A Direct Path to the Buddha Within

Gö Lotsawa’s Maha-mudrā Interpretation of the Ratnagotra-vibha-غا

Klaus-Dieter Mathes
Studies in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism

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Klaus-Dieter Mathes
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Abbreviations

BHSD  Edgerton: *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, Dictionary*

BHSG  Edgerton: *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, Grammar*

DRSM  Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal: *Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstân bcos kyi 'grel bshad de kho na nyid rab tu gsal ba'i me long*

J     Johnston (with reference to his *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā* edition)

LC    Lokesh Chandra: *Tibetan-Sanskrit Dictionary*

MVY   *Mahāvyutpatti*

MW    Monier Williams: *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*

NGMPP Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project

Skt.  Sanskrit

Tib.  Tibetan

For the abbreviations of Sanskrit sūtras and śāstras, see the bibliography.
This mind, O monks, is luminous!
But it is defiled by adventitious defilements.
—The Buddha: *Aṅguttara Nikāya* I.5, 9

Like cloth purified by fire,
[That is,] when one puts [a cloth]
Sullied with various stains over a fire,
The stains are burnt
But not the cloth,
Similarly, with the luminous mind,
Sullied with stains arisen from desire,
The stains are burnt by wisdom
But not the luminous [mind].
Those sūtras taught by the victorious ones
In order to reveal emptiness—
All eliminate defilements
But do not diminish the [buddha] element.
—Nāgarjuna: *Dharmadhātustotra*, stanzas 20–22

Numerous passages in the sūtras and śāstras distinguish the adventitious stains of a suffering mind from its coexisting natural purity, which is at times called *luminosity, buddha nature, or dharmadhātu*. This natural purity is a kind of true nature of mind endowed with innumerable buddha qualities since beginningless time, even during our wildest excesses of attachment or hatred. Put another way, buddha nature (Skt. *tathāgatagarbhā*) is empty of adventitious stains but not of its own qualities. If we take the above-quoted passage from the *Dharmadhātustotra* seriously (and all Mahāyāna exegetes accept that this *stotra* was composed by Nāgarjuna), we have to restrict the validity of Madhyamaka logic to the adventitious defilements—anything else cannot be the object of a conceptualizing mind. Some Tibetan interpreters have distinguished two
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to the Buddha within modes of emptiness: being “empty of an own-being” (Tib. rang stong), and being “empty of other” (Tib. gzhan stong). The former rangtong view is that buddha nature means simply that the mind, like all phenomena, lacks an own-being or self. The latter zhentong view is that buddha nature is an ultimate nature of mind that is endowed with all buddha qualities and that is empty only of adventitious defilements (the “other”), which do not reflect its true nature.

The old Tibetan discussion of whether the teachings of a luminous mind or buddha nature in the so-called third turning of the wheel of Dharma (dharmacakra), such as in the passage above, should be taken more literally or whether the third dharmacakra should be interpreted via the rangtong analysis became a contemporary issue when my Tibetan teachers Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtsho and Thrangu Rinpoche began to propagate the controversial zhentong interpretation of the Rgyud bla ma (the Uttaratantra or Ratnagotravibhāga) in the 1970s and 80s. Up until then the Tibetan reception of the Ratnagotravibhāga had mainly been known of in the West through David Seyfort Ruegg’s publications, which were to some extent influenced by the prevailing Gelug (Dge lugs) hermeneutics. The Gelug school follows Candrakirti’s (seventh-century) lead in taking the teaching in the second dharmacakra of the lack of an independent nature or own-being as the underlying intention of any positive statement about the ultimate.

Against this background, it would of course be useful to investigate how other Tibetan schools have interpreted the theory of buddha nature, and when I was appointed director of the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project in Kathmandu in October 1993, I had great hopes of collecting new material for a future research project on this subject. But it was only when I went through the Tibetan texts kept at Chetsang Rinpoche’s library in Dehra Dun in March 1997 that I finally discovered something interesting, namely Gō Lotsawa Zhōnu Pal’s (Gos Lo tsā ba Gzohn nu dpal) (1392–1481) Ratnagotravibhāgavākhya commentary, which is said to belong to the meditation tradition (Tib. sgom lugs) of the Maitreya works. A first reading revealed two important points: Zhōnu Pal was not at all concerned with propagating zhentong (at least not the Jonangpa (Jo nang pa) variety), but he did see in the Ratnagotravibhāga and the other Maitreya works doctrinal support for his mahāmudrā tradition.

Having realized the importance of this work, I decided to edit it, and on the basis of an old blockprint of the same text, I was able to publish a critical edition of Zhōnu Pal’s Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma’i bstan bcos kyi ’grel bshad de kho na nyid rab tu gsal bai’i me long [“A Commentary on the Treatise Mahāyānottaratantrasāstra (i.e., Ratnagotravibhāga)—The Mirror Showing
Reality Very Clearly”) at the beginning of 2003. This commentary is the main source for the present study, which was accepted as my habilitation thesis by the University of Hamburg in April 2004.

It is my pleasure to acknowledge the various forms of help I have received from others in preparing this work. First of all, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Venerable Thrangu Rinpoche, who assisted me in my research continuously, whether in Kathmandu, Sarnath, or the West, by patiently going through long lists of questions and discussing the subtle points of my research on buddha nature, emptiness, and mahāmudrā. Similar thanks go to Khenpo Lobsang from the Vajra Vidya Institute in Sarnath, who helped me to understand difficult passages in the Tibetan and who, thanks to his having memorized many treatises, was able to identify some of the unattributed quotations. Even though I was able to meet the Venerable Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche only once—in the summer of 2002 in Hamburg—I gratefully recall his clear and precise explanations of certain aspects of tantric zhentong, sūtra-mahāmudrā, and essence mahāmudrā at an important stage in my writing.

I also express my gratitude to professors Lambert Schmithausen and David Jackson, who carefully read important parts of my study and offered most welcome solutions to a number of difficult points. Having only joined the Indian and Tibetan Department in Hamburg in the summer of 2001, I nevertheless feel sufficiently qualified to praise the collegial, “bodhisattva-like” atmosphere in which scholarly problems are addressed. This is true in particular of Dr. Diwakar Acharya, who provided repeated assistance in deciphering all the nearly unreadable aksaras of the Ratnagotravibhāga-vyākhyā manuscripts and in working with the numerous Laṅkāvatārasūtra manuscripts from Nepal.

Many thanks also to Philip Pierce (Nepal Research Centre, Kathmandu) and David Kittelstrom (Wisdom Publications) for carefully reading through the entire manuscript and improving my English. Furthermore, I profited from the very fruitful exchanges I had during regular meetings with Kazuo Kano (Kyoto, currently University of Hamburg), whose doctoral thesis on Ngog Loden Sherab’s (Rngog Blo ldan shes rab) Ratnagotravibhāga commentary (the Theg chen rgyud bla’i don bsdis pa) I have been supervising for the past two years.

Finally I would like to thank the German Research Council (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) for enabling me to conduct the present study in the first place by financially supporting me for three years with a scholarship.
Introduction

General Remarks

The doctrine of “buddha nature” (Tib. de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po), or the teaching that all sentient beings are already buddhas or have the ability to attain buddhahood (depending on which interpretation you prefer), became an important issue in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Tibet. It was not only much discussed among masters, such as Dölpopa Sherab Gyaltsen (Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan) (1292–1361), who were intimately involved in the practice of the Kalacakratantra, but also came to form an important doctrinal foundation for the dzogchens (rdzogs chen) teachings of Longchen Rabjampa (Klong chen rab 'byams pa) (1308–63) and the mahāmudrā instructions of the Kagyüpas (Bka' brgyud pa). Thus, Rangjung Dorjé (Rang byung rdo rje) (1284–1339) equated buddha nature with the central mahāmudrā term natural mind (Tib. tha mal gyi shes pa), and Gö Lotsāwa Zhönu Pal ('Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal) (1392–1481) composed an extensive commentary of the standard Indian work on buddha nature, the Ratnagotravibhāga, from within the mahāmudrā tradition of Maitreya (ca. 1007–ca. 1085) and Gampopa (Sgam po pa) (1079–1153). Zhönu Pal and his mahāmudrā interpretation of the Ratnagotravibhāga are the main subject of the present study.

One of the main goals of Zhönu Pal’s Ratnagotravibhāga commentary is to show that the Kagyü path of mahāmudrā is already taught in the Maitreya works and the Lankāvatārasūtra. This approach involves resting your mind in a nonconceptual experience of luminosity or the dharmadhatu (the expanse or nature of all phenomena) with the help of special “pith instructions” (Tib. man ngag) on how to become mentally disengaged. A path of directly realizing buddha nature is thus distinguished from a Madhyamaka path of logical inference and it is with this in mind that Zhönu Pal’s commentary can be called a “direct path to the buddha within.”

The Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyānottaratantra belongs, if we follow the Tibetan tradition, to the “five treatises of Maitreya,” though its oldest layers had probably already been composed by Sāramati in the third or fourth century. It was not quoted in India until centuries later, and the only safe terminus ante quem for it is 508 C.E., the year in which Ratnamati, who
translated the *Ratnagotravibhāgavṛtta* into Chinese, arrived in China from Madhyadeśa (India).

According to Tibetan tradition, the future Buddha Maitreya taught the *Ratnagotravibhāga* to Asaṅga in the Tuṣita heaven. Asaṅga is also said to have composed the *Ratnagotravibhāgavṛtta*. This commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* quotes a number of sūtras that teach that all sentient beings possess the nature of a buddha, doubtlessly in the sense that they are already complete buddhas but do not know and actualize their true being because of their adventitious stains or spiritual defilements. But the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and its *vyākhyā* also contain passages that try to embed the teaching of buddha nature within mainstream Mahāyāna and relate it, for example, with suchness, and thus only with the cause or seed of buddhahood.

Such a form of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory can be discerned in the Yogācāra works among the Maitreya texts, and in his *Madhyamakāloka*, Kamalāśila (ca. 740–95) brings the *tathāgatagarbha* theory in line with Madhyamaka thought in order to establish the teaching of a single path (*ekayāna*). But the Indian reaction on the whole was simply to ignore the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and its teaching of buddha nature for six centuries. Things changed, however, in the eleventh century. During this period scholars such as Jñānākirti (tenth/eleventh century) or Maitripa started to use tantric terms more freely. Their works reflect the latest developments in Indian Buddhism, which may be characterized as a genuine attempt to incorporate certain elements of the originally tantric teachings of the mahāsiddhas into the more traditional mainstream Mahāyāna, though they still maintained the superiority of tantra. In this undertaking, the teaching of buddha nature proved to provide good doctrinal support, and thus, not surprisingly, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* became a highly esteemed treatise in these circles. Tradition has it that the *Dharmadhartmatāvibhāga* and the *Ratnagotravibhāga* were rediscovered and taught by Maitripa, but Maitripa’s teacher at Vikramaśila, Jñānasrimitra (ca. 980–1040), must have already known these two works when he composed his *Sākāracarīśāstra* and *Sākārasaṅgraha*. Ratnakaraśānti, another teacher of Maitripa, also quotes the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in the *Sūtrasamuccayabhasya*. Maitripa passed the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* and the *Ratnagotravibhāga* on to *Ānandakirti* and Sajjana. With the help of Sajjana, the Tibetan scholar Ngog Loden Sherab (Rngog Loden Sherab) (1059–1109) translated the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and its *vyākhyā* into Tibetan. For Loden Sherab (Blo Idan shes rab) buddha nature was a synonym of emptiness, which could be realized by means of nonaffirming negations. He thus founded what is known as the analytical tradition (*mtshan nyid lugs*) of interpreting the Maitreya works.
The corresponding meditation tradition (sgom lugs) was founded by Tsen Kawoché (Btsan Kha bo che) (b. 1021), who received explanations of the Ratnagotravibhāga from Sajjana with the help of the translator Zu Gawai Dorjé (Gzu Dga’ ba’i rdo rje).\(^\text{14}\)

This set the stage for the different interpretations of the Ratnagotravibhāga in Tibet. The main issues at stake were whether the teaching that all sentient beings are already buddhas within themselves has a provisional or a definitive meaning—in other words, whether the doctrine of buddha nature was taught with the intention of furthering beings who would otherwise be afraid of the true doctrine of emptiness, or whether the Buddha truly meant that sentient beings are buddhas within. Among those who accepted the teaching of buddha nature as definitive, it was further discussed whether all or only some qualities already exist in sentient beings, and whether they exist in a fully developed or only a subtle way. Apart from these issues, the Ratnagotravibhāga and its related sūtras were also used in different ways to doctrinally support disputed traditions, such as the zhentong (gzhan stong) ("empty of other") of the Jonangpas (Jo nang pa) or sūtra-based mahāmudrā.

**Delimitation of the Subject and Methods Employed**

To determine Gö Lotsāwa Zhönu Pal’s position on buddha nature, which is the main goal of the present study, we are forced to rely completely on his extensive commentary on the Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā, for the simple reason that it is his only philosophical work available to date. Fortunately, his work is far more than a simple commentary. It not only quotes and discusses nearly all Mahāyāna treatises and a number of sūtras, but also explains a few passages of the Ratnagotravibhāga in the light of the (sūtra-based) mahāmudrā tradition of Maitripa and Gampopa. Still, the result of our analysis must remain preliminary, since it is difficult to say whether Zhönu Pal’s commentary on the Ratnagotravibhāga reveals his true opinion on the subject of buddha nature. It may well be that, like others, his statements as a commentator merely reflect an ordinary explanation in line with general Mahāyāna, the final view on the buddha qualities and so forth being revealed only in a tantric context. Dölpopa (Dol po pa), for one, refrains as a commentator from presenting his extraordinary zhentong understanding in his Ratnagotravibhāga commentary. If we only had Dölpopa’s Ratnagotravibhāga commentary, then we would have remained ignorant of his full-fledged zhentong interpretation.\(^\text{15}\)
Zhönu Pal subdivides his commentary into three explanations for disciples with sharp, average, and inferior faculties. Besides his introductory remarks, it is the explanation for those with average faculties which is of particular interest. Technically, it is a commentary on the first three stanzas of the first chapter of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. The mahāmudrā-based explanations Zhönu Pal offers in his commentary on the threefold purification of a vaidūrya gem and the three dharmacakras in RGVV I.2 are especially helpful in assessing his hermeneutic strategy of fully endorsing the *Sanādhinirmocanasūtra*, which only assigns definitive meaning to the teachings of the last dharmacakra. The superiority of the last dharmacakra derives, according to Zhönu Pal, from the particularly efficient, direct approach to the natural mind that the mahāmudrā pith instructions allow. An annotated translation of this explanation for disciples with average faculties thus forms, together with the translation of the introduction and the explanation for those with sharp faculties, the basis of our analysis of Zhönu Pal’s *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary.

Because Zhönu Pal deals in the main part of his commentary with almost every aspect of the Buddhist doctrine, it is necessary to delimit the scope of our inquiry and define methodological principles that will enable us to structure this vast material and evaluate it in terms of a history of ideas. In other words, it is first necessary to identify and describe the specific points Zhönu Pal makes with regard to buddha nature in order to be able to systematically compare his position with those of other exegetes. An initial study of Zhönu Pal’s *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhya* commentary suggests three promising lines of inquiry:

1. What does Zhönu Pal mean by the presence of “subtle” buddha qualities in sentient beings?
2. How does Zhönu Pal tie the teaching of buddha nature in with the *prajñāpāramitā* literature by distinguishing two types of emptiness?
3. In what way does Zhönu Pal read his mahāmudrā pith instructions into certain passages of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, the other Maitreya works, and the *Lankāvatārasūtra*?

Given Zhönu Pal’s broad educational background, a systematic comparison of his views with all other major commentarial traditions of his time would seem called for, but such a wide-ranging study would go beyond the scope of a single monograph. Since it is Zhönu Pal’s main concern to explain the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and the other Maitreya works from within his mahāmudrā tradition, which is closely related to the meditation tradition of Tsen Kawoché, Zhönu Pal’s position will be mainly evaluated...
against the background of a carefully chosen selection of interpretations by masters of the Kagyü, Nyingma (Rnying ma), and Jonang (Jo nang) schools who figure within or are close to his tradition. The fourteenth century, which experienced some of the most important developments of the above-mentioned traditions, together with the fifteenth century, Zhönu Pal’s own century, will form the time frame for the present study.

The earliest exegete I have chosen is the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé (1284–1339), who not only stands in the tradition of Tsen Kawoche, but also combines mahāmudrā and dzogchen with Asaṅga’s Yogācāra, whose strict distinction between an impure ālayavijñāna (basic consciousness) and the pure dharmadhatu (expanse of phenomena) served as a basis for later zhentong traditions. The next two are Dölpopa (1292–1361) and his disciple Sabzang Mati Panchen (Sa bzang Mati pañ chen) (1294–1376), both of whom contributed considerably to the spiritual history of Tibet by their extraordinary zhentong interpretation of buddha nature. Since Rangjung Dorjé assimilated dzogchen ideas, it is also of great interest to determine Longchen Rabjampa’s view on buddha nature, which may have influenced Zhönu Pal’s theory of beginningless subtle qualities. In fact, Zhönu Pal’s teacher Lhakhang Tengpa Sangyé Rinchen (Lha khang steng pa Sangs rgyas rin chen) (1339–1434) belonged, together with Longchenpa, to the circle of disciples of the Sakya (Sa skya) master Lama Dampa Sönam Gyaltse (Bla ma Dam pa Bsod nams gyal mtshan) (1312–75). Of great interest is also a Ratnagotravibhāga commentary by Sangpupa Lodrö Tsungmé (Gsang phu pa Blo gros mtshungs med) (thirteenth/fourteenth century) who, as an assistant professor under Jamyang Shākzhon (Jam dbyangs Shāk gzhon), must have had some exchange of views with the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé about the Ratnagotravibhāga. Finally I have selected the Drugpa (‘Brug pa) Kagyü master Barawa Gyaltse Palzang (‘Ba’ ra ba Rgyal mtshan dpal bzang) (1310–91), whose mahāmudrā interpretation of buddha nature is nearly identical with that of Zhönu Pal.

The differences between the various Ratnagotravibhāga commentaries, while numerous, are often a matter of minor technical detail, and in order to avoid a mere collection of subsidiary material, we will concentrate in each case on a few major philosophical issues that can be directly compared or related with the three above-mentioned questions regarding Zhönu Pal’s position. Toward this goal it is not enough to simply compare how a few crucial stanzas of the Ratnagotravibhāga are explained. Especially since Ratnagotravibhāga commentaries do not survive for each chosen exegete, and furthermore, in some cases only the independent works of the master
clearly reveal his philosophical views. To give an example, when reading Dölpopa’s commentary on RGV I.152–53 (J I.149–50), we could get the impression that the fortified potential, from which the qualities of the form kāyas arise, is something newly acquired by effort, and based on this passage alone we are not able to correctly describe the Jonang position that in reality all buddha qualities exist throughout beginningless time. The explanation of this *prima facie* contradiction is that the latter is the extraordinary explanation, which is not given in an ordinary commentary. But we only come to know this by consulting Dölpopa’s *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho*. Longchenpa, on the other hand, comments on these stanzas (RGV I.152–53) in the nontantric part of his *Grub mtha’ mdzod* fully in line with the dzogchen notion that qualities are not produced but spontaneously present. Thus the ascertainment of a given exegete’s philosophical position not only involves a critical assessment of the sources used, be it his *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary or any other text, but also requires a thorough knowledge of the hermeneutical principles to which an exegete adheres.

Still, while our limited selection of texts by these fourteenth-century masters does not provide scope for a comprehensive description of the traditions related to Zhönu Pal’s position in this period, it does provide a basis for depicting a few first prominent spots on an otherwise empty map, and so serves as a preliminary guide for understanding the development of ideas during this interesting period. To sum up, my study of Rangjung Dorjé, Longchenpa, Lodrö Tsungmé (Blo gros mtshungs med), Barawa, and the Jonang position remains a first step and is only meant to better contextualize some of Zhönu Pal’s important views on the buddha nature.

The “analytic” interpretations of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in the Gelug and Sakya traditions have been accurately dealt with by Seyfort Ruegg. Zhamar Chödrag Yeshé (Zhva dmar Cho grags ye shes) (1453–1524) mentions in his biography of Zhönu Pal the interesting detail that the latter was fond of Tsongkhapa (Tsong kha pa) (1357–1419) for having taught a possible distinction between provisional and definitive meaning according to the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. On the other hand, Zhönu Pal is reported to have had an argument with Tsongkhapa’s student Gyaltsab Jé (Rgyal tshab rje) (1364–1432) over great bliss in highest yoga tantra (Tib. *rnal ’byor bla na med pa’i rgyud*). While Gyaltsab Jé explained that such bliss cannot be ascertained as anything, Zhönu Pal insisted that there is a way of ascertaining it in his (Zhönu Pal’s) own tradition. It would thus be interesting to find out if Tsongkhapa really did uphold, contrary to his disciple Gyaltsab Jé, a tradition embracing a positive direct approach to the ultimate—one that met with the approval of Zhönu Pal—but this would go beyond the scope of this study.
The Ratnagotravibhāga and Its Vyākhyā

The *Ratnagotravibhāga-vyākhyā* was translated from the Tibetan by Obermiller in 1931. After Johnston (1950) had edited the original Sanskrit on the basis of two manuscripts brought by Śāṅkṛtyāyana from Tibet, the *vyākhyā* was translated for a second time, from the Sanskrit, by Takasaki (1966). Both Johnston’s edition and Takasaki’s translation are pioneering works, yet they contain a number of serious mistakes, as can be seen from de Jong’s (1979) and Schmithausen’s (1971) extensive reviews. Unfortunately, the latter two did not correct the entire edition and translation, so each time I quote and translate or refer to a passage from the *Ratnagotravibhāga-vyākhyā*, I have had to check the original manuscript. Even though Seyfort Ruegg’s (1969) French paraphrases of the most important parts of the latter are also very valuable, they are sometimes too influenced by the prevailing Gelug interpretation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. In RGVV I.1, for example, the buddha qualities are characterized, based on a quotation from the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśa*, as being inseparable:

“Śāriputra, the dharmakāya taught by the tathāgata possesses inseparable (*avinirbhāga*) properties and qualities impossible to recognize as something disconnected (*avinirmuktajñāna*), in the form of properties of the tathāgata, which surpass in number the grains of sand of the river Gaṅgā.” Thus the sixth vajra point should be understood according to the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśa*.

Seyfort Ruegg (1969:360) regards the compound members *avinirbhāga*—and *avinirmuktajñāna*—as qualifications of the dharmakāya and translates: “...le dharmakāya...a pour qualité d’être inséparable, et il a la propriété du savoir non séparé—[inséparable] des dharma de tathāgata dépassant [en leur nombre] les sables de la Gaṅgā.” In the *Śrimālādevisūtra*, however, both compounds are used to mark the buddha qualities, which is also the most natural grammatical construction here. The difference is significant. If the qualities themselves are inseparable, it is much more difficult to read the Gelug understanding that the qualities are produced by the fortified potential into the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. Still, Seyfort Ruegg’s work was groundbreaking in having accurately described the *Ratnagotravibhāga* interpretation of the later dominant school of Tibetan Buddhism, the Gelug, whose lines of scholastic thought sometimes influenced the other schools.

The *Ratnagotravibhāga-vyākhyā* quotes a group of sūtras which clearly
state that all sentient beings possess a buddha nature that is inseparably endowed with innumerable buddha qualities. This doctrine is clearly expounded in the nine examples from the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra, which are also presented and discussed in detail in the Ratnagotravibhāga. According to Michael Zimmermann, all nine examples convey the idea of a full-fledged tathāgata in living beings throughout beginningless time. The authors of the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra were obviously somewhat uncautious, attributing as they did substantialist notions to buddha nature and fitting them out with philosophically ambiguous terminology. It could be argued, as Zhōnu Pal does, that the examples of a tree grown from a seed and the future monarch (cakravartin) in the womb indicate a growth of the buddha qualities, but in support of the original purport of the sūtra, we can say that the main focus of the example of the tree lies not on the growing tree, but on the imperishability of its seed and that the result (kārya), namely the tree, is already contained in the seed. Again, in the second example adduced, that the cakravartin is still an embryo does not seem crucial for understanding it. His nature of being a cakravartin will not change, for his future role is already preordained, and his poor mother already protected.

The Śrimālādevīsūtra, too, conveys the idea that the inconceivable buddha qualities are inseparable from buddha nature. In other words, sentient beings already possess the buddha qualities, and only differ from an actual buddha in that they have not yet purified themselves from their adventitious stains. This is also supported by the Anūnatvāpūrṇatvānirdesāparivarta which is quoted in RGVV I.1 as canonical support for the fourth vajra point, namely buddha nature:

“Śāriputra, ultimate is an expression for the [buddha] element in sentient beings. The [buddha] element in sentient beings, Śāriputra, is an expression for buddha nature. Buddha nature, Śāriputra, is an expression for the dharma-kāya.” Thus the fourth vajra point should be understood according to the Anūnatvāpūrṇatvānirdesāparivarta.

The crucial stanzas on emptiness in the Ratnagotravibhāga and its vyākhyā (RGV I.157–58, (J I.154–55)) are also clear in this respect: they fully endorse the inseparable connection of the qualities with buddha nature:

There is nothing to be removed from it and nothing to be added. The real should be seen as real, and seeing the real, you become liberated.
The buddha element is empty of adventitious [stains], which have the defining characteristic of being separable; but it is not empty of unsurpassable qualities, which have the defining characteristic of not being separable. 

The vyākhyā is:

What is taught by that? There is no characteristic sign of any of the defilements (samkleśa) whatsoever to be removed from this naturally pure buddha element, because it is naturally devoid of adventitious stains. Nor does anything need to be added to it as the characteristic sign (nimitta) of purification, because its nature is to have pure properties that are inseparable [from it].

Therefore it is said [in the Śrīmālādevīsūtra]: "Buddha nature is empty of the sheath of all defilements, which are separable and recognized as something disconnected. It is not empty, however, of inconceivable buddha qualities, which are inseparable [in that it is impossible] to recognize [them] as something disconnected, and which surpass in number the grains of sand of the river Gaṅgā." Thus we truly see that something is empty of that which does not exist in it, and we truly realize that that which remains there is present, [and] hence exists there. Having [thus] abandoned the extremes of [wrong] assertion and denial, these two stanzas correctly elucidate the defining characteristic of emptiness.

This passage clearly states, in the sense of the Śrīmālādevīsūtra, that buddha nature is not empty of inseparable qualities, and the traditional formula on being empty as found in the Cūlasuṇātasutta confirms that these inseparable qualities are left in emptiness. The quotation from the Śrīmālādevīsūtra that immediately follows in the vyākhyā ("The tathāgatas' wisdom [that knows] emptiness is the wisdom [that knows] the buddha nature") must be understood in the same context. The sūtra does not simply here equate the buddha nature with Madhyamaka emptiness, but takes emptiness as an aspect of the buddha nature, namely its being empty of adventitious stains. Seyfort Ruegg remarks on this point that the Ratna-gotrabhāgavvyākhyā tries to integrate the theory of emptiness into a particular doctrine of an absolute that is inseparable from buddha qualities.  

Schmithausen here identifies a form of "inclusivism" under which emptiness is understood as buddha nature empty of adventitious stains.
On the other hand, there are some passages in the Ratnagotravibhāga and its vyākhyā that try to avoid a too substantialist notion of buddha nature and its qualities. Thus, RGV I.29 introduces the ten aspects of buddha nature in the first chapter with the remark that the latter are taught with the underlying intention of the ultimate buddha element:

[The ten aspects are:] [its] own-being, cause, fruit, function, connection, manifestation, phases, all-pervasiveness, unchangeability, and inseparable qualities. With regard to them we should know that the intended meaning [is that] of the ultimate [buddha] element. 51

In other words, RGV I.29 would have us understand the unchangeability of the element and inseparability of its qualities in terms of the ultimate aspect of buddha nature—this, after all, is also implied in the above-quoted passage from the Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśa, which equates buddha nature not only with the dharma-kīya, but also with the ultimate. Now two different sets of qualities can be taken as pertaining to the ultimate. First, an ultimate kāya (paramārthakīya) is said to be endowed with the “thirty-two qualities of the dharma-kīya” 52 (i.e., the ten strengths, the four fearlessnesses, and the eighteen exclusive features); 53 and secondly, an ultimate aspect is referred to in the introduction of the Ratnagotravibhāga-vyākhyā to the stanzas II.29–37, 54 in the following way:

The explanation that the Buddha has the defining characteristics of space was taught with the underlying intention of the ultimate and exclusive buddha characteristic of the tathāgatas. 55

In RGV II.46c–47d it is further specified how the endowment of immeasurable qualities is to be understood:

Since its nature is [that of] the dharma-dhātu, [the svabhāvika-kīya] is luminous and pure.

The svabhāvikakīya is endowed with qualities that are immeasurable, innumer-able, inconceivable, and incomparable, and that have reached the [state of] final purity. 56

In other words, the svabhāvikakīya is here said to possess largely space-like qualities, which are not at variance with the concept of emptiness in mainstream Mahāyāna. Various Tibetan exegetes such as Barawa saw in
this ultimate aspect of the qualities the inseparable qualities of the Śrīmaddevīśītra and the Anunātattvāpūrabhānīrdeśa. Following this line of thought, Gö Lotsāwa Zhönu Pal, for example, took the sixth and the eighth examples of the Tathāgatagarbhaśūtra as an indication that the qualities exhibit aspects of growth, notwithstanding the clear intention of the sūtra, which becomes evident in its explanation of the fifth example (a treasure buried under a poor man’s house), where buddha nature is fully equated with the thirty-two qualities of the dharmakāya.57 The Ratnagotravibhāga (I.117 (J I.114)), which otherwise faithfully renders the nine examples of the Tathāgatagarbhaśūtra, only speaks of the treasure of properties (dharma-nīdiḥ).58 That this is not only an unintentional inaccuracy is clear from RGV I.152–55 (J I.149–52), where the treasure illustrates the naturally present potential, from which the svābhāvikakāya (i.e., the thirty-two qualities of the dharmakāya) is said to be obtained (see below). In other words, the treasure of buddha nature no longer stands for the thirty-two qualities of the dharmakāya, but rather for their cause. Given these somewhat unbalanced strands of the Ratnagotravibhāga, we can either follow the Tathāgatagarbhaśūtra and fully equate the qualities of buddha nature with the thirty-two qualities of the dharmakāya, or elaborate on a difference between a buddha nature that consists of merely space-like qualities, on the one hand, and a buddha endowed with all qualities, on the other.

Such a strategy of distinguishing buddha nature from the dharmakāya finds support from one of the oldest building blocks of the Ratnagotravibhāga, stanza I.27,59 which implies a subtle distinction between buddha nature, or potential, and an actual buddha:

By virtue of the presence of buddha wisdom in [all] kinds of sentient beings,
The fact that its (i.e., buddha nature’s) stainlessness is by nature without duality
And the fact that its (i.e., buddha nature’s) fruit has been
“metaphorically” applied (Skt. upacāra) to the buddha potential,
All sentient beings are said to possess the essence of a buddha.60

Zhönu Pal here explains upacāra by citing the example of a Brahmin boy who is called a lion because he is a hero and fearless.61 Whereas a real lion is an animal, the word lion is applied to the brave boy only metaphorically. It may be the case, however, that upacāra simply stands for a “custom or manner of speech,” the buddha potential being vaguely called a buddha, even though the buddha element, which already possesses its inseparable
qualities, has not yet been purified from its separable stains. But Dölpopa, for whom the only difference between an actual buddha and buddha nature is whether one has purified all stains or not, ignores this stanza, while his disciple Sabzang Mati Panchen has great difficulty in making it fit the Jonang position.

Further support for a distinction between different sets of qualities is offered in the first three stanzas of the third chapter of the *Ramatagotra-vibhāga*, which distinguish between the qualities of the dharmakāya (i.e., the ultimate kāya) and those of the form kāyas:

Benefit for oneself and others is [equivalent respectively to] the state of having the ultimate kāya and the kāyas of apparent [truth], which are based on it. Representing the state of dissociation and maturation, the fruit possesses a variety of sixty-four qualities.

The body partaking of the ultimate is the support for accomplishing one's own benefit, while the support for accomplishing the benefit of others is the embodiment (*vapuḥ*) of the Sage on the level of conventional [truth].

The first body is endowed with the qualities of dissociation, such as the [ten] strengths, and the second with those of maturation, the [thirty-two] marks of a great being.

The major (and minor) marks of a buddha, or the thirty-two qualities of the form kāyas, are called qualities of maturation and belong to the conventional level of truth. This distinction between two sets of qualities is also clearly stated in RGV I.152–55 (J I.149–52):

One should know that the potential is twofold in being like a treasure and a tree [grown] from a fruit. It is the primordial naturally present [potential] and the acquired (=fortified) supreme [potential].

It is maintained that the three kāyas of the Buddha are obtained [by starting] from these two potentials: the first kāya from the first, and the latter two from the second.

One should know that the beautiful svābhāvikakāya is like a precious image, since it is nonartificial by nature and since it is the source of precious qualities.

The sambhoga[kāya] is like the *cakravartin*, since it possesses the great kingdom of Dharma. The nirmāṇa[kāya] is like the golden statue, since its nature is that of being a reflection.
In other words, the form kāyas and thus their qualities are obtained from the acquired or fortified potential, which is normally explained as the accumulation of merit. It should be noted that it is only the svābhāvikakāya that is described as "nonartificial." Given that in RGV III.3 the ultimate kāya is said to be endowed with the ten strengths, etc. (i.e., the thirty-two qualities of the dharmakāya), the latter cannot be taken as something artificially produced either.

Another important issue among Tibetan scholars was the question whether the Ratnagotravibhāga comments on sūtras that have definitive or provisional meanings, namely whether the teaching of buddha nature is to be taken literally or interpreted in line with the emptiness taught in the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras. Immediately after the stanzas on emptiness (RGV I.157-58 (J I.154-55)), the relation between the teachings of the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras and the tathāgatagarbha sūtras, together with the aim of the latter, is spelled out:

[Somebody] says: If the [buddha] element is thus so difficult to see, given that it is not a fully experiential object for even the highest saints who abide on the final level of nonattachment, what is gained then by teaching it [even] to foolish (i.e., ordinary) people? [Thus] the [following] two stanzas [are dedicated] to a summary of the aim/motive (prayojana) of the teaching. One is the question, and in the second the explanation [is given]:

Why did the buddhas teach here that a buddha element exists in all sentient beings, after they taught everywhere that everything should be known to be empty in every respect, like clouds, [visions in a] dream and illusions.

One may have the five faults of being discouraged, contempt for inferior persons, clinging to the unreal [adventitious stains], denying real [buddha] properties, and excessive self-love. [A buddha element] has been [already] taught [at this stage] in order that those who have these [faults] abandon them.

According to Madhyamaka hermeneutics, you have to fulfill three requirements in order to show that a teaching has a provisional meaning (neyārtha), that is, that it has been given with a hidden intention (Skt. ābhirāyika, Tib. dgongs pa can). You have to be able to name the basis of
such an intention, or the intentional ground (Tib. *dgongs gzhi*), namely the hidden truth; the motive (Skt. *prayojana*, Tib. *dgos pa*) behind the provisional statement; and a contradiction that results from taking the provisional statement literally (Tib. *dngos la gnod byed*). Seyfort Ruegg has shown that the exegetical principles of the Madhyamaka school were already applied in Dharmamitra’s subcommentary on Haribhadra’s (ca. 800) *Abhisamayālaṃkāravṛtti*, the *Prasphutapada*, and it is not entirely impossible that early forms of these principles were already being used at the time stanzas I.159–60 (J I.156–57) of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* were written. Nor is it impossible to see in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* a formal proof that the teaching of buddha nature has a hidden intention and thus a provisional meaning. The intentional ground would be emptiness as taught in the *prajñāpāramitā*, and the motive of teaching buddha nature the removal of the five faults; while the contradiction between the teachings of the *prajñāpāramitā* sūtras and the *tathāgatagarbha* sūtras is clearly formulated in RGV I.159 (J I.156).72

The first three introductory stanzas (RGV I.1–3), on the other hand, suggest that the final editor of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and its *vyākhyā* was more familiar with the five principles of Yogacāra hermeneutics. In the *Vyākhyāyukti* these five principles, which must be addressed when explaining the meaning of a sūtra, are: (1) the aim/motive (*prayojana*), (2) the concise meaning, (3) the meaning of the words, (4) the connections [between its different topics], and (5) the objections [urged by opponents] together with rebuttals [of them]. It is obvious that the concise meaning of the treatise (point 2) can be presented by listing the seven vajra points (Buddha, Dharma, Saṅgha, buddha nature, enlightenment, buddha qualities, and activity) in RGV I.1, while the connections between them (point 4) are clearly explained in RGV I.3. We could further argue that the meaning of the words (*padārtha*) buddha, etc. (point 3), is explained by the term *vajra point* (or -word) (*vajrapada*), which conveys the notion that these seven points are difficult to realize by listening and thinking. The seven main topics of the treatise (vajra points) thus hint at a reality that is beyond the reach of the intellect, and the aim (point 1) of the treatise would then be to realize this reality. Whether the aim called for by the *Vyākhyāyukti* is hinted at in RGV I.1 or not, the way it is described in RGV I.160 (J I.157) accords with Vasubandhu’s list of possible aims in the *Vyākhyāyukti*. If it is thus the hermeneutics of the Yogacāra school that is being followed in this passage of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and its *vyākhyā*, the mentioning of an aim in the RGV does not imply that the latter is *neyārtha*. Moreover, stanzas I.159–60 (J I.156–57) would seem to pres-
ent a contradiction urged by opponents and a rebuttal of it (point no. 5 of the *Vyākhyāyukti*).

In this case, however, it is the *prajñāpāramitā* sūtras that are *neyārtha* and whose intention (*abhiprāya*) must be clarified in the light of the tathāgata-garbhā doctrine, precisely the way it has been done in the preceding stanzas I.157–58 (J I.154–55). This is, at least, the hermeneutic strategy of the *Vyākhyāyukti*, in which Vasubandhu tries to show that the *prajñāpāramitā* sūtras can only be protected against criticism on the part of the Hinayāna schools (which assert that the “nihilistic” teaching of the *prajñāpāramitā* harms people) by demonstrating that the teaching of emptiness possesses a thought content (*ābhiprāyika*) of what is really true. Therefore it must be interpreted in the light of this truth, which is the *trisvabhāva* theory.

While Vasubandhu refers to the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, the *Ratnagotravibhāgavākyā* addsuces the *Dhāraṇīsvararājasyasūtra*, in which the three dharmacakras are explained as in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, except that the second dharmacakra, with the *prajñāpāramitā* sūtras, is not explicitly called *neyārtha*. Still, the ambiguous term *leading principle of the tathāgata (tathāgataneeti)* doubtlessly hints in this direction. To sum up this possible interpretation, for the reasons described in stanza I.160 (J I.157) it is necessary to clarify already at an early stage the provisional teaching of emptiness in the *prajñāpāramitā* sūtras with the help of the *nitārtha* teaching of buddha nature, even though the latter is difficult to grasp even for advanced bodhisattvas.

The uncertainty of the *Dhāraṇīsvararājasyasūtra* with regard to the status of the second dharmacakra leaves room for a third interpretation, namely that both the second and third dharmacakras are *nitārtha*. Following this line of thought, we could argue that since buddha nature is taught as being as inconceivable as emptiness, stanza I.159 (J I.156) does not simply express a contradiction between the teachings of the *prajñāpāramitā* sūtras and *tathāgatagarbha* sūtras, but rather objects that either the two dharmacakras contradict each other or the teaching of an inexpressible buddha nature (third dharmacakra) is a redundant repetition of the teaching of an inexpressible emptiness (second dharmacakra). Stanza I.160 (J I.157) would then explain why the third dharmacakra is not redundant, even though it is in accordance with the second dharmacakra.

What goes against the first possibility, that is, the theory that the author of the final *Ratnagotravibhāga* views his own treatise as *neyārtha*, is its entire fifth chapter, which explains the advantages of experiencing faith in buddha nature, enlightenment, the buddha qualities, and activity. In stanza V.5 it is said, for example, that only hearing one word of these teachings on
buddha nature yields much more merit than anything else.\(^{86}\) This reminds us very much of *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* VII.31–32, which describes in a similar way the advantage of hearing the teachings of definitive meaning (*nītārtha*), namely those of the third dharmacakra.\(^{87}\) Stanza RGV V.20, which refers to the means of avoiding becoming deprived of the teaching, also warns against violating the sūtras of definitive meaning:

> There is nobody anywhere in this world who is more learned than the Victorious One,
> No other who is omniscient and knows completely the highest truth in the right way.
> Therefore, the sūtra[s] of definitive meaning put forth\(^{88}\) by the Sage (i.e., the Buddha) himself should not be violated;
> Otherwise the correct doctrine (*dharma*) will be harmed, since they will fall away from the way of the Buddha.\(^{89}\)

If this stanza is by the same author as the one who penned stanzas I.159–60 (J I.156–57), it is difficult to see how one and the same person could have composed an extensive treatise on the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* in which he takes the latter to have provisional meaning, and then issue a warning not to violate the sūtras of definitive meaning. It is also not the case that the *Ratnagotravibhāga-vyākhyā* refers to the *Lakāvatārasūtra*, which explains that the teaching of buddha nature has a provisional meaning.\(^{90}\) To summarize, the similarities between RGV V.5 and the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* do indeed suggest that the latter sūtra is being followed and that the third dharmacakra (and thus the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*) is taken to have definitive meaning.

With regard to the later discussion of the zhentong and mahāmudrā interpretations of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, the question whether the latter propounds a form of monism or not remains to be addressed. Whereas the Jonangpas assert a substantial identity between the dharmakāya and buddha nature, in that the true nature is the real dharmakāya of enlightenment, some mahāmudrā traditions identify buddha nature with the natural unfabricated mind, which naturally manifests as dharmakāya after the purification process has been completed. According to Thrangu Rinpoche, a modern proponent of mahāmudrā, every sentient being manifests, then, its own dharmakāya. Lambert Schmithausen has pointed out that the latter explanation is supported by a passage from the *Avatāraṇasakasūtra* quoted in RGVV I.25. Its teaching that the wisdom of the Buddha is contained in all sentient beings, which is an early stage of the doctrine of buddha nature,
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does not vindicate monism, since enlightenment is described as being equal to but not identical with the already existing tathāgata. The following statement comes after the example of the huge silk cloth with a painting of the universe inside an atom (which illustrates the immeasurable buddha qualities inside the ordinary mindstream):

I will try to remove in sentient beings all bonds of conceptions, through the teaching of the noble path, so that they themselves cast off by themselves the big knot of conceptions by attaining the strength of the noble path, recognize the wisdom of the tathāgata [within themselves] and become equal to a tathāgata.

The Reaction of Mainstream Mahāyāna to the Theory of Buddha Nature

The earliest Indian reaction to the theory of buddha nature is found in the Lankāvatārasūtra, which is of an extremely heterogeneous structure. It is safe to say, though, that it mainly upholds the Yogācāra doctrine of the three natures (trisvabhāva), mind-only, and basic consciousness (ālayavijñāna). In this Yogācāra sūtra buddha nature is said to be the purity of natural luminosity and to abide in the body of all sentient beings as the bearer of the thirty-two marks [of a great being]. In reply to Mahāmati's objection that this comes close to the heretical teaching of a personal self, the Buddha is reported to have said:

Mahāmati, my teaching of buddha nature does not resemble the heretical doctrine of a self (ātman). Rather, O Mahāmati, the tathāgatas teach as buddha nature what [really] is emptiness, the limit of reality, nirvāṇa, nonorigination, signlessness, wishlessness, and similar categories, and then the tathāgatas, the arhats, the perfect buddhas, in order to avoid [giving] fools a reason for becoming afraid of the lack of essence, teach the nonconceptual experiential object without characteristic signs by means of instructions that make use [of the term] buddha nature.

Based on that, we could argue that the notion of buddha nature is simply a provisional teaching (neyārtha) for those who do not grasp emptiness. The Lankāvatārasūtra also equates buddha nature with the ālayavijñāna:
The illustrious one then said this to him: "Buddha nature, Mahāmati, which contains the cause of wholesome and unwholesome [factors], and which is the agent of all [re]birth and of [all] going [to this and that state of existence], moves on to the distress of [various] states of existence, like an actor [assuming different roles]. Yet it is devoid of an I and mine. Not understanding [this], [buddha nature, which] is endowed with the impulse of the condition of the three meeting [factors], moves on. But the non-Buddhists who adhere to a persistent belief in [metaphysical] principles do not understand this. Being permeated throughout beginningless time by the various imprints of baseness left by mental fabrication, [buddha nature is also] called ālayavijñāna. Together with [the other] seven forms of consciousness which arise on the level of dwelling in ignorance, it moves on in such a way that its body is never interrupted, just as the ocean and the waves.\(^96\)

This raises the question whether the Laṅkāvatārāsūtra then considers the ālayavijñāna to be a provisional expression for emptiness, too. Based on the Laṅkāvatārā's equation of buddha nature with emptiness, Candrakīrti (seventh century) in his Madhyamakāvatāra indeed infers that the Yogācāra notions of ālayavijñāna, mind-only, and trisvabhāva are neyārtha:

Having shown with the help of this canonical passage [from the Laṅkāvatārāsūtra]\(^97\) that all parts of sūtras with a similar content, of which the Vijñānavādins claim that they are nitiṁtha, are [really] neyārtha….\(^98\)

That Candrakīrti holds the teaching of an ālayavijñāna to be neyārtha becomes clear in his auto-commentary on MA VI.42, which asserts that only emptiness is implied by the term ālayavijñāna.\(^99\) It is doubtful, however, whether we can go as far as to affirm that other parts of the Yogācāra doctrine, such as that everything is only mind (cittamātra), is taken by the Laṅkāvatārāsūtra as being neyārtha too. But this is precisely what Candrakīrti does with reference to LAS II.123:

Just as a physician provides medicine for each patient,
So the buddhas teach mind-only (cittamātra) to sentient beings.\(^100\)
This stanza taken on its own suggests indeed that the cittamātra teaching is of provisional character (neyārtha) in that it is compared to a healing agent for a particular disease. But the following stanza (LAS II.124), which has not been quoted by Candrakīrti, sheds a different light on the issue:

[This cittamātra teaching] is neither an object of philosophers nor one of śrāvakas.
The masters (i.e., the buddhas) teach [it] by drawing on their own experience.\textsuperscript{101}

In other words, the Laṅkāvatārasūtra takes the main point of the Yogācāra teaching as something that can be only experienced by the buddhas, being beyond the reach of an analytical intellect. But while most parts of the Yogācāra doctrine (e.g., cittamātra, trisvabhāva) are presented as a definitive teaching in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra, it could be argued that the notion of buddha nature (and implicitly that of ālayavijñāna) is not accepted according to its literal meaning, and is thus neyārtha.

The argument could be given further, however, that this only refers to a too-substantialist definition of buddha nature, namely as possessing the thirty-two marks of a supreme being, and that a more moderate understanding of it (namely as suchness mingled with stains, as in the Ratnagotravibhāga) would be accepted at least by some Yogācāras. This is indeed implied by the equation of buddha nature with suchness in Mahāyāna-śātrasāṃkāra IX.37:

Even though suchness is undifferentiated in all [living beings], in its purified form it is the state of the tathāgata. Therefore all living beings have the seed/nature (garbha) of the [tathāgata].\textsuperscript{102}

In the Madhyāntavibhāga, too, the influence of buddha nature (taken as suchness) can be noticed. Whereas in the Ratnagotravibhāga suchness can be accompanied by stains (buddha nature) or not (enlightenment), a positively understood emptiness may be taken to be either defiled or not in MAV I.22:

[Emptiness is] neither defiled nor undefiled, neither pure nor impure (MAV I.22ab). How is it that it is neither defiled nor impure? It is because of the natural luminosity of mind (MAV I.22c). How is it that it is neither undefiled nor pure? It is because of the adventitious nature of defilements (MAV I.22d).\textsuperscript{103}
In the same way as in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, mind's luminosity is compared to the natural purity of water, gold, and space, which can coexist with adventitious stains. This becomes clear in *Madhyāntavibhāgabhāṣya* I.16:

How should the differentiation of emptiness be understood? As **being defiled as well as pure** (MAV I.16a). Thus is its differentiation. In what state is it defiled and in what is it pure? It is **accompanied as well as not accompanied by stains** (MAV I.16b). When it occurs together with stains it is defiled, and when its stains are abandoned it is pure. If, after being accompanied by stains it becomes stainless, how is it then not impermanent, given that it has the property of change? This is because its **purity is considered to be like that of water, gold, and space** (MAV I.16cd). [A change is admitted] in view of the removal of adventitious stains, but there is no change in terms of its own-being.104

It should be noted how the terms “defiled” and “pure” of the first section are explicitly equated with the imported terminology “accompanied by stains” and “stainless.” The latter doubtlessly stem from the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and its *vyākhyā*, where buddha nature is defined as suchness accompanied by stains (*samalā tathatā*) and the transformation of the basis as stainless suchness (*nirmanā tathatā*). Such an understanding of the transformation of basis is also found in the *Dharmadhartāvibhāga*. Even though the term *tathāgatagarbha* is not found in the *Dharmadhartāvibhāga*, it is clearly implied by the comparison of natural luminosity with the original purity of space, gold, and water, which can coexist with adventitious stains.106 To sum up, we can discern an influence of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* on the Yogācāra texts among the Maitreya works, while the way buddha nature or its equivalent of an original purity is referred to in them, namely as emptiness, suchness, or natural luminosity, accords well with the interpretation of buddha nature as emptiness, etc., in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*.

Judging from his critique of Yogācāra in the *Madhyamakāvatāra*, it is hard to imagine that Candrakīrti accepted such an interpretation of buddha nature. There must, however, have been some other currents within Madhyamaka that more readily accepted the new developments in Mahāyāna. Thus, the *Sūtrasamuccaya* (attributed to Nāgārjuna by tradition) quotes and discusses certain Mahāyāna sūtras, such as the *Śrimalādevisūtra*, that restrict the dictum that all phenomena lack an own-being (i.e., their emptiness) to the level of the phenomenenal world. In order to show that there is ultimately only one single *yāna*, the compilers of the *Sūtrasamuccaya*
even quote from the *Dhāraniśvararājasūtra* the example of the threefold purification of a *vaichurya* stone, which illustrates the successive teachings of the three dharmanakras. This passage plays an important role in the hermeneutics of the *Ratnagotravibhāgavākyākhya*, implying that the second dharmanakra, which teaches the emptiness of the *prajñāpāramitā* sūtras, is outshone by a final dharmanakra, which describes the ultimate in positive terms. The question thus arises how some Madhyamikas could selectively pick certain passages from the above-mentioned sūtras instead of endorsing the entire *Śrīmālādevisūtra* literally, and thus claim, for example, that buddha nature is empty of all defilements, which are separable, but not of inseparable buddha qualities.
PART I
THE TIBETAN HISTORICAL CONTEXT
1. The Development of Various Traditions of Interpreting Buddha Nature

In the first part of my study, I will present the Tibetan historical background necessary for understanding Zhönu Pal's enterprise of commenting on the Ratnagotravibhāga toward his specific ends. The first chapter of this part is dedicated to an analysis of the dramatic changes Indo-Tibetan Buddhism went through in the eleventh and twelfth centuries with particular emphasis on the analytical and meditation schools of interpreting the Ratnagotravibhāga. It is followed by a chapter on the stances of our selected masters from the fourteenth century and a comparison of their positions.

As we have already seen in the introduction, there were basically two main approaches to interpreting the Ratnagotravibhāga and its doctrine of buddha nature. The first is to follow the Lankāvatārasūtra and see in buddha nature (equated with ālayavijñāna) a term connoting emptiness. Following this line of thought, we can either take the Ratnagotravibhāga to be neyārtha, or, if we see in buddha nature a synonym of emptiness, even nitārtha. The second possibility is to take the Ratnagotravibhāga and the sūtras upon which it comments more literally, as is done by the proponents of an "emptiness of other" (Tib. gzhan stong). Further, a tradition espousing an analytical approach, in describing buddha nature as a nonaffirming negation, must be distinguished from a meditation school, which takes positive descriptions of the ultimate, such as buddha nature, to be experiential in content. It should be noted that the latter school may still accept buddha nature as a synonym of emptiness.

Ngog Loden Sherab's Analytical Interpretation of the Ratnagotravibhāga

Loden Sherab (1059–1109) played a crucial role in the transmission of the Ratnagotravibhāga in Tibet. Not only were his translations of the
Ratnagotravibhāga and its vyākhyā the ones included in the Tengyur, but he also composed a “summarized meaning” or commentary of the Ratnagotravibhāga, in which he tries to bring the teaching of buddha nature into line with his Madhyamaka position. The latter is usually identified as being Svātāntrika. Since this summary, which is of great significance for the understanding of Zhönu Pal’s mahāmudrā interpretation of the Ratnagotravibhāga, has received little attention by Western scholars up till now, the main points of Loden Sherab’s strategy will be presented in this section.

Some ten years ago, the text of the summarized meaning was reproduced from blockprints of the edition by Geshe Sherab Gyatso (Dge bshes Shes rab rgya mtsho) (1884–1968) and published with an extensive introduction by David Jackson (1993). Seyfort Ruegg, who must have had access to the blockprint in the possession of Dagpo Rinpoche (Dvags po Rin po che) in Paris, only briefly refers to Loden Sherab’s commentary when discussing the ineffable and inconceivable nature of ultimate truth. Contrary to the Gelug position, Loden Sherab radically rejects the possibility that the ultimate can be grasped by conceptual thought:

This is because the ultimate [truth] is not an object amenable to speech; for the ultimate [truth] is not an object of thought, since conceptual thought is apparent [truth]. The intended meaning of not being able to be expressed by speech is here [because the ultimate is] not a basis for any verbal or conceptual ascertainment. This does not [mean] that [the ultimate] merely does not appear directly to the verbal consciousness. For if it were so, then it would follow that [objects] of apparent [truth], such as a vase, would also be such (i.e., not a basis for verbal ascertainment). This position is in accordance with the interpretations of Sakya Paṇḍita (Sa skya Paṇḍita) (1182–1251) but greatly at variance with the position maintained by Chapa Chökyi Sengé (Phya pa Chos kyi Seng ge) (1109–69) and many later Gelug scholars. Loden Sherab differs from Sakya Paṇḍita, however, in taking the Ratnagotravibhāga to be a commentary on the discourses with definitive meaning:

When the illustrious Maitreya clarified in an unmistaken way the intention of the discourses of the Sugata, he presented reality, which is the true meaning of Mahāyāna, by composing the
treatise of the *Mahāyānottaratantra [Ratnagotravibhāga]*, which\textsuperscript{117} teaches the precious sūtras of definitive meaning, [namely] the irreversible dharmacakra, the dharmaññatī as a single path;\textsuperscript{118} and which precisely teaches the meaning of all the very pure and certain discourses.\textsuperscript{119}

It should be noted, however, that the remaining four Maitreya works, namely the *Abhisamayālāvākāra* and the three Yogācāra works, are taken to be commentaries on sūtras with provisional meaning.\textsuperscript{120}

Zhönu Pal informs us in his *Blue Annals* that Loden Sherab equated buddha nature with the inconceivable ultimate, whereas Chapa took the latter (and thus buddha nature) to be a nonaffirming negation, bringing it within reach of logical analysis:

The great translator (i.e., Loden Sherab) and Master Tsangnagpa (Gtsang nag pa) take the so-called buddha nature to be the ultimate truth, but say, on the other hand: “Do not regard the ultimate truth as being an actual object corresponding to words and thoughts.” They say that it is by no means a conceptualized object. Master Chapa for his part maintains that nonaffirming negation (which means that entities are empty of a true being) is the ultimate truth, and that it is a conceptualized object corresponding to words and thoughts.\textsuperscript{121}

The way in which Loden Sherab equates buddha nature with the ultimate becomes clear in his commentary on the third vajra point of the Noble Saṅgha, where he explains the awareness of how reality is (*yathāvād-bhāvikatā*) and the awareness of its extent (*yāvadbhāvikatā*) in the following way:

Awareness of the extent refers to the “vision that a perfect buddha is present in all [sentient beings].” The awareness that the common defining characteristics—the very selflessness of phenomena and persons—are the nature of a tathāgata, [namely] buddha nature, and that [this reality] completely pervades [its] support, [i.e.,] the entire element of sentient beings, is the [awareness of] the extent. Furthermore, the unmistaken awareness of mere selflessness, which exists in all sentient beings, is the awareness of how [reality] is. The apprehension that every support is pervaded by it is the awareness of its extent. Both are
supramundane types of insight, [and so] ultimate objects, not a perceiving subject bound to the apparent [truth].

This passage not only shows that awareness of emptiness is an ultimate object, but also that buddha nature is taken as the mere lack of a self in sentient beings. How buddha nature is defined becomes clearer in the commentary on the first and third reasons for the presence of a buddha nature in sentient beings, in RGV I.28:

Pure suchness is the kāya of the perfect buddha. [Its] radiation (spharaṇa) means being pervaded by it (the kāya)—pervaded inasmuch as all sentient beings are fit to attain it (i.e., a kāya of their own). In this respect, the tathāgata [in the compound tathāgata-nature] is the real one, while sentient beings’ possession of his [i.e., the tathāgata’s] nature is nominal, because “being pervaded by it” has been metaphorically applied to the opportunity to attain it (i.e., such a kāya). . . . With regard to the [reason] “because of the existence of a potential,” tathāgata is nominal, because the [tathāgata-nature] is the cause for attaining suchness in the [resultant] state of purity—[is, in other words,] the seeds of knowledge and compassion, the mental imprints of virtue, and [thus only] the cause of a tathāgata. The only real [in tathāgata-nature here] is the “nature” of sentient beings (and not that the latter consists of an actual tathāgata).

Buddha nature is thus not only taken as emptiness (namely the lack of self in sentient beings) but also as the seed or cause of buddhahood. We wonder, then, how Loden Sherab explains similes such as the huge silk cloth from the Avatamsakasūtra, which illustrates the presence of immeasurable buddha qualities in sentient beings. Against the purport of the sūtra, according to which each sentient being has its own buddha wisdom, Loden Sherab claims that this buddha wisdom is the one of the illustrious one himself:

As the picture on a silk cloth exists in an atom, just so the wisdom of the Buddha exists in the [mind]stream of sentient beings. If you ask what [this wisdom] is, [the answer is] the dhammadhātu. If you ask how this [can] be wisdom, [the answer is:] Since the illustrious one came to know that all phenomena lack defining characteristics thanks to the insight that encompasses
[everything] in a single moment, this insight is inseparable from its objects. Therefore the ultimate, the very dharmadhātu itself, is [in this respect also] the wisdom that is aware of this [dharmadhātu]. Since [the dharmadhātu] abides in all sentient beings without exception, the example and the illustrated meaning are fully acceptable.\(^{127}\)

The question arises whether this contradicts Loden Sherab's presentation of the first reason for sentient beings having buddha nature in RGV I.28. In his explanation of the nine examples from the Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra, Loden Sherab specifies exactly how sentient beings are pervaded by the dharmakāya:

As to the phrase “[the dharmakāya that] pervades the entire sphere of sentient beings”: The Dharma of realization of previous tathāgatas was accomplished on the basis of immeasurable accumulation [of merit and wisdom]. [The resulting dharmakāya, i.e.,] the very pure suchness and the wisdom apprehending it, namely that which by nature is separate [from sentient beings], pervades all sentient beings, for this dharmakāya is emptiness, and it is emptiness, too, that exists in sentient beings.\(^{128}\)

In other words, even though the buddha nature of sentient beings is different from the wisdom of the buddhas, the former is still pervaded by the latter since the buddha wisdom realizes the emptiness of sentient beings' minds. The space-like buddha qualities of RGV II.29–37, which Loden Sherab, in accordance with the vyākyā, also subsumes under the ultimate truth,\(^ {129}\) must be taken in the same way. They pertain to the ordinary mind only insofar as it, too, is emptiness. Equally inconceivable as the ultimate is natural luminosity, as this must be actualized through wisdom without any objective support, so that luminosity is actually taken to be wisdom.\(^ {130}\)

To review, the emptiness of the ultimate cannot become the object of ordinary perception. But being the object of a buddha, it is pervaded by the wisdom or luminosity of the Buddha, this insight being no different from its object.

The buddha nature or element, which is repeatedly said to be the emptiness of each mindstream,\(^ {131}\) can become the objective support of inferential cognitions that negate without affirming anything. As such it becomes the substantial cause for the attainment of buddha qualities:
As to the [buddha] element that has become the conventional object of a nonaffirming negation, it is called the substantial cause that has become the conventional object of a nonaffirming negation; but something that amounts to human effort [as a substantial cause of buddhahood] does not actually exist. As to the conventional object, it has the meaning of a nonaffirming negation—namely that anything that is established as an own-being does not exist in reality.\textsuperscript{132}

This leads to the question whether the qualities are for Loden Sherab something newly produced. In his introduction to the second chapter of the \textit{Ratnagotravibhāga}—a commentary on stanza RGV II.3—the notion of nothing being newly produced is brought up in the presentation of the essence of enlightenment (compared to natural luminosity, the sun, and the sky in RGV II.3a). But with the unchangeability of buddha nature restricted to its true nature, the possibility of development with nonconceptual wisdom as a cause remains untouched:

\begin{quote}
[Verse RGV II.3c:] “Buddhahood is endowed with all stainless buddha qualities; it is permanent, stable, and eternal”\textsuperscript{133} expresses wisdom, abandonment, and the qualities based on them. [It further states] that it is not the case that these [qualities] have arisen as something that did not exist before, and that they existed in previous state[s] [still] accompanied by hindrances. In all this the essence [of enlightenment] is taught. As for the cause, here [in this stanza] it is the wisdom of not conceptualizing phenomena, and the distinguishing wisdom attained after that.\textsuperscript{134}
\end{quote}

In other words, in terms of the essence of enlightenment nothing is newly produced, which means that emptiness is present throughout beginning-less time and nothing needs to be added to it (see below).

Of particular interest is, in this respect, Loden Sherab’s commentary on RGV I.51,\textsuperscript{135} in which he restricts the statement of being naturally endowed with qualities to the very pure state in which these qualities are not experienced as something disconnected. In the same way as they are experienced as something inseparable from the pure state, their cause, or the dharma-dhatu, can be apprehended in impure states:

\begin{quote}
[The verse RGV I.51b] “being naturally endowed\textsuperscript{136} with qualities” shows that the immutability of the properties of qualities
\end{quote}
(i.e., the buddha qualities) in the very pure state is acceptable. This means that the true nature is not tarnished when qualities suddenly manifest, nor is [this nature] experienced as being separate from any naturally endowed qualities, in the same way as it [cannot] be established as something that possesses a particular qualitative feature that did not exist before in the impure state, for example. For the meaning of naturally established qualities lies in their being naturally established as an objective support without superimposition; or rather as the objective support that is the cause of [these very] qualities. This is because the correct apparent [truth] abides without superimposition, or because the ultimate abides in such a way, respectively. The realization of the ultimate is the cause of all qualities, because all buddha qualities are summoned as if called when you realize the dharmadhātu.

In other words, the naturally established (or endowed) qualities are nothing else than the cause of these qualities, which is mind’s emptiness. To put it another way, to perceive your mind as it is, without superimposing an ultimately existing own-being, is the buddha nature that causes qualities.

The crucial stanzas RGV I.157–58 (J I.154–55) on emptiness, which state that nothing needs to be added and that buddha nature is not empty of inseparable qualities, are explained in the following way:

Neither superimposing the ultimate existence of an objective support for all defilements nor denying the relative existence of an objective support for the mind and the mental factors of purification, one abides in the two truths as they are. With regard to this it has been said: “The meaning of emptiness is unmistaken.” This has been expressed [in the following verses RGV I.157ab (J I.154ab)]: “In it nothing is to be removed [and nothing to be added].” [That is,] in this reality, nothing is to be removed—[namely,] an objective support for all defilements—because [no such thing] has ever been established. [Likewise,] in this reality nothing need to be added—[namely,] characteristic signs of purification, such as the strengths and clairvoyance, because the objective support for [the attainment of the ten] strengths, etc., and purification, which exists on the level of apparent [truth], abides throughout beginningless time....
The phrase “possessing the defining characteristic of being inseparable” means that the nonapprehended unsurpassable qualities exist on the level of apparent [truth], and since reality and existence on [the level of] apparent [truth] do not contradict each other, they are said to exist as mere nature. If you therefore directly realize illusion-like apparent [truth], you [automatically] establish the qualities, because the nature of qualities is simply such that one has them (i.e., the illusory phenomena of the apparent) as an objective support.  

The quoted passages clearly show that Loden Sherab avoids defining what exactly the qualities of which buddha nature is not empty are, or rather, instead of accepting the literal meaning of RGV I.158 (J I.155) that the buddha element is not empty of unsurpassable properties, Loden Sherab suggests replacing the unsurpassable properties by the conditioned phenomena of apparent truth. In fact, qualities are circumscribed by “having the illusory phenomena of the apparent as an objective support.” Such phenomena are conducive to purification, if an ultimate own-being is not wrongly superimposed. As we have seen above, this is the correct apparent truth. What it comes down to is the objective support that is the mere cause of qualities, the dharmadhātu, or rather to the ability to meditate on emptiness by taking buddha nature as the conventional object of a nonaffirming negation. This observation is also shared by Śākya Chogden (Śākya mchog ldan) (1428–1507), who asserts that Loden Sherab sees buddha nature as a “nonaffirming negation that is not qualified by qualities such as the [ten] strengths.”

Finally, it should be noted that Loden Sherab brings the buddha element into relation with the ālayavijñāna when he explains, on the basis of the Mahāyānābhidharmasūtra, that the buddha element is the seed of the buddha qualities, and that all sentient beings, too, arise from it. Sentient beings are, however, affected through additional conditions.

Ratnogotravibhāga Commentaries in the Meditation Tradition

In the introduction to his Ratnagotravibhāga commentary, Zhōnu Pal informs us that during a visit to Kashmir, Tsen Kawoché, who was a disciple of Drapa Ngönshé (Grva pa Mngon shes), requested Sajjana to bestow on him the works of the illustrious Maitreya along with special instructions, since he wanted to make these works his “practice [of preparing] for death” (’chi chos). Sajjana taught all five Maitreya works, with Lotsāwa Zu
Gawa Dorjé (Lo tsä ba Gzu Dga' ba rdo rje) functioning as a translator. In addition, he gave special instructions with regard to the *Ratnagotravibhağa*. Until now only little has been known about Tsen Kawoche’s “meditation tradition” of the five Maitreya works. In his *Blue Annals*, Zhönu Pal informs us that whereas Ngog Loden Sherab takes buddha nature to be the inconceivable ultimate, Tsen Kawoche emphasizes it under the aspect of natural luminosity:

The followers of the tradition of Tsen (Btsan) maintain that since the luminous nature of mind is the buddha nature, the cause of buddha[hood] is fertile.

According to Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé's (Kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas) (1813–99) introduction to his *Ratnagotravibhağa* commentary, Tsen Kawoche and his translator Zu Gawa Dorjé became well known as followers of the meditation tradition of the Maitreya works, which was unique in terms of both explanations and practice. Zu Gawa Dorjé wrote his own commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhağa* in accordance with the teaching of Sajjana. Based on this commentary, the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé composed a summary of the contents of the *Ratnagotravibhağa*, and Karma Könzhön (Karma Dkon gzhon) (b. 1333) commented at length on it. Karma Trinlepa (Karma Phrin las pa) (1456–1539) composed a commentary of his own by inserting corrections into Karma Könzhön’s commentary. None of these works has turned up to date; but since in Kongtrül’s presentation of the Tsen tradition Zhönu Pal’s *Ratnagotravibhağa* commentary is mentioned next to Karma Trinlepa’s commentary, a study of Zhönu Pal promises to shed the first light on this meditation tradition. In the colophon of his *Ratnagotravibhağa* commentary, Zhönu Pal tells us that he used notes written by Chöjé Drigungpa Jigten Sumgön (Chos rje 'Bri gung pa 'Jig rten gsum mgon) (1143–1217) as the basis for spelling out his own Mahāyāna hermeneutics, which attempt to demonstrate the superiority of the last dharmacakra mainly on the basis of mahamudra pith instructions. He further says that Drigungpa’s explanations both of the three dharmacakras and the *Ratnagotravibhağa*, and the explanations deriving from Sajjana’s heart disciple Tsen Kawoche, are all in accordance with mahāmudrā.

On the other hand, Zhönu Pal tells us that he also consulted in-depth explanations that follow along the lines of Ngog Loden Sherab. In this respect it is of interest how Šākya Chogden summarizes the views of Pagmo Drupa (Phag mo gru pa) (1110–70) and many other Dagpo Kagyüpas on buddha nature. Whereas Loden Sherab is said to define the
latter as a nonaffirming negation that is not qualified by qualities such as the ten strengths, Śākya Chogden says about mainstream Dagpo Kagyü:

As to the definition of [buddha] nature, it is either taken to be the part made up of natural purity only, or as [also including] the accumulation of qualities that are inseparable from it (i.e., this purity). With regard to the second, [buddha nature] is either taken as that which enables the realization of these qualities, [namely,] the qualities of the dharma-kāya, or it is taken to be, as natural [purity], the qualities of the dharma-kāya.... [The latter is claimed by] upholders of the Dagpo Kagyü such as Pagmo Drupa.\(^{152}\)

By combining Loden Sherab’s nonaffirming negation with the qualities of the dharma-kāya as natural purity, Zhönu Pal developed his theory of the subtle qualities of the dharma-kāya in sentient beings. These subtle qualities are described as resembling the space-like qualities of the svabhāvika-kāya. They evolve in their own sphere, without depending on artificial conditions, as the hindrances are gradually removed.

**The Mahāmudrā Interpretation of the Ratnagotravibhāga**

At least two of the masters who are mentioned in the context of the meditation tradition of Tsen are known to have given mahāmudrā explanations on the basis of nontantric Mahāyāna works. Besides Zhönu Pal, this can be also confirmed now for the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé, who in his newly discovered *Dharmadāhatustotra* commentary equates *prajñā-pāramitā* with mahāmudrā, both being for him a defining characteristic of the dharma-dhātu.\(^{153}\) It is therefore reasonable to assume that Rangjung Dorjé also composed his summarized meaning of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* from a mahāmudrā perspective. It is all the more reasonable since Gampopa had once said to Pagmo Drupa that the *Ratnagotravibhāga* was the basic text of their mahāmudrā. Zhönu Pal explains this background in his *Blue Annals*:

Moreover, Dagpo Rinpoche (Gampopa) said to Pagmo Drupa: “The basic text of this mahāmudrā of ours is the *Mahāyānottaratantrarāṣṭra* (*Ratnagotravibhāga*) by Venerable Maitreya.” Pagmo Drupa in turn said the same thing to Jé Drigungpa (Rje ’Bri gung pa), and for this reason many explanations of the
Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra are found in the works of Jé Dri-gungpa and his disciples. In this connection, the Dharma master from Sakya (i.e., Sakya Paṇḍita) maintains that there is no conventional expression for mahāmudrā in the pāramitā tradition, and that the wisdom of mahāmudrā is only the wisdom arisen from initiation. But in the Tattvāvatāra composed by the Master Jñānakīrti it is said: “As for someone with sharp faculties who practices the pāramitās diligently, by performing the meditations of calm abiding and deep insight, he [becomes] truly endowed with the mahāmudrā[already] in the state of an ordinary being; [and this] is the sign of the irreversible [state attained] through correct realization.” The Tattvadāśakāṭikā composed by Sahajavajra clearly explains wisdom that realizes suchness as possessing the following three particular [features]: in essence it is the pāramitās, it is in accordance with the mantra[yāna] and its name is mahāmudrā. Therefore Götsangpa (Rgod tshang pa), too, explains that Jé Gampopa’s pāramitā-mahāmudrā is [in line with] the assertions of the master Maitripa.

This passage from the Blue Annals clearly shows that Zhönu Pal defends the pāramitā-based mahāmudrā tradition against the critique of Sakya Paṇḍita by pointing out that it had Indian origins, namely in the persons of Jñānakīrti and Maitripa (together with Maitripa’s disciple Sahajavajra). Even though Zhönu Pal agrees with Sakya Paṇḍita that during the time of Marpa (Mar pa) (1012–97) and Milarepa (Mi la ras pa) (1040–1123) the realization of mahāmudrā was understood as implying that first the wisdom of inner heat has to be produced before it can occur, he argues against any attempt to disqualify Gampopa’s nontantric mahāmudrā teachings for showing signs of Sino-Tibetan influence. Zhönu Pal reports in his Blue Annals (namely in the chapter on Dagpo Kagyü) that Marpa received from Maitripa not only tantric teachings, but that Maitripa’s mahāmudrā pith instructions also contributed to Marpa’s direct realization of the true nature of mind.

In his Ratnagotravibhāga commentary, Zhönu Pal further informs us that, according to Götsangpa, Maitripa’s mahāmudrā teachings go back even further, to Saraha and Śavaripa. This opinion is also shared by Mikyo Dorjé (Mi bskyod rdo rje), who explains in his commentary on the Madhyamakāvatāra that Maitripa realized that his doctrine of not becoming mentally engaged (i.e., mahāmudrā) has the same meaning as the Madhyamaka
taught by Saraha the elder, Saraha the younger (i.e., Śavaripa), Nāgārjuna, and Candrakīrti. Dagpo Tashi Namgyal (Dvags po Bkra shis rnam rgyal) (1512–87) claims in his Zla ba'i 'od zer that Maitripa received from Śavaripa essence mahāmudrā teachings that were not based on tantras. Moreover, Zhönu Pal refers to Dampa Sangyé (Dam pa sangs rgyas) (d. 1105), who maintained that everybody—men and women, old and young, [even] lepers—can see reality if they possess the skillful means of a lama. In this context, Zhönu Pal also claims that the meditation tradition of Tsen was closely connected with the mahāmudrā pith instructions of Maitripa’s circle:

The followers of the tradition of Tsen also believe that these states (of being old or even a leper) are made into the path by pith instructions.

During the time of Maitripa and his disciples, Indian Buddhism went through dramatic changes, with the tantric teachings of the mahāsiddhas being not only accepted on their own terms but also integrated into more general Mahāyāna expositions.

This can be observed in Jñānakīrti’s Tattvavatāra, in which three approaches to reality are distinguished, namely those of Mantrayāna, Pāramitāyāna, and “the path of freeing oneself from attachment” (i.e., Śrāvakayāna). Each of these three has again three distinct forms, for adepts with sharp, average, and inferior capacities. Zhönu Pal’s point in the above-quoted passage from the Blue Annals is that the practice of Pāramitāyāna among adepts with sharp faculties (not, that is, only the practice of Mantrayāna) is referred to as mahāmudrā. Jñānakīrti also uses the term mahāmudrā as a synonym of prajñāpāramitā in the third chapter of the Tattvavatāra:

Another name for the very great mother prajñāpāramitā is mahāmudrā, for [mahāmudrā] has the nature of nondual wisdom.

Further down in his Tattvavatāra, Jñānakīrti also finds a place for mahāmudrā within the traditional fourfold Mahāyāna meditation by equating Mahāyāna in Lankāvatārasūtra X.257d with mahāmudrā. The pādas X.257cd “A yogin who is established in a state without appearances sees Mahāyāna” thus mean that the yogin finally sees or realizes mahāmudrā. Zhönu Pal must have had such Indian sources in mind when he read the four mahāmudrā yogas into the Lankāvatārasūtra and the Dharmadharmatavibhāga.
A study of the *Tattvadāsaka* and its commentary shows that tantric concepts are used freely in the more general Mahāyāna context as well. Thus, a direct mahāmudrā approach to reality is presented without tantric initiation and related practice. Still, the yogin of the *Tattvadāsaka* is said to have adopted a “yogic conduct” (*unmattavrata*) and to be “blessed from within” (*svādhīśṭhāna*). We could argue that the very use of these terms supplied a tantric context, but from the *Kudrṣṭinirghātana* it becomes clear that Maitṛīpa takes *unmattavrata* as an extreme form of Mahāyāna conduct that results from having perfected the six *pāramīs*. Moreover, Sahaja-vajrā’s explanations of the terms *unmattavrata* and *svādhīśṭhāna* are not tantric either. To be sure, the term *svādhīśṭhāna* does not refer here to the third stage in the *Pañcakrama*, for example, where an initiated yogin who has already practiced the creation stage solicits his tantric master’s pith instructions on the *svādhīśṭhāna* level in order to attain the luminous state. Moreover, (the tantric) Āryadeva (ninth century) is said to have started a tradition of reading the five stages of the *Pañcakrama* into the *Larikāvatārasūtra*, thus presenting the tantric stage of *svādhīśṭhāna* in the context and on the basis of a Mahāyāna sūtra.

In the *Tattvadāsaka* the yogin is described as being “adorned with the blessing from within (*svādhīśṭhāna*)” as a result of having generated an enlightened attitude (*bodhicitta*) and experiencing the reality of all phenomena as luminosity. This becomes clear in stanzas TD 5–6:

Thus phenomena, which are [all] of one taste, are unobstructed, and without an abode.
They are all [realized as being] luminous through the samādhi [of realizing] reality as it is.
This samādhi occurs because of engaged [bodhi]citta,
For reality arises without interruption for those acquainted with its abode.

To sum up, the *Tattvadāsaka* propagates a direct approach to reality that is in accordance with Vajrayāna, but is mainly made possible by pith instructions. In other words, reality is not only understood to be neither existent nor nonexistent, but also directly realized as “[natural] luminosity” (Skt. *prabhāśvarata*). Traditionally, this direct realization is only possible from the first bodhisattva level onward, or made possible through tantric practice. But in the *Tattvadāsaka* such a direct realization is said to be brought about by engaged bodhicitta, and the *Tattvadāsakāṭikā* confirms that the required practice is a Mahāyāna sequence of calm abiding...
and deep insight. Still, Sahajavajra points out a major difference with Kamalaśīla’s approach:

The differentiations made with respect to engaged [bodhi]citta within the tradition of pāramitā are presented both in short and [also] extensively in the Bhāvanākrama and other works of Kamalaśīla. You should look them up there; they are not written here for reasons of space. No such engaged [bodhi]citta [as implied] here is intended [by them], however, since in this Bhāvanākrama it is not pure, having been produced on the basis of analysis, whereas here [in the Tattvadāśaka] it must be directly meditated upon with a nonanalytical mind.

And a little further down Sahajavajra quotes Mahāyānavinīśikā 12:

[The quintessence] to be realized in the thousands of collections of teachings is emptiness.

[Emptiness] is not realized through analysis. The meaning of destruction (i.e., emptiness) [is rather attained] from the guru.

Of particular interest is the following commentary on Tattvadāśaka 7, in which the pith instructions of a guru and the reality they reveal are called mahāmudrā. Sahajavajra starts by defining nonduality in terms of his so-called Yuganaddha-Madhyamaka as being “bodhicitta, or the reality of nondual knowledge, whose nature is skillful means and insight.” As an introduction to his explanation on the second part of the verse (TD 7cd), the following objection is addressed. To define reality in the above-mentioned way has the fault of bearing the characteristic sign (nimitta) of an interpretative imagination of reality, in the same way as the practice of yathābhūtasamādhi is accompanied by the characteristic sign of an interpretative imagination of the remedy, and such characteristic signs must be abandoned by not becoming mentally engaged, as preached in the Nirvikalpapravesadhāraṇī. TD 7cd is then taken as Maitripa’s answer to such a possible objection. It says that nothing, not even the characteristic signs of attainment and the like, is really abandoned, but every state of mind is simply realized as natural luminosity:

And [even] the vain adherence to a state free of duality is taken, in like manner, to be luminous [as well]. (TD 7cd)
Sahajavajra comments:

The underlying intention here is as follows. In order that those who do not know reality thoroughly realize [that] reality, it was taught that you must give up the three interpretative [imaginations] as in the case of the complete abandonment of the four extremes. This is because it is stated [in Maitripa’s Sekanirdeśa, stanza 36]:

He who does not abide in the domain of the remedy and is not attached to reality,
And who has even no desire for the fruit, knows mahāmudrā.\textsuperscript{184}

Here mahāmudrā [refers to] the pith instruction on the reality of mahāmudrā.\textsuperscript{185}

In other words, both the pith instructions and the revealed reality are here called mahāmudrā. Sahajavajra further points out that the vain adherence to nonduality, that is, the interpretative imagination of reality, does not exist as anything other than its luminous nature. Abandoning the characteristic signs of these imaginations by not becoming mentally engaged thus leads to the realization of their luminous nature, which is achieved by not focusing on a supposed own-being of phenomena. The latter practice is performed on the basis of either precise analysis or the pith instructions of a guru.\textsuperscript{186} To sum up, nothing is really abandoned, but phenomena are ascertained for what they are: in the light of analysis they lack an own-being, and in \textit{yathābhūtasaṁādhi} they are experienced as luminosity.

Even though Sahajavajra introduces the term mahāmudrā by quoting from a tantric work (i.e., the Sekanirdeśa), the pith instructions on reality are referred to as mahāmudrā in a purely nontantric context, since the yoga tradition of directly realizing reality through pith instructions is clearly distinguished from both Pāramitāyāna and Mantrayāna. This is obvious from Sahajavajra’s commentary on Tattvadaśaka 8. The root stanza is:

By the power of having realized this reality, the yogin whose eyes are wide open, moves everywhere like a lion by any means\textsuperscript{187} in whatever manner.\textsuperscript{188, 189}

Sahajavajra immediately adds concerning this stanza:
The yogin, who accurately realized previously taught nondual reality with the help of pith instructions of the right guru.

Further down Sahajavajra then distinguishes such an approach from the Mantrayāna and Pāramitāyāna:

If you are wondering “In that case, what are the differences between that yogin and a yogin of the way of Mantrayāna?” [The answer is:] There are great differences with regard to what is to be accomplished and that which accomplishes, given that [the yogin’s practice] is without the sequence of the four mudrās, and given that complete enlightenment by way of equanimity, [that is,] without the taste of the great bliss resulting from the pride of being a deity, takes a long time. On the other hand, it differs from the yogin of the way of Pāramitāyāna, it being especially superior in terms of accurately realizing the suchness of the union into a pair, [that is,] emptiness analyzed on the basis of the instructions of the right guru. Therefore, there is no engaging in austerities. Those who ascertain very well the reality of one taste to be emptiness are like [skillful] village people grasping a snake. Even though they touch the snake, they are not bitten. Some call this the wisdom of reality [or] mahāmudrā.

Gampopa distinguishes in a similar way a third path of direct perceptions set apart from a general Mahāyāna path of inferences and a Vajrayāna path of blessing:

As to taking inference as [your] path, having examined all phenomena by arguments, [such as] being beyond one and many, you say that there is no other [ontological] possibility and posit that everything is empty. [This is the path of] inference.

[The practice of] inner channels, energies, and drops, the recitation of mantras, and so forth, based on the stage consisting of the generation of the deity’s body, is the path of blessing.

As to taking direct perception for [your] path, the right guru teaches that coemergent nature of mind is the dharmakāya in terms of its luminosity. Having thus been given an accurate pith instruction of definitive meaning, you take, with regard to this “coemergent mind” (shes pa lhan cig skyes pa) that has been ascertained in yourself, the natural mind as the path, without being
separated from any of the three [aspects of the mahāmudrā teaching]: view, conduct, and meditation.¹⁹⁴

For Gampopa, this direct approach is supreme and of definitive meaning, in that it is based on direct perception as opposed to inferences, as on the general Mahāyāna path. Sometimes Gampopa even criticizes ordinary Vajrayāna for descending to the level of conceptualization,¹⁹⁵ and in so doing goes one step further than Sahajavajra, who unreservedly accepts the superiority of Vajrayāna over mahāmudrā pith instructions. It is noteworthy that Gampopa distinguishes two types of individuals, namely the gradualist (rim gyis pa) and simultaneist¹⁹⁶ (cig car pa) as similarly pronounced in the Bsam gtan mig sgron, which is ascribed to the dzogchen master Nub Sangyé Yeshé (Gnubs Sangs rgyas ye shes) (tenth century).¹⁹⁷

The latter considers that the simultaneist system originates in the sūtras of definitive meaning (nītārthasūtra) while the gradualist system is based on the sūtras of provisional meaning (neyārthasūtra).¹⁹⁸ For Gampopa, too, the gradualist teaching among the pith instructions has provisional meaning, whereas the simultaneist ones are of definitive meaning. Beginners, however, can only enter the paths of pāramitā and mantra.¹⁹⁹ Further research will be required in order to determine to what extent Gampopa’s path of direct perception is really a continuation of the tradition of Maitripa and what part of it goes back to Sino-Tibetan influences.²⁰⁰

Drigungpa Jigten Sumgön, who, as a disciple of Pagmo Drupa, stands in the tradition of Gampopa, explains that his mahāmudrā practice is in accordance with the Ratnagotravibhāga. Thus, it is reported in the Chos kyi 'khor lo legs par gtan la phab pa:

Mahāmudrā is [taught on the basis of] the Mahāyānottaratantra [Ratnagotravibhāga]. Great effort was taken to explain the latter, and I listened again and again to [such explanations] from Jigten [Sum]gön.²⁰¹

In the commentary on this passage it is explained:

The mahāmudrā practiced by the venerable Great Drigungpa (i.e., Jigten Sumgön) himself is in accordance with this Mahāyānottaratantra [Ratnagotravibhāga], the qualities [of] mahāmudrā being taught with exactly this meaning in the latter.²⁰²
The seven vajra points of the Ratnagotravibhāga are stated to be a commentary on the meaning of the third dharmacakra,\textsuperscript{203} earlier in the text described as the dharmacakra of definitive meaning.\textsuperscript{204} In his Dgongs gcig I.4–6 Jigten Sumgon\textsuperscript{205} further explains that the three dharmacakras differ in conformity with the concepts typical of the different groups of disciples, that all three dharmacakras are contained in each individual one, and that the seed of the following dharmacakra is already present in the previous one.\textsuperscript{206} This means that the Buddha himself did not teach anything provisional (neyārtha) in the sense of being intentionally wrong; it is only due to the differing faculties of the disciples that the contents of a teaching acquire provisional or definitive status.

Thus the seed of the three dharmacakras is the dharmacakra of definitive meaning, just as all yānas are ultimately identical and ascertainable as a single yāna.\textsuperscript{207} In this sense all dharmacakras have definitive meaning, but the third dharmacakra is still considered superior in its effectiveness.\textsuperscript{208}

In his Chos 'khor gtan phab, Jigten Sumgon defines a simultaneist as someone who attains enlightenment at the time of the fruit. It is essential that he have already accumulated merit previously; in other words, when on the path, he is still a gradualist. Thus, even Śākyamuni was a gradualist when he generated bodhicitta and traversed the path:

[Practitioners] are called simultaneists and gradualists. The [buddha] element in sentient beings makes enlightenment attainable. This enlightenment is attained gradually and not instantaneously.... Having generated a mind that is directed toward supreme enlightenment, [the Buddha] traversed [the bodhisattva levels] gradually, [in accordance with] the three dharmacakras.\textsuperscript{209}

In the autocommentary, this passage is explained as follows:

Instantaneous [enlightenment] is not at all possible. If one wonders who is then called a simultaneist, [the answer is:] He who attains in this life the fruit of having accumulated merit previously is called a simultaneist. Likewise, our teacher, the illustrious Buddha, is also a simultaneist. It was in virtue of the fruit of having previously accumulated merit throughout innumerable eons that he awakened during his life. But without the previous accumulation of merit, the fruit would not have been attained during his life. Therefore he was a gradualist along the entire path.\textsuperscript{210}
Even our teacher, the illustrious Buddha, first generated a mind that is directed toward unsurpassable enlightenment, and during an incalculable eon traversed the path up to the first [bodhisattva] level in accordance with the first dharmacakra. During [another] incalculable [eon] he traversed the path up to the seventh level in accordance with the second dharmacakra, and during a [third] incalculable [eon] he traversed the three pure levels in accordance with the third dharmacakra. 211

Again in Dgongs geig I.13–14 it is said that all paths traverse the ten levels, and that these levels are entered gradually. 212 In his commentary on Dgongs geig I.14, Rigdzin Chökyi Dragpa (Rig ’dzin Chos kyi grags pa) (1595–1659) quotes Pagmo Drupa, who said that a simultaneist (lit. “a person who enters all of a sudden”) is somebody whose accumulations are gathered, whose mindstream is purified, whose mind is trained, and in whom experience has arisen. 213

On the other hand, it is stated in Dgongs geig I.15 that “the hindrances of knowable objects have been abandoned throughout beginningless time,” 214 while Dgongs geig IV.18 has it that “all levels and paths are traversed by the same realization.” 215 According to the sixth chapter of the Dgongs geig, “the sole means of giving rise to realization is devotion” (VI.6). 216 Now “to possess realization is considered to be the supreme view” (VI.7), 217 and “to make yourself familiar with such a realization is taken to be meditation” (VI.10). 218 In other words, since the supreme view or realization can, or rather must, be attained by devotion, a practitioner can start at a relatively early stage to work with the one realization of the true nature of his mind that leads him through all the levels to buddhahood. 219 In this sense there is no difference between view and meditation, meditation simply being the cultivation of realization (namely the supreme view). This is definitely a continuation of Sahajavajra’s Yoganaddhavāda and Gampopa’s path of direct perceptions.

