberation from what is to be abandoned. The middle [turning] was intended for those who had thoroughly cleared away [these impediments] and who were of medium capacity. Thus it taught sky-like emptiness together with the eight examples such as illusion<sup>26</sup> as skillful means to free them

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meaning, a view consonant with the rNying ma emphasis on the indivisibility of appearance and emptiness (*snang stong dbyer med*). See Wangchuk 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Klong chen pa’s *sGyu ma ngal gso* (in *Ngal gso skor gsum* vol. 2) elaborates on the eight examples (*dpe, upamāna*) to illustrate the emptiness of all phenomena: (1) dream (*rmi lam, svapna*), (2) magical illusion (*sgyu ma, māyā*), (3) reflected image (*mig yor, pratibhāsa*), (4) mirage (*smig rgyu, marīci*), (5) moon’s reflection on water (*chu’i zla ba, udakacandra*), (6) echo (*brag ca, pratiśrutkā*), (7) Gandharva city (*dri za’i grong khyer, gandharvanagara*), (8) apparition (*sprul pa, nirmāna*). Varying lists of such examples are found throughout Buddhist literature from the Pāli canon (where they illustrate the lack of self in persons) through Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna literature (where they are used to illustrate emptiness of *all* phenomena). On early Buddhist and Mahāyāna sources, see Lamotte 1944–1980, vol. I, 357 n. 1. The eight examples presented in Klong chen pa’s *sGyu ma ngal gso* match the ten elaborated in *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* 11.1 (Lamotte 1944–1980, vol. I, 357), excluding shadow (*chāyā*) and space (*akāśa*) and having reflected image (*mig yor = pratibhāsa/prodbhāsa*) instead of mirror reflection (*pratibimba*). Some references to the examples in Madhyamaka literature are noted by Tillemans 1990, vol. 1, 289, n. 437. Klong chen pa’s *sGyu ma ngal gso* together with its

from the fetter of becoming attached to these antidotes. The final [turning] for the sake of those who had reached fulfilment and who were of sharpest capacity taught the nature of all that is knowable, as it really is. As such, it bears no similarity to the self (*ātman*) of the Hindu extremists because (a) these people in their ignorance speak of a “self” that does not actually exist, being a mere imputation superimposed on reality; (b) they take it as something measurable;<sup>27</sup> and (c) they do not accept it is a quality of spiritual embodiment and primordial knowing (*sku dang ye shes*). But even this preoccupation with ‘no self’ (*anātma*) and ‘emptiness’ (*śūnyatā*) [concerns what are] merely correctives to [the beliefs in a] self and non-emptiness but which are

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auto-commentary (*sGyu ma ngal gso 'grel*) offers a detailed analysis of each of the eight examples (with a great many supporting quotations from *sūtras* and *tantras*) in its eight consecutive chapters, correlating them with the eight negations (in four pairs) that are presented in the dedicatory stanza of Nāgārjuna’s *Mūlamadhyamakakārika* in order to indicate that all phenomena, insofar as they are dependently arisen, ultimately elude any positive assertions: “Whatever is dependently arisen is unceasing, unoriginated, unannihilated, not permanent, not coming, not going, without difference, without identity...” The complete opening *pāda* reads *anirodham anutpādam anucchedam aśāsvatam / anekārthamanānārtham anāgamam anirgamam / yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaṃ prapañcopaśamaṃ śivam / desayāmāsa sambuddhaḥ taṃ vande vandatāṃ varam //* See *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (ed. L. de la Vallée Poussin, p. 11; ed. P.L. Vaidya, p. 4). In Klong chen pa’s arrangement, (1) dream illustrates non-origination (*skye ba med pa, anutpāda*), (2) illusion illustrates non-cessation (*'gag pa med pa, anirodha*), (3) reflected image illustrates not coming (*'ong ba med pa, anāgama*), (4) mirage illustrates not going (*'gro ba med pa, anirgama*), (5) moon’s reflection on water illustrates non-annihilation (*chad pa med pa, anuccheda*), (6) echo illustrates non-permanence (*rtaḡ pa med pa, aśāsvata*), (7) Gandharva city illustrates non-difference (*tha dad pa ma yin pa, anānartha*), (8) apparition illustrates non-identity (*gcig tu ma yin pa, anekārtha*).

<sup>27</sup> The idea that the self is measurable is found in Brahmanical and Jain traditions. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, for example, is quoted as saying (II.4.12–13) that “A person the size of a thumb lives in the middle of the body like a flame without smoke. He is the lord of the past and the future. He is the same today and the same tomorrow.” In Jainism, the self (*jīva*) though non-material occupies space, expanding and contracting to conform to the dimensions of the physical body. This shape is retained, though featureless, when, as the pure *ātman*, the soul/self abandons its ties to corporeal existence and rises to the top of the universe where, according to Jain traditional cosmology, it resides for eternity (Wiley 2004).

*not* of definitive meaning.<sup>28</sup>

Indian and Tibetan theories of the three *dharmacakras* reflect varying attempts to hierarchically distinguish stages of the Buddha's teachings in line with corresponding levels of intellectual-spiritual acumen and maturation in his audience. Klong chen pa's interpretation of the three turnings regards the first two turnings as remedial steps intended to clear the way for an undistorted understanding of one's natural condition.<sup>29</sup> On this account, the Buddhist emptiness and no self doctrines were initially formulated within a religio-phil-

<sup>28</sup> *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel* vol. 1, 329: *de la phyin ci log gi lus sgyings shing log par rtog pa'i gser gyi dra bas gdong gyogs pa / nges pa don gyi mdo dang sngags kyi dgongs pa la rgyab kyis phyogs pa dag snying po'i don ni drang don te / rgyu sbyang na 'bras bu 'byung 'gyur la dgongs te gsung pa yin no / kva ye bzhin bzang pad ma'i dra ba can / khyed kyis bka' khor lo gsum du gsungs pa'i dgongs pa yang mi shes pa re bden / stong pa'i mtha' la nges par 'dzin to / 'di ltar bka' 'khor lo dang por ni las dang po pa dang / dbang po dman pa rnam la dgongs nas bden bzhi spang gnyen du bya bas 'khor ba las bzlog pa'i phyir spang bya las rnam par grol ba'i thabs so / bar bar yongs su sbyang ba byas pa dang / dbang po 'bring po la dgongs nas gnyen por 'dzin pa'i 'ching ba las grol ba'i thabs su sgyu ma'i dpe brgyad dang nam mkha' lta bu'i stong pa nyid bstan to / tha mar mthar phyin pa dang / dbang po rnon po'i ngor shes bya'i gshis ji ltar gnas pa de ltar gsungs pa yin no / de'ang mu stegs pa'i bdag ni 'di dang mi mthun te / de dag gis mi shes bzhin du bdag ces sgro btags pa nyid kyis gshis la med pa dang / che chung gi tshad du byed pa dang / sku dang ye shes kyi chos su mi 'dod pa'i phyir ro / khyed kyi bdag med pa dang / stong pa nyid la zhen pa'ang bdag dang mi stong pa'i gnyen po tsam yin gyi nges pa'i don ni ma yin te //*

<sup>29</sup> This point is reiterated by Klong chen pa in his later *Tshig don mdzod* 897.1 "From among what was taught in the three turnings of the Buddha-word by the Transcendent Conqueror, although this topic [i.e. buddha-nature] was taught in the final turning, you have nonetheless failed to recognize this fact. If sheer emptiness (*stong nyid rkyang pa*) were the ultimate, then how does it make sense that the Buddha taught three turnings separately [and in this sequence]? Rather, he taught emptiness as being of provisional meaning with the intention of merely undermining (a) the fear of the abiding reality and (b) the belief in a self [entertained by] neophytes." *ci bcom ldan 'das kyis bka' 'khor lo gsum du gsung pa las gnas 'di ni tha ma don dam rnam par nges pa'i chos kyi 'khor lor gsungs pa yang khyod kyis ma shes / stong nyid rkyang pa don dam yin na / 'khor lo gsum la tha dad du bstan pa'ang ji ltar 'thad de / stong nyid drang don du gsungs kyi / de yang gnas lugs kyi skrag pa dang / las dang pos bdag tu 'dzin pa dgag tsam la dgongs pa ste //*

osophical climate rife with speculations concerning the existence of a creator God, permanent true self or selves and an unknowable absolute reality. Against this background, the Buddha's discourses concerning *anātma* (no self) and *sūnyatā* (emptiness) were offered as corrective measures with the express aim of invalidating and eliminating wrong views and extreme conclusions, particularly those based on the proclivity to take things as enduring and independently existing. The doctrine of 'no self' was expounded both as 1) a sectarian critique of various Hindu and Jain beliefs in a self – i.e. beliefs that there is a permanent, singular, self-sufficient individuating principle that underlies and anchors the swirling flux of experience and survives death, and 2) as a psychological account of how the coarser elements of our 'sense of self' – those rooted in the sense we have of being a psychic unity that transcends actual experience – constitute fabrications or superimpositions added to our most basic experience of things and beings around us. The doctrinal belief in self can be seen to depend on the psychological sense of self; and both are undermined by realizing that things and persons lack any inherent independent nature.

Now the target of Klong chen pa's critique of reificationism is not only the first order reification of 'selves' (viz. identities of things and persons) but also the second order reifications of those very means (e.g. teachings on emptiness, no self) used to undermine first order reifications.<sup>30</sup> The point being that spontaneously

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<sup>30</sup> This is brought out more clearly in the *Grub mtha' mdzod* 654.3: "If we classify [the authentic teachings] by way of temporal phases, the wheel of the Buddha-word was turned in three successive stages. Among these, there arose three teachings: at the time of the neophyte, by primarily showing the stages of rejecting what is to be abandoned and accepting the antidotes in order to protect the mind from the emotional affliction that bind it due to the autonomous [functioning of] subject and object, the teachings of the four noble truths [were given]. In the middle, in order to negate the habituation to these very antidotes, the teachings on the lack of inherent characteristics [were given]. And finally, the teachings on ascertaining ultimate reality [were given] that revealed how our basic nature is present just as is." *dus kyi sgo nas dbye na bka' 'khor lo rim pa gsum du bskor ba rnams so / de'ang las dang po pa'i tshé gzung 'dzin rang rgyud pas bcings pa'i nyon mongs pa las sems bsrung ba'i phyir spang gnyen blang dor byed pa'i rim pa gtso bor ston pas*

present unfabricated buddha-nature – understood as self-occurring primordial knowing replete with inborn qualities – comes to the fore only to the extent that *all* such reifications have subsided. So, far from being comparable to the ontologized self of Hindu and Jain speculations, buddha-nature is precisely what remains when dualistic superimpositions, especially the habitual sense of a self anchoring our everyday experiences, subsides. Buddha-nature consists in the indivisibility of awareness and its expanse (*dbyings dang ye shes 'du bral med pa*) and of luminosity and emptiness (*snang stong dbyer med*).

Klong chen pa interprets buddha-nature theories from a rDzogs chen perspective, emphasizing the spontaneous, unfabricated character of the cognitive and ethical qualities associated with spiritual awakening while strenuously avoiding the re-reification of what becomes apparent precisely when reifications have ceased. In a nutshell: soteriological practice connects beings with transsubjective (though not transhuman) sources of morality and meaning but these turn out to be empty of any inherent independent nature. Thus in his many works, *Sems ye dris lan* included, buddha-nature is held to be synonymous with Mind itself (*sems nyid*) luminous primordial knowing (*'od gsal ba'i ye shes*), the original ground of being (*gdod ma'i gzhi*) and, in his bridging works, the actual all-ground (*don gyi kun gzhi*) as distinct from all-ground of myriad habitual tendencies (*bag chags sna tshogs kyi kun gzhi*).<sup>31</sup> Yet such experi-

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*bden pa bzhi'i chos kyi rnam grangs dang / bar ba gnyen po la mngon par zhen pa dgag pa'i phyir mtshan nyid med pa dang / tha ma gshis ji ltar gnas bstan pa don dam rnam par nges pa'i chos kyi rnam grangs gsum du byung ba yin //*

<sup>31</sup> Works such as the *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel*, *Yid bzhin mdzod 'grel* and *Sems ye dris lan*, to give a few notable examples, employ a distinction between the conditioned all-ground of myriad habitual tendencies (*bag chags sna tshogs pa'i kun gzhi*) and the actual or *de facto* all-ground (*don gyi kun gzhi*), a distinction found in the extended \**Guhyagarbhatantra* and other tantras. However, in his purely sNying thig writings – e.g. *Theg mchog mdzod*, *Tshig don mdzod*, *Chos dbyings mdzod 'grel*, and many works belonging to the *sNying thig yab bzhi* collection – the three or four types of all-ground (*kun gzhi*) classified in the seventeen tantras and related works are in all cases associated with ignorance and dualistic mind and radically distin-

ences are understood to be utterly empty of intrinsic nature (*rang gi ngo bo stong pa nyid*), beyond the mentalistic-linguistic horizon (*spros bral*), inexpressible in thought or language (*sgra bsam br-jod du med pa*), non-existent (*med pa*), uncontrived (*ma bcos pa*). Klong chen pa's purely sNying thig writings specify the correlation of buddha-nature with open awareness (*rig pa*) as its cognitive aspect and with primordial knowing (*ye shes*) as its expressive and embodied dimensions, both of which make their presence felt as the natural luminosity that pervades body and mind (as elicited in the four gnostic lamps or *sgron ma bzhi* and evoked in the four visions or *snang ba bzhi*).