Zhang Tsalpa Tsöndrü Drag (Zhang Tshal pa Brtson ’grus grags) (1123–93) is more radical when he claims in his Phyag rgya chen po lam zab mthar thug that mahāmudrā is attained in one go and that the confused err when they reckon it in terms of levels and paths. 220 Zhönu Pal tries to defend such an extreme position in his Ratnagotravibhāgavākyākhya commentary by quoting a Laṅkāvatārasūtra passage on the gradual and instantaneous purification of the mindstream, and explaining that on the pure bodhisattva levels all objects of knowledge appear instantaneously, while the gradual purification of stains through the three dharmacakras goes up only to the
seventh level. Referring to the *Vairocanābhisambodhītantra*, he argues that this seventh level may be also a provisional one already found on the path of accumulation,\(^{221}\) one that brings the sudden realization within the reach of more ordinary practitioners.

Besides these attempts to justify the simultaneist mahāmudrā teachings of his tradition, Zhōnū Pal is also concerned with reading the gradual teachings of the four mahāmudrā yogas into the Maitreya works and the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*. Given that Gampopa claims that the *Ratnagotravibhāga* is the basic text for his mahāmudrā, it is very likely that the explanations of mahāmudrā that we find in Zhōnū Pal’s *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary were already known at Gampopa’s time. Moreover, such a mahāmudrā interpretation must have already existed in India, as can be seen from Jñānakīrti’s *Tattvāvatāra*, in which mahāmudrā practice is related with the traditional fourfold Mahāyāna meditation by equating *Mahāyāna* in LAS X.257d with mahāmudrā. Further research may even show that at least some of these explanations had already been transmitted by Tsen Kawoché. Zhōnū Pal also once refers to Dampa Sangyé as a source for his reading the four mahāmudrā yogas into RGV I.31.\(^ {222}\) It is thus reasonable to assume that besides the traditional tantric mahāmudrā, Gampopa propounded both a mahāmudrā beyond sūtra and tantra and something that was later called sūtra-based mahāmudrā.

But only later doxographers, such as Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé, identify and classify these different approaches as (1) sūtra mahāmudrā, (2) mantra mahāmudrā, and (3) essence mahāmudrā. Sūtra mahāmudrā is connected with the Paramitāyāna but is also in accordance with tantra, and mainly consists of resting the mind in the state of nonconceptual wisdom. The method of this approach is hidden in the sūtras, wherefore sūtra mahāmudrā is also called the hidden or secret path of the sūtras (*mdo’i gsang lam*). Mantra mahāmudrā is transmitted through the Vajrayāna path of method, which involves tantric initiation. Essence mahāmudrā leads to the sudden or instantaneous realization of the natural mind (*tha ma l gyi shes pa*). It requires a realized master who bestows a particular type of blessing called the *empowerment of vajra wisdom* on a receptive and qualified disciple.\(^ {223}\) In the Kamtsang (Kaṅ tshang) transmission, the traditional sūtra mahāmudrā work is considered to be Dagpo Tashi Namgyal’s *Zla ba’i ’od zer*, and that of essence mahāmudrā the *Nges don rgya mtsho* by the Ninth Karmapa Wangchug Dorjé (Dbang phyug rdo rje) (1556–1603).\(^ {224}\)

As will be shown later, we can also distinguish sūtra and essence mahāmudrā explanations in Zhōnū Pal’s *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary, even though the technical terms are not used in it. Sūtra mahāmudrā would
be Zhönu Pal’s attempt to read the gradual path of the four mahāmudrā yogas into various passages of the Ratna\gotra\vibhāga and the Lāṅkāvata\rārasūtra. Essence mahāmudrā explanations are mainly quoted from various mahāmudrā masters in order to justify the superiority of the third dharmacakra at the beginning of the commentary. Zhönu Pal leaves no doubt that the gradual approach of the four yogas is provisional and outs\none by the instructions on how to realize the natural mind suddenly or in “one go.” For Zhönu Pal this sudden realization of mahāmudrā does not mean, however, that a practitioner can reach full enlightenment in one moment. It simply refers to the possibility of having moments of direct insight, even though the subtle qualities still have to keep on growing.

**The Zhentong Interpretation of the Ratna\gotra\vibhāga**

The Jonang tradition of zhentong Madhyamaka asserts a truly existing ultimate that is endowed with all buddha qualities and thus not “empty of an own-being” (rang stong), but “empty of other” (gzhan stong) nonexisting adventitious stains. The validity of the common Madhyamaka assertion that “all phenomena are empty of an own-being” is thus restricted to the level of apparent truth. Such a stance is mainly based on the Tathagata\garbhasūtras, but also Yogācāra works are adduced, since their theory of trisvabhāva (three natures, i.e., the imagined, dependent, and perfect natures) allow such a distinction between rangtong and zhentong. In his Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho, Dölpopa defines zhentong in the following way:

> Since it has been said that the dharmatā [or] perfect [nature], which is empty of the imagined and dependent, ultimately exists, the ultimate is well established as being zhentong only.

“Ultimate” or “true” existence should not be taken in an ontological sense, however, as becomes clear from the following passage:

> The dharmakāya is free from mental fabrications throughout beginningless time. Because of recognizing it as being free from mental fabrications, it is truly established.

The definition of the dharmakāya, or the ultimate, as being free from mental fabrications excludes the extreme of an ontological existence. “Being truly established” rather means that the experience of the dharmakāya is really true.
It is said that such an insight dawned in Dölpopa's mind during a Kalacakra retreat at Jonang, but later proponents of zhentong such as Tāranātha (1575–1634) claim the continuity of the meditation tradition of Tsen Kawoché with the zhentong of the Jonangpas. Thus, Tsen Kawoché points out that his Kashmiri teacher Sajjana already adhered to a distinction between the real and the imputed in the last dharmacakra, which was taken to have definitive meaning. According to an important collection of one hundred instructions (khrid) preserved by Jonang Künga Drölchog (Jonang Kun dga’ grol mchog) (1507–66), Tsen Kawoché said with regard to the “instruction” of zhentong:

Sajjana, the pandita from Kashmir, made the very significant statement that the Victorious One turned the dharmacakra three times. The first dharmacakra concerned the four noble truths, the middle one the lack of defining characteristics, and the final one careful distinctions. Of them, the first two did not distinguish between the real and the imputed. During the ultimate ascertainment of the final one, he taught by distinguishing between the middle and the extremes and by distinguishing between phenomena and their true nature.

Even though Sajjana's statement does not prove that zhentong was already being taught in India, as Künga Drölchog (Kun dga’ grol mchog) would have us believe, it does suggest that at least one of the hermeneutical traditions that strictly follow the Saṁdhinirmocanāsūtra already existed in Kashmir.

In his Zab mo gzhan stong dbu ma’i brgyud ’debs, Tāranātha surprisingly lists in a zhentong transmission—besides Sajjana, Zu Gawa Dorjé, and Tsen Kawoché—Ngog Loden Sherab and Chomden Rigpai Raldri (Bcom ldan rig pa’i ral gri), whose Ratnagotravibhāga commentaries are, to say the least, not exactly in line with Dölpopa’s zhentong position as it is described in his Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho, but this must be seen against the background of Dölpopa’s distinction between an extraordinary zhentong explanation with primordially existing ultimate qualities and an ordinary Mahāyāna explanation. In other words, in the eyes of the Jonangpas both Ngog Loden Sherab and Tsen Kawoché explain the Ratnagotravibhāga on an ordinary Mahāyāna level in such a way that they do not exclude the ultimate existence of qualities in a Vajrayāna context.

In his description of the diffusion of zhentong, Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé claims that it goes back to Nāgārjuna's and Maitreya's commentaries of the
VARIOUS TRADITIONS OF INTERPRETING BUDDHA NATURE

final dharmacakra (i.e., Nāgārjuna’s collection of hymns and the Maitreya works except the Abhisamayālaṃkāra), which were further commented upon by Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Candragomin, Śāntipa, and Sajjana. Both Ngog Loden Sherab and Tsen Kawoche are mentioned as having received these teachings from Sajjana, which shows that for Kongtrül, too, Ngog Loden Sherab figures significantly in the zhentong transmission. Whereas these commentaries were interpreted along the lines of both the Cittamātra and Madhyamaka views, Tsangnagpa, the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé, Dölpopa, and Longchen Rabjampa, among others, explained them according to the great Madhyamaka tradition of definitive meaning that goes beyond Cittamātra.

In other words, both the mahāmudrā and zhentong traditions refer to the transmission of the Maitreya works of Ngog Loden Sherab and Tsen Kawoche. Besides Dölpopa and his disciples, it is especially Rangjung Dorjé and Longchen Rabjampa who are of particular interest, since they are mentioned as proponents of zhentong and, at the same time, interpret the Ratnagotravibhāga from their respective mahāmudrā and dzogchen traditions. As will be shown further down, both Rangjung Dorjé’s and Longchenpa’s positions differ considerably from the zhentong of the Jonangpas, with Rangjung Dorjé’s works containing explanations that can be described as a prototype of what I propose to provisionally call “Kagyü zhentong.”

Karma Trinlepa had already described a major difference between the zhentong views of Rangjung Dorjé and a position that accords with the Jonangpa, a difference that can be confirmed by a comparison of Dölpopa’s, Sabzang Mati Panchen’s, and Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé’s Ratna-gotravibhāga commentaries. Whereas for Kongtrül buddhahood is unconditioned only inasmuch as its dharmakāya does not appear to disciples, Dölpopa claims that buddhahood is free from moments, while Mati Panchen (Mati pañ chen) in his commentary on RGV I.6 quotes the Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra according to which unconditioned buddhahood means that it does not belong to the three times. Dölpopa criticizes Kagyü mahāmudrā for claiming that the mind or thoughts are the dharmakāya, because the ultimate (taken by the Jonangpas as something that is beyond the three times) cannot be the nature of something adventitious and impermanent.

This same difference is also addressed by Tāranātha in his Zab don nyer gcig pa, in which he compares, among other things, the trisvabhāva interpretations of Dölpopa and Serdog Panchen (Gser mdog pañ chen) Śākya Chogden. Dölpopa claims that the ultimate is exclusively the unchangeable perfect nature, which is empty of the dependent and imagined natures, Śākya Chogden restricting the negandum to the imagined nature
alone. The basis of emptiness is the dependent, the entire mind, which takes on various forms of a perceived object and perceiving subject. Tāranātha concludes his comparison by pointing out one fundamental difference: Śākya Chogden takes nondual wisdom to be something multiple and momentary, whereas Dölpopa explains it as permanent in the sense of being beyond permanence and impermanence and transcending one and many.246

In a similar way to Śākya Chogden, both Rangjung Dorjé and, on this point, Zhönu Pal take the momentary natural mind as the basis of negation and the adventitious stains as the negandum. If we decide to follow Śākya Chogden and call this zhentong, we need to distinguish at least two main types of zhentong that differ in defining the basis of negation as being either completely transcendent (Jonangpa) or at least to a certain extent immanent (Śākya Chogden).

Finally, it should be noted that the opposition between zhentong and mahāmudrā can be traced back to a different understanding of the ālāyavijñāna in Asaṅga’s Mahāyānasamgraha and the Lankāvatārasūtra. In the Mahāyānasamgraha (MS I.45–48) Asaṅga maintains a clear-cut distinction between an ālāyavijñāna and a supramundane mind that arises from the seeds of the dharmadhātu (or its outflow).247 The line between pure and impure mind is so clearly drawn that ordinary beings are implicitly not included in the dharmakāya and only have the ālāyavijñāna as a basis. It was in view of this that Paramārtha (500–69) developed his theory of a ninth consciousness, the so-called amalavijñāna.248 The Lankāvatārasūtra, on the other hand, equates the ālāyavijñāna (i.e., the eighth vijñāna) with buddha nature, so much so that the latter is taken to be permeated by mental imprints and to move on under the other seven consciousnesses like the ocean and its waves. For certain proponents of mahāmudrā who take the nature of thoughts to be the dharmakāya this equation is essential, and it is not surprising that Zhönu Pal heavily relies in his Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā commentary on the Lankāvatārasūtra, even though the latter is not quoted even once in the Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā.
2. Various Positions Related to Zhönu Pal’s Interpretation

In order to assess Zhönu Pal’s way of explaining and using the Ratnagotravibhāga, it is helpful to compare it with the positions of exegetes who are close to him, both in terms of philosophical view and time. As already explained in the introduction, it is not possible to do this by simply comparing the commentaries on certain stanzas of the root text or using some similar approach, given that each master reveals his particular view in a different context, and sometimes not at all in his Ratnagotravibhāga commentary. The method I shall use here is rather to find answers to the questions of how each exegete presents the buddha qualities and emptiness, and how he uses the Ratnagotravibhāga or the teaching of buddha nature in his own hermeneutical tradition. Textual passages from the respective Ratnagotravibhāga commentaries and other works dealing with buddha nature will be selected and evaluated against the backdrop of these hermeneutical traditions.

It would go beyond the scope of this work to take all major scholars of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries into account here. We could argue, for example, that the positions of Rongtön Sheja Kunrig (Rong ston Shes bya kun rig) (1367–1449) or Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) should be considered, since Zhönu Pal was a disciple of both of them. But judging from the way Rongtön (Rong ston) comments RGV I.26 or RGV I.157–58 (J I.154–55), it is likely that Zhönu Pal did not adopt anything specific from Rongtön for his own interpretation of the Ratnagotravibhāga. To be sure, I do not wish to suggest that it is useless to compare Zhönu Pal with Rongtön, but this would require a careful study of other works by Rongtön and of his hermeneutical principles as well. Suffice it to say that Zhönu Pal must have been influenced by Rongtön in his adherence to Loden Sherab’s distinction between a buddha nature and a fully matured buddha.
It is difficult to say the extent to which Zhönu Pal was influenced by Tsongkhapa. Zhamar Chödrag Yeshé claims in his biography of Zhönu Pal that the latter was fond of Tsongkhapa’s distinction between the provisional and definitive meanings on the basis of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, but unfortunately we are not further informed how this distinction was made and if it was in line with how Zhönu Pal makes it in his commentary. Of further interest is the information from the same biography that Zhönu Pal was told by his teacher Rimibabpa Sönam Rinchen (Ri mi ’babs pa Bsod nams rin chen) (1362–1453) in 1440, after teachings at the Dagpo pass, to abandon neither the mahāmudrā view nor the tradition of the Gelugpas; and the Eighth Karmapa Mikyö Dorjé somewhat pointedly remarks that Zhönu Pal took Tsongkhapa’s view as a guideline and at the same time upheld the tradition of the Dagpo Kagyü. Even though it cannot be ruled out with certainty that Tsongkhapa gave Zhönu Pal teachings that accord with the latter’s *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary, it should be noted that some passages in the description by Zhamarpa (Zhva dmar pa)’s of Zhönu Pal’s life also suggest substantial differences with the Gelugpas. Thus, we are informed that Zhönu Pal criticized the Gelugpas for being expert in the gradual path to enlightenment without knowing Atiśa’s *Bodhipathapradīpa*, and Zhönu Pal is further reported to have had a low opinion of Tsongkhapa’s student Gyaltsab Jé. Most importantly, Zhönu Pal does not mention Tsongkhapa in his *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary even once.

Whatever instructions Zhönu Pal received from Tsongkhapa, from a doctrinal point of view it is easier to combine the nonconceptual mahāmudrā approach with Loden Sherab’s definition of ultimate truth as being completely beyond the reach of conceptual mind. In fact, Zhönu Pal does declare that he followed Loden Sherab, and this can be observed, among other places, in Zhönu Pal’s commentary on RGV I.26, in which the buddha element is explained as a cause. The root text (I.26) lists the last four vajra points, namely the buddha element (i.e., buddha nature), enlightenment, qualities, and activity, and takes the first to be the cause and the remaining three to be conditions of purification. In the *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā*, the buddha element is explained in the following way:

Here, of these four [vajra] points, the first one should be understood as the cause that brings forth the Three Jewels, after you come to rely on its [natural] purity on the basis of your own correct mental engagement, given that it is the seed of the supramundane properties.
In his *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary Zhönu Pal strictly follows Loden Sherab and takes the buddha element to be a substantial cause (*nye bar len pa'i rgyu*).[^260] Earlier, however, in his Kālacakra commentary called *Rgyud gsum gsang ba*[^261] he seems to have advocated a more sophisticated explanation in distinguishing the buddha element (or buddha nature) from a substantial cause and attending conditions, a distinction that allows buddha nature to be only a necessary cause of enlightenment.[^262] This would be similar to Gyaltsab Je’s explanation of the buddha nature as “cause without which enlightenment would not occur” (*med na mi byung bā'i rgyu mtshan*), which means that the buddha nature does not function as a fortified potential[^263] or a substantial cause.[^264] Indeed, Mikyö Dorjé states in his review of Zhönu Pal’s *Rgyud gsum gsang ba* that the latter was influenced by Tsongkhapa in his presentation of the natural and fortified potentials.[^265] Zhönu Pal is further criticized by Mikyö Dorjé for citing the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé in support of his claim that the buddha nature in sentient beings is merely their six sense fields (*āyatanas*), which resemble a buddha.[^266] But even though such an interpretation is found in Zhönu Pal’s *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary, in the context of elucidating DhS 66–68, it is clearly ruled out as a possible explanation of buddha nature in his commentary on RGV I.25.[^267] Still, it is an interesting question for future research: what exactly did Zhönu Pal, and thus a part of the later Kagyū tradition, inherit from Tsongkhapa?

It is evident, on the other hand, that Zhönu Pal’s main concern in his *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary is to demonstrate that the *Ratnagotravibhāga* offers doctrinal support for the direct mahāmudrā path of the Dagpo Kagyü. This is what he repeatedly claims, basing himself as he does on Gampopa,[^268] Jigten Sumgön,[^269] and various other mahāmudrā masters. Moreover, his theory of subtle buddha qualities hints at a synthesis of Loden Sherab’s position with commentarial traditions other than those of the Gelugpas. For these reasons, the background against which Zhönu Pal’s position will be evaluated is restricted (apart from Loden Sherab’s summary of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*) to a narrow selection of masters of the Kagyü, Nyingma, and Jonang schools who were active in the fourteenth century, a time of dramatic intellectual change in Tibet.

### The Position of the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé

Rangjung Dorjé is said to have composed a summary of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, on the basis of which his disciple Karma Könzhön (b. 1333) and
then later Karma Trinlepa wrote commentaries of their own. Unfortunately none of these three works has come down to us, so that we have to rely on other sources if we wish to assess Rangjung Dorjé's contribution to the exegesis of the Ratnagotravibhāga and buddha nature—for instance, his recently discovered commentary on the Dharmadhātu-stotra or his Snying po bstan pa and autocommentary on the Zab mo nang gi don. The latter work shows how the doctrine of buddha nature can be blended with mahāmudrā and dzogchen in a tantric context.

The introduction of Rangjung Dorjé's Dharmadhātu-stotra commentary contains the interesting remark that the Ratnagotravibhāga and the Madhyamakāvatāra teach in detail how the form kāyas and the dharma-kāya arise from the accumulations of merit and wisdom respectively. That this should not be understood in the sense that the kāyas are produced from scratch can be seen from the way Rangjung Dorjé explains the seven examples of how the dharma-dhatu (equated by him with the buddha nature or even the Buddha) abides in all sentient beings. The first example, of the essence of butter in milk and manifest butter, is taken as signifying that the Buddha appears through the causal act of removing all hindrances on the path, but it is not that he arises on his own, through another, a combination of both or from no cause. The second example of the Dharmadhātu-stotra (DhS 5–6), namely the lamp inside a vase, illustrates for Rangjung Dorjé that the dharma-dhatu does not mean that things are merely empty. In order to show that it refers to the two types of wisdom (the one that knows what reality is like, and the one that knows its extent), Rangjung Dorjé quotes and explains RGV I.87–88 (J I.85–86):

That this is certainly the case can be seen from the Uttaratantra (i.e., the Ratnagotravibhāga), in which it has been said:

In brief, it should be known that there are four synonyms, The dharmakāya and so forth, Reflecting four aspects of meaning With regard to the immaculate sphere (i.e., dharma-dhatu).

[The four are:] [It contains] inseparable buddha properties, Its potential is attained as it is (i.e., as dharma-tā), It is not of a false, deceptive nature, And it is quiescent by nature throughout beginningless time.
Under the aspect of [it as] fruit, [the sphere] is taught as being inseparable from the buddha properties; under the aspect of [it as] cause, [it is taught] as the naturally present and fortified potentials; under the aspect of [it as] the two truths, as a correct and nondeceptive valid cognition; and under the aspect of [it as] abandonment, as being naturally quiescent and quiescent in terms of [having abandoned] adventitious [stains]. To be sure, [these aspects] are not essentially separate. This is explained in detail in the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdesa-sūtra*.275

In other words, both the naturally present and the fortified potentials are simply an aspect of the dharmadhatu and thus not different from the dharmakāya. This becomes particularly clear in Rangjung Dorjé’s commentary on the seventh example (DhS 14–15), which illustrates that something with no essence (namely the banana tree) has a fruit with an essence. Rangjung Dorjé explains:

> When you split a banana tree, no essence is found; nevertheless first a fruit ripens and then it is eaten. Likewise, when you analyze saṁsāra, no essence whatever is found. [For] even saṁsāra is [only] thoughts…. Thoughts have no essence and are like an illusion and a mirage. Still, from the transformation of the basis of these very [thoughts], form kāyas emerge that benefit all sentient beings. Therefore, a consciousness that is caught in the net of defilements is called saṁsāra. By becoming free from defilements, it turned into the all-accomplishing wisdom, which is nectar for sentient beings.276

It is noteworthy that for Rangjung Dorjé the notion of growth is restricted to the form kāyas.277 The hollow banana tree serves to point out that you do not find an essence upon analysis, which does not rule out that qualities of the dharmakāya are present (the dharmakāya being beyond the reach of the intellect). Contrary to such an understanding, Śākya Chogden (1428–1507) cautions in his commentary on DhS 15–16 that in the example the sweet fruits (bananas) are not taught as being the essence of the banana tree. This means that even though sentient beings possess a buddha element, it is not exactly the case that the essence of sentient beings is a buddha.278 Rangjung Dorjé’s view on the relation between the buddha nature and the dharmakāya can best be seen from his summary of the seven examples in the *Dharmadhātustotra*:
Thus the stages of teaching the natural purity of the element by way of examples [are:] The example of butter illustrates the essence. At the time of [existing as] a sentient being a mere sentient being appears and not a buddha, just as in milk a mixture of water and butter appears [and not pure butter]. When you have become a buddha, you are not mingled with stains; this is like the appearance of butter which is not in the least mixed with liquid. The example of the lamp illustrates the noncontradictory inherent qualities. Even though the light of qualities does not differ at all, regardless of whether you are purified, it appears to become stronger and weaker depending on the extent to which you are enveloped by hindrances. The example of the gem illustrates that the proper qualities of the dharmakāya are free from all hindrances and that the [latter] possesses the quality of engaging in nonconceptual activity. The example of gold illustrates cause and effect, namely the unfabricated and the sambhogakāya, which latter is of the nature of virtue and of the pure mental faculty (yid). The example of the rice and its husk illustrates that the intellect does not see until it is liberated from the imprints of ignorance. The example of the banana tree is an example of the fruit of the nirmāṇakāya, namely the transformation of the basis of [your] clinging and thoughts.279

To sum up, Rangjung Dorjé fully equates the dharmakāya with the dharmadhātu, which is thus inseparably endowed with buddha qualities. The latter are simply hindered by adventitious stains and unfold fully at the time of purification. In other words, the accumulations of merit and wisdom only cause the kāyas indirectly, in that the accumulations enable the removal of all hindrances and the manifestation of what has always existed. It is noteworthy, though, that the only example implying real growth (namely the fruit of a banana tree) concerns the nirmāṇakāya, but the way Rangjung Dorjé interprets it, we could infer that the hollow banana tree only stands for not finding any essence in the thoughts of the impure mind, and that these empty thoughts coexist with all buddha qualities. Further down, we will see that in tantric contexts Rangjung Dorjé indeed claims that the qualities of the form kāyas exist primordially.

Some Tibetan sources280 speak of Rangjung Dorjé as an adherent of zhentong and even of his possibly having influenced Dölpopa. Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé, whose Ratnagotravibhāga commentary is generally referred to as representing the “zhentong tradition” of the Karma Kagyü school, says in the
colophon of his commentary that he has presented the seven essential vajra points of the Ratnagotravibhāga in terms of phenomena and their true nature (dharmatā) following Rangjung Dorjé’s lead. In his description of how zhentong spread, Kongtrül mentions, after Tsangnagpa, the second Buddha Rangjung Dorjé, suggesting that the latter stood in a “zhentong tradition” that came down to him through Tsangnagpa. Karma Trin­lep­a explicitly calls Rangjung Dorjé a zhentongpa (i.e., a follower of the “empty-of-other [view]”):

My lama, Omniscient [Seventh Karmapa Chödrag Gyatso (Chos grags rgya mtsho) (1454–1506)] says: “Nowadays, some who are proud of being proponents of zhentong [claim that] a permanent, stable, steadfast, unchangeable ultimate truly exists, and since it is empty of the adventitious [stains resulting from] clinging to an object and a subject, [they claim that] it is profound zhentong. Since they thus rejoice in an eternalist view, this is [but] the deceiving words of propounding a profound emptiness—the clinging to an extreme—and not the pure zhentong taught in the sūtras. Being confused about Jina Maitreya’s teaching [according to which] the true nature of mind (sems nyid) is not empty of unsurpassable qualities, they say that the sixty-four qualities that are [already] present at [the level of the] ground are empty of adventitious stains and call this zhentong. [Thus] they demean the Victorious One by saying that he wanders in saṁsāra, inasmuch as a perfect buddha whose hindrances are exhausted and whose wisdom is fully blossomed [would then] experience the suffering of the six realms—hell and the like. What has been taught in accordance with the tantras, the Bodhisattva Trilogy (sems 'grel [skor gsum]), many sūtras, and the Maitreya works is the zhentong professed by Rangjung Dorjé.” Thus I have heard in the discourses of the Jinendra (i.e., the Seventh Karmapa).

The Eighth Karmapa Mikyö Dorjé, who claims to follow Rangjung Dorjé, also takes buddha nature in the sense that sentient beings do not possess their own qualities. These qualities, rather, are possessed by the Tathāgata, who is a buddha endowed with both purities; and nature (garbha) refers to the fact that all sentient beings are pervaded by the Tathāgata’s tantric form kāyas, and that his dharmakāya of luminosity is inseparable from the suchness of sentient beings.
In the above-quoted passage, Karma Trinlepa obviously distinguishes Rangjung Dorje’s zhentong from an “eternalist” version of it, and thus also from the zhentong upheld by Dölpopa and Sabzang Mati Panchen. My comparison of their Ratnagotravibhāga commentaries with the one of Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé has shown that the latter differs considerably with regard to the explanation of unconditioned buddhahood in RGV I.6. Kongtrül quotes Rongtön’s classification of four types of being unconditioned (asamskṛta) and explains that even though the dharma-kāya has, among other things, an unconditioned quality to it (because it does not appear to disciples), it is not the case that it is unconditioned; for if it were it would contradict that it possesses knowledge, compassion, and power. Dölpopa claims with reference to RGV I.6 in his Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho, on the other hand, that the “unconditioned nature of buddhahood” refers to the fact that this is free from momentariness, while Mati Panchen in his commentary on RGV I.6 quotes the Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra according to which unconditioned means not being subject to the three times. Dölpopa’s critique of the Kagyū mahāmudrā position that realization is attained by recognizing that the nature of mind or thoughts is the dharma-kāya must also be seen in the light of this different conception of the ultimate and its relation to the apparent truth, for the dharma-kāya cannot be the nature of something adventitious if it is taken as wholly stable and permanent.

Given these differences, some scholars have assumed up to now that Situ Panchen Chökyi Jungné (Situ pañ chen Chos kyi byung gnas) (1699/1700–1774) blended the seemingly irreconcilable zhentong and mahāmudrā positions and spread them throughout all the Kagyū traditions of Kham (khams), and that followers of the nonsectarian movement (ris med), such as Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé, described Rangjung Dorje and others as zhentongpas in a biased way. Karma Trinlepa’s remark and its conformity with Kongtrül’s different understanding of RGV I.6 suggest rather that Kongtrül’s description of Rangjung Dorje should be taken more seriously—namely that the latter actually upheld a Kagyū version of zhentong, even though he himself did not call it that. Based on the autocommentary on the Zab mo nang gi don, I will show that Rangjung Dorje’s so-called zhentong is mainly based on Asaṅga’s distinction between the ālayavijñāna and a supramundane mind in the Mahāyānasamgraha and on a combination of this Yogācāra explanation with mahāmudrā and dzogchen.

It is an important concern of zhentong to clearly distinguish that which is empty from that of which it is empty. In attempting to do so, Dölpopa contrasted a kun gzhi rnam shes (ālayavijñāna), which is the basis of saṁsāra, from the pure basis of buddha qualities, which he called kun gzhi′i
ye shes ("wisdom of the [primordial] ground"). Even though Rangjung Dorjé does not make use of Dölpopa's terminology (i.e., kun gzhi'i ye shes), he distinguishes in his autocommentary on the Zab mo nang gi don a ground (kun gzhi), which can also mean suchness, from a kun gzhi rnam shes, namely the normal "ground consciousness":

In this regard, if ground (kun gzhi) is not mentioned [together with] the word consciousness, ground may refer to suchness. Therefore, consciousness is mentioned [together with it].

This distinction is made in the context of explaining the pure and impure aspects of mind that function as a cause of everything, the topic of the first chapter in the Zab mo nang gi don. The first three pādās of the first chapter are:

As to the cause, it is the beginningless true nature of mind (sems nyid);

Even though it has no dimension and does not fall into any possible [conceptual, ontological, or metaphysical] category, it unfolds [as] unimpeded play.

The commentary starts by pointing out that in the common language of all yānas the "true nature of mind" (sems nyid) is known under two aspects, namely possessing purity and being impure. Mind in its purity is illustrated by recourse to the simile of the element space in the Ratnagotravibhāga, in which the purity of mind is compared to space, which is without support, and the defiled mind to the supported elements (earth being supported by water, water by air, and air by space):

In the Uttaratantra [Ratnagotravibhāga I.55–57] it has been said: "Earth is supported by water, water by air, and air by space. But space has no support [among] the elements of air, water, and earth. Similarly, the skandhas, elements, and sense faculties are supported by karmān and defilements, karmān and defilements by [constantly] uncalled-for mental engagement, and uncalled-for mental engagement is supported by the purity of mind. The nature of mind, however, has no support in any phenomena." These [stanzas] express the buddha nature (sangs rgyas kyi snying po) as mind, which means that it is the basis of saṁsāra and nirvāṇa in their entirety.
This explanation of buddha nature as a basis of samsāra and nirvāṇa is further reinforced by quoting a stanza from Saraha’s Dohākosāgīti, stanza 43:

The true nature of mind (sems nyid) alone is the seed of everything;  
I prostrate to [this] mind,  
In which worldly existence and nirvāṇa spreads,  
And which is like a wish-fulfilling jewel in bestowing the desired fruit.\(^{305}\)

As we shall see, for Rangjung Dorjé the true nature of mind (sems nyid) (as buddha nature) functions as the basis of samsāra, in that it contains the stainlessness of the eight consciousnesses, which must be taken as mere appearances empty of duality. With such a mahāmudrā interpretation of buddha nature, Rangjung Dorjé can still draw a clear line between the pure and impure mind, while following Asaṅga’s restriction of the ālayavijñāna\(^{306}\) to that which merely consists of all seeds or mental imprints of skandhas, elements, and āyatanas, which are said to be “embraced by false imagining” and to be the root of all hindrances.\(^{307}\) In conformity with the Abhidharmasamuccaya and the Mahāyānasamgraha, the ālayavijñāna is not considered to be the cause of buddha wisdom; the properties of purification arise rather from the dharmakāya. This becomes clear from an answer to a rhetorical question in the autocertainty of the Zab mo nang gi don:

Question: How are the properties of purification produced?  
They are supported by buddha nature, [inasmuch as] it is the dharmakāya of the above-mentioned purity of mind.\(^{308}\)

In support of this, Rangjung Dorjé refers to RGV I.152 (J.149), in which the natural and fortified potentials are compared respectively to the “underground treasure” and the “fruit from the tree.” By further quoting the Mahāyānasamgraha (I.45–48), Rangjung Dorjé indicates his predilection for Asaṅga’s clear distinction between the ālayavijñāna and that which serves as a basis for the fortified potential (in the following called the “Yogācāra portion”):

If that which contains all seeds, [namely] the consciousness of maturation (i.e., the ālayavijñāna), is the cause of all defilements, how can it be the seed of the supramundane mind, which is the
remedy for this \( \text{ālayavijñāna} \)? The supramundane mind is unfamiliar (\( ma \ 'dris \ pa \)); thus there is no [mental] imprint from it [in the \( \text{ālayavijñāna} \)]. Question: “If [its] mental imprint does not exist [there], from which seed must it be said to arise?”

Answer: It arises from the seed [or]\(^{309} \) mental imprint of studying,\(^ {310} \) which is the outflow of the very pure dharmadhātu.\(^ {311} \)

Objection: “Is the mental imprint of studying identical with \( \text{ngo bo nyid} \)\(^ {312} \) the \( \text{ālayavijñāna} \) or not? If it were identical\(^ {313} \) with the \( \text{ālayavijñāna} \), how would it be suitable as the seed of the remedy for it? If you say that it is not identical with it, you [must] see what the basis for this seed of the mental imprint of studying is.” [Answer:] The mental imprint of studying [occurs] based on the enlightenment of the buddhas.\(^ {314} \) Even though it enters into the consciousness of maturation (i.e., \( \text{ālayavijñāna} \)) in the same way as water [into] milk, arising together with the basis into which it enters, it is not [this] \( \text{ālayavijñāna} \), given that it is the seed of the remedy for [the \( \text{ālayavijñāna} \)]. From a small mental imprint it [gradually] turns into an average one and then a big one, since you will [eventually] be endowed with [the fruits of] having studied, reflected, and meditated many times. It [must be] regarded as the seed of the dharmakāya. Being the remedy for the \( \text{ālayavijñāna} \), it is not identical with\(^ {315} \) the \( \text{ālayavijñāna} \). Even though [this seed] belongs to this world, it is the outflow of the very pure supramundane dharmadhātu, and thus the seed of the supramundane mind. [And] even though the supramundane mind may not have arisen [yet], it is [still] the remedy for entanglement in all defilements and migration to lower realms, and [the remedy that] suppresses all faults. It supports the connection with buddhas and bodhisattvas.\(^ {316} \)

Although it (i.e., this seed) is [still] of a mundane nature for beginner bodhisattvas, it is regarded as being included in the dharmakāya, and for śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas as being included in the “body of liberation.”\(^ {317} \) It is not the \( \text{ālayavijñāna} \), but included in the dharmakāya and the “body of liberation.” As it gradually increases,\(^ {318} \) turning from being small into being average and then big, the consciousness of maturation wanes and becomes completely transformed, [so that] the \( \text{ālayavijñāna} \), which comprises all seeds, even does not exist [any more], having been abandoned in every respect.\(^ {319} \)
Rangjung Dorje adds to this *Mahāyānasamgraha* passage the following remark:

If some think that the fortified potential has newly arisen, it is not so. The naturally present potential is the dharmadhātu. As to the array of eight (the ālayavijñāna and so on) in it, they have been placed [there] and are characterized by false imagining. Likewise, the true nature, namely the stainlessness, of the eight accumulations [of consciousness] exists as the nature (rang bzbin) of the four wisdoms. Thanks to the virtuous elements that have been placed [in the mind] by proper thought and that are supported by the enlightenment of the buddhas, previous stains are destroyed, and the delusion of the eight accumulations [of consciousness] ceases to exist. This, then, has been called the “wisdom of the transformation of the basis.” ... Stainlessness [of mind] is regarded as wisdom, and the [state of] being mingled with stains [is regarded] as consciousness.

Nothing is newly produced, since the nature of the four wisdoms already exists as the true nature or stainlessness of the eight consciousnesses. In other words, the four wisdoms, or the part of the naturally pure ultimate that is temporarily covered by the adventitious stains of the eight consciousnesses, already exist. It is this part that is revealed by the virtuous elements that have been placed in the mind (and that are supported by the enlightenment of the buddhas rather than the ālayavijñāna). It should be noted that this stainlessness of the eight consciousnesses is thus not included in the ālayavijñāna. To return to the example used in the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, even though water and milk are mixed, they are still “unfamiliar” (ma 'dris pa). The sentence “Although it (i.e., this seed) is [still] of a mundane nature for beginner bodhisattvas, it is regarded as being included in the dharmakāya” (MS I.48) suggests that ordinary beings are not included in the dharmakāya, having as they do the ālayavijñāna as their only basis. Rangjung Dorje follows Asaṅga in drawing a clear-cut distinction between the impure and pure mind, implicitly equating ordinary sentient beings with the ālayavijñāna (including its active forms of consciousness) and excluding them from the dharmakāya. The positive factors of the path are but the outflow of the pure dharmadhātu, with an increasingly larger part of it manifesting itself as the hindering defilements of the impure mind are removed.

To review, even though Rangjung Dorje only distinguishes an ālayavijñāna (kun gzhi rnam shes) that is the impure mind from a kun gzhi (which
may also refer to suchness), he in fact distinguishes the "ālayavijñāna from the pure dharmadhātu in such a way that it would be an easy play on words to call the latter kun gzhi ye shes, inasmuch as the manifestation of the pure dharmadhātu (or suchness) is called the "wisdom of the transformation of the basis."

The Eighth Karmapa Mikyo Dorje includes the same passage from the Mahāyānasamgraha in his commentary on the Abhisamayālaṅkāra, weaving it into a general outline or introductory presentation in the second paragraph of the first chapter, which deals with the "foundation of accomplishment," or, for him, buddha nature. Indeed it represents an essential part of his "zhentong interpretation" of buddha nature, which again centers on a similar distinction between a kun gzhi rnam shes and a kun gzhi, with the only difference that Mikyo Dorje uses the term kun gzhi ye shes instead of kun gzhi. Kun gzhi is equated then with the transformation of the basis in the Dharmadharmatavibhāga, the naturally present potential, and the synonyms for emptiness (including suchness) in the Madhyānta-vibhāga.

It is probably in view of this interpretation of Mikyo Dorje that Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé writes in his own commentary on the Zab mo nang gi don with reference to Rangjung Dorje’s autocommentary:

Having in this regard designated in [his] autocommentary the dharmatā or suchness, viewed as the ground of all of saṁsāra and nirvāṇa, by the term kun gzhi (ground), he [taught] within this [part of the commentary] that the [mind that] is endowed with purity is the "wisdom of the ground of everything," while under the aspect of [it as the mind] containing all seeds he taught that it is the "consciousness of the ground of everything" (ālayavijñāna). This is a twofold division of the mind into pure and impure.

As can be easily seen from the above-quoted passages, Kongtrül presents the contents of Rangjung Dorje’s autocommentary in line with Mikyo Dorje’s zhentong understanding, and in using the term kun gzhi ye shes, Kongtrül wanted to imply exactly that, and not that Rangjung Dorje had the same zhentong view as Dölpopa. The fact that the autocommentary on the Zab mo nang gi don was already written in 1325, eight years before Dölpopa became a zhentongpa in 1333, could be thus easily explained by seeing in Rangjung Dorje’s sharp distinction between the impure and pure (i.e., the kun gzhi rnam shes and kun gzhi) an older layer or a predecessor of a "zhentong position," which was not necessarily called
that and was nothing other than a particular interpretation of Asaṅga’s Yogācāra. If we follow Kongtrül or the Sakya master Mangtö Ludrub (Mang thos Klu sgrub), who claims that Rangjung Dorjé held a zhentong view before Dölpopa, we have to add for clarity’s sake that it was a different one.

But as already mentioned above, the term zhentong is not found in Rangjung Dorjé’s works. A little further down, though, in his elucidation of the term beginningless nature of mind (sems nyid thog med) in the first pāda of the first chapter in the Zab mo nang gi don, Rangjung Dorjé uses the term liberated from other, which resembles zhentong:

As to the “beginningless [mind],” since a beginning and end of time is a [mere] conceptual superimposition, [the cause of everything] is here [taken as] the true nature (rang gi ngo bo) of both the stainless [mind] and the [mind] mingled with stains, it is precisely this dependent arising; and it is completely liberated (i.e., free) from [all] else. Since there is no other beginning than it, one speaks of beginningless time.

Now it would have been just as easy to say “empty of other” (gzhan gyis stong pa) as “completely liberated from [all] else” (gzhan las rnam par grol ba). But as we shall see further down, Rangjung Dorjé may have had other reasons for not using the term. Karma Trinlepa must have had this passage in mind when he called Rangjung Dorjé a zhentongpa. A permanent and stable ultimate is clearly excluded here. The basis of emptiness is the true nature of mind (sems nyid), which is also the buddha nature endowed with inseparable qualities. If Dölpopa’s more transcendent zhentong view had already gained prevalence at the time Rangjung Dorjé wrote these lines, the inclusion of “dependent arising” would have been a very clever move to set off his position from it.

It is also for this reason that Rangjung Dorjé wants us to understand Asaṅga’s sharp distinction between the ālayavijñāna and the supramundane mind as being in harmony with Saraha’s famous stanza stating that the mind is the seed of both saṁsāra and nirvāṇa. With the help of the latter, Rangjung Dorjé introduces into his commentary a mahāmudrā interpretation of buddha nature. This synthesis of Yogācāra and mahāmudrā led to some misinterpretations of Rangjung Dorjé, which Mikyö Dorjé addresses in his Abhisamayālaṁkāra commentary (Mikyö Dorjé adheres to a similar synthesis, equating as he does the actual wisdom of the ground (kun gzhi ye shes) with buddha nature:
VARIOUS POSITIONS RELATED TO ZHÖNU PAL’S INTERPRETATION

Some fools say that the omniscient Karmapa, the glorious Rang-jung [Dorjé], asserts that the purport of the Mahāyānottaratantra [Ratnagotravibhāga] is: “Buddha nature exists in an inseparable way in the dharmadhātu of the mind of sentient beings.” This noble being did not put it that way. In [his] auto commentary on the Zab mo nang gi don, he makes a twofold classification in calling both—the pure and the impure—“mind.” Having explained that possessing impure mental impulses [means] to “possess mind” (sems can) (i.e., to be a sentient being), he says that such sentient beings do not possess the dharmadhātu. Moreover, he takes these sentient beings themselves to be the adventitious stains, which occur because of the false imagining that deviates from the dharmadhātu. Having called the pure mind natural mind, original protector, original Buddha, and so on, he says that [this mind] is the one that possesses the mode of being inseparable from the buddha qualities.

If this assessment of Rangjung Dorjé’s view is correct (and we have to admit that it is so with regard to the distinction between a pure and impure mind, as based on the Mahāyānasamgraha), we wonder how well it reflects Rangjung Dorjé’s mahāmudrā teachings. In the Rang byung rdo rje’i mgur rnams, the following mahāmudrā definition of the term ground (kun gzhi) is given:

The ground is the basis of all saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. When not realized, it is saṃsāra, and when realized it is the “heart of the Tathāgata” (i.e., buddha nature). [This is how] the nature (ngo bo) of the “ground” has been expressed. For example, just as reflections appear in a polished mirror, the consciousness of the manifold [world] occurs and ceases in the stainless sphere of your own mind, because the clinging to the duality of an object and subject appears and occurs naturally in the sphere [of your own mind]. Saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are not two but one in essence (ngo bo). When you do not realize this, you are confused; when you realize it, you are liberated. Neither what must be realized nor the one who realizes it exists. Nevertheless, clinging to them as though they were two is the basis of saṃsāra. If you see the nature of nonduality, buddha nature (rgyal ba’i snying po) is actualized.
The “Yogācāra portion” of the autocommentary (see above) requires distinguishing between the mirror of the stainless sphere of the mind, which displays the various reflections of the world, and the impure dualistic clinging to these appearances. Still, the ground can function as the basis of both, nirvāṇa and saṃśāra, depending on whether the reflections in the mirror of stainless mind are or are not recognized for what they are. It is in this sense that Rangjung Dorjé takes saṃśāra and nirvāṇa as one in essence, while adhering at the same time to the distinction between a pure and impure mind.

But things get even more complex: the following three pādas of the Zab mo nang gi don introduce a description of mind on the basis of the dzogchen categories essence (ngo bo), nature (rang bzhin), and compassionate responsiveness (thugs rje). The first five pādas (repeating the first three) of the first chapter in the Zab mo nang gi don are:

As to the cause, it is the beginningless true nature of mind
(sems nyid);
Even though it has no dimension and does not fall into any possible [conceptual, ontological, or metaphysical] category,
It unfolds [as] unimpeded play.
Therefore [its] essence is empty, [its] nature clear,
[And its compassionate responsiveness] is unimpeded, [able to]
appear as anything.

Rangjung Dorjé's autocommentary on pādas 3–5 is:

This very mind presents the aspect of an unfolding play that, in its momentary consciousness, is unimpeded in itself. In view of this, [its] nature (rang bzhin) is present as emptiness and as natural luminosity. These two are the ground, given that from it the individual forms of the accumulation of mental factors and the seven accumulations of consciousness appear unimpeded and in one moment. In the impure state it has been taught as being the “mind,” “mental faculty,” and “consciousness.” When pure, it is expressed by the terms three kāyas and wisdom.

The true nature of mind (sems nyid), which is again referred to as the “ground,” is called mind in an impure state and wisdom in a pure state. It should be noted that the appearances of the impure consciousness (mental factors, etc.) are said to appear from the ground, whose nature is taken to
be emptiness and natural luminosity. It should be further noted that Rangjung Dorjé introduces the correct dzogchen terminology, according to which the *essence* (*ngo bo*) is normally defined as emptiness. But in his commentary he uses *nature* (*rang bzhin*) instead of *ngo bo* for emptiness, having undoubtedly been aware of the possible confusion that results from the quoted Yogācāra passage, in which it is said that the “essence” (*ngo bo*) of the ālayavijñāna is not the seed of the dharma-kāya. Having already used the term *rang bzhin* for emptiness, he could not use it again for clarity (*gsal*). But in order to solidify the impression that he is still commenting on the three dzogchen categories, the term *rang bzhin* is skilfully repeated in the explanation of the term *gsal*, namely in the expression *rang bzhin gyis 'od gsal ba* (“natural luminosity”).

To sum up, in his explanation of buddha nature, Rangjung Dorjé combines three different strands of interpretations:

1. The mahāmudrā interpretation stemming from Saraha
2. The interpretation according to Asaṅga’s *Mahāyānasamgraha*
3. The dzogchen interpretation

In other words, for Rangjung Dorjé, well-founded mahāmudrā and dzogchen explanations need be combined with Asaṅga’s Yogācāra distinction. Mikyö Dorjé for his part criticizes in his *Abhisamayālamkāra* commentary those followers of mahāmudrā among his contemporaries whose confusion, he says, is a hundred thousand times greater than the assertion: “The ālayavijñāna, by being purified, becomes the fruit, [namely] the mirror-like wisdom.” In the introduction to his *Madhyamakavatāra* commentary we find an interesting explanation of the mahāmudrā approach. It is said that statements in mahāmudrā teachings to the effect that thoughts can appear as dharma-kāya (given that saṁsāra and nirvāṇa are the same in essence) simply reflect the realization that thoughts do not exist as anything other than their dharmatā, not that thoughts can appear as the real dharma-kāya:

When the Madhyamaka view of this [mahāmudrā system] has arisen in the mindstream, the natural mind is said to have been actualized and the dharma-kāya to have been made directly [manifest]. When you realize that phenomena (dharmin), such as sprouts and thoughts, are nothing other than their [respective] true nature (dharma-tā), you use the verbal convention “thoughts appear as dharma-kāya.”
We do not know if Rangjung Dorjé was of the same opinion, but given his attempt to combine mahāmudrā with Yogācāra, we should be at least careful not to define his position one-sidedly on the sole basis of his mahāmudrā teachings.\(^{346}\)

Directly related to the question of how Rangjung Dorjé could blend the mahāmudrā- and Yogācāra-based explanations of buddha nature is how he defines the two truths. In the first seven pādas of the ninth chapter of the Zab mo nang gi don, the chapter on purification and its basis, the two truths are both explained as being contained in the stainless buddha nature. The root text of the Zab mo nang gi don is:

As for the [buddha] element in sentient beings, it is the stainless buddha nature (sangs rgyas kyi snying po),

Endowed with the two truths.

This [is stated] in the Vajrajñāna[saṃucchayatantra]:

*Apparent* means to appear as a perceived and a perceiver.

[This] truth is like [a reflection of] the moon in water.

*Ultimate* refers to the eighteen [types of] emptiness.

[This] truth is called *nondual wisdom*.\(^{347}\)

Rangjung Dorjé explains in his autocommentary:

What exists ultimately? It is the mind beyond every net of thought, the naturally pure element of sentient beings, [and] the buddha nature (sangs rgyas kyi snying po)\(^{349}\).\(^{349}\) These two exist, and so are expressed by these [terms]. Therefore it is stated: “As for the...[buddha] element of sentient beings, it is the stainless buddha nature endowed with the two truths.” In this regard, the buddha nature is simply the nonexistence of the stains [or] delusion of the above-mentioned eight accumulations of consciousness,\(^{350}\) but those who have not actualized the meaning of the two truths are deluded with regard to the mode of dependent arising, cling to two different views,\(^{351}\) and fall into saṃsāra.\(^{352}\)

From this it is not possible to infer that the two truths are one in essence but different isolates (ngo bo gcig la ldog pa tha dad),\(^{353}\) for it is not the ordinary apparent truth which is included in buddha nature here, but only the stainlessness of the eight forms of consciousness. Indeed, this part of the commentary shows how Rangjung Dorjé blends the above-mentioned mahāmudrā and Yogācāra strands of thought. Once apparent truth is
defined as the stainless forms of consciousness or mere appearance (see below), both truths can be taken as being inseparable and included in buddha nature (and clinging to them as being separate results in samsāra). This is what enables Rangjung Dorjé to accommodate his mahāmudrā teachings. But it does not mean that buddha nature is equated with the ālayavijñāna, as in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra. The inclusion of only a restricted apparent truth within buddha nature still allows Rangjung Dorjé to uphold a more moderate “zhentong,” or rather zhendröl (gzhan grol), distinction between the level of “normal” deluded appearances and buddha nature. This becomes clearer in a further definition of the ultimate truth, on the basis of a passage from the second chapter of the Guhyasamājatantra, according to which the nonarisen mind is free from all entities, skandhas, and so on. The apparent truth is further elucidated along the lines of Yogācāra philosophy, namely the tenet that apparent truth implies that no dualistic appearances are true:

What has been imagined as the duality of a perceived and a perceiver does not exist at all, given the pronouncement [in MAV I.3] by Venerable Maitreyā: “A consciousness arises that produces the appearances of objects, sentient beings, a self, and perceptions. There is no [corresponding outer] object, and since [such] an object does not exist, that [other, i.e., a perceiving subject] does not exist either.” Thus it has been said that no perceived [objects] and perceiving [subjects] of the imagined [nature] exist at all. Well then, how can this be presented as a truth? [The answer is:] Even though it does not exist, [something] appears. That is why it is called apparent truth, since its nature (rang gi ngo bo nyid) is that of not being deceptive.

In response to the objection that these mere appearances would then be the ultimate truth, since the ultimate truth is defined as not being deceptive in the treatises on logic, Rangjung Dorjé further clarifies his understanding of the ultimate truth:

These [mere appearances] are presented as the expressible ultimate (paryāyaparamārtha), whereas the ultimate truth [here] is that which is related to the principle of true nature (dharmaṭāyuktī), [namely] the natural emptiness previously mentioned when presenting the eighteen great [types of] emptiness.
In other words, buddha nature or the pure mind includes “mere appearances” in the form of the expressible ultimate truth, and it is only the expressible ultimate truth that is taken as apparent truth here. That it is different from what is ordinarily meant by apparent truth is clear from Rangjung Dorje’s Dharmadhûtustotra commentary, where the two aspects (nirvikāra and aviparyāsa) of the perfect nature in MAV III.116cd are explained in the following way:

The two [aspects of the perfect], the unchangeable and unmistaken, are taken [respectively] as the defining characteristics of the two truths. Acceptance by common consent (lokaprasiddha) and acceptance by reason (yuktiprasiddha) are varieties of the apparent truth.\(^\text{359}\)

This means that the unchangeable perfect is taken as the ultimate, while the perfect in terms of being unmistaken is taken as a restricted form of apparent truth, which does not include acceptance by common consent or the like.

The relation between the two truths is then defined as being neither identical nor different:

The two truths, which have been explained in such a way, are suchness and that which is liberated from other, in the same way as they are phenomena (dharma) and their true nature (dharmaṭa). They can be expressed as being neither identical nor different. This is how the buddhas realized it, and it is also the meaning of the entire Dharma that has been taught.\(^\text{360}\)

In other words, the apparent truth is dharmas understood as mere appearances, or suchness; and the ultimate truth is the dharmaṭa or that which is “liberated from other.” As noted above, Rangjung Dorje prefers the term liberated from other (gzhan las grol ba) to the term empty of other (gzhan gyis stong pa). His term, probably newly created, bespeaks his inclination to dzogchen teachings, as evident from his usage of the three dzogchen categories in his commentary on the initial stanzas of the first chapter in the Zab mo nang gi don. In fact, “being liberated” could refer to the dzogchen notion of rang grol, a term that describes the mind having already been liberated on its own—without effort, so to speak.

Rangjung Dorje’s term gzhan las grol ba, then, could combine the aforementioned Yogacāra-based zhentong distinction with the dzogchen line of thought. The mind, which is already naturally liberated, is at the same time
empty of or free from something other than its nature, namely the adventitious stains. Emptiness in the Maitreya works is defined according to the canonical formula for *being empty* as the absence of something (namely duality) in something else that exists (false imagining and emptiness). In this context, emptiness is taken as a “state of being free from [something] (bral ba nyid). Thus it has been stated in the *Madhyāntavibhāgabhāṣya*:

Emptiness refers to this false imagining (*abhūtāparikalpa*) that is free from the relation between a perceived and a perceiver.

Contrary to the notion of mere appearance (apparent truth), the notion, namely, that appearances are perceived just as they are (not, that is, as a dualistic appearance), the state of “being liberated from other” also has a positive connotation. Being the ultimate truth, it is equated with natural emptiness (*svabhāvānyatā*, at times also called *prakṛtīnnyatā*) in line with the Yogācāra view that the absence of duality is considered an all-pervasive positive quality. “That which is liberated from other” refers to this natural emptiness. As we have seen above, it is also equated with the true nature of mind (*sems nyid*) or buddha nature, and given the similar meaning of *grol ba* (liberated) and *bral ba* (being free) in this context, and the equation of emptiness (*stong pa nyid*) with the *fact of being free* (*bral ba nyid*) in the *Madhyāntavibhāgabhāṣya*, it is understandable that Karma Trinlepa and Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé should have come to the conclusion that Rangjung Dorjé is a zhentongpa.

But here again there is a major difference from Dölpopa’s zhentong. For Dölpopa, the Yogācāra definition of the two truths as being neither identical nor different does not exclude their difference as long as it is not in terms of essence. This is not possible since it is only the ultimate that exists in terms of its essence, and we need at least a second ontological category in order to speak of an essential difference. In other words, Dölpopa draws the line between the two truths more strictly; by no means would he include “mere appearance” within buddha nature. Dölpopa defines the two truths in such a way that he is forced to accept the consequence that the ordinary world does not appear to a buddha any more.

In this context it should be also noted that the Jonangpas usually reject the notion that the wisdom of the path (i.e., the unmistaken perfect nature) is included in the perfect nature and thus the ultimate truth, while they include the dependent in the imagined nature. But such a sharp distinction between the two truths, which is premised by denying the dependent nature altogether, is hardly compatible with the Yogācāra works.
According to them, a pure aspect of the dependent nature is left over in the ultimate—namely the nonconceptual cognition of suchness. Precisely this is what is connoted by Rangjung Dorjé's term *mere appearance*. Thus it comes as no surprise that, unlike Dölpopa, Rangjung Dorjé does not take the basis of emptiness or negation to be a permanent stable state of being, but rather dependent arising, or the continuous flow of the true nature of mind (*sems nyid*). It is obvious that such an understanding of zhentong is much more compatible with Rangjung Dorjé’s mahāmudrā instructions.

When we take a closer look at Rangjung Dorjé's initial definition of mind, namely that the true nature (*rang gi ngo bo*) of the stainless mind and the mind mingled with stains is "precisely this dependent arising and the liberation from [anything] other," we notice that it appears to be the result of blending together the three different traditions we have already identified in his commentary on the first *pāda*. "Dependent arising" refers to the continuous flow of the natural mind as described in mahāmudrā, "from other" stands for the emptiness within this natural mind continuum of other, namely adventitious stains (the zhentong view), and "liberation" (*rnam par grol ba*) refers to the fact that this mind is liberated throughout beginningless time (the rdzogs chen view).

Rangjung Dorjé describes the fortified potential simply as the manifestation of the pure dharmadhātu, or the naturally present potential, and thus claims that all buddha qualities exist throughout beginningless time. Quoting Nāgārjuna's *Dharmadhātustotra* in order to prove that the presentation of buddha nature as the ultimate was also the intended meaning of the Madhyamikas, he further points out that the buddha element is synonymous with the dharma-kāya, suchness, and the potential, and that this is illustrated by the nine examples of the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*:

"...Those sutras taught by the victorious ones in order to reveal emptiness all eliminate defilements and do not diminish the [buddha] element." And so on. Thus it has been taught extensively [in the *Dharmadhātustotra*]. As for synonyms of it (i.e., the buddha element), they have been taught in detail in the *Uttaratantra [Ratnagotravibhāga]*: "The nature of the element of the very pure mind is the dharma-kāya, suchness, and the potential" and so on. Through the nine examples it has been taught that the sixty-four stainless buddha qualities are made to appear by purifying [all] defilements, however many there are, in short, there are sixty-four.
This clearly shows that Rangjung Dorje identifies the main purport of the \textit{Ratnagotravibhāga} as being contained in the nine examples, and not in other passages which suggest that at least the thirty-two qualities of the form kāyas do evolve. But is Rangjung Dorje of the opinion that the thirty-two marks of a buddha already exist in the mindstream of an ordinary being? Unfortunately his \textit{Ratnagotravibhāga} commentary has yet to be discovered, but in his commentary on the \textit{Dharmadhātustotra} Rangjung Dorje presents the arising of the buddha qualities in an ordinary way, and it is reasonable to assume that he explains the appearance of apparent form kāyas, like Dölpopa, in line with the various passages of the \textit{Ratnagotravibhāga} and mainstream Mahāyāna. In any case, it is not possible to simply transfer a presentation of buddha nature such as the one given above to a nontantric context and conclude that the ordinary marks of a buddha can thereby automatically be taken to exist in sentient beings. That Rangjung Dorje distinguishes an ordinary presentation of the kāyas from an extraordinary one becomes clear in his commentary on the first two lines of the second introductory stanza of the \textit{Zab mo nang gi don}, which is:

\begin{quote}
Homage to the single coemergent [wisdom], which is real,  
That which consists of the two, which possesses the three kāyas,  
[namely] the nādiṣ, prāṇa, and bindus,  
The four states [of daily life, which] are properly the four kāyas,  
And the nature of the five kāyas.\textsuperscript{375}
\end{quote}

Rangjung Dorje comments:

\begin{quote}
“The single coemergent [wisdom], which is real” abides, mingled indistinguishably with stains, in all sentient beings. It is the dharma-kāya of all buddhas together with [their] qualities and activity. “That which consists of the two” [refers to the possession of] skillful means and insight, the nature (rang bzhin) of the apparent and ultimate, [and] the fruit, [namely] the two kāyas of the truly stainless dharma-dhatu and its truly profound outflow (i.e., of Dharma teachings and so on).

“Which possesses the three kāyas, [namely] nādiṣ, prāṇa, and bindus” means: The ultimate dharma-dhatu [of] great bliss is the dharma-kāya. With respect to the kāya of the truly profound outflow [of teachings], which depends on the apparent truth, the sambhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya arise. [The sambhogakāya arises through] the purification of dreams and the transformation of the
basis of the mental faculty and the life wind, both of which are based on the \( \text{ālūya/vijñāna} \). [The nirmānakāya arises] through the purification of the [accumulations of] consciousness, which are engaged in [the projection of] entities, [or] ordinary appearances. These [three] are, moreover, the nādis, [or] [vajra] body; prāṇa [or] [vajra] speech; and bindu, [or] vajra mind. It has been taught that these three are obtained by purifying them. Therefore they have been taught as being the body, speech, and mind of all buddhas.

In his commentary on the first line, Rangjung Dorje says in accordance with RGV I.27–28 that only the dharmakāya of all buddhas truly abides in sentient beings. The form kāyas are then explained as the outflow of the Dharma teachings on the level of the fruit, which corresponds to the pertinent passages in the first and third chapters of the Ratnagotravibhāga. In other words, this is what Dölpopa calls the ordinary presentation in his Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho. The dharmakāya is ultimate, and the form kāyas appear in dependence on the disciples and apparent truth after the purification of hindrances.

Contrary to this ordinary presentation, the “tantric” sambhogakāya and nirmānakāya exist primordially in ordinary beings in the form of the vajra body and vajra speech, or, to use the technical terms, nādis and prāṇa. That the tantric kāyas also exist in states that are mingled with stains becomes even more clear in the commentary on the third line, which says that the four states of daily life (i.e., the states of deep sleep, dream, waking, and sexual union) are the dharmakāya, sambhogakāya, nirmānakāya, and jñānakāya, and it is explicitly said that these four kāyas are mingled with the hindrances of sentient beings.

To sum up, the tension in the Ratnagotravibhāga between explanations that center around the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra or the Anūnatiśāyāvatvanirdesa on the one hand and the parts that suggest a growth of at least some of the buddha qualities on the other simply reflect two different levels of teachings for Rangjung Dorjé, and for Dölpopa too. The ordinary presentation of the kāyas was given in a general context explaining buddha nature as seen from the perspective of a beginner, whereas teachings such as “nothing needs to be removed from or added to the buddha element” (RGV I.157ab (J I.154ab)) point to the ultimate level of interpretation, or the extraordinary Vajrayāna teachings. A beginner sees his qualities grow to the same extent as he removes his hindrances, but from an ultimate point of view, he has been a buddha throughout beginningless time without knowing it.
Rangjung Dorjé’s *Snying po bstan pa* reveals the same findings. By carefully choosing in the beginning three stanzas from different sources, Rangjung Dorjé skillfully demonstrates his particular understanding of buddha nature. By starting with the simile of a gold statue, he leaves no doubt that it is the original purport of the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* that must be followed:

Though beginningless, [saṃsāra] has an end.
Pure by nature, [the element] is endowed with the property of being eternal.
Being covered from outside by a beginningless sheath, it is not seen, Like a gold statue covered [by clay].

By saying that the element only has the property (among others) of being eternal is not the same as saying that it is eternal. (Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé notes in his commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* that the dharmakāya is only eternal in the sense that it does not appear to sentient beings.) Next, in order to counteract the impression that the buddha element and the adventitious stains are distinct entities, a stanza from the *Mahāyānābhibhādharmanasūtra* is quoted:

The beginningless sphere (i.e., the buddha element) is the basis of all phenomena.
Due to its existence, [it can assume] all forms of life [as well as] the attainment of nirvāṇa.

Thus it is made clear that buddha nature is the basis of all phenomena including saṃsāra. The third stanza (HT 2, IV.69) is from a passage of the *Hevajratantra*, in which the three kāyas, namely the dharmakāya and the two form kāyas, are said to be located in the yogini’s body in the form of cakras, which indicates Rangjung Dorjé’s ultimate tantric interpretation of buddha nature, all ultimate buddha qualities being already ever complete.

Rangjung Dorjé dedicates a relatively long part of his short text to an explanation of the sixty-four buddha qualities, and it deserves our attention. Having equated buddha nature with the mahāmudrā term *natural mind* (*tha mal gyi shes pa*), he says that there are sixty-four qualities to its uninterrupted play. After a detailed presentation of the first thirty-two, namely those of the dharmakāya, he states that these are not seen as they really are, and are thus fabricated as something they are not. This is then illustrated by the
famous two stanzas on emptiness (RGV I.157–58 (J I.154–55)). In other words, Rangjung Dorjé applies only the thirty-two qualities of the dharma-kāya to the classical formula of what the buddha element is empty of and what not. This shows that the original purport of the Ratnagotravibhāga is followed, namely that the thirty-two marks of the Buddha are acquired and not present throughout beginningless time. After the quotation of RGV I.157–58 the Snying po bstan pa continues:

Furthermore, the nature of the two form kāyas
Are the thirty-two major and [eighty] minor marks.
[These] attained qualities are your own body.
This body is not created by a self, [the creator Gampa (Sgam pa)]
Cha (phyva), 387 [or] Śiva,
By Brahman, real external atoms,
Or hidden [matter].
Because the impure modifications of the perceived and the perceiver
[Of] the five [sense] gates were purified,
They were labeled with the conventional expression attained.
Therefore the pure nādis, prāṇa, and bindus
Are the pure form kāyas.
When not purified, they are the impure form kāyas. 388

This shows clearly that Rangjung Dorjé respects the Ratnagotravibhāga. He says, in accordance with mainstream Mahāyāna, that the form kāyas are attained. But at the same time he argues that they cannot be newly created. His solution of the seeming contradiction is the same tantric interpretation that we have already observed in Rangjung Dorjé's autocommentary on the initial stanzas of the Zab mo nang gi don: the primordial form kāyas are the nādis, prāṇa, and bindus of the subtle body. 389 To make sure that this point is really taken in the sense he intends, he illustrates this purification of the impure form kāyas by way of the simile of the threefold cleansing of a vaibandvya gem in the Dhāraṇīśvararājasūtra. 390

Finally I point out that Rangjung Dorjé excludes a too eternalist interpretation of buddha nature by rejecting the extreme position that buddha qualities have no causes at all. Thus, it is said in the Snying po bstan pa:

Some who have adopted negative views realize that
The buddha qualities are without cause
Or that they are not [contained] in the [mind]
Or produced by external causes and conditions.
What is the difference between [such views] and the [extremes of] eternalism and nihilism?

It is clear that conditioned\textsuperscript{391} [buddha qualities] arise and stop every moment,

Just like impure conditioned [factors].

If this were not the case,

The activity of the form kāyas would be interrupted.

Still, [these qualities] are not referred to by the term \textit{conditioned}.\textsuperscript{392}

The description of the buddha qualities in terms of a momentary continuum or dependent arising reflects Rangjung Dorjé’s mahāmudrā background and constitutes the main difference between his interpretation of buddha nature and Dölpopa’s zhentong.

\textit{The Position of Dölpopa Sherab Gyaltsen}

Dölpopa’s exegesis of buddha nature was remarkable and controversial at the same time. Not only did he formulate a “transcendent” version of zhentong that strictly distinguishes a completely unchangeable buddha nature from the external and nonexistent stains of worldly constituents, but he also used terminology in an unorthodox way. Hookham and Stearns\textsuperscript{393} have already described Dölpopa’s system of interpretation at length. Stearns has given a detailed account of Dölpopa’s life based on two early biographies written by his disciples Lhai Gyaltsen (Lha’i rgyal mtshan) (1319–1401) and Künpang Chödrag Palzang (Kun spangs Chos grags dpal bzang) (1283–1363?).\textsuperscript{394} In the following I shall offer a brief survey of the main points before presenting my own observations.

According to traditional Tibetan accounts, the revolutionary theory that the ultimate is not “empty of an own-being” (rang stong) but “empty of other” (gzhan stong) arose in Dölpopa’s mind during a Kālacakra retreat at Jonang.\textsuperscript{395} Lhai Gyaltsen informs us that Dölpopa’s realization was connected with the Kālacakratantra and the construction of the great stūpa in Jonang, which was consecrated in 1333. One of the first works in which Dölpopa expressed his new zhentong understanding of the Buddhist doctrine was his famous \textit{Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho}.\textsuperscript{396} His last major work was the \textit{Bka’ bsdu bzhi pa} (Bka’ bsdu bzhi pa’i don bstan rtis chen po, The Great Reckoning of the Doctrine That Has the Significance of a Fourth Council),\textsuperscript{397} which can be seen as a final summary of Dölpopa’s views.\textsuperscript{398}

The hermeneutical principles according to which Dölpopa interprets the Buddhist teachings along the lines of his zhentong are laid out in the
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Bka’ bsdu bzhi pa, in which the entire Buddhist doctrine is “reckoned” by dividing the Buddhist teaching into four epochs. Besides the four epochs of varying quality that make up a cosmic age, Dölpopa also uses a lesser set of four epochs to refer to the qualitatively different periods of the teaching. He thus allocates philosophical doctrines to epochs (yuga) according to purely dogmatic criteria. As a support, Dölpopa refers to the Kalacakratantra, but in the relevant passage in the Vimalaprabhātīki it is only the irreligion of the cakravartin, the spreading of the religion of the barbarians, and the religions of others who are being converted that are related with the four yugas.

Important for our study here is Dölpopa’s description that not only the teachings transmitted by Sākyamuni but also the Maitreya works belong to the Kṛtayuga of doctrine, whereas the works of Ārya Vimuktisena and Haribhadra represent the teachings of the inferior Tretāyuga. The common interpretation of the Yogācāra works of Maitreya, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu as mere cittamātra itself reflects the historical degeneration of the Dharma.

I have shown elsewhere that Dölpopa’s zhentong owes much to a particular explanation of these Yogācāra works along the lines of the Great Mahāmaka teaching (dbu ma chen po), and that the Ratnagotravibhāga thereby plays a crucial role. As we shall see below, the Ratnagotravibhāga can be explained in both an ordinary and extraordinary way, and it is the latter that serves as the proper guideline for gaining a correct “Kṛtayuga understanding” of the Yogācāra works. Still, the Ratnagotravibhāga does not fully endorse, for example, Dölpopa’s strict distinction between the two levels of truth (so strict that there are even two sets of form kāya qualities, one belonging to the apparent level of truth and an ultimate one that exists throughout beginningless time); and it was rather the new Jonang translation of the Kalacakratantra that became the ultimate scriptural basis for Dölpopa’s innovative teaching.

For those interested in the characteristic points of Dölpopa’s view on buddha nature, his commentary on the Ratnagotravibhāga, namely the Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma’i bstan bcos legs bshad nyi ma’i ’od zer, poses the problem that the ultimate zhentong understanding is only hinted at in a subtle way. To give an example, in the commentary on the crucial stanza 1.158 (J I.155), it is not clear to what the “ultimate unsurpassable buddha qualities, such as the ten strengths,” namely those qualities of which the dharmadhātu is not empty, exactly refers. Is it only the thirty-two qualities of the dharmakāya that are ultimate, as opposed to the thirty-two qualities of the form kāyas, which are explained as appearing to the disciples as a result of the accumulation of merit? Are the form kāyas, as a conse-
quence of this, something newly produced on the path? In order to clarify such questions, we have first to consult the *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho*, in which the *Ratnagotravibhāga* is often quoted and also commented upon. The differences between the *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho* and the *Nyi ma'i 'od zer* are so fundamental that Hookham wonders if the *Nyi ma'i 'od zer* is by Dölpopa at all and not rather by the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé. But as we shall see further down, the doctrinal differences between the *Nyi ma'i 'od zer* and the *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho* must be viewed against the backdrop of two different hermeneutic strategies, the aforementioned ordinary and extraordinary explanations, pursued by Dölpopa.

That this was Dölpopa's strategy becomes clear in a discussion of the three kāyas and the two potentials at the beginning of the third chapter ("The State of the Result") in his *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho*. First, Dölpopa explains the ultimate dharmakāya and apparent (*kun rdzob*) form kāyas in largely general and conservative terms, and then proceeds to "the extraordinary [presentation of] the vajrakāya or mantrakāya according to the mantra[yāna]."

Dölpopa starts his ordinary presentation of the ultimate dharmakāya and the apparent form kāyas in the *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho* by quoting RGV III.1–3 and then comments:

The fruit of dissociation, [or] the dharmakāya, is the kāya of the unchangeable perfect [nature], and [thus] suchness. In it the qualities of dissociation, [namely] the [ten] strengths and so on, are complete. The generated fruit, [or] the form kāyas, are that which is endowed with the unmistaken perfect [nature], and [thus] correct wisdom. In them the generated qualities, such as the [thirty-two] marks, exist. Thus it is said. These [three stanzas] rule out the [view of] some who claim that even the dharmakāya is a generated fruit [on the level of] apparent [truth], and some [others who] claim that even the form kāyas are the fruit of dissociation [on the level of] ultimate [truth]...Likewise [the view of] some [who] claim that even the dharmakāya does not exist in sentient beings from the beginning is extremely confused, [as is that of] some [others who] claim that even the form kāyas exist in sentient beings from the beginning, inasmuch as it has been said in great detail [in RGV I.152 (J I.149)]: "[You should know that the potential is twofold in being] like a treasure and a tree [grown] from a fruit..." and so on.
As we will see below, Dölpopa explains the two potentials in a way common to exegetes like Lodrö Tsungmé, claiming as he does that the fortified potential must be newly produced. In his ordinary exposition Dölpopa quotes the Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra and the Abhisamayāalamkāra, and even includes the view of Ārya Vimuktisena. Based on these texts he concludes that the two form kāyas come under the apparent truth, in line with the common Mahāyāna presentation of the kāyas. It is interesting that Ārya Vimuktisena, whose teachings are described by Dölpopa elsewhere as belonging to the Tretāyuga of doctrine, should be mentioned here. In other words, Dölpopa’s distinction between an ordinary and extraordinary interpretation could be compared to what is described by him as the Kṛtayuga and Tretāyuga of doctrine.

In his paragraph on “the extraordinary [presentation of] the vajrakāya or mantrakāya according to the mantra[yāna]” Dölpopa explains:

Here, there are two types of form kāyas. [First,] the commonly known sambhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya of the apparent [truth]; and [second,] the ultimate sambhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya; [the latter] are completely [contained] in the dharmatā, perfect [nature], and suchness.... Therefore the ultimate sambhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya are known by way of the extraordinary mantra[yāna].

In other words, Dölpopa distinguishes two ways of explaining the three kāyas that do not really contradict each other, it being simply the case that in an ordinary presentation, as in his Ratnagotravibhāga commentary, the ultimate sambhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya are not explicitly mentioned. The extraordinary or “tantric” explanation of the buddha kāyas in the Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho involves a distinction between ultimate and apparent kāyas and qualities. In the same way as ultimate form kāyas are distinguished from their normal ones, the thirty-two qualities of the ultimate dharma kāya are explained as existing on the level of apparent truth as well. But whereas the latter are conditioned, the ultimate ones are not. To put it another way, even though the ultimate buddha qualities of both the dharma kāya and the form kāyas exist in all sentient beings throughout beginningless time, the apparent (or “normal”) form kāyas must be generated on the path. Likewise an ultimate abandonment and realization are distinguished from apparent ones, in that the ultimate ones are already complete in your own dharmatā, while the apparent ones must be attained on the path, as becomes evident in the following passage of the Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho:
Also with regard to abandonment there are two: the abandon-ment that is [due to the fact] that no stains are established in their own right throughout beginningless time; and the destruction and extinction of adventitious stains with the help of the remedy.... Likewise there are also two realizations of a buddha: the realization of [your] dharmatā that is aware of itself by itself throughout beginningless time, [namely] self-arisen wisdom; and the realization that has come from meditating on the profound path, [namely] wisdom arisen from other.417

The question thus arises, what is the exact relation between these two types of abandonment and realization, or the ultimate and apparent truths? Rather than use the definition that they are “one in essence, but different isolates” (ngo bo gcig la ldog pa tha dad), Dölpopa follows the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra and defines the relation between the two truths with the phrase “different in that their identity is negated” (gcig pa bkag pa'i tha dad pa), in the same way as dhammas and dhammatā are defined in the Dharmadharmatāvibhāga as being neither different nor identical. From this it does not follow that the two truths are different entities,418 but simply that the ultimate (dharma) exists and the apparent (dhammas) does not (negation of identity). On the other hand, dhammatā is defined as the absence of duality (equated with dhammas) and as such in a sense is not different from the nonexistent dhammas (negation of difference).419 It is only because mainstream Tibetan Buddhism emphasizes the essential identity of the two truths that Dölpopa stresses the aspect of the negation of identity in the Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho:

Therefore there is a big difference [in saying] “empty of everything” and “empty of all phenomena,” given that on the level of the fundamental state [there is] emptiness of phenomena (dhammas), but not of their true nature (dhammatā). This excludes [the views of those who] claim that phenomena and their true nature are one in essence, but different isolates, or that a difference does not exist at all, for the two are different, their identity being negated.

If you ask: Well then, in the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra [III.6]—“The defining characteristics of the conditioned realm and of the ultimate are the [one] defining characteristic of being free from identity and difference. Those who conceptualize sameness and identity are improperly oriented.”420—it has been said that the
two truths are neither identical nor different, [has it not]? This canonical passage negates both identity and difference in terms of essence, for even though the essence of the ultimate exists in the fundamental state, the essence of the apparent does not. As for all other explanations, if you claim that the two truths do not have these two [different] modes of truth, two modes of appearance, or two modes of being empty, [you adhere to] a nihilistic view; you are [reflecting] the simple carelessness of being intoxicated with the poison of mixing [the two truths] together without distinguishing any difference between [their] two modes at all.421

In other words, if there is only one essence, namely that of the ultimate, it does not make sense to speak of an essential difference, since this would require the existence of another essence from which it differs. But apart from the ultimate, nothing else really exists, the apparent truth not being established in terms of an essence of its own. This also means that Dölpopa's distinction between ultimate and apparent kāyas does not entail the absurd ontological view that there really are two different sets of kāyas.422 Rather, only the ultimate kāyas really exist. The kāyas of apparent truth do not really exist, any more than the apparent world. Still, on the level of apparent truth they are produced to the same extent as the accidental stains of the apparent truth are removed, and in this sense there are accumulations of merit and wisdom.

In order to back up his view on ultimate truth, Dölpopa adduces the following sentence from the Śrimālādevisūtra quoted in RGVV I.12:

And this dharmakāya of the Tathāgata, O illlustrious one, is called buddha nature when not liberated from the sheaths of defilements.423

Dölpopa further points out that even though the ultimate has been given different names according to the impure state of ordinary persons, the partly pure and partly impure state of bodhisattvas, and the perfectly pure state of a tathāgata, it is not different in reality.424 To be sure, Dölpopa takes this unchangeability or permanence of the ultimate as a continuous unending flow of moments not (as most of the exegetes explain it) as though the buddha kāyas remained in the endless world as long as sentient beings are in need of their buddha activity, but rather as being free of moments. The ultimate is thus understood as transcending the three times (i.e., the past,
present, and future), and all kāyas have an ultimate aspect that is beyond the three times:

That the permanent Buddha and the liberation of the Buddha are form, that even space is a form of the Buddha, and so forth—the meaning of such statements must be understood in the context of forms, etc., being explained [on the level] of suchness or as forms, etc., that are beyond the three times and the threefold world.\(^{425}\)

Thus Dölpopa comments on RGV I.5a in his *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho* in the following way:

Even though [the verse RGV I.5a states that]: "[Buddhahood] is unconditioned and spontaneously present,"\(^{426}\) and other [passages] teach that the ultimate buddha is not conditioned, the underlying intention is that he is free of moments.\(^{427}\)

It should be noted that Dölpopa does not make this explicit statement, which is crucial to the zhentong distinction between the two truths, in his commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. With only Dölpopa’s *Nyi ma’i ’od zer* (i.e., his *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary) at hand, we would be hard put to define his view as precisely as above.

It is nevertheless possible to identify in the *Nyi ma’i ’od zer* a subtle allusion to the above-mentioned apparent and ultimate qualities. Dölpopa explains the third inconceivable point of RGV I.23 (i.e., the “stainless buddha qualities”) in the following way:

As to the stainless buddha qualities, they are any property of the Buddha whatsoever, including the fruit of dissociation, [namely] the ten strengths, the four fearlessnesses, and the eighteen exclusive features, and so on, all connected with precisely this dharmakāya, and the fruit of maturation, [namely] the thirty-two [major and minor] marks, and so on.\(^{428}\)

In the next sentence of the commentary, the fourth inconceivable point, that of activity, is defined:

As to the deeds of a victorious one, they are the... performance of effortless and uninterrupted activity for the sake of sentient
beings by the attained power [of] the qualities—the ten strengths and the like.\textsuperscript{429}

In other words, Dölpopa states here that the power of qualities is somehow attained or brought about, and it goes without saying that the “[ten] strengths and so on” (stobs la sogs pa) include the qualities of maturation as well, because, if anything at all, it is these qualities of maturation that are attained.

In his commentary on RGV I.25, Dölpopa explains again the term \textit{stainless} \textit{buddha qualities}, which is used in the same context as in RGV I.23.\textsuperscript{430}

As to the meaning of the stainless buddha qualities, the ultimate qualities, such as the ten strengths, also exist as inseparable properties even in defiled ordinary persons (i.e., those who are not yet on the path). But since they have not [yet] been actualized, this seems to be contradictory and thus inconceivable.\textsuperscript{431}

It should be noted that the reader has already been forced to include the qualities of maturation under the abbreviated list of the “[ten] strengths and so on” just one page above in the commentary, and the same thing may be happening here. In other words, Dölpopa indirectly hints at the ultimate qualities of the form kāyas or the fruit of maturation. This skillful allusion is then repeated each time Dölpopa adds the genitive attribute \textit{don dam pa’i} to the buddha nature or qualities, but he is otherwise at ease in commenting on the \textit{Ratnagotravibhāga} in a more common way. The crucial stanza I.27, in which the three reasons for the presence of a buddha nature in sentient beings are presented, is thus explained in the following way:

Since the dharmakāya of the perfect buddha embraces and pervades all phenomena, since there is no differentiation [to be made] within the dharmatā concerning all saṁsāra and nirvāṇa, and since the potential of the tathāgata exists in all sentient beings as the natural purity of the dharmadhātu, which can be purified of hindrances, truly every being possesses, always, continuously, and throughout beginningless time, the ultimate essence of the Buddha.\textsuperscript{432}

Apart from the qualification of the “essence of the Buddha” as being “ultimate,” the explanation is pretty standard. The potential of a tathāgata is simply taken as the purity of the dharmadhātu, which is indicative of the usual process of acquiring qualities on the level of apparent truth, as
explained in the definition of buddha activity in RGV I.23 above. The attentive reader will understand that "ultimate essence of a buddha" includes all ultimate qualities (themselves including the qualities of the form kāyas), in the same way as the term "ultimate qualities, such as the [ten] strengths" (stobs la sogs pa don dam pa'i yon tan) does in Dölpopa's explanation (RGV I.157 (J I.154)) of the primordial qualities to which nothing needs to be added.\(^{433}\)

Having thus indirectly hinted at the extraordinary zhentong understanding that suchness, dharmatā, or dharmadhatu contain all ultimate buddha qualities throughout beginningless time, Dölpopa has no trouble commenting on passages in the Ratnagotravibhāga that clearly suggest a generation and growth of at least the form kāyas, since it is automatically understood that such explanations refer only to the apparent level of truth. To put it another way, there is no contradiction in explaining a stanza, according to its original purport, in the common way, since to do so is a legitimate part of the extraordinary zhentong interpretation, one that can be seized upon in each case (without even being hinted at). As an example, I present here Dölpopa's full commentary on RGV I.152-53 (J I.149-50). It should be noted that no attempt at all is made to interpret the generation of the form kāyas as only appearing to arise.\(^{434}\)

For example, in the same way as the inexhaustible treasure underground is naturally present, not newly brought about by effort, and the tree with its fruits gradually grows in the garden by having brought about [the necessary conditions] with effort, the buddha potential, which has the ability to bring forth the three kāyas, should be known to be twofold as well. It is both the natural potential, [namely] the pure dharmadhatu, which is closely present as the nature of mind throughout beginningless time, and the fortified potential, [which is] supreme in terms of virtues and conducive to liberation). [The fortified potential] arises from [virtuous deeds] being newly acquired with effort, [namely by] something being done, such as focusing on [the naturally present potential] and studying.\(^{435}\)

As to how the three kāyas are attained, it is [here] maintained that the fruit, [namely] the three kāyas of a perfect buddha, are attained owing to a cause, [namely] these two naturally present and fortified potentials. First, the naturally present potential is
perfected through many accumulations of wisdom, and becomes free from all adventitious stains, and the Ārāśā kāya, [namely] the svābhāvikakāya, the dharmatā endowed with both purities, is thereby attained. Second, the accumulation of merit is perfected by increasing the fortified potential, and the latter kāyas, [namely] both the sambhogakāya and the nirmāṇakāya, which appear to disciples near and far, are thereby attained.436

To summarize, since Dölpopa acknowledges the existence of produced and conditioned qualities on the level of apparent truth, he obviously does not feel urged to read his ultimate zhentong view into such passages that pass as ordinary presentations. All a reader sharing the extraordinary zhentong view has to do is to remember that all ultimate qualities are fully contained in the ultimate nature of the defiled dharmadhātu. Having enjoyed a full-fledged Sakya education, Dölpopa may have still felt obliged even in his later life to clearly distinguish between the sūtras and tantras, and not to read a “tantric view” (a dharmadhātu that possesses the ultimate qualities of the form kāyas) too insistently into the Ratnagotravibhāga (which is a sūtra text), at least not within his commentary on it. Thus he formally fulfills the scholarly rules of explaining an Indian treatise, and is still able to point out to the careful reader his zhentong understanding indirectly and to repeat this allusion by skillfully adding an attribute (“ultimate”) to a few technical terms at the right place. It should be noted that on this point, Dölpopa’s method was obviously not satisfactory enough for Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé, whose Ratnagotravibhāga commentary follows Dölpopa’s for the most part verbatim. Thus, Kongtrül felt obliged to quote Karma Trinlepa and the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé, who both reject the widespread notion that the fortified potential in the Maitreya works is taken to be conditioned.438

The Position of Sabzang Mati Panchen

The Ratnagotravibhāga commentary by Sabzang Mati Panchen Jamyang Lodrö Gyaltsen (Jam dbyangs Blo gros rgyal mtshan) (1294–1376), the Theg pa chen po'i rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos kyi rnam par bshad pa nges don rab gsal snang ba (in the following called the Nges don rab gsal), has been included by Khenpo Abbey in his collection of works of ancient Sakya scholars.439 In the colophon, the commentary is ascribed to the Tibetan paṇḍita Jamyang Lodrö writing at the great Sakya college.440 According to Stearns, his full name is Mati Panchen Jamyang Lodrö Gyaltsen, and he is thus also called Lodrö Gyaltsen.441 Having enjoyed a full-fledged Sakya edu-
cation, he proceeded to Jonang, received Dölpopa's teachings, and became his supreme “heart disciple.” Later Mati Panchen was given the monastery Sabzang Gaden Gön (Sa bzang Dga’ ldan dgon) by Lama Dawa Gyaltsen (Bla ma Zla ba rgyal mtshan).

Sabzang Mati Panchen follows Dölpopa's *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary faithfully, usually quoting his master verbatim and adding further clarifications and sometimes justifications of Dölpopa’s zhentong as well. He also places an interesting introduction in front of his commentary. In it, his hermeneutical classification of the five Maitreya works is of particular interest. According to Mati Panchen, the *Abhisamayālaṁkāra* elucidates the view of the second dhammacakra, the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṁkāra* the view and conduct of the third dhammacakra, and the remaining three, namely the *Madhyāntavibhāga*, *Dharmadharmaṭavibhāga*, and the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, elucidate the view of the third dhammacakra by way of analyzing the dharmaḥatu. It is further pointed out that the teachings of the third dhammacakra, including those propounded in the *Samdhinirmocanāsūtra*, go well beyond cittamātra. If, as Mati Panchen stated, we claim that the notion of a “natural luminosity of mind” in the Maitreya works does not hold up against Madhyamaka reasoning, we could subject the tantras to the same Madhyamaka critique as well, since they propound the same “natural luminosity.”

As in Dölpopa’s *Nyi ma'i 'od zer*, buddha nature is referred to as the ultimate buddha. The *Kālacakra tantra* is adduced first in support of this assertion, which is not surprising, given that Mati Panchen’s new translation of this tantra became the main foundation of Jonang hermeneutics. But in quoting the *Dharmadhātustotra*, he shows at the same time that his zhentong view is still in line with Nāgārjuna’s Madhyamaka:

That which must be attained, namely this ultimate buddha, dharmakāya [or] self-arisen, coemergent wisdom, is [already] present [now] by virtue of its pervading the nature of mind of all sentient beings. Thus it is not difficult to accomplish it, for it is actualized by simply abandoning [all] hindrances, as has been stated in detail in the *Śrīlaghukālacakra* (*Kālacratantrarāja*): “Sentient beings are simply buddhas. Another buddha of the great (?) does not exist in this world...”; in the *Hevajratantra* [Part 2, IV.69] as well: “Sentient beings are simply buddhas, save for being hindered by adventitious stains. After these are removed, there is [no uncertainty that sentient beings are] simply buddhas;” and in passages such as *Dharmadhātustotra* [37]: “When covered by the
net of defilements, it is called **sentient being**; the very same thing is called **buddha** when freed from defilements.”