In short, the *Sems ye dris lan* clarifies the central place that the constellation of doctrines concerning buddha-nature (*tathāgata-garbha*), spiritual affiliation (*gotra*) and spiritual potential (*dhatu*) is accorded within rNying ma soteriology. The importance of buddha-nature doctrine, particularly as articulated in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (RGV), cannot be overestimated. In the *Sems ye dris lan*, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* is the first and last text quoted and the one most often quoted. Its importance is also indicated by its frequent occurrence in the related *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel* which quotes the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, sometimes at considerable length, in at least sixty instances. Although *Ratnagotravibhāga* is generally classified in Tibetan Buddhist scholasticism as a Mahāyāna treatise, its interpretations of Buddha nature and of the path as a three-stage (impure, pure-impure, and completely pure) revelation thereof served in many of Klong chen pa's works as a thematic bridge between Mahāyāna, Mantrayāna and rDzogs chen discourses.

In his *Yid bzhin mdzod* autocommentary, Klong chen pa outlines the basic Mantrayāna-based soteriological framework of ground, path and goal in terms of an endotelic clearing process (as contrasted with the teleological path of cause and effect described in the cause-oriented \*Lakṣaṇayāna), one that makes clearly evident

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guished from *dharmakāya* (*chos sku*) and the ground (*gzhi*) itself. Needless to say, Klong chen pa's interpretations of *kun gzhi* and other salient topics of Buddhist soteriology vary considerably in accordance with the different doctrinal frameworks being presented, criticized or defended.

one's inherent spiritual potential (*kham*s) as it is already primordially present:

Thus, in the cause-oriented [vehicle of] characteristics it is claimed that the *sūgatagarbha*, our spiritual potential, exists merely as a seed and that buddhahood is attained by making it grow through the two accumulation [of merits and knowledge] as conditions. It is therefore called a cause-determined vehicle because it is held that cause and effect follow [sequentially] one after the other.

In the Mantra [vehicle], the spiritual quintessence (*garbha*, *snying po*) is spontaneously and naturally present in sentient beings lacking in none of its extensive inborn qualities. It constitutes the ground where clearing occurs (*sbyang gzhi*) which is like the shining sun. The objects to be cleared (*sbyang bya*) are the eight modes of consciousness together with their all-ground which constitute *samsāra* and cover [this sun] like clouds. When the obscurations have been progressively cleared away, like clouds dissolving [in the sky], through cultivating the empowerments and the creation and completion stages (*bskyed rim dang rdzogs rim*) which make up the clearing process (*sbyong byed*), temporary qualities are actualized. It is held that thereafter, the actual all-ground (*don gyi kun gzhi*), i.e. the goal where obscurations are cleared away (*sbyangs 'bras*), is disclosed as it is in all its luminosity, like the sun. At this time, since the defilements that were there previously no longer exist, and since even the name of the all-ground with its habitual tendencies is gone, the [enduring] reality shines forth without any distinction between an earlier and a later [state]. As the *Hevajratantra* [II, iv, 69]: states:

Sentient beings are actually buddhas though [their true nature is] shrouded by adventitious obscurations. When these obscurations clear, they are indeed buddhas.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Yid bzhin mdzod 'grel* 1169.4: *de yang rgyu mtshan nyid las kham*s *bde bar gshegs pa'i snying po sa bon du yod pa tsa*m *rkyen tshogs gnyis las gong du 'phel bas sangs rgyas thob par 'dod pa'i phyir rgyu'i theg pa zhes bya ste / rgyu 'bras snga phyir khas len pa'i phyir ro / sngags kyi snying po de sems can thams cad la rang chas lhun grub tu yon tan rgya chen ma tshang ba med par yod par sbyang gzhi'i nyi ma 'dra ba nyid la / sbyang bya 'khor ba'i rang bzhin tshogs brgyad kun gzhi dang bcas pa sprin lta bus bsgribs pa nyid / sbyong byed dbang dang bskyed rdzogs bsgoms pas sprin sel ba ltar rim gyis sbyangs pas gnas skabs kyi yon tan grub nas / sbyangs 'bras don gyi kun gzhi nyi ma ltar gsal ba ci bzhin pa mngon du 'gyur bar 'dod de / de tshe sngar gyi*

### 1.3 Meditation and the path of disclosure

We have seen that Klong chen pa's understanding of the Buddhist path as a clearing process (*sbyong byed*) that progressively reveals one's abiding nature – viz. Mind itself, self-occurring primordial knowing, buddha-nature – is fundamental to his soteriological system. This view of the path presupposes three things we have briefly touched upon: (a) that one's true nature, equated in rDzogs chen with consciousness *simpliciter* – the simple *taking place of presence* – is an invariant structure, an absolute flow to borrow a term from Husserl's analysis of time consciousness<sup>33</sup> within which reflective differentiations arise and subside; (b) that this pre-reflective dimension of consciousness is nonetheless something strangely elusive, distorted and concealed as it is by the reifying habits of thought which identify with particular experienced contents as selves over against independently existing objects; and (c) that the path is therefore both a process of de-identifying with superimpositions and disclosing the implicit mode of being and awareness that they conceal.

While we can scarcely do justice here to the complex variety of meditation practices outlined in rNying ma texts,<sup>34</sup> it will be useful

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*dri ma med pas kun gzhi'i ming bag chags dang bcas pa log kyang don snga  
 phyi rnam dbye med par gsal te | brtag gnyis las | sems can rnam ni sangs  
 rgyas nyid | 'on kyang glo bur dri mas bsgribs | de bsal na ni sangs rgyas  
 nyid | ces so ||*

<sup>33</sup> See Husserl 1991: 389. According to Evan Thompson, "Husserl's view is that consciousness as sheer flow is phenomenologically discernible. We can see, if we look closely and carefully enough..., a flowing or streaming belonging to our consciousness that is distinct from the objects or contents of consciousness, that is, from whatever our experience is about or directed toward, whether in the objective and transcendent world, or the subjective and immanent sphere or our own intentional acts and experiences. This flowing or streaming consciousness is absolute, ultimate, or original, in the sense that it is a condition of possibility for every other kind of consciousness, but is not itself made possible by some other, still deeper level of consciousness." (Thompson 2007: 324.)

<sup>34</sup> Such practices, though still little explored in contemporary Buddhist scholarship, may turn out to be as crucial to understanding and validating

for our purposes to distinguish between the basic kinds of meditation typically presented. For sake of brevity, we will confine this typology to forms that are presented in the *Sems ye dris lan*. These can be subsumed under two basic sets of distinctions pertaining to the presence or absence of transitivity and conceptuality in meditation. These tend to overlap in complex ways in a given meditation session:

| Typology of meditation in the <i>Sems ye dris lan</i> |                |                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| (1) <i>Transitivity</i>                               | (A) Transitive | (B) Intransitive   |
| (2) <i>Conceptuality</i>                              | (A) Ideational | (B) Non-ideational |

(1A) Transitive meditation<sup>35</sup> is one which takes any given thought or object (real or visualized) as its focal point and uses it as a support for either (a) focusing the mind one-pointedly in order to still all mental activities [transitive non-ideational meditation] or (b) gaining intellectual insight into the nature of things/beings [transitive ideational meditation].<sup>36</sup> (1B) Intransitive meditation practices aim at abandoning everything with which the mind is normally occu-

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rDzogs chen views (particularly views on the nature of Mind) as experimentation is to understanding and validating scientific theories.

<sup>35</sup> I use the terms *transitive* meditation and *intransitive* meditation with a sense analogous to the grammatical distinction between *transitive* verbs which take a direct object (e.g. to dream) and *intransitive* verbs which cannot take a direct object (e.g. to sleep). The former express an action undertaken by a subject toward an object, whereas the latter express states in which the act-object structure is not involved. Now, applied to consciousness, the distinction can help clarify two distinct ways in which one is said to be aware of one's conscious mental state. Consciousness can be given to itself transitively, i.e. when taken taken as its own object. But this is possible because conscious is already given to itself intransitively, i.e. in simply being aware, a state phenomenologists call first personal givenness. 'Being conscious' is in this sense ambitransitive (see Legrand 2009) in the specific sense that all transitive intentional states of being conscious *of something* are given from this first-personal perspective as experiences I am undergoing, i.e. they share this dimension of intransitive pre-reflective self-consciousness.

<sup>36</sup> It is tempting here to mention *śamatha* (*zhi gnas*) and *vipāśyanā* (*lhag mthong*) as pertinent examples but these are understood and presented quite differently in the gradualist and non-gradualist traditions.

pied in order to realize a lucid, objectless state in which the mind, deprived of its habitual recourse to objects, comes to rest in its natural condition. It is a state in which “one ceases to be actively occupied with the objects of consciousness in order to become conscious of consciousness itself (which usually remains “hidden” behind what it is conscious of).” (Fasching 2008: 464).

(2A) Ideational meditation refers to a particular subtype of transitive meditation in which “the meditator holds an idea or a group of ideas in the forefront of awareness, and uses them to stimulate a directed course of intellectual activity.”<sup>37</sup> Meditation on impermanence is a case in point where the idea is not only to understand intellectually (*bsam pa*) the fact that nothing lasts but to internalize it (*nyams su len, sgom pa*) to the point where it completely transforms one’s attitudes, motivations and ways of being and acting in the world. As parenthetically noted in the preceding paragraph, transitive meditation can be ideational or non-ideational depending on whether the aim is to gain a kind of insight into the nature of things/beings that positively transforms attitudes and motivations in ways conducive to spiritual attainments [ideational] or to disclose the nature of Mind itself [non-ideational]. Many Tibetan spiritual traditions advocate alternating between the two. (2B) Non-ideational meditations are generally also intransitive and likewise devoted to leaving the mind denuded of its familiar objects, activities and points of reference. No longer able to ‘lose itself’ in objects and ideas, mind gives way to its original clear and empty condition. The texts also occasionally present transitive forms of non-ideational meditation which attend to certain objects (for example, the cloudless sky or a nonsensical word such as *hasaraki*<sup>38</sup>) not simply to focus and calm the mind but to thwart and ultimately break through its habitual proclivities to fixate on and try to make sense of things by means of concepts.

A rNying ma meditation session will typically begin with transitive-ideational forms of meditation and proceed to intransitive-non-ideational ones. In the *Sems ye dris lan*, for example, one begins

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<sup>37</sup> Fontana 2007: 154.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, *Chos dbyings mdzod 'grel* 344.4.

with the transitive-ideational practices of cultivating refuge and bodhicitta. One then proceeds to visualize a chosen deity, a transitive meditation in which the mind's ideational activity subsides in the experience of the deity's luminosity. This leads to immersion in a state free from mentalistic-linguistic proliferations in which one recognizes the lucid and empty nature of Mind itself. Needless to say, on the understanding that the aim of soteriological practice is to lay bare one's natural condition or primordial knowing, the types of meditation favoured in higher rDzogs chen contemplative instructions are *non-ideational* and *intransitive*. As Klong chen pa describes it (*Sems ye dris lan* 387.3): "By letting your eyes gaze unfixedly toward the centre of the sky, a limpid non-conceptual state of awareness arises. At this time, since mind has stopped, the two types of apprehension lack any objective reference, the two types being the apprehension of the outward apparent object as a real entity and the apprehension of the inner mind as a real entity."

The high status accorded those forms of meditation lacking any intentional and thematic focus is understandable in light of the central rNying ma distinction between mind and primordial knowing. Put succinctly, ideational meditation is bound up with mind while non-ideational meditation is bound up with primordial knowing. Meditation involving ideation is the type favoured by gradualist Indo-Tibetan Buddhist traditions. It has also, incidentally, been the type emphasized in the Western Christian tradition, as noted by Naranjo and Ornstein (1972). By contrast, non-gradual Indo-Tibetan traditions (exemplified by Indian Buddhist Siddha traditions and Tibetan bKa' brgyud and rNying ma schools) have traditionally regarded meditation without ideation as a precondition for the experience of (or rather *that is*) self-occurring primordial awareness. This approach to meditation reflects the phenomenological-psychological insight that intransitive pre-reflective self-awareness is structurally prior to, and a condition for the possibility of, all intentional ideational mental processes and therefore remains inaccessible to them.

## 2. Translation

### *Reply to Questions Concerning Mind and Primordial knowing: Instructions for Investigating Mind and Primordial knowing*

#### Praise to All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

I bow in homage to the Victors with their sons, an ocean  
 Whose depth of sensitivity and caring cannot be fathomed  
 In which the turbulence of mind and mental factors is stilled  
 [Within] the clear oceanic expanse of their non-dual Mind.  
 The essential meaning of the eighty-four thousand ways of teaching,  
 The unerring intention of the *sūtra* and tantra genres,  
 Is summarized in terms of the distinction between mind and primordial knowing.  
 Having investigated its meaning, I shall write about the stages of its cultivation.

#### [Introduction:]

The perfectly realized Buddha turned the wheel of the doctrine in three successive stages. Concerning the first discourse teachings on the four noble truths: these were primarily intended for the progression of neophytes and those of weak, inferior intelligence. [378] They clearly conveyed the skillful means for internalizing [these truths] through the stages of things to be abandoned [i.e. the truths of suffering and its cause] and their antidotes [i.e. truths of cessation and the path]. Concerning the middle discourse teachings on the absence of defining characteristics: these were primarily intended for the stage of progress of those with some training and middling capacity. They conveyed with the antidote of teachings on the absence of intrinsic essence that those things taken as ‘selves’ [or identities] are unoriginated. Amongst the final discourse teachings of definitive meaning: these primarily conveyed *in extenso* the teachings on how one’s existential condition is present for the stage of progress of those belonging to the vehicle of complete fulfilment and who were of sharpest capacity.

The first [discourse] taught a path for turning away from the characteristics of *samsāra* that are to be abandoned. The middle

taught the elimination of intellectual obscurations based on the fact that the natures one apprehends [and believes in] amongst what is to be eliminated are without intrinsic essence. The last disclosed our existential condition as the vital quintessence (*yin lugs snying po*).

Having thus clearly distinguished the meaning of what was taught on the basis of gradations in capacity and stages in how one progresses, one internalizes them [accordingly]. Here, the first stage is an impure condition because of its possessing defilement. [The next] is a partly pure, partly impure condition corresponding to the degrees to which defilements are purified by way of the path. [The last] is a condition of total purity divested of all defilements. With regard to these three [conditions], they have each been elucidated according to the gradation of (1) ground, (2) path and (3) goal. [379] Among discourses corresponding to the final stage of promulgation, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* [1.47] states

According to the phases of being impure,  
Partly pure and partly impure, and completely pure,  
One speaks of a sentient being, a Bodhisattva  
And a Tathāgata [Thus-gone].

‘Ground’ refers to the presence in oneself of luminous primordial knowing during the time of being a sentient being. ‘Path’ refers to the four [phases] of Accumulation, Integration, Seeing and Cultivation during the time of being a Bodhisattva. ‘Goal’ refers to the final attainment of the inborn qualities such as the strengths at the time of being a Tathāgata. Since Mind itself (*sems nyid*) in its luminosity within mind-governed beings (*sems can*) is suchness possessing defilements, it is described as “quintessence of the Tathāgata,” “one’s virtuous disposition,” “Mind itself,” and “luminosity.”

[Part One: Ground]

*Section One: A discussion of the meaning of “ground.”* The nature of reality in its primordial luminosity is unconditioned and spontaneously present. From the perspective of its emptiness, since it cannot be posited as any substance or characteristics and also can-

not be negated as ‘*samsāra*’ or ‘*nirvāṇa*’ and so forth, it is free from all limitations of discursive elaborations like the sky. From the perspective of its clarity, it is spontaneously and primordially imbued with the natural expression of the spiritual embodiments (*sku*) and their primordial gnoses (*ye shes*), and is luminous like the orbs of the sun and moon. These two facets abide primordially as the nature of reality as a unity without fusion or separation. As is stated in the *sNying po rab tu bstan pa'i mdo* [*Mahāyānābhidharmasūtra*]: <sup>[380]</sup>

The beginningless element (*dhātu*)  
 Is the basis of all phenomena.  
 Because it exists, [it allows for] all forms of life  
 As well as the attainment of *nirvāṇa*.<sup>39</sup>

And from the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* [9.22]:

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<sup>39</sup> The often quoted passage is from the *Mahāyānābhidharmasūtra*. Although no longer extant, this important *sūtra* is quoted at RGVV 72.13–14: *anādikāliko dhātuḥ sarvadharmasamāśrayaḥ / tasmīn sati gatiḥ sarvā nirvāṇādhiḡamo 'pi ca* // See also RGVV 1.155 (J 1.152) See Takasaki 1966: 290. The Tibetan translations of RGVV have *dbyings* instead of *khams* (both being accepted translations of *dhātu*). See Mathes 2008: 71. It is interesting that Klong chen pa here and elsewhere (e.g. *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel* 312.6; although in his *sGyu ma ngal gso 'grel*, *Ngal gso skor gsum* vol. 2, 597.1 it is erroneously ascribed to the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*) refers to the text as *sNying po rab tu bstan pa'i mdo*, a designation which may be a nod to his contemporary, Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339) whose similarly titled *sNying po bstan pa* (Full title: *De bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po bstan pa zhes bya ba'i bstan bcos*; in *Rang byung rdo rje gSung 'bum*, vol. 7, 282) presents (on 283.2 f) the above *Mahāyānābhidharmasūtra* passage as the second of its three opening stanzas which consist of three well-known quotations concerning Buddha nature. Rang byung rdo rje is known to have been both student and teacher of Klong chen pa and both were at one time disciples of the renowned rDzogs chen master Ku ma rā dza. All that remains of their correspondence is a letter written by Klong chen pa posing critical questions to Rang byung rdo rje about the idea of a First Buddha (*dang po'i sang rgyas*), an idea espoused in the *Mañjuśrīnāmasāṃgīti* and *Kālacakra* and taken up in the Rang byung rdo rje's *Zab mo nang don* and auto-commentary. Klong chen pa here appears to be following the lead of the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* (MSA) which had similarly questioned the idea. The letter entitled *rGyal ba Rang byung rdo rje la phul ba'i dri yig* is found in *gSung thor bu* (A 'dzom 'brug pa ed.) vol. 1, 363–377. For a French translation, see Arguillère 2007.

Although not different before or after...  
Suchness remains pure.<sup>40</sup>

And [the *Ratnagotravibhāga* [1.51cd] states:

As it was before, so it is after –  
Such is the nature of invariance.<sup>41</sup>

As the *Rin po che rgya mtsho'i rgyud* observes:

*Tathāgatagarbha* in its primordial luminosity is  
Like a jewel, perfectly replete with all qualities.  
And, like the undefiled sky and the orb of the sun,  
It is spontaneously present as *kāya[s]* and *jñāna[s]*.<sup>42</sup>

Thus we have ascertained by way of the view (*lta ba*) that primordial knowing in its luminosity constitutes the ever-present ground of being. These days, most ‘spiritual friends’ and all ‘great meditators’ are in agreement in taking an utter emptiness devoid of anything whatsoever as the ground. This does not agree with the import of Buddhist discourses [of the third turning] that are of quintessential meaning. The goal, i.e. buddhahood endowed with all inborn qualities, does not arise by virtue of experiencing a ground that is

<sup>40</sup> Klong chen pa begins with a line from MSA 10.22 but adds a line emphasizing the abiding purity of suchness. This gives a different sense than MSA 10.22 which reads *snga ma phyi mar khyad med kyang / sgrib pa kun gyi dri med pa / de bzhin nyid ni sangs rgyas 'dod / dag pa ma yin ma dag min //* “Although not different before and after,/ It is without defilements of all the obscurations./ Suchness is accepted as buddhahood./ Neither pure nor impure.” D Tōh. no. 4020, *sems tsam* vol. PHI 18.3. That is to say, it cannot be considered pure (where purity connotes a loss of impurity) because it remains unchanged over time but also cannot be considered impure because it remains undefiled by obscurations.

<sup>41</sup> Again the text is slightly different in wording (though not in sense) than RGV 1.51cd (RGVV 41.21) which has: *yathā pūrvaṃ tathā paścād avikāritvadharmatā //* RGVt: *ji ltar sngar bzhin phyis de bzhin / 'gyur ba med pa'i chos nyid do //*

<sup>42</sup> This possibly refers to the *Ḍākārṇavamahāyoginītantrarāja* (*Dpal mkha' 'gro rgya mtsho'i rgyud kyi dkyil 'khor gyi 'khor lo'i sgrub thabs padma rā ga'i gter*). D Tōh. no. 372. *rgyud 'bum*, vol. KHA, 2.1 Tr. by Dharma yon tan (Dar ma yon tan?), though I could not locate this passage. The Sanskrit edition with Tibetan translation of chapter fifteen of this tantra is found in Maeda 1995: 147–169.

simply nothing at all. [Why?] Because the three aspects of ground, path and goal are misconstrued and because buddhahood being an actualization of the goal of emancipation is unconditioned and endowed with spontaneously present qualities. Therefore, these [views] and the view of the peak of worldly existence<sup>43</sup> would seem to be the same.

Here [in our tradition], this unconditioned and spontaneously present luminosity is precisely what we call the ‘ground.’<sup>[381]</sup> From the dimension of this very ground, by failing to recognize one’s existential condition (*yin lugs*) as it is, there is ignorance (*ma rig pa*). When one thereby goes astray into the [duality of an] apprehended object and apprehending subject, one circles around (*saṃsāra*) in the three realms. As is stated in the *Māyājāla* [i.e. \**Guhyaagarbhatantra* 2.15]:

E ma ho! From the \**sugatagarbha*  
Individual divisive concepts<sup>44</sup> manifest due to karma.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> ‘Peak of worldiness’ (*bhavāgra*=Tib. *srid rtse*) describes the highest of the mundane formless meditations practiced by an Arhant. It is described as a sphere in which there is neither conceptualization nor non-conceptualization (*naivasamjñānāñjñāsamjñātana*) that occurs in the fourth and final formless attainment (*ārūpya-samāpatti*). This attainment either leads to the state of cessation [of all conception and sensation] (*[samjñāvedita]nirodhasamāpatti*) in case of the Ārya who is able to complete the stages of meditation that transcend worldliness (*lokattara*), or it represents the final destination for one unable to access this higher state and who therefore remains confined to worldly (*laukika*) states of mind. See AK 2.24 etc. and the illuminating overview by Seyfort Ruegg (1989: 192). See also Klong chen pa’s *Sems nyid ngal gso ’grel*, vol. 2, 241 where the limited *bhavāgra* is distinguished from *nirodha* interpreted (in light of MKv) as “cessation of discursive elaborations of mind” (*’gog pa ni sems kyi spros pa ’gog pa’i phyir*) which, in the case of a Bodhisattva, brings with it a heightened compassion for living beings.

<sup>44</sup> Klong chen pa’s quotation of this passage here and elsewhere (e.g. *Grub mtha’ mdzod*, *Yid bzhin mdzod*, *Sems nyid ngal gso ’grel*) take the *Guhyaagarbhatantra*’s *sprul* (manifest, emanate) as the homophone *’khrul* (errancy) though not at *sGyu ma ngal gso ’grel* 601.4 which correctly has *sprul*. In his commentary on this tantra (*Phyogs bcu mun sel* 118.6), Klong chen pa elucidates the passage as follows: “*E ma ho* is used to express the nature of kindness. Errancy has derived from the dimension of the \**sugatagarbha*, one’s

Thus, the non-recognition of one's abiding condition is the 'fundamental ignorance' (*rtsa ba'i ma rig pa*). From the context of what is the ground or seed or basis of the development of this incipient errancy, the [ensuing] upwelling of hypostates based on dualistic beliefs constitutes the 'reifying ignorance' (*kun tu brtags pa'i ma rig pa*). When from these two [modes], there arise all the different phenomenal categories of sentient beings comprising the lower three wretched destinies, the middle human realm, and higher divine realms, then due to the potentialities imprinted in the form of various habitual tendencies on the all-ground, one experiences the joys and sorrows of one's own vision, the heights and depths of *saṃsāra*, like the turning of a water mill. The *Ratnaguṇasañcayagāthā* [28.5ab] states:

Sentient beings, lower, middle and higher, however many,  
Are all declared by the Buddha to arise from ignorance.<sup>46</sup>

primordial abiding condition, luminous Mind itself. Here, \**sugatagarbha* refers to luminous Mind itself which abides as the very essence of the three *kāyas* which are neither conjoined nor disjoined... In the *sGyu 'phrul rgyas pa* (Tk vol. 14, 67.6f.) its meaning is the actual all-ground that is unconditioned ('*dus ma byas don gyi kun gzhi*): 'It is not the all-ground of divisive conceptualizing/ But the actual ground without intrinsic nature./ That is called the expanse of phenomena,/ Primordial knowing of suchness.//'... When errancy occurs due to any given conditions, since divisive concepts of individual sentient beings occur of their own accord, this great metropolis of *saṃsāra* manifests like a self-appearing dream by virtue of causally efficacious karma." *brtse ba'i rang bzhin gyis e ma ho brjod nas / gdod ma'i gnas lugs sems nyid 'od gsal ba bde gshegs snying po'i ngang las 'khrul lo / de'ang bde gshegs snying po ni sems nyid 'od gsal ba sku gsum 'du 'bral med pa'i ngo bor gnas pa de nyid yin te / ... sgyu 'phrul rgyas pa las / rnam rtog kun gzhi ma yin pa / rang bzhin med pa don gyi gzhi / de ni chos kyi dbyings zhes bya / de bzhin nyid kyi ye shes so // zhes pa dang / 'dus ma byas don gyi kun gzhi'i don nyid / ... rkyen gang gis 'khrul na sems can rang rang gi rnam par rtog pa rang shar du byung bas rgyas byas pa'i las kyis 'khor ba'i grong khyer chen po 'di rang snang rmi lam ltar sprul so //*

<sup>45</sup> See critical edition in Dorje 1987: 188.

<sup>46</sup> Full title: *Prajñāpāramitāratanaguṇasañcayagāthā* (Tib. '*Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa sdud pa tshigs su bcad pa*, in D Tōh. no. 13, shes phyin, vol. KA, 2.1). For Sanskrit and Tibetan recensions of the text, see Obermiller 1937 and Yuyama 1976. The relevant passage *Ratnaguṇasañcayagāthā* 28.5ab in Sanskrit reads: *yāvanta satva mṛdu-madhyam'-ukṛṣṭa loke / sarve a-vidya-prabhavā sugatena uktāḥ //* See Yuyama 1976: 110;

Although the three realms continue separately, the \**sugatagarbha* without being adversely affected, remains pervasively present in all sentient beings. As the *Śrīmālā-devīsiṃhanāda-sūtra* states:

All beings are totally pervaded by *tathāgatagarbha*.<sup>47</sup>

And as is stated in the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* [1.27]:

All embodied being are always imbued with the buddha-quintessence  
Because the spiritual body of perfect buddhahood radiates, [382]  
Because suchness is undifferentiated, and  
Because the spiritual affiliation is present.