Mati Panchen seems to follow Dölpopa’s strategy in commenting on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* according to the ordinary presentation of the *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho* while at the same time not failing to indicate the extraordinary zhentong explanation of the Mantrayāna. Thus, the above-quoted stanza from the *Hevajratantra* is from a passage in which the three kāyas, namely the dharmakāya and the two form kāyas, are said to be located in the yogini’s body in the form of cakras. But at the beginning of his commentary (on RGV I.3), Mati Panchen has an opponent ask if the tantric practice of viewing your own body as a deity could not serve as a basis for taking the form kāyas to be ultimate truth, and answers that such teachings only refer to the dharmatā of the body. In any case, Mati Panchen deals in his *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary, like Dölpopa, only with the “normal” form kāyas of the sūtras:

In case you should cling to the idea: “If, from explanations in the tantras, namely teachings in the *Vairocanaḥhisambodhitāntra* and so forth, this body is known to be a deity, [it therefore follows that] it is the buddha kāya,” [the following should be realized]. The Buddha gave thought to the dharmatā of this and that [body], but this impure body, being a “phenomenon possessing dharmatā” (*dharmin*), is not exactly a buddha, given that it is conditioned and without essence, whereas a buddha is an unconditioned, self-arisen kāya.... As to the abandoning of the claim that the ultimate is the form kāyas: Again, if you think that the ultimate buddha is the form kāyas (for it has been taught that the twelve deeds spread out and so on), you [should] not think that way either, because form kāyas are taught as being established as appearances for others in dependence on [others’] fortune, [namely] as conditioned entities, but not as possessing ultimate qualities, which are not conditioned and so forth.... As to the ultimate buddha, it is simply the dharmakāya.

That the ordinary presentation of the kāyas clearly excludes the form kāyas from the ultimate becomes clear in Mati Panchen’s commentary on RGV I.148 (J I.145), in which only the stainless dharmadātu, equated with natural luminosity, is taken to be the real dharmakāya, but not its outflow.
Still, the following sentence, which elucidates RGV I.25 (namely the third inconceivable point, which Dölpopa used for his indirect inclusion of the ultimate qualities of the form kāyas), could be an allusion to the extraordinary explanation of buddha nature:

The tathāgata knows that even all ultimate qualities are present in all sentient beings—not one of them is missing....

Of great interest are Mati Panchen’s occasional additions to Dölpopa’s commentary. They not only ensure a clearer zhentong understanding, but also defend some problematic notions entertained by his master. In his commentary on RGV I.6ab (which explains why buddhahood is not conditioned) Mati Panchen quotes the Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra to the effect that “not being conditioned” also implies “being beyond time.” As we have seen above, Dölpopa refrains from such an inference in his commentary, though he does explain in his Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho that RGV I.6ab means that buddhahood is free from momentariness (and thus beyond time). Mati Panchen’s Nges don rab gsal on RGV I.6ab is:

Buddhahood is unconditioned since in the beginning, middle, and end it has the nature of being free from conditioned phenomenon that arise, abide, and pass out of existence; as has been said in the [Mahāpari]nirvāṇasūtra: “A phenomenon that abides in permanence does not belong to the three times. Likewise, the tathāgata does not belong to the three times either, and is therefore permanent.”

It should be noted that Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé, who otherwise strictly follows Dölpopa’s commentary, deviates from this zhentong understanding of the term unconditioned (asaṃskṛta). Referring to Rongtön’s explanation of four types of understanding unconditioned, Kongtrül states that the dharma-kāya only shares this quality of being unconditioned to a certain extent, namely inasmuch as it does not appear to disciples. If we claimed that it is completely unconditioned, it would contradict that it possesses knowledge, compassion, and power.

Mati Panchen’s commentary on RGV I.26 contains a few interesting and noteworthy remarks. Stanza I.26 lists the last four vajra points, namely the buddha element (i.e., buddha nature), enlightenment, qualities, and activity, and takes the first to be the cause and the remaining three to be conditions of purification. In the Ramagotravibhāgavyākhyā the buddha element as a cause is explained in the following way:
Here, of these four [vajra] points, the first one should be understood as the cause that brings forth the Three Jewels, after you come to rely on its [natural] purity on the basis of your own correct mental engagement, given that it is the seed of the supramundane properties. 454

Like Dölpopa, Mati Panchen merely paraphrases this explanation from the Ratnagotravibhāgavatāryākhyā (both of them having good reasons not to quote it), thus tacitly passing over the possibly intended meaning of a real growth by omitting the causal clause with the word seed:

One [vajra] point is the suchness mingled with stains. It is the cause that must be purified, for the Three Jewels come forth from that which is completely pure of stains. 455

A little further down, though, and still within his general explanation of this vajra point in RGV I.26, Mati Panchen directly rules out the equation of the buddha element with a seed from which a fruit really grows:

It is not acceptable to say either that [buddha nature] in the state of ordinary beings does not [yet] exist as the buddha endowed with all ultimate qualities, [and that the Buddha] thought [buddha nature] to be only a seed [in this state] when he taught that it exists [in sentient beings as a buddha]. A fruit produced from a seed that grows and fully matures is conditioned [and thus not a buddha quality]. 456

What is also interesting in this passage are the remarks on the fortified potential. Even though Mati Panchen follows Dölpopa's rather traditional presentation of the fortified potential as something newly acquired as a result of effort (RGV I.152 (J I.149)), he qualifies such an understanding by saying that the different potentials of the three yānas (i.e., the fortified potentials) are ultimately one, since the natural luminosity of mind pervades all sentient beings, 457 and concludes the discussion with the following statement:

Therefore, the ultimate buddha, being regarded as the direct manifestation of something that exists, should never be taken as the new product of something that [previously] did not exist. As for [its] synonyms, [apart] from [being] the very dharmadhātu,
it has also been called “potential,” “uncontaminated seed,” “element of sentient beings,” and “the nature of everything.”

In other words, the notion of real growth is invalidated by equating the seed with the dharmadhātu and by denying a real difference between various potentials. In fact, the theory of a newly acquired individual potential that is the cause of the form kāyas is somewhat disturbing in a zhentong interpretation that takes the ultimate as an unchanging absolute in which all qualities are present throughout beginningless time. It is thus not surprising that Mati Panchen remarks in his conclusion of the paragraph on the three aspects of buddha nature (dharmakāya, suchness, and potential) in relation to the nine examples from the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra (I.147–55 (J I.144–52)):

Moreover, what has been taught in distinguishing the nine meanings (i.e., of the nine examples) with regard to the three natures (i.e., aspects of buddha nature), [namely] the two [types of] dharmakāya, the potential that arises from adopting [virtuous deeds], and the form kāyas is for the sake of [becoming] skilled in distinctions, but it is not the case that [the clause] “because it pervades every [sentient being]” [applies to these distinctions]. It is rather their support, the uncontaminated sphere, that is all-pervading.

In other words, for Mati Panchen the notions of form kāyas, acquired or fortified potential, and so on are things alien to, and not in line with, the real purport of the Ratnagotravibhāga, which he obviously interprets on the basis of the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra. Like Dölpopa, he accepts that the ordinary explanations of a fortified potential and form kāyas do not really support the zhentong view, apart from being valid descriptions of the apparent truth in their system.

Dölpopa would not accept any notion of real growth with regard to the ultimate qualities. For this reason, as we have seen above, both Dölpopa and Mati Panchen ignore in their commentaries the clause “because [the element] is the seed of the supramundane properties” of RGVV I.26. Similarly, Dölpopa does not comment on what is RGV I.27 in the Sanskrit edition (a stanza not included in the root text of the Ratnagotravibhāga by most Tibetan traditions) and thus does not have to deal with another problematic passage that suggests a real difference between the potential and a buddha, namely the third reason for the presence of buddha nature in all sentient beings:
...because its fruit has been “metaphorically” applied\textsuperscript{460} to the buddha potential....\textsuperscript{461}

If the potential is called a buddha only in a metaphorical sense, there must be a difference that is more substantial than the existence or nonexistence of adventitious stains. Mati Panchen first informs us that he has chosen not to ignore this passage given that it is found in some Indian texts, which means that he still doubts its authenticity, even though it is found in the Tibetan translation of the \textit{Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā} (according to all available Tengyur editions). The root text Mati Panchen quotes (and which he corrected based on the Sanskrit\textsuperscript{462}) has Tib. \textit{nye bar spyod pa} (“to enjoy”) instead of Tib. \textit{nye bar btags pa} (“to apply metaphorically”) for Skt. upacāra. With the help of this “skillful translation,” Mati Panchen arrives at the following zhentong interpretation:

All beings possess the ultimate buddha nature...because the potential [or] buddha element, which will be established as buddhahood, [can be] enjoyed as something that is not different from the dharmakāya, [or] the fruit free of stains, even in a state when [the potential] is mingled with hindrances.\textsuperscript{463}

This strict denial of any change in buddha nature led a number of scholars to the conclusion that the zhentongpas would then claim the existence of a permanent entity,\textsuperscript{464} which is a paradox according to Buddhist philosophy. An entity \textit{per definitionem} fulfills a function and by virtue of this it must be impermanent. But Mati Panchen explains:

As to abandoning the undesired consequence that [buddha nature] is a permanent entity, if you contend that since it is without any difference before and after, and since it is also, in view of [its] causes and conditions, an attained fruit, the sphere (i.e., the buddha element) is a permanent entity, [the counterargument is as follows]. It is permanent in view of its not being conditioned. Where [will you find] the view that something is a conditioned entity on the grounds that it is free from the defining characteristics of production, cessation, and abiding? ...If you contend that something is an entity in view of its fulfilling a function, [the counterargument is as follows]. It possesses the ability to bring the two needs (i.e., for yourself and others) to perfection in every respect. Therefore, it is not an
ephemeral conditioned entity, since everything conditioned is false, deceptive, and without essence. Still, there is no contradiction in saying that [buddha nature] is permanent and at the same time a nonconditioned entity.465

Nobody would have denied that the kāyas unfold buddha activity, but it must have seemed outrageous to hear someone calling them an “entity.”466 A considerable part of the problem with the Jonang position is therefore not so much philosophical but the unorthodoxically free use of terminology, which must have caused a hermeneutical shock to many contemporary scholars.467 Still, the zhentong view raises the question of how an ultimate dharmakāya that is really permanent and beyond the three times can function as a basis of buddha activity in this world, or how something entirely transcendent can be at the same time the nature of a mindstream and thus something immanent.

To conclude, a few passages in Sabzang Mati Panchen’s commentary suggest that he endorses Dölpopa’s ultimate zhentong view as described in the Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho, even though the commentary neither makes a distinction between ultimate and apparent buddha qualities nor mentions ultimate form kāyas. Unfortunately there are no other works by Mati Panchen available to substantiate the hypothesis that he followed Dölpopa’s hermeneutic strategy of only expounding the ordinary presentation of buddha nature in the Ratnagotravibhāga commentary.

The Position of Lodrö Tsungmé

Even though a handwritten copy reproduced from an ancient manuscript of Lodrö Tsungmé’s (thirteenth/fourteenth century) Ratnagotravibhāga commentary from the library of Riwoché Jedrung Rinpoche (Ri bo che Rje drung Rin po che) of Pema Kö (Padma bkod) was published under the Library of Congress program some three decades ago, the commentary has hardly been used by Western scholarship before now.468 The Nyingma lama Paldan Sherab, who for a long time lived in Varanasi but now lives in New York, thought that this commentary was what was long thought to be a merely legendary Ratnagotravibhāga commentary by Longchen Rabjampa. Paldan Sherab probably removed the introductory page from one of the Indian reproductions of Lodrö Tsungmé’s commentary469 and added three prefatory pages: on the first is Paldan Sherab’s newly created title Kun mkhyen Klong chen pa'i rgyud bla ma'i 'grel pa bzhus; on the second a picture of Longchenpa; and on the third the same picture again together with
the ye dharma hetuprabhava formula in Lantsha script and a stanza by Thub­
dag Lingpa (Gter bdag gling pa) (1646–1714) in which Longchenpa is
praised under the name of Lodrö Tsungmé. Paldan Sherab added two fur­
ther pages along with a colophon of his own at the end, in which he explains
why this commentary is by Longchenpa. The only other reason Paldan
Sherab came up with this (besides the fact that Longchenpa was also called
Lodrö Tsungmé) is that his tradition has it that there is a general outline of
the five Maitreya works and a Ratnagotravibhāga commentary by Long­
chenpa. The former is mentioned in the biography of Longchenpa,
which contains an extensive list of his works, but a Ratnagotravibhāga com­
mentary by him is not listed there.

From Zhönü Pal’s Deb ther sngon po we know that a certain Dragpa Sengé
(Grags pa Seng ge) (b. 1283) went to Sangpu Neutog (Gsang phu Sne’u
thog) in order to study under the “senior teacher” (bla chos pa) Jamyang
Shākzhön and the “assistant teacher” (zur chos pa) Lodrö Tsungmé. Unfor­
atunately we are not told in which year this was, but before going to
Sangpu (Gsang phu), Dragpa Sengé received teachings in Tsurpu (Tshur
phu), where he arrived in 1308. Zhönü Pal further informs us that Dragpa
Sengé left Sangpu to meet the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé after the
latter returned from Kongpo. According to the biography of Rangjung
Dorjé written by Situ Panchen Chökyi Jungné and Belo Tsewang Kün­
khay (’Be lo Tshe dbang kun khyab), the Third Karmapa left for Kongpo
in 1310 and returned to Ü in 1313. From this we can infer that Dragpa Sengé
must have studied under Shākzhön and Lodrö Tsungmé sometime between
1308 and 1313. Since Longchen Rabjampa was born in 1308, it is impossible
that he could have been this Lodrö Tsungmé who was teaching at Sangpu.
It is also known that Yagde Panchen (G.yag sde pa n chen) (1299–1378), who
was a teacher of Longchenpa, was a disciple of Lodrö Tsungmé.

Now it is still possible that Longchenpa composed a Ratnagotravibhāga
commentary under the name Lodrö Tsungmé at Sangpu Neutog. In
other words, we may assume that there were two persons with the name
Lodrö Tsungmé there. This is not very likely, though. It is not so much that
Longchenpa was only a student at Sangpu Neutog, as the way Lodrö
Tsungmé explains the Ratnagotravibhāga. The latter’s view on buddha
nature, as we will see, differs considerably from Longchenpa’s.

According to Khenpo Abbey (Kathmandu), to whom I presented a copy
of the text published in India, Lodrö Tsungmé, the teacher at Sangpu and
author of the Ratnagotravibhāga commentary, was from Nedrug (Gnas
drug) in Kham and thus a close disciple of Lama Dampa Sönam Gyalt­
sen (1312–75). But in his forthcoming thesis, Kano claims that the
Lodrö Tsungmé from Sangpu is not the same person as the one from Nedrug.

Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé says of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary by a certain Lodrö Tsungmé that the latter follows, together with Pagdru Gyaltsen Zangpo (Phag gru Rgyal mtshan bzang po) and Rongtön Sheja Kün-rig, the commentarial tradition of Chapa Chökyi Sengé’s disciples, such as Tsangnapa Tsöndrü Sengé (Brtson ’grus seng ge) and Darbagpa Mawai Sengé (Dar ’bags pa Smra ba’i seng ge). They are “all [said] to follow the great translator Ngog [Loden Sherab] [in spite of] many unimportant discrepancies in the Dharma language.” But the differences between Ngog Loden Sherab and Lodrö Tsungmé seem to be more substantial than that, for Lodrö Tsungmé was criticized by Butön Rinchen Drub (Bu ston Rin chen grub) (1290–1364) for ascribing definitive meaning to the teaching of a real buddha nature within the mindstream of sentient beings.

In the introduction to his *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary, Lodrö Tsungmé states that the first and the last of the five Maitreya works, namely the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* and the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, comment on the intention of the Buddha’s words, which literally have definitive meaning, and should thus truly be considered to be *nītārtha*. Hence the three reasons for the presence of a buddha nature in RGV I.28 ((1) because you are embraced and pervaded (spharāṇa) by the embodiment of the perfect buddha, (2) because suchness cannot be differentiated, (3) because of the potential) are taken in a strict sense.

Lodrö Tsungmé does not comment on what in the Sanskrit edition is RGV I.27 (not included in the root text of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* by most Tibetan traditions) and does not have to deal with its slightly different third reason, according to which “its (i.e., buddha nature’s) fruit has been metaphorically applied to the buddha potential.” He argues rather that there is nothing metaphorical with regard to the above-mentioned three reasons. In particular, Lodrö Tsungmé does not accept the notion that the pervasion of sentient beings by the embodiment of the perfect buddha (reason 1) only refers to their ability to obtain the dharmakāya; that the presence of a potential (reason 3) merely means possessing suchness; or that a tathāgata is caused by the mental imprints of virtue and the seeds of insight and compassion. In his commentary on RGV I.28, Lodrö Tsungmé explains:

The dharmakāya is the dharmadhātu inseparable from qualities. It is real in that it exists as something pervading all sentient beings by virtue of being identical [with them]. Since there is no
disproof against such a claim, it is not acceptable to say that it is [merely] nominal. All the more so, because if the pervasive nature of the dharmakāya meant that it can be attained [as a matter of course] it would not be necessary to [present this first reason] separately from the [third reason,] [namely,] “[because of] the existence of a potential.” If you object that [the reason] “[because of] the existence of a potential” [refers to] what has arisen from practice, then the following should be considered: In that case [it would follow that the fortified potential] would exist as something pervading all sentient beings, given that it is because [the dharmakāya] exists as something pervasive that [the proposition] “All sentient beings possess a buddha nature” can be proven...It is [only] the naturally present potential among the two [potentials] that pervades sentient beings. Therefore, to abandon buddha nature, which [after all] has actually been taught, and to teach a nature of sentient beings is not the intention of the Buddha's words with definitive meaning.

Even though the third reason is taken at face value, namely that a buddha nature or potential really exists as something pervading all sentient beings, Lodrö Tsungmé restricts the validity of this statement to the naturally present potential. The fortified or acquired potential is something produced when virtue is striven for and thus has a different beginning in each individual mindstream. From the commentary on passages such as RGV I.51cd (“[Buddha nature] is of an unchangeable nature—as it was before, so it is after”) and RGV I.157 (J I.154) (“There is nothing to be removed from it and absolutely nothing to be added”), it becomes clear that the naturally present primordial qualities are taken as the thirty-two qualities of the dharmakāya (the ten strengths and so forth). They are what is referred to as the ultimate truth with regard to qualities in Lodrö Tsungmé's introduction. Lodrö Tsungmé thus loosely relates them with the ultimate aspects of the remaining vajra points, namely the pure dharmatā of mind, which is the ultimate aspect of the buddha element (dhātu), and the dharmakāya, or the ultimate aspect of enlightenment (bodhi). The corresponding aspects of apparent truth are the thirty-two marks of the Buddha, the ability to generate undefiled buddha properties (i.e., the potential acquired through practice), and the form kāyas (sambhogakāya and nirmanakāya). In other words, ultimate truth is equated with the qualities of the dharmakāya, the dharmakāya itself, and the true nature of mind. The ultimate then is not taken as a mere nothingness or void, but described in positive
terms. The ontological status of this positive ultimate becomes clear in a discussion about the naturally present potential functioning as a real cause:

Objection: If the naturally present potential were an actual cause, would it [not then] be an entity? Answer: The naturally present potential abides as the beginningless dharmatā, [or] emptiness mingled with stains [and] inseparable from immeasurable qualities. Even though the aspect of dharmatā (or emptiness) is what causes the transformation of the basis into the stainless dharmakāya, it is not an efficient cause and thus not an entity. [But] the aspect of wisdom is [such] an entity in view of being the efficient cause of the future [ten] strengths, etc., of the Buddha, which resemble [those of] the potential, and there is nothing invalid in such a position.500

Here it would be difficult to draw the line between ultimate and apparent truth. The introduction of Lodrö Tsungmé's commentary clearly states that the thirty-two qualities of the dharmakāya belong to the ultimate aspect of the buddha element, apparent [truth] being what has the ability to generate undefiled [buddha] properties, namely that aspect of wisdom that is an efficient cause and thus an entity. On the other hand, Lodrö Tsungmé equates a naturally present wisdom with natural luminosity,501 which is usually taken as a synonym of emptiness and the ultimate. But claiming that an entity (wisdom as an efficient cause) partakes of the ultimate is philosophically problematic and would expose Lodrö Tsungmé to the same critique the Jonangpas had to face.

Whatever truth they belong to, it is remarkable that Lodrö Tsungmé distinguishes the thirty-two qualities (the ten strengths, etc.) of the potential and those of a buddha, notwithstanding that he fully endorses stanza I.157 (J I.154) and explains that the ten strengths, etc., exist throughout beginningless time and that nothing that did not exist before needs to be newly created. In the introductory remarks to the explanation of stanza I.23, it becomes clear that Lodrö Tsungmé resolves the tension by distinguishing an aspect of sphere from an aspect of wisdom:

As to the [buddha] nature, if ascertained under the aspect of sphere, it is the dharmatā of mind mingled with stains and inseparable from the inconceivable buddha qualities. It is the dharmakāya that exists since beginningless time.502
But under the aspect of wisdom, as we have seen above, some kind of production is maintained. It is true that wisdom is taken to be an aspect of the naturally present potential, and as such to be primordially existent, but in terms of wisdom a fruit can clearly be distinguished from a cause:

[Question:] Is the fruit present in the cause? [Answer:] No, for even though the wisdom that is purified from all stains is the fruit, it does not exist in sentient beings; and even though wisdom mingled with stains exists in the continuum of sentient beings, this is not the fruit.

Lodrö Tsungmé's position on the relationship between buddha nature as a cause and the three kāyas as a fruit becomes particularly clear in his commentarial remarks on RGV I.152–55 (J I.149–52), which explain how the last five of the nine examples from the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra (those of the treasure, the tree, the precious image, the future cakravartin, and the golden statue) illustrate the nature of the buddha potential, out of which the three kāyas arise. First of all, Lodrö Tsungmé points out that the naturally present potential is a cause of the buddha kāyas in the real sense of the word, and not only metaphorically, in that wisdom arises by acts of correct mental engagement, namely by focusing on emptiness (which is taken to be the naturally present potential by the proponents of a metaphorical understanding):

Since the fruit, the three pure bodies of the perfect buddha, are attained from these two potentials, [namely] the naturally present potential and the one arisen through practice, [these] are taken to be their cause. Therefore the element or potential is the cause. [Question:] Which fruit [or] kāya is attained through which cause? [Answer:] First, as to the kāya [attained] through the naturally present [potential], it is the actual svabhāvikakāya which is attained, since previously suchness existed mingled with stains, and the transformation of the basis into the purified dharmakāya is attained by virtue of having purified its stains. Some very intelligent people say that nonconceptual knowledge arises by becoming familiar with the correct mental engagement of focusing on emptiness; thus it was taught that [emptiness] was metaphorically called a cause of wisdom. This is not acceptable, given that it [has been said] in the [Ratnagotrabhāga]vyākhyā: "Tathāgatahood is the state of being con-
stituted by the threefold buddhakāya. Therefore, since the element of the tathāgata is a cause of its being attained, the meaning of element here is ‘cause.’

It is interesting that no attempt at all is made to downplay the element of causation in the relationship between buddha nature and the buddha kāyas. This becomes even more evident in the explanation of the nirmāṇakāya, where its property of being something really produced is underlined by ascribing to it an artificial character:

Second, the latter, [namely] the two form kāyas, are attained through the fortified potential. Having accomplished virtues that are a cause of liberation and having taken vows, he appears, at the time of becoming a buddha, as the two form kāyas for disciples near and far.... The nirmāṇakāya is like an artificial image made of gold, since its nature is to appear as the reflection [of the sambhogakāya] to the mind of disciples through the power of the sambhogakāya.

From this it is clear that the form kāyas are something artificially created and thus do not exist since beginningless time, all the more so as their cause, the fortified potential, has been said to have a beginning in time (see above).

The way the three kāyas emerge from buddha nature is then summarized in the following way:

...the dharmakāya, suchness, and the naturally present potential, [all] three [of them] literally pervade all sentient beings. The outflow of the dharmakāya, [namely] the two[fold] teaching of the profound and the vast, and the fruit of the potential, [namely] the three kāyas, are taught as existing on the level of the fruit. Even though these “somehow exist” (yod pa dang yod kyang) in sentient beings, they are obstructed by hindrances. This is taught as such because the two[fold] wisdom of what [reality] is like and how far [it reaches], [namely] the dominant condition of the two[fold] discourses, exists, as do the four wisdoms that govern the arising of the two [form] kāyas. When these wisdoms are purified of adventitious stains, they arise by virtue of this as the appearance of the two[fold] discourses and the two [form] kāyas. Svābhāvikakāya has the same meaning as dharmakāya, and since the fortified potential is a potential that
is newly achieved through conditions, it does not pervade all sentient beings.\(^{511}\)

In other words, we loosely speak of the presence of the three kāyas in sentient beings only in the sense that the causes of the form kāyas, namely the twofold wisdom of what reality is like and how far it reaches together with the four wisdoms (mirror-like wisdom, etc.), exist in sentient beings since beginningless time. The fortified potential not only removes hindrances, but also, by way of the purification process, causes the primordial wisdoms to unfold as form kāyas, and as we have seen above, even the thirty-two qualities of the dharmakāya (the ten strengths, etc.) undergo a change, since it has been said that the qualities of the fruit resemble those of the potential (see above).

To recap, Lodrö Tsungmé's commentary resembles Dölpopa's ordinary or "nontantric" presentation of buddha nature. Another similarity with Dölpopa, and also Sabzang Mati Panchen, is the way unconditioned buddhahood is explained. In his commentary on RGV I.5 Lodrö Tsungmé takes the dharmakāya to lack any conditioned phenomenon whatsoever.\(^{512}\) In other words, the way Lodrö Tsungmé comments on the Ratnagotravibhāga does not exclude the possibility that he adhered to a similar extraordinary view as Dölpopa. This is indicated by Lodrö Tsungmé's statement that the three kāyas somehow exist in sentient beings and that they manifest from the primordial wisdom when the hindrances are removed.

The Position of Longchen Rabjampa

Longchenpa's interpretation of buddha nature in his Treasure of Tenets (Grub mtha' mdzod) deserves our interest for several reasons. First, most of the stanzas dealing with the fourth vajra point (on buddha nature) in the Ratnagotravibhāga are quoted and commented upon in thirty continuous pages in the Treasure of Tenets.\(^{513}\) Second, this work's theory of buddha nature plays a central role in linking the dzogchen teachings with older strands of Indian Buddhism.\(^{514}\) Third is the Grub mtha' mdzod's positive interpretation of the Ratnagotravibhāga, maintaining that emptiness needs to be understood in the sense of buddha nature's luminosity, and that such a positive assessment of the ultimate has definitive meaning.\(^{515}\) This and texts such as the Rdzogs chen sems nyid ngsi got pa shing rta chen po, in which an "empti[ness] of an own-being" (rang stong) is distinguished from an "empti[ness] of other" (gzhan stong),\(^{516}\) probably led Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé to list Longchenpa among the masters who figured in the diffusion of zhentong.\(^{517}\) Most mod-
ern Nyingma scholars think, however, that such a stance is naive, in that Longchenpa did not endorse a zhentong view in any of his other works, especially his more mature ones including the Chos dbyings rin po che'i mdzod or the Gnas lugs rin po che'i mdzod. The latter rather show that Longchenpa was perfectly in line with Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka.

It would go beyond the scope of this study to establish what the final view of Longchenpa was and whether it is reflected in the Grub mtha’ mdzod or the Shing rta chen po. Still, we should keep in mind the possibility that there were already different ways of defining zhentong at the time of Döl­popa. This said, we will now investigate Longchenpa’s interesting dzog­chen interpretation of the Ratnagotravibhāga in the Grub mtha’ mdzod.

The short title Treasure of Tenets is a little misleading, since more than one third of the text (namely the last four chapters) is on Vajrayāna and dzogchen, which are not, strictly speaking, contained in the traditional sys­tem of four tenets (Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, Cittamātra, and Madhyamaka). But the full title shows that the Treasure of the jewels of Tenets “elucidates the meaning of all yānas.” In other words, it is the system of nine—or in this text, sixteen—yānas of the Nyingma school that are pre­sent. The sixteen yānas are listed at the beginning of the third chapter, which introduces an explanation of both the Buddhist and other tenets. It is, of course, the explanation of the last of these sixteen yānas that reflects Longchenpa’s ultimate view. The nature of the fundamental state, which is repeatedly equated with the primordial ground, self-arisen wisdom, or awareness, is described in line with the dzogchen categories essence (ngo bo), nature (rang bzhin), and compassionate responsiveness (thugs rje). The essence of the primordial ground is taken to be empty (like space), its nature is luminosity (like that of the sun and the moon), and its compassionate responsiveness is all-pervasive (like the rays of light). These three categories are further equated with, respectively, the dharmakāya, sambhogakāya, and nirmāṇakāya. Inseparable in essence, the three kāyas abide throughout beginningless time as the nature of wisdom in an ever-unchangeable sphere.

As doctrinal support for a sphere with ever-existing qualities, Longchenpa cites the stanza from the Mahāyānābhidharmasūtra (“the beginningless sphere is the basis of all phenomena”) quoted in RGVV I.155 (J I.152) and stanza 43 from Saraha’s Dohākośāgīti, which also plays an important role in the mahāmudrā interpretation of buddha nature:

Mind alone is the seed of everything.
I prostrate to [this] mind.
In which worldly existence and nirvāṇa spread,
And which is like a wish-fulfilling jewel, bestowing the desired fruit. 526

Of particular interest is the following description of how buddha wisdom (in all its aspects of body, speech, and mind) exists throughout beginningless time even in confused states of mind. 527 A little further down, Longchenpa describes this state in detail:

[Primordial] awareness (rig pa) 528 is empty in essence, exists by its own nature in the form of five lights, and its compassionate responsiveness pervades [everything] in the form of rays. Even though it is present as the great source of the kāyas and wisdom, it is hindered [in three ways]: The aspect where it is in essence the empty dharmakāya, [namely] the pure vision of wisdom, is hindered by the eight accumulations [of consciousness] together with the ground (kun gzhi). 529 [Its] nature, the luminosity of the five lights, is hindered by the tangible skandha of flesh and blood. [Its] compassionate responsiveness, [which] abides [in a state of] manifesting [light] rays and awareness, is hindered by karman and mental imprints. Even though [this rig pa] is [only] present in a state that is very difficult to perceive, it is not the case that it does not exist. It pervades all sentient beings and exists in the body together with a support. 530

Longchenpa, thus, adduces the crucial stanza I.28 from the Ratnagotravibhāga, which lists the three reasons for the presence of buddha nature in sentient beings. In his explanation of the third reason ("because of the potential"), Longchenpa equates potential with the dzogchen term awareness, adopting as he does the reading rig instead of rigs (potential), and glossing buddha nature as rig pa in the following paraphrase. In other words, all sentient beings possess buddha nature because of their intrinsic primordial awareness.

At the beginning of his presentation of the secret Mantrayāna, 531 Longchenpa defines both the basis of purification (sbyang gzhi) and that which must be purified (sbyang bya) in line with the Ratnagotravibhāga and its terminology:

The subject being characterized (mtshan gzhi) is the naturally pure sphere, which is inseparably united 532 with the luminous
kāyas and wisdom, together with what is based on that [sphere], namely the phenomena to be purified and the purifying factors.... The naturally pure dhammatā of the sphere [and] luminosity is the basis of purification. The adventitious hindrances, [which are] karman, defilements, the phenomena of sāṁśāra, and the eight accumulations [of consciousness] including the “ground” (i.e., the alayavijñāna) are the stains to be purified. The ground, which consists of the various mental imprints, is repelled, given that it is the root of sāṁśāra. Even though the real object of the real ground, [namely] the fundamental state, is not repelled, that aspect of it that is conventionally given the name ground is turned back and becomes what is called dhammadhātu wisdom.

As in RGV I.157–58 (J I.154–55), adventitious stains that must be removed are distinguished from a dhātu that is inseparable from the buddha qualities, which here are all the kāyas and wisdom. It should be noted, too, that Longchenpa was aware of the two different meanings of kun gzhi: the real ground, which is the fundamental state; and that which is conventionally given the name kun gzhi. Thus an impure alayavijñāna (the conventional “ground”) is distinguished from a kun gzhi that signifies the fundamental state, which in dzogchen is inseparable from primordial awareness or self-arisen wisdom. Similar to a zhentong interpretation, the kun gzhi is equated with the fundamental state. This is like Rangjung Dorje’s pure mind, which becomes manifest simply when the impure kun gzhi rnam shes (ālayavijñāna) is removed. This distinction between an impure ālayavijñāna and a pure kun gzhi could have been the forerunner of what later became known as zhentong. In fact, Longchenpa once in his Rdzogs chen sems nyid ngal gso’i grel pa shing rta chen po draws the distinction between “empty of other” (gzhan gyis stong pa) and “empty of own-being” (rang gyis stong pa) in the context of discussing the Yogācāra theory of the three natures. Longchenpa explains:

The empti[ness] of an own-being [has] two [aspects]: the nonexistent appearances, which are devoid of a specific characteristic of their own like a [reflection of the] moon in water; and the empti[ness] of an own-being, [which is the emptiness of] the imagined [only], where spontaneously present phenomena are not abandoned, even though elements that can be labeled in terms of self and other do not exist. “Empti[ness] of other”
[means] to be empty of what is other, or uncontained and empty of [what is referred to by] any other synonym [of the ultimate]. 538 “Empty of both” also includes two [parts]: being empty of [what is referred to by] synonyms 539 and being empty of what is specifically characterized in terms of words [and] things. In this regard, the dharmatā of the mind, [that is] luminosity or the natural element of buddha nature, is empty of all flawed entities. It has the defining characteristics of qualities. The aspect of it which is the purity of [its] own essence is beyond the accomplishment of qualities and the discarding of faults.... [False] imagining or the eight accumulations of consciousness do not exist in the ground, and are thus also empty of an own-being.... In sum, empty of an own-being means that no phenomena truly exist in terms of an own-being. As to empty of other, this phenomenon (or, nature of phenomena?) has been designated under its aspect of not possessing other phenomena. 540

In other words, the nature of the buddha element, or the dharmatā of the mind, which has been equated with the unchangeable perfect nature, 541 is not empty of qualities, but empty of the eight accumulations of consciousness (including the ālayavijñāna). The last definition of empty of other (zhentong) is unclear, specifically whether to read dharma (chos) or dharmatā (chos nyid). Furthermore, the demonstrative pronoun de in chos de la found here is also problematic; to which phenomenon spoken of before does it precisely refer? Further up it was said that the dharmatā (chos nyid) is empty of flawed entities, in particular what is other. Thus speaking of dharmatā (chos nyid) here in the context of zhentong would make logical sense. This omission of the single syllable tā (nyid) (perhaps by a later redactor) changes the meaning of the whole passage, since that which is empty of something else (i.e., buddha nature) is then subsumed under phenomena, which do not truly exist in terms of an own-being. Philosophically, the interpretation based on reading dharma (chos) holds water. It could be argued that even though the dharmatā of the mind is empty of other, it still lacks a true own-being. Longchenpa may have preferred such a zhentong definition because it does not conflict with his dzogchen view that the essence of primordial awareness is emptiness.

Even though a later emendation seems likely, it is difficult to conclude from this passage alone that Longchenpa is a zhentongpa who denies, like the Jonangpas, that dharmatā lacks an own-being. Still, Longchenpa clearly
states in his *Grub mtha’ mdzod* (in his commentary on a stanza quoted in RGVV I.158 (J I.155)) that the ultimate is not merely emptiness in which nothing exists at all:

The sphere is the ultimate truth. It is said that by seeing its nature you see ultimate truth. But again, it is not the case that an emptiness in which nothing exists at all is the ultimate truth. To fools, ordinary beings, and beginners, the teachings on selflessness and so forth were given as a remedy for being attached to a self. But [this selflessness or emptiness], it should be known, [is] in reality the sphere [or] luminosity, [which is] unconditioned and exists as something spontaneously present. 542

Nowhere in the entire *Grub mtha’ mdzod* does Longchenpa distinguish between the thirty-two qualities of the dharmakāya and the qualities of the form kāyas. Both types of qualities exist throughout beginningless time. This is made clear in the following passage, in which Longchenpa addresses the question of the exact relationship between the buddha element and buddhahood in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* by letting a fictive opponent ask why a buddha is not taken to be the result of purifying the stains of the [buddha] element (*khams*) on the path of adopting and abandoning. 543 Longchenpa answers:

Since self-arisen wisdom, great perfection (*rdzog chen*) itself, exists throughout beginningless time as the spontaneously present qualities of the Buddha’s vast abundance [of treasures], the three kāyas are [already] complete as his own possession. Therefore, they do not need to be searched for once [the ālayavijñāna] has been turned back. 544

Nevertheless, the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, in which the form kāyas are explained to be a product of the path and caused by the fortified potential, is adduced in support of dzogchen. The beginning of the paragraph on dzogchen in the seventh chapter shows the importance of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* as a canonical underpinning for the great perfection, even though it is, technically, part of the Sūtryāna. In listing the flaws of inferior vehicles, Longchenpa blames the sūtras for obstructing the great bliss of atiyoga (i.e., dzogchen) by trying to conceptualize and analyze dzogchen, which is beyond concepts and analysis. 545 Having ridiculed the remaining inferior vehicles, Longchenpa describes dzogchen in the following way:
In terms of its nature [the great bliss of atiyoga] is great perfection (dzogchen), luminosity, the essence of the sphere, [and] self-arisen wisdom. Since it has neither cause nor fruit accompanied by conditions (as if there were something to be produced and something that produced), it has, like space, naturally existed throughout beginningless time.\textsuperscript{546}

In support of this, Longchenpa refers to RGV I.51cd—two pādas that have been quoted in the \textit{Kun byed rgyal po}:\textsuperscript{547}

\begin{quote}
[The buddha element is of] an unchangeable nature—as it was before, so it is after.\textsuperscript{548}
\end{quote}

And in the same line and sentence—that is to say, on an equal footing with the \textit{Kun byed rgyal po}—Longchenpa quotes RGV I.5a, once again in support of the above-mentioned description of dzogchen:\textsuperscript{549}

\begin{quote}
[Buddhahood] is unconditioned and spontaneously present.\textsuperscript{550}
\end{quote}

It is noteworthy that the \textit{Ratnagotravibhāga}, which belongs to the sūtra rather than tantra category, is quoted in support of dzogchen immediately after the sūtras and all other inferior vehicles have been ridiculed. Probably aware of this inconsistency, Longchenpa simply quotes this pāda without mentioning the source.

In the presentation of the higher yānas in the \textit{Grub mtha' mdzod}, it is mainly the \textit{Ratnagotravibhāga} (along with two closely related sūtras) that is adduced from a category of texts that normally belong to the yānas of the inferior sūtras. One of the most obvious reasons for this is that the \textit{tathāgataagarbha} theory, with its concepts of natural luminosity and inseparable buddha qualities, displays a high degree of similarity with dzogchen, and given that the dzogchen tradition is otherwise at a loss to cite identifiable Indian Buddhist sources, it is no surprise that the \textit{Ratnagotravibhāga} would have become a central focus.

Such an approach requires a particular interpretation of the \textit{Ratnagotravibhāga}, one that Dölpopa calls the extraordinary interpretation of the Vajrayāna. While Dölpopa and Rangjung Dorjé clearly distinguish a regular explanation of the \textit{Ratnagotravibhāga}, in which the two potentials and the three kāyas are presented in an ordinary Mahāyāna context separate from an extraordinary tantric interpretation, it is not so clear whether Longchenpa follows the same strategy. Those who adhere to the thesis that
Lodrö Tsungmé was Longchenpa would, of course, say that the differences between Lodrö Tsungmé’s Ratnagotravibhāga commentary and the dzogchen interpretation of buddha nature in the Grub mtha’ mdzod result precisely from such a distinction between an ordinary Mahāyāna interpretation and an extraordinary Vajrayāna one. In order to discuss this reasonable point, we need to turn to Longchenpa’s presentation of the lower yānas in the Grub mtha’ mdzod.

First of all, it is interesting to note that the Ratnagotravibhāga and the tathāgatagarbha theory do not figure significantly in the definition of the tenets in the third chapter of the Grub mtha’ mdzod. One exception is the Cittamatra section, where RGV I.51cd (see above) is quoted to illustrate the unchangeable aspect of the perfect nature (parinispānasvabhāva), with which buddha nature is implicitly equated. This equation is further substantiated on the basis of Mahāyānasūtraālamkāra IX.37. In his definition of the unchangeable perfect nature, Longchenpa introduces two new synonyms for it, the fundamental state (gnas lugs) and the real ground (don gyi kun gzhi), neither of which is found in the traditional Yogācāra works.

By weaving these terms into the presentation of a lower vehicle, he establishes a connection between the Yogācāra and the primordial or real ground, and thus shows that already the Cittamātra presentation of the ground is itself compatible with the highest view of dzogchen.

Apart from this, the presentation of the philosophical tenets is quite conservative. Neither the Ratnagotravibhāga nor its tathāgatagarbha theory is mentioned even once in the explanation of the Madhyamaka systems. Other exegetes did not stay so strict. For example, Tāranātha (1575–1634), in his own presentation of the four tenets, the Gzhan stong snying po, divides the fourth tenet (Madhyamaka) into ordinary and Great Madhyamaka (dbu ma chen po). In this work, he based his Great Madhyamaka on a zhentong interpretation through a particular understanding of the Yogācāra combined with the Ratnagotravibhāga. In contrast, Longchenpa speaks of a Great Madhyamaka only in the sense of “being free from mental fabrication” (spros bral).

It is noteworthy, however, that Longchenpa defines ultimate truth in the Prāsaṅgika (Madhyamaka) as the essence (ngo bo), which is free from the mental fabrication of a perceived object and a perceiving subject. It is true that the concept of the emptiness of perceived and perceiver originally comes from the prajñāpāramitā literature, but it is first and foremost a concept favored by Yogācāra works, in which restricting the object of negation to the duality of subject and object does not negate nondual wisdom and other buddha qualities. In the context of explaining the transformation of the
basis\textsuperscript{559} in chapter 4, Longchenpa shows how his notion of a primordially existing wisdom can be explained from a Prāsaṅgika view, without any allusion to the Ratnagotravibhāga:

Some who consider themselves to be Mādhyamikas [say]: Since a buddha does not have wisdom, he does not have the knowledge of wisdom either, because knowable objects are mental fabrications, and he is free from mental fabrications.... As has been said in the \textit{[Madhyamaka]-Avatāra} [XI.17d]: “The mind being suppressed, the [dharma]kāya makes [the state of nonarising and nonobstruction] directly manifest.”\textsuperscript{560} [Answer:] This is not acceptable for the following reasons. Since in terms of emptiness, from the view of the dharmakāya, neither the existence nor nonexistence of wisdom is established, you may present it as “existent,” [and] this [can be] negated; and, similarly, you may claim [its] “nonexistence,” [and] this, too, [can be] negated. Therefore nonexistence is not defensible either. In terms of appearance, from the view of the form kāyas, after disciples manifest, wisdom, too, must appear, since [the visible kāyas] necessarily appear in order to work for the benefit [of others]. Although the tenets concerning knowable objects, knowers, and so forth, [in short,] anything imputed, are mental fabrications, objects (\textit{yul}) belonging to the system\textsuperscript{561} of that which manifests without being imputed by anyone should not be taken as mental fabrications.\textsuperscript{562}

This view of the ontological status of buddha wisdom matches the view of Sakya Paṇḍita (1182–1251), who says in his \textit{Thub pa dgongs gsal}:

If [you claimed that] wisdom is truly established in his own (i.e., the Buddha’s) continuum, you would be like the non-Buddhists who maintain the permanence [of the absolute].... [But] if wisdom were a [mere] appearance for others, without existing in his own continuum, the Buddha would be without qualities.\textsuperscript{563}

Similarly, the Eighth Karmapa Mikyö Dorjé and Śākya Chogden claim, according to Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé:

Wisdom is beyond existence and nonexistence on the level of a buddha; on a conventional level, though, wisdom exists.\textsuperscript{564}
Coming back to Longchenpa: with regard to philosophical theory or views, the Prāsāṅgika occupies a privileged place where the Ratnagotravibhāga has no bearing at all for him.

The situation is different in the fourth chapter, which explains how to proceed on the paths of these tenets. The presentation of the bodhisattva path starts with an explanation of how bodhicitta is generated, by pointing out that everyone possesses a natural [buddha] potential (rigs). This subchapter is basically a commentary on the main passages of the first chapter of the Ratnagotravibhāga (on buddha nature). It should be remembered in the following passage that the discussion of buddha nature in this fourth chapter still formally belongs to the nontantric part of the Grub mtha' mdzod.

Based on RGV I.62ab (“The luminous nature of mind, like space, never undergoes change”), Longchenpa defines potential as follows:

The naturally pure sphere, which is the ultimate truth or self-arisen wisdom, is called the potential or [buddha] element when mingled with stains. When stainless, it is called enlightenment or tathāgata.

This definition is fully in line with the Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā (on I.23–24) except that the [buddha] element (Skt. dhātu, Tib. khams) is replaced with Longchenpa's own dzogchen terms, naturally pure sphere and self-arisen wisdom. Quoting RGV I.157 (J I.154) (“There is nothing to be removed from it and absolutely nothing to be added. The real should be seen as real; and seeing the real, you become liberated”), Longchenpa defines the nature of the potential:

With regard to the essence of this sphere, which is [buddha] nature, stains that must be abandoned have never existed, because [in terms of their true being,] they are natural luminosity and stainlessness. Qualities that previously did not exist will not be newly produced, since qualities are spontaneously present.

But according to RGVV I.25, it is the uninterrupted and effortless buddha activity that is “spontaneously present” (lhun grub), and not the qualities. In the entire Ratnagotravibhāga and its vyākhyā, qualities are not even once called spontaneously present (lhun grub). In dzogchen, the nature (rang bzhin) of awareness (rig pa) (equated with buddha nature) is
spontaneously present (lbun grub), which is understood to imply that the qualities have been spontaneously present throughout beginningless time. Even though there are no “spontaneously present qualities” in the Ratnapratibhāga, it is not entirely impossible to read them into it, given that the qualities are inseparable from the primordial buddha nature and the basis on which spontaneous buddha activity unfolds. It should be noted that a normal Mahāyāna text is here not simply being quoted and commented on according to its original purport, but it is being brought into line with a dzogchen view.

Of particular interest is how Longchenpa also claims in this “non-tantric” portion of the Grub mtha’ mdzod that all the three kāyas exist throughout beginningless time. His agenda is therefore to prove that the buddha qualities already exist in both the naturally present and fortified potentials, that is, that these two potentials are only liberating causes and not efficient causes. He starts by presenting the following etymology of potential (gotra):

Go-in gotra (Longchenpa: gautra) [stands for] guṇa, which translates as quality, and -tra for tara, which translates as “to liberate” (sgrol ba). The qualities, regarded as the support, liberate [by bringing you] beyond samsāra. [As] has been said in [Mahāyānasūtrālāmākāra III.4cd]:

As for the qualities, you should know  
That they have the meaning of “to liberate.”

Two lines further down Longchenpa quotes the entire stanza (MSA III.4) which not surprisingly, judging from the way he quotes the second half of the third pāda and the fourth pāda above, he understands in the following way:

[The potential] should be known as the naturally [present] and the fortified. They are the support and the supported, exist [as cause] but do not exist [as fruit], and as for the qualities, you should know that they have the meaning of “to liberate.”

Longchenpa explains how the all-pervading luminosity of buddha nature (as established by the three reasons in RGV I.27) can be divided into the two aspects of emptiness and appearance, so as to accord with both types of potential:
As to the sphere, [or] emptiness, it is the liberating cause with regard to the dharmakāya and the svabhāvikakāya, [which are] the support (=prakṛtisthagotra); and as to wisdom, [or] appearance, including your own luminous major and minor marks [of a buddha], they abide as the supported (=paripuṣṭagotra), [which is] the liberating cause with regard to the two form kāyas.

In other words, for Longchenpa neither potential is an efficient cause, in the sense of really producing qualities, but is only a liberating cause, which means that each is already imbued with all qualities that bring about liberation from what hinders them, namely adventitious defilements and the like. The two potentials are further equated with the sphere and wisdom, or emptiness and appearance, and from what has been said till now about the sphere and wisdom, it follows that both potentials are inseparable and exist throughout beginningless time.

Contrary to this line of thought, Lodrö Tsungmé takes the fortified potential as something newly accomplished (and consequently, as something with a beginning in time):

As to the [potential] arisen from practice, it has been newly accomplished thanks to conditions of the various potentials of the noble ones. In this regard, the naturally present one is the support, and the one arisen from practice (i.e., the fortified potential), the supported. As for the defining characteristic of the potential, it is a property of the state mingled with stains, and it is effective in generating the abandonment and realization of the noble ones. As for [its] etymology, up to go in gotra, it is derived from gu, [which stands for] guṇa ("quality"). By separating ta and ra [in tra], you obtain tara ("to liberate"). [So it is] guṇa-tara. Since it is the qualities that it liberates and generates, it is a potential.

Next, Lodrö Tsungmé quotes MSA III.4. But this time the stanza must be understood in the light of Vasubandhu’s commentary, since the last sentence of Lodrö Tsungmé’s explanation is an abbreviation of Vasubandhu’s analysis of the compound guṇottāraṇatā, which is:

It should be known that the potential has the meaning of the “coming out of the qualities”—the qualities come out in the sense that they arise from it (i.e. the potential).
A "natural reading" of the Tibetan translation of MSA III.4 supports Longchenpa, but Vasubandhu's commentary and also the general context of the third chapter of the *Mahāyānasūtraśālaṁkāra* suggest that Lodrö Tsungmê's interpretation is more accurate. Still, the main point here is not to settle the question who is right; it is rather that one and the same author cannot be expected to quote and interpret an important stanza from the *Mahāyānasūtraśālaṁkāra* in such fundamentally different ways. It is inconceivable that the "Lodrö Tsungmê" who composed a *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary could have ignored the original purport of the *Mahāyānasūtraśālaṁkāra* and the *bhaṣya* on it when writing the *Grub mtha' mdzod*, if he were the author of both works.

It seems to me that Longchenpa's interpretation of MSA III.4 would not be different in another context, such as a simple commentary on the *Mahāyānasūtraśālaṁkāra*. Longchenpa's way of presenting buddha nature in this passage of the *Grub mtha' mdzod* cannot be following a strategy of distinguishing an ordinary from an extraordinary interpretation. Dölpopa would have simply accepted the purport of MSA III.4 and the *bhaṣya* on it, because it is in accordance with the level of apparent truth on which form kāyas and qualities are actually produced, or to use Lodrö Tsungmê's terminology, the potentials are efficient causes.

For those who claim that Longchenpa was the Lodrö Tsungmê who composed a *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary in Sangpu Neutog there is still one possible argument left, which is that Longchenpa changed tack after he left the university of Sangpu, adopting a full-fledged dzogchen view only after his years of study. Future researchers investigating the works of Longchenpa will have to keep this question in mind.

Based on his particular understanding of MSA III.4, Longchenpa comments on the last five of the nine examples from the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* (the treasure, the tree, the precious image, the future monarch, and the golden statue), which illustrate the nature of the buddha potential out of which the three kāyas arise (RGV I.152–55, J I.149–52): There is a twofold division into a naturally present potential and an acquired potential corresponding to the division of ground and path. During the time [the potential] abides in the nature of the sphere, the ground, as something all-pervading, it resembles, as an aspect of the sphere, [which is] the primordial ground of manifestation, a treasure of precious jewels. In the same way as the abode, which is the ground that gives rise to anything one may wish, is not determinable as something manifest, [the
potential] is the sphere of the dharmakāya, [or] the svābhāv-
ikāya. It is presented [as such] because it enables the manifes-
tation of the kāyas and wisdom. As to awareness and the kāyas 
under [the] aspect of appearance, [both of which are then] the 
manifested wisdom, they are actualized qualities that exist in 
yourself. This comes about by their power to free from hin-
drances. It is merely with respect to this ascertainment that the 
[acquired or fortified] potential has been illustrated previously by 
the example of a mature tree with fruits. The pure cause is labeled 
as the pure fruit. This is elucidated in the examples of the gold 
mine and the [mine of] supreme jewels in the Mahāyāna-
sūtrālaṁkāra.\footnote{586}

Moreover, when it is explained what [the potential] is like 
when on the path of learning, both potentials of the sphere are 
called natural potential abiding as the support, given that they 
exist as something spontaneously present by nature. The roots 
of virtue, beginning from the initial generation of bodhicitta all 
the way up to the tenth level, [that is] everything included in the 
two accumulations of merit and wisdom, which is all based on 
that [natural potential], are called acquired or fortified potential. 
These virtues are taught as if the qualities that exist in yourself 
newly arise on the strength of having removed the stains of the 
natural potential, which is endowed with a newly acquired rem-
edy. Nowadays the [natural potential] is [often] taken as the 
suchness of the ground, and the path as the fortified potential, 
the two potentials not being counted as part of the ground. This 
obviously implies a misunderstanding of the sphere, since [such 
a view] contradicts the spontaneous presence of appearance and 
emptiness in the [primordial] ground.\footnote{587}

In other words, there is no real production of anything for Longchenpa. 
What happens simply is that the purification process makes the primordial 
qualities of the three kāyas apparent:

In view of the apparent production of the three kāyas by the 
strength of training on the path and the removal of stains, it is 
said to have the nature of a potential. This is illustrated by the 
five similes of the treasure [under the ground], the tree, the pre-
cious Buddha statue [wrapped in a garment], the cakravartin, 
and the golden statue [in the earthen mold].\footnote{588}
To conclude, Longchenpa interprets buddha nature in the fourth chapter of the *Grub mtha’ mdzod* from a dzogchen perspective, the implication being that the qualities of the primordial form kāyas do not refer to the real thirty-two marks of the Buddha in the body but to the thirty-two “luminous marks.” At the expense of reinterpreting MSA III.4 and the meaning of *spontaneously present* (*lhun grub*) in RGV I.25, he tries to establish that theories of the two potentials in the *Mahāyānasūtālāmkkāra* and the *Ratnagotravibhāga* do not present the primordial ground differently from dzogchen.

Among philosophical tenets, Longchenpa takes Prāsaṅgika to be the highest. It still belongs to the analytical approach of the lower Sūtrayāna, however, and so is outshone by the unsurpassable *yāna* of dzogchen. But if we understand the teaching of an ultimate buddha nature to mean that the qualities of a buddha have been spontaneously present throughout beginningless time, and if we take the final passage of the first chapter literally, and thus accept that the teaching of emptiness has five defects that can only be removed by the definitive teaching of buddha nature (which Longchenpa sets forth), the *Ratnagotravibhāga* must indeed be said to outshine Prāsaṅgika. The superiority of Prāsaṅgika is accepted within the lower analytical approach of the sūtras, but the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, a text whose doctrine is so closely associated with dzogchen, has definitive meaning, counteracting the defects of the analytical approach in a way similar to dzogchen.

The kind of relation between the *tathāgatagarbha* theory of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and dzogchen, which is necessary for such an approach, is first of all established by what Dölpopa would call an extraordinary Vajrayāna explanation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. This implies, for example, that not only the thirty-two qualities of the dharmakāya but also the thirty-two qualities of the form kāyas exist throughout beginningless time (which is, in view of the nine examples from the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*, not entirely impossible). Second, dzogchen notions such as *spontaneous presence* (*lhun grub*), *sphere* (*dbyings*), and *primordial ground of manifestation* (*’char gzhi*) are systematically introduced as synonyms of key philosophical terms in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. The technical terms do not need to be entirely new: *spontaneously present* (*lhun grub*), for example, is repeatedly found in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, where it denotes effortless buddha activity, but in a dzogchen context it is necessarily associated with the buddha qualities, and so has a slightly different connotation.

Having thus been introduced to the *tathāgatagarbha* theory from a dzogchen perspective, we are prepared to accept the *Ratnagotravibhāga* as a
canonical basis for dzogchen when the latter is presented as the final yāna. Such a twofold strategy not only offers a way to proceed smoothly, and without too many contradictions, to the higher vehicles when studying texts like the Ratnagotravibhāga, but also reflects a hermeneutic attempt to set dzogchen on a firmer canonical foundation.

The Position of Barawa Gyaltsen Palzang

Four texts from Barawa’s collected works prove to be very helpful in determining his view on the Ratnagotravibhāga. In all four of them Barawa establishes his mahāmudrā understanding of buddha nature over other views, particularly the zhentong of the Jonangpas. In the first work, The Sunbeam of Explaining the Intention of Two Dharma Masters,591 which Barawa composed after hearing that two omniscient masters, namely Künkhyen Sherab Gyaltsen (Kun mkhyen Shes rab rgyal mtshan) (Dolpopa) and Khenchen Tamchö Khyenpa Butön Rinpoche (Mkhan chen thams cad mkhyen pa Bu ston Rin po che), upheld seemingly incompatible views:

[Barawa] heard the [following]: “The Omniscient Butön (Bu ston) claims that buddha nature does not exist in sentient beings,” while “the Omniscient [Dölpopa] claims the existence of both a pure ground of wisdom and an impure ground of consciousness; he [further] claims that these two are not identical in essence, and he [finally] claims that the reflections of emptiness are properly buddha nature [in the form of] firmness of mind.”592

In other words, whereas Butön denies the presence of buddha nature in sentient beings altogether, Dölpopa accepts its existence even in terms of distinct images, such as the reflections of emptiness that are experienced during the six-branch yoga (ṣādaṅgayoga) of the Kalacakratantra.599 Barawa argues that both masters, Butön and Dölpopa, must have made their respective statements with a hidden intention, and so he assumes that they have provisional meaning. In order to establish that a statement has a hidden intention (dgongs pa can) you have to be able to indicate the basis of such a hidden intention (dgongs gzhi)594 through demonstrating what the author really believed to be true, the motive (dgos pa) of the provisional statement, and a contradiction that results from taking the provisional statement literally (dngos la gnod byed).595 Thus, Barawa tries to show that it is his own mahāmudrā understanding of buddha nature—not only
emptiness but also clarity and awareness—that is the sole basis on which the ultimate purport of both Dölpopa and Butön rests. In short, Barawa presents his interpretation of buddha nature as the only possibility left for explaining the contradictory positions of Butön and Dölpopa (provided that both are omniscient and so see the same ultimate reality). Through these hermeneutics we can see Barawa’s own view in a concise way. In three other texts, Barawa criticizes the Jonang position even more directly. They are two long letters addressed to Dükhorwa Dorjé Nyingpo (Dus ’khor ba rdo rje snying po), a follower of Dölpopa, and a reply to eight other disciples of Dölpopa. Even though much is repetition, some points are more elaborated on than in the Dgongs bshad nyi ma'i 'od zer (the first text mentioned).

In his study of Butön’s De bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po gsal zhing mdzes par byed pa'i rgyan, Seyfort Ruegg comes to the conclusion that it is mainly the equation of buddha nature with the real dharmakāya of a buddha that led Butön to the conclusion that the teaching of buddha nature has only provisional meaning. Butön’s disciple Dratsepa Rinchen Namgyal (Sgra tshad pa Rin chen rnam rgyal) (1318–88) in his commentary on the Mdzes rgyan (i.e., the Yang rgyan) takes this further, stating that even on a tantric level the teaching of buddha nature has only provisional meaning. In other words, Butön and Dratsepa deny that a buddha nature that is fully adorned with all qualities exists in sentient beings. Dratsepa explains in his Yang rgyan:

If you say that the buddha nature which somebody possesses is the suchness (tathatā) of the Buddha, we also accept that it exists in sentient beings, but as for your thesis that it is the dharmakāya of a buddha, it has already been explained before that it is not established that the latter exists in sentient beings.

But Dratsepa leaves no doubt that this suchness is nothing other than emptiness, which he takes, in accordance with Sakya Paṇḍita, as the basis of the ultimate purport (dgongs gzhi) with regard to all sūtras that proclaim a buddha nature.

Barawa contrasts such a description of Butön’s view with the common opinion that Dölpopa shares, namely that buddha nature possesses all qualities throughout beginningless time, and concludes that both are extreme positions and inadequate formulations of their ultimate views; otherwise both would be contradicting all sūtras and tantras of the third dharma-cakra, which say that buddha nature exists in the sheath of defilements, but as the true nature of phenomena (though not as something possessing all
VARIOUS POSITIONS RELATED TO ZHÖNU PAL’S INTERPRETATION

qualities). Barawa here quotes a passage from the *Śrīmālādevīsūtra* that was transmitted in two different versions. The way it is quoted by Barawa, the Sanskrit manuscripts and the Derge Tengyur of the *Ratnagotravibhāga-vyākyā* is:

And this dharmakāya of the tathāgata, illustrious one, is called *buddha nature* when not liberated from the sheath of defilements.

Butön for his part followed the reading of the *Śrīmālādevīsūtra* in the Kangyur, which does not have the negative particle *ma* and thus conveys an entirely different meaning:

And this dharmakāya of the tathāgata, illustrious one, which is liberated from the sheath of defilements, is called *buddha nature*.

According to Seyfort Ruegg, it was owing to this direct equation of the real dharmakāya free from stains (and not only its dharmatā) with buddha nature that Butön disqualified the teachings of buddha nature from having more than provisional meaning. Indeed on this point, Barawa explains that there is no contradiction between his understanding of buddha nature and that of Butön:

As to the Omniscient Butön Rinpoche’s statement that sentient beings do not possess buddha nature, he asserts that it is [only] buddha nature [understood as] the dharmakāya that does not exist in sentient beings—namely a buddha nature that would be free from the sheath of adventitious stains and endowed with the two purities that possess the ten strengths, the four types of fearlessness, the Buddha’s eighteen exclusive features, and so forth.

And this would be impossible, since the ten strengths would immediately destroy ignorance and the dharmakāya would unfold the form kāyas. Barawa points out that Butön explains in his *Mdzes rgyan* that sentient beings possess buddha nature by virtue of the potential they have to bring forth the three kāyas. Moreover, Butön refers in his *Sbyor drug gi ngo sprod* to sentient beings as not having realized their natural luminosity, which is free from mental fabrication. Repeating that Butön cannot have meant that all teachings of buddha nature in the third dharmacakra have a hidden intention, Barawa sums up:
[When Butön] taught that [buddha nature] exists, he thought of its existence as dharmatā [or] luminosity. [When] he taught it as being empty, he thought of it as having neither shape nor color.\(^{607}\)

Against the backdrop of Seyfort Ruegg’s findings, Barawa’s assertion that Butön does not mean that a correctly understood buddha nature has only provisional meaning could have a basis as long as he does not see in the existing luminous aspect of mind anything that goes against the constraints of emptiness.\(^{608}\) Still, Barawa’s attempt to show that Butön’s view accords with his own could have been to some extent merely a way to avoid expressing disagreement. But it seems that Barawa was more in need of help against Dölpopa’s position, which he not only tries to reinterpret but also opposes more directly, especially in his letters.

Barawa’s *Dgongs bshad nyi ma’i ’od zer* is thus not so much a reliable analysis of Butön’s and Dölpopa’s true intentions as a presentation of his own views on buddha nature. Right at the beginning of the *Nyi ma’i ’od zer* he gives the following definition:

This ground, [or] bodhicitta, is clear in that it is not covered by [any] substantial hindering stains. This is clarity. Not having turned into [dead] matter, it knows, as explained above, happiness and suffering, and is thus awareness. [Finally,] it is empty, because it lacks shape and color. These three are inseparable. If you distinguish [different states] mingled with adventitious stains, [these three] are the buddha nature of sentient beings.\(^{609}\)

This definition of buddha nature is quite interesting, for it combines the typical mahāmudrā description of directly experiencing the true nature of mind as inseparable clarity, awareness, and emptiness with the analytical definition of a buddha nature as being mingled with adventitious stains.\(^{610}\) These adventitious stains, then, are explained as resulting from not recognizing this true nature of mind, which is always present, whether recognized or not:

This buddha nature that exists in sentient beings is mingled with the stains of defilements. The confusion of not recognizing [your own] true nature by yourself is ignorance. [This] ignorance has been taught as being defilements and adventitious stains. For this reason the dharmatā or luminosity that
abides within the sheath of defilements is buddha nature. It is said to be hindered by adventitious stains. The clarity of not being hindered by anything other than that—for example, a substantial impurity with shape and color—this [fundamental] clear state is called luminosity or the naturally pure state. [When] it does not recognize itself by itself, this is ignorance. Under these conditions [the fundamental clear state] appears as the multiformity of a perceived object and a perceiving subject, [and] you wander in samsāra. The consequence of this is the seed of the phenomena of samsāra, [that is,] the buddha nature of sentient beings.... By practicing [meditation on] the dharmatā, that which abides in the sheath of karman and defilements, is purified of its karman and defilements, along with [all] mental imprints, and therefore the dharmatā or luminosity is actualized. This is the dharmakāya, or buddha nature, on the level of a buddha. 

This short explanation demonstrates the main points of Barawa's mahāmudrā position. The difference between samsāra and enlightenment is simply defined by whether you recognize your own true nature of mind or not. This point is repeated several times in the four works of Barawa that deal with the position of the Jonangpas, and is not only backed up by quotes from Saraha, but also elaborated with the help of the Lāvikāvatārasūtra and the Ghanavyūhasūtra, in both of which buddha nature is equated with the ālayavijñāna. Contrary to Asaṅga's Mahāyānasamgraha, the distinction between an impure and pure aspect of the mind (or, translated into the terminology of the Ratnagotravibhāga, of impure adventitious stains and a pure buddha element) is thus downplayed. Barawa even accepts the consequence that buddha nature experiences suffering, and reads his interpretation of the buddha element’s perception of suffering into the Ratnagotravibhāga (stanzas 1.40–41): 

If there were no buddha element, there would not be aversion to suffering either, 
Nor would there be desire or earnest wish for or the intention [to attain] nirvāṇa. 
The perception of worldly existence as suffering and fault, and of nirvāṇa as bliss and quality, 
Only occurs in the presence of a potential, and not in beings without one.
For Barawa, buddha nature thus transforms into samsāra when it does not recognize that it is inseparable clarity and emptiness. When it does come to that recognition, buddha nature then transforms into the real dharmakāya of a buddha. Consequently, Barawa distinguishes two types of buddha nature: one of sentient beings and one of a buddha. This bespeaks a particular understanding of buddha qualities, one according to which they are brought forth in the real sense of the word:

Under the condition of the [presence of] disciples, the fruit of liberation, [namely] the ten strengths, the four types of fearlessness, the eighteen exclusive features, and so forth appear in the dharmatā, [or] luminosity; and as a result of that, [buddha] nature and the fruit of maturation appear as the two form kāyas and so forth. Therefore [we speak of] the seed of [buddha] nature.

It is interesting that Barawa includes the qualities of liberation among those that are caused by the presence of needful disciples—normally only said of the qualities of the form kāyas. His understanding of the production of qualities becomes clear from how he takes the common simile of separating butter from milk:

You collect butter by churning milk. By whipping a lump of butter [already] freed from the buttermilk, it [will become] free of buttermilk, hair, and so forth. This is called the essence of butter. As this essence becomes manifest, [the qualities of] good color and taste, great richness, and the ability to make a lamp burn arise automatically. Likewise, as the dharmatā, [or] luminosity, manifests it becomes free from everything that must be abandoned, and is thus the [buddha] nature from which all qualities pertaining to the level of a buddha come forth.

In other words, the buddha qualities on the level of the fruit are compared to the good color and taste of butter and its ability to feed the flame of a lamp—qualities that do not exist in milk. They manifest spontaneously, however, when the process of churning is completed. Thus buddha nature, or the dharmatā that abides in the sheath of defilements, is taken to be a seed that brings forth a buddha. Barawa not only claims that this understanding is the ultimate purport of Butön’s teachings, but also that of Dölpopa’s:
As to this assertion of the Omniscient Chöje Rinpoche (Chos rje Rin po che) (i.e., Dölpopa) that the buddha nature of a sentient being is a buddha, and that the qualities of a buddha exist [in it]: when he taught that the buddha nature that exists in a sentient being is a buddha, he was thinking of the fact that buddha nature is [in reality] dharmatā, or luminosity, and not different in essence whether it exists in a sentient being or a buddha. His intention was to seal the cause by means of the fruit, and he [metaphorically] applied the name of fruit to the cause. [He thought that] the buddha nature of sentient beings possesses the ability to make the qualities of the level of a buddha come forth.\(^{620}\)

But if this had been the true intention of Dölpopa, he would not have ignored the crucial stanza RGV I.27, in which it is said that the “fruit [of buddha nature] has been metaphorically applied to the buddha potential.”\(^{621}\) Indeed, Dölpopa’s disciple Sabzang Mati Panchen had great difficulty in interpreting this phrase and bringing it in line with zhentong. The immediately following passage is nevertheless of great interest, because that which Barawa claims to be Dölpopa’s intention is in fact Barawa’s own view; the buddha nature of sentient beings already possesses the five qualities of the svabhāvika[kāya] but is only in partial concordance with the four perfections of the dharmakāya (being clean, the self, permanent, and blissful). Referring to the Bodhisattvabhumi, Barawa rules out that ordinary beings possess the ten strengths and so forth.\(^{622}\) This is also clear from Barawa’s own statements:

...then the [ten] strengths and so forth would not be a fruit, since they would not be a fruit that has arisen from causes and conditions. The [ten] strengths and so forth do not exist throughout beginningless time. [Their] cause is buddha nature, and the condition [for their arising] is meditation [on this buddha nature] along the path. From [these two] the [ten] strengths and so forth arise later, when you are free from adventitious stains. Therefore [the ten strengths and so forth] are the fruit of liberation. Likewise it has been said that buddha nature is not a real buddha, but the cause or seed of a buddha.... Thus it has been said in [Saraha’s] Dohā[koṣagīti, stanza 43]: “Mind alone is the seed of everything....”\(^{623}\)
Barawa justifies his interpretation by pointing out that in RGV I.51 it is not said that buddha nature is endowed with the ten strengths and the like, but only that it is naturally endowed with qualities. This means either that the qualities referred to are not necessarily the ten strengths, etc., or that Barawa understands the compound yon tan rang bzhin nyid in the sense of "the true nature of qualities." In his letter to eight disciples of Dölpopa, Barawa is more precise:

It is not said [in RGV I.51] that buddha nature exists as a [real] buddha. It is obvious that [this stanza] teaches the major and minor marks of buddha nature as the defining characteristics of the ultimate, or the dharmakāya. This has been explained in the Ratnagotravibhāgavīkhyā. The assertion that the Buddha has the defining characteristics of space was made with the ultimate and exclusive characteristics of the tathāgatas in mind.

These are the fifteen defining characteristics of the ultimate, as explained in RGV II.29–37. Barawa warns that it does not follow from this that there are fifteen distinct factors, since they have been taught as being the ultimate characteristics of a buddha in particular. Now, what is never changing according to Barawa are the defining characteristics of the ultimate:

As to the defining characteristics of the ultimate, there is not the slightest difference between the defining characteristics of the ultimate of an ordinary being and those of a tathāgata. But since there is a difference with regard to the characteristics of the ultimate major and minor marks, he taught [the defining characteristics of the ultimate] with the ultimate and exclusive [space-like] characteristics of the Buddha in mind. Thus [it has been said]. Therefore, as a force [or] capacity, these defining characteristics of the ultimate exist in buddha nature with [only] partial concordance. In the dharmakāya of a buddha, however, they exist in a completely perfect way.

With regard to the various statements that the buddha qualities are inseparable, Barawa explains in his Dgongs bshad nyi ma'i 'od zer that such statements can be referring only to the ultimate qualities. This, he says, is clearly stated in RGV I.29, which lists ten aspects of buddha nature, among which the inseparability of the qualities is the last one:
...and the inseparability [of the qualities]. With regard to them you should know that the intended meaning [is that] of the ultimate [buddha] element. 631

A little further down, according to Barawa, it is made clear to which inseparable qualities exactly this stanza refers. He says that buddha nature possesses in full the five qualities of the svābhāvikakāya, which are enumerated in RGV II.46c–47d: 632

[The svābhāvikakāya] is luminous, since as the nature of the dharmadātu it is pure. 633 The svābhāvikakāya is endowed with qualities that are immeasurable, innumerable, inconceivable, incomparable, and that have reached [the state of] final purity. 634

In other words, it is only the natural quality of unconditioned luminosity that is inseparable—the dharmatā that cannot be differentiated in terms of shape, color, and quantifiable numbers. 635 Now, Barawa argues that the major and minor marks (i.e., the qualities of the form kāyas) are separable because they have shape and color, and the ten strengths and so forth are separable for being multiple:

The pure dharmadātu is said to be the qualities of the dharmakāya. They are inseparable and have neither shape nor color nor number. The major and minor marks have shape and color, and the [ten] strengths and so forth are multiple. Therefore they are [all] separable. 636

In Barawa's "Presentation of the Basic Consciousness and Wisdom," which is a refutation of Dūkhorwa Dorjé Nyingpo's reply to his questions, the crucial stanza on emptiness in the Ratnagotravibhāga (I.158 (J I.155): "The budhha element is empty of adventitious stains, which have the defining characteristic of being separable; and it is not empty of unsurpassable qualities, which have the defining characteristic of not being separable") is explained along the same line of thought:

That which has perceptible attributes in terms of the particulars of forms, [namely] various shapes and colors, is not established as it appears, and is thus empty. [This refers] to the adventitious phenomena of apparent truth. Buddha nature has the defining characteristic of lacking anything that can be separated in terms
of the particulars of forms—various shapes and colors—and lacks characteristic signs. It is the wisdom of self-realization, free from all mental fabrications. It has been taught that the unsurpassable dharmatā is not nonexistent.637

From this it is clear that for Barawa the inseparable qualities in RGV I.158 (J I.155) refer to the dharmatā and thus to the qualities of the ultimate, as described above. In other words, since the thirty-two qualities of liberation (namely the ten strengths and so forth) and the thirty-two qualities of maturation or the form kayas are separable, they are implicitly taken to be empty, just like the phenomena of apparent truth. Thus it is clear why Barawa cannot accept Dölpopa’s stance that the reflections of emptiness, such as the appearance of smoke during the practice of the six-branch yoga, amount to seeing a part of your buddha nature, namely an aspect of the major and minor marks.638 Barawa “interprets” Dölpopa in the following way:

Even though sunlight is not the real solar disk, its unobstructed radiance shines in the form of light. Therefore light is not different from the solar disk; and when you see sunlight you say that you see the sun. Similarly, even though the reflections of emptiness are not the real buddha nature, the unobstructed radiance of buddha nature shines forth in the form of the ten signs, such as smoke. Therefore [Dölpopa] thought that the reflections of emptiness are not different from buddha nature and called them buddha nature.639

In discussing the reflections of emptiness, Barawa insists that the buddha nature of ordinary beings is simply luminosity endowed with the five qualities of the svābhāvikakāya but not with the major and minor marks of the form kayas.640 This excludes the possibility that Barawa would have accepted the primordial existence of the qualities of the form kayas on an extraordinary tantric level of interpretation, all the more so since he interprets Dölpopa on this very point.

The differences between Barawa’s mahāmudrā interpretation and Dölpopa’s zhentong become most evident in how Barawa explains the relation between the impure “ground of consciousness” (i.e., the ālayavijñāna) and the pure “ground of wisdom” (ye shes kyi kun gzhi).641 Already in his introduction to the Dgongs bshad nyi ma’i ‘od zer he equates the terms ground (kun gzhi) and consciousness of the ground (kun gzhi’i rnam shes),642 and defines their pseudo-difference, in line with mahāmudrā, as depending
upon whether you have recognized the true nature of mind. Barawa reads his understanding into Dölpopa’s zhentong distinction between an impure and pure ground in the following way:

[The ālayavijñāna] is the awareness of buddha nature [in the aspect of it] as the impure ground. Confusion arises when [buddha nature] does not recognize itself. Various extroverted thoughts thereby occur.... Inasmuch as [buddha nature] forms the ground of the phenomena of saṃsāra, it is the impure ālayavijñāna. Inasmuch as it does not possess such qualities as the [ten] strengths, it is [what is called] sentient being. When buddha nature recognizes itself by itself, [when it is] without confusion and left in its original state, it is the dharmakāya of a buddha. Given that it functions as a support of the kāyas, wisdom, deeds, activity, and so forth that pertain to the level of a buddha, it is the pure ground of wisdom, namely a buddha.

The impure ālayavijñāna does not form the ground of properties pertaining to the level of a buddha because it does not possess such qualities as the [ten] strengths. The pure ground of wisdom does not form the ground of saṃsāra, since it is without adventitious stains and thus does not experience saṃsāra’s happiness, suffering, and so forth. Therefore, if you distinguish them as isolates, it can be said that they are two opposing kingdoms. But since the nature of both grounds is buddha nature, they are one in essence.

In other words, Barawa defines the relationship between the two as “being one in essence, but different isolates,” the standard formula for defining the two truths in mainstream Madhyamaka. But this is exactly what Dölpopa opposes, favoring the competing formula: “different in that their identity is negated” (gcig pa bkag pa’i tha dad pa). In support of this Dölpopa refers to the definition of the relationship between dharmas and dharmatā in the Dharmadharmaṭāvibhāga, which Barawa counterexplains in his letter to Dūkhorwa Dorjé Nyingpo:

[In the Dharmadharmaṭāvibhāgaavyrtti, ll. 143–145] it has been said:

You may ask: “How is it possible that they (i.e., dharmas and dharmatā) are not different?” [The answer is that] the
dharmatā is characterized by the mere nonexistence of dharmas, because the [dharmatā] does not exist in terms of the particulars of forms and so forth.

The pure dharmatā and the impure consciousness (or dharmas) are inseparable by nature. On the other hand, since [mind] has arisen as two impure dharmas [in the form of] isolates, [namely ones capable] of recognizing dharmatā and [ones that can] not, [the dharmas and dharmatā] are [also] different. This is what I think.649

In other words, Barawa has shifted the emphasis from the ontological difference between an existing dharmatā and nonexisting dharmas to the epistemological one between recognizing the true nature or not. The phenomenal world is a form that buddha nature assumes when it fails to recognize itself. Ontologically the two are not different, any more than the existence of ocean water is not affected when the flat surface of the ocean is churned into waves, to use an oftquoted example from the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*.650 Dölpopa, however, criticized precisely this view in his *Bka’ bsdu bzhi pa*.651

Even though Barawa follows mainstream Madhyamaka and avoids a strict division between two grounds (or apparent and ultimate truths), he still adheres to a definition of the ultimate in positive terms. Thus the common intersection of saṁsāra and enlightenment is not only a buddha nature that is emptiness, but also clarity and awareness. How these two, clarity and emptiness, belong to the ultimate is made clear in the following explanation of the ground and path:

Such a clarity, awareness, and emptiness, are, [all] three [of them], inseparably the ultimate truth. They do not change at all either in ground, path, or fruit. Their manifestation is not obstructed, and owing to mental imprints they appear as the variety of a perceived and a perceiver. This is apparent truth. When you meditate on the path, the three: clarity, awareness, and emptiness are experienced—just like the clear autumn sky—as being vivid (*sal le*), vibrant (*sing ge*), and sharp (*hrig ge*).652 This is ultimate truth.653

In other words, the phenomenal world of saṁsāra is simply one particular way that clarity, awareness, and emptiness subsist. It is clear that such a view favors the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra’s* equation of buddha nature with the
ālayavijñāna and ignores, for example, Asaṅga’s distinction between the ālayavijñāna and a pure supramundane mind in the Mahāyānasamgraha. In the latter, it is emphasized that the remedy for the ālayavijñāna (namely the outflow of the pure dharmadhatu) is necessarily something different from the ālayavijñāna. Whereas Rangjung Dorjé manages to bridge the opposing strands of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra and the Mahāyānasamgraha, Barawa clearly argues against Asaṅga when he writes to Dūkhorwa Dorjé Nyingpo that the remedy does not need to be different:

Since nothing other than not recognizing yourself as being dharmāta needs to be abandoned, wisdom, the remedy for abandoning, arises, when you recognize yourself as being dharmāta. [That which must be abandoned] disappears, for [it was nothing but] not having recognized yourself as being dharmāta. Therefore, even though that which must be abandoned disappears, the self-recognition does not disappear, and thus the remedy does not either. 654

In the same letter Barawa illustrates this with the following example:

Water freezes into ice under cold conditions such as wind. Even though it has become like a stone, the two, ice and water, are identical by nature, and under conditions of fire and so forth, the ice melts. Even though the ice has disappeared, the water has not—has it? 655

A Comparison of the Positions

With regard to the presentation of buddha qualities, we can distinguish two groups. The first consists of Rangjung Dorjé, Dölpopa, Mati Panchen, and Longchenpa. These share the opinion that all buddha qualities, including the thirty-two marks of the form kāyas, exist throughout beginningless time. Whereas the first three members of this group make it clear that the claim of primordial buddha qualities reflects a tantric understanding (ordinary beings do not possess the common thirty-two marks of a buddha but only the thirty-two tantric marks of the form kāyas contained in their vajra body), it is not clear whether Longchenpa follows along the same lines. Even though Longchenpa calls the qualities of the form kāyas “luminous major and minor marks” (’od kyi mthran dpe) which shows that he does not mean the actual marks of a buddha, their primordial existence is claimed
in a strict Mahāyāna context of explaining the fortified potential on the basis of MSA III.4. In other words, Longchenpa obviously does not refrain from reading his dzogchen view into ordinary Mahāyāna explanations. It is precisely this commentary on MSA III.4 that differs from the corresponding one of Lodrö Tsungmé in such a way that the latter cannot be confused with Longchenpa.

In fact, Lodrö Tsungmé forms together with Barawa the second group, which explains, in accordance with Ngog Loden Sherab, that the qualities of the form kāyas are produced. But while Lodrö Tsungmé takes the qualities of the dharmakāya (the ten strengths and so on) to be the ultimate qualities, Barawa here again follows Ngog Loden Sherab, and accepts only the space-like defining characteristics of RGV II.29–37 as ultimate qualities. Still, Lodrö Tsungmé distinguishes between the ten strengths and so forth of an ordinary sentient being and those of enlightenment. Tāranātha included Ngog Loden Sherab in his eulogy of the zhentong transmission, which means that he considers Loden Sherab's Ratnagotravibhāga commentary as an ordinary Mahāyāna explanation that admits of an extraordinary tantric interpretation. In other words, when Lodrö Tsungmé explains the Ratnagotravibhāga in line with Ngog Loden Sherab, it may be that he did not exclude a tantric zhentong interpretation either, but in order to settle this question it is necessary to consult his respective tantric works, which have not been available to me.

A comparison of how emptiness is defined yields first of all the already familiar position of the Jonangpas (Dölpopa and Mati Panchen) that a permanent ultimate is empty of everything conditioned. The ultimate buddha nature, which is inseparable from all buddha qualities, is taken as being beyond the three times in the same way as the tathāgata. Longchenpa defines in his Rdzogs chen sems nyid ngal go'i 'grel pa (219–21) the nature of the buddha element in a similar way, as being the changeless perfect nature (or the dharmata) of the mind, which is empty of other (zhentong), namely all the faults (false imagining or the eight accumulations of consciousness) that by nature do not belong to the buddha element. On the other hand, buddha nature, or primordial awareness, is also explained in terms of the traditional dzogchen categories of being empty in essence, spontaneously present by nature, and compassionately responsive. Lodrö Tsungmé equates the ultimate buddha nature with the dharmatā of the mind, and explains the ultimate aspect of enlightenment, or the dharmakāya, as being unconditioned, in view of its being empty of all conditioned phenomena.

For Rangjung Dorjé and Barawa, too, buddha nature is empty of adventitious stains, but contrary to Dölpopa's and Mati Panchen's positions,
buddha nature is taken as consisting of moments. Thus Rangjung Dorjé equates buddha nature with the natural mind and dependent arising, both of which contain mere appearances empty of duality or the stainlessness of the eight accumulations of consciousness, but not the impure part of consciousness that is clearly distinguished from it. Here, however, Barawa follows the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* and equates buddha nature with the *ālayavijñāna* (the impure part of the mind is thus included in buddha nature). For him buddha nature is emptiness, clarity, and awareness, emptiness here meaning that the mind lacks color and shape.

Related to these different presentations of emptiness is the question of how the relationship between the two truths is defined. While the zhentong tradition of the Jonangpas defines them as being different in that their identity is negated (*gcig pa bkag ba'i tha dad pa*), Barawa's mahāmudrā equation of buddha nature with the *ālayavijñāna* requires the two truths to be one in essence, but different isolates (*ngo bo gcig la ldog pa tha dad*). It is clear that Dölpopa could not adopt the formula of their being one in essence, since he defines zhentong as the existing eternal ultimate that is empty of the conditioned apparent truth. His distinction between the two truths is so clear-cut that he is at pains to explain how his understanding does not contradict the *Samdhinirmocanasiūtra*, which excludes not only the identity of the two truths, but also their difference. His explanation is that since only the ultimate really exists he would need a second truly existing ontological category for the relationship *difference in essence*.659

We wonder how Rangjung Dorjé, who combines a strict Yogācāra distinction between the *ālayavijñāna* and the supramundane pure mind (similar to zhentong) with Saraha's mahāmudrā explanation (the mind is the basis of samsāra and nirvāṇa), defines the relationship between the two truths. As we have seen above, Rangjung Dorjé faithfully follows the Yogācāra definition of emptiness by endorsing the *Madhyāntavibhāga* formula that the perfect nature is the dependent empty of the imagined. This is contrary to Dölpopa, who reinterprets the *Madhyāntavibhāga* to be saying that the unchangeable perfect nature is empty of both the dependent and the imagined. To put it another way, both the unchangeable perfect nature and the unmistaken one (the latter consisting of the dependent factors of the path) are empty of duality, namely that which does not exist and so is different from them. If we choose to call that zhentong, we need to point out that not only the unchangeable perfect nature is left in this emptiness, but also a "pure dependent nature," or as Rangjung Dorjé puts it, mere appearances (or the stainlessness of the eight accumulations of consciousness). Rangjung Dorjé restricts apparent truth to these mere
appearances or pure dependent nature, which means that both truths are left over in emptiness, or that both the ultimate and the apparent truths are empty of duality. With what is normally the expressible ultimate (paryāyaparamārtha) being called apparent truth and the ordinary world of dualistic appearances being excluded from this apparent truth, Rangjung Dorje’s strict distinction between the pure and impure mind simply does not address the relationship between the two truths. In other words, when we read in Rangjung Dorje’s mahāmudrā works that both truths are one in essence and included in buddha nature, we have to keep the above-mentioned restriction relating to apparent truth in mind. (Be it added that I have not been able to locate the formula “one in essence but different isolates” in Rangjung Dorje’s works to date.)

Reservations against the formula “one in essence but different isolates” can also be sensed in the works of later Kamtsang (Kam tshang) Kagyüpa. In his Shes bya kun khyab mdzod, Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé explains that

…without [further] analysis and only conventionally are the two truths taken as one by nature, but different isolates; ultimately they cannot be said to be either identical or different in essence.\(^{66}\)

Kongtrül quotes Rangjung Dorje in support:

Since both truths are free\(^{66}\) from being identical and different, just like phenomena and their true nature, their [relation] cannot be expressed in terms of anything, being [neither] one [nor] different.\(^{66}\)

In his Madhyamakāvatāra commentary,\(^{66}\) the Eighth Karmapa Mikyö Dorje argues that even conventionally the two truths are neither one nor different, on the grounds that they mutually depend on each other.\(^{66}\) With regard to the mahāmudrā teachings, Mikyö Dorje explains that statements of Kagyü masters to the effect that “thoughts are the dharmakāya” or that “sārṣāra is nirvāṇa” were meant to imply that ultimately the two truths do not exist as something different; this does not mean, however, that thoughts and the dharmakāya (which stand for the respective two truths) are one in essence.\(^{66}\) What is being said is simply that both lack an own-being and are thus bound to the same mode of being, as explained in the prajñāpāramitā sūtras.\(^{66}\) Mahāmudrā teachings that the two truths (i.e., thoughts and the dharmakāya) are of the same nature may be misunderstood as implying
that they share the single nature of an ultimately existing entity. But once fully qualified recipients realize the real meaning of mahāmudrā teachings, they are liberated from such wrong conception about the two truths.\textsuperscript{667}

To sum up, we need to distinguish two mahāmudrā views: the one held by Barawa, which defines the two truths as being one in essence, but different isolates; and the one held by Rangjung Dorjé who, like the Jonang-pas, negates both identity and difference, but differs from them in taking buddha nature to consist of moments.
3. A Short Account of the Most Important Events in Zhönu Pal’s Life

The comparative description of the six positions in the previous chapter puts us in a position to determine Zhönu Pal’s views on buddha nature against the backdrop of ideas that are close to his, both in terms of doctrine and time. Before we embark on that investigation, a brief account of his life on the basis of Zhamar Chödrag Yeshe’s (1453–1524) biography will set the historical context and describe the broad education of this nonsectarian scholar. This background information will help us to understand the development of his views. One fact that will emerge, for example, is the connection between Zhönu Pal’s close relations with Pagdru rulers and his preference for Gampopa’s and Drigung Jigten Sumgön’s mahāmudrā interpretation of the Ratnagotravibhāga.

The following account of Gö Lotsāwa Zhönu Pal’s life is mainly based on his extensive biography, which was written by his disciple the Fourth Zhamarpa Chödrag Yeshe.668 Other than the short account by Künga Gyaltsen (Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan) (b. 1440)—another disciple of Zhönu Pal—of the teaching convent in Tsetang (Rtses thang), Zhamarpa’s biography is the second oldest to my knowledge that survives.670 Not only is it by far the longest, but it is also the most convincing one, containing as it does many details of day-to-day life, such as Zhönu Pal being attacked by a drunken robber from Kham (Kham) with a sword—things only personal acquaintances would normally know about.671 The first half of the biography is the most important one for us, since it describes in detail Zhönu Pal’s education and his various masters. The remaining half is a presentation of various events in Zhönu Pal’s life, which are loosely arranged according to different topics, such as how he kept his samayas, or how he was spiritually supported by his teachers. There are also paragraphs on Zhönu Pal’s qualities, translations, dreams, and visions, how he entered the gate of the Dharma and attained realization, his teaching activity, and finally his
literary output. It would go beyond the scope of this work to present all this material in detail. Thus the following account is based on a selection of events, mainly ones enabling a better understanding of the formation of Zhö nu Pal’s views on buddha nature, emptiness, and mahāmudrā.

Before beginning the actual life story, Zhamar Chödrag Yeshé reviews possible previous incarnations of Zhö nu Pal. Thus, Zhö nu Pal was once told by his personal deity in a dream that he had been a disciple of the mahāsiddha Orgyenpa Sengé Pal (Or gyan pa Seng ge dpal) (1229/30–1309). Moreover, it was believed that one of his previous incarnations had been present when the Buddhist doctrine was introduced in Samyé (Bsam yas), since the story of the construction of Samyé and the arrival of Khenpo (Mkhan po) Bodhisattva and Padmasambhava once brought tears to his eyes. Zhamar Chödrag Yeshé’s teacher and Zhö nu Pal’s disciple Namkha Lodrö (Nam mkha’ blo gros) (1403–77) claims that Zhö nu Pal must have also been among the disciples of Pagmo Drupa (1110–70), while Lochen Sönam Gyatso (Lo chen Bsod nams rgya mtsho) (1424–82), another important disciple of Zhö nu Pal, repeatedly told Zhamar Chödrag Yeshé that in his eyes Zhö nu Pal was the reincarnation of the famous Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo (Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po) (1042–1136), in view of the former’s extraordinary knowledge of the doctrine and his capability as a translator:

The precious Dharma master Lochen obviously rejoiced in [Zhö nu Pal’s] complete knowledge of all sūtras and tantras, [his] perfection as a translator, and his own compositions. For this reason he repeatedly told me: “Surely he is a reincarnation of Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo.”

We are further informed that Zhö nu Pal himself claimed to possess special qualities from previous lives. Thus he asserts that he had to read the Ratnagotravibhāga only once to get it down by heart. That he had access to an original Sanskrit version of the Ratnagotravibhāgaavyākhyā is clear from his commentary on it, in which he sometimes quotes the Sanskrit original of the vyākhyā and reviews Ngog Loden Sherab’s translation.

Zhö nu Pal was born as the third son of Tönpa Jungné Dorjé (Ston pa ’Byung gnas rdo rje) and Śri Tarkyi (Śri thar skyid) in a water monkey year (1392) in a lay village in the lower part of the Chongyé (’Phyong rgyas) valley, below the Gyamen (Rgya sman) temple. This must be Gyamen Yangpo (Rgya sman yang po), a place to which his family moved from Gö (’Gos). His ancestors descended from Trisong Detsen’s (Khri srong Ie dtsan) minister Gögen (’Gos rgan). Tönpa Jungné Dorjé was very fond
of his son Zhönu Pal, but he was murdered, and his wife, the young mother Śrī Tarkyi, had to bring up their eight children alone. Lechen (Las chen) Künga Gyaltṣen informs us that at the age of nine Zhönu Pal entered the Kadampa monastery of Chenyé (Spyan g.yas) in the upper part of the Chongye valley and renounced worldly life in the presence of Khenchen Rinpočhe Sangyé Tenpa (Mkhan chen Rin po che Sangs rgyas bstan pa). It was during this ceremony that he was given the name Zhönu Pal. Zhamar Chödrag Yeshe offers the additional information that Zhönu Pal was fully ordained at the age of nineteen under the Tsetang Khenpo Samten Zangpo (Rtses thang mkhan po Bsam btan bzang po). At this point in the biography we are also told about some further later events, such as Zhönu Pal taking bodhisattva vows in the presence of the Fifth Karmapa Dezhin Shegpa (De bzhin gshegs pa) (1384–1415) and later again in the presence of the Chittagong yogin and great pāṇḍita Vanaratna (1384–1468), and then at another time receiving a Cakrasāri empowerment from Tsongkhapa’s teacher Gungnang Choje Dzepa Pal (Gung snang Chos rje Mdzes pa dpal). This completes the three vows in Zhönu Pal’s mindstream, at which point he can activate his former potential to clearly distinguish the provisional and definitive meanings of the sūtras:

The great being, who activated his potential with the help of positive imprints stemming from former virtues...penetrated the vast expanse of the Dharma language of definitive meaning and [his ability to] distinguish the provisional and definitive meanings of the profound sūtras became unobstructed.

Chödrag Yeshe (Chos grags ye shes) then starts a long chapter on how Zhönu Pal studied under sixty-six learned and realized masters without taking sides. Following his “renunciation of worldly life” (rab tu byung ba), that is, from his ninth to twelfth year, he used his summer vacation in Chenyé, in spite of having to do work for his mother, to study the Bodhiparvatiṣṭhita under his uncle Sangyé Dragpa (Sangs rgyas grags pa) and Lobpön Sherab (Slob dpon Shes rab). At this time the fifth Pagdru (Phag gru) ruler Dragpa Gyaltṣen (Grags pa rgyal mtsphan) (1373–1432) fell sick, and when monks of Chenyé recited Medicine Buddha sādhanas for their king, Zhönu Pal quickly learned them by heart. At the age of twelve he participated in the summer teachings at Tsetang and studied the Praṃāṇavārttika under Samdrup Zangpo (Bsam grub bzang po), who is described as having bloodshot eyes and a black face, and as being so very aggressive that Zhönu Pal was afraid of being beaten.
During the teaching break of the wood monkey year (1404) Zhönu Pal studied at Chöding Monastery, and in the following years (1405–7) received *prajñāpāramitā* teachings from Tön Śākpa (Ston Śāk pa) (1355–1432). Under Tön Śākpa, he studied *pramāṇa* works along with the commentaries by Norzang (Nor bzang). Tön Śākpa repeatedly beat Zhönu Pal, who at one point ran away from Chöding. In the winter of the preceding dog year (1406) Zhönu Pal participated in discussions and explanations of the doctrine in Tsetang. After he had left Tön Śākpa’s community of monks, he together with the Tsetang Khenpo Samzangpa (Rtes thang mkhan po Bsam bzang pa) was given to Kyangchenpa (Rkyang chen pa) Śākya Śri. In the summer of the year 1407, when Zhönu Pal visited Chenyé Monastery after the summer examinations, the teacher Sherab Darwa (Shes rab dar ba) served him tea and presented a golden statue of Mañjughoṣa to him, praising his studies and good performance during the examinations.

In the autumn of the ox year (1409), Zhönu Pal again served Tön Śākpa on his trip to Rutsam (Ru mtshams) in Nyemo (Snye mo), but having been repeatedly reprimanded by the Tsetang Khenpo, he returned to Chenyé. In the iron tiger year (1410), the year Zhönu Pal received full ordination under the Tsetang Khenpo (see above), he left for Lhasa and Tangsag (Thang sag), where he studied the *Madhyamakāvatāra*, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, *Prasannapadā*, and *Catuḥśataka* (the *Catuḥśataka* with the help of a commentary by Rendawa [Red mda’ ba]) under Martön Zhöngyalwa (Dmar ston Gzhon sgyal ba) (who was a disciple of Rendawa). Of particular interest is the following account of Zhönu Pal’s attempt to obtain teachings from the zhentong master Lötang Nyagpo (Blos btang nyag po):

[Zhönu Pal] told me: “Once, on the ridge of Sé (Sras) [Peak] (?), Lötang Nyagpo, who had attained the realization of zhentong, was seated on a Dharma throne. He was surrounded by many monks and lay persons and gave Dharma teachings. Both of us went closer in order to find out what he had to say. As we were approaching him, somebody was quickly sent to us. He told us not to go any further—we were not allowed to do so. He (i.e., Lötang Nyagpo) must have had supernatural perception.”

While Tön Śākpa was explaining the *Ratnagotravibhāga* together with Asaṅga’s *vyākhyā*, Zhönu Pal managed to obtain the transmission of Dölpopa’s (1292–1361) *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary as well. In order to receive teachings from various masters, Zhönu Pal traveled even without the consent of the Tsetang Khenpo, as can be seen from the passage in
Zhamarpa's biography that immediately follows the story of the unsuccessful approach made to Lötang Nyagpo:

Then, when I went to the master Samzangpa [i.e., the Tsetang Khenpo], he asked: "Why did you go to Penyül (’Phan yul) without permission?"701

A little further down we are informed that he left Chenye secretly in order to receive guruyoga teachings from Khenchen Sanglowa (Mkhan chen Sangs blo ba) in Yöl Rinchen Ling (Yol Rin chen gling). Just when Zhönu Pal was starting to study the six-branch yoga, Tönpa Wangö (Ston pa dbang 'od) and Tenpa Bum (Brtan pa 'bum) arrived to take him back to Chenyé Monastery.702 Back in Chenyé he received various teachings from Khenchen Sangyé Tenpa (Mkhan chen Sangs rgyas brtan pa).703 Later, in Tsetang, he took part in the examinations on the prajñāpāramitā, Madhyamakāvatāra, Bodhicaryāvatāra, and Ratnagotravibhāga, and the Tsetang Khenpo scolded him for having fallen behind.704

In 1413, at the age of twenty-two, he took the examinations held at Kyishö (Skyid shod) and went on to study, under Samten Döndrub (Bsam gtan don grub) in Kyormoling (Skyor mo lung) (in the Tölung (Stod lung) valley), the Vinaya, sūtras, and the Abhidharmakośa.705 In Tölung (probably at Tsurpu) he went to see the Fifth Karmapa to obtain his blessings,706 and then, under Tsalminpa Sönam Zangpo (Mtshal min pa Bsdod nams bzang po) (1341-1453) (who had come there from Tsalmin (Mtshal min) Monastery for a visit), he studied the blo sbyong and sens pa'i rim pa by Sumpa Lotsāwa (Sum pa Lo tsā ba).707 Sönam Zangpo (Bsdod nams bzang po), who had been installed as the abbot of the monastery of Tsalmin by the Fifth Karmapa in 1403, was one of the main disciples of the Jonang abbot Choglé Namgyal (Phyogs las rnam rgyal).708 Later that year (1413) Zhönu Pal received zhi byed instructions from Lobpön Yabpa Chöjé (Slob dpon Yab pa Chos rje),709 and under Šākya Zangpo (Šākya bzang po) he studied the Skyes mchog ka dag gsal ba and the Jātakas.710 Back in Tsetang, he obtained various teachings including the six Dharma [Practices] of Nāropa (nāro chos drug) from the Fifth Karmapa.711

In the following year (1414) Zhönu Pal developed an interest in astrology, which he had first studied under Kyangchenpa (Rkyang chen pa) in Tsetang, and in the following year he continued to reflect on the subject during a teaching break in Tangpoché (Thang po che) (located in the Chongyé valley).712 Later on, in the spring of the year 1418, he visited Chenpo (Chen po) Saṅghaśri in Nartang (Snar thang) and went through
the entire “astrological calculations of Śambhala” with him.\textsuperscript{713} Zhönu Pal’s Kālacakra-based calculations would eventually lead to some important corrections, which he published in a work called \textit{Rtsis la ’khrul se}.\textsuperscript{714}

In the autumn of the year 1414, Zhönu Pal received teachings (\textit{lam rim}, the \textit{nāro chos drug} empowerment, etc.) from Tsongkhapa at the court of the Pagdru ruler Dragpa Gyaltsen.\textsuperscript{715} On this occasion he also served the king.\textsuperscript{716} A little further down in the biography we are told that Zhönu Pal became particularly fond of Tsongkhapa’s analytical approach, and also of the distinction he makes between the provisional and definitive meanings on the basis of the \textit{Ratnagotravibhāga}. Tsongkhapa is reported to have said in Nyal (Gnyal) in 1415:

\begin{quote}
One way of distinguishing the provisional and definitive [meanings] which does not contradict what has been explained here is to expound according to the \textit{Mahāyānottaratantra} (=\textit{Ratnagotravibhāga}).\textsuperscript{717}
\end{quote}

Zhamar Chödrag Yeshé does not inform us how exactly this distinction is made. It is thus difficult to say whether Tsongkhapa influenced Zhönu Pal’s Kagyü-oriented \textit{Ratnagotravibhāga} commentary at all, and if so, in what way. It should be noted that some passages in Zhamarpa’s description of Zhönu Pal’s life suggest substantial differences from the Gelugpas. Thus, we are informed that Zhönu Pal criticizes the Gelugpas for being expert in the gradual path to enlightenment without knowing Atiśa’s \textit{Bodhipathapradipa}.\textsuperscript{718} We are further told that his own understanding of great bliss in Vajrayāna differs from Tsongkhapa’s student and successor at Ganden (Dga’ ldan), Gyaltsab Je (1364–1432).\textsuperscript{719}

In the winter of the sheep year (1415) Zhönu Pal approached Kyangchenpa for explanations on the Kālacakra (i.e., \textit{ṣadāṅgayoga}). He had thought that having been given previously with the Tsetang Khenpo to Kyangchenpa (see above) would prove helpful in obtaining Kālacakra teachings at this time,\textsuperscript{720} but instead Kyangchenpa told him to ask in Ju Lhakhang Teng (Ju Lha khang stengs), where Zhönu Pal indeed received a Kālacakra empowerment and six-branch yoga instructions from Lhakhang Tengpa Sangye Rinchen (Lha khang stengs pa Sangs rgyas rin chen).\textsuperscript{721} Later, in the summer of the same year, he went again to Lhakhang Teng (Lha khang stengs), this time in the company of Kyangchenpa. Sangye Rinchen (Sangs rgyas rin chen), who was one of the main disciples of the great Jonang abbot Choglé Namgyal,\textsuperscript{722} conferred on both of them seven empowerments relating to a sand maṇḍala of the Kālacakra.\textsuperscript{723} Zhönu
Pal also received at Lhakhang Teng the reading transmission of Dölpopa's *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho*. A little further down in Zhamarapa's biography of Zhönu Pal we are told how highly Zhönu Pal esteemed his teacher Lhakhang Tengpa Sangyé Rinchen:

Out of natural compassion the Dharma master Lhakhang Tengpa delighted in everyone. In general, [Zhönu Pal] was grateful to all [his] lamas, but he was particularly grateful to this Dharma master. That [Zhönu Pal] has had a long life until now is probably due to a "long-life practice" he gave [to him]. The precious Dharma master [Lhakhang Tengpa] had a broad knowledge of both the Kama (*bka' ma*) and Terma (*gter ma*) [traditions] of the Nyingmapa. He [also] knew many tantras, maṇḍalas, etc., of the Sarma (*gsar ma*) [tradition], including the Kalacakra. He relied on many noble beings, [namely] the great omniscient one from Jomonang (Jo mo nang) [i.e., Dölpopa], the [Sakya] Dharma master Lama Dampa [Sönam Gyaltsen] (Bla ma dam pa [Bsod nams rgyal mtshan]).

Although this is not mentioned in particular, Zhönu Pal must have known through his teacher Sangyé Rinchen the extraordinary zhentong interpretation of the Kalacakra as propounded by the Jonangpas. According to Lechen Künga Gyaltsen, Zhönu Pal received the six-branch yoga of the Jonangpas from Lhakhang Tengpa. In the following year (1416), while again in Lhakhang Teng, Zhönu Pal also studied the *Bodhisattva Trilogy*, the three tantric commentaries that are the main textual basis for the Jonang exegesis of zhentong.

In the same year (1416), Zhönu Pal traveled to Riwo Gepel (Ri bo dge 'phel) in Tsang, where he spent five months receiving detailed explanations of the *Kalacakratantra* from Shangpa Kümkhyen Sherab Palzang (Shangs pa Kun mkhyen Shes rab dpal bzang). Zhamarapa's biography of Zhönu Pal notes that the explanations were based on the topical outline (*sa bcad*) and notes by Butön, and that Zhönu Pal was told to use them from then on when explaining the *Kalacakratantra* himself. From Kümkhyen Shangpa (Kun mkhyen Shangs pa) he also obtained, among numerous other tantric teachings and empowerments, the Kalacakra empowerment in the tradition of Butön.

Much later, in the year 1436, when Vanaratna was teaching at the court of the sixth Pagdru ruler Dragpa Jungné (Grags pa 'byung gnas) (1414–45), Zhönu Pal was also initiated into the *Kalacakratantra* by that great
When giving his disciple Lochen Sönam Gyatso Kālacakra teachings at Yizangtse (Yid bzang rtse) in 1447, Zhönu Pal remarked that it would be best to seek the related six-branch yoga explanations from Vanaratna, whose transmission lineage of the Kālacakratantra belonged to the “cycle of upadeśa tradition of Śavaripa” (sha ba ri dbang phyug gi man ngag lugs kyi skor). The initial representatives of this lineage were Vibhūti-candra (twelfth/thirteenth century) and his disciple Kodragpa Sönam Gyaltse (Ko brag pa Bsod nams rgyal mtshan) (1170–1249).

Zhönu Pal showed such a great interest in Kālacakra that one of his teachers, Densapa Sangye Gyaltsen (Gdan sa pa Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan), wondered in a discussion with Lhakhang Tengpa Sangye Rinchen whether he ought to be included among the Kālacakra masters. Sangye Rinchen brushed this idea aside, pointing out that he had also mastered other tantras, such as the Gubhyasamāja, without any difficulty and offered the explanation that he had studied these tantras in former lives.

In 1420, when Zhönu Pal was only twenty-nine years old, he composed a commentary on the first chapter of the Kālacakratantra and in the same year he had to return to his Chenye Monastery in order to teach the extensive Kālacakra commentary Vimalaprabha at the request of Tönpa Rinchen Palzang (Ston pa Rin chen dpal bzang). Lechen Künga Gyaltse mentions in his biography a Kālacakra commentary among the ten important works composed by Zhönu Pal. Zhönu Pal’s position among the transmission lineages of the Kālacakra is within both the so-called “Rva [Lotsawa] system” (rva lugs) and the “Bro [Lotsawa] system” (’bro lugs). The transmission of the former he received from Shangpa Künkhyen Sherab Palzang in the years 1416 and 1417 in Riwo Gepel, and the latter from Sangye Rinchen in the year 1415 in Lhakhang Teng.

In the spring of the pig year (1419), Zhönu Pal went to the famous Nyingma teacher Drölmaowa Sangye Rinchen Palzangpo (Sgro’irna ba Sangs rgyas rin chen dpal bzang po) (1350–1430) at Tanag (Rta nag) in Tsang and obtained numerous Nyingma teachings along with the Vajrakilaya cycle according to the tradition of the Sakya Khön (Sa skya ’khon) family. In the historiographical literature of the Nyingma school, he is thus counted within the mahāyoga transmission going back to Dropugpa Śākya Sengé (Sgro phug pa Śākya seng ge) (1074–1135) of the Zur family. Khetsun Sangpo, too, considers Zhönu Pal a Nyingma lineage holder. Zhönu Pal also entertained close relations with Götrugpa (Rgod phrug pa) (1363–1447), who was a propounder of the Orgyen Nyendrub (O rgyan bsnyen grub) teachings. From Götrugpa he received prophecies, and later also a Tsering Chenga (Tshe rings mched lnga) empowerment, and instruc-
tions on the cycle of the six Dorjé Pagmo (Rdo rje phag mo) works.\textsuperscript{745} Lechen Künga Gyaltsen reports that Zhönu Pal also obtained teaching cycles of the Drugpa Kagyüpa at the feet of Göttrugpa and the Pagdu ruler Dragpa Jungné.\textsuperscript{746}

Given his nonsectarian attitude, Zhönu Pal sought out teachings from masters of other traditions as well, such as the famous Rongtön. Further down in Zhamarpa’s biography, in a chapter on how Zhönu Pal finds the marvelous door of the Dharma, we are told that he went to hear the Dharma teachings of Rongtön,\textsuperscript{747} and that during a teaching break he gained a crucial insight into the meaning of buddha nature and the two truths:

\begin{quote}
[Zhönu Pal] went to the garden outside for a break and while sitting in the shadow of an apricot tree, he gained a genuine certainty about the meaning [of the sentence] “The buddha nature is the natural luminosity of mind,” and instantly understood the subtle and precise Dharma terminology of it…. [Moreover,] even though he [at first] did not appreciate the explanation that the two truths can [be taken as] isolates, from then on he rejoiced in it (i.e., such an approach).\textsuperscript{748}
\end{quote}

It is not clear to what extent Rongtön’s teachings influenced this insight, but in the first part of Zhamarpa’s biography we are told that in the summer of the ox year (1421) Zhönu Pal heard Rongtön’s explanations of the entire treatise of the Ratnagotravibhāga, the Pramāṇaviniścaya, and the five stages of the Guhyasamājatantra.\textsuperscript{749} In the wood dragon year (1424) he also listened to Rongtön’s Madhyamakāvatāra teachings.\textsuperscript{750} According to Lechen Künga Gyaltsen’s biography, Zhönu Pal also studied the prajnā-pāramitā and the Bodhicaryāvatāra under Rongtön.\textsuperscript{751}

Enjoying as he did very close relations with the Pagmo Drupa rulers and their monastic seats (see below), Zhönu Pal must have naturally felt inclined toward the various Kagyü transmissions that he received from such famous teachers as the Fifth Karmapa Dezhin Shegpa (see above) or Ngog Jangchub Pal (Rngog Byang chub dpal) of Drezhing (Spre’u zhing).\textsuperscript{752} In the same wood dragon year Zhönu Pal obtained from Ngog Jangchub Pal, in Drezhing, numerous important Kagyü teachings, such as special instructions on the Nāro chos drug or the Oral Transmission of Cakrasaṃvara (bde mchog snyan rgyud).\textsuperscript{753} Before the year was out he returned to Tsetang and received teachings from the abbot of Densatel, Chöjé Nyernyi Rinpočhe Sönam Gyaltsen Palzang (Gdan sa thel, Chos rje Nyer gnyis rin
Zhamar Chödrag Yeshé notes that Zhönü Pal expressed preference for the Dharma terminology of this abbot during a discussion of the doctrine with numerous scholars in Tsetang.

The next six years (1425–30) were spent at the monastic seat of Densatel, where Zhönü Pal composed a *prajñāpāramitā* commentary up to the third chapter. In between he visited Rabtenling (Rab brtan gling) in order to obtain meditation instructions from Tsültrim Gyaltsen (Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan), and Dreuzhing, where he studied, under Khenchen Sengé Pal (Mkhan chen Seng ge dpal), the great Hevajra commentary of Nāropa and the *Mkha' 'gro rgya mtsho* tantra. In the iron dog year (1430) Zhönü Pal was offered a chair in Gyadur (Rgya dur). He reluctantly accepted, but ran away shortly afterward, saying that Gyadur meant cemetery of [this] trap.

In the iron pig year (1431) he studied Sempa Chenpo’s (Sems dpa’ chen po) commentary on the *Guhyasamājapradipoddyotana* with the author himself. Afterward he returned to Dreuzhing in order to receive various teachings from Ngog Jangchub Pal (Rngog Byang chub dpal).

The water rat year (1432) he spent at Tsetang teaching extensively. For the next five years; Zhönü Pal attended the sixth Pagdru ruler Dragpa Jungné (who was enthroned in 1432) at his secular seat Neudong (Sne’u gdong), and spent most of his time in conversation with other geshes. Occasionally he taught at Tsetang, but was repeatedly ordered back to Neudong. It is not clear to what extent Zhönü Pal was affected by the internal revolt of the Pagmo Drupa in 1434, which marked the beginning of the decline of the dynasty’s power, but Zhamar Chödrag Yeshé informs us at this point in the biography that Zhönü Pal wished to escape the same way he did at Gyadur before, thinking that it would not serve his own ends in the long run to stay with the king.

Still, Zhönü Pal would eventually be known as the preceptor of the Lhazig Lang (Lha gzigs rlangs) family, in other words, the Pagdru dynasty. It was the first ruler of this dynasty, Tai Situ Jangchub Gyaltsen (Ta’i Situ Byang chub rgyal mtshan) (1302–64) that founded, in the immediate vicinity of his palace Neudong in the lower Yarlung (Yar klung) valley, the monastery of Tsetang, in which Zhönü Pal received many teachings and where he was ordained. (The seventh king, Künga Legpa (Kun dga’ legs pa) (r. 1448–81), would later also serve as the abbot of Tsetang.) Zhönü Pal entertained good relations with the chief religious authority of the Pagdru family, namely the nephew of Künga Legpa and son of Dragpa Jungné, Chennga Ngagi Wangpo (Spyan snga Ngagi dbang po) (1439–90), who was
entroned on the seat of Densatel in 1454. According to the colophon of Zhö nu Pal's Ratnagotrivibhāgavāryākhyā commentary it was this same abbot Chennga Ngagi Wangpo who in 1479 ordered the wood blocks for the commentary to be carved.

In the ox year (1433), still during his stay with Dragpa Jungné at Neudong, Zhö nu Pal went to Gyalzang (Rgyal bzangs) in the Yön (Yon) valley in order to supervise the corrections of a new Kangyur, which was being compiled in honor of the late Pagdru ruler (Dragpa Gyaltsen). It was in the spring of this same year that Vanaratna for the first time arrived in Tibet. At the court, Dragpa Jungné asked him many questions, and together with the king, Zhö nu Pal studied not only a host of tantras, but also the Maitreya works Abhisamayālamkāra, Mahāyānasūtrālāmākāra, and Madhyāntavibhāga (together with the commentaries), a commentary on the first chapter of the Pramāṇavārttika, and the Prasannapadā, to name only a few. They read the Sanskrit texts of these works, asked questions, and listened to the numerous explanations. Moreover, they received a Cakrasaṃvara empowerment. During all this, Zhö nu Pal offered much assistance (probably translating).

At the end of the rabbit year (1435) Vanaratna returned to Tsetang from a visit to Paro in Bhutan. Together with many geshes Zhö nu Pal listened to special instructions on the six-branch yoga and received an Acala empowerment. In the summer of the following dragon year (1436) Zhö nu Pal served Vanaratna during his trip to the sacred sites of Samye and Chimpu (Mchims phu). All along the way he took the opportunity to ask many questions of and to have long discussions with the realized Indian pandita. Thereafter he frequently translated for Vanaratna at Neudong, and while doing so received numerous teachings. Before leaving Tibet, Vanaratna said of Zhö nu Pal:

I have traveled through two-thirds of Jambudvipa and seen the great scholars with great knowledge—like suns for men. Among them I have not seen [one whose] knowledge is greater than Zhö nu Pal's.

During Vanaratna's third visit to Tibet, which lasted from 1452 to 1454, Zhö nu Pal translated Vanaratna's Šabarapādastotra and acted as interpreter during his teachings and empowerments at Dingri (Ding ri) until the main translator, Lotsāwa (Lo tsā ba) Maṇjuśrī, arrived. But later on, when Vanaratna was teaching again at the court of Neudong, the Pagdru ruler Künga Legpa felt so uneasy in the presence of Zhö nu Pal that the king
forced him to leave for one month to Kyamchepa Teng (Skyam 'chad pa stengs). Further down in the biography, Zhamarpa tells us that at one point Zhönu Pal had to calm down Künga Legpa with the power of his samādhi after the ruler had become angry for no reason—so much so that he almost expelled him from his kingdom. This happened in a pig year (probably 1467).

Zhönu Pal had already felt uncomfortable in 1438 at the court of Neudong under Künga Legpa’s predecessor Dragpa Jungné, and repeatedly requested in vain, over a period of half a year, to be allowed to leave for Dagpo, where a certain Drudawa (‘Bru mda’ ba) had agreed to pay for his livelihood. Then, the king ordered everybody to take empowerments from the Sakya master Martön Gyaltse Özer (Dmar ston Rgyal mtshan ’od zer) at Tsentang (Btsan thang) near Tsetang. On this occasion Zhönu Pal received a Kriyasamuccaya empowerment and many other teachings and empowerments. According to the biography of Lochen Sönam Gyatso (Lo chen Bsod nams rgya mtsho), Gyaltse Özer (Rgyal mtshan ’od zer) on this occasion also conferred the empowerments of the Hevajra and Yamantaka cycles of the Sakya school. Zhönu Pal then followed Martönpa to Chöding, where both of them received teachings from Götrugpa (Rgod phrug pa), whose actual name, Dragpa Jungné, is also mentioned here. On several previous occasions in Gyalzang (Rgyal bzailgs), Zhönu Pal had obtained many instructions from Götrugpa, reports Zhamarpa’s biography. According to Lechen Künga Gyaltse, Zhönu Pal also studied Drugpa Kagyu texts under Götrugpa.

In the seventh month of the same year (1438), several people were intending to travel to Kongpo (Kong po), and Zhönu Pal approached the king again, firmly set on leaving that month. Having made offerings to the king, he was finally freed from his duties for good. In Dagpo, Zhönu Pal discussed various points of the doctrine (such as the differences between the lam rim of the Gelugpas and Atisa’s Bodhipathapradipa) with Khenchen Tashi Jangwa (Mkhan chen Bkra shis byang ba). In the winter of the horse year (1438), he was invited by the local governor Paljor Zangpo (Dpal ’byor bzang po) to teach at Kurab (Sku rab), the administrative center of Dagpo. In the autumn of the sheep year (1439) the Third Zhamarpa Chö- pal Yeshé (Zhva dmar pa Chos dpal ye shes) (1406–52) came from Kongpo to Druda (‘Bru mda’) (Dagpo), and Zhönu Pal obtained from him the reading transmissions of the Mkha’ spyod dbang po’ichos drug, the Karma paks'i dam tshig gi bshad pa, and the Third Karmapa’s Dam tshig rgya mtsho, and, according to the biography of Situ and Belo, the six Dharma [practices] of Nāropa.
In the spring of the monkey year (1440) Zhönu Pal visited Gampo (Sgam po), and later he received teachings on numerous Kagyü works—by the Second Zhamarpa Khachö Wangpo (Zhva dmar pa Mkha’ spyod dbang po) (1350–1405), the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé, and Minyag Sherab Zangpo (Mi nyag Shes rab bzang po)—from Rimibabpa Sönam Rinchen (1362–1453) at Dagpo pass. Before parting, much to Zhönu Pal’s astonishment, he was advised by Rimibabpa to abandon neither the mahāmudrā view nor the independence of the Gelugpas:

Later, [to Zhönu Pal’s] astonishment [Rimibabpa] said: “Just as I do not reject the mahāmudrā view, don’t you reject it either. Just as I do not reject the tradition(?) of the Gandenpas (Dge Idan pa) (i.e., Gelugpas), don’t you reject it either.” [Zhönu Pal] replied: “I will surely hold [this] tradition sacred” and showed great respect.

The way Zhamar Chödrag Yeshé reports this event we get the impression that Zhönu Pal was surprised and politely showed respect but did not fully take this advice. This view is not met with total agreement. In a review of the Rgyud gsum gsang ba, which Zhönu Pal composed only two years later in 1442, the Eighth Karmapa Mikyö Dorjé somewhat pointedly remarks that Zhönu Pal takes Tsongkhapa’s view as a guideline while at the same time upholding the tradition of the Dagpo Kagyü. This suggests that Zhönu Pal may have taken Rimibabpa’s words more seriously than Zhamarpa suggests.

In the summer of the monkey year (1440), Zhönu Pal wanted to attend the teachings of the Third Zhamarpa in Kongpo, but his sponsor Drudar (’Bru mdar) would not allow him to go. Thus he abandoned his trip to Kongpo and gave a gshed dmar empowerment in Drudar instead, but he refused to stay any longer with his sponsor and returned to the Yarlung valley in the winter of the same year.

In the spring of the bird year (1441) he participated in the prayer festival (smon lam) at Densatel, where many geshes gathered on the orders of the ruler Dragpa Jungné. During this time he daily sat at the feet of Götrugpa. After that he spent some time at Tingnamo Dzong (Rting sna mo rdzong) instructing numerous Dharma masters, such as Namkha Lodrö from Tsetang and Lochen Sönam Gyatso. From 1448 onward Zhönu Pal considered these two as jewel disciples and at a residence called Jangpo Drang (Ljang pho brang) offered them more explanation on the definitive meaning than he offered to anyone else after that.
In the summer of the bird year (1441) Zhönü Pal received, among many other teachings, special instructions on the *Rdo rje gsun gyi bsnyen grub* from Götrugpa at Chöding in the On ('On) valley (to the east of Densatel). Again in the following dog year (1442) he sat at the feet of this great master.

Under the sponsorship of a high official from Neudong called Drung Sönam Gyaltse (Drung Bsod nams rgyal mtshan) (1417–87), Zhönü Pal stayed at Neudong in the autumn of the year 1441, giving various empowerments, such as the *phur pa man ngag drug pa*. With the help of Namkha Paljor (Nam mkha’ dpal ’byor) he then moved to his residence Yizangtse and spent the winter of the bird year (1441) there. At Yizangtse Zhönü Pal instructed Sönam Gyaltse in the six-branch yoga practice. From Zhamarpa's biography of Lochen Sönam Rinchen we know that from then on he regularly visited Zhönü Pal at Yizangtse.

The remaining first part of Zhamarpa's biography of Zhönü Pal does not give much detailed information of the remaining years. From the water dog year (1442) until the water monkey year (1452) we are told that Zhönü Pal was mainly teaching, as described further down in a separate chapter. After the narration of the events relating to Vanarathna's third visit to Tibet (see above), we are told that in the fire rat year (1456) Zhönü Pal received from Sherab Zangpo in Menchig (Sman gcig) *zhi byed* teachings that he promised to practice for six months. After obtaining various other teachings from Sherab Zangpo, he returned to Yarlung. Up to the water horse year (1462) Zhönü Pal is said to have devoted most of his time to conversations with geshes and to have stayed in retreat only for one month during this period.

Even in his eighties Zhönü Pal remained quite active. In the wood sheep year (1475) he traveled to eastern Tibet and in the following fire monkey year (1476), the king Künga Legpa offered him a hundred gold coins and requested Dharma teachings. Zhönü Pal complied and over a period of two years, up into the earth dog year (1478), gave teachings such as an explanation of the five levels in the *Guhyasamājatantra* (based on notes of the Second Zhamarpa Khacho Wangpo). During this time Zhönü Pal also granted the king a Bernagchen (Ber nag can) Mahākāla empowerment. This then concluded the first part of Zhamarpa's biography.

Of particular interest in the remaining part of the biography are some details about the composition of Zhönü Pal's commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā*. As for the date of its composition, Zhamar Chödrag Yeshé only mentions a snake year, but this must be Zhönü Pal's last snake year (1473) for the following reasons. First, Zhönü Pal's mental presence is described as not having deteriorated, his understanding at the time of death
being as good as when he composed the *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā* commentary, and second, he is said to have been nearly blind, dictating the commentary to his assistant Mönlam Dragpa (Smon lam grags pa) over a period of four months entirely from memory. Zhamar Chödrag Yeshe further informs us that the editors only found a few mistakes when checking the numerous quotations from the Kangyur and Tengyur. That Zhönu Pal was capable of such a work is corroborated by the fact that he completed his *Blue Annals* in the earth dog year (1478). Third, according to the colophon the commentary was composed in Möndang (Smon ldang), an area where Zhönu Pal was teaching and writing in the early 1470s (see below).

To sum up, thanks to his nonsectarian attitude, Zhönu Pal was able to receive instructions and tantric empowerments from the most important masters of his time. On top of that, he also had direct access to the Indian origins of Tibetan Buddhism, studying and translating a number of Sanskrit texts with Vanaratna. The way Zhönu Pal combines all these traditions is seen especially in a chapter on how he discovered the marvelous door of the Dharma. In it, Zhamar Chödrag Yeshe reports how Zhönu Pal gains the strength of faith by visiting the place where Pagmo Drupa saw the true nature of phenomena:

> [Zhönu Pal realized that] buddha nature, or the natural luminosity of mind, is the basis of all saṁsāra and nirvāṇa. Just as the abiding nature of this [luminosity] is present in [his] mind, so are similar abiding natures [in the minds of all from] buddhas down to [each] sentient being. "Being beyond the experiential sphere of the mind, it is beyond expression." All Madhyamaka explanations of this kind apply here.

This great expression *union into a pair*, from the tradition of the unsurpassable secret [Mantrayāna], he now ascertained as the true nature of all phenomena, [that is,] not with regard to the fruit [anymore], and with the help of the Buddha’s teachings he proclaimed widely that this [union into a pair] can be experienced even by fools and ordinary persons. Even those who had only little experience he properly introduced [to the true nature of their minds] on the basis of precisely this [little experience they had]. He did not utter this like a talking parrot pronouncing empty words but taught properly, as properly based on his own experience.... The entire superiority of qualities contained in the buddha mind arose through the power of his having realized the ultimate view of the *union into a pair*. 
In other words, Zhönu Pal is described as having realized, in confirmation of the insight of Pagmo Drupa, that buddha nature, or the natural luminosity of mind, is the basis of both samsāra and nirvāṇa. This, and the following explanation that the true nature of phenomena can even be experienced by ordinary practitioners, is typical of Kagyū mahāmudrā, and, as we shall see in the following chapters, fully in line with Zhönu Pal’s Ratanagotravibhāgavīśeśka commentary.

Also of great interest is Zhönu Pal’s summary and critique of Dölpopa’s view that immediately follows in this paragraph of the biography:

[Zhönu Pal] said that the omniscient Jomonangpa (i.e. Dölpopa) posited that an appearance [produced by] karman and the appearance of wisdom are two separate individual things that have been mixed together. [It is] precisely this appearance [produced by] karman that is designated as “ice, which is the appearance of wisdom” and pointed out as being the appearance of wisdom...[this] being illustrated by the example of water and ice. As long as distinctions are made between a self and other, a material world and living beings, corresponding conventions will be used. Otherwise, in terms of the appearance of wisdom, they are of one taste.822

In other words, for Zhönu Pal the realms of ordinary experience and wisdom are not two distinct things mixed together, but of one nature, in the same way as ice is not really different from water.

His thoughts on the “reflections of emptiness” (śūnyatābimba), however, seem to be more in line with zhentong:

Some wish to analyze even in the unsurpassable secret Mantrayāna in the following way: “Given the reflections of emptiness, they do not truly exist.” But [for Zhönu Pal] a vision [consisting in the] reflections of emptiness is a vision of the true nature of mind.823

This valuable description of Zhönu Pal’s position concludes with the following statement:

He taught perfectly, without contradiction, the teachings of the spiritual friends gone before him, such as those of the mahāsiddha Yumo[wa Mīk’yō Dorje] (Yu mo [ba Mi bskyod ro rje])
(eleventh century) and Gampopa and his disciples; the teachings of the master of siddhas, Vanaratna; the *Bodhisattva Trilogy*; the *Guhya* *samājapradipoddyotana*; the instructions of [the translator] Mañjuśrī; numerous profound sūtras; and many cycles of the “old” (i.e., Nyingma) secret Mantra[yāna].

Thus Zhönu Pal must have brought the tenet of Yumowa, whom Tuken Lozang Chökyi Nyima (Thu’u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma) (1737–1802) considers to have been the originator of the zhentong teachings (Stearns 1999:44), in line with the teachings of Gampopa. This suggests that Zhönu Pal was yet another master who blended zhentong with mahāmudrā. It should be noted again, however, that Zhönu Pal never uses the expression zhentong in his entire *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā* commentary.
PART II
TRANSLATION
4. Zhönu Pal’s
*Ratnagotravibhāgavīyākhyā* Commentary

**Translator’s Introduction**

The present study of Zhönu Pal’s *Ratnagotravibhāgavīyākhyā* commentary is based on my edition of a handwritten *dbu* _med_ text and a blockprint (Mathes 2003). Common throughout the *dbu* _med_ manuscript are features that are generally considered to be old, such as *bstantags* for *bstags*, or *ngo ti* for *ngo bo*. The entire manuscript has 698 folios with seven lines on each page. Unfortunately the backside of folio 483 and the last page are missing. The headings of the five chapters of the commentary (Zhönu Pal follows the Indian *vyākhyā*) are listed together with the folio numbers on a cover page, which bears the seal of the Zhamarpa and assigns the letter *ha* to the volume containing Zhönu Pal’s commentary. It is thus reasonable to assume that the original was kept in the library of the Zhamarpas in Yangpachen (Yangṣ pa can), which was seized by the Gelug government after the war with the Nepalese king Raṇa Bahādur Śāha in 1792. But the *dbu* _med_ text of Zhönu Pal’s commentary, which is now in the library of the Potala Palace, has only 691 folios, and it is thus doubtful whether our text was still at Zhamarpa’s seat when his seat was sacked and the booty brought to Lhasa. The blockprint has 463 folios with seven lines on each page, and could be the text described by Akhu Ching Sherab Gyatso (A khu ching Shes rab rgya mtsho) as having 461 folios.

Both texts have significant common mistakes. Unlike the blockprint (B), though, the *dbu* _med_ text (A) has a few serious copying mistakes of its own, such as the one on p. 161.5 where the scribe jumped from the second *gcig* back to the first one, repeating the syllables in between. A also has the peculiarity, contrary to B, of consistently writing some words with the superscript *sa* instead of *ra* (*sdzu ’phrul* instead of *rdzu ’phrul*, *sdzogs* instead of *rdzogs*, and *sdzob* instead of *rdzob*). This and the fact that the colophon...
of B, which is missing in A, does not fit on one folio the size of our dbu med manuscript A (it is known from the prefatory page that only the last folio is missing in A) make it unlikely that the dbu med manuscript (A) is a copy of the blockprint (B). In the case of B being a copy of A, the blocks would have been carved on the basis of a handwritten text that already contained significant copying mistakes; the text would have had to have been emended by the editors. Moreover, the probability that the original was no longer available at the time the blocks were carved, only six years after Zhönu Pal had composed his work, is very low. This leaves us with the probable case that A and B share a common source. In fact, as a close disciple of Zhönu Pal, Zhamar Chödrag Yeshé (text A has the seal of the Zhamarpas on its prefatory page) may well have obtained a handwritten copy of the commentary before the blocks were carved.

The colophon of the actual text simply states that the Buddhist monk Zhönu Pal composed his commentary in the mountain solitude called Møndang. In the biography of Lochen Sönam Gyatso we find the location “castle of Møndang” (smön ldang mkhar), where Lochen is said to have received explanations relating to the pāramitās at the feet of Zhönu Pal in the winter of the year 1472, and according to Zhamarpa’s biography, Zhönu Pal had already stayed at the same castle in 1469 or 1470, composing a commentary on Pradipoddyotana up to the tenth chapter.

The colophon of the Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā commentary does not give any further details, but Zhamar Chödrag Yeshé informs us in his biography of Zhönu Pal that the commentary was composed in a snake year (1473).

According to the colophon of the printing press, the blocks of the Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā commentary were carved only six years after Zhönu Pal completed his work, which means that he lived to see his “publication.”

The relevant passage of the colophon is:

All the [material for] wood blocks and sheets of paper from the thick forest [collected by] the faithful who follow the orders of the glorious and supreme Lochen [Sönam Gyatso], and all the [material] from the glorious, everywhere victorious, and mighty southern chief eventually arrived in the vicinity of Künzang Nag (Kun bzang nags). In the courtyard of both [worldly and religious] traditions, [the one called] “Glorious Yangpachen,” which resembles a fine abode of immortality within the sphere of the earth, to be served by many scholars—in this palace where many glorious ones gather—[the abbot of Densatel] enjoyed to
the full a handful of the lama’s (i.e., Zhōnu Pal’s) kindness, [namely,] the nectar of all the tantras’ profound meaning and the perfection of the ocean of text traditions, which are directly known by [the lama], while his heart was filled with the nondual supreme bliss of profound luminosity. Since the order was given by this universal monarch of “awareness holders,” the powerful chief of the retinue of the maṇḍala, the supreme chief who is the head of all practice lineages, the glorious Ngagi Wangchug Dragpa (Ngagi dbang phyug grags pa) (1439–90), the everywhere-victorious god, the Dharma king, and “attendant of the Dharma” (chos kyi spyan snga), all necessary material was obtained in great splendor [and] was in no way incomplete. With regard to the supervision of Dharma [activity] and [requisite] worldly activity, the necessary arrangements were properly made, thanks to the efforts of the learned Samdrub Dragpa (Bsam grub grags pa). Gyalwai Trinlé Lhündrub Namrin (Rgyal ba’i phrin las lhun grub nam rin) and Palden Zangpo Ngödrub (Dpal ldan bzang po dngos grub), two miraculously learned scribes, [together with] six ([and later even] more—ten) specialists in the craft of carving, Gönpopal (Mgon po dpal) and so forth, gathered and finished the [wood] blocks at the beginning of summer in the earth pig year (i.e., 1479).

Künzang Nag, where the various materials for carving the blocks arrived, is the place where the monastic seat of the Pagmo Drupas, Densatel, is located. The courtyard called Yangpachen, in which Ngagi Wangpo (Ngagi dbang po) (who became the eighth Pagdru ruler in Neudong in 1481) heard teachings from Zhōnu Pal and gave orders to carve the blocks, is probably located at Künzang Nag as well.

A cursory glance makes it clear that Zhōnu Pal’s work differs in its format from an ordinary Tibetan commentary. He hardly uses the typical Tibetan system of analyzing topical divisions and subdivisions (sa bcad) but rather follows the Indian commentarial tradition of first quoting a portion of the root text and then commenting upon it. The actual commentary is divided into three parts: (1) a relatively short one with an explanation of the title—that is, the terms mahāyāna, uttara, tantra, and sāstra—for those with sharp faculties (DRSM, 8.3–13.2), (2) an explanation of the first three stanzas of the first chapter for those with average faculties (DRSM, 13.2.–80.11), and (3) the longest part, the entire remaining commentary, for those with lesser capacities (DRSM, 80.11–576.17).
In the section below, I have translated the introduction and the first two commentaries, that is, the ones for sharp and average faculties. The introduction starts with a long quotation from the *Vairocanābhisambodhitāntra* that describes eight levels attained by ordinary persons without proper guidance, and then praises the qualities of the Buddha and his teaching. After a short historical survey of the transmission of the *Ratnagotrabhāga* the relatively short introduction concludes with a discussion of how buddha nature can be explained either as a nonaffirming negation, natural luminosity, ālayavijñāna, or all bodhisattvas and sentient beings. The explanation of the title targets various connotations of the terms used in it, especially the compound member tantra, which is elucidated by several quotations that reveal Zhōnu Pal’s understanding of what the underlying intention of the *Ratnagotrabhāga* is. It is also noteworthy that Zhōnu Pal follows Maitripa and the mahāsiddha Saroruha in listing the Sautrāntika among the Mahāyāna schools. The commentary for those with average faculties contains an extensive analysis of the seven vajra points. It demonstrates how Zhōnu Pal weaves in his mahāmudrā pith instructions and presents his mahāmudrā hermeneutics of viewing the last dharmacakra as the peak of Buddhist teachings.

**Technical Notes**

The following translation and study of Zhōnu Pal’s *Ratnagotravibhāgavṛtiṭhyā* commentary is based on my edition of this text. When quoting it, I refer to the abbreviation DRSM, followed by page and line numbers. The numbers in brackets at the beginning of each paragraph of the translation again refer to page and line numbers of my edition of the DRSM (i.e., the *Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos kyi 'grel bshad de kho na nyid rab tu gsal ba'i me long*).

Zhōnu Pal’s *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary contains numerous quotations of the sūtras and śāstras. These quotations will be identified and compared, as far as possible, with the original Sanskrit. In addition, the pertinent manuscripts were consulted when available. This was especially important in the case of the *Ratnagotravibhāgavṛtiṭhyā*, which Johnston edited on the basis of two manuscripts. This edition was sometimes improved by referring to the same two manuscripts Johnston used. In the footnotes, the letters A and B are employed in the same way as in Johnston’s edition, namely to denote the manuscript with the old Śāradā script (A) and the Nepalese manuscript (B). The negatives of the photographs that Rāhula Sāmkṛtyāyana made of these manuscripts are now preserved by the Bihar Research Society, Patna. Positive copies of a number of these
negatives were made in the sixties and seventies and brought to Germany. Currently they are kept at the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Göttingen, where both Ratnagotrabhāgavyākhyā manuscripts have the shelf-mark Xc 14/1. I thank Dr. Gustav Roth for providing me reader-printer copies from these photographs.

Equally important are the numerous quotations from the Lankavatārasūtra. A first comparison of the twenty-two manuscripts microfilmed by the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP) with Nanjio’s (1923) edition allowed a selection of ten manuscripts on the basis of which the Sanskrit edition could be cross-checked. The variant readings I noticed are far too few to establish a stemma of the twenty-two Nepalese manuscripts, and given that a critical text edition of this important sūtra is not yet available, I simply attempt in the present work to establish a tentative Sanskrit text so as to enable a better understanding and translation of the Tibetan. The quoted passages are not critically edited and not all variant readings have been listed. Here are some of my observations and present reasons for having selected the ten manuscripts I used.

Based on the joint variant reading śraddhā- of six manuscripts against sarvva- or sattvam (the aksaraś rvva and ttva can be easily confounded), I selected from these six what appears to be the oldest manuscript (reel no. C 13/7, dated 1753 A.D.), which is from Kesar Library. Ms. H 45/6 is selected because it is probably the oldest of all twenty-two, containing as it does the name of King Śrījayasiddhinarasimhamalla, who reigned from 1619 to 1661 A.D. D 58/6 was selected on the grounds that it once contradicts H 45/6 and has an older Newari script.

Ms. A 112/8 is dropped for using a later script, displaying some scribal errors and being closely related to H 45/6 (both share common mistakes). Ms. A 112/10 shares common mistakes with D 58/6 but is retained for contradicting the latter once. E 406/2 and H 45/6 have the same handwriting and do not differ in the checked passages. E 1200/8 shares a significant common variant reading with D 58/6 but was retained for being comparatively old (dated 1698 A.D.). D 58/4 is incomplete (it lacks required passages). D 52/5 was selected for once opposing most of the remaining manuscripts. A 917/6 has a common variant reading with ms. C 13/7 and was a private copy of Hemraj Shakya, whose library was later incorporated into the collection of the National Archives. B 88/1 is a copy of A 917/6.

Ms. E 1725/5 is a retake of D 16/2, E 406/2 of H 45/6, and E 1308/4 of E 3/3 (which is a copy of E 625/14). A 112/9 is kept for playing an important role in the eighth chapter of the Lankavatārasūtra that is at the moment critically edited by Lambert Schmithausen.
The manuscripts of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* selected are referred to by the following letters:

A  Reel no. A 112/9  
B  Reel no. A 112/10  
C  Reel no. C 13/7  
D  Reel no. D 52/5  
E  Reel no. D 58/6  
F  Reel no. D 73/8  
G  Reel no. E 625/14  
H  Reel no. E 1200/8  
I  Reel no. E 1725/5  
K  Reel no. H 45/6
The Commentary on the Treatise “Mahāyāna-Uttaratantra”:
The Mirror Showing Reality Very Clearly
(Introduction and Initial Commentaries)

Introduction

[2.2] I prostrate to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.
[2.2–4] I bow down to the lamas who, in human form, are expert in the loving skillful means of listening to and reflecting on [the Dharma]; [Their forms have been molded] from the substance of the mantras of compassion of the victorious ones and the perfection of insight.  
In the form of] marvelous illusory troops they defeat the troops of [different] groups of demons, And they serve as guides for those who conform to the purposes of the wise.

[2.4–6] I bow entirely to the most excellent among the sons of the Victorious One, [To him] who completely pervades the [buddha] element of sentient beings with his clouds of love,  
Who completely moistens the limitless fields with the rainwater of Dharma, And who ensures that they are completely filled with the supreme fruits of virtue and goodness.

[2.6–7] I bow to Maiträpa, in whom the treatise of the [Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyāna-]Uttaratantra [began to] blaze As a consequence of his having found [the realization of] mahāmudrā Through the kindness of the venerable Śabaripa.
[2.7–8] I bow to Dampa Sangye,\textsuperscript{863}  
Who carried the lion-sound of emptiness  
Into [every] side valley of the Snowland,  
And is thus the unconquered protector victorious over all.

[2.9–10] I bow to the feet of Lama Rinchen (Rin chen) (i.e., Gampopa),\textsuperscript{864}  
Who fulfilled a prophecy by the Victorious One,  
Because the “youthful moonlight” (i.e., the ever young Candraprabha)\textsuperscript{865}  
Has shone on the mountain peak of the fortunate ones.

[2.10–11] I bow to [all] sentient beings,  
Who possess the treasure of the essence\textsuperscript{866} of all buddhas,\textsuperscript{867}  
Who have obtained from it a mind of jewels,  
And who [can] therefore generate the supreme joy of bodhisattvas [or] heroes.

[2.11–12] I prostrate also to the great treatise of the \textit{Uttara\[tantra]},  
Which without exception is included among the utterances of the great ones,  
for [among] all the extensive and limitless teachings of the victorious ones  
It is the most excellent of measures in the world.

[2.12–15] Here\textsuperscript{868} the \textit{[Ratnagotravibhāga] Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra} taught by the Illustrious Ajita (i.e., Maitreya) and the commentary on it composed by the master Ārya Asaṅga are the Dharma to be explained. [The \textit{Uttaratantra} and its commentary] should be explained[, however, only] after they have been accepted in the sense of taking the unsurpassable teacher and his entire teaching as a standard of authenticity.

[2.15–16] Concerning these [two points], it is first stated how the teacher is unsurpassable. Various teachers come into being in the world. In this regard, it has been said in the \textit{*Āryavairocanābhisambodhitāntra}.\textsuperscript{869}

[2.16–24] Also, Guhyakādhipati,\textsuperscript{870} with regard to\textsuperscript{871} fools—ordinary persons, who are like cattle; to some [of them]\textsuperscript{872} the notion of Dharma occurs by chance. It is as follows. Keeping something merely on the order of, “I must fast” in mind generates enthusiasm and makes you cultivate the same [conduct] over and over
again. Guhyakādhipati, this is like a seed that brings forth virtuous deeds; it is the first [level of enhanced] mind. As a result of this fasting you are led to give presents to your parents, son and daughter, relatives, and kinsmen on this or that day marked by a good configuration [of stars]. This is like a sprout; it is the second [level of enhanced mind]. Furthermore, such generosity also makes you give to unknown persons. This is like a trunk; it is the third [level of enhanced mind]. Furthermore, such generosity makes you look hard for suitable recipients and give [alms to them]. This is like a leaf; it is the fourth [level of enhanced mind]. Furthermore, such generosity makes you rejoice in gurus and musicians and give [to them as well]. This is like a flower; it is the fifth [level of enhanced mind]. Furthermore, this generosity makes you give to aged persons. This is like a fruit; it is the sixth [level of enhanced mind].

[2.24-3.7] Also, Guhyakādhipati, you remain disciplined in order to be born in the higher realms. This is like nourishment; it is the seventh [level of enhanced mind]. Also, Guhyakādhipati, thanks to a mind like this, you hear from individual spiritual friends the following words while wandering in samsāra: “These gods are great gods. They bestow bliss on everyone. Make respectful offerings and become somebody who has accomplished everything. They are: Īśvara (i.e., Śiva), Brahman, then Viṣṇu, Śaṅkara, Rudra, Skanda, then the sun [god], the moon [god], Varuṇa, Kubera Dhanada, Indra, Virūpākṣa, Viśvākara, Yama, Kālārātri, Nirṛti, the so-called Chiefs of the Eight Directions, Agni, the sons of Vinatā, then Devī, Tapastakṣa, Padma, the Nāga [called] Takṣaka, Vāsuki, the so-called Śaṅkha, Karkoṭaka, Mahāpadma, Kulika, Śeṣa, Sadā (?), Ananta, Ādideva, the most excellent gods and riṣis, Veda[puṟuṣa], and the sons of Draupadi. May the wise make offerings [to them].”

[3.7-9] After you hear such words from [spiritual friends], [your] mind becomes enthused. Then, being full of devotion, you hasten to make offerings to the [gods]. Guhyakādhipati, this is the best of relief for fools or ordinary persons wandering in samsāra. It is [the state of] having become strong; and the victorious ones have declared it to be the eighth [level of enhanced] mind.
Accordingly, people rely on their own individual teachers when on the eighth [level of enhanced] mind. But these teachers cannot liberate [sentient beings] from [cyclic] existence, and they have defects. The Buddha, the illustrious one, alone is free from defects. As [Udbhaṭaśiddha-svāmin] has explained in [his] Viśeṣastava [1–2]:

[3.11–12] Having given up other teachers,
I have taken refuge in you, illustrious one.
If somebody asks why I [do] this, [I answer:]
You are without defect and endowed with qualities.

[3.12–14] Because the world rejoices in defects
And is too weak to perceive the qualities,
It sees even defects as being like qualities
And takes refuge in other [teachers].

[3.14–15] Likewise, since [the gods]—Īśvara and the others—are not omniscient, their assertions, too, destroy [people’s] minds. Therefore it is difficult for them to develop devotion toward the Buddha. In the same text (Viśeṣastava 72) it has been said:

[3.15–16] Fools whose mind is destroyed
By the defects of the tenets
Of those who are not omniscient in the sense [taught above]
Have not seen you, the teacher who is without defect.

[3.16–17] Likewise, when investigating whether a teacher is of highest quality or not, it has been said in [Dharmakīrti’s] Pramāṇavārttika [I.219]:

[3.17–18] [As for] the defects of others or a state without defects,
To say: This [person has] such [defects] or not—
Others know that this is something difficult to determine
Because it is difficult to arrive at a valid cognition [about it].

[3.18–19] Thus it is difficult to know whether another [being] is omniscient. On the other hand, it has been said in the Devātiśayastotra [17]:

[3.19–20] I have not taken the side of the Buddha,
Nor am I hostile to [people] like Kapila;
Indeed, I regard as teachers [all those]
[Whose] words are suitable.902

[3.20–23] Likewise, discourses that are not vitiated by either direct or inferential valid cognitions, and that do not contradict each other when setting forth what is completely hidden,903 are perfect discourses. Therefore, the Buddha who delivered [such discourses] is a perfect being of authority. The discourses of the Buddha do not contradict each other. As has been said in the Viśeṣastava [19]:

[3.23–24] It is heard that the many words spoken by Vyāsa Contradicted each other in the beginning and the end Because his memory was weak.
This, O wise one, is not the case with any of your [words].904

[3.24–4.2] Likewise, the great masters who uphold the Buddhist tenets not only ascertain that [these] are the teaching of the Buddha, but also take the discourses as a measure. On the other hand, here in the [Land] of Snow those who [maintain] that [our] teacher [also] taught, out of his very great compassion, things that are not correct905 very much predominate; and very few [maintain] that he taught straightforwardly. Because of such [arguments], the teacher and the teaching are greatly despised and harmed. Therefore it has been said here [in the Ratnagotravibhāga V.20]:

[4.2–4] Nobody anywhere in this world is more learned than the Victorious One,
No other who is omniscient and knows completely the highest truth the way he does.
Therefore, the sūtra[s]906 of definitive meaning put forward907 by the Sage [i.e., the Buddha] himself should not be violated;
Otherwise the correct doctrine (dharma) will be subverted, since you will fall away from the way of the Buddha.908

[4.5–6] Therefore, the treatise [Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyāna-]Uttara-[tantra] teaches all words of the Buddha in a “correct way.”909 It has also shown the difference between the provisional and definitive meaning of these [Buddha words].910

[4.6–11] With regard to the [Maitreya works], three among the works of the Illustrious Maitreya, [namely] the Abhisamayālaṁkāra, the Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṁkāra, and the Madhyāntavibhāga, were translated by the translators
A DIRECT PATH TO THE BUDDHA WITHIN

Paltseg (Dpal brtsegs), Yeshé Dé (Ye shes sde), and others during the first period of the spread of the doctrine [in Tibet]. As for the remaining two, the [Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyāna-]Uttaratantra[sāstra] and the Dharmadhatavibhāga together with its commentary, Lord Maitripa saw light shining from a crack in a stūpa and, wondering what the source of the light was, tried to determine it. As a consequence, he obtained the texts of the two treatises. He rejoiced [in them] and prayed to the venerable Maitreya, whereupon he arrived—directly visible in an opening between clouds—and duly bestowed [on Maitripa] the “oral transmission” (lung) of both texts. Thus it is known. 912

[4.11–14] Then he who is called Panḍita Anandakirti heard [the teaching of both texts] from Lord Maitripa and carried the texts to Kashmir disguised as a beggar. Upon his arrival, the great Panḍita Sajjana recognized him as a scholar and invited him to his home. [Sajjana] listened to [the teaching of] both treatises and copied the texts. 913 The great translator Loden Sherab heard them [from Sajjana], translated them in Śrīnagar in Kashmir, and composed an extensive explanation in Tibet. 915

[4.14–20] Also, the [well-known] Tsen Kawoche, a disciple of Drapa Ngönshé, came with the great translator (i.e., Ngog Loden Sherab) to Kashmir. He requested Sajjana to bestow on him the Maitreya works along with special instructions, since he wanted to make the works of the Illustrious Maitreya his “practice [of preparing] for death” (ṇītī). Thereupon [Sajjana] taught all five works, with Lotsawa Zu Gawa Dorjé serving as translator. He also gave special instructions with regard to the Uttaratantra in the due way, and back in Tibet, Tsen explained it to numerous [spiritual friends] in Ü and Tsang. 917 The translator Zu Gawa Dorjé wrote a commentary on the Uttaratantra in accordance with the teaching of Sajjana, 918 and translated the [Dharma]dharmatavibhāga, both root-text and commentary. Thus neither the Uttaratantra nor the [Dharma]dharmatavibhāga was spread in India before the time of Lord Maitripa. Neither is found in the great treatises such as the Abhisamayālāmākāra, 919 not even “a single phrase of them” (zur tsam).

[4.20–24] The translation by Jowo (Jo bo) [Atiśa] Dipaṁkara (982–1054) and Nagtso (Nag tsho) (b. 1011) was well done before the one by the great translator (i.e., Ngog Loden Sherab). 921 It is clear that the great Sharawapa (Sha ra ba pa) (1070–1141) explained [the Uttaratantra] on the basis of Nagtso’s translation. 922 Given that later [his] disciples on the whole preferred Ngog’s translation, he explained it a second time on the basis of that translation. 923 He also wrote a small pīkā on the Uttaratantra commentary by Ngog, and Drolungpa (Gro lung pa) and Zhangtse (Zhang tshes) wrote a pīkā based on it [also]. Based on these two, Nyangdren (Nyang...
bran) wrote [another] tikā. Later, many masters, such as Chapa [Chökyi Sengé] (Phya pa [Chos kyi seng ge]) (1109–69),
Tsangnagpa [Tsöndrü Sengé (Brtson ’grus seng ge)], and Denbagpa [Mawai Sengé (Dan bag pa [Smra ba’i seng ge])], wrote tikās, and [so] this tradition spread widely.

[4.24–5.4] In this regard, all explanations of this treatise (i.e., the Uttaratantra) put forward their own assertions on how the so-called buddha nature [should be understood] and then established a basis for these [assertions]. In the canonical scriptures I have seen that buddha nature is expressed in four ways: as (1) emptiness with the defining characteristics of a nonaffirming negation; (2) the natural luminosity of mind; (3) the basic consciousness (ālayavijñāna); and (4) as all bodhisattvas or sentient beings. In this treatise it is explained with a fourfold meaning: with the three specific defining characteristics: dharmakāya, suchness, and potential, and the general defining characteristic—nonconceptual.

[5.4–10] The great translator (i.e., Ngog Loden Sherab) together with his followers postulate that the ultimate, or emptiness with the defining characteristics of a nonaffirming negation, as explained in the analytical corpus [of Madhyamaka works], is buddha nature and call it naturally endowed, since when you apprehend that which is naturally endowed with qualities, [that is,] that emptiness, all qualities are gathered together as if called. Having taken the characteristic sign of purification to be the objective support of wisdom [conducive to] purification, they explain that there is nothing to be added. Having taken the characteristic sign of all defilements to be the self of a person and that of phenomena, which are wrongly superimposed by [a mind consisting of] all the defilements, they explain that nothing that existed before need be removed, since these [two] objective supports of the defilements are not established as anything at all. Being pervaded by the dharmakāya they explain as meaning that all sentient beings are fit to attain the dharmakāya.

[5.10–12] In this regard, the Master Gampopa said:

The basic text of this mahāmudrā of ours is the [Ratnagotravibhāga] Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra by the illustrious Maitreya.

[5.12–13] It is clear that those who correctly understand the pith instructions of the [Three] Masters from Kham and others follow and assert this. [And] with regard to that, the Dharma Master Götsangpa (1189–1258) said:

[5.13–15] Generally speaking, the one who was [most] adept at supporting sentient beings] on the marvelous path called
mahāmudrā within the teaching of the victorious Śākyamuni was the great Brahmin Saraha. The holders of his tradition in India were Master Śabarapāda, the father, and his spiritual son. That even a stupid cowherd in Tibet was enabled to understand the word mahāmudrā goes to the credit of Master Gampopa.

[5.15–16] The son in the expression “father and son” is the Great Lord Maitripa.

[5.16–21] [This] is very clear from the Tattvadaśaka, a work among the many small ones of Maitripa that have been transmitted, and [even more] so in a commentary on it by Sahajavajra. Moreover, the pandita Vajrapāṇi, Maitripa’s direct disciple, explained this tradition extensively to many learned ones in Tibet. [Another] direct disciple of Maitripa, Dampa Sangyé, called the mahāmudrā teachings—which are in essence the pāramitās and in accordance with the secret mantra—“Calming of Suffering,” and taught them extensively to innumerable disciples in Tibet. Furthermore, the words of pith instructions and the explanations of treatises deriving from Tsen Kawočhe are considered to be only in accordance with Maitripa.

[5.21–22] When you are asked to describe here how buddha nature is [to be taken] in terms of these eight stages, a description must be given:

[5.22] In the Ldog pa bsdus pa [bstan pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa] it has been explained:

However many negations may be enumerated, they boil down to two, nonaffirming and affirming [negation].

[5.22–23] Of these, the nonaffirming negation has been explained in the Ldog pa bsdus pa in the following way:

There is no object to be taught in the case of the nonaffirming [negation].

[5.23–24] As for the affirming negation, it has been said:

As for the affirming [negation], there is an object [to be taught].

[5.24–6.1] The commentary [i.e., the Ldog pa bsdus pa bstan pa'i rnam 'grel] says:
Question: How is it that there is no object to be taught in the case of the nonaffirming negation? [Answer:] There is no reality to the thing (i.e., object) [it refers to], since making someone understand that [something] does not exist in a particular way, and nothing more, is not to assert any existence of a thing. As for the affirming negation, there is [such a reality to the thing it refers to]. In any case, because the perception of an existence, or [in other words, of] the existence of nonexistence, is postulated, an apprehended thing exists, and thus exists as an objective support.

[6.1–2] In the same [text] it is said:

Likewise, the nonaffirming [negation] applies directly, the affirming one indirectly.

[6.2–6] In the commentary on this it has been explained:

As to the nonaffirming negation, the way the [negating] expression applies is that it applies directly. For example, when you tell blind persons, in order to teach [them], that a hare has no horns: “Because something harsh and sharp has not grown on a [hare’s] head, a hare’s horn does not exist,” you make [them] understand only the nonexistence of a hare’s horn, not [the existence of] something else. As to the affirming negation, it applies indirectly. For example, if you describe a Kṣatriya with the words “is not a Brahmin,” that which is to be understood by negating Brahmin is something else, [namely] the Kṣatriya. Therefore, it is an indirect way.

[6.6–7] In accordance with the present treatise (i.e., the Ldog pa bsdus pa), Bhavya (490–570) had stated in the Tarkajviilii (i.e., Madhyamakahrdaya III.26ab):

Here, earth and the like [are] not something that has the own-being of the elements on the ultimate level.

[6.7–15] In the commentary on this [pratika] it is said [in the Tarkajviilii]:

The [negative particle] not is a word indicating negation and must be taken to mean “are not.” [Question:] What is not what?
[Answer:] It must be taken to mean that “earth and the like are not something that has the own-being of elements on the ultimate level.” Here the negation not (Skt. na) is a word used for a nonaffirming negation, and not for an affirming negation.

[Question:] What is the difference between the two, affirming and nonaffirming negations? [Answer:] Affirming negation is negating the own-being of a [certain] entity [at the same time] establishing the own-being of another [categorically] similar entity. For example, the negation “he is not a Brahmin” implies [that he is] somebody other than a Brahmin, a non-Brahmin, [that is,] people who are lower in terms of asceticism, studying, and the like. The nonaffirming negation does no more than rule out the own-being of an entity, and so does not affirm another [categorically] similar entity. For example, saying “Brahmins shall not drink alcohol” repudiates only that, and so does not say that they shall drink or not drink some other liquid.

[6.15–18] All proponents of tenets, non-Buddhist and Buddhist [alike], commonly accept that a nonaffirming negation negates whatever is to be negated, and that apart from that nothing else is established, as in the statement “There is no horn on a hare’s head.” As to the negation “the earth and the like are not something that has the own-being of elements on the ultimate level,” [that is,] the ultimate that has been made into a [cognitive] object, it does not refer to the sublime wisdom of self-realization that is free from mental fabrications. [This ultimate,] rather, is pure worldly wisdom endowed with mental fabrications.

[6.18–23] Again from the Tarkajñālā: You may wonder if the ultimate is beyond all [forms of] speech and intellect. Is it therefore not the case that the [the ultimate equated with] the negation of an own-being of an entity is [in reality] not a negation (i.e., not a negation proper), since it is an object [expressed in] words? [Answer:] There are two aspects of the ultimate: One is “having entered into nonactivity (anabhisaṃskāra)—[this is] beyond the world and without stains and mental fabrications. The second [aspect is when] you are engaged in activity—this is in accordance with the accumulation of merit and wisdom; it is pure worldly wisdom endowed with mental fabrications. Here (in the Madhyamakahrdaya) the [sec-
ond ultimate] is taken as the qualification of the thesis ("does not ultimately exist").⁹⁵³ Therefore there is no mistake.⁹⁵⁴

[6.23–7.1] Further Candrakīrti said in [his] commentary on [the thirteenth stanza of] the sixteenth chapter of the [Catuhśatakā (i.e., the Bodhisattvayogācāraśāstracatuḥśatakātaṭikā)]:⁹⁵⁵

With regard to the nonexistence of all entities
A differentiation does not make sense.
What is seen in all things
Is undifferentiable. (CS XVI.13)⁹⁵⁶

This is because they have arisen from causes and conditions, and because it would follow that [their] own-being consisted of something produced. [On the other hand,] any [possible] own-being of all entities [could] only consist of something without a cause, and since something without a cause cannot have any existence, the own-being is a mere non-existent (dngos po med) based on a non-affirming negation. This is because it is not an entity (dngos po).

[7.1–4] Therefore it is obvious that only a nonaffirming negation can be taken as the basis for defining⁹⁵⁷ the nature [of things], emptiness, and the like. Such an emptiness was called buddha nature by Bhavya, because in the Tarkajvalā it has been explained as a reply to the criticism of some śrāvakas that in the Mahāyāna buddha nature is taught as having the defining characteristic of being [all-]pervasive, in contradiction to the seal of nonself:⁹⁵⁸

[7.4–8] This is because even [the expression] "being endowed with buddha nature" [means that] there is emptiness, signlessness, wishlessness, and the like in the mindstream of all sentient beings. It is not the case that a permanent "personal self"⁹⁵⁹ pervades everything. This is because we find [passages] like: "All phenomena [have] the nature of emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness. Emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness are the tathāgata, and so on."

[7.8–9] Also, the master Candrakīrti said in [his auto]commentary on the [Madhyamaka] Avatāra [VI.42]:⁹⁶⁰
Since [basic consciousness] follows the nature of all phenomena,\textsuperscript{961} it should be understood that mere emptiness is taught in terms of basic consciousness (ālayavijñāna).

[7.9–13] Since it is not possible that this master [Candrakīrti] did not see that buddha nature was proclaimed to be the basic consciousness—in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra this has been stated in many [passages]—[buddha] nature was accepted [by him] as being emptiness that has the defining characteristics of a nonaffirming negation.\textsuperscript{962} It is said that [Candrakīrti] saw the explanation that sentient beings are, [in terms of] this emptiness, buddhas ornamented with the major and minor marks, [that is,] the explanation that [a buddha nature of this kind is ascribed] provisional meaning with reference to the Laṅkāvatārasūtra,\textsuperscript{963} and thus explained [only in this respect] in [his] Madhyamakāvatāra that buddha nature has provisional meaning. It is clear that not the smallest part [of buddha nature] is distinguished [in terms of provisional and definitive meaning].\textsuperscript{964}

[7.13–16] The masters Ārya Vīmuktisena and Haribhadra have explained the emptiness of a nonaffirming negation as potential (gotra) and svabhāvikakāya. The master Jñānagarbha even explained it as dharmakāya, and thus he implicitly asserts that it is [buddha] nature. In this present treatise (RGV I.63ab) it is said:\textsuperscript{965}

The luminous nature of mind, like space, never undergoes change.

[7.16–17] Thus, [buddha nature] is explained [as] suchness (tathatā). In the [Mahāyāna]sūtrālaṃkāra (XIII.19cd) it is said:

Luminosity is not another mind (cetas), [one] different from the mind as true nature.
It is taught as being the nature [of mind].\textsuperscript{966}

[7.17–20] This and other [passages] explain the true nature of mind, [or] the element of awareness, as [buddha] nature. This explanation is given in many textual traditions of the master Nāgārjuna, such as the Dharma-dhātustotra, the Cittavajrastava, and the Bodhicittavivaranaṇātiṅkā. Many sūtras of the last [dharma]cakra, too, explain it [thus].

[7.20–22] The explanation of basic consciousness as buddha nature has been taught many times in the Laṅkāvatāra and the Ghanavyūha. The Śrīmālādevisūtra,\textsuperscript{967} the Vajra Songs, and the like have also explained it [as such].
[7.22–23] As for the explanation of sentient beings as buddha nature, in the Pradipodyotana[nāmaṭikā]968 it has been said:

All sentient beings are buddha natures.

[7.23–24] [Here] in this [text, the Ratnagotravibhāga], too, this is explained in [passages] such as:

The [buddha] element in [its] three states is known under three names.969 [RGV I.48cd]

The fourfold division of [buddha] nature as explained in this treatise (i.e., the Ratnagotravibhāga)970 will be elucidated later many times and not [further] elaborated here.

[7.24–8.1] Thus I have shortly explained who the author of the [Ratnagotravibhāga] Mahāyānottaratantrasāstra was, which master found it, and how it has been transmitted together with two levels of explanation, namely an explanation [of it] in terms of the path of logical inference, based on Madhyamaka works, and the path of directly realizing the meaning of [buddha] nature.

The Commentary for Those with Sharp Faculties

[8.1–3] Now the treatise itself will be explained. There are three levels. For those with sharp faculties who understand as soon as the main points are mentioned, [merely its] name (i.e., title) is explained.971 For those with average faculties [the treatise] is explained by way of a summary,972 and for those with dull faculties it is explained by elaborating [each stanza] extensively.973

[8.3–4] The title [of the treatise] is:

In Sanskrit: Mahāyāna Uttaratantra Śāstra974
In Tibetan: Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos
[In English: A Treatise on the Unsurpassable Continuum of the Great Vehicle]975

[8.4–6] Those with sharp faculties can usually understand the principal meaning by hearing this title only. How is that? The [term] treatise furnishes a general name for the text of the subject matter, and the remaining [terms] a title for the particular [subject matter]. In this regard, Sthiramati has said in [his] Madhyāntavibhāgaṭīkā:
Now it should be explained what the nature of a treatise is, and why it is [called] a treatise. Perceptions that display [the mental forms] of an aggregate of names, words, and letters are [what constitutes] a treatise. Or rather, the perceptions that display [the mental form] of specific terms leading to the attainment of supramundane wisdom [make up] a treatise. 

[Objection:] How are [these acoustic] perceptions produced and expressed? [Answer:] There is nothing wrong [here], since the hearer's perceptions arise from the perceptions of the author and expounder. Since it chastises (śās) the disciples, it is a treatise (śāstra). In chastising disciples, it gives rise to a distinctive form of discipline, meditative stabilization, and insight, and thus they abstain from the base deeds of body, speech, and mind, and instead perform suitable deeds.

Alternatively, it is a treatise because it is in accordance with the defining characteristics of a treatise. These are: that [teaching] which [causes] you to eventually abandon defilements together with [their] imprints by making you familiar with the received teachings, and that protects [you] from [cyclic] existence and the lower realms, which are frightening owing to various incessant and long-lasting violent sufferings. Therefore, since it chastises (śās) [your] enemies the defilements, and because it protects (traṇ) [you] from the lower realms and [cyclic] existence, it possesses the defining characteristics of a treatise (śāstra). These two [features] are found in the whole Mahāyāna and in the whole explanation thereof, and nowhere else. Therefore it is a śāstra. Thus it has been said: “That which chastises all [your] enemies, the defilements, and protects you from the lower realms and [cyclic] existence is, owing to these qualities of chastising and protecting, a treatise. These two are not found in other traditions.”

The explanation of the term treatise should be taken as it has been taught by this master, [Sthiramati]. The [phrase] “and nowhere else” refers only to outsiders (i.e., non-Buddhists). Since the Śrāvakayāna protects from both the lower realms and [cyclic] existence, it is not included within what is referred to by “else.” As to taking “perceptions that display the [mental forms] of names, words, and letters” as [a definition for] a treatise, this follows from having distinguished and explained the analyzed and investigated meanings [of a treatise]. Those who follow what is generally
accepted in the world will necessarily take the essence of a treatise to reside in the grand vocalizations whose nature is [mere] sound. [As to] “to chastise and to protect,” the verbal root of “to chastise” in Sanskrit is śās, and [the Sanskrit root] trai is in Tibetan skyob pa (“to protect”). The primary [meaning] of the derivatives of these [verbal roots] is taken according to the Sanskrit.

[8.24–9.1] All the Dharma teachings of the teacher are explained on the basis of the insight [which consists of] the ten strengths, the patience of fearlessness, and the quick-wittedness of detailed knowledge. Among [these explanations] is the following [in the Ratnagotravibhāgavākyākhyā, on I.1]:

[They (i.e., the seven topics of the Ratnagotravibhāga) are “vajra bases” in that they are the basis or support of vajra-like meaning, [that is, the object] of realization.

Therefore [the teachings] are based on the ability to distinguish right from wrong, on the fearlessness of omniscience, and on the detailed knowledge of word and meaning.

[9.1–4] [Next comes an explanation of the term Mahāyāna [in the title]. With regard to the discourses of the illustrious one, there are teachings whose subject matter is Hinayāna properly speaking. Among them are the [Avadāna]sataka, the Udana-varga, the two sets of the four categories of scriptures [of the Vinaya and the sūtras], and the Bimbisārāpratyudgamanā[nāma]mahāsūtra. They are called Hinayāna, because they express the meaning of the Hinayāna. The prajñāpāramitā sūtras, the presentations of the five perfections, and so forth are called Mahāyāna because they express Mahāyāna.

[9.4–8] When all [the teachings] are summarized, they [can] be presented as the three “wheels of the Dharma” (dharmacakra) along the lines of the Samdhinirmocanasūtra. In this regard, the basket of Hinayāna [teachings] is the first dharmacakra, while the basket of Mahāyāna is the [teachings of] the middle and last dharmacakras. Belonging as it does to the last of these three [dharmacakras], [the treatise being commented here] is called the “highest continuum” (Rgyud bla ma). The term uttara (i.e., the Sanskrit equivalent for bla ma) means, in terms of direction, north; in terms of quality, supreme; in terms of substance, excellence; and in terms of time, subsequent. Of these [its meaning] here is subsequent, and bla ma is also a synonym of subsequent.

[9.8–13] As to rgyud, since it means continuum, it must be applied, according to circumstances, in the sense of temporary strength. For example, just
as the term \textit{gandi} (trunk of a tree) expresses [one of] the three "[parts of a] continuum" (i.e., the trunk) and the single top, and just as the [phrase] "sound of the melody" expresses the "continuum" of first praising [the Three Jewels], that of [reciting] the sūtra in the middle, and that of finally dedicating [the merit acquired during the ritual,] which consists of the three "[parts of a] continuum" (\textit{rgyud}),\textsuperscript{985} in the same way the three dharmacakras are a continuous [process] of gradually guiding a person, and thus called "[parts of a] continuum." Among them [the \textit{Rgyud bla ma} (i.e., the \textit{Ratnagotravibhāga})] is called the subsequent, the highest (\textit{bla ma}) or supreme [continuum (\textit{rgyud}), that is, the final dharmacakra]. This meaning has been expounded in the following lines (II.73cd) of this [\textit{Ratnagotravibhāga}]:

Therefore this final stage of the Buddha\textsuperscript{986} is unknown
Even to the great sages who have obtained empowerment.\textsuperscript{987}

\[9.13-14\] If somebody requests: "When the Mahāyāna is explained in the discourses [of the Buddha], express [its] meaning, [namely] Mahāyāna itself!" it must be expressed. The opposite of great (\textit{mahā-}) is inferior (\textit{hina}), and this is the vehicle (\textit{yāna}) of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas. In the \textit{Mahāyānasūtrālāmkiśā} [I.9–10] and the \textit{bhāṣya} on it, it is stated:

\[9.14–15\] For the following reasons Śrāvakayāna is not called Dharma of Mahāyāna: it is incomplete, contradictory, without skillful means, and not taught in such a way.\textsuperscript{988}

\[9.15–25\] [The \textit{bhāṣya} on this stanza is:] "It is incomplete" with respect to teaching the benefit of others. In Śrāvakayāna, benefit for others has not been taught at all, the śrāvakas being taught the skillful means of aversion, detachment, and liberation for themselves only. Merely teaching others [the need] to benefit themselves does not deserve to be [called] benefit for others. "It is contradictory": the other being used for your own benefit, [your mind] is bent exclusively on your own benefit. That somebody whose [mind] is bent on nirvāṇa\textsuperscript{989} for himself alone should fully awaken to unsurpassable perfect enlightenment is contradictory. Even though he has been intently occupied with the means of enlightenment according to Śrāvakayāna for a long time, [a śrāvaka] is not fit to become a buddha. "It is without skillful means" means Śrāvakayāna has no skillful means for attaining\textsuperscript{990} buddhahood. He who has striven for [enlightenment] without skillful means, for however long a time,\textsuperscript{991} does
not attain the desired goal. It is like milking horns and the like.\textsuperscript{992}Well then, is the way a bodhisattva should train taught any differently here? It is not taught in such a way. Śrāvakayāna by itself is not worthy of Mahāyāna. You do not find in it such a teaching. Since Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna only contradict each other, there is [here] a stanza on [their] mutual contradiction:\textsuperscript{993}

\begin{quote}
[9.25–26] Because [the two yānas] contradict [each other] in terms of intention, teaching, practice, Reliance, and time, the inferior (hina)yāna really is inferior.\textsuperscript{994}

(\textit{MSA} I.10)
\end{quote}

[9.26–10.5] [The \textit{bhāṣya} on this stanza is:] How do they contradict [each other]? They contradict each other through a fivefold contradiction, namely a contradiction in terms of aspiration, teaching, practice, reliance, and time. In the Śrāvakayāna the aspiration is nirvāṇa\textsuperscript{995} for yourself alone. The teaching is for the sake of this [goal] alone, as is the practice. Reliance, which consists of the accumulation of merit and wisdom, is limited.\textsuperscript{996}The time is also shorter.\textsuperscript{997}Their goal is attained within only three lifetimes. In Mahāyāna everything is opposite to that. Thus they contradict each other, and as a consequence the inferior yāna really is inferior. It is not worthy of Mahāyāna.\textsuperscript{998}

[10.5–9] To attain the desired goal within three lifetimes—this [possibility] exists for bodhisattvas, too. Thus, we may wonder why in the [\textit{Yogācārabhūmi}viniscayasamgrahāṇi] it has been stated that some arhats who turned toward [full] enlightenment [did so by] hiding in an isolated place in their physical body, while completely perfecting the accumulation of enlightenment with an emanation body that is qualitatively similar, and attaining buddha[hood] together with it. [Answer:] Even though something like that may be possible, how could [you reckon with only] one lifetime, [compared to] this emanation body undergoing birth and death many times? It would be necessary, then, for [such arhats] to complete [the accumulations] in innumerable [lifetimes] three [times over].

[10.9–15] The vehicle that is wholly great is called Mahāyāna because these five points—aspiration, practice, and so forth\textsuperscript{999} are not inferior. The term yāna, or vehicle, refers to going. [\textit{Yāna}] in the instrumental [refers to] that upon which\textsuperscript{1000} you go, [namely,] the paths of being in partial concordance with liberation\textsuperscript{1001} up to the tenth level.\textsuperscript{1002} Used in the locative, it
A DIRECT PATH TO THE BUDDHA WITHIN

[refers to] the place where you go, [namely,] the level of a buddha itself. Even though the way the two terms (i.e., yiina in the instrumental and locative) are understood is therefore different, according to such great treatises the level of a buddha may also be referred to by using the term in the instrumental. This has been said, among other places, in the [Prajñā-pāramitā-ratnagūṇa]sāmcayagāthā [I.21]:

“Why is it called the vehicle (yāna) of enlightenment?”
Riding on it takes all sentient beings beyond misery.
This vehicle is a mansion, like [limitless] space;
It is the great vehicle that lets you attain direct happiness and joy.1004

Accordingly, the term vehicle is also a synonym of mount, and carrying as it does all sentient beings to the mansion of unsurpassable enlightenment, it is called the great vehicle. Since such load-bearing is not found among the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, [their vehicle] is called an inferior mount. Yogācāras are generally subsumed strictly under the Mahāyāna, but they take the teachings to the effect that [some] sentient beings definitely do not pass into nirvāṇa in the sense that [those] beings do not have a chance to pass into nirvāṇa at all, not that they do not have [such] a chance only temporarily. Moreover, they maintain that the arhats of the other two yānas will definitely not be able to become [practitioners of] the Mahāyāna after they have entered [nirvāṇa] without remainder.

In the Tattvaratnāvali, composed by Lord Maitripa, it is said:

Here there are three yānas, the so-called Śrāvakayāna, Pratyekabuddhayāna, and Mahāyāna. There are four positions, according to the division into Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, Yogācāra, and Mādhyamika.1005 In this regard, it is according to the position of the Vaibhāṣikas that the Śrāvakayāna and Pratyekabuddhayāna are explained.1006 Mahāyāna is twofold, the so-called tradition of pāramitā and the one of mantras. With regard to Pāramitāyāna, there are three [divisions], explained [respectively] according to the positions of the Sautrāntikas, Yogācāras, and Mādhyamikas.1008

Therefore the Sautrāntikas are taken to be followers of Mahāyāna. Likewise in accordance with Maitripa, the mahāsiddha Saroruha explains in his commentary on the eighth chapter of the appendix to the Hevajratantra [that]:

[10.15–20] [10.20–25]
The so-called Sautrāntikas are Mahāyāna-Sautrāntikas.

Moreover, Nāgārjuna has stated in his *Ratnāvali* [V.85–87]:

As long as any sentient being
Anywhere has not been liberated[, even a single one],
May I remain [in this world] for the sake of [that being],
Even after attaining unsurpassable enlightenment.

If the merit of he who says this
Had form,
It would not fit into [all] the world’s realms,
As numerous as the [grains of] sand of the Gaṅgā.

This is what the illustrious one said,
And the reason for it is apparent:
[The merit] should be known to be of the same extent
[As the wish] to benefit the limitless realm of sentient beings.

Thus the limitless realm of sentient beings has been taken as the reason for the limitless merit dedicated to sentient beings. The Yogācāras generate [bodhi]citta [out of a] wish to bring all sentient beings possessing [the corresponding] potential to enlightenment, even though [the latter] are limitless inasmuch they cannot be counted. Similarly those without the potential are likewise innumerable and limitless in the tradition of these [Yogācāras]. Also those who abide in the extreme state of quiescence are innumerable and limitless as well. Therefore, since [the Yogācāras also] lack the mental strength to resolutely bring those [arhats] to buddha[hood], it is quite evident that [their] mental strength is inferior to [that of] the Mādhyamikas. As to the wish on the part of the Yogācāras being [limited] in such a way, this is very clearly explained in the *Madhyamakāloka*, where it sets forth [the position of] the Yogācāras as the opponent[s’] view. I [can] only claim or think that the Sautrāntikas are similar [to the Yogācāras].