Moreover, during the phase of sentient beings, the *tathāgatagarbha* is obscured by [dualistic] mind and remains defiled. As is stated in the *Māyājāla*:

As water present in the centre of the earth  
Is always naturally uncontaminated,  
So one's spiritual potential obscured by mind,  
Is naturally present within all sentient beings.<sup>48</sup>

And as the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* [1.112–113] describes it:

Were there an inexhaustible treasure  
Underground beneath a poor man's house,  
Neither would he know of its presence,  
Nor could the treasure tell him "here I am."  
Likewise, as all beings have failed to realize  
The most precious treasure contained within their minds –  
Their true nature, immaculate without anything added or removed.  
Thus they continually experience the manifold miseries of impoverishment.

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Obermiller 1937: 103. For the Tibetan, see Yuyama 1976: 185, Obermiller, 1937: 103.

<sup>47</sup> Full title: *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda-nāma-mahāyānasūtra* (Tib. *Phags pa lha mo dpal phreng gi seng ge'i sgra zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*, in D Tōh. no. 92. dkon brtsegs, vol. CHA, 509.1 See D). For English translation see Wayman and Wayman 1974. The passage is also cited in Klong chen pa's *Grub mtha' mdzod* 871.5 and in his *Phyogs bcu mun sel*, 119.4 where it is incorrectly ascribed to the *Samādhirājasūtra*.

<sup>48</sup> This passage is not found in the \**Guhyagarbhatantra* (see critical edition Dorje 1987) but possibly belongs to another text from the *Māyājāla* cycle.

In this context, the *tathāgatagarbha* is comparable to the orb of the sun while the all-ground together with its habitual tendencies – the whole complex of mind and its mental factors within the mind-streams belonging to the three realms – is comparable to clouds.

Some fools who boast about their erudition [claim the following]: It is untenable [to maintain that] mind and its mental factors are obscurations because (A) one produces the mind [of awakening, i.e. *bodhicitta*] and because (B) Mind itself which is luminous is one's spiritual potential (*kham.s*).<sup>[383]</sup> Therefore, [we reply that] it would symptomatic of not comprehending the import of the *sūtras* and tantras to say that mind is accepted as being one of the meditative absorptions (*samadhi*) [belonging to] the facets of non-conceptual awakening. [Our argument is as follows:] (A) With regard to 'producing the mind' [of awakening], is this not also a conceptualizing that involves accepting [some things] and rejecting [others] in the context of *samsāra* [and hence obscured]? If so, it would ultimately have to cease. (B) But if one were to speak about Mind itself [in this way] then this would be inappropriate because it cannot be established given that there is neither produced nor producer [i.e. no causality].

It seems [here] that one has not properly distinguished between mind (*sems*) and Mind itself (*sems nyid*). Since 'mind' involves conceptual and analytic factors of mind-streams belonging to the three realms, it is that which grasps erroneous superimposed aspects together with the all-ground [comprising] the eightfold cognitive ensemble. As the *Satyadvayavibhāṅga* maintains:

'Conceptualization' consists of mind and mental factors  
Having superimposed aspects that constitute the three realms.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Full title: *Satyadvayavibhāṅgakārikā*. Tib. *Bden pa gnyis rnam par 'byed pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa*, in D Tōh. no. 3881, dbu ma, vol. SA, 2.1. In his *Satyadvayavibhāṅgavṛtti*, Jñānagarbha glosses this passage as follows: "Conceptualization refers to what arises as having superimposed aspects of mind and mental events that constitute the three realms." D Tōh. no. 3882, dbu ma, vol. SA, 25.5: *kham.s gsum pa'i sems dang sems las byung ba'i sgro btags pa'i rnam pa can du 'byung ba'i rnam pa ni rtog pa yin no l*. For English translation, see Eckel 1987.

‘Mind itself’ is luminous primordial knowing, the *tathāgatagarbha*. Thus it is when mind ceases or no longer functions that Mind itself, luminous primordial knowing, shines forth in individual intuitive awareness. As the *Aṣṭasāhasrika Prajñāpāramitā* [5b.1–2] states:

That mind is not [dualistic] mind because mind’s nature is luminous.<sup>50</sup>

[*Objection:*] But doesn’t great Mind (*sems chen po*) exist on the level of buddhahood?

[*Reply:*] This refers to great primordial knowing (*ye shes chen po*). It agrees completely with descriptions of the ‘great passions’ as [expressions of] primordial gnoses that are found in the tantras. In short, [384] mind together with its mental factors belonging to the three realms and subject to habitual tendencies transmitted since beginningless time are shown<sup>51</sup> to have the two obscurations [intellectual and emotional] as their nature and to be produced. And thus they are explained as something to be eliminated and that must be stopped.

Moreover, it is claimed that to now depend upon a method that

<sup>50</sup> The corresponding passage from the Sanskrit are given in Schmithausen 1977: 41 as lines E.b.1–2: *tathā hi tac cittam acittam / prakṛtiś cittasya prabhāsvarā /*. This passage occurs in the following context: “How does one learn? One should learn in such a way that one does not become superior-minded [conceited] even by this mind of awakening. *Query:* On what account? *Reply:* In this way: ‘That mind is not mind because the nature of Mind is luminous.’” *ci ltar bslabs na ’di byang chub kyi sems des kyang rlom sems su mi bgyid pa de ltar bslab par bgyi’o / de ci’i slad du zhe na / ’di ltar sems de ni sems ma mchis pa ste / sems kyi rang bzhin ni ’od gsal ba lags so //* (D Tōh. n. 12, sher phyin, vol. KA, 5.3). In interpreting the relevant passage (underlined), Klong chen pa is at pains to unequivocally distinguish the first use of *sems* (*sems de* or the less accurate translation *sems la* in the version he was working with) from the second, *viz.* to distinguish naturally luminous non-dualistic Mind itself (*sems nyid*) from [dualistic] mind (*sems*).

<sup>51</sup> SYa has *brten pas* whereas SYd and SYk have *bstan pas*. Both readings are possible but the latter seems better suited to the relevant context of citing scriptural support for the distinction between *sems* and *ye shes* (or *sems chen po*). A reading based on the former would be “...mind together with its mental factors belonging to the three realms and subject to habitual tendencies transmitted since beginningless time depend upon having the two obscurations [intellectual and emotional] as their nature and upon being produced.”

[itself] does not depend on the state of Mind itself in its luminosity is comparable to a cloud adrift in space. As the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* [1.55–57] states:

Earth is supported by water, water by air,  
 And air is supported by space.  
 But space is supported neither by  
 The elements of air, water nor earth.  
 Likewise our psychophysical aggregates, sensory elements and sensory capacities  
 Are supported by actions and afflictive emotions.  
 Actions and afflictive emotions are supported completely by  
 The inappropriate mentation.  
 Inappropriate mentation is in turn supported by  
 The purity of mind  
 The nature of Mind, however, is not  
 Supported by any of these phenomena.

As the *Pramāṇavārttika* [2.208cd] states:

This mind is by nature luminosity.  
 The defilements are adventitious.<sup>52</sup>

This statement agrees with this [rNying ma] approach insofar as ‘the nature of Mind,’ ‘the basic nature of Mind,’ ‘Mind itself’ and ‘the naturally pure expanse’ and ‘the abiding condition as the nature of things’ have one and the same meaning.

Mind, on the other hand, consists of three conditional states by virtue of its classification in terms of the three realms: (A) a one-pointed conceptless [state in the realm of formlessness], (B) a simple clarity [state in the realm of aesthetic forms] and (C) a conceptual [state in the desires realm].<sup>[385]</sup> Thus these phenomena of *samsāra* that depend on mind and appear mistakenly due to habitual tendencies are unreal, deceptive, a childish delusion, com-

<sup>52</sup> While the SY has *sems kyi rang bzhin 'od gsal ba / dri ma rnams ni glo bur ba //*, my rendering is based on *Pramāṇavārttika* 1.208ab: *prabhāsvaram idaṃ cittaṃ prakṛtyāgantavo malāḥ //* and corroborated by Tibetan translation in D: *sems 'di rang bzhin 'od gsal te / dri ma rnams ni glo bur ba //* On differing views on what Dharmakīrti may have meant by this passage, see Seyfort Ruegg 1969: 425–28; Schmithausen 1987: 160–62; Franco 1997: 85–93; and Wangchuk 2007: 208.

pounded, hollow, insubstantial, and without essence, [like] a bubble about to burst [or] a plantain. They are therefore illustrated by way of eight examples<sup>53</sup> such as magic, a reflected image and so forth. They constitute a distortion, a visual anomaly, apparent yet nothing as such. Being devoid of abiding nature throughout the time of their appearing, they cannot withstand intellectual analysis. They are mere appearances to conventional, erroneous [cognitions] like the visions of one who has ingested [the hallucinogenic] *dhatūra*. Meanwhile one must recognize [these phenomena] as appearances due to taking the apprehended object and apprehending subject to be real.

The luminous vital quintessence should be understood as follows: it is ultimate reality, it is enduring, stable, without transition or change, utterly calm and non-deceptive. The very essence of primordial knowing, the ground just as is from time immemorial until the end, is free from all limitations of discursive elaborations and, like the unobscured orb of the sun, remains the same in nature – it has not been shrouded, is not now shrouded and [will remain] unshrouded by the defilements of all phenomena belonging to mind and its mental factors.

[Part Two: Path]

*Section Two: How to make an experience of the path.* Having realized the presence of the quintessence of buddhahood within oneself, one meditatively cultivates this state. By way of the Parāmita system, one cultivates it after generating [*bodhi*]citta. By way of Mantra[yāna], [386] one additionally brings about maturation by means of the empowerments and brings about freedom by means of the oral instructions. Here [in our system], the method of internalizing it as a single essence is thus in harmony with the *sūtras*.

In this regard, once comfortably seated, one takes refuge and develops [*bodhi*]citta. After having clearly visualized in an instant the deity of one's predilection, [while seated in a posture] endowed

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<sup>53</sup> See above n. 23.

with the seven qualities of Vairocana,<sup>54</sup> one becomes evenly composed in the expanse of this clear, vivid and vast state of open awareness which does not conceptualize anything, does not grasp anything, and is not identified by the mind as any apparent object. One thus relaxes in the experience of luminosity. As it is extolled by Ārya Nāgārjūna in his *\*Madhyamakaratnāsukośa*:

Don't conceptualize anything and don't grasp anything!  
 Relax freely in its nature without making it something contrived.  
 This uncontrived state is the precious treasury of the unborn.  
 It is the road travelled by all the Victors of the three times.<sup>55</sup>

And as the *Heruka Galpo Tantra* declares:

Devoid of thought is Mind itself as vast as space.  
 Mind itself is space beyond all thoughts.  
 Concerning this Mind itself [vast as] space and devoid of thought,  
 There is no apprehension in space nor anything apprehended.<sup>56</sup>

So at this time, when mind and all its mental factors have ceased, the non-conceptual primordial knowing is present as the essence of

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<sup>54</sup> The seven-point posture refers to an ideal meditation posture having seven qualities of the deity Vairocana (*rnam snang chos bdun*): (1) legs crossed (in vajra posture, right leg over left leg with backs of feet sitting on tops of thighs), (2) hands in gesture of equanimity (right hand rests on left four finger's width below navel), (3) spine straight, (4) neck bent slightly forward, (5) shoulders broadened ("like the wings of a vulture"), (6) eyes gazing in direction of the nose (i.e. gazing unfixedly into space twelve to sixteen finger widths in front of nose), (7) tongue touching the palate. *rkang pa skyil krung / lag pa mnyam gzhag / sgal tshigs drang po bsrang ba / mgrin pa cung zad gug pa / dpung pa rgod gshog ltar brgyang ba / mig sna rtser phab pa / lce rtse ya rkan la sbyar ba ste bdun no /*

<sup>55</sup> There is no canonical text bearing the title to which this passage is attributed (Tib. *Dbu ma skye med rin po che'i mdzod*) although there is a very short text entitled *Ratnāsukośa* (Tib. *Skye med rin po che'i mdzod*) ascribed to Nāgārjūna. E.g. D Tōh. 3839, dbu ma, vol. TSA, 299.4 This passage does not occur in it.

<sup>56</sup> Full Title: *He ru ka 'dus pa'i rgyud phyi ma dpal he ru ka'i gal po dur khrod mngon par 'byung ba zhes bya ba'i rgyud /* Tk 319 vol. 25, 93.1. One of the eighteen Mahāyoga tantras devoted to Ye shes dri med, the heruka of the Tathāgata family among the five buddha families. I could not locate quotation in this source.

personal self-awareness. As a scripture [i.e. *Prajñāpāramitāstotra* by *Rahulabhādra*] states:

Devoid of what can be expressed in language and thought, such is  
 Prajñāpāramitā. <sup>[387]</sup>  
 Unborn, unceasing, the essence of space itself,  
 It is the scope of primordial knowing as individual self-awareness.  
 Praise to the Mother of all Victors of the three times.<sup>57</sup>

In this context, ultimate truth is declared to be beyond the domain of the mind and intellect. What this implies is that when mind ceases and one transcends intellect, that primordial awareness which has been present in oneself is [revealed as] the very nature of reality (*dharmatā*) like the shining sun when it is free from clouds. As for settling into the composure state: at a time when there is a cloudless sky which enhances the process of separating the essence from the dregs<sup>58</sup> [i.e. open awareness from obscuring thoughts], sit with your back to the sun. By letting your eyes gaze unfixedly toward the centre of the sky, a limpid non-conceptual state of awareness arises. At this time, since mind has stopped, the two types of apprehension lack any objective reference, the two types being

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<sup>57</sup> The passage which the *Sems ye dris lan* here ascribes to ‘a scripture’ (*lung*) is elsewhere quoted by Klong chen pa under the title *Yum la bstod pa* (Skt. *Prajñāpāramitāstotra*). See, as examples, *Theg mchog mdzod* pt. 1 1051.3, *bSam gtan ngal gso ’grel, sPyi don legs bshad rgya mtsho* in *Ngal gso skor gsum* vol. 3, 40.1, and *sGyu ma ngal gso ’grel* in *Ngal gso skor gsum* vol. 2, 597.4. Most Indian, Tibetan and Chinese sources attribute this hymn to Rahulabhādra (Tib. *Sgra gcan ’dzin bzang po*). The hymn is prefixed (with this authorial ascription) to a number of *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* in Sanskrit (though neither the Tibetan nor Chinese translations contain the praise). See Brunnhölzl 2007: 347 n. 60. See also Seyfort Ruegg 2004: 19. The early (9<sup>th</sup> c.?) Tibetan *IDan dkar ma* catalogue lists a *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa la bstod pa’i tshig gi sdeb sbyor* that it ascribes to this author. See Lalou 1953 no. 452. In the existing bsTan ’gyur collections, however, the *Prajñāpāramitāstotra* (Tib. *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa’i bstod pa*) is only found as one of the eighteen stotras ascribed to Nāgarjūna. E.g. D. no. 1127, *bstod tshogs, ka 151.1* Nothing resembling the passage in question is found in this work. See comparison of the two Tibetan translations of the Rahulabhādra text by Seyfort Ruegg in Doboom 1995: 83.

<sup>58</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Dorji Wangchuk for clarifying the sense of this expression.

(a) the apprehension of the ‘outer’ apparent object as a real entity and (b) the apprehension the ‘inner’ mind as a real entity. When therefore one no longer conceptualizes entity or non-entity, there is a calm in which any third alternative type of apprehension apart from those two would [also] be without objective reference. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* [9.34] states:

When neither entity nor non-entity  
Is present before the mind,  
At that time, since there is also no other representation,  
Lacking any objective reference, it remains thoroughly calm.<sup>59</sup>

As the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* [58b] states:

[He is] to be individually intuitively known – unwavering...<sup>60</sup>

A *Dohā* states: [388]

Relax simply in self-clarity [like] water and a lamp [reflected in it].

Or as Kaudālika [i.e. Koṭālipa] puts it:

Meditating by way of mind is not meditation.  
But not meditating is also not meditation.  
Beyond meditating and not meditating,  
The very absence of mentation is Mahāmudrā!<sup>61</sup>

<sup>59</sup> This famous line from Śāntideva’s ninth chapter on insight is a given as the Madhyamaka response to the Yogacāra question (*Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9.33) “When the thing investigated which is said to not exist is not perceived, then how can some no-thing, devoid of basis, be present before the mind?” The answer of course is that it can’t: neither entity (thing) nor non-entity (no-thing) in fact exist.

<sup>60</sup> ‘He’ of course refers to Mañjuśrī who in this text personifies primordial knowing. D, rgyud ’bum, vol. KA, 7.6. The Skt. for the relevant part of 58b is *pratyātmavedyo hy acalaḥ...* For critical edition of Sanskrit text and translation, see Davidson 1981.

<sup>61</sup> The author to whom this passage is attributed was an Indian mahāsiddha, known in Tibetan works as Tog rtse pa (Tog tse pa?) “Mattock-man,” who gained fame in Tibet for his non-gradual Mahāmudrā teachings. sGam po pa’s grand-student ’Jig rten mgon po once commented that from among all the Indian and Tibetan adepts, it was only the Indian Koṭālipa and Tibetan sGam po pa who directly pointed out mind. See Jackson 1994: 13 and 142. Also see Roerich 1988: 869. The quoted passage is not found in Kaudālika’s oft-quoted *Acintyakramopadeśa* (Tib. *Bsam gyis mi khyab pa’i rim pa’i man*

On this occasion, “cessation of mind” means that open awareness makes evident the spiritual embodiment of primordial knowing (*ye shes kyi sku = jñānakāya*). [The *Madhyamakāvātāra* (11.17d)<sup>62</sup> states:]

Due to mind’s cessation, that [suchness] is made evident by the *kāya*.  
This is one quarter of [of the stanza].

Now, in the case of genuine meditative absorption, there occurs [a state that does] not stray from the sphere of open awareness which is free from the entire complex of mind consisting of the all-ground and all-ground consciousness, along with ego-based cognition, and the conscious experiences of the five sense perceptions. The Inconceivability (Skt. *acintya* Tib. *bsam gyis mi khyab pa*) chapter of the *Ratnakūṭa* states:

Though free from mind, ego-mind and dichotomizing cognition, one has not also abandoned the state of contemplative absorption.<sup>63</sup>

By meditating in this way, the three experiences of bliss, clarity

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*ngag*), D Tōh. 2228 vol. 51, 198.5.

<sup>62</sup> Text and translation corrected according to MAV, 361. This edition is based, as Tauscher (1989: VI) observes, “on the canonical edition of the *Madhyamakāvātārabhāṣya* [5263] of Peking, to which that of Narthang, a (seemingly) non-canonical edition which La Vallée Poussin obtained from Stcherbatsky and which I am unable to identify, and occasionally Jayānanda’s commentary have been compared.” In addition to copies of the MAV that circulated in Tibet, with or without the *bhāṣya*, there are two different canonical translations of the MAV: an older one by Nag tsho Tshul khriims rgyal ba and Kṛṣṇapaṇḍita in Peking (P 5261) and Narthang editions and a newer one by Pa tshab Nyi ma grags and Tilaka(kalaśa) (P 5262 and D 3861). Although the earlier translation was largely replaced by the later, it continued to be used at least until the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Klong chen pa’s quotations from MAV correspond to the earlier Nag tsho translation though he invariably interprets 12, 8d as if *’gag pa* had the instrumental *pas*.

<sup>63</sup> This refers to the *Acintyaguhyānirdeśa* which makes up section three of the *Ratnakūṭa*. Full title: *Āryamahāratnakūṭadharmaparyāyaśatasāhasrikagranthetrisaṃvaranirdeśaparivartanāmamahāyānasūtra* (Tib. *’Phags pa dkon mchog brtsegs pa chen po’i chos kyi rnam grangs stong phrag brgya pa las sdom pa gsum bstan pa’i le’u zhes bya ba theg pa chen po’i mdo*, in D Tōh. 45, dkon brtsegs, vol. KA, 199.1).

and non-conceptualization naturally emerge and, moreover, they are beyond limit. As the *mDo gdams ngag 'bog pa'i rgyal po* states:

If one settles mind without thought in  
The nature of reality without thought,  
There arises a felt experience without bias or partiality.<sup>64</sup>

Now, the procedure for this meditative absorption that transcends mind belonging to the three realms [389] is as follows. In the formless [realms] the single-pointed non-conceptual [cognition] has no apparent object (*snang yul med pa*). This means that although there is no conceptualization, the appearance of objects (*yul snang ba*) is not suppressed, rather it is the single-pointed grasping that is absent. As for mind belonging to the [realm of] forms, although there is the appearance of objects, this may involve thoughts and analyses (*rtog dpyod*) or be devoid of these. But even if it is imbued with the good feelings of a meditative trance, it doesn't go beyond a kind of grasping. The mind which doesn't go beyond matters of speculation because its doubts have not been resolved and the mind belonging to the desires [realm] are predominantly conceptual and analytic. In this context, what constitutes non-conceptual primordial knowing and, moreover, the meditative absorptions of the three individual realms still involve habitual tendencies for mind's apparent objects and thus the nature of one's abiding condition remains unknown. But here [primordial knowing and absorptions] are nonetheless endowed with numerous special qualities such as realizing the essence of the ground whose nature is luminosity, being embraced by the *bodhicitta*, and uniting [the forces of] skillful means and discerning insight. In this regard, the four concentrations and four formless states are of two sorts: (a) those subsumed under the mind

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<sup>64</sup> The title to which this passage is attributed likely refers to the *dGongs 'dus* (*Sangs rgyas thams cad kyi dgons pa 'dus pa'i mdo*), a text sometimes referred to by the title [*mDo*] *gDams ngag 'bogs pa'i rgyal po* or close variants thereof by rNying ma pa and bKa' brgyud scholars including Phag mo gru pa rDo rje rgyal po, Bu ston, 'Gos lo tsa ba, and Klong chen pa. For this identification and its problems, see Karmay 1998: 84–89. I thank Dr. Dorji Wangchuk for pointing out this reference. The *dGongs 'dus* is an important rNying ma tantra (despite the *mdo* in its title) that is regarded as one of five principal tantras of the Anuyoga tradition of rDzogs chen.

of *samsāra*, i.e. grasping which, in this context should stop, and (b) the transworldly formless concentrations which should be cultivated because they are the genuine primordial knowing. So as you progressively become familiar with luminous primordial knowing, [390] you successively traverse all the spiritual levels and paths and the super-knowledges<sup>65</sup> such as the [divine] eye<sup>66</sup> and so forth arise automatically like reflections arising spontaneously in clear water.

[Part Three: The Goal]

Once you have thus recognized the ground and have purified, through cultivating the path, the defilements of mind and its mental factors that have obscured your spiritual potential, and after experiencing the diamond-like absorption at the end of the series of ten spiritual levels, primordial knowing of buddhahood dawns. Since one's spiritual disposition is then free of every last defilement, this is known as the fundamental transformation of spiritual awakening (*byang chub tu gnas 'gyur*). At this time, the *dharmakāya* in its luminosity makes true cessation in which mind has ceased clearly evident by way of primordial knowing, self-awareness as it is individually realized. As the *Madhyamakāvātāra* [11.17] states:

Through the incineration of the dry kindling of all that  
Is knowable, the [ensuing] peace is the *dharmakāya* of the victors.

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<sup>65</sup> The six super-knowledges (*abhijñā*; Tib. *mngon shes*) are: 1) capacity for miraculous transformations, 2) divine eye (that sees the deaths, transmigrations and rebirths of all sentient beings), 3) divine ear (that hears all sounds in the universe), 4) clairvoyance (that knows all the thoughts of others), 5) remembering past lives (of oneself and others), and 6) ability to destroy imperfections (in oneself and others). These are discussed in AK 7.42ad. See La Vallée Poussin 1925, vol. 5, 97–100. In his *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel* vol. 1, 455.4, Klong chen pa includes the six as one of the twenty-one categories of undefiled qualities of the Buddha presented in *Abhisamayālamkāra* 8.2–6. For additional details on the six super-knowledges (as summarized in the above list), see 'Jigs med gling pa's *Yon tan mdzod 'grel* vol. 1, 341.3 and Yon tan rgya mtsho's *Nyi zla sgron me* vol. 1, 792.1.

<sup>66</sup> The term *spyān* (honorific for mig or eye) refers to the divine eye (Skt. *divyacakṣus* = Tib. *lha'i mig/lha'i spyān*), one of the six super-knowledges (see preceding note). See AK 7.54cd.

At this time there is neither arising nor cessation.

Due to mind's cessation that [suchness] is made evident by the *kāya*.<sup>67</sup>

This spiritual embodiment (*kāya*) [of suchness] is of three kinds: (1) the *dharmakāya*, luminous by nature, (2) *sambhōgakāya*, endowed with five definite attributes,<sup>68</sup> and (3) *nirmāṇakāya*, manifesting in

<sup>67</sup> See above n. 22 and edited text. This quotation and the following one (MAv 11.17 and 11.19) are here presented (with intervening pāda 11.18) along with Candrakīrti's auto-commentary as they are found in the critical edition MAv, 361f.:

*shes bya'i bud shing skam po ma lus pa /*  
*bsregs pas zhi ste rgyal rnams chos sku ste /*  
*de tshe skye ba med cing 'gag pa med /*  
*sems 'gags pas de sku yis mngon sum mdzad // [11.17]*

*ye shes kyi rang bzhin can gyi sku shes bya'i bud shing skam po ma lus pa*  
*bsregs pa las shes bya'i skye ba med pas skye ba med pa dang ldan par 'gyur*  
*ba gang yin pa 'di ni sangs rgyas rnams kyi chos kyi sku'o / 'di nyid kyi dbang*  
*du mdzad nas /*

*sangs rgyas rnams ni chos nyid lta /*  
*'dren pa rnams ni chos kyi sku /*  
*chos nyid shes bya'ang ma yin te /*  
*de ni shes par nus ma yin // [11.18]*

*zhes gsungs so / chos kyi sku 'di ni / de tshe skye ba med cing 'gag pa med pa*  
*ste / 'di nyid kyi dbang du mdzad nas 'jam dpal skye ba med cing 'gag pa med*  
*pa zhes bya ba 'di ni de bzhin gshegs pa'i tshig bla dvags so zhes gsungs so /*  
*de ltar na ye shes kyi yul de kho na nyid la rnam pa thams cad du de'i yul na*  
*sems dang sems las byung ba rnams mi 'jug pas sku kho nas mngon sum du*  
*mdzad par kun rdzob tu rnam par bzhag go / 'di ni*

*zhi sku dpag bsam shing ltar gsal gyur zhing /*  
*yid bzhin nor bu ji bzhin rnam mi rtog /*  
*'gro grol bar du 'jig rten 'byor slad rtag /*  
*'di ni spros dang bral la snang bar 'gyur // [11.19]*

*sku gang gis de kho na nyid 'di mngon sum du mdzad par bshad pa de ni zhi*  
*ba'i rang bzhin can du 'dod de / sems dang sems las byung ba dang bral ba'i*  
*phyir ro / zhi ba'i rang bzhin can yin yang sems can gyi don mdzad par spyod*  
*pa gsal bar byed pa ni /...*

<sup>68</sup> These five definites (*nges pa lnga*), also known as five exquisite qualities (*phun sum tshogs lnga*), specify the structure common to the varied manifestations of *sambhōgakāya*. They are: (1) setting (*gnas*), (2) duration (*dus*), (3) teacher (*ston pa*), (4) his teaching (*bstan pa*), and (5) his retinue (*'khor*). These became widespread in Tibetan exegesis on the three *kāyas* from at least as

order to train each trainee according to their aspirations. One's in-born qualities are thereby spontaneously present like a wish-granting jewel. So long as *samsāra* persists,<sup>[391]</sup> spontaneously occurring buddha-activity arises in order to fulfil the two aims of living beings.<sup>69</sup> This [buddha activity] manifests and is actualized in the spiritual embodiment of primordial knowing that is free from all discursive elaborations. As this text goes on to say [11.19]:

The embodiment of calm radiates like a wish-fulfilling tree.  
 And like a wish-granting jewel, it ever enriches the world,  
 Without premeditation, until beings are free.  
 This is manifest in a state free from elaboration.