As to great (mahā-), in the *Mahāyānasūtrālāmākāra* [XIX.59–60] it has been taught [as referring to] the seven[fold] greatness:

The greatness of the focus, [the greatness] of the two accomplishments,
Of wisdom, of initiating effort, of skill in means,
The greatness of final achievement,\textsuperscript{1014} and the greatness of buddha activity—
Since it has this [sevenfold] greatness, it is called Mahāyāna.\textsuperscript{1015}

\[\text{[II.13–15]}\] All these seven are also taught in this \textit{[Ratnagotravibhāga]}. In \textit{[RGV V.15cd]} the greater focus is taught:\textsuperscript{1016}

Insight is supreme [among the \textit{pāramitās}], and its source is studying. Therefore studying is supreme.\textsuperscript{1017}

\[\text{[II.15–16]}\] In \textit{[RGV I.39ab]} the greatness of accomplishment is taught:

Having cut off all affection for himself by means of insight, [The bodhisattva,] being full of mercy, does not attain\textsuperscript{1018} quiescence, out of [his] affection for sentient beings.\textsuperscript{1019}

\[\text{[II.16–17]}\] In \textit{[RGV I.13b]} the greatness of the wisdom of realizing both [types of] selflessness is taught:

\(?\ldots\text{and, as a consequence, have completely realized}\) the extreme limit of the selflessness of all [sentient beings and] the world as quiescent\ldots.\textsuperscript{1020}

\[\text{[II.17–18]}\] In \textit{[RGV II.62ab]} the [twofold] greatness of effort and skill in means is taught:

Having limitless causes, having [as a focus of his activity] an inexhaustible [number of buddha] elements in sentient beings,\textsuperscript{1021} possessing mercy, powers, wisdom, and perfection, [...the protector of the world is eternal].\textsuperscript{1022}

\[\text{[II.18–19]}\] As to the greatness of final achievement, it is taught in the chapter on qualities, and as to great activity, it is extensively taught in the fourth chapter.

\[\text{[II.19–20]}\] The “greatness of the Mahāyāna” [as exemplified] in the \textit{prajñāpāramitā} is explained [in \textit{Abhisamāyālamkāra I.43ab]}:

The mind [that takes each sentient being as] the supreme among all sentient beings,\textsuperscript{1023} abandoning, and realization—with regard to these three\ldots.\textsuperscript{1024}
[11.20–22] It is also explained very well in this [treatise here]. As to the “taking of each sentient being as supreme among all sentient beings,” it is taught [in RGV IV.2c]:

Having seen that buddhahood is indistinguishable in all sentient beings, whose treasure is the stainless qualities....

[11.22–23] and the greatness of abandoning is taught [in RGV IV.2d]:

The compassion of the victorious ones, like wind, blows away the net of the cloud[-like hindrances of] defilements and the intellect.

[11.23–24] The greatness of realization is taught in passages such as [RGV I.26a]:

That which must be realized, realization (i.e., enlightenment)....

[11.24–12.1] Somebody may ask: As for the uninterrupted discourses of the three dharmacakras, they [present] a continuum (rgyud) of [different types of] subject matter, [but] if so, how is the continuum of the [actual] objects of [these types of] subject matter [referred to]? In this treatise [of RGV I.132] it is said:

[In the previous stanzas] it was stated that the natural purity of the mind, which has no beginning, lies within sentient beings’ sheaths of defilements, similarly beginningless, which have no connection [with the mind’s natural purity].

[12.1–3] Thus we have two continua with regard to what is without beginning, while [according to RGV I.79b and so forth:] [Buddha nature]...is the refuge in the world, because it has no limit in the future....

there are two continua with regard to what has no limit [in the future]. Thus four continua are taught.

[12.3–5] In the appendix of the [Guhya]samajatantra [XVIII.33–34] it has been said:
A continuum (rgyud) is called a continuous [flow].
The continuous [flow] may be threefold,
Corresponding to the classification into basis,

[Its] nature is the cause of well-formed appearance (ākṛti),
[Its] basis the "[skillful] means,"
And [its] irresistibility the fruit.\textsuperscript{1031}
The meaning of continuum includes these three.\textsuperscript{1032}

[12.5–6] It has also been taught here [in RGV I.48cd]:

The buddha element is, corresponding to [its] three states,
taught under three names.\textsuperscript{1033}

[12.6–10] This has also been taught in the Vajrasikha[mahāguhya]tantra.\textsuperscript{1034}

Why is this [called] subsequent continuum?

Continuum [means] "continuous [flow]."
Samsāra is taken to be a continuum,
[Your continuum is] a "subsequent one" when you have gone beyond [samsāra];
It is called a subsequent continuum.

Continuum [means] "continuous [flow]."
The subsequent [one] is the suchness arisen from the former [one];
It is known for being secret and hidden.
It is called the subsequent continuum.

Why is it a continuum and subsequent?

It is the supreme victorious one of the perfected level:
[His continuum] has broken out from the prison of [cyclic] existence.
In other words, whatever has broken free
Is termed the subsequent of the continuum.

[12.10–17] When [attempting to] briefly clarify this and the question before,
we are here [faced with] what the terms of [the question] "Why is it a con-
tinuum and subsequent?" mean. The meaning of continuum is to be a continuous [flow]. As long as you have not reached [the first bodhisattva] level [called] Very Joyful, [your existence in] samsāra is in a continuous [flow]. Thus it is called a continuum. From the level [called] Very Joyful onward, you perform buddha activity for as long as space exists, and this is a continuum [as well]. Once it has gone beyond saṁsāra, [your continuum] is called subsequent. Even if you condense this down to saṁsāra and purification, it is [still] a single continuum, given the continuous connection resulting from its having arisen from a [previous state], that is, given that the subsequent [continuum], [or] purification, has arisen from a previous [one], [or] saṁsāra. What has been so condensed into a single [continuum] is reality, the luminous nature of mind. Having been hindered by ignorance in the previous state of saṁsāra, it was like a secret treasure. As a result of knowledge it has [now] become the continuum of purification. Thus [the questions] are explained.

1035 [12.17–21] In the explanation of the subsequent [continuum] above, [it was taken to be] simply the [state of] having gone beyond [saṁsāra]. [Then] it was asked, "Why is it a continuum and subsequent?" The answer [is:] [Sanskrit] tara [has] the meaning of "having broken free/out" or "having liberated yourself." [The Sanskrit prefix] ud1036 has the meaning of "very" (lhag pa), "on" (steng), "subsequent" (phyi ma), or "superior" (rab), and so forth. Thus a great bodhisattva of the final level [first] went beyond saṁsāra [to reach] the level [called] Very Joyful. As to the clause "having reached the ultimate level[s] after crossing over (brgal) the ocean-like level of mental imprints caused by ignorance" in the Daśabhūmika[sūtra], it needs to be taught in exact words: "because you have crossed over (brgal) the [ocean...], you have become somebody who has 'broken out/free' (brgal)..."1037

1038 [12.21–23] To sum up these explanations, it has been said in the Dharmadātustotra (stanza 2):

Whatever the cause of saṁsāra is—this very thing has been purified. Thus nirvāṇa is this purity, and the dharmakāya, too, is precisely this.

1039 [12.23–26] This method [of teaching] is truly fantastic! Throughout beginningless time—that long—you have repeatedly experienced immeasurable suffering in the cities of the six realms. Through all that[, however,] your buddha nature has not rotted, and by its power your potential is awakened, resulting in an even stronger aversion toward saṁsāra. When you have [finally] found enlightenment, for as long as space lasts, you will abide as
the [buddha] element of sentient beings, which are [but a] continuous flow of defilements and suffering.

[12.26–13.1] Also with regard to the continuum of [different types of] subject matter: although this treatise teaches the meaning of all the yānas, still its main subject is the subsequent or unsurpassable [dharma]cakra.

[13.1] Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.1038

[13.1–2] This [homage] has been inserted by the translators in order to mitigate obstacles and render [their work] auspicious.

The Commentary for Those with Average Faculties

[13.2–6] The explanation that [elucidates] the concise meaning for those with average faculties1039 has three [points]: an explanation of the meaning together with the aim [of the treatise], the canonical texts (lung) with which [the treatise] is associated, and the explanation of [how] the former topics are related to the subsequent ones.1040 As to the first [point], Master Vasubandhu said in [a text called] “What Has Been Obtained [as] an Upadeśa of the Venerable [Maitreya]”:1041

To those whose intellect is inferior to mine
And who wish to explain the sūtras,
I will give a minor instruction:1042
You must state the aim [of the sūtra], together with its concise meaning.
The meaning of the words, the sequence [of] or connections [between its different topics],
And the contradictions [pointed out by opponents] together with their rebuttals.1043

[13.6–10] Clever disciples [who need to be guided by] the treatise wonder what the subject matter of this treatise is, what the aim and the ultimate aim (i.e., the attainable aim) of the subject matter are, and what the nature of the connection between the subject matter (abhidheya) and the text (abhidhāna) is. To those who have become engaged in an investigation marked by such initial doubts, I will address these [points1044] by [elucidating] the concise meaning [of the treatise]. With regard to those who are both faithful and clever, I will explain it in the form [of a full-fledged commentary on] the five chapters.
The Explanation of RGV I.1

[13.10–11] As to the subject matter, it is taught in [the following points]:

The Buddha, [his] teaching and community, [his] element, enlightenment, [and] qualities, and finally the activity of the Buddha.\(^{1045}\) [RGV I.1ab]

[13.12–18] As for the aim of the subject matter, it is not the aim of merely [explaining the motive of] the subject matter, but also the realization of the subject matter.\(^{1046}\) Here, [in the \textipa{pāda}] “is the seven vajra points,”\(^{1047}\) the seven points of the subject matter are [each] called a \textipa{vajra} because they are very difficult to realize by hearing and thinking about. As for the treatise, it has been taught as a basis [for understanding] these [points], and so the connection between the defining characteristics of the subject matter (\textit{abhidheya}) and the text (\textit{abhidhiina}) is clarified. As for what makes you realize the individual subject matter, it is not proper [to think of this as] a particular aim, given all the common phraseology [used in the treatise]. The aim is[, however,] once you know that [the subject matter] has a meaning that, like a vajra, is difficult to analyze,\(^{1048}\) you [come to] know that it is a discourse on the essence (i.e., buddha nature), which has definitive meaning. The ultimate (i.e., attainable) aim is the direct actualization [of the subject matter] as the result of cultivating meditation in stages, which has been grounded in an initial faith because this meaning of [buddha] nature (as has been stated) is difficult to determine by hearing and thinking about.\(^{1049}\)

[13.18–23] With regard to the explanation of the seven points: once this treatise, [this] great discourse, has explained one principal point and connected [it] with the others as with its branches, the aim of teaching [their] connection will be thoroughly understood. If somebody therefore asks which of these seven points is the principal one, [the answer is that] the Buddha is the principal one, because the other six points are defined by describing his qualities. This has been taught in the words [of RGV I.3], which show the successive interconnections of the seven [points]:

From the Buddha [comes] the teaching and from the teaching the noble community.\(^{1050}\) Within [the setting of] the community, [buddha] nature leads to the attainment of the [buddha] element of wisdom. And the attainment of this wisdom is the highest enlightenment,
Which is endowed with properties, such as the [ten] strengths, that benefit all sentient beings.\textsuperscript{1051} [RGV I.3]

[13.23–25] Now, these seven points will be explained. As for the stages of the seven [points]: since on the path of the supreme vehicle the engendering of a mind committed to enlightenment is like a caravan leader, they are in accordance with the stages of correctly arousing [such] a mind, as has been explained in detail in the \textit{Mañjuśrīvīrikṛiḍitasātra} in the following passage:\textsuperscript{1052}

[13.25–14.7] Mañjuśrī decked [his] body out with ornaments and put on bright clothes [from which light shone].\textsuperscript{1053} He positioned himself along the way the [noble] prostitute *Suvarṇaprabhāśrī\textsuperscript{1054} was coming, and [when she reached him,] she got down from her chariot and clutched the clothes Mañjuśrī had on. Mañjuśrī told her: “I will give you [my] clothes if you enter [the path] to enlightenment.”\textsuperscript{1055} So the young woman asked what enlightenment was like. When Mañjuśrī elucidated the meaning of enlightenment in broad terms, starting with emptiness, she opened up to the Dharma,\textsuperscript{1056} became very joyful, and touched both feet of the youthful Mañjuśrī. She took refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha, fully embraced abstinence (\textit{brahmacarya}) and the [other] moral commandments,\textsuperscript{1057} generated with strong determination a mind committed to unsurpassable perfect enlightenment (i.e., \textit{bodhicitta}) and spoke the following words: “Mañjuśrī, I too will generate a mind committed to the unsurpassable perfect enlightenment, as taught by you, so that, based on what you have taught, [namely,] love and compassion for all sentient beings, the lineage of the Buddha will not be disrupted, the lineage of the Dharma will not be disrupted, and the lineage of the Saṅgha will not be disrupted.” And so forth.

[14.8–11] Taking refuge in the Three Jewels has been explicitly taught in this [treatise] too. The objective support for arousing [\textit{bodhi}citta] is the welfare of others and enlightenment [for yourself]. As for the others from among [these two: other and self], the [others] are the sentient beings for whose sake [\textit{bodhi}citta] is cultivated. So it has been taught here [in this treatise], in [the chapter] “Suchness Mingled with Stains.” [This also] because the impure [\textit{buddha}] element has been called a sentient being in [RGV I.47]:
Depending on whether the buddha element is impure, partly impure and partly pure, or perfectly pure, it is called a sentient being, bodhisattva, or tathāgata respectively.

The welfare of others has been taught in [the chapter on] activity. As to enlightenment, which is the cause of the activity, it has been taught in the chapter on enlightenment. The qualities are the instruments or tools with the help of which enlightenment works for the sake of others. All seven must be understood in terms of the two truths. In this regard, the Three Jewels in terms of the ultimate [truth] has been explained in [RGV I.21].

Ultimately, buddhahood is the only refuge for the world, because the Sage has the Dharma as his body, and the Community "sets it (i.e., buddhahood) as its ultimate goal."

What follows (i.e., RGV I.22) is buddhahood on the level of apparent [truth], the bodies in terms of the apparent [truth] being explained as being for the sake of others. The Dharma and Saṅgha on the level of apparent truth are taught in [RGV I.20]:

[The Dharma] will be abandoned [and] is of a deceptive nature and nonexistent, and [the Saṅgha] is fearful. Therefore, the two kinds of Dharma and the Noble Community are ultimately not the supreme refuge.

The teaching of buddha nature explained in terms of emptiness [leads to] ultimate suchness mingled with stains, while in [passages] like:

If there is no buddha element, there will be no aversion even to suffering (RGV I.40ab)

the appropriated potential is explained. Thus this is [the buddha element] on the level of apparent [truth].

To explain the function of enlightenment, ultimate enlightenment is explained in terms of the svabhāvikakāya, and enlightenment on the level of apparent [truth] in terms of the two form kāyas. The thirty-two qualities of dissociation [from hindrances] are the ultimate ones, and the thirty-two qualities of maturation are those of apparent [truth]. The dharmakāya, the master of activity, belongs to the ultimate, and the form
kayas belong to the apparent [truth]. Thus explaining [the seven vajra points] with two aspects each results in fourteen categories.

[14.22–15.1] Among these [seven vajra points] I shall first explain the [buddha] element. If it be asked why, it is because the [buddha] element is called emptiness or suchness, and therefore known as suchness pure and simple, while every explanation of the seven [vajra points] in their ultimate aspects differs only with regard to [whether they] are purified from stains or not. In this regard, emptiness as explained in the middle [dharma]cakra is taught as being a nonaffirming negation, in the sense of being empty of an own-being that is not mixed with other own-beings; and it needs to be realized by the perceiving subject (yul can) [on the basis of] an inferential valid cognition. It is also described as not having arisen from any causes and conditions at all, as explained in the Satyadvayavibhāgavṛtti (4ab):

[15.1–3] An understanding arisen through a logical proof [that fulfills] the three criteria [of a syllogism] is the ultimate (paramārtha), because it is the aim (arthā) plus the supreme (parama). Also, the object that is determined by it is described as the ultimate [object] (paramārtha), just as a direct perception [can be either a cognition or an object].

[15.3–8] As it is said in the Prasannapadā:

"How can an own-being be [artificially] created?" To be both created and [have] an own-being—this has no coherent meaning, [the two] contradicting each other. Here, own-being means being in itself, and according to this etymology, a created thing is nowhere in the world called an own-being, just like the heat of hot water, for example, or the creation of rubies and the like from such things as quartz crystals through the efforts of an alchemist. That which is not created is an own-being, for example, the hotness of fire or the own-being of such things as the "rubiness" of genuine rubies. This is called their own-being because it has not arisen from contact with other things.

[15.8–10] Here, in the last dharmacakra, you ascribe such an emptiness to the outer husk and then determine the emptiness that is [buddha] nature. This is not a nonaffirming negation of an own-being but the [buddha] element of awareness, for it has been said in [RGV 106b]:

"..."
Having seen the [buddha] element of awareness, which is like honey. [1071]

[15.10–12] [This element] is not an object concretized by inferential [cognition] but rather an object of direct [cognition]. Even though it has not arisen from causes and conditions, it is not the case that it has not arisen at all. In the same way as the element of space evolves within its own sphere, [the buddha element] does rather not, in [its natural] flow, undergo change because of contact with other phenomena.

[15.12–18] Also, the great Madhyamaka masters assert that the sūtras of the last dharmacakra are authoritative, and it is not the case that they do not accept the emptiness of [buddha] nature. For in [Bhavya's] Prajñāpradīpa it has been said:

Since it is [mainly] dependent arising qualified as nonorigination and so forth that has been taught [by the illustrious one], the subject matter of [this] treatise [here is accordingly]. [1072] The nonconceptual wisdom[, namely,] the ultimate [state] of not conceptualizing this nectar[-like] reality [of dependent arising], apprehends an object, which is like the stainless autumn sky. [This,] the complete pacification of all mental fabrications, the freedom from difference and identity, and the quiescence, which must be realized by oneself, have been pointed out [in this treatise]. The way of the illustrious one [corresponds to this] reality, but somebody with base thoughts may not believe [in it]. Therefore, it (i.e., reality) is [basically] apprehended because of the preeminence of mainly inferential cognitions. [1073]

[15.18–20] Here again, in the last dharmacakra, the hotness of fire and so forth is used as an example, it having been said in the Bodhīcittavivaraṇa (stanza 57): [1074]

I claim that the nature (prakṛti) of all phenomena is emptiness, in the same way as sweetness is the nature of sugar and hotness that of fire. [1075]

[15.20–16.2] The negandum, too, that of which something is empty, is [here] a little different from [how it is defined in] the middle [dharma]cakra. From sentient beings up to the Buddha [something] exists
[that is] established as the nature of mind because of being neither impaired by, nor fabricated under, other conditions. It is thus called *empty of fabricated adventitious phenomena*. The adventitious, again, [consists of] mind insofar as it is:

a. The direct cognition of blue, yellow, and so forth, as long as it is colored into various objective mental forms (*ākāra*).\(^{1076}\)
b. The mental form of the perceiving subject (*grāhakākāra*) of this.
c. The mental form of an object appearing to the conceptual [faculty,] which (form and concept) have arisen by the power of mental imprints left by the appearances of direct cognition.
d. The mental form of perceiving, which is the subject of this [object].
e. The appearances of inferential cognitions, as explained in the Madhyamaka, together with the mental forms of [their] perception.
f. The mental forms of such appearances as falling strands of hair or yellow conch shells created by impaired sense faculties.
g. The mental forms of perceiving these [things].
h. The appearances in clear dreams.
i. That which has arisen from meditation, such as on a skeleton or [involving] the total [fixation of the mind].\(^{1077}\)
j. The appearances of defiled clairvoyance.
k. The appearances of concentration and the formless [absorptions].
l. The appearances of objects during śrāvakas' and pratyekabuddhas' realization of the selflessness of persons.
m. The mental forms of perceiving these [appearances] (i.e., h–l).

[16.2–7] Depending on the circumstances, all these are fabricated from [cognitive] objects, [mental] imprints, or impaired sense faculties, and thus not what the original mind is like. Therefore the original mind is said to be empty of them. On the other hand, they do not arise as something entirely different from the nature of mind. It is like space, for example: even though it does not turn into phenomena like clouds and mountains, and is thus termed empty, it would not be appropriate to say that these clouds and so forth abide somewhere else than in space. Moreover, in view of their being produced out of ignorance, even the outer material world and the bodies of sentient beings are artificial [or fabricated], and thus [themselves] neganda, things of which [the buddha element] is empty.

[16.7–12] The Buddha does not see this element of awareness as [having] any of the mental forms of [characteristic] signs, for it has been said in the *Bodhicittavivaraṇa* (stanzas 43–46).\(^{1078}\)
In short, buddhas did not see[,] do not see[,] and will not see.\textsuperscript{1079} How could they see what has the nature of lacking an own-being?\textsuperscript{1080}

An entity is a concept; [whereas] the nonconceptual is emptiness. Where concepts have appeared, how can there be emptiness?\textsuperscript{1081}

A mind that [manifests] the mental forms of a cognitive object and subject is not seen by the tathāgatas. Wherever there is a cognitive object and subject, there is no enlightenment.\textsuperscript{1082}

That which is without defining characteristics and origination, without abiding and beyond words—
Space, bodhicitta, and enlightenment—[all share] the defining characteristics of nonduality.\textsuperscript{1083}

\textbf{[16.12–16]} In the Madhyāntavibhāga [I.14–15] it has been said:

In short, the synonyms of emptiness are: suchness, the limit of existence,
Being without characteristic signs, the ultimate, and the dharmadhātu.

The meaning of the synonyms follows respectively from the fact that [emptiness is] unchangeable, not mistaken,
Their [i.e., the characteristic signs'] cessation, the object of the noble ones, and the cause (in the sense of \textit{sphere})\textsuperscript{1084} of the qualities of the noble ones.\textsuperscript{1085}

Also, the synonyms taught here should be applied to both forms of emptiness, those of nonaffirming negation and of awareness.

\textbf{[16.16–17]} The lord of this doctrine (i.e., the \textit{Ratnagotrabhāga}), the father, the venerable Maitrīpa, and his son [Sahajavajra] assert that the emptiness taught in the Madhyamakāvatāra is middling Madhyamaka, the emptiness of awareness being the tradition of supreme Madhyamaka.

\textbf{[16.17–21]} You may ask if Mādhyamikas first determine emptiness by logical inference and then get used to it, [and] if you accept that [the process of] getting used to what logical inference has revealed counteracts conceptual [effort], and that [as a consequence of this] a direct cognition
arises, in the same way as a fire kindled from rubbing pieces of wood burns these very same pieces, does then an unobstructed direct cognition arise within this “awareness-emptiness” (rig pa stong pa nyid) of the last dharma-cakra? Is there an investigative valid cognition or not? If there is one, what is it like?

[16.21–17.3] In the tradition of the followers of pith instructions this has been taught to some: “Investigate thoroughly day and night what your mind is like.” Thus the notion of investigation is given first. Some are then instructed: “Having given up [unnecessary] thinking about past, present, and future, settle your mind in an unwavering state. As a result, what is called one-pointedness will arise. It has the defining characteristics of a direct cognition. Once it has arisen, watch the mind, which will meditate in such a way that this direct cognition itself is turned inward.” Then the guru will cause the disciple to remain in this state of mere gazing. He causes the disciple to remain in such a state of mere gazing after having made him wonder, for example, whether there are sentient beings in [a particular body of] water, and so made him focus his eyes. This is a way of investigating by means of nonconceptual direct cognition. From this arises the direct perception that all phenomena lack a [truly existent] self. The sense faculty associated with the eyes, which sees the water in the above example, stands for devotion to, and respect for, the lama who sees the truth. The eye consciousness stands for the direct cognition that is turned inward.

[17.3–9] This mode [of this investigative cognition is taught in the following pādas] of this [Ratnagotravibhāga):

...who see that—in view of the natural luminosity of that mind—defilements lack an own-being.... [RGV I.13a]

This teaches one-pointedness, while [the pāda]:

...and, as a consequence, have completely realized the extreme limit of the selflessness of all sentient beings and the world as quiescent.... [RGV I.13b]

teaches the direct realization of selflessness, and this is also given the name yoga of freedom from mental fabrication. Freedom from mental fabrication is not merely a nonaffirming negation, but [also] a quality of awareness that cannot be established as any[thing with] characteristic signs. The finger of mahāmudrā points to the momentary awareness, which does not come
down on either of the [two] sides, appearance or emptiness. Thus say those versed in the pith instructions. Even though this tradition belongs to the Pāramitāyāna, it is labeled mahāmudrā. Thus it is explained in the Tattva- 

dasakaṭikā by Sahajavajra. It is also explained in the Tattvāvatāra by Jñānakirti in the root text and its commentary.\textsuperscript{1089}

\textbf{[17.9–11]} Likewise in the teaching of Pagmo Drupa:

The actual “path of liberation”\textsuperscript{1090} is the mahāmudrā yoga of awareness and emptiness. It is not [successfully traversed] by a mere analytical meditation on emptiness. Even though you may have meditated on an intellectually understood emptiness for eons,\textsuperscript{1091} there is no possibility of throwing off the bonds of [this] golden chain.\textsuperscript{1092}

\textbf{[17.II–19]} In this regard, his outstanding disciples said at length, among other things:

The right guru, [that is, one who embodies] a condition different [from yourself],
Brings about [your] maturation;
Still, the causal connection of devotion and respect is wonderful,
Since [maturation] will be accomplished by a profound causal connection,
As in the case of the sun and its rays of light
Or a seed and its fruit.
If [your] devotion and respect is developed properly,
[Your] realization will follow accordingly.
And the emptiness that you analyze
With the insight (shes rab) of listening and reflection
Without proper devotion and respect
Is taken by the guru to be an intellectually understood empti[ness].
Likewise the preliminary realizations (nyams) and experiences—
Those realizations put in the mind
By the profound teaching of the victorious one,
The songs of the previous mahasiddhas,
And the words of the four yogas—
May arise very easily
In a person who has no devotion or respect,
But [your] defilements and concepts are not [easily] abandoned.
How will you cross the ocean of samsāra then?
Without knowing what it is to be free from mental fabrication,  
How will you abandon the characteristic signs of mental  
fabrication?  
Without realizing the luminosity of nonorigination,  
How will you cut the stream of origination?  

[17.19–24] In the same way as you know, by drinking a random handful of  
ocean water, the taste of all [the rest of it] which you have not drunk, a  
yogin who knows the reality of his own mind will know the seven [vajra]  
points as they really are, [that is,] the reality of the mind of sentient beings  
from the Avīci [hell] up to the dharmakāya of a buddha. For it is said in  
the Śrīmālādevīsūtra:

Illustrious one, whoever has no doubts that that which is cov­  
ered by the extremity of the sheath of all defilements is [still]  
buddha nature has also no doubts about the dharmakāya of the  
tathāgata, who is liberated from the sheath of all defilements.  

[17.24–18.2] As for the [first vajra point,] the Buddha, we must take as a  
measure what earlier scholars say in the Sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa:

With regard to the synonyms of the name of Buddha—if you  
[attempt to] derive [etymologic meaning] from the word  
buddhabh—one is [as follows]: mohanidrāpramardanāt(?)  
pra-buddhapuruṣavat, [which means]: “[he is] like a person awak­  
ened from sleep (gnyid sangs pa) having awakened from the sleep  
of delusion”; [thus] you strive for awakening. Another synonym  
rnam=rnam grangs?) is explained [as follows]: buddher  
vikāsanād buddha[h l]  
vibuddhapadmavat, [which means]: “[he is] like an open (vi-?), blossomed (~buddha?)  
lotus, since  
his intellect has opened and blossomed (bye zhing rgyas).” [To  
sum up,] he is called “[the one whose intellect] has awakened  
(sangs) and blossomed (rgyas).” The general meaning of the word  
is that he thoroughly knows all phenomena and is [thus] com­  
pletely enlightened.

[18.2–7] As for the actual usage of the word Buddha, whether (depending  
on circumstances) truly or metaphorically, it has been said in the Ārya-  
dharmasaṅgītisūtra.
Son of a noble family, a bodhisattva should thoroughly know [the meaning of the word] Buddha on the basis of the ten [forms of] entering the way of the Dharma. If you ask which ten, they are: the Buddha of the natural outflow, the Buddha arisen from maturation, the Buddha of samādhi, the Buddha of aspiration, the Buddha of the mind, the Buddha of the true nature, the Buddha of enjoyment, the Buddha of emanation, the metaphorical Buddha, and the Buddha (i.e., statues, etc.) that you place in front of yourself.

[18.7–9] Here, if you ask what the Buddha of the natural outflow is, [the answer is:] That which is established from both the natural outflow of the pāramitās and the achievement of the qualities of the pāramitās is the Buddha of achievement. Therefore he is called the Buddha of the natural outflow.

[18.9–12] If you ask what the Buddha arisen from maturation is, he is the maturation of the natural outflow of the pāramitās. It is what arises from this maturation in the form of the Buddha of maturation. He blesses sentient beings and comes into being by the blessing of the Dharma. This is what is referred to as the Buddha arisen from maturation.

[18.12–14] If you ask what the Buddha of samādhi is, [he is] the samādhi into which the tathāgata is absorbed and [from which,] once absorbed, a hundred thousand buddhas arise spontaneously, without the tathāgata making [any] effort. It is by the blessing of [this] samādhi that [buddhas] have arisen from [this] samādhi; therefore they are called buddhas of samādhi. This is what is referred to as the Buddha of samādhi.

[18.14–18] If you ask what the Buddha of aspiration is, [he is] the bodhisattva who prays: “By means of whatever forms, colors, and paths of conduct sentient beings are disciplined, may I be disciplined by means of these same forms, colors, and paths of conduct.” They are [bodhisattvas] disciplined by the Buddha, being disciplined by the form of the Buddha. You should know that this is the Buddha of aspiration, since he has arisen from this aspiration. This is what is referred to as the Buddha of aspiration.

[18.18–22] If you ask what the Buddha of the mind is, it is a bodhisattva who has gained full control over the mind, and can, in virtue of this control, turn into whatever he thinks about. Having seen sentient beings being disciplined by the buddhas, he
wishes: “May I assume the form of a buddha.” Since he has arisen from the mind, he is a buddha of the mind. Moreover, these disciplined ones see and know the Buddha because they have purified their mind. This is what is referred to as the Buddha of the mind.

[18.22–25] If you ask, what is the Buddha of the true nature? The Buddha of the true nature is the transformation of the basis, [the basis that is responsible for] the assumption of bad states; the inconceivable; the stainless; that which has various forms; the dharmadhātu in its different aspects; the variety of form, beauty, and shape; and the appearance of a buddha form endowed with the thirty-two marks of a great being—[all] this is called the Buddha of the true nature.

[18.25–19.1] If you ask what the Buddha of enjoyment is, it is bodhisattvas, [their] enjoyment, a corresponding manner of conduct, form, food, speaking, rules (or rituals?), and the corresponding activity—[all] this is called the Buddha of enjoyment.

[19.1–4] If you ask what the Buddha of emanation is, it is this: once they have obtained the samādhi of [being able to] display all forms, buddhas and bodhisattvas remain absorbed in samādhi. Having obtained [this] power and being moved by compassion, they emanate as buddha forms and discipline sentient beings. This is called the Buddha of emanation.

[19.4–7] If you ask what is the metaphorical Buddha? It is when some regard [their] teacher or preceptor as a buddha and respect him as they would a buddha. Regarding and respecting him in this way, they take [his instructions as] the teachings of the Buddha and fully enjoy and follow through on them. This is called the metaphorical Buddha.

[19.7–10] If you ask, what the Buddha you place in front of yourself is, it is when some make a statue of the Buddha (or have one made), make offerings to it, honor it by all acts of worship, treat it with respect, adore it, and take it as [embodying] the teachings of the Buddha and fully enjoy and follow through on those teachings. This is called the Buddha you place in front of yourself. Son of a noble family, a bodhisattva should thoroughly know [the meaning of the word] Buddha on the basis of these ten [forms of] entering the way of the Dharma.
Among these, the natural outflow (nisyanda) has been translated as a “buddha resembling [his] cause” in the Lāṅkāvatāra[sūtra]. This is the sambhogakāya. As to the body of maturation, the maturation of the six pāramitās appears as the body of a buddha—at the time of “[single]-moment comprehension” (ekakṣanīkābhīsamaya).\textsuperscript{1105} As to [the buddha of] samādhi, since it is [also] taught in the introduction of the Prajñāpāramitā, it is like the appearance of an assembly of tathāgatas teaching the Dharma, seated on many lotuses of jewels at the head of light [rays] emerging from the displayed sense faculty of the tongue, after [the buddha] has become absorbed in the king of samādhis. As to the buddha of aspiration, through their aspiration, bodhisattvas appear as buddhas to others. As to the buddha of the mind, bodhisattvas who gained control over the mind see that they can discipline others if they turn into the form of a buddha, and do so accordingly.

Among these [five], the first three are [buddha] kāyas of those described as a buddha on the tenth [bodhisattva] level and above. The latter two are bodhisattvas who have gained control [over all phenomena].\textsuperscript{1106} The svābhāvika-, sambhoga-, and nirmānakāya, all three, will be explained in this [treatise, i.e., the Ratnagotravibhāga]. On account of their resembling a buddha, the last two are metaphorically labeled as buddhas in order to generate respect for [your] teacher and statues of the Buddha. Moreover, as for the name buddha, it [applies, strictly speaking, to] the buddha of no more learning, but those on the tenth level are [also] called buddhas. In the commentary on this [present work, the Ratnagotravibhāga], those from the eighth level onward are called buddhas. Even those from the [bodhisattva] levels onward are [sometimes] called [buddhas]. In the Tarkajviilā it is explained that you are called a buddha when you possess a steady bodhi-citta. Also all sentient beings are declared to be buddhas in view of [their mind] streams. Such explanations serve a particular aim. Further, [even] some men and medicines have arbitrarily been labeled as buddhas metaphorically. But here [in the Ratnagotravibhāga,] it should be understood that [only] those on the eighth level onward are called buddhas.

As to [the vajra point of] the Dharma, in the Vyākhyāyukti it has been said, [in the paragraph on] comprehending the ten meanings [of the word dharma]:

[The word] dharma has the following meanings: knowable objects, the path, nirvāṇa, the objects of the mental faculty,\textsuperscript{1107} merit, life,\textsuperscript{1108} the discourses [of the Buddha], what will happen in the future,\textsuperscript{1109} certainty, and law.\textsuperscript{1110}
From among these [ten] you must choose, here in the context of the Jewel of the Dharma, the path, nirvāṇa, and the discourses.

As to [the vajra point of] the Community, it is a synonym of assembly. Here it is the Saṅgha in terms of the ultimate, [that is,] liberation [and] cessation. The noble ones, [that is,] śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas, who have this [ultimate] as their basis, are also called [this].

As to [the vajra point of] the buddha element (dhatu), it has the meaning of substantial [cause] (nye bar len pa) [or] source ('byung khungs) of the fruit. In the present context, [that is,] with regard to the pure and impure, which manifest themselves [respectively] as the Three Jewels and saṁsāra, [the element] is, according to circumstances, explained as potential (gotra).

As to [the vajra point of] enlightenment, [Skt.] bodhi, since [the term] is used for the purified faults and the thorough knowledge of [all] phenomena, it should be understood as being like a buddha, [that is, it applies to bodhisattvas] from the eighth level onward.

As to [the vajra point of] qualities, in general they are properties (dharma). They are what particular [properties] clearly differentiated from other properties are called. Here, accordingly, they are properties such as the [ten] strengths, clearly distinguished from [those of] other teachers. [Such properties] should be called [qualities] only from the eighth level onward.

As to [the vajra point of] buddha activity (Tib. phrin las), phrin is a honorific word. [Skt.] karma[n] means action (las). Action is involved here because [the progression] from wholesome worldly deeds up to the state of a buddha is necessarily accomplished through [the assistance of] other buddhas. The cause of this, wisdom and compassion, is called activity (phrin las), in the [same] way that the cause is metaphorically termed the fruit.

As to [the word] finally [in RGV I.1b], activity is the seventh [and] last [vajra point], starting from the first [vajra point], the Jewel that is the Buddha. Also, with regard to the body of meaning [in the treatise], since activity is the final fruit of generating a mind set on attaining enlightenment (bodhicitta), it is [qualified by] finally. If the body of the treatise is [taken], as explained in the commentary on master Dignāga's Nyāyabindu, to [mean] both the “body of meaning” and the “body of words,” then the seven vajras are “the body of meaning,” and the collectivity of discourse that expresses them is the body of words or terms, and this is precisely [what] this stanza [(RGV I.1) is about]. In the present treatise, [the text]
from [stanza RGV I.4 starting with] “Which has [neither] beginning...”
up to [stanza RGV V.28 ending with] “...in short, the two results are taught by the last [stanza]”

[20.15] ...is the entire treatise. The body of this entire [treatise] is, in short, all seven vajra points.\(^{1112}\) [RGV I.1cd]

[20.16–18] The stanza starting with “[The seven vajra points must be known,] together with their own defining characteristics....” (RGV I.2)\(^{1113}\) explains that the source of this body [is] like the mother of a child. The stanza starting with “From the Buddha [comes] the teaching...” [RGV I.3] explains the connection by which the body is, like veins and sinews, stitched together.

[The Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā says:]{\(^{1114}\)}

[They are “vajra bases”\(^{1115}\) in that they are the basis or support of the vajra-like meaning, [namely the object] of realization. In this regard, it should be known that [what] by nature [is] the ineffable meaning (i.e., object) of self-realization is like a vajra, since it is difficult to understand with a knowledge that results from listening and reflection. The letters that express this meaning by teaching the [most] favorable path for attaining it are called the base because they are the support of this [meaning]. Thus, as [the meaning] is difficult to understand and [the syllables are its] support, the meaning and syllables should be known as a vajra base (vajrapada). What is here the meaning and what are the syllables? [First] the meaning is mentioned: it is the sevenfold meaning (i.e., object) of realization, that is to say, the meaning of Buddha, Dharma, Saṅgha, the [buddha] element, enlightenment, qualities, and activity. This is called the meaning. The letters by which the sevenfold meaning (i.e., object) of realization is made known [or] elucidated are called syllables. This teaching of the vajra points should be known in detail according to the sūtras.\(^{1116}\)"

[20.18–22] Now the [Ratnagotravibhāga]vyākhyā on this stanza [I.1] will be explained. In this regard there is an explanation of the term vajra point (lit. “vajra base”) and a presentation of canonical sources making the vajra[-like] meanings known. First, the seven meanings (i.e., objects),
which must be realized on the basis of the [corresponding] words, are ultimate ones, and thus vajra-like. The words expressing these [meanings] are a basis because they are [their] foundation. Thus all seven words are called *vajra bases*. To explain them again: since [Tib.] *de la* ("in this regard"), [in Sanskrit] *tatra*, is the seventh case, it [can] be taken to imply [Tib.] *de na* ("at that place," "there") and [means]: when explaining this vajra base.

[20.22–21.1] "Listening" means arisen from listening, that is to say, knowing the meaning from scriptures. "Reflection" means arisen from reflection, that is, knowing the meaning from having reflected on reasons and arguments. "Difficult to understand on the basis of these two [types of] knowledge" means that when directly distinguishing the meaning, it is very difficult to actualize it, because these two [forms of knowledge] are conceptual. Therefore you should take [the meaning] to be an indistinguishable quality and [likewise] understand that the seven ultimate [points] are like a vajra. However [the meaning] is understood, since an expression is always referring to a thought, the meaning should not be taken as the actual object of the thought. Within the direct [perceptions] of any knowable object whatsoever, it is the meaning and object of comprehension that have the nature of self-realization, [that is,] a direct [perception] arisen from meditation.

[21.1–7] If you object then that, "The seven meanings are what is experienced in self-realization, and if these seven meanings are, on the other hand, ineffable, they [cannot] be the subject matter of the treatise. Thus, the treatise [meant for discourse] is devoid of subject matter." It is not so. As for the self-realization that realizes the seven meanings: even though it cannot arise primarily on the basis of words, the knowledge arisen from listening and reflection is a cause favoring the attainment of the fruit, [or] self-realization. Through teaching it, since [this favorable cause] is the path that leads you to the attainment of self-realization, self-realization is taught as well. This in the same way as [the city of] Pāṭaliputra is expressed when you say: "This is the way leading to Pāṭaliputra." This has been also said [in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* V.16]:

Thus, on the basis of authoritative scripture and reason,  
[This doctrine] has been explained [by me] only for my own purification  
And for helping those endowed with marvelous virtues  
In terms of their intelligence and devotion.
Thus, the insight arising from listening is brought forth by explanations based on scripture, and the insight arising from reflection by ones based on reasoning. In this respect it is stated in the *Laṅkāvatāra*[sūtra]:

Now further, the bodhisattva and great being Mahāmati requested the illustrious one to speak on this subject: "Illustrious one, may it please the illustrious one to explain to me again where, from where, and how thoughts of the cognitive forms (*vijñapti*) of phrases among the people occur, [and] the experiential object that manifests as the thoughts of words." The illustrious one said: "The occurrences of syllables, Mahāmati, come about from a combination of the head, chest, nose, throat, palate, lips, tongue, and teeth."  

This is in accordance with what is explained in the *Vacanamukh[āyudhopama]*:

[Sounds are produced from] the chest, throat, palate, tongue, nose, head, teeth, and the lips—from all and each of these places.

[Tib.] *mgo bo* ("head") means *spyi bo* [a synonym of head], and *brang* ("chest") means *khog pa* [a synonym of chest].

Further, Mahāmati, we will explain the defining characteristics of the accumulations that go to make up words, phrases, and syllables. When these accumulations are well understood, bodhisattvas and great beings who delve into meaning, phrases, and syllables swiftly awaken to unsurpassable complete enlightenment and cause all sentient beings to awaken in the same way. Mahāmati, *word-body* (that is, the "accumulation that goes to make up words") is the thing on the basis of which a word is coined. The accumulation is a thing. [Here,] *accumulation* (Skt. *kēya*) does not have a different meaning than body. Mahāmati, this is the *word-body*. The *phrase-body*, Mahāmati, does not have a different meaning than "the existence of many meanings of phrases," "[their] ascertainment," and "definite objects [of reference]." Mahāmati, this is what I taught to be the *phrase-body*. The *syllable-body*, Mahāmati, is that by which words and sentences are
made manifest and does not have a different meaning than syllables, symbols, characteristic signs, objects [of reference], and designation.\(^\text{1125}\)

[21.23–22.3] Again, Mahāmati, the *phrase-body* is a definite product\(^\text{1126}\) that constitutes phrases.\(^\text{1127}\) Mahāmati, *words* are different specific words consisting of letters, [namely, the ones] from *a* to *ha*. Mahāmati, the *syllable-body*\(^\text{1128}\) here refers to short, long, and extended syllables.\(^\text{1129}\) Mahāmati, the *phrase-body* here is: regarding the phrase(*pada*)-body, the idea of it is obtained from the walkers on the trails (*padavīthi*)—elephants, horses, humans, deer, cows,\(^\text{1130}\) buffalos, sheep,\(^\text{1131}\) cattle, and so forth. Moreover, Mahāmati, words and syllables are the four formless skandhas. [The latter,] being expressed by [the term] *word*, are in fact word.\(^\text{1132}\) Insofar as they are manifest (*vyajyate*) by virtue of their specific defining characteristic, they are syllables (*vyānjana*). Mahāmati, these are the defining characteristics of the expressions *word* and *phrase* with regard to the accumulations/bodies of words, phrases, and syllables. You should familiarize yourself with this [topic].\(^\text{1133}\)

[22.3–11] Any term for any thing—the labeling [of the latter] as if it were a reality—is a word. A collection of many of these is called the “accumulation,” “body,” or “thing.” A phrase is called true when it elucidates [something], not, [that is,] by scattering words in a general way, [but] by using different [grammatical] cases. Syllables are letters that form words and phrases. *Syllable* is *vyānjana* in Sanskrit, and means “letter,” “mark,” or “consonant.” [In the case of] these, the meaning of the three accumulations is straightforward. As to “definite [product\(^\text{1134}\) that constitutes] phrases,” when explaining it in terms of the other synonyms, it is as explained before. The accumulation that goes to make up words (i.e., the word-body) is the cause of words. “From *a* to *ha*” means the sixteen vowels and the thirty-three consonants. The accumulation that goes to make up syllables (i.e., the syllable-body) is also the cause of syllables; [these are pronounced] in three ways, [namely with] a long, short, and average span of breath. As to the other synonyms, the walkers on the footpaths (elephants and so forth),\(^\text{1135}\) they [refer] to the phrase-body, because phrase is in Sanskrit *pada* and means “foot.” The word-body consists of the four formless skandhas beginning with sensation, given that they make you comprehend the meaning. The specific defining characteristics necessarily involved in comprehending meaning, since they are unchangeable, are called syllables.
[22.11–14] Jñānaśrībhadra has stated [in his *Laṅkāvatārāvṛtti*] that words are terms that express, and phrases are the subject matter [to be expressed]. Having explained these three bodies/accumulations together with their separate defining characteristics according to this same *Laṅkāvatāra*sūtra, the Abhidharma, and the treatises on grammar, I shall again explain the three together on the basis of one foundation.

[22.14] Furthermore, in the *Mahāyāna*sūtrālaṅkāra [I.4cd] it is stated:

> It should be known that the Dharma has two aspects as well: meaning and syllables. ¹¹³⁷

[22.14–17] Therefore the entire treatise is explained as being [mere] syllables. Here [in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*] it is the same. The syllables that express the seven meanings,¹¹³⁸ [namely,] the underlying nature of the terms of the entire treatise, are called the *base* of the seven meanings, for they are the foundation of these seven meanings. Moreover, the knowledge involving thoroughly understanding the seven meanings is called *meaning*, because this knowledge arises on the basis of the terms and terms are its basis. This is the stage when understanding (*rtog pa*) arises in the listener.

[22.17–19] With regard to the one who is explaining [the Dharma], it is stated [in *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* XXIV.8ab]:

> The teaching of the Dharma by the buddhas is based on the two truths. ¹¹³⁹

[22.19–25] Accordingly, the meaning is posited as the support and the terms as the supported, since the terms used by the one who explains arise from a knowledge that thoroughly understands the meaning. To sum up, it is in view of them being difficult to grasp that the [seven] meanings should be understood to be vajra[-like]. It is in view of their being the support of the meaning that the syllables should be understood to be the “base” of the meaning. “In view of” means “by reason of.” [This is] “the conventional meaning of explaining [the seven vajra points] as vajra and base.” As to the [question], “What is here the meaning and what are the syllables?” it is clarified by: “the sevenfold [meaning of realization is called meaning].” The Sanskrit is here: *tatra katamo ‘rthaḥ katamad vyāñjanam*. Since *katama* is [an interrogative particle calling for a relation expressed by] *as* [Tib. *du*], we must translate here: “[What is] meaning [and what are] syllables [taken as here]?” Therefore it is clear that a suitable translation of the answer [must be]: “As to the meaning of realization, it must be expressed¹¹⁴⁰ as the sevenfold meaning.”
As to the meaning of *buddha*, it is the meaning of the term *buddha*. The rest follows accordingly. “The letters (*aksara*) by which the sevenfold meaning (i.e., object) of realization is made known [or] elucidated are called syllables (*vyanjana*).” Since there is a sevenfold meaning, the [expressive] words [lit. “syllables”] are [also] sevenfold. [Sanskrit] *vyanjana* is “syllable” or “consonant,” because the essence of the seven[fold] meaning is made known and, more particularly, elucidated.\textsuperscript{1141} Thus it is said. As to the presentation of canonical sources justifying the vajra meanings[s], this teaching of the vajra bases has been expressed in a condensed form, but now it should be known in detail according to the sūtras.

[The next passage in the *Ratnagotrabhāgavatākhyā* is:]

[Ānanda, the Tathāgata is invisible. He cannot be seen with eyes. Ānanda, the Dharma is ineffable. It cannot be heard with ears. Ānanda, the Saṅgha\textsuperscript{1142} is not conditioned. It cannot be worshipped either by body or by mind.\textsuperscript{1143} Thus the [first] three vajra points should be understood according to the *Dṛḍhādhyāsayaparivarta*.\textsuperscript{1144}]

[23.4–8] When in the sūtra the illustrious one told Ānanda to teach the Dharma with regard to the invisible Tathāgata, the ineffable Dharma, and the Saṅgha that cannot be worshipped, Ānanda replied the following to the illustrious one: “How is it, illustrious one, that the Tathāgata is invisible, that the Dharma is ineffable, and that the Saṅgha cannot be worshipped?” [The Buddha answered] “Ānanda, the Tathāgata is invisible,” because he must be taken in terms of [his] dharmatā, as has been said in the *Vajracchedika*:

The buddhas are the dharmakāya; the leaders see the dharmatā.

[23.8–12] [In the *Dṛḍhādhyāsayaparivarta* the Buddha said, speaking of himself in the third person:]\textsuperscript{1145} “He cannot be seen with the eyes as the marvelous marks [of a buddha]. The Dharma, too, Ānanda, is ineffable, inasmuch as it must be taken in terms of [its] dharmatā. It cannot be heard with ears, that is, as the sixty[fold] melodious speech. The Saṅgha, too, Ānanda, is not conditioned, inasmuch as it must be taken in terms of [its] dharmatā. It can neither be venerated by the body nor worshipped by a mind that longs [to do so] upon seeing [the Saṅgha].”

[23.12–16] Immediately after this teaching Ānanda said: “Illustrious one, it is amazing [how] difficult it is to realize in such a way the dharmatā of
the buddhas, the illustrious ones.” Since [the Buddha] gave his consent, it is obvious that the Three Jewels must be taken with reference to [their] dharmatā [here]. Thus the first three vajra points under discussion here should be understood according to the Dr̥ḍhādhyāśayasyasūtra, since [their explanation] was requested by the bodhisattva Dr̥ḍhādhyāśaya.

[The next passage in the Ratnagotravibhāga vyākhyā is:]

[Śāriputra, this [ultimate] meaning is the [cognitive] object of the Tathāgata; it comes under the range of the Tathāgata’s awareness].

Śāriputra, it cannot, to start with, be known, seen, or examined correctly even by śrāvakas or pratyekabuddhas on the basis of their own insight, much less by fools and ordinary people, unless they [i.e., śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, fools, and ordinary persons] realize it by faith in the Tathāgata. Śāriputra, that which must be realized by faith is the ultimate. Śāriputra, ultimate is an expression for the [buddha] element in sentient beings. The [buddha] element in sentient beings, Śāriputra, is an expression for buddha nature. Buddha nature, Śāriputra, is an expression for the dharma-kāya. Thus the fourth vajra point should be understood according to the Anūnati vā purṇatvanirdeśa.

[23.16–20] [It has been said:]

“Śāriputra, this ultimate meaning is the [cognitive] object of omniscience whose nature is [that of] the Tathāgata; it comes under the range of the Tathāgata’s wisdom, which apprehends all knowable objects. For these reasons it is called ultimate. Śāriputra, it cannot, to start with, be correctly known (as the [buddha] element of sentient beings), seen (as buddha nature), or examined (as being the dharma-kāya), even by śrāvakas or pratyekabuddhas on the basis of their own insight rather than on what others say; how much less can fools and ordinary people, who are prone to view the transitory collection [as a real I and mine], realize it by their own knowledge.”

[23.20–22] “They realize it by faith in the Tathāgata” means by following his discourses and merely trusting [his words]. Since śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and ordinary persons [can have such a realization], they are not included among those who do not realize it [at all]. [The Buddha thus said:] “Śāriputra, even though the ultimate is difficult to realize, it must be realized by faith in the words of the Buddha.”

[23.22–24.2] [It has been further said:] “Śāriputra, the name vase and the material of [its] huge bulb are not identical by nature, and [their]
relation is not such that they are inseparable in terms of the four elements. Were that so, it would follow that even a cow would think of the word *vase* upon seeing the huge bulb [of one]. Therefore, since all words are subse­quent labels (*btags pa*) for this and that meaning, they are called *expressions* (*bla dvags*). In this sense, the word *ultimate* is an expression for the empti­ness [of] sentient beings that is, in a certain respect, synonymous with the phrase ‘[buddha] element in sentient beings.’ Likewise, the phrase ‘[buddha] element in sentient beings’ is, in a certain respect, an expression for buddha nature. The term *buddha nature*, Śāriputra, is synonymous with the term *dharma-kāya*. It is an expression of a subsequent label.”

[24.2–5] Thus the fourth vajra point should be understood on the basis of its five defining characteristics of the ultimate in accordance with the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśasūtra*, implying that the element of sentient beings is like a vajra. The explanation of the three [reasons for the existence of buddha nature in sentient beings]—being embraced and pervaded (*spharāṇa*) by the embodiment of the perfect Buddha and so forth—in the chapter on suchness mingled with stains, is also based on this treatise (i.e., *sūtra*).

[The next passage in the *Ratnagotravibhāga-vyākhyā* is:]

[Ilustrious one, unsurpassable enlightenment is an expression for the sphere (Tib. *dbyings*) of nirvāṇa. *Sphere of nirvāṇa,* illustrious one, is an expression for the Tathāgata’s dharma-kāya. Thus the fifth vajra point should be known according to the *Āryaśrīmālā[devi]sūtra*.]

[24.5–14] Further down in [RGV I.89 (J I.87)] it is stated:

Perfect enlightenment/awakening to all aspects is the removal of [all] stains together with the [corresponding] mental imprints. Moreover, it is buddhahood, nirvāṇa, and nonduality on the ultimate [level].

Similarly, unsurpassable enlightenment (Tib. *byang chub*) has the same meaning as buddha (Tib. *sangs rgyas*), inasmuch as cleansing (*byang*) and awakening (*sangs*) have the same meaning, as do blossoming (*rgyas*) and achieving (*chub*). [Buddha in turn] has the same meaning as the sphere of nirvāṇa (Tib. *mya ngan ’das*), since stains together with the [corresponding] mental imprints are misery (Tib. *mya ngan*), while their removal [is expressed by] “beyond” (Tib. ’das). Therefore, the name enlight-
enment is an expression for the sphere of nirvāṇa. Therefore, both enlightenment [or] buddha and removal [or] nirvāṇa are the same as nonduality and the ultimate [truth] of the transformation of the basis. As for the sphere of nirvāṇa, it is an expression for a tathāgata's dharmakāya; the way [nirvāṇa] exists when it is the element of sentient beings, thus it came\(^\text{1159}\) (Tib. de bzhin gshegs, Skt. tathāgata) and was attained, and a [tathāgata's] body (kāya) is inseparable from the qualities of the properties (dharma) of the [ten] strengths and so forth. Thus the fifth vajra point should be known according to the Āryaśrīmālādeviśimhanādasūtra, ārya being a general title for a sūtra, while the particular sūtra itself is called Śrīmālādeviśimhanāda.

[The next passage in the Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā is:]

[Śāriputra, the dharmakāya taught by the Tathāgata possesses inseparable properties and qualities, [impossible] to recognize as something disconnected,\(^\text{1160}\) actually in the form of properties of the Tathāgata, which surpass in number the grains of sand of the river Gaṅgā. Thus the sixth vajra point should be understood according to the Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdesa[sūtra].\(^\text{1161}\)]

[24.14–18] The dharmakāya\(^\text{1162}\) taught by [our] teacher the Tathāgata has the following meaning. The [qualities], such as the [ten] strengths, which surpass in number the grains of sand of the river Gaṅgā, are the properties (dharma) of a tathāgata. Since the wisdom of the Buddha is identical with them, it [i.e., the wisdom or the dharmakāya] possesses inseparable properties. Even at a time when defilements prevail, it possesses qualities that are [impossible] to recognize as something disconnected.\(^\text{1163}\) In short, since the qualities and the element are connected in a relation of identity, the term kāya must [refer] to [their] true nature.\(^\text{1164}\) [Thus] the sixth vajra point should be understood according to the Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdesa[sūtra].

[The next passage in the Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā is:]

[Mañjuśrī, the Tathāgata does not engage in conceptualizing or imagining. Still, such effectiveness unfolds without effort in him who neither conceptualizes nor imagines. Thus the seventh vajra point should be understood according to the Tathāgataguṇaunjñānācintyaviśayāvatañāraṇidēśā. Such are, to sum up, the seven vajra points. It should be understood that they are the body of the entire treatise, in the form of collected topics that are the [seven] doors to the [present] teaching.\(^\text{1165}\)]
Mañjuśrī, the Tathāgata does not engage in conceptualizing in general, when chastening disciples, or in imagining anything in particular, such as objects and time. Still, even without [these] concepts, such an effectiveness—[namely] the display of the kāyas of a tathāgata, the sounding of the melody of [his] speech and so forth—does not depend on effort. Thus it unfolds [in him who] is neither conceptualizing nor imagining, without effort and uninterruptedly, as long as space exists.

This [defines] the seventh vajra point or word, which refers to the ultimate [level] of a buddha as an agent of unfolding activity. It should be understood according to the Tathāgataguṇānācintyaviśayāvatāranirdeśasūtra. [According to its title] the sūtra teaches how you enter the inconceivable experiential sphere of the Tathāgata's qualities and wisdom by virtue of the insight gained by hearing[, reflecting on, and meditating upon this sphere].

Such are, to sum up, the seven vajra points. It should be understood that they are the body that summarizes and accumulates all branches of the treatise in the form of collected topics, these collected topics being the seven doors through which you comprehend the [present] teaching in detail.

The Explanation of RGV I.2

Now, in order to teach what connection this treatise (i.e., the Ratnagotravibhāga) has with a canonical source that states these seven topics uninterruptedly in one sūtra, it is said [in RGV I.2]:

These [seven vajra points] should be understood, each together with its own defining characteristics, [as explained] in sequential order in the Dhāraṇīsvararājasūtra—The [first] three in the introductory chapter, And the [remaining] four in the [chapters on] a “Distinction of the Qualities of a Bodhisattva” and on a “[Distinction of the Qualities of a] Buddha.”

[Ngog Loden Sherab's] “together with” (rjes su 'brel ba) is anugata in Sanskrit. Since it can mean “to follow,” “to be similar” (rjes su 'gro ba),
to abide together" (rjes su gnas pa), and "in accordance" (rjes su 'brangs pa), it is [also] possible to translate it as "in accordance." There are three [points] to explaining this stanza: a brief explanation, a detailed presentation, and a summarized meaning. With regard to the first it has been said [in the Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā:]

The [first] three from among these seven vajra points together with the specification of [their] own defining characteristics should be understood, in respective order, from the introductory chapter of the Āryadhāra!lvararajasiitra.1170

[25.7-10] "Together with" (rjes su 'brel ba) [must] be deleted here [in Ngog Loden Sherab's translation] and [the sentence corrected to:] "must be understood in accordance (rjes su 'brangs) with the [introductory] chapter." If we delete "together with" and translate instead: "must be understood in accordance with the introductory chapter," [the result] is in accordance with the Indian text. As to "the specification of [their] own defining characteristics," this sūtra does not specify mere terms of the Three Jewels and so forth; specify, rather, is used because [the text] elucidates the defining characteristics of the actual meaning [of the vajra points]. In this sūtra, the seven meanings [of the vajra points] are taught under the aspect of both truths.

[The next passage in the Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā is:]

After that, the remaining four [vajra points] are from the [chapters on] a "Distinction of the Qualities of a Bodhisattva" and on a "[Distinction of the Qualities of a] Buddha."1171

[25.10-11] After that, [as to] the remaining four, i.e., the [buddha] element, enlightenment, qualities, and activity, it should be understood that one is from the [chapter on] a "Distinction of the Qualities of a Bodhisattva" and that three are from a "Distinction of the Qualities of a Buddha."

The Three Jewels: Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha

[25.11-17] As to the detailed presentation, there are two [stages]: the presentation of the words of the sūtra and an explanation of their meaning. As to the first:1172

In this [Dhāraṇīvararājasūtra] it has been said: "The illustrious one completely awakened to the sameness of all phenomena
and duly set the wheel of teaching (dharmacakra) in motion. [Thus] he had a limitless, well-disciplined crowd of disciples."1173 As for an explanation of this: from these three phrases of the root [text] or treatise you should understand the presentation of [how] you arrive at full knowledge about the gradual arising of the Three Jewels in successive order. This refers to when the teacher [himself] is on the path. From among the remaining four [vajra] points, one (i.e., the buddha element) is the substantial cause and three are the attending causes of that which corresponds to the arising of the Three Jewels.1174 It is in terms of [these four] that you should understand the specification of [how] you arrive at a full knowledge [of the cause corresponding to the arising of the Three Jewels].1175

[25.17–19] In this respect, when abiding on the eighth bodhisattva level, he attained the tenfold power over all phenomena. Therefore he, the illustrious one, who went to the supreme seat of enlightenment, has been called “he who completely awakened to the sameness of all phenomena.”1176

[25.19–26.3] It is said that the illustrious one, having gone to the vajra seat [in Bodhgayā], completely awakened to the sameness of all phenomena. This is said because earlier, [namely,] from the time he abided on the eighth level onward, he was [already] awake to the sameness of all phenomena. This is like saying that he conquered Māra again at the time he abided on Vulture Peak (Grdhṛakūṭa), having [already] conquered Māra before when abiding on the vajra seat. On the eighth [level] he attained the complete realization that phenomenal existence and quiescence are the same. [Moreover, he attained on this level] the excellence of pure [buddha]fields and activity. Thus greatly resembling a buddha, he was called a buddha. “All phenomena” refers to saṁsāra and nirvāṇa, and he completely awakened toward [their] sameness in the form of the one wisdom, which is able to endure that both (saṁsāra and nirvāṇa) lack an own-being. In fact, phenomenal existence is the [state in which] forms appear to the intellect of sentient beings and bodhisattvas up to the seventh level. A mind that does not [experience] an arising in terms of an own-being and [thus] lacks [mentally created] characteristic signs is called natural luminosity. On the eighth level these two (i.e., the intellect of phenomenal existence and luminosity) are realized as being of one taste. As for the mastery of all phenomena, it has been taught as the attainment of the ten powers in passages such as the following from the [chapter] on the eighth level in the Daśabhūmikasūtra:
He who has perfected in such a way body and wisdom [has control over all sentient beings. Moreover,] he attains mastery over his life for having been blessed with a lifespan that [lasts] for a truly inexpressible number of eons.

[26.3–6] There are two supreme “seats” (according to the Tib: essences) of enlightenment: Akaniṣṭha and the vajra seat [in Bodhgaya]. Since the solid Akaniṣṭha is never destroyed, and since the vajra seat is not destroyed even by the three [elements of] fire, water, and earth at the end of an eon, [these two] are very firm and thus called an essence. “Went” is gata in Sanskrit. Since [gata] can also mean “abided,” [the phrase “he went to the supreme seat of enlightenment”] is also understood in the sense of “he abided in the supreme essence of enlightenment.”

[26.6–9] An illustrious one who has completely awakened is called “one who has set the wheel of teaching in proper motion.” [In the Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhya it is stated:] When abiding on the ninth bodhisattva level, he knew well the mental dispositions of all sentient beings, attained the highest perfection [in making use of] the faculties [of sentient beings], and was skilled in destroying in all sentient beings the series of mental imprints of defilements. [Therefore he who has completely awakened is called “one who has set the wheel of teaching (dharmacakra) well in motion”].

[26.9–16] Having attained discriminative awareness on the ninth level, he sets the vast dharmacakra in motion. Knowing well the many forms of all sentient beings’ dispositions and devotion, he turns the [dharm]acakra in accordance with [these] dispositions. Given his highest perfection in making use of sentient beings’ faculties—it being possible that some have strong devotion but inferior faculties, while others have little devotion but sharp faculties—he knows the [range of] objects [experienced by his] disciples. [Thus] he knows now to turn the dharma[acakra] with discriminative awareness. This is for the following reason. He destroys the series of three realms [caused] by karman and defilements, the series of thoughts [occurring] on account of the mental imprints of designations, and the series of mental bodies [brought forth] by the mental imprints of ignorance. Being expert [in employing to this end] these temporary remedies and even the final [one]—the vajra-like samādhi—he is an expert in the fruit of the dharmacakra.
[The next passage in the Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā is:]

[While abiding on the tenth bodhisattva level, he underwent the consecration of a crown prince of the unsurpassable teaching of the Tathāgata, and immediately after that he ceased to be hindered with regard to effortless buddha activity. Therefore, he who set the wheel of teaching in proper motion is called “the one who had a limitless well-disciplined crowd of disciples.”] 1182

[26.16–21] The Buddha, the illustrious one, who set the wheel of teaching in proper motion, is called “the one who had a limitless well-disciplined crowd of disciples.” For when he was abiding on the tenth level, immediately after he had reached this level [in fact], he underwent the consecration of a crown prince of the unsurpassable teaching of the Tathāgata. [Moreover,] immediately after he obtained [this status], his [activity, which was then already] in accordance with buddha activity, became effortless and uninterrupted. How he was consecrated is not mentioned here, but this can be learned from the Daśabhūmikasūtra. For [there] it is said that during the consecration there were innumerable followers who sat on innumerable lotuses, wherefore he led a limitless crowd of disciples on the tenth level.

[The next passage in the Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā is:]

[Again, [the author] teaches this leading a limitless well-disciplined crowd of disciples in the portion of the treatise that immediately follows, namely from “he was together with a great assembly of monks”1183 up to “he was together with an immeasurable assembly of bodhisattvas”;1184 and as to [the meaning of] “those [disciples] who possess such qualities,”1185 he perfectly led [them]1186 in successive order to the enlightenment of śrāvakas and buddhas, wherefore “[the illustrious one] was together with those who possess such qualities.”] 1187

[26.21–27.2] Now, the leading of a limitless crowd of disciples is taught in this treatise immediately after the teaching of [how] you arrive at a full knowledge1188 of the arising of the Three Jewels, namely, from “he was together with a great assembly of monks,” sixty thousand in number, up to “he was together with an immeasurable assembly of bodhisattvas.” For those who have been led to the enlightenment of śrāvakas possess the qual-
ities [described in the passage] from “those who know all” up to “those who penetrate the words of the Tathāgata,” and those who have been led to the enlightenment of buddhas possess the qualities [described in the passage] from “renunciation for the sake of the experiential object of unobstructed omniscience” up to “the unlimited, uninterrupted activity of a bodhisattva.” He dwelt together with [disciples] who possessed such qualities. “Together with” means [their] activity was in accordance [with his].

[The next passage in the Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā is:]

[Then, immediately after the teaching of the praiseworthy qualities of śrāvakas and bodhisattvas, the proper analysis of the qualities of the Buddha Jewel should be understood: based on the excellence of the Buddha’s meditative stabilization, which is inconceivable, he manifested a spacious circular hall [adorned with] an array of jewels and caused the circle of the Tathāgata to assemble in it. They offered various divine substances and poured down clouds of praise.]

[27.2–10] Then, immediately after the teaching of the praiseworthy qualities of śrāvakas and bodhisattvas, the illustrious one taught the Dharma teaching called “the door to renunciation [and] being without hindrances [that opens up] by adopting a bodhisattva’s conduct.” [The following passage from the Dhāraṇīsvararājasūtra starting with:]

At this time the illustrious one entered into a meditative absorption called the samādhi of the Tathāgata that illuminates the experiential objects of a buddha just the way they are emanated. Thereupon, at this time, [he made manifest] through the power of the Buddha—in the upper intermediate space, [that is,] in the desire realm up to the form realm—a spacious circular hall that is the abode of the Buddha, made of the Tathāgata’s roots of virtue.

Up to

And in all world realms with their [respective] four continents, [namely,] all world realms of [the universe called] Huge Thousand, which consists of one thousand to the faculty of three [worlds], huge staircases of this kind occur.
is summarized in the *Ratnagotravibhāgavīyākhyā* in the sentence:] By the excellence of his inconceivable meditative stabilization, the Buddha manifested a spacious circular hall [adorned with] an array of jewels.

[27.10–18] Then the six classes of gods of the desire realm made offerings to, praised, and served the illustrious one together with his retinue. [The illustrious one] then proceeded [together with his retinue] up the staircases to the spacious circular hall. He took his seat on the lion throne, and his retinue sat down on seats appropriate to them. Then the illustrious one entered into the meditative absorption of a samādhi called *play of the Buddha in [a state of] liberation and unhinderedness*. From him, that is, from all the pores of [his] body, emanated light rays surpassing in number the grains of sand of the river Gaṅgā, illuminating the world realms in the ten directions. This light pacified [the suffering of] the lower realms, and from this light the stanzas “[The light of Śākyamuni] by which the force of diligence has been firmly established—without limit and openly” resounded in order to encourage the bodhisattvas. [This light and these stanzas] made [them] understand all buddhafields, and having [thus] encouraged all bodhisattvas, [the light] descended to the crown of the head of the illustrious one.

[27.18–24] Then, from the world realms of the ten directions, bodhisattvas such as *Kusumaśrīgarbha* came to this spacious hall together with their retinues, which surpass in number the grains of sand of ten river Gaṅgās. They poured down clouds of offerings and praises, and sat down on seats that had emanated in their directions. Likewise, an immeasurable assembly of bodhisattvas, which was encouraged by the light, and the four groups, and [other] humans and nonhumans from the [universe called] Huge Thousand, [attracted] by the sounds of clear speech, came up the staircases to the spacious hall and sat down on seats appropriate to them. Even the gods up to Akaniṣṭha [Heaven] assembled, wherefore all this [has been summarized in the *Ratnagotravibhāgavīyākhyā* by the following passage:] “and had the circle of the Tathāgata to assemble in it. They offered various divine substances and poured down clouds of praise. This is how the proper analysis of the qualities of the Buddha Jewel should be understood.”

[The next passage in the *Ratnagotravibhāgavīyākhyā* is:]

After that, the proper analysis of the qualities of the Dharma Jewel should be understood as follows: He [manifested] the appearance of an array of high Dharma seats, emanated light,
and announced the names and qualities of [various] Dharma teachings.\textsuperscript{1204}

[27.24–28.5] After that, the illustrious one became aware of this huge assembly of retinues, and from a circle of hair between [his] eyebrows, light rays called demonstration of the bodhisattva’s strength shone forth, circled seven times around the assembly of bodhisattvas, and descended onto the crowns of their [heads]. Then, as soon as this light touched the bodhisattva *Kusumaśrīgarbha, he got absorbed into a samādhi [called] display of all ornaments. By the power of this [samādhi] the lion throne of [Sākyamuni] appeared in the middle of this hall, many millions\textsuperscript{1205} of palmyra [trees]\textsuperscript{1206} in height and adorned with jewels...and endowed with all manner of ornaments.\textsuperscript{1207} In this [passage] “an array of high Dharma seats” (Skt. udāradharmāsanavyūha) is taught. Then the bodhisattva *Kusumaśrīgarbha spoke the [following] stanza to the illustrious one:

\begin{quote}
Kindly fulfill the needs of sentient beings with [your] sunlight!\textsuperscript{1208}
\end{quote}

[28.5–9] In this and the passage up to “the light was praised, and [the illustrious one was requested to explain the Dharma while still] seated on the lion throne”\textsuperscript{1209} “the praise of light”\textsuperscript{1210} is taught. It is taught [in the Dhānapīśvararājasūtra] that the [illustrious one] remained on the lion throne in order to teach what is endowed with immeasurable qualities—starting with:

Having found [by himself] the liberation of being without hindrances, the illustrious one then focused on planning the bodhisattva’s path, namely the Dharma teachings called the door to renunciation and being without hindrance [entered] by adopting a bodhisattva’s conduct.\textsuperscript{1211}

[This has been summarized in the Ratnagotravibhāgaavyākhyā:] “[The illustrious one] announced the names and qualities of [various] Dharma teachings, and thus the proper analysis of the qualities of the Dharma Jewel should be understood.”

[28.9–13] By the power of the Buddha, the ten bodhisattvas *Ratnayaṣṭi, etc., [entered their respective] samādhis,\textsuperscript{1212} and it is the power resulting from the experiential object [of these samādhis] that is taught next. In view of this and the passage from “Then the bodhisattva *Dharmesvara”\textsuperscript{1213} up to [the conclusion of] the chapter on the assembled “array of ornaments,”\textsuperscript{1214} [it is stated in the Ratnagotravibhāgaavyākhyā:]}
After that the proper analysis of the qualities of the Saṅgha Jewel should be understood as follows: [The Buddha] displayed the mutual power that results from the experiential objects of the samādhis of bodhisattvas and taught a praise of their manifold qualities. 1215

[The next passage in the *Ratnagotravibhāgavatī* is:]

[After that, again, the proper analysis of the qualities of these Three Jewels should be seen in successive order, and this is included in the concluding portion of the introductory chapter. The most excellent prince of the Dharma, [Dhāraṇiśvararāja,] having been fitted out in a buddha-ray initiation with supreme fearlessness and quick-wittedness, taught a praise of the ultimate, which is possessed of the real qualities of a tathāgata, and announced the topics of the supreme teaching of the Mahāyāna. [The illustrious one then] showed how to attain perfect mastery of the Dharma, namely the fruit resulting in [being able] to cause [the Saṅgha] to realize the Mahāyāna.] 1216

[28.13–20] After that, the illustrious one saw the assemblies of the retinues of the [ten] bodhisattvas as large receptacles of the Dharma, and since the most excellent prince [of the Dharma], Dhāraṇiśvararāja, was not afraid, a light ray called *quick-wittedness* emanated from the top of the teacher's head, circled seven times around the maṇḍala of retinues, then a hundred times around the body of Dhāraṇiśvararāja, and descended onto the crown of his [head]. This is [referred to in the *Ratna-gotravibhāgavatī* with the words] “he was initiated by a buddha ray.” Immediately after this light had touched the bodhisattva Dhāraṇiśvararāja, through [this] power of the Buddha, he outshone by a hundred times the bodies, light, and lion thrones of the retinues. [Having received this blessing] he rose, 1217 put on his upper wear, made offerings in the form of an umbrella the size of the three-thousand-world [universe] in width, flowers, cymbals, and so forth, praised the light ray, and pronounced [the following stanzas]:

[28.20–23] Being touched by the light of the leader of men,
I remember any [virtue] attained before,
[And my] intellectual brilliance, quick-wittedness, and retentive power
Exceeds [those of others] by many thousands.
My body is healthy and my mind pure,
My intellect happy and balanced.
On top of that, a buddha's full omniscience
And quick-wittedness have entered my body.\textsuperscript{1218}

[28.23–24] Up to these stanzas [corresponds to] “the most excellent prince of the Dharma was fitted out with supreme fearlessness and quick-wittedness in a buddha-ray initiation” [in the Ratnagotravibhāgavākyākhyā].

[28.24–29.1] From:

Since it is difficult to gain the great power of a buddha,
Weak ones cannot take delight [in it].
The Buddha having granted it for the sake of all sentient beings,
I request it from the Buddha.\textsuperscript{1219}

up to

Kindly explain the experiential objects of the leaders.\textsuperscript{1220}

[corresponds to] “Based on the attainment of quick-wittedness, he taught a praise of the ultimate, which is possessed of the real qualities of a tathāgata” [in the Ratnagotravibhāgavākyākhyā].

[29.1–3] From “After the bodhisattva Dhāranīśvararāja had praised the illustrious one with these stanzas, he said the following to the illustrious one:”\textsuperscript{1221} up to “[It is the ornament of bodhisattvas that the] accomplishment of work does not torment [them]”\textsuperscript{1222} [corresponds to] “and he announced the topics of the supreme teaching of the Mahāyāna” [in the Ratnagotravibhāgavākyākhyā].

[29.3–7] In view of [the passage] “illustrious one, why does a bodhisattva [first] conquer Māra and foes and rid himself of doubt, and [only] then [enter into the sphere of a tathāgata]?”\textsuperscript{1223} up to “I will explain to you how one swiftly attains perfect mastery of the Dharma”\textsuperscript{1224} [the following is stated in the Ratnagotravibhāgavākyākhyā:] “[The illustrious one then] showed [him] how to attain perfect mastery of the Dharma, namely the fruit resulting in [being able] to cause [the Saṅgha] to realize the [Mahāyāna]. Thus the proper analysis of the unsurpassable qualities of these Three Jewels should be viewed in sequential order, and this is included in the concluding portion of the introductory chapter.”
[29.7–12] By the power of the Buddha, Dhāraṇīśvararāja surpassed his own kind and also others a hundred times over, and having attained the height of quick-wittedness, he taught a praise of the Buddha, teaching [therein] his unsurpassable qualities. He announced the topics, wherefore the unsurpassable qualities of the Dharma were taught. He taught the fruit resulting in [being able] to cause [the Saṅgha] to realize the [Mahāyāna], wherefore the unsurpassable qualities of the Saṅgha were taught. As to these three teachings of qualities, since they are given immediately after the introductory chapter, titled "Array of Ornaments," it should be known that they are included in the concluding portion [of this chapter]. It goes up to "Then the bodhisattva Dhāraṇīśvararāja said to the illustrious one: "Well so."")

**Buddha Nature and Its Purification through the Three Dharmaśekras**

[29.12–14] [The *Ratnagotrāvibhāgavīkhyā* further says:]

Then, after the introductory chapter of the *[Dhāraṇīśvara­rāja]*ūtra, the buddha element is elucidated by way of a description of the application of sixty purifying factors to this [element], the process of purification making sense [only] if the object to be purified possesses [buddha] qualities.

[29.15–18] Generally, the simple expression *cleansing properties* does not pervade (i.e., coincide with the domain covered by) the expression *properties to be cleansed*, just as no [such pervasion] is ascertained when expressing gold by the term *fibroferrite*. On the other hand, if a knowledgeable [person] looks closely, he is able to ascertain, "There is a fruit." This is explained in [*Pramāṇavārttika* I.7]:

The arising of the fruit (i.e., effect), [a process] that is inferred From the complete cause [as being a logical reason], Is described as the nature (svabhāva) [of this cause], Since [this fruition] does not depend on other things.

[29.18–25] Given such [a relationship], as expressed in the example, [we must concede that] in general the object to be purified, or the fruit, is endowed with qualities[, which means] "is connected with qualities." In the same way, Vinayadeva explains *connection* ('brel pa) in [his] *Hevajra* commentary as a synonym of "being endowed" (ldan pa), "contact" (phrad pa), and "being linked" (sbyor ba). This needs to be understood, even
though it is explained here, in the ten presentations [of the element], as “being endowed” (ldan pa). This is because it is proper to say that the cause that gives rise to a fruit that is pure for having been cleansed is a cleansing [factor], if such an object or fruit is endowed and [thus] connected with qualities. It is like an expert prospector sifting the earth [for] gold, or an alchemist cleansing a precious vaiśūrya stone. The meaning is such. It has been said: “The buddhas, who think in terms of many eons, see that when bodhisattvas, great beings, apply these sixty factors [of cleansing] for the sake of all sentient beings, [the result] is beneficial.” And: “Whatever has been investigated with great insight, I, too, have investigated [it].”

[29.25–30.7] In this way, the learned masters, the buddhas, caused the learned students, the bodhisattvas, to exert themselves in [applying] the sixty factors and strung the precious threefold training on the thread of remembrance. [Thus] they put on the [four] ornaments of the body of intellect, seized the eight great lamps of recollection, and so forth, and produced the power of sixteenfold great compassion, and as they sift the great earth of sentient beings and perform the thirty-two acts1234 of cleansing some of the stones [which stand for] sentient beings, it is certain that these sentient beings [will be found to] possess [such] a nature that special marvelous qualities are bound to come forth. Since that nature is the cause that brings forth the qualities, it is given the name element. Since this is for the sake of all sentient beings, and not only for one type of earth, ground, or [precious] stone—of sentient beings—there are no sentient beings with a definite cut-off potential. This elucidates the meaning of [the sentence]: “It is not the case that [arhats] fall [into the extreme of] peace and cannot rise [from it any more].”

[30.7–9] [Now, as to the reason why] gold and the [buddha] element of sentient beings [are taken to be] similar in the Daśabhūmikasūtra, [the Ratnagotravibhāgavīkhyā continues:]

This motive having been taken up [as the subject matter],1235 again a particular example, namely the [purification] process1236 of gold, is used for the ten bodhisattva levels.1237

[30.9–14] [In the Daśabhūmikasūtra] it is stated:1238

For example, O sons of the victorious ones, gold that is heated in fire by a skilled [gold]smith1239 to a certain extent becomes to that same extent thoroughly refined,1240 completely pure, and pliable [for the purpose of decorations and ornaments].1241 Likewise, O sons of the victorious ones, the extent to which a bodhisattva1242
makes offerings to the buddhas and illustrious ones, makes efforts with regard to the development of sentient beings, and “is in a state of having absorbed” the purifying factors of the [ten] levels to that same extent the roots of his virtues, which are dedicated to omniscience, will make [him] [even more] thoroughly refined, completely pure, and pliable at will.

Likewise in [the chapter on] the second level [in the Daśabhūmikasūtra] it is stated:

O sons of the victorious ones, when this gold is put into fibroferrite, it will be even more freed from all impurities.

Also on the third level and higher levels, it is said [to be cleaned] by other specific acts of purification each in turn. [In the Ratnagotra-vibhāgavyākhyā it is further stated:]

In this sūtra, too, immediately after the presentation of the activity of a tathāgata, the example of an impure vaiḍūrya stone is given.

It has been taught in this same Dhāraṇīśvararājjasūtra using the example of the vaiḍūrya gem. The example of an impure vaiḍūrya gem is given immediately after the presentation of the thirty-two-[fold] activity of a tathāgata, which is [related to] the thirty-two qualities of dissociation, such as the [ten] strengths. It has been taught starting with “Son of a noble family, it is like this.” With regard to the stages of unfolding activity, everything—the [entire] activity of speech, all turnings of dharmacakras—have been summarized and taught as the threefold [dharma]cakra. Since it (i.e., the dharmacakra) is a great teaching, the foundation of these [turnings] must be spread out. [The sentence:] “[A tathāgata] has completely awakened [to all phenomena]” in the commentary on the Jewel of the Buddha, [means:] “after he has come to know reality as it is with the non-conceptual wisdom of a buddha.”

The heap of vaiḍūrya gems [refers to] all the [buddha] elements of sentient beings, inasmuch as it is stated [in the Ratnagotra-vibhāgavyākhyā on I.8]:

“Of the sentient beings” means “[sentient beings] who are among those who have committed themselves [to one of the
three yānas], those have not committed themselves [to one of the	hree yānas], or those who have committed themselves to some­thing wrong. 1252

[30.23–31.1] The stains of all the [buddha] elements of sentient beings from among those not committed or those committed to the right [path] are cleansed by the [teachings of] the dharmacakra. The stains—the hindrances of defilements among ordinary persons, the hindrances of the knowable among the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, both these hindrances that bodhisattvas as ordinary persons may [still] have, and the hindrances of any remaining [mental] imprints that noble ones still have after subdu­ing the rough form of both hindrances—all these hindrances are cleansed.

[31.1–5] The path, in as far as it is a remedy against the stains, has been taught in the [Abhidharma] samuccaya:

What is the truth of the path? The path by which you thor­oughly come to understand [the truth of] suffering, abandon origination, actualize cessation, and meditate on the path—these are, in short, the defining characteristics of the path. The path is fivefold: the path of accumulation, the path of prepara­tion, the path of seeing, the path of meditation, and the path of completion. 1253

[31.5–7] In the Abhisamayālaṃkāra these have been taught as the paths con­ducing to liberation, to penetration, to seeing, to meditation, and to no more learning. The purifying paths [are reflected in] five divisions in each of the three yānas.

[31.7–19] As for the stages of bodhisattvas established on the path, they have been taught in the presentation of the ten bodhisattva levels1254 [in the twentieth chapter] of the Avatarāksa[śūtra]: 1255

O sons of the victorious one, since this bodhisattva potential, as it is called, extends as far as the dharmadhātu and reaches the limits of space, it is vast. Bodhisattvas abiding in it are born into the [great] family (rīgs)1256 of the past, future, and present buddhas. O sons of the victorious ones, if you ask what things [the buddhas] thought bodhisattvas should strive for and [what they] proclaimed, these are, O sons of the victorious ones, the ten bodhisattva levels. It is what past, present, and future buddhas taught, teach, and will teach. If you ask which ten,
they are: the bodhisattva level of generating [bodhi] citta for the first time, the bodhisattva level of the beginner, the bodhisattva level of yoga conduct, the bodhisattva level of growing up, the bodhisattva level of sublime preparation, the bodhisattva level of sublime resolution, the irreversible bodhisattva level, the bodhisattva level of youthfulness, the bodhisattva level of the regent, and the bodhisattva level of consecration.

[31.19–20] [Thus] it is taught that the ten [types of] bodhisattvas abide in the potential (or belong to the [buddha] family). As for the potential in this [passage], it has been taught in the Lankāvatārasūtra.

[31.20–23] Furthermore, Mahāmati, there are five potentials leading to [different] realizations. Which five? They are: the potential leading to the realization of the Śrāvakayāna, the potential leading to the realization of the Pratyekabuddhayāna, the potential leading to the realization of the Tathāgatayāna, the potential of not being committed to any one [of the three], and the fifth, the potential of being without a potential.

[31.23–32.5] Mahāmati, how should you thoroughly come to understand the potential that leads to the realization of the Śrāvakayāna? Somebody whose body hairs stand on end when realization on the basis of a thorough knowledge of the skandhas, dhātus, ayatanas, and specific and general characteristics is being taught, whose mind takes immediate interest in the knowledge [automatically obtained] by becoming familiar with defining characteristics, but is not [interested in] becoming familiar with the defining characteristic of being inseparable from dependent arising—such a person, Mahāmati, has the potential that leads to the realization of the Śrāvakayāna. Someone who has, based on [his] view of the realization of the Śrāvakayāna, totally abandoned the rising (i.e., active) defilements on the sixth and fifth levels, [but] not the defilements of the mental imprints, [namely,] someone who is [still] subject to inconceivable transmigration truly utters the lion roar: “My [future] rebirth is uprooted, [my] morality (brahmacarya) established. I have done what has to be done.” Having said this and the like, he becomes familiar with the fact that persons lack a [true] self, to the point where, as a consequence, he becomes someone whose mind [embraces] nirvāṇa.
[32.5–9] Others, Mahāmati, thoroughly understand existence in terms of a self, a sentient being, a vital life force, a nourisher, a noble being, and an individual, and thus seek nirvāṇa [in them]. Others again, Mahāmati, seeing that all phenomena depend on causes, are ones whose mind [may] take [that] to be nirvāṇa. [But] since they do not see the selflessness of phenomena, they do not attain liberation, Mahāmati. Mahāmati, such a mind, which takes nonemancipation as emancipation, belongs to those who have the potential that leads to the realization of the Śrāvakayāna and [the potential of] tirthikas. Here, Mahāmati, you must make an effort in order to [help them] overcome [their] unsound views.

[32.9–14] Then, Mahāmati, a person possessing the potential that leads to the realization of the Pratyekabuddhayāna is somebody whose body hairs stand on end, rejoicing with tears [in his eyes], when realization only for oneself is being taught. When the obstinate clinging to entities owing to the causal condition of not socializing, the being confounded by the manifold variety of his own body’s magical power and the display of a magical partition [of his body] into two [parts] are pointed out, [such a person] is pleased. Knowing that he has a potential that leads to the realization of the Pratyekabuddhayāna, he should engage in discourse that is in keeping with the realization of the Pratyekabuddhayāna. This, Mahāmati, is the defining characteristic of somebody with the potential that leads to the realization of the Pratyekabuddhayāna.

[32.14–21] Then, Mahāmati, there is the threefold potential that leads to the realization of the Tathāgatayāna. This is [1] the potential that leads to the realization of phenomena, which by their nature lack an own-being, [2] the potential that leads to the noble ones’ realization, which [is attained] by themselves individually in the form of thorough understanding, and [3] the potential that leads to the realization of the vastness of outer buddhafields. Mahāmati, if somebody is not afraid, frightened, or terrified when any of these three is being taught, when the inconceivable notion that [everything in the world merely consists] of the appearances of his own mind—body, ālaya[vijñāna], property, and abode—is being taught, he should be known as one who possesses the potential that leads to the realization of the Tathāgatayāna. This, Mahāmati, is the defin-
ing characteristic of someone with the potential leading to the realization of the Tathāgatayāna.

[32.21–25] Mahāmati, when these three are being taught, somebody with the [uncertain] potential of not being committed should be engaged there, wherever his mind tends. Mahāmati, such a tapping of the potential is the level of purification. This tapping needs to be done in order to proceed to the level of no more appearance. Having been cleansed of the [mental] imprints of his own defilements in his individual ālayavijñāna, a śrāvaka will see the selflessness of phenomena and obtain as a consequence the abode of the bliss of samādhi, and finally the embodiment of a victorious one (i.e., the dharma-kāya).

[32.25–33.2] Thus the sources of the [description of the] potential as taught in the Avatāṃsaka[śūtra] and the explanation of the subdivisions of the potential in the Lāṅkāvatārasūtra have been presented. Now they will be explained a little [more]. As to [the expression] “this bodhisattva potential,” it is a buddha potential, given that it is a cause similar [to the fruit]. For roughly speaking, a bodhisattva is the cause—the substantial [cause]—of a buddha, as has been said in the Madhyamakāvatāra [I.1b]:

Buddhas were born from bodhisattvas.

[33.2–6] Well then, even though the grain of a lungtang (tree?) is [taken to be] the seed of a lungtang trunk, when carefully analyzed, you come to know that it is [only] the kernel inside of it that is the seed of the trunk. Likewise, if carefully analyzed, it is the essence of a bodhisattva’s mind-stream that is the potential. If you ask how so, [the answer is that] this very essence functions as the seed of the buddha properties, wherefore it is called dharma-dhatu (lit., source of the [buddha] properties). As has been said in the Dharmadhātustotra [stanza 17]:

I maintain that, as a seed, this [buddha] element is itself the support of all [buddha] properties (dharma).

[33.6–8] As to “extends as far as the [dharma-dhatu],” [it means that] the part that [consists of] seeds delimits the [buddha] potential from other knowable objects. If you wonder whether only bodhisattvas have [such seeds], this is explained [in RGV I.16b–d]:

...
[The wisdom that knows] the extent [of the dharmadhatu] (yāvadbhāvikatā) results from the fact that they see [with their intelligence, which realizes the limits of the knowable], that the true nature of omniscience exists in all sentient beings.

[33.8–13] Since [this wisdom] accordingly exists in all sentient beings, it is vast and broad, reaching the limits of space. It is the seed of the dharmakāya, in the same way as the sprout that emerges from the kernel becomes the potential [bringing forth] the trunk. In the Dharmadhātustotra [66–68] it is said:

The generosity [that involves] undergoing various hardships,
The discipline [of] gathering [wholesome karman] for the sake of sentient beings,
And the patience that benefits others—
I maintain that by these [three] the [buddha] element is fortified.

Diligence with regard to all [positive] properties,
Applying the mind to meditation,
And permanently relying on insight—
These, too, cause enlightenment to blossom.

Insight together with skillful means,
Very pure aspiration,
And wisdom well established in strength
Are four qualities (dharmas) that strengthen the [buddha] element.

[33.13–15] Similarly, since the root of wholesome deeds that are in accordance with the ten perfections is fortified, that which has been fortified is called the fortified or appropriated potential.

[33.15–16] With regard to this, too, it has been stated in the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra:

Mahāmati, the potential of the noble ones is divided into three types, according to the distinction made among śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and buddhas.

[33.16–21] Likewise, the three potentials, each of which are certain, and the uncertain potential, which changes depending on which conditions are met, are the four potentials of the noble ones. To teach being without a
potential [means to be] without a fortified potential. This was not made clear in the previous words [quoted from the *Ḷaṅkāvatārasūtra*]. You may wonder why being without a fortified potential is [still] taken as a potential. [The reason] is not that the absence of a fortified potential is itself called a potential. It is rather that not everyone possesses a fortified potential [just] because everybody has a natural potential. Since [anyone] possessing a mind has a natural potential, he is [also] spoken of in these terms, in the same way as a noble being is meant by “tonsured” (i.e., a monk). 1288 Some Yogācāras take the expression “without a potential” literally.

[33.21–24] Here, in the teachings in the *Dharmadhūtustotra* on the strengthening of the potential, the similarity of a person's skandhas, sense faculties, and so forth—their being made similar to the Buddha himself—is the potential, and therefore they (i.e., the skandhas, etc.) are the cause of [such a] potential at that time. When, by this similarity, wholesome deeds are performed naturally or automatically, this is a sign of the potential. The cause is illustrated by the fruit, as has been stated in, among other places, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*:

In this regard, the sign of the potential of the bodhisattva's perfection of generosity is that the bodhisattva naturally rejoices in generosity. 1291

[33.25–34.7] Passages such as “[Somebody whose] body hair stands on end when the realization of skandhas, *d̄hāras*, *āyatanas*, and specific and general characteristics is being taught” teach the sign of a potential, as in the case of the potential of generosity and so forth. As to “internalization [based on] thorough knowledge,” it is a name for realization. Based on the potential, “its mind takes immediate interest in the knowledge [automatically obtained] by becoming familiar with defining characteristics,” 1292 and this is the cause of realization. Since both types of those with a Hinayāna potential exhibit such a [cause], [but] since those whose minds take immediate interest in becoming familiar with the defining characteristic of being inseparable from dependent arising are exclusively endowed with the pratyekabuddha [potential], 1293 it has been said that [śrāvakas] are not [similarly interested] and are cut off from it. By [internalizing] the view of realization on the Śrāvakayāna, they abandon the causes of manifest defilements at the time of fruition [but] not [their] mental imprints. By abandoning the causes for manifest [defilements], they have abandoned transmigration and rebirth following [normal] death. Knowing this directly, they utter the lion roar, utilizing the strength that has come from
the right knowledge that [their] existence and so forth are destroyed. The main point along the path on which you achieve this is the knowledge that a person lacks an own [independent] self.

[34.7–14] Not having abandoned mental imprints, they obtain a mental body at the time of “no remainder” but are [still] subject to inconceivable transmigration. As to the explanation of “on the sixth and fifth level,” bodhisattvas also have [recourse to] the path, [or] potential, of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas. On the fifth [level] they reverse [something that] is similar to the defilements to be abandoned by śrāvakas through their knowledge of truth. On the sixth [level] they reverse [something that] is similar to what must be abandoned by pratyekabuddhas through their knowledge of dependent arising. This is the reversal, in the [mind]stream of bodhisattvas, of thoughts that are metaphorically called defilements, but in reality there are no [more] real defilements from the first bodhisattva level onward. Ārya Vimuktiṣena has said in this regard that [this level] is the śrāvakas’ and pratyekabuddhas’ perfection of abandonment and realization. From the seventh level onward, they outshine by the strength of [their] mind the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas.

[34.14–18] Although the teaching of the Buddha has many [different] presentations of nirvāṇa, [and] even if it is the lowest among these, the nirvāṇa of the śrāvakas, [attained when] defilements and a rebirth following [normal] death are reversed by meditating on the lack of an [independent] self in a person, it is [still] known by its main difference vis-à-vis outsiders, [such as the] Śāṅkhya, who claim the existence of a self, and therefore [can still] be taken to be liberation. As for the Vaiśēṣikas,1294 they argue along the lines that liberation [is achieved] by eliminating the qualities of the personal self—earth and the like—so they are not liberated. In our own judgment, however, this is but the extinction of what is merely imputed.

[34.18–24] Again, others assert ([and this is reinforced] by their having attained the actual base of meditation) that once attachment is abandoned, the actual base of successively higher [states] is attained. In view of that, outsiders (i.e., non-Buddhists) who [become] free from attachment to the corresponding lower [states] see that all entities [that cause] suffering on the lower levels depend on the causes of attachment on these levels. Reversing this attachment through meditation, they enter a state of mind in which they claim [to have attained] nirvāṇa. Some in particular become proud, thinking that they are arhats for having reversed attachment with the help of the actual base of meditation. Seeing that they connect with another existence at the moment of death, they come to know that they are not arhats
and give rise to the mistaken view that others are not arhats either. [Thus] it is explained in the Bsam gtan pa'i dpe mkhyud kyi mdo. Therefore it is said that śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and outsiders have not [attained] supreme liberation since they do not see the selflessness of phenomena.

[34.24–35.1] The signs of the pratyekabuddha potential are that when the discourses of this vehicle are explained, [their body] hair stands on end and so forth. As for the path, it is taught [in the Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛttiḥ Sphuṭārtha II.8] by Ācārya Haribhadra:

On the path of the pratyekabuddhas, there is simple meditation on the truth as it has been explained, and having meditated on entities as they really are, [that is,] arising in dependence....

[35.1–3] Not having completely realized the selflessness of phenomena, they obstinately cling to entities. Therefore it is not the nirvāṇa of the supreme. It has been said in many sūtras, however, that their magical clairvoyance and so forth is far superior to the clairvoyance of the śrāvakas.

[35.3–4] There is [a distinction] among three potentials of the Tathāgatayāna in the larger [version] of the [Lankavatāra]sūtra, but there is a distinction among four potentials in the [version with] eight chapters:

The potential leading to the realization of naturally [established?] phenomena, [the potential leading to the realization of phenomena that lack an own-being]....

[35.4–7] This is no doubt correct. We can postulate that the *Cittamātrikas, who say that [mind] is established in terms of its nature or own-being—and, according to Maitripa, the Sautrāntikas, too—have a realization superior to the śrāvakas. As to the realization that phenomena lack an own-being, it starts from the Mahāyāna path of seeing. Mādhyamikas are the ones with a potential for this [realization].

[35.7–8] Here in [RGV II.7] it is stated:

[The cause of the separation from the two hindrances is again the two types of wisdom,] which are taken to be nonconceptual wisdom and the one obtained after that.

[35.8–10] With regard to this wisdom obtained after [meditation], it is stated [in RGV II.19a–20a]:

[Buddhahood is always the cause of seeing visible objects not made from elements, purely hearing the good discourses, smelling the pure scent of the Tathāgata’s discipline, tasting the flavor of the right Dharma of the great noble ones, and experiencing the bliss of touching meditative stabilization.

[35.10–16] Likewise, the five sense faculties, collected together within the mental faculty of a bodhisattva, exhibit appearances with particular forms. With the manifestation of a few, many, or limitless buddhafields, which are characterized by such particular appearances, the two accumulations are brought to completion, and this is the realization of exalted outer buddhafields. Since [this] depends on that which precedes it, [namely,] the direct realization of buddha nature—which is the nonconceptual wisdom free from mental fabrication—the thorough understanding or generation of [the bodhisattva’s] own realization, it is expressed by the term attained after [meditation]. In the same way as the two stages of training (the perfection of wisdom and skillful means) emerge during the middle dharma-cakra, the two stages of nonconceptual [wisdom] and [wisdom] obtained after that have been explained in the last dharma-cakra as well. These were the explanations of the certain potentials.

[35.16–17] As for the uncertain one, even though it is certain with regard to the potential of the noble ones in general, it is not certain with respect to any of the three yānas. As is said in the Mahāyānaśrālāmākāra [XI.55ab]:

There are two kinds of uncertain śrāvakas: those who have seen the meaning of [their own] yāna and those who have not.

[35.17–19] In the same way, somebody with an uncertain potential does not generate the bodhicitta of aspiration, and thus is said to be a śrāvaka who is uncertain, in that he acts like a śrāvaka, meditating on the noble truths and so forth, even though he is a bodhisattva.

[35.19–25] Next, the ten states, or conditions, of bodhisattvas from the Avatāmsakaśūtra will be explained.

1. As to generating [bodhi]citta for the first time, it involves seeing the Tathāgata’s marvelous characteristics, seeing his miracles, seeing sentient beings’ suffering, and seeing (i.e., reading) the scriptures. The generation of bodhicitta for the first time is based on whatever is suitable. It is the generation of [bodhi]citta that is full of aspiration. As a result of this generation of [bodhi]citta for the first time, the seed of the ten strengths is
generated. You rejoice [in it] by expressing the benefit of, among other things, the superior generation of [bodhi]citta by honoring the Buddha, and exert yourself with regard to the practice of [bodhi]citta. As has been said in [*Bodhicaryāvatāra* V.97]:

The deeds of a bodhisattva may be vast,
But first you must purify your mind.\(^{1305}\)

\[35.25-36.3\] 2. With regard to the bodhisattva [level] of the beginner, Ācārya Haribhadra has stated [in his *Abhisamayālāṃkāravṛttiḥ Sphuṭārtha* I.22]:

Similarly, in order for a bodhisattva to generate bodhicitta for the first time and so forth, and in order for him to generate the bodhicitta of exertion at the proper time and practice the Dharma implied by it....\(^{1306}\)

Accordingly, you learn the instructions when you are in a state of generating the bodhicitta of aspiration. The way to learn [them] is to listen when they are first read out. After that you learn to meditate in an isolated place, and having attained [a stable] meditation, [you learn how to become] expert in teaching the Dharma to others.

\[36.3-6\] 3. The bodhisattvas whose practice is yoga\(^{1307}\) abide on [the level of] the third generation of [bodhi]citta. It has been said that they meditate [according to] many [practices], such as the presence of mindfulness (Skt. *smṛtyupasthāna*). Accordingly, they exert themselves with regard to the yoga of the two types of selflessness, from “impermanence” up to “without action.” By virtue of this, eyes that do not depend on other [factors] arise, together with clairvoyance.

\[36.6-9\] 4. “[The bodhisattva level of] growing up” is also called having been born in an existence with changed conditions. Jāta\(^{308}\) in Sanskrit [means] having been born into a family [of good ancestry]. Thus, having attained a [new] birth in a form [that reflects your] fully matured knowledgeable faith in such things as the Three Jewels, deeds, and fruit, as [taught] in the discourses of the Buddha, you acquire [the ability] to listen to the Dharma from the buddhas of the three times. Abiding on the great path of accumulation, you can listen to the Dharma directly from a tathāgata.

\[36.9-12\] 5. [A bodhisattva on the level of] sublime preparation abides, during the fourth generation of [bodhi]citta, on the part [of the path characterized by] penetration. In [*the Abhisamayālāṃkārā* IV.35ab] it has been stated:
The observed object of [different] types of heat\textsuperscript{1309} are here praised as being all sentient beings.\textsuperscript{1310}

Accordingly, whatever [practice] you begin upon attaining penetration, it is connected with the benefit of sentient beings. You ascertain that sentient beings, buddhafields, and so forth are immeasurable.

[36.12–16] 6. The bodhisattva [on the level of] sublime resolution has become certain by virtue of his very stable resolution with regard to the Three Jewels and so forth, and attains the state of patience on the level of being in partial concordance with penetration.\textsuperscript{1311} For it has been said [in the Abhisamayālāṃkāra V.3]:

Unsurpassably perfecting the properties of threefold omniscience
Without ever abandoning the benefit of sentient beings is called stability.\textsuperscript{1312}

This is the state of the fourth generation of [bodhi]citta. Since it has [also] been expressed as “comprehending the ten aspects, [namely,] signlessness and so forth,” it should be referred to as generating perseverance in not being afraid of emptiness.

[36.16–18] 7. The bodhisattva on the irreversible [level] has attained the first [bodhisattva] level, [on which] he does not retreat from knowledgeable [faith] in the Three Jewels and his own level, as has been stated in the Prajñāpāramitāratnakūśa [gāthā] [XVII.7b]:

...always free from doubts about their own level, like Mount Meru....\textsuperscript{1313}

This [accounts for] the first level up to the seventh.

[36.18–20] 8. The bodhisattva [on the level of] the youthfulness abides on the eighth level. Being faultless, he is called youthful. As to fault, it [has the meaning of] defect, and [the bodhisattva on this level is called youthful] because he does not have any [faults] or [their] roots. The buddhas and illustrious ones instruct them by means of sublime [buddha]fields.

[36.20–22] 9. The bodhisattva [on the level of] a regent abides on the ninth level, since in the same way as a regent knows the activities of a king, [the bodhisattva on this level] is an expert with regard to the activities of a buddha, [such as] the preaching of the Dharma.

[36.22–24] 10. The bodhisattva [on the level of] consecration abides on the tenth level and has attained [the ability to perform] the innumerable
deeds of a buddha. On the basis of these [points], the ten bodhisattva levels [of the *Avatamsakasūtra*] have been explained.

[36.24–37.1] Now the way the buddha potential is purified by the three [dharma]cakras will be explained. Among the three *yānas*, even those who have obtained the four fruits on the *Śrāvakayāna* differ considerably in terms of qualities. Although they have [all] attained arhat[ship], there are many differences [among them]: [one] is with ornaments and [another] without; the body [of one] is frail and [that of another] is not. The situation is similar with regard to the pratyekabuddhas.

[37.1–6] Since bodhisattvas below the seventh level have many different faculties, there are many potentials functioning as their causes, and this is what is called the fortified potential. Although the natural potential has, among others, fortified and nonfortified [and] pure and impure [forms], these are, in terms of their nature, not very different, inasmuch as [the natural potential] has been taught as being of the nature of suchness, which is not different in buddhas and any sentient being. Therefore it has been said in the *Śrīmālādevīsūtra* [221b] that whoever has no doubts [that what is covered by the extremity of the sheath of all defilements is] buddha nature also has no doubts about the dharmaṃkāya of the buddhas. Thus they are not different, and since the fundamental substantial cause of a buddha is buddha nature alone, this latter must be purified. Toward that end the limitless activity of the light and emanations of the buddhas purifies the [buddha] element of sentient beings.

[37.6–8] All of these three stages, which have been taught by way of the example of refining a *vaiḍūrya* gem in the *Dhāranīśvararājasūtra*, are the purification by means of the teaching [wheels] (dharmaṃcakra) of the noble one, which have not been set in motion before by humans or gods. With regard to the example, [the *Dhāraniśvararājasūtra* (as quoted in the Ratnagotrabhiṣṭa-vibhāga-viśuddhi)] states:

[37.8–13] Son of noble family, take an expert jeweler who knows how to refine jewels well. He extracts impure jewels from a mine, washes them in salty acidic water, and polishes them with a black haircloth. But he does not cease his efforts there. After that he washes them in a sharp gravy and polishes them with a woolen blanket. But he does not cease his efforts there. After that he washes them in a medicinal liquid and polishes them with a finely woven cotton cloth. [Thus] polished and rid of impure substances, [such a gem] is called a precious *vaiḍūrya* stone.
[37.13–16] The three stages of purifying the coarse, middle, and subtle stains is an example of the purification by way of the three turnings [of the dharmacakra]. When a specialist in the worldly sense analyzes an impure precious gem, he [finds that] it is worth purifying. The meaning [illustrated] is the fortified potential. [But] a specialist in the worldly sense does not know their [i.e., sentient beings'] potential, and it is [rather] the ability to purify by the power of meditative concentration that [serves as] an example for the naturally present potential. In [Bhavya's] Prajñāpradipa it is stated:

[37.16–20] Moreover, some think the following: “Since it has been said in the scriptures: 'In a tree or a trunk of a tree there are various elements,' [you are also entitled to say that] hotness exists in water. Therefore this is not a [proper] example.” [Answer:] With regard to this, [a magician] who possesses magical powers or has gained control over sentient beings [may say:] “May there be riches, gold, silver, and so forth wherever there is grass, chaff, cow dung, and so forth.” Magically empowered by this [declaration], [the grass and the rest] are [all transformed] in a like manner. [This also] permitted with regard to a tree, it has been said: “There are various elements in a tree and in the trunk of a tree.”

[37.20–24] Such an ability to transform chaff into gold by the power of meditation is not a generally accepted way that causal relation works. Rather, when the power of meditation is involved, it is only the spatial element of the chaff that can be transformed into gold by this power, so that it is not a mutual transformation of an own-being of the two elements. The spatial element was used by the illustrious one as a simile of the naturally present [buddha] potential. Since it is obvious that in a generally accepted valid cognition, absolute darkness does not arise from a flame, it is not possible to claim [such and incur the undesired consequence in Madhyamakāvatāra VI.14b]:

Then absolute darkness arises even from a flame.

[37.24–38.1] Likewise, you can certainly distinguish between objects that can be [produced by] the magical power of meditation and not, for if it were not so, the power of the buddhas' meditation would transform all sentient beings into buddhas in one moment, as is said in the Tarkajvālā (that is, Madhyamakahṛdaya X.3ab):
If it could be achieved by the power of [Śākyamuni], all sentient beings would have passed into nirvāṇa.1321

[38.1–5] When an individual person has accepted the moral precepts and [first] established himself as a lay practitioner, [then] as a novice monk, and [then as] a [fully ordained] monk, it is not certain that this monk has obtained the fruit of a stream-enterer and so forth, even though it is said that entering into the teaching is completed when the upasampādana vows of a monk1322 have been taken. Likewise, even though the three dharma-cakras are set in motion, the three stages, namely, the nirvāṇa of the Hinayāna, the attainment of the Mahāyāna levels of the nobles ones, and the attainment of the eighth [bodhisattva] level, have set temporary limits. In this regard, [the following is the presentation of] the first stage of purification [in the Ratnagotravibhāga-vyākhyā]:

[38.5–8] Son of a noble family, a tathāgata, too, knows the unpurified element of sentient beings and creates disgust in those who rejoice in saṃsāra with the alarming teaching of impermanence, suffering, no-self, and impurity. [In such a way] he causes them to enter the noble discipline of the Dharma.1323

[38.8–11] Thus it is stated [in the Dhamanīśvararājasūtra (as quoted in the Ratnagotravibhāga-vyākhyā)]. A tathāgata is like a jeweler because he knows the [buddha] element of sentient beings precisely and completely. This is in accordance with:

Then, as to the śrāvakas, he wishes to know all [of them]—because of his continuous engagement—as though he wanted, for example, to burn everything with fire, but it is not that he knows them instantaneously.1324

So, it is claimed that he comes to know the [buddha] elements of sentient beings gradually, not instantaneously.

[38.11–12] You may ask what is [meant] by the following statement:

In the Mahāyāna it is said that he is someone whose pervasion of the entire maṇḍala of knowable objects [occurs] in a single moment of knowledge (mkhyen pa).1325
[38.12–16] The jeweler, who [in this example] is the Tathāgata, is uninterruptedly engaged in his activity [of looking for the jewels of sentient beings] in the innumerable world systems. This is shown [in the text], for it is said further down\(1326\) in this teaching [of the Dhrāṇīśvararājasūtra]:

The doubt as to whether the dharmacakras were turned all at once or sequentially is removed. In the limitless world systems, they were turned all at once, and with regard to the individual persons, they were turned sequentially.\(1327\)

[38.16–19] Well then, for those who possess more roots of virtue at the stage of being in partial concordance with liberation (mokṣabhāgīya), the second [dharma]cakra is first set in motion. For those who possess many more [roots of virtue], the first to be set in motion is the third [dharma]cakra. This should be understood in accordance with the Ajātastrakauketavyavinodana [sūtra], the Śūraṅgamamasamādhi [sūtra], the Āṅgulimālīya [sūtra], and others.

[38.19–26] Likewise, if you take the Saddharmapuṇḍarika [sūtra] as a measure, at the time when many arhats, such as Śāriputra, were on the śrāvaka path, they were made to mature with the roots of virtue that pertain to the Mahāyāna and were granted a prophecy through the third [dharma]cakra. Thus whoever abides on the śrāvaka path is also prompted to embrace the third [dharma]cakra, so that somebody with such a potential becomes a disciple of the first and third [dharma]cakras. You may ask, is it not taught in the Saddharmapuṇḍarika [sūtra] that it [itself] is the second [dharmacakra]? How can it then be the third [dharma]cakra? This [results] from a different way of counting. When presenting [the turnings] as two, the [dharma]cakra of the Hinayāna and the Mahāyāna, the Saddharmapuṇḍarika [sūtra] is the second [dharmacakra]. In the Samdhinirmocana [sūtra] it is described as the third, in accordance with the classification of the teachings for those who have entered the Śrāvakayāna, the Mahāyāna, and all yānas.

[38.26–39.4] This [particular] description as three stages\(1328\) is found in the present treatise (RGV II.41a–c), too:

The nirmāṇakāya, which is the [primary] cause of [people] in the worlds entering
The path of peace, bringing [them] to maturity, and granting [them] prophecies,\(1329\)
Always abides in it,\(1330\)
[Like the form elements in the spatial element.]\(1331\)
and in the detailed explanation [of this stanza] as the last stage of the presenta­tion as three stages, it is stated [in RGV II.58c–59d] that [the Saddharmapūṇḍarīka] is the third stage:

Through the teachings of the reality of the Dharma
In the Saddharmapūṇḍarīka and other [sūtras],
He diverts [the śrāvakas] from their former conviction,
And by using insight and skillful means,
Makes them mature on the ultimate yāna
And utters a prophecy with regard to [their] supreme enlightenment.1332

[39.4–11] When you first enter the Śrāvakayāna, aspects of the truth of suffer­ing arise, and because of frightening impermanence [you realize] the suffer­ing of being overpowered like chaff blown around by the wind. Because you have clung to the existence of a creator such as Īśvara and a substantial self that is different from the mere accumulation of skandhas even though they do not exist, [your life] has become pure suffering. Having seen that the stainlessness of what is in reality bliss has become immersed in impure mud, he creates—through his teaching that makes you weary of saṁsāra—disgust in sentient beings who are attached to saṁsāra, rejoicing in it, seeing it as something possessing good qualities. At the stage of being in partial concordance with liberation and the stage of being in partial concordance with penetration, he creates disgust in a general way. [For] when you directly come to know the aspects of the truth of suffering mentioned above and the twelve aspects of the remaining three truths on the path of seeing, you attain a state of great weariness[—in this way] he creates disgust [on this level]. Having [thus] made it a direct remedy for defilements, [the Buddha] causes you to embrace the disciplinary doctrine of the noble ones, the truth of the path.

[39.12–15] From that weariness he causes you [to go on to] attain [the level of] no more learning that is free from attachment, and from the latter to become established in the nirvāṇa without remainder, which is also the cessation of the polluted skandhas. The first [dharma]cakra has thereby partially reached fruition. That this is not entirely so is because the Buddha's activities are for the sake of establishing [everybody] in omniscience; the first [dharma]cakra was set in motion for this purpose.

[39.15–17] With regard to the second [dharma]cakra it is stated [in the Dhāraṇīśvararājasūtra (as quoted in the Ratnagotrabhāgavākyākhya)]:

But a tathāgata does not cease his efforts there. After that he makes them realize his guiding principle (netrī) through his teaching of emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness.\textsuperscript{1333, 1334}

[39.17–21] The sentence “But a tathāgata does not cease his efforts there” excludes the possibility that the Śrāvakayāna has reached the end with a defining characteristic of not [being able to] proceed to other [yānas]. You may ask, “Well then, for what reason does he make again effort?” A tathāgata is endowed with the realization of omniscience for [the sake, too, of] those who, after that [practice of the first dharmacakra], have entered the Mahāyāna, having generated bodhicitta together with the [corresponding] conduct. As for his guiding principle, it is the path.

[39.21] [As] is stated [in Abhisamayālamkāra I.2a:]

The path [leading to] omniscience,
[Is what has been taught here (i.e., in the prajñāpāramitā sūtras) by the teacher.\textsuperscript{1335}

[39.21–22] The essence of this path is the three doors to liberation, and so he makes them realize the guiding principle through his teaching of emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness.

[39.22–40.4] In the prajñāpāramitā, too, also these three [doors] have been taught.\textsuperscript{1336}

Moreover, Subhūti, the Mahāyāna of the bodhisattvas, the great beings, is the three samādhis. If you ask what these three are, they are the samādhi of emptiness, the samādhi of signlessness, and the samādhi of wishlessness. If you ask what the samādhi of emptiness is, it is that which abides in a mind fully realizing that all phenomena are empty of their own defining characteristics, [and that which is] emptiness as a door to liberation. This is the samādhi of emptiness. If you ask what the samādhi of signlessness is, it is that which abides in a mind fully realizing that all phenomena are without [characteristic] signs, [and that which is] signlessness as a door to liberation. This is the samādhi of signlessness. If you ask what the samādhi of wishlessness is, it is that which abides in the mind fully realizing that all phenomena are not to be “mentally elaborated,”\textsuperscript{1337} [and that which is] wishlessness as a door to liberation. This is the samādhi of wishlessness.
This defines it—the entire path taught in the *prajñāpāramitā*. But the “highest fruit” of the levels proper to this [second] dharmacakra is obtained [only] by [a bodhisattva] on the seventh level.

With regard to the third [dharma]cakra it is stated [in the *Dhāraṇīśvararājasūtra* (as quoted in the *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhya*):

But a tathāgata does not cease his efforts there. Thereafter he causes sentient beings, who have by origin various natures, to enter the sphere of a tathāgata through the teaching of the irreversible [turning of] the dharmacakra, the teaching of the threefold purity. Those who have entered [the sphere] realize the true nature of a tathāgata and are called the unsurpassable venerable ones.

“But a tathāgata does not cease his efforts there” is explained in the *Ratnāvalī* [V.40]:

In the same way as eight śrāvaka levels are explained according to the *Śrāvakayāna*, there are ten bodhisattva levels according to the *Mahāyāna*.

The sixth śrāvaka level in the *Laṅkāvatāra*[sūtra] passage (“Mahāmati, from the sixth level onward, the bodhisattvas, great beings, śrāvakas, and pratyekabuddhas enter cessation.”) is the level of the fruit of a “never returner.” Even though it is not at all the same as the sixth bodhisattva level in terms of qualities, etc., it has been subsumed under the same name, *sixth level*. The śrāvakas’ and bodhisattvas’ respective enterings into cessation are explained in this way as being the same in name [only].

If, however, based on the commentary of the *Āṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (which says that since on the bodhisattva path of seeing the abandonment and realization of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas are perfect), they are enemy destroyers (arhats), because they have destroyed the enemies on the path of seeing, and [practitioners] in whom the outflows are exhausted, because they have exhausted the outflows on the path of seeing—if you think [on this basis] that you do not have to learn any more after having attained arhatship, [you should consider that it was said:] “But a tathāgata does not cease his efforts with that.” Thereafter, those bodhisattvas are introduced into the sphere of a tathāgata.
[40.18–19] If you ask what the sphere of a tathāgata is like, it is engaged within itself in working for the sake of sentient beings, with neither effort nor concepts, because it has been said in this [RGV I.77]:

[40.19–21] As to the way of the bodhisattva, in the state obtained after meditation\(^{1344}\)

He becomes equal to the Tathāgata on account of having liberated sentient beings in [various] worlds.\(^{1345}\)

[40.21–23] Since this [ability] is obtained from the eighth level onward, that bodhisattva is also called a tathāgata. In the [Prajñāpāramitāratnaguṇa]-saṃcaya[gaithā] [XII.4cd], too, it has been said:

Bodhisattva[s] thoroughly realize this [dharmata]\(^{1346}\) as suchness
And are therefore called buddha by the tathāgatas.\(^{1347}\)

[40.23–24] Not having attained the sphere of such a tathāgata, [a bodhisattva] on the seventh level should not to be said to be without defilements. With regard to the notion that there is [still] attachment to the wisdom of a tathāgata and that [his] intentions have not been completely perfected, it is stated in Daśabhūmikasūtra:

[40.24–41.3] O son of the victorious one, a bodhisattva on the seventh level has left for the most part all the accumulations of defilements—attachment and the rest\(^{1348}\)—behind him. A bodhisattva practicing on the [seventh] level, “having gone far,” should to be said to be someone neither with defilements nor without defilements. If you ask why that is, [it is for the following reason:] as no defilements occur, he should not be said to be with defilements. But since [he still] longs for the wisdom of a tathāgata, and since [his] intentions are not completely perfected, he should not be said to be without defilements either.\(^{1349}\)

[41.3–7] It is said that because of this, the conduct arisen from practice, and attachment to the wisdom of a tathāgata, are from the first to the seventh level given the name defilement, and it is the purification of this a tathāgata puts his effort into. As for the skillful means by which he does this, it is by the teaching of the irreversible [dharma]cakra. Because this teaching is one of threefold purity,\(^{1350}\) it is, firstly, a perfect teaching.
As for this threefold purity, it has been said in the *Mahāyānasūtrālāmkiṣāra* [and the corresponding *bhāṣya* XII.11]:

This teaching of the buddhas is pure in terms of the three circles.
It should also be known to be free from the eight faults.

“Pure in terms of the three circles” means [the purity of that] by which he teaches, [that is, in] speech and words; [the purity of] how [it is taught]—the kind of statements and so forth—and [the purity of the disciples] to whom [it is taught], who know the condensed statements and detailed explanations.\(^{1351}\)

Therefore, it is threefold—the purity of the speech of teachers, famous among [the monks of] Nalanda; of the teachings to be explained; and of the [mind]streams of the disciples.

Since wisdom on the eighth level is irreversible, it is called the irreversible level. The meaning of this teaching is that some people get tired of the [meditation] cushion and are not able to sit for a long time [on it], and in the same way as they [can] not endure the cushion, they rise again from meditative equipoise, and this means not being able to endure meditative equipoise. Since, on the eighth level, you do not rise [any longer] from meditative equipoise, [which is focused] on nonorigination, it is called the *endurance of nonorigination*. Nor do you turn away from the wisdom of nonorigination. From this [eighth] level onward, the teaching in its main part is therefore said to be irreversible. Since it is transmitted into the [mind]stream of the disciple, it is called a [dharma]cakra, namely the *Dhāranīśvararājasūtra* itself and the other sūtras of the irreversible [dharma]cakra. Moreover, the actual students of this [dharma]cakra are sentient beings who by origin have various natures. Since the term *nature* is a synonym of the term *potential*, you need [to understand] potential. “Various” [means] “different.” As [sentient beings] are the fruit arisen from different potentials, they have [these] as [their] origin. The explanation in the *Samdhinirmocana*sūtra (VII.30) “those who have entered all vehicles”\(^{1352}\) [refers] precisely to this.

The fruit of this [dharma]cakra is [the state of] having entered the sphere of a tathāgata. As for the true nature of a tathāgata, it is said [in *Abhisamayālaṁkāra* IV.16cd]:

\(^{1351}\)\(^{1352}\)
And that which is different from that ([knowledge of minds]
called active and so forth\textsuperscript{1353})

Is the knowledge of these [forms of mind] in [their] aspect of
suchness.\textsuperscript{1354}

And it is [further] said [in \textit{Abhisamayālaṅkāra} IV.17a]:

The sage[s] realize suchness [and teach it to others].\textsuperscript{1355}

\textbf{[41.21–24]} In this manner you realize the true nature of a tathāgata, which
[means that] you know the mind of sentient beings in terms of its true
nature and so forth, become enlightened, attain the arhat[ship] of the
unsurpassable \textit{yāna}, and you are thus said to be an unsurpassable object of
veneration. In this regard, it has been said in [the chapter on] the eighth
level in the \textit{Dasabhūmīka[sūtra]} that [a bodhisattva on the eighth level] is
honored by all worldly protectors.\textsuperscript{1356}

\textbf{[41.24–42.10]} As for how stains are thereby cleared away, it is stated in the
\textit{Laṅkāvatārasūtra}:

“Illustrious one, how is the stream of appearances, which are
your own mind, purified—instantaneously or gradually?” The
illustrious one replied: “The stream of appearances, which are
your own mind, is purified gradually and not instantaneously.
“Mahāmati, it is like the mango fruit, which ripens gradually and
not instantaneously. It is in this way, Mahāmati, that sentient
beings’ streams of appearances, which are their own mind, are
purified. Mahāmati, it is like a potter, who makes pots gradually
and not instantaneously; in the same way, Mahāmati, a tathāgata
causes sentient beings’ streams of appearances... to be purified
gradually and not instantaneously. Mahāmati, it is like grass, a
thicker, medicinal herbs, and forest trees, which grow up gradu­
ally from the earth\textsuperscript{1357} and not instantaneously; in the same way,
Mahāmati, a tathāgata causes sentient beings’ streams of appear­
ances... to be purified gradually and not instantaneously. Mahāmati, it is like someone who becomes a master of comedy,
dancing, music, singing, lute,\textsuperscript{1358} cymbals,\textsuperscript{1359} and painting gradu­
ally and not instantaneously; in the same way, Mahāmati, a
tathāgata causes all sentient beings’ streams of appearances... to
be purified gradually and not instantaneously.”\textsuperscript{1360}
[42.10–15] Mahāmati, it is like all manifestations of forms in a mirror, which appear instantaneously without concepts;1361 in the same way, Mahāmati, a tathāgata causes all sentient beings' streams of appearances...to be purified instantaneously, [namely in a stream] free from concepts and [in] a [tathāgata's] experiential object that lacks appearances. Mahāmati, it is like the disks of the moon and the sun, which illuminate with [their] rays all manifestations of forms instantaneously; in the same way, Mahāmati, a tathāgata instantaneously shows the experiential object of the victorious one, [that is, of] his inconceivable wisdom, to those sentient beings1362 who are free from the mental imprints of bad states, [namely,] their own minds' appearances.1363

[42.15–19] Here, the stream of appearances that are your own mind is the basic consciousness, which is comparable with the stone of the vaṭṭīśva family. It is similar to the water of the ocean. From it arise the forms of active consciousness, which are similar to waves. When the active consciousness becomes pure, it does so gradually. The gradual ripening of fruit of the mango tree is an example of gradually increasing [the dosage] of a remedy to purify the mind. The potter stands for the tathāgata. By his fashioning, that is, by his teaching of the Dharma, the path gradually arises. [This is what the Lāṅkāvatārasūtra] is saying [here].1364

[42.19–21] As to the example of the great earth, in the same way as everything arises in dependence on the earth, which is by nature void of concepts, so too the qualities arise gradually from the nonconceptual dhammakāya of the tathāgata and the nonconceptual meditative concentration of the bodhisattvas. [This is what the Lāṅkāvatārasūtra] is saying [here].

[42.21–22] In the same way as vocal music, comedy, and instrumental music are mastered gradually, so too the qualities arise gradually even from the conceptual state together with performance that is attained after [meditative concentration]. [This is what the Lāṅkāvatārasūtra] is saying [here].

[42.22–23] The example of the mirror stands for the instantaneous appearance of all objects of knowledge in your mindstream after it is liberated from base states on the pure [bodhisattva] levels. [This is what the Lāṅkāvatārasūtra] is saying [here].

[42.23–24] The example of the sun and moon stands for the instantaneous diffusion of brilliance of teaching the Dharma to other disciples. [This is what the Lāṅkāvatārasūtra] is saying [here].
[42.24–25] Therefore the gradual purification of stains by way of the three [dharma]cakras goes up to the seventh level. [This is what the Lankāvatārasūtra is saying [here].]

[42.25–43.2] The first turning washes away defilements that have arisen through the [wrong] view of a self. The middle turning purifies [both] coarse and subtle concepts that come from clinging to things. The last turning purifies the so-called object appearances that appear to the mind, for they are a hindrance to seeing [your own] buddha nature properly.

[43.2–4] Furthermore, [it is stated] in the Lankāvatārasūtra [II.99–100]:

Like the waves of the ocean, set in motion under windy conditions, Arising like a dance—and there is no interruption— The stream of the basic [consciousness] is in a similar manner set constantly in motion by the wind of [cognitive] objects, And the varied waves of consciousness arise as in a dance. 1365

[43.4–7] The continuum is the basic consciousness, which is without interruption. In the same way as dance-like waves arise when a flow of water has been stirred by winds, so too the waves of the eye consciousness and so forth arise under the conditions of [cognitive] objects, which [in this] resemble the wind. Assuming the forms of a dancer, deities, and the like, [the waves] dance. Likewise, the basic consciousness assumes the forms of [cognitive] objects and arises as the consciousness of the eyes and so forth. This is like a dancer. [This is what these stanzas] are saying [here].

[43.7–10] In the Lankāvatārasūtra (II.101–2) it is further said:

Blue, 1367 red, salt, conch shells, milk, sugar, Astringent fruits, and flowers, These are known to be neither identical nor different, 1368 Like rays of the sun and the moon, And waves of the ocean. 1369 Likewise the seven types of consciousness, too, Are connected with the mind. 1370

[43.10–16] If you consider what the forms of an object are like when they appear to consciousness, they appear as blue and so forth. As to blue and red, they appear to the eye consciousness. [Here] it is being said that they appear as the aspects of conch shells, milk, flowers, sun rays, and so forth. As to salt, sugar, and the astringent myrobalan fruit, these characterize
what appears in the form of taste. Furthermore, when a pot appears in the sunlight, the manifested pot is not substantially different from the [actual] pot. [But] if it were substantially identical with the [material] continuum [of the pot], a pot would appear also in the darkness. Therefore, it is free from identity and difference. Likewise, when blue appears to the eye consciousness, it is the eye consciousness itself that takes on the appearance of blue. Therefore, this appearance of blue is not substantially different from consciousness (shes pa). The fact that the stream of this consciousness appears also as yellow [shows that] this appearance as blue does not [totally] conform with the continuum of consciousness. [This is what these stanzas] are saying [here].

Likewise, since the seven types of consciousness occur as these very seven types of consciousness themselves in a stream of the type that basic [consciousness] is, they are not different from the basic [consciousness] in terms of substance [or] type. [But] it is not the case that they permanently abide as a [continuous] stream.

Thus, the master Vasubandhu said [in his Trisṣīkākārikā, stanza 16]:

The manifestation of mental consciousness takes place at all times, Except in an unconscious state, in a state without mind (citta), sleep, or fainting.

... and thus explained three states without [active consciousness]. As for the defiled mind, it does not exist during absorption on the supramundane path and cessation. Thus the defiled mind and the consciousness of the five doors are completely tainted, but since the mental consciousness has both a tainted and untainted [part], it can abandon the tainted [part]. [This is what the stanza] is saying [here].

[It is further said in the Lankāvatārasūtra (II.103-4):]

The change of the ocean [produces] the variety of waves; Likewise, the basic [consciousness] moves on as the variety of what are called [active forms of] consciousness. Mind, [defiled] mind, and [active] consciousness are [conventionally] determined for the sake of defining characteristics, [But in reality] the eight [types of consciousness], whose [only] defining characteristic is not to be separate, can neither be the basis for definition nor possess defining characteristics [as distinct types].
[43.24–44.2] In the same way as the flat expanse of the ocean [may] turn about, change, and appear as waves, so too the basic consciousness becomes a sevenfold variety of consciousnesses. Thus the mind (as a consequence of having accumulated mental imprints in the basic [consciousness]), the defiled mind (as a consequence of egocentricity), and the active mind (as a consequence of the mental faculty and its corresponding cognition of objects) are [all] labeled “consciousnesses,” having acquired their names and meaning by virtue of their distinct defining characteristics. In reality, all of these are types of the same basic [consciousness], and as types, they should therefore not be associated with defining characteristics or a basis for definition. The eight have the defining characteristic or nature of not being different types.

[44.2–3] [It is further said in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (II.105):]

In the same way as there is no difference between waves and the ocean,
A development (i.e., in the sense of a real distinction)\(^{1376}\) from the mind of the types of consciousness is not found.\(^{1377}\)

[44.3–5] When waves have “returned to” and “developed” into the ocean, they are [indeed still] waves. [But] in the same way as you do not apprehend [them as distinct entities, thinking rather that] they are the ocean, so too the eight types of consciousness are not apprehended [as something separate] when mind has “developed” into the eighth [bodhisattva] level. [This is what this stanza] is saying [here].

[44.5–7] Likewise, with regard to these [eight forms of consciousness], Saraha said [in his *Dohākośa-giti*, stanza 74]:\(^{1378}\)

Whatever emanates from the mind, [and however long such thoughts do so,]
So long will their nature be that of the protector [of all beings].\(^{1379}\)
Are water and waves different or not?
[His] equality with worldly existence is by nature [that of] space.\(^{1380}\)

[44.7–9] Zhang [Tsalpa Tsöndrü] (Zhang [Tshal pa Brtson ’grus]) said:

Do not think that these thoughts—suddenly arisen
From within the state of thus positing [your] mind—
Are themselves different
From luminosity and the dharmakāya.
In the same way, waves stirred up with a crashing sound
From the unmoved clear ocean
Are nothing different [from the ocean].\textsuperscript{1381}

[44.9–13] Chegom (Lce sgom) (ca. 1140/50–1220)\textsuperscript{1437} said:

Even though a variety of dual appearances appear to the mind,
With regard to their abiding nature they have never been different
and are of one taste.
It is like water and ice: even though they appear to be two,
They have the same taste, for the nature of ice is water.
Therefore, the nature of water and ice is not different.
You should know that all phenomena that appear as [subject-object]
duality are like that.\textsuperscript{1382}
It is like the ocean and the waves: even though they appear as two,
They have the same taste, in that by their nature waves are the
ocean.
Therefore, the nature of the ocean and the waves is not different,
And you should know that [all] phenomena that appear as [subject-object] duality are like that.\textsuperscript{1383}

[Thus] the discourse of the victorious one (i.e., the Laṅkāvatārasūtra) is a
basis for such [mahāmudrā teachings].

[44.13–16] [Next, the Ratnagotravibhāgavākyākhyā says:]

With regard to the example of gold, it too refers to [the potential]: “Thinking of this potential, which is purity by nature,
even though it has been hindered by the adventitious stains....”
If you ask, the potential of what? [the answer] is the element,
the potential, and the cause of a tathāgata.\textsuperscript{1384} The proof in the
scripture for this [is:] Just as gold is not seen in crumbled
stone but [first] becomes visible through a process of purifi-
cation, similarly tathāgatas [become visible by purification]
in the world of living beings. Thus it has been stated in the
Ghanavyūha[sūtra].\textsuperscript{1385}

[44.17–20] A variant reading [?]\textsuperscript{1386} of this sūtra [passage] is: “The presence
of gold does not become apparent by pulverizing stones to dust; the gold
appears by a particular process of purification.” The example of gold
teaches that the naturally present potential, [namely] suchness, is purified.
Here [in the Ratnagotravibhāga I.151 (J.1.148)] it is said:

Since it is unchanging by nature, [full of] virtue, and perfectly pure, Suchness is [well] illustrated by the analogy of a piece of gold.\textsuperscript{1387}

[44.20–45.5] Somebody may remark that if you explain the gradual purification of stains by means of the three [dharma]cakras together with the examples, [and] if it is easy to understand the differences between the first and the second [dharma]cakras, in that they [respectively] teach the [four] noble truths and emptiness, what is then the difference between the second and the third [dharma]cakras? In the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra, the last two [dharma]cakras are both taught in terms of the lack of own-being, absence of production, absence of cessation, quiescence from the start, and being naturally in a state of nirvāṇa. Therefore, they appear not to be different in reality. If, on the other hand, a difference is evident, inasmuch as the second [dharmacakra] has been taught as being provisional and the third as being definitive, is it the case that, in terms of compassion, the extent of a bodhisattva's conduct is greater or smaller in [either of the] two? Or is there a difference of a higher and lower view in terms of insight? Or a difference in being expert or not in cultivating [the view] in meditation? Or a difference in having completed the [bodhisattva] levels or not? If there is no difference, how are you to understand that the purity in terms of the three circles\textsuperscript{1388} of the discourses in the third [dharmacakra] are mentioned in particular, and that the Tathāgata's effort [in the third dharmacakra] surpasses the previous ones? If there are differences, say them!

[45.5–7] If this is a worthwhile question, those disciplined according to the works of the Śrāvakayāna and those exclusively disciplined according to the Madhyamaka treatises of Nāgārjuna and his disciples will become terrified. Nevertheless, since obviously many, even persons with marvelous devotion, have had [this question], an answer must be given.

[45.7–21] In the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra (VII.31–32) it is stated:

[Paramārthasamudgata] asked: “Illustrious one, how much merit do those sons or daughters of good origin generate who hear this illustrious one's teaching of the definitive meaning—beginning with phenomena lacking an own-being up to being naturally in a state of nirvāṇa—and then develop devotion, write it down, memorize it, read it, venerate it, propagate it, receive an oral transmission of it, recite it to others, reflect on it, and unite with it in the form of meditation?” The illustrious one
replied to the bodhisattva Paramārthaśamudgata: “Paramārthaśamudgata, those sons or daughters of good origin will generate immeasurable, incalculable merit. It is not easy to give an example of this, but I will explain it to you briefly. Paramārthaśamudgata, it is like this: If you compare, for example, the particles of earth on the tip of a fingernail to all the particles of earth in the earth, they do not approach even a hundredth part, they do not approach even a thousandth part [or] even a hundred-thousandth part—any part, any approximation, any comparison. If you compare the water in a cow’s hoof print to the water in the four great oceans, it does not approach even a hundredth part, and so on. Paramārthaśamudgata, I have explained the merit of those who are devoted to the sūtras of provisional meaning up to being united [with them] in the form of meditation. If you compare it to the merit of having completely realized the [bodhisattva] levels by devotion, to the teaching of definitive meaning up to complete realization from being united [with it] in the form of meditation, it does not even approach a hundredth part (and so on) up to ‘it does not bear any comparison.’

[45.21-22] Given that the difference in benefit from [only] hearing these provisional and definitive meanings is already so great, you may conceive that the difference [between them and] the profound and vast meaning of the last [dharma]cakra is also on the same order.

[45.22-46.5] There is a distinction [among the three dharmacakras] resulting from a difference in compassion. With regard to the second [dharma]cakra, you are focused—according to the three aspects of compassion, which is [either directed] toward sentient beings [or] phenomena, [or] is without any objective support—on [either] sentient beings with their suffering of suffering, [or] on their being encumbered with the suffering of impermanence, [or] on the nature of emptiness. Here in the third [dharma]cakra the nature of mind is [taken to be] the nature of bliss, permanence, the true self, and essential purity. Outside of this [nature, however], it has been temporarily hindered by ignorance, and as a result appears to be encumbered with suffering. Thinking that this is amazing, you develop compassion in order to remove this confusion. Likewise, knowing that you are yourself of the same kind as [this buddha] potential, you develop friendliness and love, and seeing the nature of sentient beings, you rejoice and respect them as if they were teachers. [Finally,] you gener-
ate the equanimity in which you see the sameness of all sentient beings. You work, as a result of this, much more expeditiously for the benefit of others, and this is considered to be the attainment of the four special immeasurable [qualities]. This is taught from “So it was presented before” (RGV I.163a (J I.160a)) up to “you obtain buddhahood quickly” (RGV I.170d (J I.167d)).

[46.5–11] With regard to generating bodhicitta, which arises from the [four] immeasurable [qualities], it has been said in the Bodhicittavivarana. It has been stated [in the Guhyasamaja tantra]:

[Your own mind] is free from all entities.
It is exempt from the skandhas, dhatus, and ayatanas.
The perceived object and the perceiving subject.
Being equanimous [in keeping with] the selflessness of phenomena,
Your own mind has never arisen since the beginning
And has emptiness as its nature.

In the same way as the illustrious buddhas and the great bodhisattvas generated a mind [committed] to great enlightenment, I too shall generate such a mind from now on until I am [in the heart of] enlightenment, so that sentient beings who are unsaved may be saved, those who are not liberated may be liberated, those who are not consoled may be consoled, and those who have not completely passed into nirvana may completely pass into nirvana.

[46.11–12] It has been [further] said in the [Bodhicittavivarana].

Having thus generated the bodhicitta that in terms of apparent [truth] has the nature of aspiration, [bodhisattvas] must generate ultimate bodhicitta by the power of meditation.

[46.12–14] [This power of meditation is] the supreme generation of bodhicitta, since it arises through the power of seeing the similarity between the enlightenment to be attained, and the [cognitive] object, [namely,] sentient beings’ luminosity of mind.

[46.14–16] This ultimate [bodhi]citta is also called emptiness, for it is stated in the Bodhicittavivarana [71]:
[A blissful mind] has been also explained as suchness, the limit of reality, Signlessness, and the ultimate, the very supreme bodhicitta, and emptiness.\(^\text{1401}\)

\([46.16–17]\) It is even more exalted when you train yourself, based on this generation of [bodhi]citta, to observe the conduct of a bodhisattva. When you familiarize yourself with the [bodhi]citta of focusing on the nature of mind, you realize that the nature of the six active forms of consciousness is luminosity.

\([46.17–24]\) In the *Dharmadhātustotra* [38–43] it is stated:\(^\text{1402}\)

Based on eyes and forms, Stainless appearances occur. Since these neither arise nor cease, They are rightly known as the *dharmadhātu*.\(^\text{1403}\)

Based on sound and ears, [The corresponding] consciousness [occurs]; the mind of these three\(^\text{1404}\) Is the *dharmadhātu* without defining characteristics, Obtained without any concepts at all.\(^\text{1405}\)

Based on the nose and odor, An olfactory consciousness [occurs]; [all three are] suchness. This makes you realize that [they are] the *dharmadhātu* That is without forms and unteachable.\(^\text{1406}\)

The nature of the tongue is emptiness. The tasted object, too, is an “isolated [phenomenon].”\(^\text{1407}\) And given their *dharmadhātu* nature, Their [corresponding] consciousness is without abiding.\(^\text{1408}\)

Pure tangible objects with the defining characteristic of being a condition, [That which] by [its] nature [is] the pure body, [And the corresponding consciousness that is] free from conditions— [These are what] I call the *dharmadhātu*.\(^\text{1409}\)

Having completely abandoned thoughts and imagined [objects]\(^\text{1410}\)
With regard to phenomena that appear to the mental [consciousness],\textsuperscript{1411} You should meditate on phenomena being the \textit{dharmadhātu}, Given\textsuperscript{1412} that they lack an own-being.

\textbf{[46.24--47.2]} Accordingly, the six collections of consciousness, their support (the six faculties), and the six objects [constitute] the eighteen \textit{dhātus}. When the eighteen [types of] mental movement\textsuperscript{1413} occur in them, you [may] meditate on these [mental] movements as luminosity, and once you are used [to doing so], the eighteen \textit{dhātus} themselves appear as luminosity. When they do appear [as luminosity], you are said to be accomplished.

\textbf{[47.2--10]} Based on this, you obtain the qualities of the pure sense fields (\textit{āyatana}) as taught in the \textit{Saddharmapuṇḍarikā[siitra]}. It has been said that 112 or 108 qualities arise with regard to each \textit{āyatana}. There are twenty "world realms"\textsuperscript{1414} of the desire [realm], sixteen of the form [realm], and four of the formless [realm]—altogether forty. [Forty] each in the ten directions makes four hundred, and this in each of the three times makes 1,200. When you see the forms\textsuperscript{1415} that abide in the four hundred worlds in the ten directions of the present, they are seen as if assembled at the gate of the eyes. In a like manner are seen the forms of the past and the future of these world realms. For a bodhisattva, they are first seen with the eyes of flesh, not with clairvoyance. Thus it has been explained in the sutra, which repeats [this description] with regard to the other [sense] faculties as well. When he sees such a variety of objects, the conduct of a bodhisattva becomes very exalted. Extensive clairvoyance is also quickly achieved by accomplishing eyes\textsuperscript{1416} of flesh [that see that]. Thus a vast amount of merit can be created.

\textbf{[47.10--12]} [In the same way] as the venerable Dipaṃkāraśrijñāna (i.e., Atiśa) said in his \textit{Bodhipathapradipa 37}:

\begin{quote}
The merit of [only] one day and night accruing to those possessing clairvoyance

Somebody devoid of clairvoyance does not have even in a hundred lives.\textsuperscript{1417}
\end{quote}

\textbf{[47.12--13]} [The third dharmacakra] is more distinguished also by reason of [its] view. There it is asserted, among other things, that all phenomena, subject as they are to worldly existence and nirvāṇa, lack an own-being from the very beginning and are free from the eight extremes of mental fabrication.
[47.13–17] In the Dharmadhātustotra [30–33] it is said:

Just as a horn on the head of a rabbit
Is only imagined and does not exist,
So all phenomena, too,
Are only imagined and do not exist.

If you analyze down to minute atoms,
Even the horn of an ox does not exist.
As it was before, so it will be later;
So why imagine here [that anything exists]?

If [things] arise in dependence
And cease in dependence—
If a single [independent thing] does not arise—
How do fools conceive of one?

The defining characteristics of imagined origination
Must be understood as [conforming to] the middle [way],
In accordance with the examples of the horn of a rabbit and
an ox—
Just like the properties of the Sugata himself.

[47.17–19] In this way it is taught that phenomena lack a single own-being,
[and] with recourse to [the arguments of] neither one nor many, interdependence, and the interdependence of impermanence. Just as in the corpus of analytical works, so it is here [in the third dharmacakra], too.

[47.19–25] Nevertheless, in whatever way they are [determined through] investigation as being emptiness, [it is stated in Dharmadhātustotra 18–22]:

Even the stainless sun and moon
Become obstructed by the five hindrances:
Clouds, mist, smoke,
Eclipses, and dust.

Similarly, the luminous mind
Becomes obstructed by the five hindrances:
Attachment, malignancy, laziness,
Dissipation, and doubt.
Like cloth purified by fire,
[That is,] when one puts [a cloth]
Sullied with various stains over a fire,
The stains are burnt but not the cloth.  

Similarly, with the luminous mind,
Sullied with stains arisen from desire,
The stains are burnt by wisdom
But not the luminous [mind].

Those sūtras taught by the victorious ones
In order to reveal emptiness—
All eliminate defilements
But do not diminish the [buddha] element.

[47.25–26] This means that luminosity that is not annihilated, even though it is accompanied by defilements throughout beginningless time, cannot be rejected even by the sūtras that reveal emptiness or [by] the numerous analytical [works].

[47.26–48.4] Therefore, the view here [in the third dharmacakra] is that if you take the way things appear as the measure, without considering the essential mode of phenomena, they exist in the modes of samsāra and nirvāṇa, material things and consciousness, the material world and beings. If, on the other hand, the essential mode serves as the measure, nothing whatsoever exists as something different from the mind, and it (i.e., the view) is the insight (prajñā)—the knowledge—that even the true nature of mind (sems nyid) is the natural mind,  which in no way exists as a phenomenon that possesses [characteristic] signs. The emptiness that is examined by reasoning and that which is grounded in luminosity—[neither] can be destroyed by anything; [both] are buddha nature.

[48.4–10] Reasoning that establishes that no own-being exists at all and a [treatment of] the mind abiding as luminosity occur in many scriptures, but they are explained particularly extensively in the Ghanavyūha and the Lankāvatāra. In these it is [explained] in the same way as the emptiness of an own-being is taught in the Madhyamaka treatises. On the other hand, if you persistently investigate in a direct manner, without depending on logical reason, the mind and the mental factors that are included in defilements and thoughts, [you again find that] nothing exists at all, in the same way as when you approach a cloud that looks like a mountain and [find out that] it is not like one, or a moving fata morgana,
which is not perceived when you go up close, or a heap of stones that is not a man. Therefore it is difficult to distinguish [on such a level] even the difference between an apparent [truth] that is correct and one that is false. If this-worldly [criteria] serve as the measure, [however,] they can be distinguished.

[48.10] These points were taught by former lamas as well. Zhang [Tsalpa Tsöndrü] stated:

[48.11–13] O Mother who gives birth to all the victorious ones and their sons!
You who need to be realized by fortunate practitioners!
Heart treasure of those descending from [you,] venerable [Mother]!
Elixir of the vehicles, [namely] all scriptures, logical works, and pith instructions!
Dharmakāya, essence of the final definitive meaning!
Sphere of naturally pure luminosity!

[48.13–15] In the three times, whether buddhas come or not,
Whether the noble community realizes [the ultimate] or not,
Whether the wise ones preach or not,
Whether those learned in commenting on intention are to explain [these discourses] or not—
This true nature, [this] luminosity, free from mental fabrications and pure,
Has ever been spontaneously present and abides without increase or diminution.

[48.15–17] Even though harm has been wrought over immeasurably many eons on pure space,
By the burning of the fire [element] and the blowing of the wind [element],
[And] by the generation and destruction of worlds, for example,
This has not harmed space—it was neither increased nor diminished.

[48.17–18] Sometimes clear sunlight is completely obstructed by clouds;
It may thus appear to increase, becoming more clear, or to diminish
When the clouds dissolve or when it is overcast,
But the essence of the sun can neither increase nor diminish.
[48.18–21] The unchangeable dharmakāya, which abides like that, is nothing other than your own mind. The whole of samsara and nirvāṇa appears in all its variety in the mind. When this is not realized, your own mind is disturbed by the power of mistaken delusion, and [the mind] therefore appears as the suffering [of the] material world and the beings of samsara. When it is realized with certainty, your own mind appears as the limitless wisdom of nirvāṇa and great bliss.

[48.21–22] Therefore, since everything emanates from your own mind, you know the true nature of all sentient beings. If you recognize the true nature of your own mind; knowing that, you know all phenomena, such as nirvāṇa.

[48.22–24] By knowing all phenomena completely, you transcend all three realms; by knowing one (i.e., the nature of your own mind), you become versed in all. The leaves and petals of [a plant whose] roots are cut fall by themselves; therefore, your own mind will ascertain [all] alone.

[48.24–25] The true nature of your own mind, which is the seed of everything, has never been different from the mind of all victorious ones and [their] sons. It appears as the unborn dharmakāya; it is not something material, but self-awareness, [that is,] natural clarity.

[48.25–49.1] It is not established as an entity and is devoid of color, shape, and measure; it is not a nonentity [either] but [can] manifest as anything according to conditions; it is not something eternal [but rather is] empty of an own-being; it is not something completely nonexistent [either], being self-[revelatory] clarity that is empty by nature.
[49.1–2] It is not established as a self; when investigated, it is without essence; it is not a "no-self" [either], being the great self free from mental fabrications; it is not established as [any] extreme and is without any perceiving subject. It is not established as a middle and is beyond all points of reference.

[49.2–3] It cannot be illustrated by an example, nor can it even go by the name [of its possible] parts; but neither does it lack exemplification, being like space. It is not established as [something that can be called by] words, and it cannot be denoted by an expression; but neither is it free of words, being the cause of all expressions.

[49.3–7] Existent and nonexistent, true and false, empty and nonempty, quiescent and not quiescent, mentally fabricated and not, imaginable and not, bliss and suffering, existing as a cognitive object and not, duality and nonduality, beyond the intellect and not, isolated and not, established and not, pure and impure, spontaneously present and not—uttering clusters of words like these does not get at it. Even though it is expressed in the form of many synonyms, no matter how profound and acute the clusters of words, these cannot bring you any closer to the true nature of mind.

[49.7–9] Though you may investigate and examine for eons, no matter how skilled and profound your investigations and examinations, that which is original by nature cannot be an object of investigation, and therefore you cannot realize the true nature of mind [by such means].

[49.9–10] For example, the planets and stars that appear [as a reflection] in the ocean: even if you thoroughly sift with a sieve made of silk, in the end you will not be able to get hold of a single star,
Because the planets and stars [in the ocean] are not cognitive objects [corresponding directly to] entities.

[49.10–12] As long as [something] can be expressed in words, for that long
It may be [supplied] with names, but no matter how well supplied it is, these are not the nature [of the mind];
As long as there is a grasping of the duality “to be seen” and “seer,”
The nondual nature [of the mind] cannot be realized.

[49.12] Chegom Sherab Dorjé (Lce sgom Shes rab rdo rje) said:

[49.12–14] The root of all phenomena is the mind of enlightenment (bodhicitta),
And since clarity, which is the mind’s nature (rang bzhin), is not obstructed,
The magical display of the mind is unimaginable;
Nevertheless, the true nature (ngo bo) of the mind is not established as anything.

[49.14–15] It has ever been empty, without a self, and free from mental fabrications;
Being coemergent great bliss free from mental fabrication,
It is free from the thorns and dust of [characteristic] signs, is stainless,
Has never arisen, and is naturally pure.

[49.15–16] It is the perfection of wisdom, inexpressible in word or thought;
Not being an object [that can be] recollected by the consciousness, mind, mental faculty, or intellect,
It lacks, like the true nature of phenomena, an example illustrative of it.
A metaphor that fits [only] partially is that it resembles space.

[49.16–19] Lacking the shapes and colors that are the [characteristic] signs of things,
It has neither limits nor a middle and transcends all [possible] sides and parts.
It has neither beginning nor end, and it does not become used up or increase.
It knows no going or coming, [and yet it is] all-pervading—the expanse over which it is spread out;
Devoid of change in the three times: it neither increases nor decreases.
Outside the three times of past, future, and present,
It goes beyond the extremes of existence and nonexistence, eternalism and nihilism, true and false.
It has ever been separated from good and bad, being and not being,
[wrong] assertion and denial.

[49.19–21] It is beyond causes and conditions of origination, destruction, and change.
It may be disturbed and affected by conditions,
But it does not deviate from [its] nature of emptiness;
However great the variety [of its appearances], in its aspect of emptiness it is one.

[49.21–22] It is empty of self [and] empty of other—and within the equality of being empty,
The surface is empty and the deep [inside] as well; in the sphere of profound emptiness,
The outside is empty, the inside is empty, and empty is the huge expanse.
Therefore the true nature of mind is like space.

[49.22–24] It pervades everything but cannot be defined as such.
If the mind has not been seen, will not be seen, and is not being seen
Even by all the buddhas of the three times,
This is all the more true of bodhisattvas, pratyekabuddhas, and śrāvakas.
How much more, therefore, of ordinary beings?

[49.24–25] The mind is without duality, and neither is it established as unitary;
Thus it is empty. How, then, can this emptiness be seen?
If the mind were seen or realized,
It would be a thought and therefore not the real mind.
However much you investigate, the real mind cannot be known.
If it ever were known (rig), this would be ignorance (ma rig).
Therefore, the true nature of mind (sems nyid) has always been empty,
And so, certainly, the mental factors as well.
Thus the intellect, clinging to things and adhering to illusions,
Should be known as primordial emptiness.

In emptiness nothing exists as duality,
And even emptiness has always been empty.
“Empty” and “not empty”—this knowledge is a thought,
And the nature of this very thought is primordial emptiness.
The nature of primordial emptiness is beyond the intellect, free of thought and expression.

The innermost part of knowledge is emptiness, and if you realize deeply—
[And] not only verbally—that in which the limits of the mind (yid) are exhausted,
You see the true nature (dharmatā) of mind (sems), the ultimate truth.
You realize the essence of all buddha words and pith instructions,
And you fathom the [underlying] intention of the victorious ones of the three times.

This must be seen as the dharmakāya and [its] being pointed out.
The experience and realization [that comes from] seeing the nature of mind
Are not within the grasp of those [only] learned in the words of the scriptures and the Dharma.
It is not understood as a result of sharp logical reasoning
Or realized within the higher [state of] concentration [called] calm abiding.
It does not appear because of a greater activation of body and speech.

The fortunate consequence of strength from your own former practice,
The blessing of a right wise lama,
And great devotion and respect—[realization] is within the grasp of these three
[Special forms of] interdependence coming together at one time.

[50.9] Pagmo Drupa said in the *Rin chen rgyan 'dra zhes bya ba'i bstan bcos.*

[50.9–10] With regard to the mind there are two [points]: [it is] not established and not obstructed;
“Not established” [refers to] the pure luminosity
And “not obstructed” [to] the spontaneously present united into a pair [with luminosity].

[50.10–11] [This] union into a pair is taught as a view
[That acts] as a remedy for clinging to an individual self.
As for the way to enter pure luminosity,
[Which is a remedy] for the clinging to the self of phenomena:

[50.11–12] The root of both saṁsāra and nirvāṇa is the mind;
And the mind is primordially pure, suchness.
Since it is primordially quiescent and has not arisen,
The mind has been ever free from the extremes of mental fabrication.

[50.12–13] Primordially pure and pure by nature,
Gradually [becoming] pure and spontaneously present,
It is free from the extremes of thought, expression, and difference,
Uninterrupted and not conditioned.

[50.13–15] Free from the three [stages] of origination, destruction, and abiding,
It is all-pervading but not established as a thing.
Not going and coming, and uninterrupted,
It is self-arisen great bliss without outflows;
It is coemergent wisdom.
The expression “not established” [in the line] “With regard to the mind there are two points, not established and not obstructed” is not a nonaffirming negation, but refers rather to the true nature of mind (sems nyid), which is not established as something with characteristic signs. The expression “not obstructed” refers to forms that appear among the objects of the sense faculities. “The clinging to an individual self” is explained in the great treatises as clinging to the mind as a self. Furthermore, you cling to the mind, which appears in multiform variety, as to a self, and since it (i.e., the self) is then nothing other than that variety without characteristic signs, the basis for a self is undermined. If clinging to the self of phenomena is the clinging to the existence of an own-being of the mind, its basis is withdrawn in view of the mind being luminosity. “Uninterrupted” means the “continuation in a continuum [of moments]” from beginningless time till buddhahood. A continuation in a continuum it is, but this does not mean that it arises as forms with characteristic signs. The characteristic signs having disappeared, its flowing (lit. “going”) is not obstructed, and neither does it abide as phenomena with characteristic signs. “Self-arisen” means that it arises from within itself, without the necessity of various conditions. Not being a mental faculty (yid) or a body either, it is bliss. Since both the mind without characteristic signs and the unobstructed appearances arise simultaneously, it is also called “coemergent.”

As for how the cause [of the ordinary mind]—the two aspects of ignorance—Arose from the original mind, [that is,] self-arisen wisdom: The true nature of mind (sems nyid), mixed with the true nature of phenomena, Is coemergently arisen wisdom; It appears as this latter, [but cannot itself] be ascertained.

[Mind] that does not recognize itself by itself Is coemergent ignorance. Through the knowledge that perceives clarity to be your own [self], Knowledge [in the form of] self-awareness will be perceived as I. That which appears to you as objects will be perceived as other.

Without the insight that realizes [this], The true nature of phenomena is not realized—Which results in the ignorance of the imagined.
Under whatever conditions it (i.e., the imagined) was produced, it is [still] the mental faculty (*yid*) of the original [mind].

[51.1–3] The outward-looking [mind] is the mental consciousness (*manovijñānām*),
And the inward-looking mind is the defiled mind (*kliṣṭaṁ manah*). The wisdom of the natural [or uncontrived] ground
And the wisdom [of] the consciousness of the five doors (i.e., the eyes, etc.) are caused by these two “minds” (*manovijñānām* and *kliṣṭaṁ manah*) being in discord
And [the resulting inner and outer] are kept from meeting or [coming] very close.

[51.3–4] The defiled mind looks inside
And perceives the original [mind], which is without an I as an I.
[The consciousness of] the five doors is nonconceptual;
[Still,] the mental consciousness perceives it as [endowed with]
characteristic signs.

[51.4–5] Perceiving object and consciousness as two,
You accumulate defilements and *karmaṇ* of attachment and hate.
Just as in the examples of the threads of the silkworm
Or the objects in a dream,
You become entangled in yourself.

[51.5–10] Original mind, [that is,] self-arisen wisdom, is only the way mind is in [terms of] its own nature. It is not the case that first wisdom free of ignorance arose, and later ignorance arose from it, since if you reacquire stains from a stainless mind, it would follow that even a buddha [would return] to saṃsāra. The former mind, too, was mingled with ignorance; but [since its] true nature is not enveloped in ignorance, [it makes sense to say that] a twofold ignorance has arisen from this [original mind].
The first [appearance of] ignorance is when the [primordial] ground (or basic [consciousness]?) simply does not recognize itself. This is what the Śrīmālādevīśīśūra calls the “level of mental imprints of ignorance.”

[51.10–13] “It appears [as this, but] cannot be ascertained” means that even though it appears as something without established nature at all, it cannot be ascertained [as being such]. “The imagined” means a thought within the mental [consciousness]. It is attachment to a perceived object
and a perceiving subject and so forth. “Defiled mind” is a very subtle form of knowledge, being the mere appearance of the [primordial] ground (or basic [consciousness]?) as the [personal] self. Therefore, the worldly shrewd are not aware of it. The direct substantial cause of the entire mental consciousness and the consciousness of the five doors is the basic [consciousness] that has become the defiled mind.\textsuperscript{1448} The defiled mind causes dualistic appearances in the form of the six accumulations [of consciousness].

[51.13–16] To sum up, the abiding nature of the phenomena of saṁsāra and nirvāṇa is the true nature of mind (sems nyid), which has no characteristic signs. It is the svabhāvikakāya, because even when you become a buddha, it is precisely that mind, [and that mind] alone, whose nature it is to have no characteristic signs. It is also called the dharmakāya, because in essence it is the [ten] strengths and so forth [of a buddha]. The two form kāyas shine forth as a reflection of the svabhāvikakāya for disciples.

[51.16–18] This same meaning is taught by Saraha [in his Dohākosāgiti]:\textsuperscript{1449}

[They are like] two trunks from one seed;  
For this reason there is only one fruit.  
And whoever thinks of them as being undivided  
Is liberated from saṁsāra and nirvāṇa.\textsuperscript{1450}

[51.18–19] [Saraha further said in his Dohākosāgiti, stanza 74]:\textsuperscript{1451}

The true nature of mind (sems nyid) alone is the seed of everything;  
I prostrate to [this] mind,  
In which worldly existence and nirvāṇa spreads,  
And that is like a wish-fulfilling jewel in bestowing desired fruit.\textsuperscript{1452}

[51.19–22] Also [with regard to] meditation, there are both—a root and branches. The root in turn has two aspects: meditation on the lama and meditation on the mind. As to meditation on the lama, it is mainly found in the traditions of Dampa Sangye and Je Gampopa. It is not that it does not exist in other [traditions as well]. In the “instructions encompassing the path and the fruit,”\textsuperscript{1453} for example, the extensive yogas such as “inner heat” (gtum mo) have been explained as inferior, the samayas and vows as middle, and the profound path as superior (bla ma).\textsuperscript{1454}

[51.23–25] Dependence on a right person as the root of the path is generally even found in the Śrāvakayāna, but much more so in the Mahāyāna. But not only mere respectful reliance on a lama—meditation on the lama
[may] be [also] made the [essential] nature of the path. Both traditions expressing [this] are very clear [on the matter].

[51.25–52.3] In the Ţathāgatagarbajñānācintyavīṣayāvatāra[nirdeśa]sūtra it has been said:

Mañjuśrī, a bodhisattva who is supported by a spiritual friend outshines in one morning the roots of virtue that have arisen from ten million, one hundred thousand million, immeasurable hundreds of thousands of buddhas. [He outshines] what has arisen from giving, from making offerings, and from upholding the training relating to them. Thus [a bodhisattva] who venerates [his] spiritual friend possesses inconceivable qualities.

[52.3–6] Even though the Tathāgata is not surpassed [by] the lama in terms of [actual] qualities, [the roots of virtue from] one morning of being supported by the lama outshines the roots of virtue that have arisen from [being supported by] innumerable [buddhas]—ten million, one hundred thousand million, immeasurable hundreds of thousands—from giving material offerings to them, and from upholding the training [relating to them]. It is clear that this [results] from having taken as [your] path meditation on [your] lama.

[52.6] Jigten [Sum]gön said in [his] Cintāmaṇi:

[52.6–13] In general terms, Pagmo Drupa [has said]: “As for the instruction on how to practice in accordance with the sūtras and tantras, with devotion to, and respect for, the lamas of the profound path, the previous lineage [holders, such as] the master of yogins Virūpa, the protector of beings Nāgārjuna, the venerable [pair] Tilo[pa] and Nāro[pa], the supreme accomplishment [can be realized] in this life, and also great bliss appears in an instant by their kindness. [Thus] it has been taught by Vajradhara in the secret mantra [tradition] of the Mahāyāna. Jinas [in the form of] space vajras fill, as if an agglomeration of sesame seeds, [the space in front of] all buddhas of the past, present, and future. [All] the time they practice austere asceticism and they teach the Dharma of attaining enlightenment: ['Your] meditation is not pure; you have not attained the ultimate with it. Focus on luminosity, which is pure like the face of space. If you focus on luminosity,
it will reveal itself in the form of its own [inherent] bliss.’ Thus they tame demons and [become] perfect buddhas under the tree of supreme enlightenment.”

[52.13–15] [My] lama [who is like a] jewel (i.e., Pagmo Drupa) repeatedly said: “All the buddhas of the three times even have their individual principal deity as an ornament at the top of the head. [Thus] I have been paying respect to the right lama who shows [me] that my own mind is a buddha.”

[52.15–24] The qualities of both saṁsāra and nirvāṇa—this [fruit] arising from that [cause]—are immeasurable, [and their causal relation is only known by the lama]. Everything, the accumulations of merit and wisdom, the [bodhisattva] levels, the [five] paths, and buddhahood, can only be obtained from the lama and from no one else. Having ascertained that the only life-blood of benefit and happiness is [your] lama, you do not succumb to the first root infraction [of despising your lama, but rather] venerate him as the crown of [your] head, as [you] do the “king of wish-fulfilling jewels” (rin chen dbang gi rgyal po). Having made offerings [to him] with a mind bent on enlightenment, I will pray for all desired [qualities]. [From him,] too, now that he resides in the middle of [my] heart, I will seek advice with regard to both saṁsāra and nirvāṇa. On the throne of a fearless lion, a red lotus, and a sun and moon [seat] in the joyous [throat] cakra sits the precious protective lama, [who is in essence] Amitāyus, in great meditative equipoise. He teaches the Dharma under the aspect of [the letters] a and nga. I will listen to him, and also others ought to be satisfied with this profound Dharma. A right lama shows the cakras of body, speech, and mind, and the cakra of jewel[-like] wisdom, and also, like Śri Kṛṣṇācarya, the twenty-four sacred places. The lord of the Dharma, the protector, (i.e., Pagmo Drupa) teaches the tripitaka and the four tantra classes, [that is,] the entire scriptures of the victorious one.

[52.24–53.1] Zhang [Tsalpa Tsöndrü], too, frequently said:

The state of nonduality arising from within [your mind] [depends] only [on] the blessing of [your] lama. The wisdom of realization arises among those with faith and respect for the
lama. Those expert in investigation and examination, however, “groped in the dark” (chi cha yod).

[53.1–4] Also the great master of siddhas Dampa Sangye said:

The path that is in essence prajñāpāramitā has the name mahā-mudrā and is completely in accordance with the Māntra[yāna]. This teaching, called the “calming of suffering,” was taught to many fortunate ones here in the country of Tibet.

[53.4–8] In the Avatamsaka[sūtra] [it is explained that] the bodhisattva as a beginner first applies himself to studying, then remains in a solitary place, and finally becomes a spiritual friend. Similar to these stages, three stages corresponding to when he is a studying śrāvaka, a practicing pratyekabuddha, and a helping bodhisattva are explained [in the sūtra]. The first stage is to listen to instructions from the lama, [the second] to meditate on the lama, while by reciting the lama’s mantra on top of that, he completes [the third stage] of the lama. This is called mind training. Therefore, meditation on the lama is the root or essence of the path in the tradition of instructions.

[53.8–9] You may ask, in what sense is it the root? Dampa [Sangye] said:

If you commend yourself to the lama, you reach wherever you like. People of Dingri, show devotion and respect to the lama[, who is like your] feet.

[53.9–11] Accordingly he is the guiding [condition] or root cause that makes you traverse the path. In the Ratnāvali [II.98] it is stated: 1467

The major and minor marks
Of a universal monarch, however good [they may be],
Are said to arise [only] from a single act—
Faith in the king of subduers (i.e., Śākyamuni). 1470

[53.11–13] This means that with faith in the major and minor marks of the king of subduers as cause, you will obtain the major and minor marks of a universal monarch. When you have faith in the king of subduers, reflections of the major and minor marks of [Śākyamuni] shine forth. These are stored as imprints in the mind, and from their maturation they develop into the major and minor marks of a universal monarch.
Likewise, if the lama on whom you are here meditating in order to realize emptiness directly has had no such direct realization of emptiness himself, it will not appear in his disciples either. Therefore Dampa [Sangye] said:

If a mold has no carvings, [the molded figure] will be blank\textsuperscript{1471} and not a [proper] \textit{tsha tsha}.\textsuperscript{1472}

The venerable Gampopa said many times:

It is necessary that the lama himself have a direct realization of emptiness.

Likewise, if [a disciple’s] attention is frequently focused on the body, speech, and mind of a lama who sees the truth, his mind will be really the lama, in the sense that the mental faculty (\textit{yid}) of the disciple will become very similar to [that of] the lama. This is what the above-mentioned teacher (i.e., Gampopa) thinks in the main. This meaning is [expressed in the following line] taught in the \textit{Sampa\textsuperscript{\text{u}}ti[tantra]}:

The [vajra] master is the king of the mind.\textsuperscript{1473}

In this regard Jigten Gönpo said:

As long as they have not become Vajradharas themselves, nobody should meditate on my disciples but only on the root lama. [Otherwise] great confusion is added to confusion.

Also Gotsangpa said:

Often it is seen that the mind\textsuperscript{1474} of the disciple is wasted by praying to a lama who has not the [proper] defining characteristics. If a lama has attachments, it will increase those of a disciple.

In the same way as the sense faculty of the eye is the guiding condition of eye consciousness, so too a lama, who is the king of the mind, functions as the guiding condition for directly realizing emptiness. The meaning of the excellent [beings] who take [their] lama to be like the [wisdom] eye of the forehead is precisely this.
[53.24–54.2] The scriptures depict some who killed [their] parents and then took up a life of homelessness, studied the *tripitaka*, but because they were still engulfed in *samsāra*, did not even attain the mere path of the noble ones. Their disciples, however, attained the fruit of arhatship. The faculty that gave rise to their flawless wisdom resulted from faith in the scriptures. Among the followers of pith instructions it is known as the lama of scriptures.

[54.2–4] Also in this [*Ratnagotravibhāga* (IV.54 (J IV.51))] we find:

> Realizing that there is the suffering of death and transmigration in the gods’ [realm] and the suffering of constant striving in the human [realm],
> Those with insight do not desire the greatest glory among gods or humans.
> This is because of their insight and their persistent faith in the words of the Tathāgata,
> And [consequently], because of their seeing on the basis of their knowledge that “this is suffering, this is its cause, and this is [its] cessation.”

[54.4–7] “They see on the basis of their knowledge” means directly seeing on the basis of their insight, while on the other hand, the guiding condition of this insight of directly seeing, [namely,] what is brought about by the power of faith is called *persistent faith*. That which is brought about by the guiding condition of insight is called *persisting in the Dharma*.

[54.7–13] The second stage is the stage of meditating on the mind. In the [*Aryaḍākinīvajra*]pañjara[tantra] it is stated:

> In this birth you will become a buddha
> By meditating on the mind as the supreme buddha.
> Apart from [this] jewel mind
> There are neither buddhas nor sentient beings.
> Apart from that which is the basis and the different forms of consciousness,
> There is nothing whatsoever.
> The mightiest beings in the three realms,
> All the buddhas, are brought about by the mental faculty.
> The greatest king in the three realms
> Is the true nature of mind (*sems nyid*); by it alone [kingship] is obtained.
> Entities arisen as form, sound,
And smell alike, taste, and tangible object, are here called the jewel mind.
They are quiescent in the supreme dharmadhātu.
[Sākyamuni] said that Form, feeling, discrimination,
Formative forces, and consciousness—None of them is different from the entity of mind.\textsuperscript{1478}

[54.13–16] The meditation on the precious mind is as stated. Moreover, there is [the meditation of] special insight, which is called \textit{analytical meditation} by many scholars, including Kamalaśīla, wherein, based on reasoning such as being beyond one and many, you cultivate a continuum of inferential knowledge. This is preceded by the attainment of calm abiding, [a meditation wherein] you focus on a statue of the Buddha[, for instance]. This is not rejected here, but more profound than that is meditation on the path without conceptual examination.

[54.16–23] That has been also stated in Sahajavajra’s commentary on [stanza no. 6 of] Maitrīpa’s \textit{Tattvadaśaka}:

Being accordingly firmly anchored in the accumulations of calm abiding, [namely,] discipline and the like, you straighten your body upright in an agreeable place,\textsuperscript{1479} and having taken a seat on the cushion of wished-for bliss, you actualize great compassion. Then you need to generate a one-pointed mind. In order to do this, the yogin first of all focuses, as well as he can, on all phenomena [that appear in his mind] just exactly as they are, that is, in any of their possible differentiations, such as skandhas, dhātus, āyatanas, or as having form or not. Then he ascertains that they are empty of the own-being of one and many, whereupon he needs to imbue [his] mind\textsuperscript{1480} by continuously [ascertaining that they are] that way again and again. He must [so] direct [his] mind until body and mind have become very pure. Once they have become very pure, calm abiding is achieved, [as] has been stated [in the following stanza]:

By distinguishing skandhas, etc., you correctly perceive all phenomena,
And analyze [and conclude them] to be empty.
As long as you are in meditative stabilization (samādhi), the mental faculty apprehends them as they really are. Then, coming out of meditative stabilization, you analyze again all phenomena with the eye of insight. Having analyzed [them], you need to meditate again. Thanks to this [practice], you rid yourself of the seeds of doubt. When the mind has become steady by focusing in calm abiding, then, if you analyze with insight (shes rab), the right appearance of wisdom arises, for it is said: “[In] meditative equipoise you know [reality] as it is.”

Insight and calm abiding are continually concordant. In this regard, the path of calm abiding and deep insight united into a pair properly endowed with such skillful means as generosity and discipline is widely known as engaged [bodhi]citta in the tradition of pāramitā. This is the state of preparation, inasmuch as you attain through the [progressive] stages of meditative stabilization—such as the appearance of the marvelous—[the levels] of heat and the like [on the path of] “connecting with definite differentiation” (nirvedabhāgīya).

Once you have next attained the path of seeing, you are in the causal state, and afterward, through the [progressive] stages of meditation, in the state of fruition. Here, in this regard, the distinctions made with respect to engaged [bodhi]citta within the tradition of pāramitā are presented both concisely and at length in the Bhāvanākrama and other works of Kamalasila. You should look them up there; they are not written here for reasons of space.

No such engaged [bodhi]citta is intended here [in the Tattvadasāka, however,] since in the [Bhāvanākrama] it is [only] pure by having been produced on the basis of analysis, whereas here [in the Tattvadasāka] meditation is [performed] with a non-analytical mind right from the beginning. When somebody who possesses pāramitā pith instructions, which are adorned with the words of the guru, internalizes the *Yuganaddha-Madhyamaka, then [his] very insight into the ultimate, [namely,] the emptiness endowed with all excellent forms, [spontaneously] continues in a continuum [of moments]. This is calm abiding and nothing else, for it has been said [in Hevajratantra I.8.44cd]:

When you thoroughly know all phenomena, [Your] meditation is actually nonmeditation.
[55.12–15] For this reason, such a calm abiding and special insight united into a pair are the path; and to be sure, an engaged [bodhi]citta together with devotion toward a goal different [from this path] is not being asserted here. This is [also] taught in [Maitripa’s Mahāyānavināśika, stanza 12]:

[The quintessence] to be realized in the thousands of collections of teachings is emptiness.

[Emptiness] is not realized through analysis. The meaning of destruction (i.e., emptiness) [is rather attained] from the guru. 1486

[55.15–16] It is further stated [in Mahāyānavināśika, stanza 18]:

Whose practice of continuous meditation [remains undisturbed, even] when apprehending [forms] such as a vase, 1487
Will become a great buddha whose single body [of compassion and emptiness pervades] all forms. 1488

[55.16–17] In order to elucidate these two [stanzas], [it should be remembered that Maitripa] said [in Tattvadāśaka, stanza 6cd]:

[The samādhi of realizing reality as it is (yathābhūtasamādhi) occurs through engaged [bodhi]citta,] 1489
Because reality arises without interruption for those acquainted with its abode. 1490

[55.17–20] For those who, thanks to the pith instructions of the right guru, are aware of the basis of this engaged [bodhi]citta, whose nature is the suchness of [the two truths] united into a pair, there arise uninterruptedly, that is, in every moment, emptiness and compassion inseparable, [these being] the defining characteristics of ultimate bodhicitta. They are called yogins, because they are of this very nature.

[55.20–22] Thus it is said, and this is therefore what the venerable Maitripa thought. The way the Ratnagotravibhāga [explains it] here is similar. Among the four principles, namely those of dependence (apekṣāyukti), cause and effect (kāryakāranayukti), proving on the basis of feasibility (upapattisādhanayukti), and true nature (dharmatāyukti), 1491 it is the last, the principle of true nature, by which [the Ratnagotravibhāga] thoroughly
examines reality. As for the principle of true nature in this regard, in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* (X.7) we find:

[55.22–24] Whether tathāgatas appear [in this world] or not, there is, to support the Dharma, the dharmadhātu [as] a support, and this is the principle of true nature.  

[55.24–56.5] In line with this, it has been said in the present commentary (i.e., the *Ratnagotravibhāgavīśyākhyā*):

Now, this buddha nature, whose reach is as great as the dharma-kāya's, whose defining characteristics are not different from [those of] suchness, and that has the nature of a definite potential, exists always and everywhere without any difference. This needs to be seen against the backdrop of [our] taking true nature as the measure. As has been stated [in the *Tathāgatatagarbhasūtra*]: “Son of a noble family, the true nature of phenomena is this: whether tathāgatas appear [in this world] or not, these sentient beings always possess buddha nature.” This true nature of phenomena is here principle, argument, and method. By virtue of which (i.e., true nature of phenomena) this (i.e., contents of perception) is this way (i.e., an accurate realization of mind) and not otherwise. Everywhere it is precisely the true nature of phenomena that is relied upon—the principle underlying an accurate realization [and] a correct knowledge of mind. The true nature of phenomena is inconceivable and unthinkable; it must rather be simply believed in.

[56.5–12] As for the reality of the mind, when generated under the guiding condition of respectful faith in, and devotion to, the lama, the nonconceptual mind grows in its clarity. As a result of this you accurately realize the mind's quality of nonorigination and come to know [its] unobstructedness or [its] luminosity completely. When the eyes [cannot see clearly] or a lamp is not bright [enough], you do not see even the gross outlines of a form. If both are clear [and bright], even the minute details of a form can become clear. Similarly, when the concepts of internalized words and meanings are not clear, you will never be able to actualize the reality of mind. As for the realization, owing to the true nature of pure mind's clarity, that mind is without origination: given that they are the true nature of dependent arising, the phenomena (i.e., dharmas, namely the contents of
perception, etc.) of [mind’s] clarity simply are like the accurate realization of mind based on it (i.e., true nature). Not being [further] modified, however, by wrong assertions and denials, they are what is accurately determined by [what is designated by the affixed suffix] ī. Therefore they become “true nature” (dharmatā).

[56.12–16] This is not like expectations based on a proof that establishes the apprehension of fire from [a direct perception of] smoke by means of inferential cognition. Therefore, the true nature (dharmatā) is taken as the measure when meditating on the mind. Since measure (i.e., valid cognition) has the connotation of “not perverting,” the phenomena of mind’s clarity are not perverted by it (i.e., dharmatā as measure). The learned need to ascertain this. Even in the matter of inferential cognition, the force of the inference is exactly as great as the [power of] recalling the three modes of proof. Moreover, the power of recalling is altered by [your] very clear statement of proof for the other party. Therefore Dignāga said: “I make it clear!”

[56.16–18] As for cultivating a direct [cognition] that sees reality, a lama who directly sees the true nature [of the mind] is needed, and as for cultivating inferential [cognitions], you need to see what a disputant must [still] establish on his own. The two are obviously similar. Also, Candragomin said:

[56.18–19] Reasoning itself is to extract the essence, to extract what is supreme. If there is no [proper] reliance, it is not [properly done].