Now, at the time of buddhahood, although mind and mental factors cease, since primordial knowing does not cease, it is not like space that is empty of matter. Rather, [this primordial knowing] works for the fulfillment of sentient beings by way of inconceivably great insight and compassion comprising (a) qualities of renunciation, that is, the freedom from all obscurations and (b) qualities of realization including the ten strengths,<sup>70</sup> four kinds of fearlessness,<sup>71</sup> four

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early as the fourteenth century. See Makransky 1997:106, Almogi 2009: 242–243 n. 19. In classical rNying ma works from Klong chen pa onward, the five are sometimes elaborated in great detail, as in *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel* vol. 2, 322.1 and *Yon tan mdzod 'grel* vol. 2, 805.4. Makransky suggests a possible source for the list of definite attributes of *sambhōgakāya* in Atiśa's eleventh century condensed commentary on the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, the *Prajñāpāramitāpiṇḍārthapradīpa*, P 5201, vol. 92, 106.5.4, which has a listing of four definites that includes all but duration.

<sup>69</sup> That is, the aims/values of oneself (*rang don*) and others (*gzhan don*).

<sup>70</sup> The ten strengths (*bala*=Tib. *stobs*) comprise: (1) knowing what is possible and what is not possible (with regard to karma), (2) knowing how actions bring about results (in minutest detail), (3) knowing the higher and lower capacities of humans (ranging from dull to sharp), (4) knowing the myriad elements (both the spiritual affinities of beings and the five elements that make up the world), (5) knowing the varying aspirations of beings (both for the teachings and for what is most profound) (6) knowing the paths that lead everywhere (i.e. the paths to evil destinies, the paths to higher destinies and the path to liberation), (7) knowing meditations and liberations (i.e. the four meditations and eight liberations), (8) knowing previous lives (the innumerable previous rebirths of oneself and others), (9) the knowledge of death and transmigration, (10) knowing that the defilements are exhausted (namely, all

correct discriminations,<sup>72</sup> ten powers<sup>73</sup> and so forth, and it is unconditioned and spontaneously present. It is the actualization of a capacity which exists as a quality which you have had primordially in your spiritual potential. As the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* [1.5] states:

Buddhahood is endowed with the two aims:

- a) It is unconditioned, spontaneously present,  
And is not realized through extraneous conditions.

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the obscurations together with their habitual tendencies). These ten are listed among the eighteen undefiled buddha-qualities in AK 7.28ab. See La Vallée Poussin, 1925, vol. 5, 66–67. In Klong chen pa's *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel* vol.1, 456.1, they are subsumed under one of twenty-one categories of undefiled buddha-qualities as they are presented in *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* 8.2–6. This and additional details given by Yon tan rgya mtsho in *Nyi zla sgron me* vol. 1, 494.4 are summarized in the above list.

<sup>71</sup> The four kinds of fearlessness (*mi 'jigs pa=vaiśāradhya*) are demonstrated in the following declarations of the Buddha which he did not fear any truthful person could deny: (1) Declaration of renunciation (his abandonment of all the cognitive and affective obscurations along with their habitual tendencies); (2) Declaration of realization (his perfect awakened realization of all that is to be known); (3) Declaration of the path that benefits other (*viz.* if one depends on it, there is no possibility that one will not gain deliverance); (4) Declaration of what hinders the path that benefits others (*viz.* if one indulges in those things that block the path, there is no possibility they will not become obstacles to the path). These are again included among the eighteen undefiled buddha-qualities in AK 7.32ac. See La Vallée Poussin 1925, vol. 5, 74–75. The presentation here is based on *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* 8.2–6 and its interpretations by Yon tan rgya mtsho in his *Yon tan mdzod* commentary, *Nyi zla sgron me* vol. 1, 495.4 and Klong chen pa's *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel* vol. 1, 456.3.

<sup>72</sup> These comprise the correct analytical knowledge encompassing (1) teachings (every one of the inconceivably numerous words of the teachings), (2) meanings (every one of the meanings based on these words), (3) vocabularies (every one of the languages and terminologies used to reveal the teachings to others); (4) confident eloquence (although he taught beginning from his first teaching until the end of the aeon and beyond, his intelligence remained inexhaustable). This presentation follows *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* 8.2–6; *Nyi zla sgron me* vol. 1, 497.1; *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel* vol. 1, 455.5.

<sup>73</sup> These are the power over: (1) life, (2) mind, (3) necessities, (4) karma, (5) rebirth, (6) devotion, (7) aspiration, (8) miraculous powers, (9) primordial knowing, (10) dharma. This presentation follows *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* 8.2–6; *Nyi zla sgron me* vol. 1, 493.1; *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel* vol. 1, 455.6.

b) It is imbued with knowing, caring and capability.

In short, the goal is what is known as spiritual awakening (*byang chub*) replete with <sup>[392]</sup> capabilities belonging to one's spiritual potential which is luminosity. For a more detailed exegesis of these matters, you should have a look at the treatise I composed called *Nges don Shing rta chen po*.<sup>74</sup>

[Colophon]

*Through any virtue that may accrue from concisely elucidating  
The distilled meaning of ground, path and goal,  
May all beings without exception realize the meaning of luminosity  
And be victors of the dharma, spontaneously [fulfilling] life's two aims.  
In the vast ocean-isle in the jeweled sea of intelligence [dwells]  
The serpent[-Buddha] adorned with precious hood of the three train-  
ings.  
Endowed with goodness and renowned for qualities of pure dharma,<sup>75</sup>  
May this elucidation of the teaching provide a lasting foundation.  
By clarifying, in accordance with my command of the subject matter,  
The distilled quintessence of scripture, reasoning and personal guid-  
ance,  
May all beings without exception traverse the path to liberation  
And may they spontaneously realize life's two glorious aims.  
While I have longed to meet with you,  
Time and place have granted few opportunities,  
But in future times, it is hoped we will be reunited in  
Pure Buddha-fields overflowing with the riches of inborn qualities.  
This reply to the question(s) you have asked  
Is my modest contribution to a subject difficult to understand. <sup>[393]</sup>  
But as far as I am able, I have put into words the subject matter  
Of which I am certain and offer it respectfully to you.*

These *Instructions on Investigating Mind and Primordial knowing* have been respectfully offered by this contemplative who teaches

<sup>74</sup> That is, the *rDzogs pa chen po Sems nyid ngal gso'i 'grel pa Shing rta chen po* (see *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel*).

<sup>75</sup> Klong chen pa here incorporates his disciples name *Chos grags bzang po* ["Good one renowned for dharma"] into the *kāvya*, a trope employed in many Indian and Tibetan verses of dedication.

the dharma, *Tshul khrims blo gros*, from [the hermitage at] Snow Capped Mountain (*Gangs ri thod dkar*) to the master<sup>76</sup> *Chos grags bzang po*. May all beings hereby gain mastery over the exquisite worldly and transworldly splendours in all times, places and situations, and as their bright qualities expand, may they effortlessly accede the highest citadel of supreme liberation.

*Sarvaṃ Mangalam! Kuśala, kuśala, kuśala!*

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<sup>76</sup> Klong chen pa here respectfully addresses his student (*slob ma*) as a master (*slob dpon*).

### 3. Text

#### 1. Notes on edited texts of *Sems dang ye shes kyi dris lan*

Three extant versions of the *Sems ye dris lan* have been consulted in preparing this critical edition:

- 1) *Sems dang ye shes kyi dris lan*. (SYa) A xylographic copy from blockprints contained in the A 'dzom chos sgar edition of the *Klong chen pa gSung thor bu* vol. 1 (of 2), 377–393.
- 2) *Sems dang ye shes kyi dris lan*. (SYd) A xylographic copy from blockprints contained in the Derge edition of the *Klong chen pa gSung thor bu* vol. 1 (of 2), 292–304.
- 3) *Sems dang ye shes brtag pa'i man ngag*. (SYk) A manuscript copy of *Sems ye dris lan* contained in the *bKa' ma shin tu rgyas pa* (NyKs) vol. 49 (of 120), 344–365.

The first two versions contain only minor discrepancies and would appear to derive from a common source. The third, a reproduction of the text contained in the manuscript copy of the NyKs, contains many scribal errors and has been of limited philological value in preparing the edited text.

In my translation and critical edition of the *Sems ye dris lan*, page references in subscript square parentheses <sub>11</sub> within the body of the translation and edited transliteration refer to paginations in the main primary source used. In the case of the *Sems dang ye shes kyi dris lan*, I use the A 'dzom chos sgar edition (SYa) as the main source with variant readings from the other editions (apart from the obvious scribal errors in SYk) included in the notes to the edited text. These notes also indicate variants of quotations found in Sanskrit originals or other Tibetan versions of the quoted passages. Klong chen pa's writings present a particular challenge in this regard as he apparently (and is credited by tradition with) quoting texts from memory. I have therefore attempted as far as possible to correct quotations on the basis of Sanskrit edition and/or canonical recensions of Tibetan translations wherever these are available. For ease of reference, I have included all other citation information for

quoted passages and textual-critical comments in the notes to the translation. Page numbers in square brackets that occur both in the edited text and translation correspond to numbers given on folia sides in SYa.

2. *Text of the Sems ye dris lan:*

*sems dang ye shes kyi dri lan zhes bya ba bzhugs /*

*sems dang ye shes brtag pa'i man ngag ces bya ba /*

sangs rgyas dang byang chub sems dpa' thams cad la phyag 'tshal lo /

gang thugs gnyis med chu gter dag pa'i dbyings /  
 sems dang sems byung rnyog pa rab zhi zhing /  
 mkhyen brtse'i gting mtha dpag gis mi lang ba'i /  
 rgyal ba rgya mtsho sras bcas spyi bos mchod //  
 chos tshul brgyad khri bzhi stong snying po'i don /  
 mdo dang rgyud sde'i dgongs pa ma nor bar /  
 sems dang ye shes rnam pa gnyis su 'dus /  
 de don brtags nas sgom pa'i rim ba bri //

de la yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas kyis chos kyi 'khor lo rim pa gsum du bskor ba yang / bka' dang po bden pa bzhi'i chos kyi rnam grangs las / gtso bor las dang po pa dang blo cung zad dman pa rnam 'jug pa [378] la dgongs te / spang gnyen gyi rim pas nyams su len pa'i thabs gsal bar gsungs shing /bka' bar pa mtshan nyid med pa'i chos kyi rnam grangs las / gtso bor cung zad sbyangs pa dang dbang po 'bring po rnams 'jug pa'i rim pa la dgongs te / ngo bo nyid med pa'i rnam grangs kyi gnyen po la bdag tu 'dzin pa rnams skye ba med par gsungs la / bka' tha ma nges pa don gyi chos kyi rnam grangs las / gtso bor yongs su rdzogs pa'i theg pa rnams dang dbang po rnon po rnams 'jug pa'i rim pas gshis la ji ltar gnas pa'i rnam grangs rgya cher gsung te / dang pos 'khor ba'i mtshan nyid spang bya las ldog pa'i lam bstan / bar pas spang bya las 'dzin pa'i rang bzhin ngo bo med pas shes sgrib spang bar bstan / tha mas yin lugs snying por bstan te / dbang po'i rim pa dang / 'jug tshul gyi go rim la brten nas gsungs pa rnams kyi don gsal rab phyed nas nyams su blang ba las / 'dir dang po dri ma dang bcas pas ma dag pa'i gnas skabs dang / lam gyis sbyangs pas dri ma rim pa bzhin

du dag pa ma dag pa dag pa'i gnas skabs dqang / dri ma thams cad  
 dang bral ba shin tu rnam dag gi gnas skabs rnam pa gsum la ltos  
 nas / gzhi dang / lam dang / 'bras bu'i rim pa rnam re zhig gsal bar  
 mdzad pa ni / bka' <sup>[379]</sup> tha ma'i rim pa bzhin brjod pa las / *rgyud  
 bla mar* /

ma dag ma dag dag pa dang /  
 shin tu rnam dag go rim bzhin /  
 sems can byang chub sems dpa' dang /  
 de bzhin gshegs pa zhes brjod do //

zhes gsungs te / sems can pa'i dus kyi 'od gsal ba'i ye shes rang  
 la yod pa ni gzhi'o / byang chub sems dpa'i dus kyi tshogs sbyor  
 mthong sgom bzhi ni lam mo / de bzhin gshegs pa'i dus kyi stobs  
 sogs kyi yon tan de mthar phyin pa ni 'bras bu'o / de yang sems can  
 pa'i sems nyid 'od gsal ba ni dri ma dang bcas pa'i de bzhin nyid  
 yin pas chos khams dge ba de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po sems  
 nyid 'od gsal ba zhes bya'o /