[56.19–21] Accordingly, the reliance on a disputant is needed. Especially in order to realize the emptiness of all phenomena on the basis of proofs, such as being beyond one and many or [that of] dependent [arising], a strength of conviction must certainly be generated. [Thus] it is stated in the commentary on the [Madhyamaka-]Avatāra (XI.55):

[56.21–23] Likewise it is obvious that even nowadays some who in former lives formed the mental imprint of a strong conviction regarding emptiness realize the depth of emptiness on the strength of [this] cause alone. [Moreover,] it is seen that even those who have failed—in that they regard as true that [which is taught] according to the textual traditions of the “non-Buddhists” (tīrthikas)—fathom the depth of emptiness on the strength of [that] cause alone.
Thus, wishing [your practice] to be preceded by the force of conviction and merit, you by all means need to accumulate merit through dependence on a lama in order to realize the properties of natural luminosity. As it has been said [in Hevajratantra 1.8.36cd]:

[The coemergent is neither taught by anyone else nor found anywhere (i.e., in scriptures)]. It must be known by yourself, from [having accumulated] merit by taking recourse to the skillful means of [pith instructions obtained] while passing time with the master.  

Well then, somebody may ask in what way emptiness is realized by way of direct [cognition] only, unpreceded by inferential [reasoning]. This has to be [further] explained. In the Madhyamakālaṃkāra (stanza 73) [it is stated]:

[57.1–2] Now, since the nature of it (i.e., a vase, etc.) is directly manifest
By having realized it,
Why is it that unwise people
Do not realize in this way the nature (dngos po) of entities?  

You may object: when these [things] are realized, it does not make sense that their own-being is not realized. It is as if you look at a piece of land devoid of vases and realize that its essence is to be devoid of vases. If ordinary beings, even the worst [of them], whose view is not good (lit., “white”), perceive things that are merely free from all possible [wrong] superimpositions [baselessly arrived at] from the formlessness of entities and the like, why do they not realize them as they are?  

[57.5–6] [The Madhyamakālaṃkāra (stanza 74) answers]:

[In fact] they do not. Having a burdensome [mind]stream without beginning,
They are overpowered by [their habit of] of imagining entities as real;
Therefore no living beings
Directly realize it (i.e., the nature of entities).  

Those entering into worldly existence without beginning, whose intellect is disturbed by the poison of an obstinate adherence to entities, are not able to thoroughly understand [their] form, in the sense of perceiving
[reality] in a simple direct way. This is like people with an impaired intellect who do not realize momentariness because they focus on a continuum of similar events. Moreover, [ordinary direct perception] is not very amazing. Even though the shapes of a vase, an ox, and so forth, which are devoid [of the universal properties] of an ox and so forth, are clearly seen, those who have a mistaken understanding, [viewing as they do things] according to the traditions of Kapila, Kaṇāda, and the like, do not perceive [them] in this way (i.e., as being empty of universal properties). Thus all sentient beings possess a knowledge of [direct] appearances [even] on the basis of not having ascertained natural emptiness. Nevertheless, owing to the confusion that has arisen throughout beginningless time, ascertainment is lacking. It is like the Śāṅkhyas and others, who possess a knowledge [of things] that clearly appear to be devoid of real universal properties, and still a [corresponding] ascertainment does not arise [in them]. Thus it has been said. Master Haribhadra, too, [said,] when explaining the defining characteristics of an own-being in [his] commentary on the Aṣṭasāhasrika Prajñāpāramitā, that all sentient beings possess a knowledge that [is capable of] directly seeing emptiness.

[57.14–15] Gōtsangpa said:

The [latent] knowledge at the time [you are an ordinary] being
Exists in the form of the dharmakāya;
Even though it is taught by the lama, this is not [really] necessary—
It is suitable for being realized by yourself.

[57.15–17] With that in mind, venerable Koṭali, too, said:

Eye consciousness, without the duality [imagined] by thought,
Is wisdom—fantastic!


The other form (pararūpa) is concealed
By [thought’s] own form (sva-rūpa), [imputed] by the intellect,
Which, [while] basing itself on different entities,
Reflects a single object.

Through [such] a concealing [thought]
The concealed manifold objects appear—even though discrete in themselves—
As if they were not different entities,
In some form [suggestive of a universal property].

Under the constraint of [such] thinking on the part of it [i.e., the intellect],
[This] universal is [then] declared to be [something] existent.
Ultimately, [however,] it does not exist
The way it is imagined by that [intellect].

[57.20–26] The meaning of this quote [is]: To a conceptual knowledge controlled by direct cognitions that take in different entities, such as sandalwood and nyagrodha [trees], there appears the form of a single universal called tree, into which all distinctive features of a tree are gathered. When it appears, you think that that form is external, and cling to the existence of a single object universal. Even though such objects do not relate to a single universal, these objects' nonexistence becomes obscured by the thought's own form, and the [concrete] entities of trees are seen as something not different from the single entity of the universal tree. Since a great number of sentient beings possess such thoughts, the existence of universals is proclaimed in accordance with the ideas of the many. The intellect that contains the form of the universal tree thus corresponds to the apparent (lit., "concealing") [truth], concealing as it does the ultimate. Such a universal of a tree is a mere convention, but apart from that it does not exist in any ultimate sense. To sum up, it may be said that the universal [called] tree is imputed to the set of trees taken as the basis of imputation.

[58.1–5] Sentient beings face two [types of] confusion: perceptual confusion, such as the yellow appearance of a [white] conch shell, and the confusion of adherence, such as adhering to the universal tree as an entity. Inferential knowledge removes the confusion of adherence but not perceptual confusion. Inferences are thoughts, and it is obvious that thoughts are like the conception of entities, which naturally is confusion. This is what Dharmakirti said, and Kamalasila asserted [this] as well:

Naturally these thoughts
Are in the end the nature of ignorance.

Therefore, with respect to the ultimate, appearances are only confusion.

[58.5–6] Likewise, all apprehensions involving obstinately adhering to entities, which must be refuted by the Mādhyamikas, are simply like these universals grasped at by thought. In the Hastavālavytti it is stated:
[58.6–12] You regard and perceive a rope as a snake. To see it as a rope would be meaningless. Here, in a not so fortunate land, you apprehend at dusk the form of a rope simply as the property of a universal and thus become confused. Because you do not thoroughly grasp the nature of [its] distinctive features, a [false] knowledge arises that certifies: “This [can be] only a snake!” [Even] if you perceive its distinctive features, this knowledge too is confused knowledge, and in the end meaningless, given the tedious mental fabrication caused by imagining it not the way it really is. The knowledge with regard to that [rope] is also confused, as [in the case of seeing] a snake, when you see its parts [and still cling to the rope as a single entity]. Also with regard to that rope, if you divide it into its parts and examine it, an own-being of a rope is not apprehended. This being the case, the apprehension of a rope is nothing but mere confusion, like the intellect thinking that it is a snake.

[58.12–13] Thus it is said that the seeing of different parts while clinging to the existence of a single phenomenon is the systematized confusion of all confusions. Likewise it is stated in the [Bodhisattvayogācāra] catuḥśatāka[ṭikā]:

[58.13–20] Just as you say that something permanent exists when looking at a continuum wrongly, you [also] say that an entity exists when looking at an accumulation wrongly. The flame of a butter lamp passes out of existence every single moment; [still,] the earlier and later moments are based on an uninterrupted connection of cause and effect. When there is an accumulation of causes and conditions, an existing continuum comes forth. Similarly, if everything conditioned that passes out of existence as soon as it has arisen has an accumulation of causes and conditions of such a nature, then existent continua, which are based on the uninterrupted connection of cause and effect, have been coming forth throughout beginningless time. Therefore you can infer with certainty how the own-being of these continua abides. As for the non-Buddhist āryas, who ascertain [their existence] in a mistaken way, they remember a former basis; since they do not directly perceive the momentary destruction within it, they see the continua, which pass from one skandha to the next, in a wrong
way, and accept both a self and an other. [Thus] they think that entities exist as something permanent.\textsuperscript{1513}

[58.20–23] It is further stated:

Specifically and generally characterized phenomena are [here] merely being imputed. But when these [phenomena] arise, it is only an accumulation that arises and only an accumulation that passes out of existence. Since opponents do not know the accumulation the way it really is and see [it] wrongly, they consider that discrete [entities], such as earth, are established in terms of an own-being and realize only an entity that, besides being simply mistaken, is also unjustified logically.\textsuperscript{1514}

[58.23–26] Likewise, all imputations that a nature of entities exists are made on the basis of different parts. All perceptions of permanence, such as the thought that “the man of last year is this one [here]” are merely imputations to different earlier and later parts. Therefore, [whereas] Dharmakīrti [applies this critique] only to how universals are [wrongly] imputed to be real, it is applied in the Madhyamaka treatises to assertions concerning particulars\textsuperscript{1515} as well, and [then] it is determined that all entities are without an own-being.\textsuperscript{1516}

[58.26–59.5] Such being the case, when you come close to something that appears from [afar, as from] the other side [of a valley], to be a single small [entity], you see different [things], such as grass, trees, and stones, and not a single [entity]. Looking at a stream of water from a long distance, you see it as [something] immovable as if it were a stick. Coming close to it, you see only a series of former and later waves, and not that it is immovable. Likewise, when the direct [perception] arisen from the yoga of one-pointedness thoroughly investigates the mind and outer [objects] in any of their temporal differences, it realizes that no own-being whatsoever can be apprehended in any entity. This is the way to directly realize nonorigination.

[59.5–6] The continuum of direct [perceptions] repudiates concepts, which involve words and meanings. When these are overcome, [the result is] the entire overcoming of appearances. With regard to this, the Ven. [Maitripa?] said:

You realize that they (i.e., appearances) came forth through the cause of expressing forms of objects.
Therefore the fruit, [namely,] all mistaken appearances, have ceased. With regard to this, former [masters] explained: "Appearances have dissolved in the mind." When you perform an analytical meditation based on inferential [cognitions], it is not the case that a direct [cognition] that realizes reality arises immediately after these same [inferential] thoughts have ceased, but rather [only] when [all] thoughts disappear. Only then does a mere nonconceptual direct [cognition] arise, and from this arises a direct [cognition] that realizes reality. These two differ only in being far and close.

These stages were taught by the Ven. [Maitripa?], who said:

Constantly search and thoroughly investigate
With the help of mental expressions (manojalpa).¹⁵¹⁷
There is nothing to be internalized or expressed.
Analyze with the yoga of one taste as well!

Kamalaśīla, too, explained in the [three] Bhāvanākramas and the commentary on the Nirvikalpapraśadadhāraṇī that at the end of analysis you rest in nonconceptuality only.

Atiśa said in the Madhyamakopadeśa:¹⁵¹⁸

Likewise, the mind of the past has ceased and passed out of existence. The future mind has not yet arisen and come forth. It is very difficult to investigate the present mind under such [circumstances]. It has no color and lacks shape. Being like space it is not established [as anything]. In other words, if you analyze and break it down with the weapons of reasoning, such as that it is beyond one and many, or has not arisen, or natural luminosity, you realize that it is not established [as anything]. Likewise, if neither [color nor shape] are established as entities in terms of any own-being whatsoever, and [both are] nonexistent only, the thoroughly cognitive insight itself is not established either. For example, being subject to the condition of a fire kindled by rubbing two pieces of wood, these two pieces, too, are burned, and afterward there is nothing left; even the very fire that burnt [them] goes out. Similarly, when all phenomena, inasmuch as they are specifically and generally characterized, are simply established as nonexistent, even that insight does not appear, and since this is luminosity that is not established in terms of any own-being whatsoever, all mistakes,
such as laxity and excitement, are removed. During this time no knowledge whatsoever is conceptualized, nothing whatsoever is perceived, and all mindfulness (dran pa) and attention (yid la byed pa) have been given up. The knowledge (namely, consciousness) should remain in such a mode until the enemies and thieves, namely, [characteristic] signs and thoughts, come up [again].

[59.22–24] In this respect, Gōtsangpa said:

As for the analytical meditation of the scholars and the kusulu meditation of resting—if the two are taken by themselves, the path in the kusulu tradition is faster.

[59.24–60.5] If you [intend to use] such a yoga in meditation, then in the Lāṅkāvatārasūtra it has been explained as meditation in five stages. It has been said:

Moreover, Mahāmati, I will explain the turning back of the conditions of ignorance, thirst, and karman; the turning back of thoughts, [namely,] the suffering of the three worlds; and the view that objects as appearances of your own mind are an illusion. Mahāmati, there are some Śramaṇas or Brāhmaṇas who assert that something exists without having existed before, [namely,] the manifest fruit of a cause and an entity abiding in time; [further] that, depending on conditions, skandhas, elements, and sense spheres arise, remain, and, also after coming into existence, cease. Mahāmati, they uphold a destructive and nihilist [view] with regard to [things like a mental] continuum, action, origination [and destruction], worldly existence, nirvāṇa, the path, karman, effects, and truth. Why is that? It is because they do not apprehend directly and thus lack fundamental insight.

[60.5–7] From that [passage] up to

Mahāmati, the bodhisattvas, the great beings, will attain before long the sameness of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa,
it states that having turned away from a nihilist view, you meditate on the sameness of sāṃsāra and nirvāṇa, on the strength of minutely analyzing the causal and resultant phenomena of sāṃsāra.

[60.7–9] Immediately after that, the “physical isolation” is taught in [the passage]:

Mahāmati, through [their] right practice, which is connected with the effortless [accomplishment] of great compassion and skillful means, through [their practice of seeing] that all sentient beings are the same as an illusion and a reflection....

[60.9–10] The “mental isolation” is taught in [the passage]:

Through [their practice of seeing that the original state] has not started from [causes and] conditions and is beyond [the duality of] an internal and external object.

[60.10–13] Immediately after that, the blessing by themselves, [namely,] the meditative stabilization [of experiencing phenomena to be] illusion-like, is taught in [the passage]:

[Bodhisattvas] who, through [their practice of] not seeing [objects] outside of the mind, become endowed with the blessing of being without characteristic signs, who deeply meditate as part of [their practice of] gradually pursuing [their chosen] object[s] of meditative stabilization along the stages represented by the [bodhisattva] levels, and who are convinced that the threefold world is an illusion [produced by] their own mind, they attain the meditative stabilization [of experiencing phenomena to be] illusion-like.

[60.13–14] After that, “luminosity without appearance” is taught in [the passage]:

By entering [a state that consists of] only their own mind without appearance, they attain the abode of prajñāpāramitā.

[60.14–18] “Union into a pair” is taught in [the passage]:
Mahāmati, the bodhisattvas who are free from origination and action[1534] fully attain what conforms to the body of a tathāgata, which is like the form of a vajra in meditative stabilization. [This body] is endowed with the emanation [body] of suchness [and thus][1535] adorned with power, clairvoyance, control, love, compassion, and skillful means, a body of a tathāgata, which has arrived at the place that offers passage to all the buddhafields, is beyond the mind, mental faculty, and mental consciousness, and whose basis has been gradually transformed. 1536, 1537

[60.18–20] Also, the three meditative stabilizations (samādhi) that are taught in [the stanza:] “May the perfection of meditation be completed by the samādhi [of experiencing phenomena to be] illusion-like, the samādhi of becoming a hero, and the vajra-like samādhi,”[1538] are united into a pair with the prajñāpāramitā [of experiencing phenomena to be] illusion-like and [the experience] without appearance.

[60.20–25] With respect to this, the utmost among purposeful objects of bodhisattvas is the activity of a tathāgata. This activity must be performed with compassion in accordance with the way it is taught [in the Ratnagotravibhāga] as “[pouring down] from the clouds of compassion.”[1539] Therefore, it is said here [in the Lankāvatārasūtra, quoted above]:[1540] “great compassion.” [The pāda RGV IV.4b]: “By which, [that is,] by [which of] the numerous means for those to be guided”[1541] is taught [in the Lankāvatārasūtra] by way of “skillful means.” [The pāda RGV IV.3d]: “The wise one[s] are always without effort” is taught by way of the “effortless accomplishment.” [The Lankāvatāra passage] “The right practice, which is connected [with…]”[1542] [means] the right practice of meditation on the activity that possesses [these] three particular [qualities]. It is said to possess five stages.

[60.25–61.7] Even though the body of all the [buddha] elements of sentient beings has no [independent] self, it has nevertheless arisen, by the spell and medicine of mere ignorance, and is thus illusory. Since it is only an appearance in the mind, the isolation of the body from a [wrong] view is taught. If analyzed, it has arisen from the pure mind, and did not start from causes and conditions that consist of elements or anything formed from elements. 1543 This is the isolation [of the mind] from the ordinary. The essential mind is isolated from an outer perceived object and an inner perceiving, and this is the isolation of the mind. No characteristic signs or forms of an outward looking mind exist, and being blessed by [such] non-conceptuality, the bodhisattvas who are endowed with it go with [their]
body of meditative stabilization to the pure abode, etc., until they gradually go to the tenth level. They pursue, [that is, they become] concordant with, the objects of meditative stabilization [on various levels] and are convinced that the entire mind of the three worlds is their own mind, [the three worlds being] an illusion. In view of that, they deeply meditate and attain a meditative stabilization where one of the defining characteristics is the perception that all the buddha realms are like an illusion.

[61.7–13] Having entered suchness, which means that forms or appearances of characteristic signs simply do not exist in their mind, they attain the abode of prajñāpāramitā, which embodies the eighteen types of emptiness. This amounts to full enlightenment. Having attained enlightenment, the bodhisattvas, who are free from the activity of striving to be born with a pure body, do not conceptually differentiate between the two “doors” of enlightenment and appearance when, from the state of full enlightenment, the door to the appearance of the limitless objects of knowledge opens. This [state] is therefore said to be like the form of a vajra [in] meditative stabilization. It is [also] called the vajra-like meditative stabilization or the “union into a pair.” Its qualities conform with [those of] a tathāgata’s dharmakāya. The suchness is endowed with such emanations that appear in [different] forms to sentient beings. This demonstrates [the matter] in short.

[61.13–18] When explained in detail, [the word] dharma in dharmakāya [stands for] strength, clairvoyance, ten types of control, love toward concrete [beings], and compassion in general. The own-being of these is [expressed by] kāya. They are adorned with [skillful] means for the sake of others, and have arrived at the place that offers a passage to all the buddhafIELDS. A characteristic of them is that they teach to some as to disciples and to others as to teachers. An emanation is the assuming of forms for the sake of limitless sentient beings. Not depending on another path, they have reversed the mind, [that is,] the basic consciousness, the defiled [consciousness], and the mental consciousness. Free from these three, they gradually—[that is, by] progressing (pho ba) from one [bodhisattva] level to the next—[but] fully attain the three kāyas of a tathāgata of a transformed (phos pa) basis.

[61.18–22] It was the master Āryadeva who said that this text teaches the five stages. Therefore I have followed the words of this master and explained matters accordingly. Lamas who practice the pith instructions of this text [i.e., the Ratnagotravibhāga] explain [these instructions in terms of] stages of meditation on [buddha] nature called the four yogas. I cannot say with certainty that their literal expressions are nowhere [found] in the scriptures,
only that I did not see them. [Their] meaning[,] however[,] is explained in the _Laṅkāvatārasūtra_.

[61.22–26] Even though there are many [explanations on] the stages of the four yogas composed by lamas, [I quote here] Zhang [Tsalpa Tsöndrü Drag (grags)], [who] said:\(^{1548}\)

The meditative equipoise of realizing your mind is known in the stages of the four yogas. When the yoga of one-pointedness has arisen, you realize the nature (rang bzhin) of your own mind. Clarity and emptiness are not obstructed, and are without middle and extreme, like the vault of pure space. To remain in a vibrant (sing ge)\(^{1549}\) and crisp (ye re)\(^{1550}\) state is the meditative equipoise of the first yoga. The spreading of thoughts from it is [already] the [state] attained after [meditation], even though you may have meditated seated. When you remain in [this] vibrant and crisp state of clarity and emptiness, there may be internal chatter [and] movement, but you remain within the meditative equipoise.

[61.26–62.3] When the yoga of freedom from mental fabrication has arisen, you realize the true nature (ngo bo) of your own mind. It is uninterrupted awareness, free from mental fabrication. Your own mind, which is without origination and cessation, adopting and discarding, is grounded in the dharmakāya, and this is the meditative equipoise of the second yoga. When you remain in this, there may be mental movement, chatter, and talk, but you are still in meditative equipoise. When distracted by the characteristic signs of mental fabrication, you may meditate seated, but this is [already the state] attained after [meditation].

[62.3–9] When the yoga of one taste has arisen, you realize the defining characteristics of your own mind. You realize that manifold saṁsāra and nirvāṇa arise from your own mind, which is the dharmakāya [and] free from mental fabrication. The entire multiplicity, [including] thoughts and the nonconceptual, appearances and nonappearance, abiding and not, being empty and not, being clear and not, has, as luminosity and dharmakāya, one taste. Therefore, you see the appearance of the great dharmakāya but not the conceptual, which is not luminosity. The realization of a sameness of taste in this way, [that is,] the moment of capturing it with the mental faculty (yid), is the meditative
equipoise of the third yoga. When it is captured by the uncon­
trived mental faculty, there may be mental jumping, running,
chatter, and talk, but you still remain within the meditative
equipoise. When separated from the uncontrived mental faculty,
you may meditate seated, but this is [already the state] attained
after [meditation].

[62.9–17] When the yoga of nonmeditation has arisen, the
yogin does not need to meditate, the true nature of awareness
[now] being free of [the need for any] support. There is no med­
itator; he has disappeared. It is said that the Buddha with his
three kāyas and five types of wisdom has become fully complete
in yourself. Now [you realize your] primordial knowledge that
this [Buddha] is yourself. This is the accomplishment of
mahāmudrā. You are certain that this [Buddha] is yourself. The
thought that you have attained [this] primordially present
accomplishment is not [the product of] a conceited mind. There
is neither retaining nor not retaining by mindfulness, neither
mental engagement nor lack thereof, neither one taste nor not
[one taste]. There is no duality. When [you let] consciousness
[rest] in its own place, there are neither stages of meditative
equipoise nor [the state] obtained afterward. In uninterrupted
awareness and emptiness there is no dying and no being born.
The strength of a garuda comes to completion within the
eggshell. When it leaves the eggshell it [immediately] flies off
into space. [Likewise,] the qualities of the three kāyas are
[already] complete within [your] mind. [The powers of work­
ing] for the benefit of others arise after the [constraining] “seal”
of the body1551 has been destroyed [at death].1552 [When they]
arise in such a way without meditation, there are no [separate]
stages of meditative equipoise and a [state] attained afterward.
As long as there is something to become familiar with, [such as]
how elevated a realization may be, there is a duality of medita­
tive equipoise and a [state] attained afterward, there is a retain­
ing and not retaining by mindfulness, and there is the duality of
being distracted and not. When there is nothing to become
familiar with, [and this is] the only [thing that] arises, this should
be called nothing to meditate on.

[62.17–23] Also in the Lāṅkāvatārasūtra, in the answer to Mañjūghoṣa’s
(i.e., Mahāmati’s) question on the great yoga (mahāyoga), it has been said:
The Buddha replied: “Mahāmati, the great bodhisattvas, great beings who are in possession of the four dharmas,1553 are yogins of the great yoga. What are their four dharmas? They are: the ascertainment1554 that appearances are your own mind; abandoning the view of origination, abiding, and destruction; the realization1555 that external entities do not exist; and the strong wish1556 to internalize the wisdom of the noble ones by yourself.1557 Mahāmati, bodhisattvas, great beings who possess these four dharmas, are yogins of the great yoga.

[62.23–63.2] If somebody asks, Mahāmati, how a bodhisattva, a great being, then becomes expert in ascertaining that appearances are his own mind, [the answer] is: he looks1558 at it in the following way: this threefold world is only your own mind. The mind is devoid of an I and a mine, [subsists] without motion, and without adopting or discarding. Throughout beginningless time it is permeated by [the inclination to] adhere to imprints of baseness left by mental fabrications.1559 It is closely1560 connected with indulging in the variegated forms of the triple world. It appears1561 to be in concordance with the concepts (i.e., the mental fabrications) of body, property, dwelling place, and existence.1562 In this way, Mahāmati, a bodhisattva, a great being, is expert in ascertaining that appearances are his own mind.”1563

[63.2–7] Thereby is the yoga of one-pointedness taught. It has five distinctive features: the meditation [that everything is] mind only; neither adopting nor discarding; being permeated by the imprints of mental fabrication; connection; and concordance. The first is the meditative stabilization of realizing that clarity and emptiness are like space. As for the appearances of the threefold world, everything appears as the nature of this clarity and emptiness itself. You realize that only this much is wandering about in samsāra. The I or its mine of a goer from here to the other side is not different from this [clarity and emptiness]. Therefore, even when you pass into the next world, it is only the mind that is passing [away]; there is nothing else apart from it that wanders to the other world.

[63.7–9] Second, you think that the abiding in clarity and emptiness and the wandering of thoughts—these two—are not different categories in terms of their substance. Since precisely clarity and emptiness move about as thoughts, nothing whatsoever must be adopted or discarded with regard to thought and clarity.
Third, you know that the imprints of mental fabrication have not been given up when many thoughts occur again, even though you have seen [mind] as clarity and emptiness.

Fourth, you know that even the indulging subject, [that is,] the various forms of intellect, which indulge in the [world] of objects when it is not resting in meditative equipoise, is the mind of clarity and emptiness itself.

Fifth, you know that all the appearances of a body, property, a dwelling place, and the realms of the six types [of beings] are bound up with this same mind, in that they share the same identity.

Thus, it has been said in many ways that all thoughts [arising by way] of the doors of appearance are known to have the nature of nonthought. One [stanza] in accordance with this has been taught in Pramāṇavārttika [III.287]:

That which clings to word and meaning with regard to any [object]—
This very knowledge is a mental construct with regard to [this object].
[Its] nature is not word or meaning;
Therefore, in this respect all types [of knowledge] are direct.

In the sūtras and śāstras it is explained that you understand mind only because it has been ascertained that the connection between a noun and its referent is imagined. This [fifth point] is nothing more than this. Götsangpa takes this yoga of one-pointedness to be the essence of [the path of] accumulation and the four branches [of the path] of penetration, namely heat and the rest.

If somebody asks, Mahāmati, how a bodhisattva, a great being, abandons the view of origination, abiding, and destruction, [the answer is]: as [in the case of] the [apparent] arising of forms in an illusion or a dream, no entities arise, since [their true nature] does not exist in terms of either self, other, or [a combination of] both. Bodhisattvas follow [the fact that entities] are only appearances of their own mind, and see the nonexistence of external entities. Having seen this, they see that the forms of consciousness are not active, and that the conditions [for these forms] are not heaped up, wherefore they see that the triple world has arisen from conditions of thought; and because of not
apprehending any inner or outer phenomena, they truly see that [the triple world] lacks an own-being, and the view of origination is discarded. They realize that the own-being of phenomena is an illusion or the like, and thereby fully attain [the ability] to endure that phenomena do not arise. Mahāmati, in this way a bodhisattva, a great being, abandons the view of origination, abiding, and destruction.

[63.24–26] This is the yoga of freedom from mental fabrication:

When the yoga of freedom from mental fabrication has arisen, you realize the true nature (ngo bo) of your own mind. It is uninterrupted awareness, free from mental fabrication. Your own mind, which is without origination and cessation, adopting and discarding, is grounded in the dharmakāya, and this is the meditative equipoise of the second yoga.

[63.26–64.2] It is as explained in these [stanzas]. All entities are like the forms in an illusion or a dream. Even though they appear to arise, they do not do so [in reality]. If no true nature can be established [for them] as a self, other, or [a combination of] both, they simply do not arise. You realize that they are altogether baseless and without root.

[64.2–9] [The yoga] increases to [encompass] five distinctive features of that realization. First, seeing that the appearances are in accordance with the mind, you realize that the totality of all appearances are mind, in that when the mind is happy or suffering, [its] appearances are similar. Second, seeing that the mind lacks an own-being, you see that appearances are the mind’s “doors of appearance” and you realize[, in addition,] that appearances lack an own-being. Third, because this realization has arisen, the sense faculties turn inward, and the five [forms of] consciousness no longer engage with objects. Fourth, the conditions for consciousness to arise are the five sense faculties, [their] objects, and nonperception (avijñāpti). These eleven piled-up heaps are mere imagining and, moreover, lack an own-being. You see, further, that these eleven, [that is,] any heaps to be piled up, are without an own-being or basis. Fifth, the yogin increasingly sees that the outer and inner heaps (skandhas) lack an own-being and realizes that the entire threefold world has also arisen from what is made under the conditions of inner thought. It is said:
The three forms of existence are simply imagined and do not exist as entities with an own-being.\textsuperscript{1572}

This path of realization has two fruits. As to the first, the unconditioned fruit [or] cessation, because [the bodhisattvas] do not apprehend any outer and inner phenomena and truly see that [phenomena] lack an own-being, the view or notion that entities arise in terms of [an] own-being is contradicted. Therefore, [this view] is discarded, and so everything to be abandoned on [the path of] seeing, such as the sixty-two base views, is abandoned. As to the conditioned [fruit], they realize that it [has] the nature of things like illusions, and thereby fully attain the essence of the path of liberation, [that is, the ability] to endure that phenomena do not arise[, which in turn is the ability to endure] that which follows the proclamation [of emptiness].\textsuperscript{1573} The way it has been explained [here] is: “Mahāmati, in this way a bodhisattva, a great being, abandons the view of origination, abiding, and destruction.”\textsuperscript{1574} Göttsangpa thinks that this realization [amounts to the same] as attaining the first [bodhisattva] level.\textsuperscript{1575}

If somebody asks, Mahāmati, how then a bodhisattva, a great being, becomes expert in realizing that: external entities do not exist, [the answer] is: Mahāmati, all entities\textsuperscript{1576} are like a fata morgana, a dream, and the apparitions of falling hairs.\textsuperscript{1577} All entities lack an own-being\textsuperscript{1578} and are caused by adhering to [what arises from] the imprints\textsuperscript{1579} of thoughts—[from] the ripening,\textsuperscript{1580} in various forms,\textsuperscript{1581} of the baseness of mental fabrication, [and such ripening occurs] throughout beginningless time. Bodhisattvas\textsuperscript{1582} and great beings who correctly see this realize that external entities do not exist in such a way. This is [the meaning of the sentence]: “A bodhisattva, a great being, is expert in realizing that external entities do not exist.”\textsuperscript{1583}

In this [passage from the \textit{Laṅkāvatārasūtra} the yoga of one taste is taught. In the same way as [Zhang] explained [the yoga of one taste],\textsuperscript{1584} all entities that are subsumed under [the categories] object and mind are only false appearances, since they resemble a fata morgana, a dream, and the apparitions of falling hairs. A dam is not needed for the water of a fata morgana, and it is not necessary to take care of a son from a dream, nor is it necessary to tie apparitions of falling hairs into a knot.
Likewise, when you see the essential nature of mind, not the slightest endeavor of view is needed to repel appearances. Therefore, you realize that all appearances in the form of entities are this very true nature of mind (*sems nyid*) that lacks an own-being. Because you realize, as a consequence of this, that *-appearances and dharmatā are of one taste, you do not abandon or adopt anything.

[65.4-7] You may wonder, if that is the way it is, what is it, then, that appears in different forms, without having an own-being? It is what appears owing to the power of the baseness of mental fabrications [that occur] throughout beginningless time. “BASENESS OF MENTAL FABRICATIONS” in turn [means:] Thoughts are mental fabrications, and their imprints are baseness. Also the appearances in various forms, such as mountains and houses, that [arise] from these [imprints] are called—using the name of the cause for the fruit—imprints. It is like saying “This is poison” when seeing the [already manifest] disease [caused by it].

[65.7-9] Thoughts of adhering to manifold [appearances and the like] arise, and from the imprints left by them, similar [appearances] arise in turn. Such a mechanism of alternating imprints and thoughts has no beginning in time. [As] has been said [in the *Mahāyānābhidharmasūtra*]:

The beginningless sphere (i.e., the buddha element) is the basis of all phenomena.

[65.9-13] Thus the support of imprints is the true nature of mind (*sems nyid*) in its natural luminosity. It is because you thus realize that mind and appearances are of one taste that this is called the yoga of one taste. Gōtsangpa thinks that this [ranges] from the second to the seventh [bodhisattva] level. Accordingly, bodhisattvas and great beings realize that external entities do not exist. [And this is the meaning of the sentence]: “A bodhisattva, a great being, is expert in realizing that external entities do not exist.”

[65.13-16] [The *Lankāvatārasūtra* further says]:

Somebody might ask: How does a bodhisattva, a great being, [get] the strong wish to internalize the wisdom of the noble ones himself? [The answer] is: having fully attained [the ability to] endure that phenomena do not arise, [bodhisattvas] dwelling on the eighth level obtain the mental body owing to their thorough understanding of final perfection, which is the realization of the mind, the mental faculty, the mental consciousness, the five categories, the [three] natures, and the two types of selflessness.
[65.16-25] In this [passage,] the yoga of nonmeditation is taught....1590 The “wisdom [of the noble ones understood] by yourself” is precisely this [same yoga of nonmeditation] as explained [by Zhang].

[65.25-66.2] With regard to [this wisdom], it is stated in this [Laṅkāvatārasūtra II.202]:

[Mahāmati, a bodhisattva or great being] who has withdrawn alone to a solitary place analyzes1591 himself with his own intellect, because he does not consider valid and reliable words of the Buddha [any more]. Not relying on anybody else, he has abandoned [wrong] views and concepts, and exerts himself to gradually advance [through the bodhisattva levels] and [finally] reach the level of a tathāgata. Mahāmati, this is the defining characteristic of having realized the wisdom of the noble ones by himself.1592

[66.2–5] Therefore, because the yogin becomes aware on his own, [and] not by way of direct and inferential valid cognitions or the reliable words of the Buddha—since there is no relying on the valid cognitions of any person whatsoever—this is called “having internalized by yourself.” This [fact] is called nonmeditation, because what is called meditation is the force of the desire to meditate and the cognition of the characteristic signs of meditation, and these do not exist here [from this level on].

[66.5–12] [The expression] “being resolved” in [the sentence] “being resolved to [attain your experiential] object of realizing the wisdom of the noble ones by yourself”1593 denotes [a kind of] provisional self-realization in which you internalize conviction, even though this conviction is not manifest from the eighth level onward. Also [the expression] “endurance of the fact that phenomena do not arise” occurs many times in the scriptures. Having thoroughly investigated with the insight of reflection, you [learn to] endure that there is no origination in terms of an own-being. This is called the first endurance. On the first level it is called the endurance that follows the proclamation [of emptiness]. On the sixth level, it is called the concordant endurance. As to the eighth level attainment of the [ability] to endure that phenomena do not arise, on former levels [bodhisattvas] realize in meditative equipoise that phenomena do not arise, and [the endurance of this fact] started from that [realization]. [Though] you realize on the eighth level that phenomena do not arise, [the endurance of this fact] did not start [only] from that [level]1594 and is thus [already] a great endurance [by the eighth level]. Therefore, supreme endurance is given the name of endurance, in the same way as a person capable of good deeds is [only] called a person.
Some [yogins] may be able to sit on one cushion for up to one month, but when the second month starts, they have to get up, and in this case do not have the slightest endurance any more. It is like that also on the former [bodhisattva] levels. Because of that endurance, the mind, [that is,] the five types of consciousness together with the basic consciousness, the defiled mind, and the mental faculty with thoughts, is transformed on the eighth level. Among the five dharmas, it is names, characteristic signs, and thoughts that are transformed, and even the three natures and the two types of selflessness are fully realized here. On the seventh level and below, the appearances of the mental consciousness—and therefore the imagined [nature]—are not reversed. Since the thoughts of the mental faculty are not reversed, the dependent [nature] is not reversed. Although the imprints of imagining the two types of self have not been abandoned up to the seventh level, they are reversed here on the eighth level. Because of the perfect realization following from that, the [three] natures and the two types of selflessness are realized, [which is] the thorough understanding [characteristic of] final perfection. 1595

[66.19–21] [As for] the attaining of the mental body: you attain on this level the mental body, which [amounts to] the realization of the svabhāvikakāya, and [this] distinctive [goal] is named [accordingly] and explained in these terms. As to the mental body in detail, when this text explains the mental body, it does so by taking its lead from this sūtra. 1596

[66.21–26] With regard to the Laṅkāvatārasūtra, there are two [translations], a shorter one, the so-called essence of the discourse, and one longer than it—longer in that it contains in the first part the teachings to the lord of Laṅka and more than nine hundred stanzas in the final part. 1597 It is obvious that in [their presentation of] the great yoga, both are in some disorder. In the shorter [translation, from the Chinese,] the realization that external entities do not exist is taken as the second yoga, 1598 whereas in the longer [version] it is taken to be the third. It is better to take it as the third, in accordance with the commentary of Jñānaśrībhadra. 1599 It is [further] obvious that the detailed explanation of the individual [yogas] is mixed up in the longer text, but not in the shorter one. A simple attainment of the mental body is [achieved] from the lower [levels] onward.

[66.26–67.3] If you ask why, among the three mental bodies of arhats, pratyekabuddhas, and powerful bodhisattvas, as taught in the Śrīmālā-devisūtra, the mental bodies of an arhat and pratyekabuddha are obtained when no skandhas are left over, Ācārya Buddhaguhya explained that when these two, who are endowed with mental bodies, enter the Mahāyāna, it is at the stage of engagement based on conviction. Thus it
has been said that a mental body is obtained even at the stage of engagement based on conviction.

[67.3–10] Now, the [following] explanations will be taken from the teachings in the *Vairocanābhisambodhitāntra* and [its] commentary [called the] *[Vairocanābhisambodhitāntrapīṇḍārtha]*: The extent to which śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas obtain the fruit; the difference between their mistaken and unmistaken path; how they gradually realize selflessness; the point in time when they and the bodhisattvas who have entered the Mahāyāna right from the beginning transcend the one hundred sixty worldly [forms of] mind; how there is a vision of the truth at the stage of engagement based on conviction; [how] this stage is in accordance with the ten levels of the fruit; and how [these] ten levels, which are their branches, exist—[these points are explained] so that those who possess the faith that arises from having obtained the eyes of seeing the vastness of the Dharma will not deprecate the Dharma.

[67.10–18] In [Buddhaguhya’s] commentary *Vairocanābhisambodhitāntrapīṇḍārtha* it is stated:1601

As to this, the understanding1602 has accordingly been taught as being twofold—realizing the selflessness of a person and realizing the selflessness of a person and phenomena—in line with the difference between sentient beings with dull and sharp faculties. In this regard, those with dull faculties first enter the path of realizing the selflessness of a person after abandoning a path that is solely a worldly path.1603 After that they grow weary of things such as the manifestation of the hundred sixty [kinds] of worldly mind, which have the defining characteristics of a mind of attachment and so forth, and realize the selflessness of a person. [This sentence] must be extended to “mind of attachment, mind of hatred, mind of love, mind of delusion, and so forth.” After the one hundred sixty [kinds of] worldly mind have been left behind for three eons, a supramundane mind is generated. It is like this: it (i.e., the person) [consists] of skandhas only, and a self never exists; [it is like] the thought that the world is meaningless given [the existence of] the city of Indra [together with its] realms and so on. Up to here [the first type of understanding] has been taught.

[67.18–25] The yogins with sharp faculties first remove concepts of a self and so forth: skandhas, *dhātus, āyatanas*, and [any duality of] a perceived and perceiver. Having left the one hundred
sixty [kinds of] worldly mind behind, they enter [the realization of] the selflessness of persons and phenomena. It is stated [in the root tantra]: “Moreover, Guhyakādhipati, in those who have no regard for other modes of progress than the Mahāyāna, a mind [that realizes] the selflessness of phenomena arises. If you ask, why it is, [the answer is:] a form of discrimination arises that [sees that everything is] like an illusion, a fata morgana, a reflection, an echo, a fire-wheel, or the city of Gandharvas since their nature is thoroughly known once your former mode of conduct and the abode of the skandhas are completely abolished. Therefore, Guhyakādhipati, even the selflessness of phenomena in terms of a mind must be abandoned.”

[67.25–68.10] Therefore, when those with dull faculties and those with other-than-sharp faculties cultivate in such a way the path of the selflessness of a person, and while those with sharp faculties cultivate the path of realizing the selflessness of a person and phenomena, yogins with dull faculties gradually attain eight fruits, such as entering the fruit of the “stream-enterer,” which is preceded by the abandonment of the one hundred sixty [kinds of] worldly mind—attachment and the like; and later they understand that skandhas and so forth are like the nature of an illusion, a fata morgana, and similar [examples]. Being completely free from the distinctions made among skandhas, dhātus, and āyatanas, they realize that these three have quiescence and emptiness as their only defining characteristics. As has been said in detail, among other things, in the [root tantra]: “Guhyakādhipati, even with regard to those who abide in a supramundane [state of] mind, an intellect is produced that thinks: ‘The skandhas possess it (i.e., the supramundane mind).’ The moment freedom from attachment to skandhas arises, you are liberated, owing to [their] destruction similar to [the destruction of] foam, water bubbles, and a fata morgana. It is like this: having abandoned skandhas, dhātus, āyatanas, and [the duality of a] perceived and perceiver, you realize the sphere of quiescence, whose own-being is the true nature of phenomena. Guhyakādhipati, those who are connected to the supramundane mind [and] the eight features distinguishing a mistaken and unmistaken mind [and] are free from the net of deeds and defilements are yogins.”
[68.10–18] Those with dull faculties are śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas; those with sharp faculties bodhisattvas. “First” means to have freshly entered the Śrāvakayāna, not indirectly from one yāna to the other. As for the merely worldly path, it is, among others, the view that there is merely a self that is free from the qualities, [as] postulated by the Vaiśeṣikas. It is the views of a self [entertained] by the tīrthikas. As to the one hundred sixty [forms of] worldly mind, they are sixty defilements, starting from a mind of attachment and going up to a mind of [re]birth. The sixty are taken singly, in pairs, [and then] in groups of three, four, five, six, eight, and ten, so that there are altogether one hundred sixty, but in reality there are only sixty. “Such as” means other defilements different from these. “To renounce” [means] to abandon them. “After [the one hundred sixty worldly kinds of mind] have been left behind for three eons, a supramundane mind is generated” [means:] “Having newly entered the yāna, you become an arhat [in the state of] no more learning at best within three lifetimes and at most within three eons.”

[68.18–26] “[Consists] of skandhas only,” and so forth, is the way to realize the selflessness of persons. You know that a self of persons does not exist; it is only skandhas that wander in saṁsāra. “[Yogins with sharp faculties] first remove concepts of a self and so forth: skandhas, dhātus, āyatanas, and [any duality of] a perceived and perceiver. Having left the one hundred sixty worldly [kinds of] mind behind, they enter [the realization of] the selflessness of persons and phenomena” [means that] even that which is [wrongly] imagined by the tīrthikas, such as that beings are pervaded by the self of a person and so forth, are removed. Having removed, with the view of mind only, the clinging to phenomena—skandhas, āyatanas, and elements up to perceived [objects] and perceiving [subjects]—you leave the one hundred sixty worldly [kinds of] mind behind and comprehend the selflessness of persons and phenomena. Just as śrāvakas are able to leave behind the worldly mind with the view of the selflessness of persons, you know that [the equivalent] can also be done on the bodhisattva path with the view of mind only. Those with sharp faculties demonstrate this at the time of passing beyond the worldly mind.

[68.26–69.5] “Those who have no regard for other [modes of progress]” in [the sentence] “Moreover, Guhya-kādi-pati….” are Mādhyamikas, ones with very sharp faculties. [The passage] “The abode of skandhas” [provides] the basis upon which skandhas are so designated. They are destroyed [the moment their] nonexistence is realized. As for the selflessness of phenomena here, there are two types: the one realized by the followers of Cit-tamātra[, who] postulate the ultimate [existence of] a mind free from a
perceived [object] and a perceiving [subject], [while] the Mādhyamikas realize that even this [mind] does not exist. Therefore, such a selflessness of phenomena in terms of a mind that is free from a perceived [object] and a perceiving [subject] is necessarily abandoned by the Mādhyamikas. “Even” [means:] It is not that the clinging to a self of phenomena is abandoned only to the extent of [no longer] adhering to perceived [objects] and perceiving [subjects].

[69.5–10] [The paragraph] from “Therefore” up to “sphere of quiescence” [states that] after attaining arhat[ship] on the Śrāvakayāna, you enter the Mahāyāna upon realizing the selflessness of phenomena. In the preceding states of the “stream-enterer” and the rest you still cling to skandhas and so forth [as things that] exist, and therefore it is said that there is a clinging to phenomena. There are eight [noble persons who have tasted] the fruit of the supramundane mind: the four enterers and the four abiders, [namely the stream-enterer and so forth.] As to their path, when the sixteen [attributes of the four noble truths]—impermanence and the rest—are realized, it is stated that they are seen with regard to the world. Because you thus realize the yoga [on the level of] apparent [truth], [this realization] is unmistaken with regard to the correct apparent [truth], but since you do not realize the ultimate truth, [namely,] the selflessness of phenomena, it is [also] linked with what is mistaken.

[69.10–12] For it is stated in Lankāvatārasūtra [II.128]:

The fruit of the stream-enterer, that of the once-to-come,  
That of the not-to-come, and even that of arhatship [still represent] impaired [states of] mind.

[69.12–14] “Who are free from the net of deeds and defilements” [means that] in the state of remainder you are free from the net of the defilements, which have completely ripened. In the state without remainder you are free from the net of deeds (karman), but not free from the mental imprints of defilements.


As explained before, the yogins enter the path [of realizing] the selflessness of persons and phenomena according to their [individual] stage of dull or sharp faculties, and both are [still] in a state in which all phenomena, as illusion-like appearances, obscure [their] mind, [so that] they are encouraged to start to
make efforts to realize

the level of engagement based on conviction. This is the stage they are at. In the same way that they thoroughly internalize the path of realizing the selflessness of persons and phenomena, so too they are made familiar with this very [selflessness] through the meditation of actualizing the mind of entering, abiding, and awakening [others], and being looked after [in this way]—[an activity] that precedes [their] future attainment of the conduct of the perfections of generosity and the rest by the four means of attracting sentient beings—they are made to enter the ten [levels]. For these, and for those instructed with the Dharma words of [how to] enter these [levels] on the strength of insight acquired by listening and reflecting, even though their (i.e., the pāramitās') outflow, [namely,] the qualities of body, speech, and mind, have not been attained [yet], [the levels] are as if they were a reality. Being convinced of this is the “conviction” [in the expression “engagement based on conviction”]. The essence of a bodhisattva’s benefiting himself and others is engagement based on conviction, no matter what form the preceding conviction takes in his engagement. This essence is a [bodhisattva] level, in the sense of a foundation. It is taught that you spend one eon on the level of engagement based on conviction.

[69.23–70.1] The level of engagement based on conviction is the development of three [kinds of] mind, as has been said: “Given its engagement with the ‘perfections’ (pāramitā) and the four [means of] attracting [sentient beings], the [bodhisattva] level of conviction is unequalled, immeasurable, and inconceivable, the source of immeasurable wisdom, and obtained by ten [kinds of] mind. What I will mention briefly is that all [levels] are attained by way of it. Therefore [even] the level of omniscience is explained as conviction. The wise leave [this] level behind them in [only] one eon.”

[70.1–4] Moreover, the development of three [kinds of] mind, explained as the level of engagement based on conviction, and the elucidation of the ten [kinds of] mind on the level of conviction, in the “practices” that complete the ten levels of wisdom, have been correctly taught in this treatise, in the chapters [XIII–XVI] on the secret [maṇḍala] in connection with the tantra attached to this Vairocanābhisambodhitāntra.
Then, Guhyakadhipati, if you ask what the thorough knowledge of the three [forms of] mind\(^{1622}\) [operative on the level of] engagement based on conviction is, [the answer is:] Guhyakadhipati, the defining characteristic of internalizing that the mind is neither arising nor passing out of existence is the first realization, since you realize the first instant of the mind [of engagement based on conviction]. The second is nonconceptuality, wholly leaving behind the entire net of thoughts. Great compassion arises upon thinking that having realized a state without hindrances, sentient beings must be established on the right path. This is the third [type of] mind operative on [the level of engagement based on conviction]. Guhyakadhipati, through the attainment of [these] three [forms of] mind, the levels \((bhūmi)\), perfections \((pāramitā)\), and means of attracting [sentient beings] will be attained.

Guhyakadhipati, as to the preparations for attaining the levels and perfections, the bodhisattva follows the conduct of a bodhisattva according to the secret Mantrayāna, and once he possesses skillful means and insight, he is induced to engage in proper [activity] in the form of the four means of attracting [sentient beings]. To give the gift of Dharma with a joyful mind is the [path of] preparation, which is a branch of the levels and perfections of this [engagement based on conviction].

Guhyakadhipati, having given them [the gift of] Dharma, a bodhisattva who abides in the discipline of a pure and unconditioned mind establishes sentient beings in the discipline at their wish. He himself abides in it. This is regarded as the [path of] preparation, which is a branch of the levels and perfections of this [engagement based on conviction].

Guhyakadhipati, when a bodhisattva pervades luminosity\(^{1623}\) and, with his mind, the phenomena of the ten directions, he himself obtains the [ability to] endure that phenomena do not arise. To establish others in this [state] is regarded as the [path of] preparation, which is a branch of the levels and perfections of this [engagement based on conviction].
Moreover, Guhyakādhipati, [a bodhisattva who] possesses rays of wisdom initiates effort by the force of an intellect skilled in the eventual and gradually increasing realization by this same mind and establishes others in this [state]. Guhyakādhipati, this is regarded as the [path of] preparation, which is the attainment of a branch of the levels and perfections of this [engagement based on conviction].

Guhyakādhipati, when a bodhisattva observes the conduct of a bodhisattva according to the secret Mantra[yāna], he “stabilizes his mind” with an intellect that possesses wisdom [but] without paying attention to any of the meditations; and when he causes others, too, to properly adopt this [state], this is regarded as the [path of] preparation, which is the attainment of a branch of the levels and perfections of this [engagement based on conviction].

Guhyakādhipati, [the bodhisattva] himself abides in it (i.e., the perfection of meditation) with this same mind, [namely,] an intellect endowed with wisdom, [but] without paying attention to the worldly or the supramundane meditations, or the immeasurable [attitudes] of the śrāvakas; when he causes others to correctly adopt this [state], this is regarded as the [path of] preparation, which is the attainment of a branch of the levels and perfections of this [engagement based on conviction].

Guhyakādhipati, a bodhisattva who observes the conduct of a bodhisattva according to the secret Mantra[yāna], [and] who is endowed with such an earnest intention of meditation, is himself—owing to this same mind, [namely,] an intellect endowed with wisdom—grounded in [a state in which] he is induced to apply worldly and supramundane insight, and establishes others in it too. Such [a state] is regarded as the attainment of a branch of the perfection of insight and the actualized level [corresponding to it].

Guhyakādhipati, a bodhisattva, being expert in perfectly attracting [sentient beings] by skillful means [and] well blessed with spiritual friends, is induced to make prayer wishes for [attaining] all properties of a buddha and—starting with the first mind [of enlightenment]—to
attract sentient beings by the four means of attraction. This is regarded as the attainment of the [path of] preparation, which is the perfection of skillful means and the “far-reaching” [level] of this [engagement based on conviction].

[71.5–7] Guhyakādhipati, [a bodhisattva who,] thanks to an intellect endowed with wisdom, is motionless and not the least agitated is not subdued by any adversary or by gods or by [any] from among the hosts of demons. This is regarded as the [path of] preparation, which is the “motionless” level of this [engagement based on conviction] and [its corresponding] perfection.

[71.7–13] Guhyakādhipati, a bodhisattva who is well looked after by spiritual friends, who [has realized] with regard to all phenomena their equality with illusory phenomena, and who is endowed with the perfection of great compassion is induced to pervade the buddhafields in the ten directions with the perfection of great compassion, to fully rejoice equally with body, speech, and mind, and to see—with body hairs standing on end and much joy—the tathāgatas residing in the ten directions. He is endowed with great compassion extending to the extreme of the farthest sentient being, and is induced to pervade all sentient beings with the extremity of space, the extremity of [the scope of all] sentient beings, [and] the ultimate of wisdom and consciousness.

[71.13–15] When he has thus obtained the generation of the power of faith, diligence, and insight, he sees, both in dreams and directly, buddhas and bodhisattvas, and even obtains the meditative stabilization of not forgetting bodhicitta. He should be known as a bodhisattva who has entered the “circle” (maṇḍala) of conviction. 

[71.15–21] By quoting this [passage], I have taught the buddhahood of [the level called] engagement based on conviction. “[All phenomena, as] illusion-like appearances, [still] obscure [their] mind [means that] when śrāvakas and arhats enter [the path of realizing] the selflessness of phenomena after attaining [their] goal, [they still perceive] illusion-like appearances. Even those with sharp faculties are like them, and thus [such] appearances obscure [their] mind, in that they are conceptual hindrances. With “both also” it is clearly taught that you are encouraged to enter [the
stage of] engagement based on conviction\textsuperscript{1631} even though you have [already] entered the Mahāyāna [after] reaching the śrāvakas’ and pratyekabuddhas’ [path of] no more learning. “Are the first realization”\textsuperscript{1632} means: [are] the first moment or the first state of the mind [of enlightenment]. At that time, you realize by means of analytical knowledge—in the form of special insight [still] accompanied by thoughts—that the mind does not arise and cease. This is the first mind, [that] of entering, because it makes you enter the main part [of the practice].

[71.21–24] As to the second mind[, that] of abiding, it is a nonconceptual direct [awareness], since the entire net of thoughts together with their words and meanings has been left behind completely. To some extent it is as taught in [the explanation of] the Jewel of the Saṅgha [in RGV I.13c]:

\begin{quote}
[The community, which] sees with an unobstructed intellect that buddhahood is all-pervading….\textsuperscript{1633}
\end{quote}

[71.24–26] In the same way as you realize that your own mind is emptiness, you see that the mind of every sentient being is also emptiness. This is a realization without hindrances. Thanks to its power, great compassion toward sentient beings arises, and you [help] to establish [them] on the path. This is the mind of awakening [others], the state attained after [meditation].

[71.26–72.5] Moreover, [this is shown in] the four meditations taught in the \textit{Laṅkāvatārasūtra}.\textsuperscript{1634} The meditation of the śrāvakas and what is less advanced than the yoga practice of bodhisattvas are proper for fools. It is clear that the three [states, as in the mind of] entering and so on, are, respectively: [the meditation devoted to the] examination of meaning, [the meditation with] suchness as its object, and the meditation of a tathāgata. As to the formulation “...to be the [path of] preparation, which is a branch of the [bodhisattva] levels and perfections,” the supramundane, real levels, and real perfections are [states you arrive at] after you have attained the ultimate mind. When you meditate on the branch [called] the cause that is in partial concordance with these [states], [namely,] the ultimate, this is said to be yoga. It should be understood that this [applies] to all of them.\textsuperscript{1635}

[72.5–6] \textit{Dharmadhātustotra} [stanza 78 says]:\textsuperscript{1636}

\begin{quote}
Because you have taken full possession of the foundation of the white, After completely abandoning the foundation of the black, This [first level] is at that time definite realization And called joyful.
\end{quote}
Accordingly, [the first bodhisattva level] is joyful because you are generous to others.

[72.6–8] [The Dharmadhātustotra further says (stanza 79)]:

That which is permanently stained
By various stains such as attachment
Has become stainlessly\textsuperscript{1637} pure,
[And this level] is called \textit{stainless}.\textsuperscript{1638}

Likewise, [the second level] is stainless in virtue of your having purified the stains of the mind.

[72.8–10] [The Dharmadhātustotra further says (stanza 80)]:

Because stainless insight becomes very clear,
After you have stopped the net of defilements completely,
Limitless darkness is dispelled;\textsuperscript{1639}
Therefore [this level] is the \textit{luminous [one].}

Likewise, [the third level] is called \textit{luminous} because phenomena in the ten directions are illuminated by the light of stainless insight. [Moreover,] you endure phenomena, which are explained in all the discourses as nonarising.

[72.10–12] [The Dharmadhātustotra further says (stanza 81)]:

The ever pure and luminous
Is entirely surrounded by the light of wisdom
Of having completely avoided distraction;
Therefore this level is called\textsuperscript{1640} the \textit{radiant one.}

Likewise, [the fourth level] is called \textit{radiant} because the light rays of the wisdom that realizes the mind radiate to the [mind]streams of others.

[72.12–14] [The Dharmadhātustotra further says (stanza 82)]:

All sciences, arts, and crafts [are mastered here],
[Along with] all\textsuperscript{1641} the various forms of meditation,
And defilements difficult to overcome
Have been vanquished; therefore [this level] is called \textit{difficult to overcome.}

Likewise, [the fifth level] is called \textit{difficult to overcome} because you vanquish the defilements of clinging to meditation [in terms of] self and other.
[72.14–16] [The Dharmadhātuṭotra further says (stanza 83)]:

All the marvels of the three aspects\textsuperscript{1642}
Of enlightenment are gathered,
And the profound arising and passing out of existence is exhausted;
Therefore\textsuperscript{1643} this level is called \textit{actualization}.

Likewise, [the sixth level] is called \textit{actualization} because you actualize the perfection of insight that realizes [that phenomena] neither arise nor pass out of existence.\textsuperscript{1644}

[72.16–18] [The Dharmadhātuṭotra further says (stanza 84)]:

A web of [wisdom] light [like] the design of a wheel\textsuperscript{1645}
Plays about everywhere;\textsuperscript{1646}
The swamp of the ocean of samsāra has been crossed over.
Therefore this [level] is called \textit{gone far}.

Likewise, [the seventh level] is called \textit{far going} because it includes [everything] between the first [enlightened] mind—attracting [sentient beings] and aspiration—up to a buddha.

[72.18–20] [The Dharmadhātuṭotra further says (stanza 85)]:

Firmly held by the Buddha,
[The bodhisattvas] entered into an ocean of wisdom.
And attained the power of effortless [activity];
Therefore [this level] is \textit{immovable} for the messenger of Māra.\textsuperscript{1647}

Likewise, [the eighth level] is called \textit{immovable} because it is not moved by Māra or [other] enemies.

[72.20–22] [The Dharmadhātuṭotra further says (stanza 86)]:

Because the yogin has reached perfection\textsuperscript{1648}
In [his] discourses of teaching the Dharma
In all [fields of] correct knowledge,
This [level] is called \textit{excellent intelligence}.

Likewise, [the ninth level] is called \textit{excellent intelligence} because you have been well looked after by a spiritual friend, and have thus obtained an intellect that [realizes that everything] is like an illusion, and [you are thus endowed with] great compassion.
[72.22–24] [The Dharmadhātustotra further says (stanza 87)]:

From the kāya of this nature of wisdom,
Which is equivalent to stainless space
And held by the buddhas,
The cloud of the Dharma fully arises.

Likewise, [the tenth level] is called the cloud of Dharma teachings because from the kāya of buddha wisdom arises the cloud of Dharma teachings, which pervades all sentient beings.

[72.24–73.1] That there is also a seeing of truth on the level of engagement based on conviction has been explained in the [following stanza]:

Those whose mind abides, like a mountain,
In what is quiescent
And without an own-being from the beginning
See the truth.

[73.1–3] For it is stated in the word-for-word commentary: “As for ‘see the truth,’ it is explained as the bodhicitta of abiding.” This [bodhi]citta of abiding and the realization of freedom from mental fabrications are only different terms having the same meaning, since both of them express realization that nothing arises in terms of an own-being.

[73.3] Zhang [Tsalpa Tsöndrü] said in [his Phyag rgya chen po lam zab mthar thug]:

[73.3–5] Mahāmudrā is attained in one go.
The confused err when they reckon it in terms of levels and paths.
Still, in order to please the confused,
The levels and paths of the vehicle of defining characteristics
Must be reckoned as a substitute even here.

[73.5–6] The special dawning of [that] realization
Is the level of the path of seeing [called] extremely joyful.
Cultivating this realization of equal taste is the path of meditation.
When there is nothing to meditate upon [any more], this is the path of completion.

[73.6–7] Although suffering is not done away with,
And qualities and abilities do not immediately arise
Upon the realization of nonduality,  
No one would object and say that this is not the path of seeing.

[73.7–8] Although the ice cannot be melted  
And the ground and stones do not turn warm  
Immediately after the sun has risen at dawn,  
No one would object and say that this is not the sun.

[73.8–10] Since mahāmudrā is attained in one go, you must not reckon in terms of the levels and paths. This means that since the [bodhisattva] levels are the direct realization of the true nature of phenomena and there is no division in the true nature of phenomena, it is not possible to count the individual levels as [distinct] parts of it.

[73.10–12] This is in accordance with what has been said in the Madhyamakāvatāraḥṣaṣṭya [on I.5] together with the quotation [of a stanza from the Daśabhūmikasūtra]:

Being the true nature of consciousness, they (i.e., the bodhisattva levels) cannot be distinguished in terms of an own-being. ¹⁶⁵³ Just as a trail of a bird in the sky cannot be expressed or seen by the wise, in the same way no bodhisattva levels can be expressed, [and if this is the case,] how can they be heard of? ¹⁶⁵⁴

[73.12–14] In meaning this accords, too, with what Haribhadra said:

Since you apprehend nothing other than what has been actualized on the path of seeing, as has been explained, [the paths of] seeing and meditation are not different. Thus a real path of meditation is not presented.

[73.14–18] As to the [passage]: “Still, in order to please the confused, the levels and paths of the vehicle of defining characteristics must be reckoned as a substitute even here,” it has to be evaluated against the background of the presentation of the ten pāramitās and ten levels on the level of engagement based on conviction—[a presentation] based on the “attached tantra”¹⁶⁵⁵ in the commentary Vairocanābhisambodhitatantrapindārtha. This being the case, some advocate then that it is not appropriate to present the first mind of “abiding or realization without mental fabrication of the [level of] engagement based on conviction” as the first [bodhisattva] level¹⁶⁵⁶ because it does not have the 112 qualities.¹⁶⁵⁷
In this regard, however, Choje Drigungpa said:

If you find definitive sūtras and śāstras in support of your entailment, I will give you a good horse.

In the chapter in the Daśabhūmikasūtra on the first level it is stated:

A bodhisattva abiding on this [first level] has to a great extent mastered the world and obtained great power... Wishing [all this], he starts with that kind of effort by which you abandon everything—house, wife, and property—and set out for the teaching of the Tathāgata. Having done so, he attains and enters into a hundred samādhis within the period of one moment; sees a hundred buddhas; understands well [that he has] their blessing; causes a hundred worlds to tremble; passes through a hundred [buddha]fields; illuminates a hundred worlds; causes a hundred sentient beings to mature; remains for a hundred eons; reaches one hundred eons into the past and the future; investigates a hundred doors of Dharma; displays a hundred bodies; and displays each body with an entourage of a hundred bodhisattvas. Such are the efforts he starts to make.

In this passage the qualities of a bodhisattva on the first level are taught. When you have obtained the first level in this life, you become a king [with the standing of a] cakravartin in the next [life]; and having renounced your family life, you meditate in the forest. Because it has been taught that these qualities arise from that, it is said that the attainment of the first level and the attainment of the qualities do not coincide.

[Moreover], it would follow that the sun has not risen [only] because the qualities of the just-risen sun are not [yet] complete. It is clear that this accords with both Zhang and Drigungpa. It is not only appropriate to present the abiding mind as the ten levels; it is [also] seen to be appropriate to relate it with the four stages of penetration and the four yogas, for the following reasons: (1) It is taught as being ineffable in the Abhisamayālamkāra in the paragraph on heat, and it is seen during [the yoga of] one-pointedness that thoughts are not as they really are. (2) It is taught that during the yoga of freedom from mental fabrications, after [your] insight has increased, you see that everything, both outer and inner,
is empty, and in the paragraph on the peak it is taught: “If thoroughly investigated by insight, nothing is apprehended [any more].” (3) The realization during the yoga of one taste that the mind is without origination and that the appearances of the mind are of identical taste is in line with the explanation in the paragraph on forbearance: “The lack of an own-being in such things as forms—this very lack [is] its own-being.” (4) Nonmeditation is called such because there is no [further] thought of wishing to meditate. Such a meditation is supreme. This is in line with what is called “nonconceptual meditative stabilization” in the paragraph on the supreme [mundane] quality.

Moreover, in the life story of Drigungpa’s disciple Nyö Gyalwa Lhanangpa (Gnyos Rgyal ba Lha nang pa) (1164–1224), a disciple of Nyö Gyalwa, Yeshé Dorjé (Ye shes rdo rje), says:

In terms of the four stages of penetration on the path of preparation, they only accord with the Pāramitāyāna. Nevertheless, here again all properties of the path and the fruit are completely perfect. One-pointedness is the actualization during the meditative stabilization of heat. Freedom from mental fabrications is the seeing during the meditative stabilization of the peak of dharma. Forbearance is the direct realization of one taste, [that is,] the actualization of the equality of all phenomena. The supreme mundane quality is the actualization of qualities; [that is,] all worldly beings have matured and been liberated through the deeds of the buddhas and because of [their] activity.

In this way it is claimed that it is appropriate to relate the four penetrations with the four yogas, but also on other occasions it is not inappropriate to do so. It is also appropriate [to say] that from the eighth level onward all four yogas are completed in one instant. The Ratnamegha[sūtra] explains that engagement based on conviction is in accordance with the [four] states of penetration. The scholar Asvabhāva also explained it as such. It is very good [that he did so].

Notwithstanding, it is obvious that they must be taken to be [a feature of] the path of accumulation [as well], because it is said in the Vairocanābhisambodhi[ tantra] that you ascend in a quarter of an eon to the path of preparation, which is called entering the levels after getting beyond engagement based on conviction. I do not think that these different presentations contradict each other. In the same way, the explanations that both the prior generation of an enlightened attitude by a beginner and the first
level are the generation of the first enlightened attitude do not contradict each other.

[74.25–26] The last two dharmacakras differ in that the [bodhisattva] levels become completely perfected [only in the third dharmacakra, and] not [in the second one]. The levels of the fruit of the last dharmacakra are the [three] pure levels. The levels of the fruit of the second dharmacakra are only said to be the seventh level and below.

[The next sentence of the Ratnagotravibhāgavīśākhya to be explained is:]

“What are, in this regard, the qualities of the sixtyfold process of purifying the buddha element?”

[74.26–75.4] Thus, the way to realize what must be cleansed has been explained with an explanation of the [process of] cleansing. In this regard, the processes that purify the three stains of the [buddha] element are the [sixty] qualities, so that you should become accordingly familiar [with them], and obtain that which possesses the light of pure qualities, by applying the sixty purifying processes to the [buddha] element of sentient beings, in the same way as the quality of redness [is obtained] by bringing together turmeric powder and lime (CaCO₃). You may ask, what are these sixty distinctions among its aspects?

[75.4–5] [The next sentence in the Ratnagotravibhāgavīśākhya is:]

They are: the fourfold ornament of bodhisattvas, the eightfold brilliance of bodhisattvas, the sixteenfold compassion of bodhisattvas, and the thirty-two-fold activity of bodhisattvas.

[75.5–8] Among these, the main activity of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas is to teach the Dharma, for it is said:

The munis do not wash off sins with water,
Nor do they clear away the stains of beings with [their] hands,
Nor do they transfer their own realization to others.
They rather liberate [beings] by teaching the true nature of phenomena [and] peace.

[75.8–9] Moreover:

“I will explain to you the path
That cuts off [all] fear of [cyclic] existence;
You must accomplish it on your own."
This is what the Tathāgata has taught.

[75.9–13] Even though the Dharma is being taught, the teacher is like a carpenter; the instrument of the teaching is like a tool—an axe or a saw; and the product or the fruit of the work is like the [wooden] figure of a man or a woman. As for the qualities of the teacher of the Dharma, among these three phenomena, it is said in the *Mahāyānasūtrālāṃkāra* [XVII.10]:

You should rely on a [spiritual] friend who is controlled, peaceful, pacified,
Superior in virtue, diligent, rich in discourses,
Who has realized them,† and who is eloquent,
Loving, and free from distress.‡

[75.13–16] In accordance with that, the [first three] of the four ornaments—[namely,] discipline (*śīla*), meditative stabilization (*samādhi*), and insight (*prajñā*)—[refer to the qualities of being] controlled, peaceful, and pacified. As to [the fourth ornament,] retentive power (*dhāraṇī*), in view of [properties of] a marvelous memory, it is explained that you are adept in retaining words and are quick-witted, and for these reasons you are eloquent. As to the eight [types of] brilliance—memory and the rest—they are [responsible for] the penetration of reality. The sixteen[fold] compassion is that whose nature is kindness; these [sixteen aspects of compassion] are the great[ness] of those explaining the Dharma.

[75.16–20] The [first] three, discipline and so forth, are the threefold training. As to insight, [the third] among them, it has been explained in the sūtras as the ascertainment of meaning; that is, the insight that ascertains the meaning of the subject matter (*abhidheya*). Retentive power is the memory retaining the words of the text (*abhidhāna*) without forgetting [anything]. Just as people rejoice if someone puts on body ornaments, the circle of [your] retinue rejoices if you are endowed with these four ornaments. That is why they are called ornaments. Both insight and compassion are the tools for teaching the Dharma, the eight[fold] brilliance being insight, and the sixteen[fold] compassion [being] compassion.

[75.20–25] The eight[fold] brilliance is: the brilliance of memory (*smṛti*), the intellect (*mati*), understanding, knowledge, truth (*satya*), clairvoyance (*abhijñā*), and accomplishment (*prātipatti*). [Brilliance of] memory is the memory of the proper way [to ensure that
you] do not forget the virtuous deeds performed by a bodhisattva and [that you] perform new ones not performed [before]. It is also the memory that does not forget which nonvirtuous [deeds] have been given up and of the [need to] abandon what has not been given up [before]. This is the marvelous [memory], the essence of perfect abandoning. The marvelous insight, which has arisen from [this] essence of abandoning, has the power to seize the city of the Buddha's Dharma. Based on [this] memory, the vast brilliance [illuminating all] knowable objects arises.

[75.25–76.1] [The brilliance of the] intellect refers to the certain understanding of activities relating to the teaching of the Dharma. This is [a kind of] brilliance, and—since such activities are informed by an intellect [that applies] the four hermeneutical principles—the Hinayāna and the action of Mara are overcome.

[76.1] [The brilliance of] realization is the direct realization by yourself of the different types of Dharma to be taught. In view of this you are skilled in teaching the Dharma to others.

[76.2–4] The brilliance of phenomena: here, phenomena are [either] mundane or supramundane, depending on the various ways of knowable objects—in view of the [various] ways phenomena [appear as] knowable objects. Having come to understand the four noble truths (in which these two types of phenomena are addressed), you fully realize that the phenomena of defilements are adventitious, and, by the mind’s natural luminosity, know the phenomena of purification to be nirvāṇa.

[76.4–5] As to what is called the brilliance of knowledge, it is how the noble ones of the three yānas know knowable objects; it is what is called knowledge of a stream-enterer up to a buddha.

[76.5–8] As to what is called the brilliance of truth, it is—given that you know the four noble truths and the qualities resulting from having meditated on them—the individual knowledge of the way to meditate on the four truths, this being the cause of your entering [a state of] certainty, obtaining the four fruits, and obtaining the patience of a pratyekabuddha and a bodhisattva and the enlightenment of a buddha.

[76.8–9] The brilliance of clairvoyance is the six[fold] clairvoyance, and based on this, it is knowing the skillful means of gathering the two accumulations.

[76.9–10] The brilliance of accomplishment is the accomplishment of calm abiding, deep insight, and a marvelous intellect in your own [mental] continuum, and the accomplishment of the skillful means of ripening and liberating others. Since the entire Mahāyāna path is seen by means of these eight, they are called brilliances.
The sixteenfold compassion of a bodhisattva is: Having seen the various situations people are in, compassion takes the form of wishing that sentient beings may be free from the following defects: (1) various views, (2) the four errors, (3) the notion of mine, (4) the five hindrances, (5) the attachment to the objects of the six sense spheres, (6) sevenfold pride, (7) straying from the noble path, (8) lack of independence, (9) anger, (10) being influenced by sinful friends, (11) lacking the potential of the noble ones, (12) mistaken views, (13) a view of a self caused by ignorance, (14) being seized by the executioner in the hire of the skandhas, (15) being tied in the noose of Māra, and (16) straying from the higher realms and liberation.

In this regard, the mixing of various views with the view of the transitory collection as a real I and mine makes you a heretic who has mistakenly entered a wrong path. The four errors and the view of the transitory collection entailing the notion of a mine are coemergent. Those who have not embraced tenets share them. These first three (i.e., various views, the four errors, and the notion of a mine) are discordant with insight. Being hindered by both the five hindrances and an attachment to the objects of the six sense spheres are discordant with meditation. They are the defilements of desire.

As to the sevenfold pride: since it hinders you from becoming distinguished, it is discordant with diligence. You strive along a low path that is at odds with the noble path, you lack independence, being attached to your house, and you do not rejoice in virtue. For these reasons, sevenfold pride is discordant with diligence. Anger, hatred, and harmful intent are the discordanecs of patience.

Being separated from a spiritual friend and performing sinful acts are what is called being influenced by sinful friends. It is discordant with discipline. Being overpowered by lust, you lack the potential of the noble ones, which is without attachment. This is discordant with generosity.

The wrong view of action (karman) as being without fruit and the ignorant view of a self are respectively the obstacles on the paths leading to the higher realms and liberation. Being seized by the executioner in the hire of the skandhas is discordant with the state of nirvāṇa without remainder. Since a wavering and conceited mind is Māra's noose, it is discordant with the state of nirvāṇa with remainder. In this way, these fifteen forms of suffering are, according to circumstances, an obstacle to attaining the higher realms and liberation, where the sixteenth form of suffering should be taken as a general summary.
[77.1–3] As to the [thirty-two-fold] activity of a bodhisattva—activity whose essence lies in deeds consisting in generating the good path of virtue in support of sentient beings: These [deeds] are performed by teaching the Dharma, it having been said in the [Dhāranīśvararājasūtra]:

...thinking that the Dharma should be taught to them so that they abandon all views.\textsuperscript{1684}

[77.3–17] [The thirty-two-fold activity is:] (1) [The bodhisattva]\textsuperscript{1685} awakes [sentient beings from] the sleep of delusion [by applying insight].\textsuperscript{1686} (2) He places\textsuperscript{1687} those [beings inclined toward] the Hinayāna\textsuperscript{1688} [in the Mahāyāna]. (3) He gives those wishing things other than Dharma the wish for Dharma. (4) He furnishes\textsuperscript{1689} those who have an improper livelihood with a proper livelihood. (5) He establishes those sunk in [bad] views in the right view of the noble ones.\textsuperscript{1690} (6) He establishes those with an inappropriate mental disposition, [one] caused by ignorance, in an appropriate mental disposition. (7) He establishes those who abide in a wrong dharma in the right Dharma. (8) He establishes the stingy in [the practice of] generosity. (9) He establishes those with poor behavior in discipline. (10) He establishes those with overriding harmful intent in [the practice of] patience [and love].\textsuperscript{1691} (11) He establishes the lazy in the [exertion of] effort.\textsuperscript{1692} (12) He establishes the distracted in meditation.\textsuperscript{1693} (13) He establishes those with faulty knowledge in knowledge. (14) He establishes those who perform inadequate activities in right activities. (15) He establishes those overcome by defilements in [the practice of] abandoning defilements. (16) He sets\textsuperscript{1694} those who are bound by the view of the transitory collection [as a real \textit{I} and mine] to the [practice of] nonapprehension. (17) He establishes the undisciplined in discipline. (18) He establishes the ungrateful in [the habit of] being grateful. (19) He pulls out those who have fallen in the [four] currents.\textsuperscript{1695} (20) He forces those who do not speak well [about each other] to abide in harmony. (21) He connects those deprived of virtue to the roots of virtue. (22) He sets\textsuperscript{1696} those without the wealth of the noble ones to [the practice of] obtaining the wealth of the noble ones. (23) He furnishes\textsuperscript{1697} those who are overcome by diseases of the four elements with [a life] without disease. (24) He illuminates with wisdom those who are surrounded by the darkness of ignorance. (25) He brings those who are attached to the three realms in contact with a thorough knowledge of the three realms. (26) He establishes\textsuperscript{1698} those who are on the left-hand path onto the right-hand path. (27) He establishes those attached to [their present] life in [the practice of] seeing its disadvantages. (28) He leads those
who are bereft of the Three Jewels to the uninterrupted lineage of the Three Jewels. (29) He connects those who have fallen off from the right Dharma with [the practice of] upholding the right Dharma. (30) He establishes those who are bereft of the six recollections\textsuperscript{1699} in [these] six recollections.\textsuperscript{1700} (31) He establishes those with the hindrances of karman and defilements in [the practice of] remedying these [hindrances]. (32) He establishes those who possess nothing but lack of virtue in the completely perfected Dharma of virtue.\textsuperscript{1701}

[77.17–20] These [thirty-two] are the activity resulting from what is done on the basis of sixteen[fold] compassion, and hence they must be referred to [their] respective categories. As to leading those who have devotion to the Hinayāna to the Mahāyāna—since the Hinayāna is, in the view of the Mahāyāna, a low path, and since bodhisattvas are caused to fall [back] to the Hinayāna through sinful friends and Māra—this is the activity of the seventh, tenth, and fifteenth [points of] compassion. The others are easy to understand.

**Enlightenment, Buddha Qualities, and Activity**

[The next sentence in the *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā* is:]

Immediately after teaching the [thirty-two-fold activity], the enlightenment of the Buddha is illustrated through a presenta­tion of the sixteenfold compassion of great enlightenment.\textsuperscript{1702}

[77.20–22] After teaching the thirty-two-fold activity, King Dhāraṇīśvara said to the illustrious one [in the *Dhāraṇīśvararājasūtra*]:

Illustrious one, how does the great compassion of the buddhas and the illustrious ones enter sentient beings?\textsuperscript{1703}

[77.22–23] In reply to this question [the latter] said:

Son of a noble family, the great compassion of the buddhas and the illustrious ones neither arises in nor enters sentient beings.\textsuperscript{1704}

[77.23–24] It is through such statements, [namely,] through the presenta­tion of the sixteenfold compassion of great enlightenment, that the enlight­en­ment of the Buddha is illustrated.

[77.24–78.6] The sixteen[fold] enlightenment is: (1)\textsuperscript{1705} Being enlightened in the view of having neither root nor foundation. (2) Being enlightened in
terms of quiescence and utmost quiescence. (3) Being enlightened in terms of enlightenment's natural luminosity, given that the mind is naturally luminous. (4) Being enlightened in view of not adopting or discarding anything. (5) Being enlightened in terms of no characteristic signs and nonapprehension. (6) Being enlightened in that the three circles [of agent, object, and action] are cut off. (7) Being enlightened in view of neither having a body nor being conditioned. (8) Being enlightened in view of neither having a foundation nor undergoing differentiation. (9) Being enlightened with respect to the fact that [enlightenment] can be expressed as neither body nor mind. (10) Being enlightened with respect to the fact that it cannot be grasped and is without a basis. (11) Being enlightened in terms of emptiness. (12) Being enlightened in being equal to space. (13) Being enlightened in view of the true [primordial] ground. (14) Being enlightened in that there is "no [longer any] mode of apprehension" (anākāra) from the perception of forms (ākāra). (15) Being enlightened in being uncontaminated and not having appropriated [the skandhas]. (16) Being enlightened in being pure, stainless, and without defilements.

[78.6–8] These [points] are not realized, and it is in order that sentient beings [be able to] realize [them] that the great compassion of the buddhas arises. The explanation of the sixteen[fold] enlightenment explains suchness mingled with stains, too. Therefore, the [sixteen points] are [automatically] explained on the occasions of explaining "suchness mingled with stains” and “stainless enlightenment.”

[78.8–12] [The next sentence in the Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā is:]

Immediately after [the sixteenfold compassion of great enlightenment] is taught, the qualities of the Buddha are illustrated through a presentation of the ten strengths, the four fearlessnesses, and the eighteen exclusive features.

This is because it has been said [in the Dhāraṇiśvararājasūtra]:

Son of a noble family, if you ask what the activity of a buddha is, it is, son of a noble family, the thirty-two[fold] activity of a tathāgata. If you ask what these thirty-two [activities] are, then, son of a noble family, with regard to that, [first of all] on the basis of his unsurpassable wisdom, a tathāgata perfectly knows the "right as [precisely something] right.”
And so forth. [The next sentence in the Ratnagotravibhāgavākyākhyā is:

Immediately after the [qualities of a buddha] are taught, the thirty-two-fold activity of a buddha is illustrated through a presentation of the unsurpassable activity of a tathāgata. 1710

[78.12–15] “After...are taught” does not mean that the activity of a buddha is taught immediately after the thirty-two qualities of a buddha have been completely taught. Rather, the performance of the activity of teaching the Dharma is explained each time immediately after one of [the thirty-two] qualities has been explained. Thus the thirty-two-fold activity of a buddha is illustrated through a presentation of the unsurpassable activity of a tathāgata.

[78.15–16] As for a summary, thirdly, [it is given in the next sentence of the Ratnagotravibhāgavākyākhyā:

In this way the seven vajra points should come to be known in detail, [namely] through the illustration of their own defining characteristics in accordance with the [Dhāraṇīśvararāja]-sūtra. 1711

[78.16–19] [Objection:] The defining characteristics proper to things different from the seven [vajra] points have been taught. Still, is the [buddha] element—in having been illustrated [by way of] the sixty [purifying] factors—not established as existing as a single element; or, how are its own defining characteristics taught? [Answer:] The potential of the noble one is explained in terms of the ornament of meditative stabilization; and the apprehension of the element is taught in terms of the ornament of insight, since [in insight] you apprehend an element as vast as space. [The buddha element] is mainly taught on the basis of these and the remaining [ornaments] [and] even [on the basis] of its own defining characteristics.

[78.19–20] Third, as to the connection between the [respective] former and later subjects, it has been asked [in the Ratnagotravibhāgavākyākhyā:

And then what is the connection between these [subjects]? 1712

[78.20–24] There are two types of connections: the connection between the subject matter and the text, and the connection regarding how the meaning of the [seven] subjects are related to each other. As to the first, it was stated just above [that] the seven meanings (i.e., the seven vajra points) have
been explained through a presentation of their own defining characteristics in the Dhāranīśvararājasūtra. As to how the meanings of the subjects are related to each other, this is expressed through the connection of the seven meanings (i.e., the seven vajra points)—the Buddha and so forth—in terms of how the [respective] former and latter [function as] cause and effect.

A Short Explanation of RGV I.3

[78.25–79.7] To put this in wholly general [terms, it has been said in Ratnagotrabhāga I.3]:

[From the Buddha [comes] the teaching, and from the teaching the noble community. Within [the setting of] the community, [buddha] nature leads to the attainment of the [buddha] element of wisdom. And the attainment of this wisdom is the highest enlightenment, Which is endowed with properties, such as the [ten] strengths, that benefit all sentient beings.]

When the Buddha came into the world, it happened as a consequence that the wheel of the Dharma was set in motion in places like Vāraṇāsi. From that the noble community formed, and it is stated that within [the setting of the] matured community, [buddha] nature leads to the realization or attainment of the [buddha] element of wisdom. [Your] enlightenment is prophesied on the basis of this, [namely,] of finally having attained wisdom. Thus you attain, as prophesied, buddhahood, the supreme among the three [types of] enlightenment. It is stated that omniscience is attained on the strength of this enlightenment, wherefore the qualities such as the [ten] strengths are attained [as well]. Thanks to these qualities the properties, [or] activities, that benefit all sentient beings without exception occur. Therefore [this stanza] perfectly encapsulates the seven meanings and [establishes] the connection [among the topics] of the treatise.

[79.7–9] Likewise, this text teaches not only the connection among these seven meanings but also the connection in terms of their [natural] order. As to calling the buddha activity a “property” (dharma), from among the ten meanings of the word dharma, it is the [last one], “law.” It is stated that to act for the benefit of others after [attaining] enlightenment is the law in the realm of all buddhas.

[79.9–16] The teacher [found] perfect enlightenment, and after forty-nine days had passed, he turned the wheel of the Dharma of the four truths
in Vārāṇaṣi, Ājñātakauṇḍinya being the first in whom the path of seeing arose. When others, too, gradually attained the noble paths, the gods took refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the future Sangha. This is taken, in its meaning, from the scriptures. [The Buddha] taught to the directly manifest noble ones as if they were śrāvakas, causing them to gradually mature in the Mahāyāna, and when they realized the [buddha] element the way it really is, he prophesied in the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka[sastra] that Śāriputra and others [would become] buddhas. After becoming buddhas, they, too, would work for the benefit of sentient beings in virtue of the fact that they [themselves] would possess qualities such as the [ten] strengths. Thus it is said.

[79.16–24] The sequence of enlightenment and [subsequent] omniscience has been also stated in the commentary on Buddhagupta’s Piṇḍārtha: 1718

The immediate cause is enlightenment and omniscience. In this regard, the defining characteristics of enlightenment and omniscience have been stated in the [Ārya] buddhabhūmisūtra. They are explained in the following way: “enlightenment is the wisdom of equality, and omniscience is the wisdom of individual investigation, and so on.” Having taken up the conduct of a bodhisattva, the illustrious one made himself over a long period of time familiar with both the fact that the various sentient beings are like an illusion and the fact that in reality all phenomena are emptiness. The effect of this twofold cause is therefore the wisdom of individual investigation and so forth and the wisdom of equality, and these two only. At the moment of clear realization, [that is,] in the first moment [of it], arise the five wisdoms of equality, individual investigation, and so forth, which are without any mode of apprehension and have the suchness of all phenomena as their objective support. They are called enlightenment and omniscience. After that they assume the name of dharmakāya.

[79.24–80.8] Since enlightenment and omniscience have therefore been explained as being the immediate cause of the dharmakāya, the connection between enlightenment and the qualities—the ten strengths and the like—has [also] been explained, inasmuch as [the qualities] arise from it. In this regard, the translator (Ngog Loden Sherab) made a twofold circle (’khor lo) with respect to the seven meanings of the subject matter of the Mahāyānottaratantra [Ratnagotravibhāga]: the [circle] of nonabiding nirvāṇa and [the circle of] the [Three] Jewels. 1719 With regard to [the first],
with the [buddha] element of some sentient beings functioning as a cause, with the Three Jewels functioning as an attendant condition, and with the aid of meditation, the three properties—enlightenment and so forth—are attained. Since other disciples are in turn guided by these three, and by these still others, [the whole] is called a circle. This is taught in the present stanza on the series [of the seven vajra points]. Again, [with] the [buddha] element of sentient beings functioning as a cause, with the three [properties of] somebody else’s enlightenment and so forth functioning as a condition, and with the aid of meditation, [a new set of] Three Jewels is attained. Having attained [the state of] Three Jewels, they in turn again act similarly. Therefore, this is called the circle of the [Three] Jewels. I do not see any fault in claiming that such has been taught, since it has been stated in [Ratnagotravibhāga I.24ab] and other [places]:

The potential of [these] Three Jewels
Is the object of those who see everything.\(^\text{1720}\)

[80.8–11] In the introduction of the [Dhārapiśvararāja]sūtra, the meaning of “completely awakened toward the sameness of all phenomena” is explained as the attainment of buddha[hood] on the eighth level, [the attainment of the] Dharma on the ninth [is also explained], and [that of] the Saṅgha on the tenth, at which time the Saṅgha, as a circle that has attained the tenth level, sees its own [buddha] element. Having cleansed [the buddha element] by means of the sixty [purifying] qualities, [this Saṅgha] attains the three [properties]—enlightenment and so forth. Thus this [point] is also explained. These [remarks] conclude the explanation of the connection among [the topics of] the treatise.
PART III
ZHÖNU PAL’S VIEWS
ON BUDDHA QUALITIES,
EMPTINESS, AND MAHĀMUDRĀ
5. Buddha Qualities

The translation of the commentary on the first two introductory stanzas (RGVV I.1–2) in the previous chapter has laid a broad foundation for the following analysis of Zhönu Pal’s Ratnagotravibhāga commentary. It has become clear that the mahāmudrā teachings of direct cognition are preferred to the approach of an intellectually understood emptiness. But before we turn to the question of how Zhönu Pal presents emptiness and mahāmudrā, we will investigate his distinctive theory of subtle buddha qualities, which lies at the heart of his mahāmudrā approach.

General Remarks

One of the main issues useful in pinning down an exegete’s position on the tathāgatagarbha teachings is the question of how the qualities of a buddha are to be explained. In the third chapter of the Ratnagotravibhāga, the claim is made that the stainless buddha qualities are based on, and invisible from, stainless suchness, and are compared with the brightness, color, and shape of a jewel. Thirty-two qualities of dissociation—the ten strengths, four fearlessnesses, and eighteen exclusive features—are distinguished from thirty-two qualities of maturation, which are the thirty-two marks of a perfect being. While the qualities of dissociation are connected with the ultimate kāya, the qualities of maturation are related to the body of conventional truth, or the form kāyas that are based on the ultimate kāya.