1) 'dir dang po gzhi'i don bshad pa ni / ye nas 'od gsal ba'i chos  
 nyid 'dus ma byas shing lhung gyis grub pa stong pa'i ngos nas  
 dngos po dang mtshan ma gang du'ang ma grub cing 'khor ba dang  
 mya ngan las 'das pa la sogs pa gang du'ang ma chad pas spros pa'i  
 mtha' thams cad dang bral ba nam mkha' lta bu / gsal ba'i ngos nas  
 sku dang ye shes kyi rang bzhin ye ldan du lhung gyis sgrub cing  
 'od gsal ba nyi zla'i dkyil 'khor lta bu / de gnyis ka'ang 'du 'bral  
 med pa'i chos nyid du ye nas gnas pa ni / *snying po rab tu bstan  
 pa'i mdo las* <sup>[380]</sup> /

thog ma med pa'i dus kyi dbyings<sup>77</sup> /  
 chos rnam kun gyi gnas yin te /  
 de yod pas na 'gro ba kun /  
 mya ngan 'das pa<sup>78</sup> thob pa yin //

zhes dang / *mdo sde rgyan las* /

snga ma phyi ma<sup>79</sup> khyad med kyang /

<sup>77</sup> RGVV *kham*s

<sup>78</sup> RGVV *pa'ang*

<sup>79</sup> *Grub mtha' mdzod has mar*

de bzhin nyid ni dag gyur ba<sup>80</sup> //

zhes dang /

ji ltar snga bzhin phyis de bzhin /  
'gyur ba med pa'i chos nyid do<sup>81</sup> //

ces pa dang / *rin po che rgya mtsho'i rgyud las /*

ye nas 'od gsal bde gshegs snying po ni /  
nor bu bzhin du yon tan ma lus rdzogs /  
dri med mkha' dang nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor bzhin //  
sku dang ye shes lhun gyis grub pa nyid //

ces pa la sogs pa'o /

de ltar 'od gsal ba'i ye shes ni gdod ma'i gzhir ltar pas gtan la  
dbab pa'o / ding sang ni dge ba'i bshes gnyen phal dang / sgom chen  
kun mthun par / stong rkyang ci yang med pa la gzhi byed pa ni  
snying po'i don gyi dgongs pa dang mi mthun te / ci'ang med pa'i  
gzhi nyams su blangs pas 'bras bu sangs rgyas yon tan thams cad  
dang ldan pa mi 'byung ste / gzhi lam 'bras bu gsum 'jol ba'i phyir  
ro / sangs rgyas de ni 'dus ma byas shing lhun gyis grub pa'i yon  
tan can bral ba'i 'bras bu mngon du gyur pa zhig yin pa'i phyir ro /  
des na srid rtse'i lta ba dang de dag mthun par snang ngo / 'dir ni  
'dus ma byas shing lhun gyis grub pa'i 'od gsal ba nyid gzhir 'dod  
pa<sup>[381]</sup> yin no / gzhi de lta bu'i ngang las yin lugs ngo ma shes pas  
ma rig par gyur te / de las gzung 'dzin du 'khrul nas khams gsum  
du 'khor bar *sgyu 'phrul drva ba'i rgyud las /*

e ma ho bde gshegs snying po las /  
rang gi rnam rtog las kyis sprul<sup>82</sup> /

zhes so /

de'ang gnas lugs ma shes pa rtsa ba'i ma rig pa ste / dang po'i  
'khrul pa bskyed pa'i gzhi'am sa bon nam rten gzhir gyur pa'i

<sup>80</sup> MSA IX.22 D has first line but not second. See translation and annotation.

<sup>81</sup> SYadk 'gyur ba med pa de bzhin nyid : RGVt 'gyur ba med pa'i chos nyid do

<sup>82</sup> *Theg mchog mdzod* has 'khrul : *Guhyagarbha* 2.15 sprul

ngang las / gnyis su 'dzin pa'i kun rtog langgs pa ni kun tu brtags  
 pa'i ma rig pa ste / de gnyis las sems can tha ma ngang song gsum  
 dang / 'bring mi dang / mchog lha rnam so so'i snang ba mi 'dra  
 ba tha dad du shar nas kun gzhi la bag chags sna tshogs su bzhag  
 pa'i nus pas 'khor ba mtho dman du zo chu'i khyud mo bzhin rang  
 snang bde sdug so sor spyod pa ni / *sdud pa las* /

sems can tha ma 'bring dang mchog gyur ji snyed pa /  
 de kun ma rig las byung bde bar gshegs pas gsungs //

zhes so / de ltar khams gsum so sor brgyud kyang bde bar  
 gshegs pa'i snying po ni ngan du ma song bar sems can thams  
 cad la khyab byed du gnas te / *dbral phreng gi mdo las* /

bde gshegs snying pos 'gro kun yongs la khyab //

ces dang / *rgyud bla ma las* /

rdzogs sangs sku ni 'phro phyir dang //  
 de bzhin nyid <sup>[382]</sup> dbyer med phyir dang //  
 rigs yod phyir na lus can kun //  
 rtag tu sangs rgyas snying po can //

zhes gsungs pa bzhin no /

de'ang sems can pa'i dus na bde bar gshegs pa'i snying po de /  
 sems kyis bsgribs te dri ma dang bcas par gnas pa ni / *sgyu 'phrul  
 drva ba las* /

sa yi dkyil na yod pa'i chu //  
 rtag tu rang bzhin dri ma med //  
 de bzhin sems kyi sgrib pa'i khams //  
 'gro ba kun la rang bzhin gnas //

zhes pa dang / *rgyud bla ma las* /

ji ltar mi dbul khyim nang sa 'og na /  
 mi bzad pa <sup>83</sup> yi gter ni yod gyur la /  
 mi des de <sup>84</sup> ma shes shing <sup>85</sup> gter de yang /  
 de la nga 'dir yod ces mi smra ltar //

<sup>83</sup> SYadk *sa* : RGVt *pa*

<sup>84</sup> SYadk *ngo* : RGVt *de*

<sup>85</sup> SYadk, RGVt *shing* : D (*śāstra*) *te*

de bzhin yid kyi nang chud rin chen gter /  
 dri med gzhag dang bsal<sup>86</sup> med chos nyid kyang /  
 ma rtogs pas na dbul ba'i sdug bsngal ni<sup>87</sup> /  
 rnam mang<sup>88</sup> kun tu skye rgu 'dis myong ngo //

zhes pa ltar ngo /

de yang bde bar gshegs pa'i snying po ni nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor lta  
 bu yin la / kun gzhi bag chags dang bcas pa khams gsum pa'i rgyud  
 kyis bsdu pa'i sems sems byung thams cad sprin dang 'dra ba yin  
 no / mkhas par rlom pa'i blun po kha cig / sems sems byung sgrib  
 par mi 'thad de sems bskyed pa'i phyir dang / sems nyid 'od gsal ba  
 khams yin pa'i phyir ro / des na sems [383] rtog med byang chub kyi  
 yan lag ting nge 'dzin du 'dod do zer ba ni mdo rgyud kyi dgongs pa  
 ma long pa'i rnam 'gyur yin te sems bskyed pa'ang 'khor ba'i gnas  
 skabs na blang dor du byed pa'i rtog pa min nam / yin na ni mthar  
 thug 'gag dgos la / sems nyid la zer na ni bskyed bya bskyed byed  
 gnyis med pas mi 'grub pa'i phyir 'os pa ma yin no / sems dang  
 sems nyid so sor phyogs ma byed par snang ste / sems ni khams  
 gsum pa'i rgyud kyi rtog pa dang dpyod pa cha dang bcas pas sgro  
 btags 'khrul pa'i rnam pa 'dzin byed kun gzhi tshogs brgyad dang  
 bcas pa yin te / *dbu ma bden gnyis las* /

sems dang sems byung khams gsum pa'i /  
 sgro btags rnam pa can rtog yin //

zhes so / sems nyid ni bde bar gshegs pa'i snying po 'od gsal ba'i  
 ye shes te / de'ang sems 'gags shing ma mchis pa'i tshe sems nyid  
 'od gsal ba'i ye shes so so rang gi rig pa la snang ba yin no / *yum  
 brgyad stong pa las* /

sems de ni<sup>89</sup> sems ma mchis pa<sup>90</sup> te sems kyi rang bzhin 'od gsal ba  
 lags so<sup>91</sup> /

<sup>86</sup> SYadk *bsal dang bzhag* : RGVt *gzhag dang bsal*

<sup>87</sup> SYadk *nyid* : RGVt *ni*

<sup>88</sup> SYadk *pa* : RGVt *mang*

<sup>89</sup> SYadk *la* : D *de ni* (corroborated by Skt. see note in translation)

<sup>90</sup> SYadk *om. pa*

<sup>91</sup> SYadk *ba'o* : D *ba lags so*

zhes gsungs pa yin no // sangs rgyas kyi sa na / sems chen po yod  
do zhes na / de ni ye shes chen po la zer te / rgyud las nyong mongs  
pa chen po nyid ye shes su bshad pa dang rnam pa mthun no / mdo  
<sup>[384]</sup> bsdu na khams gsum pa'i sems sems byung cha dang bcas pa  
thog ma med pa nas brgyud pa'i bag chags can sgrub pa gnyis kyi  
ngo bo 'dzin cing / bskyed par brten<sup>92</sup> pas spang bya yin zhing dgag  
dgos par bshad pa yin no / de yang sems nyid 'od gsal ba'i nang la  
brten pa med pa'i tshul gyis da ltar brten pa ni nam mkha' la sprin  
lding ba ltar 'dod de / rgyud bla ma las:

sa ni chu la chu rlung la /  
rlung ni mkha' la rab tu gnas /  
mkha' ni rlung dang chu dag dang /  
sa yi khams la gnas ma<sup>93</sup> yin //  
de bzhin<sup>94</sup> phung po khams dbang rnam /  
las dang nyon mongs dag la gnas<sup>95</sup> /  
las dang nyon mongs tshul bzhin min /  
yid la byed pa rtag tu gnas //<sup>96</sup>  
tshul bzhin ma yin yid byed ni /  
sems kyi dag pa la rab gnas /  
sems kyi rang bzhin chos rnam ni /  
thams cad la yang gnas pa med<sup>97</sup> //

zhes so / rnam 'grel las /

sems 'di rang bzhin 'od gsal te /<sup>98</sup>  
dri ma rnam ni glo bur ba //

zhes pa'ang tshul de dang mthun te / sems kyi rang bzhin / sems  
kyi chos nyid / sems nyid / dbying rang bzhin kyi dag pa / don  
dam pa'i gnas lugs rnam don gcig yin pa'i phyir ro / sems de yang

<sup>92</sup> SYa *brten* : SYd, SYk *bstan*

<sup>93</sup> SYadk *pa* : RGVt *ma*

<sup>94</sup> SYadk *ni* : RGVt *bzhin*

<sup>95</sup> SYadk *brten* : RGVt *gnas*

<sup>96</sup> line add. as per RGVt 1.56d

<sup>97</sup> SYadk *ma yin* : RGVt *pa med*

<sup>98</sup> SYadk *sems kyi rang bzhin 'od gsal ba* / : D *sems 'di rang bzhin 'od gsal te* / Correction corroborated by Skt. *prabhāsvaram idaṃ cittaṃ prakṛtyā-gantavo malāḥ* // See note to translation for sources.

khams gsum gyi dbye bas rtog med rtse gcig pa dang / gsal ba tsam dang / rtog bcas kyis gnas skabs gsum mo / <sup>[385]</sup> de'ang sems la brten cing bag chags kyis 'khrul par snang ba 'khor ba'i chos 'di dag mi bden pa / bslu ba / byis pa 'drid pa / gsog / gsob / ya ma brla / snying po med pa / lbu ba rdos pa / chu shing / sgyu ma / mig yor la sogs pa dpe brgyad kyis bstan te / ra ri / 'al 'ol / med bzhin snang ba / snang dus nyid nas rang bzhin med pa / blos dpyod mi bzod pa / kun rdzob 'khrul pa'i ngor snang tsam dha du ra zos pa'i snang ba dang 'dra bar / bar skabs su gzung 'dzin la bden par zhen pa'i mthus snang bar shes par bya'o / 'od gsal ba'i snying po ni / don dam pa'i bden pa / rtag pa / brtan pa / 'pho 'gyur med pa / rab tu zhi ba / mi bslu ba / thog ma med pa nas tha ma'i bar gzhi ji bzhin pa ye shes kyis ngo bo spros pa'i mtha' thams cad dang bral zhing / sems dang sems las byung ba'i chos thams cad kyis dri mas ma gos mi gos gos pa med pa'i rang bzhin mnyam pa nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor sgrub pa med pa lta bur shes par bya'o /

2) don gnyis pa lam nyams su blang ba ni / de ltar sangs rgyas kyis snying po rang la yod par rtogs nas de'ang ngang du bsgom pa ste / de'ang pha rol tu phyin pa'i lugs kyis sems bskyed nas bsgoms la / sngags kyis de'i steng du <sup>[386]</sup> dbang gis smin par byas te gdams pas grol bar byed pa'o / 'dir ngo bo gcig tu nyams su len tshul mdo dang mthun te / de yang stan bde ba la 'dug nas skyabs su 'gro ba dang sems bskyed de / gang la mos pa'i lhar skad cig gis gsal btap pa'i rjes la / rnam<sup>99</sup> snang gi chos bdun dang ldan pas gang la'ang mi rtog cing ci la'ang mi 'dzin yul snang thog tu blos ma bzung ba'i rig pa sal le sing nge wa le ba'i nang la mnyam par bzhag pa ni / 'od gsal ba'i don la 'jog pa yin te / 'phags pa klu sgrub kyis dbu ma skye med rin po che'i mdzod las /

gar yang ma rtog cir yang ma 'dzin cig /  
bcas bcas ma byed rang bzhin lhug par zhog /  
ma bcas pa de skye med rin chen mdzod /  
dus gsum rgyal ba kun gyi gshegs shul lags //

zhes dang / *he ru ka gal po* las /

bsam du med de sems nyid nam mkha' che /

<sup>99</sup> SYa, SYd *rnam* : SYk *rnams*

sems nyid nam mkha' bsam pa kun dang bral /  
 bsam du med pa'i sems nyid nam mkha' ni /  
 nam mkhar<sup>100</sup> mi dmigs pa yang dmigs su med //

ces so /

de yang de'i tshe sems dang sems byung thams cad 'gags nas  
 rnam par mi rtog pa'i ye shes so so rang rig pa'i ngo bor gnas pa  
 ste / *lung las* /

smra bsam brjod med shes rab<sup>[387]</sup> pha rol phyin /  
 ma skyes mi 'gags nam mkha'i ngo bo nyid /  
 so so rang rig ye shes spyod yul ba /  
 dus gsum rgyal ba'i yum la phyag 'tshal lo //<sup>101</sup>

zhes so /

de'ang don dam pa'i bden pa ni sems blo'i yul las 'das pa zhes  
 pa'ang tshul de la zer gyi / sems 'gags shing blo las 'das pa'i dus na  
 ye shes rang la gnas pa de ni chos nyid de sprin dang bral bas nyi  
 ma gsal ba bzhin no / de ltar mnyam par 'jog pa la dangs snyigs  
 phyed pa'i bog 'byin nam mkha' sprin med pa'i tshe nyi ma la rg-  
 yab phyogs par 'dug ste / mig nam mkha'i dkyil lam ngos der bltas  
 pas shes pa dvangs la rtog med 'byung ngo / de'i tshe sems 'gags  
 pas phyi rol snang yul la dngos po ngos bzung du 'dzin pa dang /  
 nang sems dngos po ngos bzung du 'dzin pa gnyis dmigs pa med  
 pas dngos po dang dngos po med pa la mi rtog pa na / de gnyis las  
 gzhan du 'dzin pa'i phung po gsum pa dmigs pa med pa zhi ba ste /  
*spyod 'jug las* /

gang tshe dngos dang dngos med dag /  
 blo yi mdun na mi gnas pa /  
 de tshe rnam pa gzhan med pas /  
 dmigs pa med pa rab tu zhi //

zhes pa dang / *mtshan brjod las* /

so so rang rig mi g.yo ba //<sup>102</sup>

<sup>100</sup> SYa, SYd *mkha'* : SYk *mkhar*

<sup>101</sup> The passage is often quoted by Klong chen pa. See note to translation.

<sup>102</sup> Skt. *pratyātmavedyo hy acalaḥ* ... See translation n. 60.

zhes pa dang / *do ha las* /

chu dang mar <sup>[388]</sup> me rang gsal gcig pur zhog //

ces dang / *tog rtse pas* /

sems kyis bsgom pa bsgom ma yin /  
mi sgom pa'ang sgom pa min /  
sgom dang mi sgom las 'das pa /  
yid la med do phyag rgya che //

zhes gsungs pa'i don te / de'i tshe sems 'gags pa'i don rig pa ye shes  
kyi sku mngon du gyur pa ste /

sems 'gags pas <sup>103</sup> de sku yis mngon sum mdzad <sup>104</sup> /

ces pa'i zur gcig yin no / de yang ting nge 'dzin yang dag pa zhig  
yin na / kun gzhi dang kun gzhi'i rnam shes kyi sems dang / yid  
shes dang / sgo lnga'i rnam par shes pa thams cad dang bral ba'i rig  
pa'i ngang las mi g.yo ba 'byung ste / *dkon mchog brtegs pa'i gsang  
ba bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i le'u las* /

sems dang yid dang rnam par shes pa thams cad dang bral la / ting nge  
'dzin gyi gnas kyang mi 'dor ba ste //

zhes gsung pa yin no / de ltar bsgoms pas nyams bde ba / gsal ba /  
mi rtog pa gsum ngang gyis 'byung zhing gzhan yang tshad med  
de / *mdo gdams ngag 'bog pa'i rgyal po las* /

bsam du med pa'i chos nyid la /  
bsam du med pa'i blo gzhag na /  
phyogs ris med pa'i nyams myong skye //

zhes so /

de'ang ting nge 'dzin 'di nyid khams gsum pa'i sems dang bral

<sup>103</sup> SYadk 'gags pa : P n. 5262 : 'gags pa; D, P n.5261 'gag pas. See n. 62 and n. 104 for text critical comments on variant readings.

<sup>104</sup> This oft-quoted line is generally given as *sems 'gag pa de sku yis mngon sum mdzad* / in Klong chen pa's works. See *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel*, *Sems ye dris lan*, *Grub mtha' mdzod*, *Chos dbyings mdzod*, *Theg mchog mdzod*, *Zab don snying po* with occasional variants, e.g. *Sems nyid ngal gso 'grel* vol 1, 132: *sku yi* though not *Sems nyid ngal gso* vol. 2, 314: *sku yis*; *Grub mtha' mdzod*, 799: *dgag pa* instead of 'gag pa, though not *Grub mtha' mdzod* 992, 993: 'gag pa.

ba'i tshul ni / <sup>[389]</sup>gzugs med na rtog<sup>105</sup> med rtse gcig pa snang yul med pa yin la / 'di ni rnam rtog med kyang yul snang ba mi 'gog pa dang / rtse gcig pa'i 'dzin pa med pa'o / gzugs kyi sems ni yul snang ba yin yang rtog dpyod kyi cha dang bcas pa dang / rtog dpyod med cing bsam gtan gyi dga' bas brgyan kyang 'dzin pa las ma 'das pa ste / mtha' ma chod pas blo'i yul las ma 'das pa dang 'dod pa'i sems ni gtso bor rtog dpyod dang bcas pa ste / 'dir ni mi rtog pa'i ye shes yin pa dang / gzhan yang khams gsum so so'i ting nge 'dzin de ni sems kyi snang yul bag chags dang bcas pas / gnas lugs kyi rang bzhin ma shes bzhin du gnas la / 'dir ni rang bzhin 'od gsal ba'i gzhi'i ngo bo rtogs pa dang sems bskyed pas zin pa dang / thabs dang shes rab zung du 'brel ba la sogs pa'i khyad par du ma dang bcas pa'o / de yang bsam gtan bzhi dang gzugs med pa bzhi yang gnyis te / 'dzin pa 'khor ba'i sems kyis bsdu pa ni 'dir 'gag dgos la / 'jig rten las 'das pa'i bsam gtan gzugs med ni yang dag pa'i ye shes yin pa'i phyir blang bar bya ba yin no / de ltar na 'od gsal ba'i ye shes rim gyis goms pa <sup>[390]</sup>las / sa dang lam thams cad gong nas gong du bgrod cing / spyang dang mngon par shes pa la sogs pa rang chas su yod pa rnams 'char ba ni / chu dvangs pa las gzugs brnyan ngang gis 'char ba bzhin no /

3) don gsum pa 'bras bu ni / de ltar gzhi shes nas lam bsgoms pas khams la sgrib pa'i sems sems byung gi dri ma cha dang bcas pa dag nas / sa bcu rgyun gyi tha mar rdo rje lta bu'i ting nge 'dzin gyi rjes la sangs rgyas kyi ye shes 'char ba ni khams nyid dri ma mtha' dag dang bral bas byang chub tu gnas 'gyur ba zhes bya'o / de'i tshe chos kyi sku 'od gsal ba so so rang gi rig pa'i ye shes kyis<sup>106</sup> sems 'gag pa'i 'gog pa dam pa mngon du mdzad do / 'jug pa las:

shes bya'i bud shing skom po ma lus pa /  
 bsregs<sup>107</sup> pas zhi ste<sup>108</sup> rgyal rnams chos sku ste /  
 de tshe skye ba med cing 'gag pa med /  
 sems 'gags pas<sup>109</sup> de sku yis mngon sum mdzad // ces so /

<sup>105</sup> SYa, SYk *rtogs* : SYk *rtog*

<sup>106</sup> SYa *kyi* : SYd, SYk *kyis*

<sup>107</sup> SYadk *bsreg* : MAV *bsregs*

<sup>108</sup> SYadk *de* : MAV *ste*

<sup>109</sup> SYadk 'gag : MAV 'gags

sku de yang rnam pa gsum ste / chos kyi sku rang bzhin gyis 'od  
 gsal ba dang / long spyod rdzogs pa'i sku nges pa lnga ldan dang /  
 sprul pa'i sku gdul bya so so'i mos pa ltar gang la gang 'dul du  
 snang ba ste / yid bzhin gyi nor bu ltar yon tan lhun gyis grub pa /  
 'khor ba ji srid par 'gro<sup>[391]</sup> ba'i don gnyis lhun gyis grub pa'i phrin  
 las 'byung ba 'di ni spros pa thams cad dang bral ba'i ye shes kyi  
 sku la snang zhing mngon du mdzad pa ni / *de nyid las /*

zhi sku dpag bsam shing ltar gsal gyur cing /  
 yid bzhin nor bu ji bzhin rnam mi rtog /  
 'gro grol bar du 'jig rten 'byor slad rtog /  
 'di ni spros dang bral la snang ba 'gyur<sup>110</sup> //

zhes so /

de'ang sangs rgyas pa'i tshe sems dang sems byung 'gags ky-  
 ang / ye shes mi 'gag pas bems stong nam mkha' lta bu ma yin te /  
 spangs pa'i yon tan sgrib pa thams cad dang bral zhing / rtogs pa'i  
 yon tan stobs bcu dang / mi 'jigs pa bzhi dang / so so yang dag pa'i  
 rig pa bzhi dang / dbang bcu la sogs pa bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i  
 mkhyen rab dang thugs rjes sems can gyi don mdzad cing / 'dus ma  
 byas shing lhun gyis grub pa ni khams la yon tan ye ldan du yod  
 pa'i nus pa mngon du gyur pa ste / *rgyud bla ma las /*

'dus ma byas shing lhun gyis grub /  
 gzhan gyi rkyen gyis rtogs min pa<sup>111</sup> /  
 mkhyen dang brtse dang nus par<sup>112</sup> ldan /  
 don gnyis ldan pa'i sangs rgyas nyid //

ces so / mdor na 'od gsal ba'i khams kyi nus pa rdzogs<sup>[392]</sup> pa'i  
 byang chub ces bya ba ni 'bras bu'o / 'di dag gi rnam par bzhag pa  
 rgyas par ni / kho bos byas pa'i bstan bcos nges don shing rta chen  
 por blta bar bya'o //

de ltar gzhi lam 'bras bu'i don bsdus pa /  
 cung zad gsal bar byas pa'i dge ba des /  
 ma lus 'gro kun 'od gsal don rtogs nas /  
 don gnyis lhun grub chos kyi rgyal por shog //

<sup>110</sup> SYadk *yin* : MAV 'gyur

<sup>111</sup> SYadk *dang* : RGVt pa

<sup>112</sup> SYadk *pa* : RGVt par

blo gros chu gter yangs pa'i mtsho gling na /  
 bslab gsum klu dbang rin chen gdeng kas mdzes /  
 chos dkar yon tan grags pa bzang po can /  
 bstan pa'i gsal byed yun du gnas gyur cig //  
 lung rig man ngag snying po'i bcud bsdu te /  
 ji ltar sbobs bzhin gsal bar byas pa des /  
 ma lus 'gro kun thar pa'i lam bgrod de /  
 dpal ldan don gnyis lhun gyis grub par shog //  
 dam pa khyed dang mjal bar spro na yang /  
 dus dang gnas kyis cung zad skal par gyur /  
 phyi dus yon tan 'byor pas yongs gang ba'i /  
 dag pa'i zhing du lhan cig mjal bar smon //  
 dam pa khyed kyis dris pa'i lan 'di ni /  
 rtogs dka'i gnas te 'on kyang cha shas tsam /  
 ji ltar nus shing <sup>[393]</sup> kho bos nges pa'i gnas /  
 yi ger bkod nas phyag tu gus pas 'bul //

*sems dang ye shes brtag pa'i man ngag ces bya ba / gangs ri thod*  
*dkar nas chos smra ba'i bsam gtan pa tshul khrims blo gros kyis /*  
*slob dpon chos grags bzang po'i phyag tu phul ba phyogs dus gnas*  
*skabs thams cad du 'jig rten dang 'jig rten las 'das pa'i dpal phun*  
*sum tshogs par mnga' dbang 'byor zhing / 'gro ba thams cad kyis*  
*dkar po rnam par 'phel bas thar pa chen po'i grong khyer mchog tu*  
*'bad pa med par phyin par gyur cig //*

sarvam mangalam / dge'o / dge'o / dge'o //

## Abbreviations

- add. *addidit* = added  
 D Derge edition of bsTan 'gyur. *The Tibetan Tripitaka*. Taipei: SMC Publishing 1991.  
 om. *omittit* or *omisit* = omits or omitted.  
 P Peking edition of bsTan 'gyur. *The Tibetan Tripitaka*. Tokyo/Kyoto: Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute 1957.

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