In his commentary, Zhönu Pal replaces without comment “stainless suchness” with dharmakāya, and thus explains the dharmakāya as the support of all qualities, in the same way as forms are supported by space. This is of course not wrong, given that the form kāyas are themselves supported by the dharmakāya, as are, consequentially, the qualities of maturation of
the form kāyas. The qualities of dissociation do not depend on a newly created substantial cause, but nevertheless blossom, for Zhönu Pal, during the process of being freed from hindrances. The qualities of the form kāyas, on the other hand, are explained as depending on a substantial cause:

The qualities of the dharmakāya are called the fruit of dissociation. They are like the spreading appearance of the light of a lamp [located in a vase] when the vase is broken, since that which abides primordially and without depending on a newly created substantial cause for them (i.e., the qualities) appears directly and blossoms merely by becoming free from hindrances. (DRSM, 509.7–9)

The qualities of the form kāyas are the fruit of maturation. As for their substantial cause, they are established on the basis of a substantial cause, [namely,] on the basis of continued individual merit, which is based [in turn] on an artificially appropriated potential, so that they are like the picture painted by the artists.1727 (DRSM, 509.9–11)

What Zhönu Pal usually means by buddha qualities in the following discussion are the qualities of dissociation—the ten strengths and so forth. Only they, in his eyes, have ever been naturally present in a subtle form as something that resembles the svabhāvikakāya, and thus not produced by artificial causes and under artificial conditions.

In his commentary on the second vajra point (the Jewel of the Dharma that possesses an eightfold quality), Zhönu Pal shows that the semantic field of the word quality (Tib. yon tan) naturally implies increment or growth. Thus, we are told that the Sanskrit equivalent guṇa is also used as a multiplier. Triguna, for example, means “three times.” As the outcome of a causal relationship, the fruit or benefit is sometimes called a quality, such as the color red resulting from mixing turmeric powder and lime1728—an example used several times to illustrate the natural growth of the qualities of the dharmakāya within their own sphere through the interaction of the buddha element in sentient beings with the sixty cleansing factors.1729

Different Views on Buddha Qualities

Faced with presentations that teach that buddha qualities already exist in ordinary persons, Zhönu Pal follows mainstream Mahāyāna and takes such passages to refer to the seeds of the qualities only. Thus he concludes a discussion of the path under the second vajra point:
Here the teaching in the tathāgatagarbha sūtras and treatises that the [buddha] nature of sentient beings is naturally endowed with qualities such as the [ten] strengths, I take [to refer to their] seeds. (DRSM, 121.6–7)

In different parts of the commentary we are told that being endowed (Tib. ldan pa) needs to be understood in the sense of connected (Tib. 'brel pa). To support his view, Zhōnu Pal quotes Vinayadeva's Hevajravajrapadodharanāmapaṇījīkā, explaining that defining the relation between buddha nature and the qualities in terms of connected ('brel pa) underscores both that the qualities have arisen from buddha nature and that the two have an identical nature.

In his explanation of the second vajra point, Zhōnu Pal lists five different ways that the teaching that sentient beings are “endowed” or “connected” with buddha qualities may be interpreted.

[1.] That which is naturally “endowed” (Tib. ldan pa) is taken by some to be the qualities of focusing, since these qualities arise by focusing and meditating on it (i.e., emptiness or that which is naturally endowed with qualities). (DRSM, 121.7–8)

[2.] Some assert that the body of the [ten] strengths, etc., exists completely [within ordinary people], and even assert that it exists ultimately. (DRSM, 121.8–9)

[3.] Some say that the body [of the qualities] exists in a[n already] perfected [state] but not that it exists ultimately. (DRSM, 121.9)

[4.] Some say that “only to be suitable” is called to possess all qualities, since [conditions] are suitable for the [ten] strengths, etc., to arise in the mindstream. (DRSM, 121.9–10)

[5.] Some say that not all sentient beings are suitable for becoming buddhas, since the accumulation of causes necessary for becoming a buddha is not complete. Therefore suitable means simply that the accumulation [of necessary causes] is complete and not merely the [corresponding] possibility. (DRSM, 121.10–12)

In his lengthy commentary on the four inconceivable aspects of the last four vajra points, Zhōnu Pal admits that there are many passages in the treatises and profound sūtras to the effect that innumerable buddha qualities exist in sentient beings, and lists another six possible explanations that overlap to some extent with the list of the first five points:
[6.] Some think that it is like saying that Subhūti “takes after” the Tathāgata because the suchness of the Tathāgata is not different from the suchness of Subhūti. The meaning [of the phrase that] a buddha exists in sentient beings because the Tathāgata’s suchness is present in sentient beings is like that. (DRSM, 237.26–238.2)

[7.] Some say that the buddha qualities exist only to the extent that sentient beings are suitable for attaining buddha[hood]. (DRSM, 238.2–3)

[8.] Some think that it has been explained that the view of the transitory collection of I and mine is the lineage of the Buddha because [this wrong view] is [also] known to be stainless. For this reason even the contaminated skandhas, elements, and āyatanas of sentient beings are the buddha potential, and therefore it is appropriate to refer to them as the buddha qualities existing in sentient beings. (DRSM, 238.3–5)

[9.] Some say that when yogins experience themselves, they see the reality of the nonartificial mind and think that the mind (Tib. thugs) of a buddha and the minds of all sentient beings, too, are of this nature, and even say that this is precisely what buddha[hood] is. Moreover, they say that the teaching that sentient beings possess the buddha qualities follows exactly along the same lines. (DRSM, 238.5–8)

[10.] Some think that sentient beings permanently possess the [ten] strengths and so forth of the Tathāgata exactly as they are found [in him]. It is just that they are not seen, being obstructed by hindrances. (DRSM, 238.8–9)

[11.] Some think that even though sentient beings do not possess buddha qualities in their own [mind]stream, it is not the case that a buddha, who is distinct from other [mind]streams, does not exist everywhere, for it is said in the Gsang ba bsam mi khyab pa: The body, speech, and mind of the Tathāgata pervade the expanse of space. (DRSM, 238.9–12)

The Blossoming of Subtle Qualities

The unusually large variety of differing positions on the teaching of buddha nature reflects the problematic stance that most of the sūtras this teaching is based upon have, which is that all sentient beings possess the nature of a buddha (doubtlessly in the sense that they are already complete buddhas but do not know it because of their adventitious defilements). Following
the *Lankavatārasūtra*, Zhönu Pal points out that statements to the effect that even the major and minor marks of a buddha exist in sentient beings come dangerously close to the non-Buddhist view of an ātman. Still, Zhönu Pal does not want to write off the theory of buddha nature completely, postulating as he does the primordial existence of subtle buddha qualities.\(^{1734}\)

In his commentary on RGV I.12 Zhönu Pal further takes buddha nature to be a primordial subtle seed of purification and compares it to the continuum of a grain of rice that, given that it is beginningless, must exist in a subtle way in the empty space that is destined to form another world again after the former world has vanished. The coarse seed of a grain of rice is compared to the fortified [bodhisattva] potential that is produced by the same subtle seed or root of conditioned virtue.\(^{1735}\) The space-like aspect of a subtle seed or quality is again referred to in Zhönu Pal’s commentary on RGV I.161–70 (J 1.158–67), where the ultimate buddha element within sentient beings is related with the nonartifical svabhāvikakāya and explained as something in the ordinary mindstream that resembles the potential of the svabhāvikakāya.\(^{1736}\)

In his explanation of the strengthening of the potential in DhS 66–68, Zhönu Pal takes the potential as including the skandhas, sense faculties, and so on, which are made up in a way similar to the Buddha himself.\(^{1737}\) He seemingly explained buddha nature along the same lines in his Kālacakra commentary *Rgyud gsum gsang ba*, for the Eighth Karmapa Mikyö Dorjé criticizes him for asserting, with reference to the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé, that buddha nature in sentient beings resembles a buddha, in that the Buddha is similar to the six āyatanas of sentient beings.\(^{1738}\) But here in his *Ratna Gotravibhāga* commentary on I.25, Zhönu Pal rules out that the skandhas (i.e., the view of the transitory collection of *I* and *mine*) are the lineage of the buddhas (see the above-mentioned explanation no. 8) on the grounds that this is too far removed from the underlying intention of the teaching that the buddha qualities are never recognized (unlike defilements such as attachment) as something separable from the mind.\(^{1739}\)

At the end of both of his lists of different views about the buddha qualities, Zhönu Pal tells us that he personally prefers to compare the buddha qualities to the sense faculties of a future monarch still in the womb of a destitute woman, which is the eighth of nine examples taught in the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*. He takes this to mean that the qualities are already present, but only in a subtle form. In other words, they still have to mature naturally.
In the commentary on the second vajra point it becomes clear that Zhönu Pal calls the sum of all causes and conditions relating to a quality *subtle quality* (in the same way as a mixture of turmeric powder and lime would be called the *subtle quality of redness*, since such a mixture is bound to manifest the actual quality of redness once the two ingredients are in contact):

...it is not the case that that which has become like a mixture of semen, blood, and milk in the mother’s womb does not possess the six sense faculties [at all]; [rather,] they exist in a subtle way.... (DRSM, 121.12–13)

Zhönu Pal attempts to read his understanding into RGVV I.2, where the relation between the sixty cleansing factors and the buddha element, which naturally possesses qualities, is explained. The passage in the *Ratnavali gotrabhāgāvīkhyā* is:

Then, after the introductory chapter of the *Dhāraṇī varārāja*-sūtra, the buddha element is elucidated by way of a description of the application of sixty purifying factors to this [element], the process of purification making sense [only] if the object to be purified possesses [buddha] qualities.1740

Zhönu Pal comments:

Generally, the simple expression “cleansing properties” does not pervade (i.e., coincide with the domain covered by) the expression “properties to be cleansed,” just as no [such pervasion] is ascertained when expressing gold by the term *fibroferrite*. On the other hand, if a knowledgeable [person] looks closely, he is able to ascertain, “There is a fruit.”1741 This is explained in *Pramāna-vārttika* I.7:1742: “The arising of the fruit (i.e., effect), [a process] that is inferred from the complete cause [as a logical reason], is described as the nature (svabhāva) [of this cause], since [the arising of the effect] does not depend on other things.”1745 Being [related] in such a way, as it is also expressed in the example, [you must concede that] in general the object to be purified, or the fruit, is endowed with qualities[, which means] “is connected with qualities.” (DRSM, 29.15–19)
In other words, gold ore (the buddha element of sentient beings) is only connected with the actual qualities of purified gold (a buddha). A mixture of gold ore with fibroferrite (the cleansing factors of buddha activity), however, constitutes a complete cause for the arising of purified gold. Thus it can be claimed on the basis of PV I.7 that this mixture has the nature conducive to the arising of the fruit. To be sure, only the assisting buddhas literally possess qualities in Zhönu Pal’s eyes, and it is due to the power of these buddhas that similar qualities can naturally mature in the mindstream of ordinary sentient beings. The clause “the process of purification making sense [only] if the object to be purified possesses [buddha] qualities” does not mean, then, for Zhönu Pal, that the buddha element literally possesses buddha qualities. It is, rather, merely “connected” (ldan pa = ’brel pa) with them in such a way that in the presence of the cleansing factors the buddha element is a complete cause for the arising of buddha qualities.

Zhönu Pal must have been aware that this is not the picture the example involving gold draws (after all, fibroferrite must have been cheaper than gold ore) and thus illustrates the above-mentioned cleansing process further down in his commentary by means of turmeric powder and lime, a mixture that manifests the quality “redness.” Similarly, he is uncomfortable with the comparison to a vaiḍūrya gem, and suggests in his commentary on the relevant passage in RGVV I.2 that the process of spiritual purification is better exemplified by the magical transformation of grass into riches, because such a magic is said to depend on the spatial nature of grass, it being the example of space that is repeatedly used to illustrate the buddha element.

In his commentary on the second vajra point, Zhönu Pal further argues:

I assert that [the buddha qualities in sentient beings] are like the six sense faculties of the [future] universal monarch who is [still] an embryo in the belly of a destitute woman. Such subtle strengths (i.e., buddha qualities) increase as you ascend the [bodhisattva] levels, and thus become the ten strengths of the completely perfected body. (DRSM, 121.18–20)

And at the end of the six explanations listed in the commentary on the four inconceivable points, Zhönu Pal says:

I think that the actual (i.e., fully blossomed) wisdom of the buddhas with its [ten] strengths and so forth is not contained in the [mind]stream of sentient beings, in the same way as the sense
A DIRECT PATH TO THE BUDDHA WITHIN

faculties and the major and minor marks of the [universal monarch in the womb] exist [only] in a subtle way (i.e., not fully blossomed). The "different forms of wisdom" exist rather as something subtle, like the painting spoken of in the example. (DRSM, 239.12–14)

Also interesting is the way the example of the universal monarch in the womb is explained in the context of correlating the nine examples from the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra with nine defilements. The Tibetan translation of the relevant stanza in the root text is problematic and has given rise to different interpretations. If we follow the Sanskrit and take, as de Jong does, vipākavat as a possessive adjective modifying jñāna, the translation would be:

The stains on the seven [impure] levels
Resemble the stains of the womb's confinement.
And the ripened nonconceptual wisdom
Is like being delivered from the womb's confinement.

(RGV I.144 (J I.141))

Even though Zhōnu Pal does not criticize the Tibetan translation here, he too subordinates ripened to wisdom:

The stains of those on the seven impure levels resemble the womb's confinement, whose nature is that of impure stains. The nonconceptual wisdom experienced on these levels is like the sentient being in the womb. Even though the potential of all the sense faculties of a noble being has [already] arisen, it is not [yet] activated. Once the child is delivered from its confinement in the mother's womb, its sense faculties become activated. Likewise nonconceptual wisdom ripens beyond the seventh level, and the buddha kāyas fully ripen and become perfect.... (DRSM, 418.18–22)

Together with the sixth of the nine examples, which compares buddha nature to a seed that develops into a tree under the proper conditions, the example of the universal monarch is the strongest one supporting a development of the buddha qualities, or upholding a difference between the subtle qualities of buddha nature and the fully ripened ones of the dharmakāya. Thus, Zhōnu Pal concludes his explanation of the eighth example with the following remark:
Those who ignore the way in which the fully manifest marks of a king are not complete in the state of being an embryo and how the seed, which stands for the [buddha] element, gradually grows in the example before, and also hold that a completely perfect body of a buddha exists in all sentient beings, and that there is no increment, do not thoroughly understand these meanings. (DRSM, 406.7-10)

Taken in this way, the example of the future universal monarch excludes, on the one hand, the view that the qualities of buddha nature have to be newly created from scratch, and on the other hand, the view that the qualities exist primordially in a fully developed way.

The remaining seven examples from the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra, such as the Buddha in the lotus or the gold in the filth, paint a different picture, however. A complete Buddha is already present in sentient beings but simply not recognized because of the defilements. Similar examples quoted in the Ratnagotravibhāgavākyākhyā from the Dhāraniśvararājasūtra or the Anūnatvāpurṇatvanirdeśasūtra are so abundant that we are tempted to reinterpret the examples of the universal monarch and the tree rather than reading a subtle development of the buddha element into the entire Ratnagotravibhāga. Zhönu Pal does go for a subtle reading nonetheless. He claims that the nature of your mind and the dharmakāya are so similar as to prompt an unchanging substance such as a vaiḍūrya stone to be taken as an example. In support he quotes the most essential stanza of the Ratnagotravibhāga, I.27, which states that the cause, buddha nature, was given the name of its fruit. Zhönu Pal follows from this clause that these two are not exactly identical.

The status of stanza I.27, which is at the center of Zhönu Pal’s hermeneutics, is the subject of dispute. In the Tengyur it is not contained in the root text of the Ratnagotravibhāga, but it appears in the Ratnagotravibhāga-vākyākhyā on a similar stanza. Zhönu Pal is supported, however, by the Sanskrit manuscripts edited by Johnston, who includes RGV I.27 as part of the root text. It is:

By virtue of the presence of buddha wisdom in [all] kinds of sentient beings,
The fact that stainlessness is by nature without duality,
And the fact that its (i.e., the buddha potential’s) fruit has been “metaphorically” applied to the buddha potential [itself],
All sentient beings are said to possess the essence of a buddha.
Zhonu Pal comments:

First of all, by virtue of the presence of buddha wisdom in all kinds of sentient beings, this buddha wisdom, which is present in sentient beings, is called buddha nature. Even though this wisdom is the real tathāgata, it is only metaphorically called the nature of sentient beings, since it is not contained in the [mind] stream of sentient beings.\(^{1763}\) (DRSM, 262.12–14)

Second, since suchness, i.e., the mind’s true nature without adventitious stains, is not different in either buddhas or sentient beings, it is said to be buddha nature. The suchness that exists in a buddha is a real buddha. The suchness of sentient beings is a buddha metaphorically. Therefore, [suchness] abides as [if having] two parts. (DRSM, 262.14–17)

Third, the parts in sentient beings that resemble a buddha—such things as their skandhas—are the buddha potential. Its fruit has been metaphorically applied to it, as [if it were] a tathāgata, and that potential is said to be of the nature of a tathāgata. Therefore, even if it is of this nature in the real [sense of the word], it is a tathāgata [only] metaphorically. (DRSM, 262.17–19)

The assertion in the third reason that the tathāgata nature needs to be understood as being a tathāgata only metaphorically, but is nevertheless nature in the real sense of the word, is already found in Ngog Loden Sherab’s commentary,\(^{1764}\) even though Loden Sherab quotes the less explicit RGV I.28, in which the third reason is only “because of the potential.” That Zhönu Pal’s interpretation of this crucial stanza was greatly influenced by Ngog Loden Sherab is shown a little further down, where he explicitly states that Loden Sherab’s distinction of three buddha natures corresponding to the aspects of cause, nature, and fruit is a very good one.\(^{1765}\)

How is this hermeneutic strategy of avoiding the extremes of denying the buddha element altogether on the one hand and ascribing fully developed qualities to it on the other applied to the famous passage that with regard to the buddha element nothing needs to be removed or added? The two most quoted stanzas of the Ratnagotravibhāga are:

There is nothing to be removed from it and absolutely nothing to be added.
The real should be seen as real, and seeing the real, you become liberated.\(^{1766}\) (I.157 (J I.154))
The buddha element is empty of adventitious [stains], which have the defining characteristic of being separable; But it is not empty of unsurpassable qualities, which have the defining characteristic of not being separable.\textsuperscript{1767} (I.158 (J I.155))

As we have seen above, Zhönu Pal is very much concerned about reading a too ontological understanding into the \textit{tathāgatagarbha} theory and therefore attempts to remove the thorns of problematic passages by embedding these passages in mainstream Mahāyāna. Indeed, the first stanza is one of the most famous ones in Mahāyāna literature.\textsuperscript{1768} Zhönu Pal wants us first to grasp how it is explained in the second dharmacakra:

The first stanza is [shared] in common with the \textit{Abhisamayālāṃkāra} (V.21). Therefore you should first thoroughly understand how the commentary of Master Haribhadra explains it in accordance with the second dharmacakra. In the commentary (i.e., the \textit{Abhisamayālāṃkāravṛtti}) it is said: “Since, [then,]\textsuperscript{1769} liberation is not possible with an obstinate clinging to entities, you should ascertain that forms and so forth, as things dependently arisen, exist [only] conventionally and that they lack an own-being and so forth. In doing so, you have not, with regard to any phenomenon, either removed or added anything by way of [wrong] denial or reification. When you see reality\textsuperscript{1770} by virtue of having repudiated your mistake, in the same way as one illusionary elephant conquers another one, you become liberated.”\textsuperscript{1771} (DRSM, 440.3–8)

In other words, “nothing should be removed” refers to dependent arising, and “nothing should be added,” to the phenomena’s emptiness—its quality of lacking an independent existence. That both the obstinate clinging to entities and the remedy for it, namely wisdom, exist on the level of apparent truth is expressed by the example of an illusory elephant conquered by another illusory elephant.\textsuperscript{1772}

It is such an understanding that led exegetes like some followers of Ngog Loden Sherab to construe buddha nature as emptiness with the defining characteristics of a nonaffirming negation. In his introduction, Zhönu Pal summarizes such a view by pointing out that all qualities are gathered as if called by focusing on that with which the qualities are naturally endowed (i.e., connected), namely the emptiness of a nonaffirming negation. This emptiness is the cause of purification, or the object of wisdom conducive
to purification. Since this emptiness has always been present nothing needs to be added to it. Moreover, the objects of all defilements, namely the self of a person and phenomena, do not need to be removed, since they have been wrongly superimposed by virtue of all the defilements and hence are nonexistent throughout beginningless time. With such an understanding of RGV I.157 (J I.154), the phrase “there is nothing to be added” can be related with emptiness, or the cause of the qualities, rather than the qualities themselves.

The way of the third dharmacakra starts for Zhönu Pal from the naturally pure buddha element, which is called emptiness (decomposed by him into “empti-” and “-ness”):

Since no characteristic sign at all (in the way of any defilements to be removed) exists as the nature [of the buddha element], the buddha element is called empti-. Nor are there any qualities, not even the slightest, that did not exist [before] and have to be newly created and added. It has ever been the nature of qualities, and is thus called -ness. Therefore the nature of the buddha element is empty of adventitious stains whose defining characteristics are: to be separable from the buddha element itself, and to be suitable to abandon. As for the unsurpassable properties, such as the [ten] strengths, whose defining characteristics are: to be inseparable from the buddha element and to be natural (i.e., not fabricated), the buddha element is not empty of them in their subtle form. This refers to “-ness.” (DRSM, 441.5–9)

It is interesting to note that Zhönu Pal alters the whole purport of the two stanzas by adding here, without any commentary, the tiny word phra mos (“in [their] subtle form”). We have the impression that he wants to slip his interpretation across unnoticed, the root text being so clearly against him in this stanza. Such an exegetic strategy would explain why the problematic part of the compound “wisdom, which is not separate from the dharmadhātu” in the Ratnagotravibhāgaavyākhyā has been transformed into “wisdom’s cause, which is not separate from the dharmadhātu.” The vyākhyā reads:

Having reached (that is, realized (Tib. rtogs)) the door of wisdom, which is not separate from the dharmadhātu, [whose nature it is to have] a single mode....
Zhönu Pal comments:

...the door of what has become the cause of wisdom that is not separate from the dharmadhātu that [in turn] is identical with the dharmakāya in terms of empti- and -ness.... (DRSM, 445.13-14)

In other words, it is the cause of wisdom (i.e., the subtle qualities) that is not separate from the dharmadhātu. The dharmadhātu is identical with the dharmakāya only in terms of empti- and -ness, in the way described above: adventitious stains are not part of the nature of either the dharmadhātu or dharmakāya (empti-). But neither in turn is empty of inseparable buddha qualities (-ness)—with the restriction of “in their subtle form,” of course, with regard to the dharmadhātu.

Of particular interest in this respect are some parts of Zhönu Pal’s commentary on the corresponding Ratnagotravibhāgavākyākhyā, which starts with an explanation of the sentence in RGV I.157ab (J I.154ab) that nothing needs to be removed or added:

What is taught by that? That there is no characteristic sign (or cause)\(^{1776}\) of any of the defilements (saṃkleśa) whatsoever to be removed from this naturally pure buddha element, because it is naturally devoid of adventitious stains.\(^{1777}\)

Zhönu Pal comments:

Given the buddha element, there is no cause (rgyu mthshan) whatsoever of any defilements that need to be removed, for the following reasons: (1) Any assertion in this respect that stains that have become [part of its] nature must be removed is opposed [to the nine examples,] for it is explained during the teaching of the nine examples that [buddha] nature is pulled out of the sheath of stains. (2) The statement: “The stains being removed, [buddha] nature necessarily arises” belongs to the level of apparent [truth]. (3) Ultimately, [false] imagining, being the cause that brings forth all defilements, does not have to be removed. And (4) [The element] is pure in terms of its own nature. The applicability (lit., “pervasion”) [of this syllogism is established] inasmuch as the element is by nature free from adventitious stains. Whatever is the [buddha element’s] nature is not artificial; there-
fore [the element] is not adventitious—in the [same] way, for example, as parts of the sky that [are covered] by clouds do not change in the slightest into something else when the clouds have formed in [those parts of] the sky. What is established by such an explanation is that [real] stains of [false] imagining cannot be removed, given that they lack an own-being [in the first place]. (DRSM, 442.22–443.3)

When the buddha element is described as “nonartificial,” which is also an attribute of the svābhāvikakāya,1778 an allusion is being made to the ultimate or space-like aspect of the qualities. It is these aspects that are not affected by defilements, in the same way as clouds do not change the sky.

The nyākhyā continues:1779

Also, nothing needs to be added to it in the way of a characteristic sign of purification, since it is by nature in a state of possessing the inseparable pure properties [of a buddha].1780

Zhonu Pal restricts the inseparability of the qualities as applying only to their ultimate aspect or true nature, thereby following the Tibetan translation rnam par dbye ba med pa'i chos dag pa'i chos nyid1781 (true nature of the inseparable pure buddha properties) for Skt. avinirbhāgaśuddhadharmatā:

Given the element of the tathāgata, there is not the slightest cause (rgyu mtshan) of purification that needs to be added to it. The reason is “...because the dharmatā of the inseparable pure properties (i.e., qualities) is [its] nature.” Purification is [both] the path and cessation. Its cause is proper mental engagement. When you meditate on this [element], unsurpassable qualities do not have to be added by focusing on something previously nonexistent being newly [acquired]. “Inseparable” means that the unsurpassable qualities and the buddha element have never been divided. Therefore the proper engagement is merely to focus on the buddha element as it is. (DRSM, 443.4–8)

In other words, it is only the true nature of the buddha qualities that needs to exist primordially, not the qualities themselves—that is, their emptiness—to which nothing needs to be added. For Ngog Loden Sherab, the qualities collect as if called when you focus on emptiness;1782 in other words, they are more or less automatically obtained when meditating on
the cause of purification. Zhönu Pal maintains something similar when he explains that qualities do not have to be added when you meditate on the cause of purification; it is not necessary, according to him, to meditate on something becoming newly created.

The *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā* continues with a quotation from the *Śrimālādevīsūtra*:

Buddha nature is empty of the sheath of all defilements, which are separable and recognized as being separate. It is not empty of the inconceivable buddha qualities,\(^{1783}\) which are inseparable, recognized as not being separate and far beyond the sands of the Gaṅgā in number.\(^{1784}\)

Zhönu Pal comments:

With regard to the nature of mind, no faults have to be removed, nor any qualities newly added. For this reason buddha nature is "empti-" of the sheath of stains (that possess the two special features of being separable and recognizable as being separate), [that is, empty] of what does not touch upon [its] nature. An element that possesses the two special features of being inseparable—because it is identical [with its qualities]—and of being continuously recognizable as not being separate [from these] is inconceivable in terms of an own-being. The fact that it is not empty of what is beyond the object of imagination, [namely,] the buddha qualities, which are far beyond the sands on the banks of the Gaṅgā in number, [stands] for [the syllable] -ness [in the word *emptiness*]. (DRSM, 443.11–15)

If they are far beyond the sands of Gaṅgā in number, do they have the same identity among themselves, or are they different? They have strictly the same identity. To be sure, the ten strengths\(^{1785}\) are posited as ten forms in accordance with the difference of objects. There are, however, not ten different [strengths] with regard to their own-being. (DRSM, 443.15–17)

The *Śrimālādevīsūtra* clearly states that the buddha qualities are inseparably connected with the buddha element. But Zhönu Pal explains this with reference to their identical nature, which means that there are no different qualities in terms of own-being. Thus, elucidating the content of this passage on the level of dharmatā allows Zhönu Pal to maintain his theory
of naturally growing subtle qualities in the same way as it allows the more extreme position of Gyaltsab Jé, for example, who denies the primordial existence of qualities altogether.\footnote{1786}

That this is indeed Zhönu Pal’s strategy (i.e., to explain the inseparable buddha qualities on the level of dharmatā) becomes clearer a little further down in the same part of the commentary, where he does not tire of emphasizing the growth or blossoming of the qualities:

> It is not necessary to search in something other than [buddha] nature for the wisdom that realizes emptiness. After becoming acquainted with, and accustomed to, [the fact] on the path that it is empty of adventitious [stains] from the beginning, the unsurpassable qualities that exist in this very buddha nature “blossom” \(\text{rgyas}\) to become the wisdom of emptiness, and that is all. (DRSM, 444.24–26)

Also interesting in this context is a discussion of Haribhadra’s statement in his commentary on the \textit{Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā} that the entire dharmadhātu is seen on the first bodhisattva level.\footnote{1787} In reply to the challenge that this contradicts the \textit{Dharmadhātustotra}, according to which only a tiny part of the dharmakāya is seen even on the tenth level, Zhönu Pal says that Haribhadra explains the dharmadhātu as being the selflessness of phenomena, as something whose defining characteristics are a negation. Therefore, it makes sense to say that it is seen completely on the first level. But the \textit{Dharmadhātustotra} is concerned with attaining the dharmakāya of the Buddha, and that is a different matter. The name dharmadhātu stands only for something similar to the dharmakāya. In fact, there is an important divergence. On the first level, on which the entire dharmadhātu is seen, you see only your own buddha nature directly, but not that of others:

> As to the meaning here of “[only seeing] a little,” at the time when knowledge that sees its nature (i.e., the buddha nature) has arisen, its (i.e., the buddha nature’s) qualities have not [yet] blossomed. Therefore, you see [only] a little. Even though you see an increasing number of qualities of your buddha nature on the higher levels, in comparison with a buddha, even the qualities of the tenth level are [but] a little. (DRSM, 446.19–21)
BUDDHA QUALITIES

The theory of blossoming qualities could be challenged on the grounds that a buddha is thought of as “unconditioned, it being his nature to be without beginning, middle, or end.”\textsuperscript{1788}

Zhōnū Pal comments:

With “unconditioned” it is taught that buddha nature is not artificially (Tib. 'phral du) conditioned by adventitious causes and conditions but rather is permanent in the sense that it has ever been contained in its own sphere. This is taught by way of the nine examples, such as the body of the tathāgata inside a lotus. With “the quality of being without effort” is taught permanence, in that the wisdom of the buddhas remains present as long as space [exists], until the end of time. This is taught in the ten presentations of essence, cause, fruit, etc. (DRSM, 83.11–15)

It is further explained that that which possesses the six qualities (unconditioned, effortless, not to realize [the true nature] through other conditions, wisdom, love, and power) is not the sambhogakāya, which belongs to the apparent truth; it is rather the ultimate buddha, since the form kāyas are conditioned.\textsuperscript{1789}

The discussion of in what sense exactly the dharmakāya is unconditioned is introduced by a reference to the Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra and texts by other Indian masters:

The ultimate buddha in the stanza [IX.65]: “The summary of [all] buddha bodies should be understood in terms of the three kāyas”\textsuperscript{1790} of the Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra refers to the dharmakāya, and (i.e., that is) the svabhāvikakāya among the three bodies taught in this [Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra].\textsuperscript{1791} (DRSM, 83.23–25)

Zhōnū Pal continues that according to the Satyadvayavibhāga, emptiness is taught as being the Madhyamaka path as well as the dharmakāya.\textsuperscript{1792} Vimuktisena and Haribhadra call emptiness the potential when on the path and svabhāvikakāya at the time of fruition. The meaning of svabhāva, Zhōnū Pal writes, is to be “nonartificial,” and to attain the fruit means to realize it, in that it is not something new that has arisen. Still, Āryadeva says that it would follow that the dharmakāya is conditioned since it is an object experienced by the noble ones.\textsuperscript{1793}
The learned master, Zhönu Pal holds, did very well to present emptiness as dharmakāya. But the unconditioned explained here in the *Ratnagotrabhāga* is not like “the emptiness of the nonaffirming negation.” In the *Jñānalokālakāraśītra* and the *Laṅkāvatārasītra* it is clear that unconditioned refers to the fact that a tathāgata neither arises nor ceases to exist. Moreover, according to the former sūtra, a tathāgata is momentary but a never-ending continuum all the same. For Buddhagupta, too, the dharmakāya is the nonabiding nirvāṇa, which is an accumulation of a momentary continuous flow.\(^{1794}\)

Zhönu Pal sums up:

Thus the dharmakāya is taught as being momentary and a continuation in a continuum [of moments]. In short, since it would have no power if it did not possess moments, and since here it is said to possess power, you must retreat from the view that it is completely unconditioned. This is explained by the *Ratnagotrabhāga*vyākhyā: “Unconditioned must be taken as the opposite of conditioned. Here, conditioned is called that in which origination, abiding, and destruction can be observed. Since these do not exist, buddhahood has to be seen as something without beginning, middle, or end, and as being constituted by the unconditioned dharmakāya.”\(^{1795}\) That means that the Buddha himself is the basis of predication. He must be seen as being distinguished from other phenomena by the singular nature of the dharmakāya. The dharmakāya [is able to] evolve within its own sphere, even though it is without artificial conditions. Therefore it is called unconditioned because it is like space and not like clouds, which arise, abide, and cease. (DRSM, 86.13–20)

This is the key to how Zhönu Pal understands the unchangeability of the buddha element. Later on, when commenting, for example, on how the unchangeable dharmakāya is permanent (RGV I.84),\(^{1796}\) he admits that the definitive treatises explain buddha nature as unchangeable in all stages and that this has to be understood as above.\(^{1797}\)

For Zhönu Pal it is important to analyze the relation between buddha nature and the dharmakāya in line with mainstream Mahāyāna, a procedure that is, at least in some parts, supported by the *Ratnagotrabhāga-vyākhyā*. This becomes clear in the commentary on the last stanza of the second vajra point, which is on the truth of cessation:
Since in such a way you do not see the nonexisting characteristic sign or cognitive object [any more] and since you see the existing ultimate truth as it is, nothing is removed or added with regard to either of them. The realization of the equality of all phenomena on the basis of such a wisdom of equality should be known as a remedy for what is opposed, in all its forms, to seeing reality. Since [the remedy] has arisen, the opposite is known as not at all connected or present together. This is the path of seeing and meditation—of the nonconceptual wisdom—which causes you to attain the dharmakāya. It should be known in detail, as in the sūtra[s], and in accordance with the prajñāpāramitā [sūtras].

The last remark in particular, that you should understand the attainment of the dharmakāya according the prajñāpāramitā [sūtras], rules out a too ontological view of buddha nature. What is identical is thus only the true nature of both buddha nature and the enlightenment of a tathāgata. In his commentary on the second vajra point, Zhönu Pal makes the interesting remark that buddha nature is, roughly speaking, the seed or basis of all phenomena belonging to nirvāṇa. In the following Zhönu Pal addresses the problem of how buddha nature in its space-like aspect (namely in being suchness mingled with stains) can function as a seed of qualities:

You may ask: “Well then, if you called buddha nature a seed with regard to the stage of purification, then space, too, would become the seed of rice or the like in the outer world. But how can it (i.e., space) become the grain planted under the earth? If it is that grain of rice[, rather,] that is the seed, must you [not] then think that the seed of the stage of purification is not [buddha] nature either, [that is, that it is] something else?” This is a well-formulated question. Grains of the outer [world] are of two kinds: subtle and coarse seeds. As to the subtle one, in the Catuḥśataka [VIII.25] it is said: “Just as the end of a seed (i.e., the seed as an end product) is seen but its beginning is not found, so too arising does not occur, since [any possible] cause [of it would be] incomplete.” [Candrakīrti's] commentary on this is: “Just as [the end stage of] the beginningless continuum of a seed that endures since a long time as cause and fruit, one following the other, [is seen]…. Likewise, the continuum of a grain of rice must exist in a subtle way in empty space, which
is bound to form again [another] world, after the [former] world has vanished. For were it not so, [its] continuity would be impossible. Likewise, [too,] it is the subtle seed of the stage of purification that I posit as [buddha] nature. As to the coarse seed, I take it to be the fortified [bodhisattva] potential, which is made by that same subtle [seed] inasmuch as it has become the root of conditioned virtue. (DRSM, 119.26-120.10)

And in his commentary on stanza RGV I.20, which states that the teaching and the community are not the ultimate refuge, Zhönu Pal later explains:

Even though such qualities of the dharmakāya as the [ten] strengths are present in sentient beings as the properties of seeds, they must be nourished and supported by the fortified [bodhisattva] potential at the beginning, and the accumulation of merit on the tenth level at the end. Thus it is not the case that the dharmakāya is not labeled “conditioned.” It is like the image of a king produced [on canvas] by an assembly of numerous painters. (DRSM, 200.16-19)

In other words, the subtle seed is not only the root of the fortified bodhisattva potential and conditioned virtue, but in turn is also nourished and supported by them.

With buddha nature being posited as a seed, the question arises how it is that the fruit, the dharmakāya, is not subject to change, since it would be the result of mutable entities functioning as substantial causes. Zhönu Pal counters by postulating both a coarse and subtle relation between cause and effect in the phenomenal world. The relation between clay and a clay pot is a coarse one, but there are also continua in the outer world that evolve within their own sphere—and this, for Zhönu Pal, does not really constitute change. In fact, not even space, or, as we have seen above, the dharmakāya, is absolutely unconditioned in his eyes:

You may ask: “If space is absolutely unconditioned, how can there be a continuum?” Nothing expressed by the word space is absolutely unconditioned. The intermediate sky seen by the eyes is also called space, and “what belongs to the realm of mental objects” (dharmāyatanika)—whose nature is merely that of being enclosed space—as well. (DRSM, 120.13-15)
In order to prove that space was taught as a "continuous substance" (rgyun gyi rdzas), Zhönu Pal quotes the examples of the transformation of the basis in Vasubandhu’s Dharmadharmatāvibhāga-vṛtti. All three examples—space, gold, and water—demonstrate the primordial luminosity that must be discovered (that is, not newly created) by removing adventitious stains, but space is nowhere described there as a "continuous substance." Only in the last example does Vasubandhu explain that the clarity of formerly muddy water does not newly occur in the substance water, which is a "continuation in a continuum [of moments]" (Tib. rgyun gyis 'jug pa). It is difficult, though, to apply this predication, as Zhönu Pal obviously expects us to do, to all three examples, since Vasubandhu distinguishes space from gold and water:

Here, with the examples of gold and water, only a quality [of the example] was taught to be equivalent [to the transformation], [but] not [its] substance. With the example of space it (i.e., the transformation) was taught completely.

The preceding sentence, to which this remark refers, states:

Since that [change] does not take place, the true nature of phenomena, and the transformation of the basis, which is constituted by it, are permanent.

Nevertheless, Zhönu Pal concludes:

You may ask: “Well then, are any particular features of the properties pertaining to [buddha] nature called a seed?” Here in the [tathāgata]garbha sūtras and [related] treatises, the nature of sentient beings has been taught as being naturally endowed (i.e., connected) with such qualities as the [ten] strengths. That is what I take to be the seed. (DRSM, 121.5–7)

One possible way of understanding the passage quoted from the Dharmadharmatāvibhāga-vṛtti would be to interpret, along the lines of Zhönu Pal, the permanence of the dharmatā and the transformation of the basis as an endless continuation of a continuum of moments, of which only the continuum of space is a fully valid example, as opposed to the continua of gold and water particles. That his understanding is such becomes clear when he again quotes the same passage of the Dharmadharmatāvibhāga-vṛtti.
to bring his exegesis into line with the *Ratnagotravibhāga*’s teaching that buddha nature is all-pervading in all three states (impure, partly pure, and perfectly pure) and thus, as shown in the following paragraph of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, without change. Of particular interest here is a portion of Zhönu Pal’s commentary in which he deals with a quotation from the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśasūtra* in the *vyākhyā* on RGV I.50:

Therefore, Śāriputra, the [buddha] element of sentient beings and the dharmakāya are not different. The very (*eva*) [buddha] element of sentient beings is the dharmakāya. It is precisely (*eva*) the dharmakāya that is the [buddha] element of sentient beings. They are not two in their meaning, differing merely by letter.  

This statement is very explicit. The use of the particle *eva* allows only one interpretation—absolute identity. Still, Zhönu Pal explains:

Since it is space-like nonconceptuality that is the general defining characteristic, the [buddha] element of sentient beings is not different from the dharmakāya, or the dharmakāya from the element of sentient beings, in the same way as the space inside a golden receptacle and the space inside an earthen receptacle are not different in terms of the feature of being without hindrances. It is precisely the general defining characteristic of the [buddha] element of sentient beings that is the nature of the dharmakāya, and it is precisely the general defining characteristic of the dharmakāya that is the element of sentient beings. These are not different in terms of the expressed meaning; it is only the letters that are different. This is how [the equation of the buddha element with the dharmakāya] must be understood. (DRSM, 338.23–339.2)

When presented as suchness in a nonaffirming negation, the lack of an own-being in a buddha is the lack of an own-being in sentient beings, and vice versa. There is no difference with regard to [their] nature. When the Sautrāntikas posit space as being the absence of obstructing tangible objects, the absence of obstructing tangible objects inside an earthen receptacle is [the same as] the absence of obstructing tangible objects inside a golden receptacle. (DRSM, 339.2–5)

When the transformation of the basis is taught in the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāgavṛtti* with the examples of water, gold, and space, in all three it is explained that there is a continuum. There-
fore, it is not the case that space that exists only as enclosed space does not partake of the nature of momentariness along a continuum. If you take time into account here, space at the beginning of an eon \((\text{kalpa})\) is not the [same] space at the time of [its] destruction. In terms of location, the substance that exists as the enclosed space of a golden receptacle is not that which exists as the enclosed space of an earthen receptacle. Likewise, a moment in the continuation of a continuum having the quality of the [buddha] element's awareness of sentient beings is not a moment in the wisdom of a buddha. Notwithstanding, in the same way as the existence of the enclosed space of a golden and earthen receptacle is not different in terms of type \((\text{rigs})\), the nonconceptuality of a buddha and the nonconceptuality of sentient beings are of a very similar type. They even admit of the conventional designation "identity"—in the same way as saying that I and the buddhas share the same speech. (DRSM, 339.6–13)

Having shown that even space possesses the nature of momentariness, Zhönu Pal seems to be well prepared to comment in the following chapter on the unchangeable character of buddha nature in all its different states. The introductory stanza basically heralds the main stance of the entire treatise:

Because it is endowed with faults in an adventitious way and naturally endowed with qualities,
It is of an unchangeable nature—as it was before, so it is after.\(^{1811}\)
(RGV I.51)

Zhönu Pal explains:

The [buddha] element remains in the sheath of faults throughout beginningless time, but later it is endowed with qualities purified of those faults. It thus appears to be subject to change. Nevertheless, it is unchangeable by nature, even though it goes through stages. This is because the former faults, being adventitious, are contained in the [buddha] element but not [in its] nature. The qualities blossom \((\text{rgyas})\) later, but they blossom as the nature of the [buddha] element, not as something entirely separate; therefore their connection [with the buddha element] is one of identity.\(^{1812}\) (DRSM, 339.20–23)
Having restricted the unchangeability of the buddha element to its nature, or dharmatā, Zhönū Pal explains the natural growth of the qualities within the sphere of the buddha element. In doing so, he quotes Rangjung Dorjé's *Snying po bstan pa*:

This unfabricated natural mind\textsuperscript{1813} is called the *dharmadhātu* [or] the *nature of the victorious ones* (i.e., buddha nature). It is not improved on by the noble ones, or vulgarized by sentient beings. (DRSM, 339.26–340.2)

Even though this contradicts the theory propounding a natural growth,\textsuperscript{1814} Zhönū Pal goes on to explain:

Therefore, even though it is disturbed by the higher and lower realms of beings and the manifold mental defilements, [its] nature does not change. Thus the mind remains within itself, and so is at peace and is pure with regard to all [those defilements]. When purified, it is the nature of the qualities. Therefore [the qualities] increase naturally within it (*ngang gis*), like space when a house is being destroyed. (DRSM, 340.2–5)

Interesting, too, is Zhönū Pal's commentary on the third inconceivable point (that inseparable qualities are present even in ordinary beings):

The earlier qualities in sentient beings and the later qualities of the stainless state exist in the same way as the dharmatā, because neither the earlier nor the later ones are different in terms of being or not being the dharmatā. Therefore here, too, it is difficult to realize that [buddha nature] is unchangeable, even though the qualities in the state of sentient beings and the qualities at the level of a buddha are different in terms of having blossomed or not. To express this in an example that is only partially true, the space in the state of being of an existing world and the space in the state of being devoid of a world (after its dissolution) differ in that [the latter is] spacious and [the former] congested. Still, the two never diverge from the nature of space. (DRSM, 236.3–8)

In other words, the different states of buddha nature have in common that they are inseparable from the dharmatā, which makes buddha nature unchangeable in its most important aspect.
To shed further light on how Zhö nu Pal understands the natural growth of buddha nature into enlightenment and buddha activity, we have to return once more to his interesting explanation of the second vajra point of the Dharma. Here not only buddha nature, but also the \( \text{ālayavijñāna} \), is taken to be the root:

To sum up, it has been taught that without a support [and] something supported, an uninterrupted saṃsāra from beginningless time up to now is not admissible. If saṃsāra is not admissible, neither is the remedy for it, nirvāṇa. Since this [combination of] support and supported is the stained \( \text{ālayavijñāna} \), this \( \text{ālayavijñāna} \) will be reversed when you become a buddha. Even though it has been reversed, there is, after you become a buddha, activity for the sake of sentient beings for as long as space exists. Because this is not possible without a support [and] a supported, the root [must] be the actual buddha nature. It has been established [in the \( \text{Laiikāvatārasūtra} \)] that the \( \text{ālayavijñāna} \) is the second root. (DRSM, 131.5–9)

You may think, “Well then, this [reasoning] may be allowed inasmuch as buddha nature has been taught as that first support. But why is it necessary to teach the so-called \( \text{ālayavijñāna} \) expressly as a second support?” It is because buddha nature possesses two features: being naturally empty from mental fabrications and abiding as a quality of the mind. The part about being empty from mental fabrications is taught in the analytical corpus for those given to reasoning.... (DRSM, 131.9–12)

When the feature of the mind that is [buddha] nature appears during a direct [realization of it] in your own [perceiving] subject, you see it, and so not only realize that the mind itself is free from mental fabrications; by its power, you also realize that the whole of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is without an own-being. What is in perfect harmony with the workings of such a mind is the subtle inside of the mind of sentient beings, [namely,] the \( \text{ālayavijñāna} \). Therefore it is further explained as being focused on the dharmadhatu. In view of the teaching that “the \( \text{ālayavijñāna} \) is an unconscious perception (or, representation) [of the outer world, etc.],” it cannot be perceived in the form of an experience even by those wise in the ways of the world. Therefore, it is difficult to say “that what is similar to that \( \text{ālayavijñāna} \), [namely,] the kāya[?] and the nonconceptual mental consciousness that is free
from the three parts of time, is like this [or that].” This difficulty will be experienced by those who are not crazy. It is in view of only this much [ascertainment] that the experts in pith instructions say, “This is the ālaya[vijñāna].” (DRSM, 131.14–21)

It is important to note that Zhönu Pal follows the Laṅkāvatārasūtra and sees in the ālayavijñāna not only the basis of samsāra but in the end also the cause of it being reversed into nirvāṇa. If both the ālayavijñāna and buddha nature are taken to be the root of samsāra and enlightenment, you may wonder how the relation between the two is explained. In his commentary on the third vajra point, the Saṅgha, Zhönu Pal says:

To sum up, I have explained the mind, [that is,] the ālaya[vijñāna]. I explained it, among other things, as [buddha] nature. I explained it not in the sense that it is actual buddha nature. I explained it as a reflection of [buddha] nature. (DRSM, 178.2–3)

The fact that the ālayavijñāna is presented as a reflection of buddha nature and, like buddha nature, taken as a root of enlightenment, precludes a strict distinction between the buddha element and the adventitious stains, and thus an interpretation along the lines of Jonang zhentong.

The Examples Used to Illustrate the Growth of the Qualities

Most of the examples used in the Ratnagotravibhāga and its vyākhyā clearly paint a picture of a primordially present buddha who only needs to be discovered and cleansed from adventitious stains. Zhönu Pal’s understanding is different, namely that the qualities exist only in a subtle form, as seeds of the fully blossomed buddha qualities. To support his stance, he follows a double strategy. First, he picks out the few examples that allow an interpretation in line with his view. The two examples he chooses from the Ratnagotravibhāga, namely that of the tree and the future monarch, do indeed have features that suggest a growth of subtle qualities. But the main focus of the example of the tree lies not on the growing tree, but on the imperishability of its seed and that the result, namely the tree, is already contained in the seed. Similarly, in the second example adduced, that the future monarch is still an embryo does not seem to be crucial for an understanding of it. His nature of being a cakravartin will not change, in that his future role is already programmed and his poor mother already protected.
But Zhö nu Pal emphasizes that the embryo still has to develop in the same way as the tree still has to grow from its seed.

Zhö nu Pal also compares the subtle forms of wisdom inside sentient beings with the painting used in another example, probably the one of the silk cloth and the universe from the *Avatāmśakasūtra.* In addition, Zhö nu Pal cites a number of examples that, while not found in the *Ratna­gotra­vibhāga* and its *vyākhyā,* fully support his point. One of the most quoted ones is that of the waxing moon in the *Dharmadhūtastotra:*

[Practitioners] on the [bodhisattva] levels are seen to grow gradually, in the same way as you see the fine [crescent] moon growing day after day. In the same way as the moon is full on the fifteenth day, so too is the dharmakāya complete and clear on the final [bodhisattva] level. (DRSM, 121.20–22)

Obviously Zhö nu Pal compares the qualities with the waxing illumination of the moon, and not with the moon itself. Most of the remaining examples illustrate a change in quantity but not in quality—for example, the space inside a house that widens when the house is torn down; and space in the two states of containing a universe and not containing one (after its dissolution); or the light of a lamp inside a vase that spreads after the vase is broken. In other words, buddha qualities increase as ever more hindrances that cover the qualities with defilements are removed:

Even though there is a difference between [the buddha qualities] in terms of being subtle and having increased, depending on the extent to which adventitious stains are purified or not, they do not have the attribute of being changeable by nature. (DRSM, 122.1–2)

One example falls out of line, that of the red color produced by mixing turmeric powder and lime. Zhö nu Pal uses it to illustrate the cultivation of qualities by bringing together the sixty purifying factors with the buddha element in sentient beings. The quality red, however, is the result of a chemical process between two substances, something entirely conditioned. In this respect it is also interesting how Zhö nu Pal understands the example of the gold. The customary scenario of naturally present qualities that become manifest during the process of purification is replaced by a complete causal nexus involving mixing gold ore and fibroferrite. This mixture can be ascertained as having the nature of the arising of the fruit or pure gold.
The Ontological Status of the Buddha Qualities

Ontology in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* is based primarily not on the two truths of the Madhyamaka but rather on a distinction between a buddha element (or buddha nature) with its inseparable qualities on the one hand and adventitious stains that can be separated from the buddha element on the other. If you wish to relate this to the two truths in Madhyamaka, the most obvious thing to do would be to take the buddha element with its inseparable qualities as the ultimate truth and the adventitious stains as the apparent truth. Indeed, in a quotation from the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdesāśūtra*, which is one of the main sources of *tathāgatagarbha* theory, the ultimate is equated with the buddha element in its different states:

Śāriputra, that which must be realized by faith is the ultimate. Śāriputra, *ultimate* is an expression for the [buddha] element in sentient beings. The [buddha] element in sentient beings, Śāriputra, is an expression for buddha nature. Buddha nature, Śāriputra, is an expression for the dharmakāya.

On the other hand, RGV I.21 says that:

Ultimately, buddhahood is the only refuge for the world, given that the Sage has the Dharma as his body, and the Community sets it as its ultimate goal.

And the paragraph on the endowment or connection with qualities in the second chapter of the *vyākhyā* (RGV II.29–37) is introduced the following way:

The explanation that a buddha has the defining characteristics of space was taught with the underlying intention of the ultimate and exclusive buddha characteristic of the tathāgatas.

Based on this, you could claim that it is only the space-like characteristic, or the emptiness, of a buddha that qualifies for ultimate truth.

That Zhōnu Pal has problems with sutras like the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdesāśūtra* must be clear by now. In his commentary on the passage from this sutra (quoted above), he diplomatically refers to the three reasons for the presence of buddha nature in sentient beings (RGV I.27–28). The equation of buddha nature with dharmakāya can be relativized by the explana-
tion that the fruit of buddha nature has been only “metaphorically” applied to the buddha potential.

In his commentary on RGV I.1, Zhönu Pal explains all seven vajra points in terms of the ultimate and the apparent truths. In this context he calls the thirty-two qualities of dissociation ultimate (otherwise called qualities of the dharmakāya), but assigns the thirty-two qualities of maturation to the level of apparent truth. The question arises, of course, in what way the thirty-two qualities of dissociation are ultimate. RGV III.3 states that the first kāya, which is there said to be ultimate, is endowed with them, so that it makes sense to call the qualities of dissociation ultimate, especially in the broader context of explaining each of the seven vajra points on an ultimate or apparent level of truth.

In his commentary on RGV I.26, Zhönu Pal argues that suchness mingled with stains must be realized, since it includes all knowable objects that fully exhaust the two truths:

The adventitious stains, [that is,] the mind and the mental factors, both of which are dominated by the ignorance that conceals reality, belong to the apparent, because they are contained within the entire apparent truth. (DRSM, 242.10–11)

In contrast suchness is contained within ultimate truth. (DRSM, 242.11–12)

A further explanation of ultimate truth is found in the commentary on the introductory stanza to the ten aspects of the buddha element:

And this [buddha] element is the sphere (dbyings) of the ultimate. As to the ultimate, it is the right wisdom, which knows reality. Its object is the sphere; it [itself] is a synonym of the [buddha] element. This is the meaning of ultimate truth. (DRSM, 270.1–3)

In other words, the right wisdom, which knows reality is included within the ultimate or suchness. Thus the qualities of the dharmakāya are only ultimate inasmuch as they partake of this suchness. That ultimately buddha nature, and hence its qualities, are understood in this way becomes clear in Zhönu Pal’s discussion of the statement in the Lāṅkāvatārasūtra that buddha nature has provisional meaning:

Some say that because of [the phrase] “in order to guide (i.e., discipline) the heretics” buddha nature was taught in this
[Laṅkāvatārasūtra] as having provisional meaning. Others have replied that the goal of teaching buddha nature is explained, but it is not explained as having provisional meaning. In my opinion neither is correct, since the underlying intention here is that terms such as [buddha] nature, sentient beings, self, and lord have a provisional meaning. Once you have come to be guided by them, the meaning of buddha nature must be thought of in terms of selflessness. [On the other hand,) the Laṅkāvatārasūtra does not teach [the ultimate aspect of] buddha nature, which is explained here in the [Ratnagotrabhāga Mahāyāna-]Uttara [tantra], [from] beginning [to] end, and is thus unable to attain final certainty, but as for the goal to which you are guided [through the teaching of buddha nature in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra], it is taught as being the suchness [also] explained here [in the Ratnagotrabhāga]. (DRSM, 267.15–21)

In terms of enlightenment, Zhōnu Pal accepts only the svabhāvikakāya as a fit candidate for the ultimate truth, the form kāyas being enlightenment on the level of apparent truth.1828 In this context, an explanation of how the qualities are endowed with the ultimate kāya in the paragraph on endowment or connection1829 in the chapter on enlightenment is of particular interest:

Since here ldan pa (lit., endowment) has the meaning of “being connected,” the qualities are connected with activity, and activity with the dharmakāya, which is [also] endowed with the defining characteristics of the two [form] kāyas. (DRSM, 482.26–483.1)

And in his following paragraph on manifestation (vṛtti), Zhōnu Pal explains:

It (i.e., buddhahood or enlightenment in terms of dharmatā) manifests itself while [at the same time] being inseparably endowed (i.e., connected) with inconceivable qualities that are, like space, unconditioned. Although its nature is thus unconditioned, it manifests itself in different kāyas that are [both] conditioned and unconditioned. (DRSM, 483.3–4)

For Zhōnu Pal, the conditioned kāyas are the form kāyas, with their qualities of maturation, but also the dharmakāya inasmuch as it consists of
discourses taught in profound and diverse ways. Thus only the unconditioned svābhāvikakāya aspect of the dharmakāya correlates with the ultimate. Unconditioned is not understood as a static state but as a mode of being not produced by artificial causes and under artificial conditions (this does not exclude qualities that blossom naturally). Zhönu Pal points out thatngo bo nyid (svabhāva) in svābhāvikakāya means “nonartificial.” Does this mean, then, that the naturally growing qualities are ultimate in every respect? When confronted with such an objection that the buddha element undergoes change if his theory of natural growth is followed, Zhönu Pal points out the true nature of the qualities, namely their general defining characteristic of being nonconceptual. Thus he comments on a passage from the Anunatvapūrṇatvanirdeśasūtra to the effect that the nature of the dharmakāya is the general defining characteristic of the buddha element. He compares the buddha element in different states to the space enclosed by golden and earthen receptacles. Similarly you could say that the emptiness of buddha nature is not different from the emptiness of a buddha. In addition, in his commentary on RGV I.158 (J I.155) Zhönu Pal explains that the innumerable qualities are identical, not different. Thus the ten strengths (which are different jñānas) differ only with regard to their perceived object but not in essence. About the dharmakāya he says in this context:

Even though the endless number of forms of all knowable objects are not mixed with each other, it (i.e., the dharmakāya) is free of the fault of being many, since [all forms] have an identical own-being. It is also free of the fault of being one, since that own-being is the complete pacification of mental fabrications and [since] it is not characterized by [any] characteristic sign. (DRSM, 443.18–20)

This amounts to saying that the dharmakāya is empty because it is beyond one and many. In other words, the ten strengths of buddha nature are not different because they are the same wisdom apprehending different objects. On the other hand, this wisdom does not constitute an independently existing entity with specific characteristics, and this avoids the fault of being one. Taken in such a way, the existence of buddha qualities does not contradict the Madhyamaka notion of emptiness.

Emptiness, however, is not only a nonaffirming negation, but is also positively described as awareness-emptiness. Zhönu Pal adduces Maitrīpa to support his view that this awareness and emptiness of the third dharmacakra
is supreme,\textsuperscript{1834} which is also more in accordance with the \textit{Ratnagotra-vibhāga}. This “awareness-emptiness” is not simply the emptiness of an awareness; buddha nature has the double feature of being both free from mental fabrications (emptiness) and aware.\textsuperscript{1835}

In Zhönu Pal’s explanation of the second example from the \textit{Tathāgata-garbhasūtra}, honey represents buddha nature and also, according to him, the buddha element of primordial awareness, which is explicitly called by him “ultimate truth.”\textsuperscript{1836} What Zhönu Pal means by \textit{awareness} becomes clear in a discussion of the truth of the path and the truth of cessation in the second vajra point. In this context, he observes that the movement of mind has ceased on the level of a buddha, and goes on to explain:

The Madhyamikas assert that a mind to which only entities appear displays mental movement, but a buddha definitely does not display this movement. This is also the underlying purport of the \textit{Jñānālokālakārakārasūtra}. Given that both nirvāṇa and buddha are explained as a single ground in the \textit{Śrimālādevīśūtra} and this treatise here (i.e., the \textit{Ratnagotra-vibhāga}), these texts explain [this ground] as awareness only. But in asserting that it is the awareness aspect of buddha nature, they therefore do not assert that it is the wisdom of the path. (DRSM, 100.12–15)

Thus awareness is not only clearly distinguished from mind, but also from the wisdom of the path. Moreover, in the explanation of emptiness in the last dharmacakrā, awareness is taken to be a residual part of emptiness, whereas it is only the lack of an own-being in the second dharmacakrā. You do not find any kind of own-being in entities by searching with inferential reasoning. What remains, the lack of an own-being, abides as the object of an inferential valid cognition. On the path of the third dharmacakrā you do not find any adventitious phenomena by relying on direct valid cognitions. Thus [the nature of mind] is said to be empty of these phenomena. What remains rests as mere awareness without any characteristic signs.\textsuperscript{1837}

Further support for the thesis that both aspects of buddha nature, the emptiness of adventitious stains (i.e., freedom from mental fabrication) and awareness-emptiness, correlate with the ultimate is found in the commentary on RGV I.51, where Zhönu Pal describes the reality of definitive meaning in terms of self-awareness,\textsuperscript{1838} which is free from mental fabrication:
You may ask: “Well then, what is reality in its definitive meaning?” It is very self-awareness itself, which is free from all forms of mental fabrication. You may object: “Well, if you [implicitly] call it momentary, how is it then not apparent [truth]?” It is not [apparent truth] because it does not “conceal reality,” which is the meaning of the term apparent [truth]. Moreover, it cannot produce defilements when focused on. Also, not [everything] that does not withstand logical analysis comes under apparent [truth], because if logical analysis is needed when, in assessing a sprout, etc., your valid cognition [can] not stop the superimposition of taking that [sprout, etc.] for a [real] thing, then it is a [direct] valid cognition by which you apprehend very awareness itself, which is without any [characteristic] signs and mental fabrications whatsoever; and you can counteract all fabrications by precisely this valid cognition. So what can be generated by again using analytic reasoning? This is the reason why the master Āryadeva said that you must apply many synonyms for the ultimate truth. (DRSM, 340.18–25)

In other words, soteriological awareness (which includes the object of self-awareness) is but a synonym of the ultimate. Even though it does not stand up to logical analysis, it helps to counteract mental fabrication. For Zhönu Pal then, the ultimate is not the object of reasoning or inferential knowledge; it is rather the object of the wisdom of the noble ones. As we have seen above, momentariness is not really a problem for Zhönu Pal either, since he goes so far as to assign this predicate even to space.

In conclusion, the Madhyamaka concept of the two truths does not undergird the Ratnagotravibhāga; in fact, it is alien to it. Thus, in order to answer the question whether the buddha qualities exist on the level of ultimate truth, you have first to be aware of which two truths you are talking about. In the second dharmacakra, the ultimate is taken to be the absence of an own-being. Since Zhönu Pal carefully avoids claiming such an existence, the buddha qualities are of course also empty of such an own-being. Still, the qualities of the dharmakāya are taken to be ultimate, but, as has been shown above, only in the sense that they partake of suchness. When Zhönu Pal explains that the buddha element does not change, even though its primordial subtle qualities blossom in a natural way on the path, he does so on this level. In the third dharmacakra, which for Zhönu Pal is superior, positive descriptions of the ultimate are used and, as we have seen above, both aspects of buddha nature, which are freedom from mental fabrication
(emptiness) and awareness, are explained as corresponding to the ultimate truth. Because qualities are described as naturally growing within their own sphere and as being even momentary, however, this guards against a too ontological understanding of the third dharmacakra.
6. Two Types of Emptiness

A first glance at Zhönu Pal’s introductory explanation of the buddha element (DRSM, 14.22–17.24) immediately reveals one of his main aims, which is to embed the theory of tathāgatagarbha into mainstream Mahāyāna in general, and into the Madhyamaka tradition of Maitripa in particular. Zhönu Pal claims that Maitripa called the emptiness taught in the Madhyamakāvatāra middling Madhyamaka, and “awareness-emptiness” (rig stong) supreme Madhyamaka. Even though the term itself is not found in Maitripa’s Tattvadāsaka, it is said in TD 5 that all phenomena, which are of one taste, are unobstructed, without an abode, and experienced in the yathābhūtasamādhi as being luminous. Maitripa’s disciple Sahajavajra, in his Tattvadāsakatikā, defines one taste as “the one taste in terms of suchness,” unobstructed as “without a superimposed own-being,” and without an abode as “not arisen.” It goes without saying that these terms define emptiness in accordance with Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti. What makes Maitripa’s Madhyamaka supreme is the experience of this emptiness as natural luminosity, which is equated with self-awareness by Sahajavajra. In his Sākārasiddhi Jñānaśrīmitra (one of Maitripa’s teachers) summarizes stanza I.9 of the RGV and equates the crucial term pratyātmavedyāḥ (which is the same as pratyātmavedaniya in RGVV I.1, i.e., “to be realized by yourself”) with suṣaṃvedana (Tib. rang rig, self-awareness). It is obvious that Sahajavajra’s self-awareness (rang rig) should be understood in terms of pratyātmavedaniya as well, and it is this kind of (rang) rig that is—in its luminous experience of the nature of phenomena—also the emptiness of the nature of phenomena, and thus “awareness-emptiness.”

In his Ratnagotravibhāga commentary Zhönu Pal explains that the emptiness of middling Madhyamaka is approached by the method of nonaffirming negation and assigned to the middle (or second) dharmacakra, whereas supreme Madhyamaka with its “awareness-emptiness” is said to follow the path of affirming negation and belong to the third dharmacakra. In
his exposition for those with average faculties, Zhönu Pal defines the emptiness of the second dharmacakra as a nonaffirming negation along the lines of the common assertion that phenomena are empty of any own-being. In this context he quotes Mūlamadhyamakakārikā XV.2ab, which posits that something created cannot be the own-being (svabhāva) of anything. Even in this world, according to the Prasannapadā, something created, such as the “hotness” of water, is not considered to be an own-being, whereas the “hotness” of fire is. Only something that does not arise from contact with other things can be an own-being.

Candrakīrti is quick to point out that the “hotness of fire” is an example of an own-being only in the common sense, or, to use the technical term, on the level of conventional truth. In reality, the hotness of fire is created, and in the final analysis it is in no way different from the hotness of water. For Candrakīrti the six elements (i.e., earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness) cannot be imagined in terms of the categories of existence and nonexistence, of objects to be defined, or of defining characteristics. In other words, a material world and consciousness cannot be grasped in any known way. As soon as you identify a defining characteristic, such as the hotness of fire, you have already altered your experienced reality by false imagining. The own-being of entities can, however, become the object of the noble ones. In his commentary on MMK XV.2cd, Candrakīrti explains:

> Entities that have come under the influence of the eye disease [known as] ignorance—in which form they attain, through the practice of not seeing [them], the state of being the object of the noble ones, whose eye disease, ignorance, has been removed—this very [form] is their own-being, their essential nature. This is what has been established, and this is the defining characteristic [of own-being].

In other words, the own-being of entities is not only defined in a negative way (it is neither artificially created nor dependent on anything) but also in terms of being the object of the noble ones, who perceive reality without subjectively distorting it by false imagining. In his commentary on the same stanza, Candrakīrti equates the own-being of entities with their true nature (dhammatā), natural state (prakṛti), emptiness, lack of essence (naiḥsvabhāvyā), suchness, existence as it is (tathābhāva), and the continuous nonarising of things such as fire. Candrakīrti is careful enough to explain that such an own-being of nonarising is but the nonexistence of anything whatsoever.
From what has been said above, however, you could argue in line with Dölpopa or Zhönu Pal\(^\text{1856}\) that this negation only excludes predicates pertaining to the realm of conventional truth.\(^\text{1857}\) How else could the own-being of entities be experienced in a nonconceptual way by the noble ones, and reality also be positively defined by using the term *peaceful*?\(^\text{1858}\) In other words, in the second dharma-cakra, on the path of Madhyamaka reasoning, it is possible to negate theories (or reifications of any theory) of reality, but doing so has no implications for the validity of what is opposed to the negation. Once all misleading concepts are removed, a direct cognition or experience of reality is possible, as described positively in the third dharma-cakra. This carries constant warnings concerning both the limitations of language and the danger of mental fabrication and the subjective alteration of reality that is usually created by the process of imputation and labeling. Thus the language of the third dharma-cakra usually consists of pairs of paradoxes, in which a positive statement of your direct experience of reality is combined with a negation of any possible reification that could be produced by this statement if it is taken on an ordinary intellectual level of understanding. To support his point, Zhönu Pal quotes the conclusion of Bhavya’s *Prajñāpradīpa*, which states that people who are used to imagining truly existent things apprehend reality mainly by inferential cognitions, but this is not the way a buddha apprehends reality.\(^\text{1859}\)

Moreover, Zhönu Pal points out that the example of the hotness of fire is also used in the teachings of the third dharma-cakra to illustrate that emptiness is the nature of all phenomena.\(^\text{1860}\) In other words, Zhönu Pal does not want us to believe that hotness is really accepted as the own-being of fire in the *Prasannapadā*. That Candrakīrti uses the example at all, rather, indicates for Zhönu Pal that an own-being is not entirely to be excluded. In fact, you could argue that in the *Prasannapadā* unconditioned nirvāṇa, which is free from mental fabrication, fulfills these criteria.\(^\text{1861}\) It would, however, not be right to label nirvāṇa *own-being*, since this would be again a mental fabrication, from which ultimate reality is supposed to be free. As stated above, the goal of the analytical Madhyamaka works of the second dharma-cakra is to exclude any conceptual reification of reality by showing the internal contradictions of any theory of reality. But for Zhönu Pal this does not mean that a positive description of a nonconceptual experience of reality, as found in the third dharma-cakra, is entirely excluded by the analytical Madhyamaka works of the second dharma-cakra. For him, these analytical works are rather a possible preparation for the direct approach described in texts like the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.
On the basis of such argumentation, Zhönu Pal introduces two different types of emptiness. In the third dharmacakra, the emptiness of an own-being (that is, the emptiness of the second dharmacakra) is first established in an outer husk, namely the adventitious stains. Then the emptiness that is buddha nature is ascertained in a direct valid cognition, not, that is, as a nonaffirming negation of an own-being. Even though buddha nature has not arisen from causes and conditions, it is not the case that it does not arise at all, in Zhönu Pal’s opinion. It simply does not depend on other phenomena in its natural flow, and in this it is like the element of space evolving within its own sphere. In other words, Candrakirti’s emptiness of an own-being does not apply to the buddha element, in Zhönu Pal’s eyes, “because it (i.e., the buddha element) does not arise from contact with other things”—the criterion for an own-being in the Prasannapada. It should be noted, however, that for Zhönu Pal the word ngo bo nyid in ngo bo nyid kyi sku (svabhāvikakāya) means “nonartificial.” The “natural character” of buddha nature is such a “nonartificial” (ngo bo nyid, Skt. svabhāva) that it turns, in the state of a buddha, into a “kāya consisting of this svabhāva,” that is, a svabhāvikakāya. But since the svabhāvikakāya denotes the ultimate aspect of a buddha, this svabhāva consists wholly of space-like qualities and is nothing other than Candrakirti’s svabhāva (or prakṛti) of entities.

This is as far as Zhönu Pal is willing to go. He strictly opposes statements to the effect that fully developed qualities of the dharma-kāya or even the major and minor marks of a buddha exist in sentient beings. That would come too close to the non-Buddhist view of an ātman for him. In other words, he holds that in sentient beings, something that at most resembles the svabhāvikakāya really exists, and speaks in this context of “subtle buddha qualities” or “seeds.” Consequently, he takes the buddha element to be momentary, and only unconditioned in the sense of not being artificially conditioned by adventitious causes and conditions. Confronted with the objection that its momentariness entails that it belongs to the apparent truth, he explains that focusing on it does not produce delusions or obscure reality. Moreover, not everything that does not stand up to logical analysis is therefore apparent truth. A logical analysis of the buddha element only yields its being free from mental fabrications and characteristic signs. How it relates to awareness must be experienced in a direct cognition. Zhönu Pal suggests this when he distinguishes two different types of emptiness in the context of explaining three reasons why the truth of cessation is inconceivable:
In this treatise (i.e., the *Ratnagotravibhāga*) in particular, there are two [types of] emptiness to be distinguished. [First is] the nonaffirming negation, in which entities are empty of any kind of own-being. [Secondly,] it is not enough that an obstinate clinging to entities does not arise when you see [reality] yourself on the basis of a valid cognition of the perceiving subject. But when you see [reality yourself on the basis of such a valid cognition], the awareness that is a remedy for all kinds of mind (*blo*) possessing characteristic signs [also] abides as a mere property. This is the case whether buddhas appear or not. Therefore it is called *abiding nature*. Thoughts and the resulting defilements, skandhas, etc., are not the fundamental nature (*gshis*); still, the fundamental nature is the basis of defilements and thoughts, and even [this] is not seen. Therefore, when you teach emptiness, [the canonical formula is]: “You truly see that something is empty of that which does not exist in it, and that that which remains in place exists.” The defining characteristics of emptiness as taught in this [passage] inhere in both [types of] emptiness. By searching with inferential reasoning, you will not see any kind of own-being in entities. What remains is the lack of an own-being, which abides as the object of [inferential reasoning]. When searching on the basis of direct, correct [cognition], you do not see any adventitious phenomena. Thus [the fundamental nature] is said to be empty of these phenomena. What remains abides as mere awareness without [any] characteristic signs. Since both [types of] emptiness are thus grounded in the two types of valid cognition, they are never deceptive and are therefore “true.” (DRSM, 101.14–24)

The difference between the two dharmacakras is thus more one of method than of philosophical tenet. While an analytical investigation of reality in the second dharmacakra reveals nothing but the lack of an own-being, a direct cognition of your buddha nature reveals not only the emptiness of adventitious stains but also an awareness that cannot be grasped by intellectual reasoning. To postulate that this awareness is a substantial own-being with an independent existence, though, would make it an object of the intellect and bring it within range of the Madhyamaka criticism.

The realization of this awareness or “awareness-emptiness” is further explained by Zhönu Pal a little further down:
In terms of “awareness-emptiness” (rig stong), the skandhas and the like are adventitious, because in a correct direct [cognition] of entities such as the skandhas arising into existence, sinking into nonexistence, [a combination] of both, or neither one nor the other are not perceived. Since [arising entities and the like] are artificial and coerced, they are said not to be the fundamental nature of the unconstrived mind. Thus, not only is the unconstrived mind not the object of coemergent or imaginative thought, since all thoughts are adventitious, but it cannot be conceptualized or defined by them [either]. It must be realized in an unfabricated, direct way. (DRSM, 102.4–9)

What is then the relation between the lack of an own-being and awareness, the two things left over, in the second and third dharmacakras? In the same paragraph of the commentary Zhönu Pal gives a precise answer to this question:

Even though the emptiness of nonaffirming negation taught in the middle dharmacakra and the truth of [buddha] nature taught in the last [dharmacakra] are very different with regard to the object of understanding, I do not assert that the difference is that, whereas [the reality ascertained through] nonaffirming negation is directly realized, [buddha] nature is not directly realized. Even though there is a difference with regard to the referents of these words, there is no difference when the happiness of direct [cognition] is realized. This follows from a number of supreme pith instructions, and [in these] I put faith. (DRSM, 110.13–17)

In other words, positive descriptions of the ultimate in the third dharmacakra are in reality, or ontologically, not different from emptiness. This is clear, too, from Zhönu Pal’s discussion of the expression “self-awareness (i.e., self-realization) that is free from mental fabrications.” As we have seen above, he defends such descriptions of the ultimate by pointing out that not everything that does not stand up to logical analysis is automatically invalidated on the ultimate level. In the conclusion of this particular discussion (in his commentary on RGV I.51) he seeks support from Āryadeva, who said that many synonyms of the ultimate truth must be used. For Zhönu Pal, they are not only as valid as the expression “emptiness of nonaffirming negation,” but also needed as descriptions of direct experiences.
resulting from special meditation techniques. This point is discussed in the chapter on mahāmudrā.  

Here it is important to note that Zhönu Pal understands the corpus of the prajñāpāramitā teaching as implying that something is left over after the negation of an own-being. In his comment on the reason why it is inconceivable that the true nature (ngo bo) of attachment is buddha nature, whereas attachment itself is adventitious, the famous passage from the Añtasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā is quoted:

This mind is not mind, the nature of mind being luminosity.  
(DRSM, 216.2–3) 

This passage is explained in line with the Brhatīṭikā from the perspective of the three natures (trisvabhāva). “This mind” denotes the imagined nature. The perfect nature, which is the mind of unsurpassable enlightenment, or the dharmakāya, is beyond all defining characteristics of imagining and thought, so it is said not to be that mind. Therefore the nature of mind is luminosity.  

This is very consequential, for such an interpretation of the prajñāpāramitā literature in accordance with the Brhatīṭikā—that is, the perfect nature being empty of the imagined and dependent natures—is one of the most important hermeneutic moves of the Jonangpas. It endorses, or at least does not exclude, an understanding to the effect that the ultimate possesses qualities that are not empty. 

That Zhönu Pal seeks the purport of the prajñāpāramitā corpus in this direction is also supported by the following passage:

The teaching of being like clouds and the like in the prajñāpāramitā does not mean that all knowable objects were taught as being like clouds and the like. As for the limit of reality, the ultimate truth in the teaching of the two truths in the prajñāpāramitā, it was taught that it is, as the basis that is empty (stong pa'i gzhi), devoid of all conditioned forms. [It has been said:] 

Whatever is conditioned is not the ultimate. 

Having thus rejected that [conditioned forms] are the ultimate, the ultimate is called “empty of the conditioned.” On the other hand, the opposite of the conditioned, that is, the ultimate, does
Dorjé in describing the dharmadhātu, or buddha nature, with the mahāmudrā term *unfabricated* or *natural mind*. In line with this, he explains the negandum in the third dharmacakra as meaning that the natural mind, or the original state of mind (*sems kyi gnyug ma*), is empty of everything fabricated:

The negandum, too, that of which something is empty, is [here] a little different from [how it is defined in] the middle [dharma-] cakra. From sentient beings up to the Buddha [something] exists [that is] established as the nature of mind in virtue of being neither impaired by, nor fabricated under, other conditions. It is called *empty of fabricated adventitious phenomena*.... All these are, according to the circumstances, fabricated from [cognitive] objects, [mental] imprints, and impaired sense faculties, and thus not the way the original mind is. Therefore the original mind is said to be empty of them. (DRSM, 15.20–16.5)

To be sure, having directly realized emptiness within the framework of the last dharmacakra, you do not rest in a vacuum-like nothingness, the true nature of things being characterized by the awareness of natural luminosity:

Here, too, in the last dharmacakra, when you investigate the nature of adventitious attachment and so forth, you see neither any object to become attached to nor any subject that becomes attached. You simply abide in the fundamental nature of attachment—the mere awareness of natural luminosity. If you abide so, even qualities such as clairvoyance appear without any special effort. (DRSM, 441.14–17)

The distinction between the adventitious stains and buddha nature in the second type of emptiness gives rise to the question about their exact relation. In his commentary on the compatibility of the buddha element with the *prajñāpāramitā* (RGV I.160–70 (J I.157–67), Zhönú Pal explains:

Here, too, in the last dharmacakra, the ultimate is called *empty of adventitious stains*, since phenomena such as attachment are adventitious and thus not ultimate. On the other hand, even though it is pure of adventitious [stains], it is not at all acceptable [to think that the adventitious] abides somewhere other
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than in the ultimate buddha element, since the ultimate buddha element has been taught as being the basis of all defilements. Likewise, the svābhāvikakāya of a buddha, it is stated, is not artificial. It is taught that only something that resembles it exists in sentient beings. Moreover, the fact that a direct vision of the noble ones alone enters it, allows it to be called ultimate, as well. (DRSM, 448.24–449.2)

Throughout the commentary, Zhönu Pal uses several examples to bring home that the apparent and ultimate truths and related pairs, such as thought and luminosity, or saṁsāra and nirvāṇa, are not different in the sense of being separate things. That thought and luminosity share the same nature is compared, for instance, to the same nature of ice and water, or waves and the ocean. Similarly, adventitious stains and buddha nature are not considered two different things that happen to be mixed up or occur together; rather, buddha nature actually possesses, temporarily, the properties of the stains, in the same way as iron can be temporarily hot. If it did not have these properties, it could not be called the basis of defilements. In his commentary on the first inconceivable point, Zhönu Pal explains:

When cold iron is brought in contact with fire, the cold substance changes into something else—hot [iron]. Without the condition presented by fire, it will change again into a cold [substance], but it is not the case that the mind apprehends as one, without differentiating, a mixture of two different substances provided that neither hot nor cold is within the nature of iron. Likewise the mind is also turned into defilements by the fire of [mental] imprints. When the imprints are reversed, there are no [longer] any defilements. Thus, even though the mind is thereby known to be associated with defilements, it is not the case that at the time of the defilements, both the pure mind and the defiled one are mixed as two separate substances and simply not differentiated by the mind. (DRSM, 218.8–12)

In other words, adventitious stains and the buddha element are not two substances that have become mixed up; rather buddha nature itself manifests as defilements in the same way as the property of heat is not different from hot iron. In a saṁsāric state of mind, buddha nature possesses two types of properties: defilements and buddha qualities. These differ, however, in that the defilements can be separated out whereas the buddha qualities
are inseparable. Here the comparison drawn in Prasannapadā XV.2 is brought in. Whereas the property of heat as manifested in water or iron can be separated by letting the substance cool down, the hotness of fire is inseparable. In the same way as you cannot have a fire without heat, buddha nature never occurs without the buddha qualities, but it can be separated from the “heat” of defilements.

It is therefore no surprise that Zhönu Pal favors the Laṅkāvatārasūtra’s equation of buddha nature with the basic consciousness (which is taken by him as the reflection of buddha nature). He quotes and discusses at length the pertinent passage of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra after his commentary on the crucial stanzas RGV I.27–28, which presents three reasons for the presence of buddha nature in sentient beings. While the Laṅkāvatārasūtra is not quoted in the Ratnagotravibhāgavatākhyā at all, Zhönu Pal’s commentary contains nearly the entire sutra in the form of frequent quotes. He considers it a Madhyamaka work and endorses its assertion that emptiness was taught as buddha nature for those who are not capable of grasping emptiness.

This is how buddha nature can be explained as a manifestation of defilements. Even though the buddha qualities exist in a subtle form or as something that resembles the svabhāvikakāya, for Zhönu Pal they are at the same time emptiness, and as such identical in essence with the defilements, which are also empty. As we have already seen above, the difference between the adventitious and the buddha element is further characterized by their occurring artificially and naturally, respectively. Whereas the heat of water depends on outer conditions, such as a fire, a natural quality does not.

Another example that illustrates the relation between artificial phenomena (adventitious stains) and the buddha element is that of clouds and space. In his general introduction, based on the first stanza of the first chapter of the Ratnagotravibhāga, Zhönu Pal explains:

On the other hand, they do not arise as something entirely different from the nature of mind. It is like space, for example. Even though it does not turn into phenomena like clouds and mountains, and is thus termed empty, it would not be appropriate to say that these clouds and so forth abide somewhere else than in space. Moreover, in view of their being produced out of ignorance, even the outer material world and the bodies of sentient beings are artificial [or fabricated] and thus [themselves] neganda, things of which [the buddha element] is empty. (DRSM, 16.4–7)
Even though the dharmakāya is explained as the fruit of buddha nature, it is said:

The dharmakāya evolves in its own sphere, even though it is not subject to artificial conditions. Thus, it is called unconditioned because it is like space and not like clouds, which arise, abide, and cease. (DRSM, 86.18–20)

The sense in which the buddha element is still not contrived and adventitious is illustrated by the unchangeable nature of space, which is not affected by clouds:

The saying: “The stains being removed, the essence necessarily arises” belongs to the apparent [truth]. Ultimately, [false] imagining, which is the characteristic sign bringing forth all defilements, does not have to be removed, because it is pure in terms of its own-being. The validity of this [syllogism is established] by virtue of the fact that the [buddha] element is by nature free from adventitious stains. Whatever belongs to [this] nature is uncontrived and therefore not adventitious—even as, for example, some parts of the sky that [are covered] by clouds do not change in the slightest way into something else when the clouds have formed in it. (DRSM, 442.24–443.2)

And, we might add, the disappearance of clouds does not change space either, even though the volume of visible “openness” increases within its own sphere. A change in quantity does not affect the quality of space:

Even though there is a difference between subtle [buddha qualities] and increased ones by virtue of [buddha nature possessing] parts in which adventitious stains have been purified or not, they do not have the attribute of being changeable by nature. This should be understood, [for example,] in the same way as space enclosed by a house: [the space] becomes wider by tearing down the house, but the nature of space itself does not thereby become subject to change. (DRSM, 122.1–3)

In his introduction to the second chapter of the Ratnagotravibhāga, Zhönu Pal discusses at length the Dharmadharmatāvibhāga and its vṛtti, in both of which the distinction between dharmas and the dharmatā
closely parallels that between adventitious stains and buddha qualities in the Ratnagotravibhāga:

The root text (the Dharmadharmaṇāvibhāga) itself accords well with the explanation in the Ratnagotravibhāga that [the buddha element] is empty of adventitious stains but not empty of [buddha] qualities, for it (i.e., the Dharmadharmaṇāvibhāga) clearly teaches a distinction between the existing dharmatā and the nonexisting dharmas. (DRSM, 470.15–16)

The Dharmadharmaṇāvibhāga describes the relation between dharmas and the dharmatā in the following way:

The two are neither identical nor different, since there is [both] a difference and not a difference between the existent and nonexistent. (DhDhVK 38–41)

Vasubandhu’s commentary explains that the difference follows from the fact that the dharmatā exists whereas dharmas do not. On the other hand, they are also not different, because the dharmatā is only characterized by the nonexistence of dharmas, which means that both are empty.

The relation between dharmas and the dharmatā is a key to the understanding of emptiness in the third dharmacakra. Thus Dölpopa bases his zhentong definition of the two truths as “different in the sense that identity is negated” (gcig pa bkag pa’i thu dad pa) on this passage of the Dharmadharmaṇāvibhāga. Zhönū Pal understands the dharmatā, which is beyond duality, as being a continuity of stainless mind, but not in such a way that the absence of duality implies the existence of something. It does not even go beyond saṁsāra, given that it is the nature of all phenomena:

The dharmatā is free from the knowledge of eyes, etc., of ordinary people and even [its] support, [namely,] the experiential object. Since it is [also] free from the imaginations that are accompanied by words and meanings—together with [their] modes of apprehension—the mindstream that is, like the sphere of space, of one taste, is called dharmatā. This is because even all phenomena of saṁsāra are not beyond this nature. With regard to this, some say that it is a nonaffirming negation [concerning] the nonexistence as perceived object and perceiving subject, and that even an affirming negation would be allowable, in that it
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would exist as nonduality. Such [negations] may be taken to be the dharmatā, but here it is not like that, since the commentary explains [the dharmatā] as the continuity of a stainless mind only. (DRSM, 456.14-18)

Basing himself on Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra XIII.19 and the Dharmadārmatāvibhāga, Zhōnu Pal describes the stainless mind as natural luminosity, and this nature of mind as empty of duality and thought. For him, the explanation that natural luminosity coexists with all the defilements shows that Vasubandhu's Dharmadārmatāvibhāgavṛtti belongs to the Madhyamaka tradition:

This teaching [in the Dharmadārmatāvibhāgavṛtti] of a qualitative similarity between the transformation of the basis and two qualities, those of space as a substance that continues in a continuum and of [natural luminosity that] is apprehended after previously not being apprehended, shows clearly that the [Dharmadārmatāvibhāgavṛtti] of the master [Vasubandhu] belongs to the Madhyamaka tradition. In the major Yogācāra treatises it is not explained that there is a naturally pure continuation within the continuum of all defilements—ignorance and the like—but here it is so explained. (DRSM, 470.12-15)

In the same way as in the Ratnagotravibhāga, Zhōnu Pal thus avoids describing the ultimate as a static and permanent entity. This is one reason why he does not see the dharmatā as a negation that affirms the existence of something that is nondualistic, such as a static space-like entity of natural luminosity. Understood as a continuum, natural luminosity is the true nature in every moment of ordinary mind. In other words, natural luminosity is also the true nature of defiled mental events—a stance that Dölpopa vehemently rejects. That which is empty, then, is in reality not different from the basis of emptiness in which something is left over (the adventitious stains and the buddha element, or dharmas and the dharmatā)—any more than hot iron is from cold iron. This is made clear in Zhōnu Pal's explanation of the transformation of the basis in the Dharmadārmatāvibhāga:

The meaning of “you comprehend the nature (svabhāva) of the transformation when you understand that it is] the stainlessness of suchness, in that adventitious stains no longer appear at all, while suchness appears in every form” is: Having reverted
from [a state in which it] provides the basis of adventitious stains, it provides the basis of the nature that appears as suchness. (DRSM, 458.4–6)

In other words, the nature of the transformation of the basis is not newly created, but only revealed after its adventitious stains have been removed. That this is in accordance with the Ratnagotravibhāga is explained by the vyākhyā in the first point (svabhāva) of the second chapter on enlightenment (RGVV II.1):

The element that was taught by the Buddha as being buddha nature when not freed from the sheath of defilements should be known as the nature of the transformation of the basis when purified from them.1896

Zhönu Pal comments:

...the element, or cause, that is given the name buddha nature when it is not freed from the sheath of defilements, that is, when it has become the basis (āśraya) bringing forth defilements, is the basis (āśraya) [in the expression “transformation of the basis”], providing as it does the support of all defilements. When it is irreversibly purified from its stains, including the mental imprints, it does not function as a basis of defilements [any more] and has therefore reverted from [its] former state. Since it provides the support of purification only, you should know it to be the nature of the transformation of the basis. The two, the element and the transformation of the basis, are only differentiated on the basis of possessing stains or not, [for their] nature is very suchness. (DRSM, 471.24–472.2)

To conclude, contrary to the zhentong of the Jonangpas and the position of Rangjung Dorjé, Zhönu Pal explains the two truths, which in the Ratnagotravibhāga are represented by adventitious stains and the buddha element, as one in essence. This is probably also the reason why he did not use the Jonang terms rangtong and zhentong for his two types of emptiness.
7. Zhönu Pal’s Mahāmudrā Interpretation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*

*The Ratnagotravibhāga as a Basis for Mahāmudrā Instructions*

At the very beginning of his commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, Zhönu Pal makes it clear that he has aligned himself with, or at least explains the *Ratnagotravibhāga* from within, the mahāmudrā traditions of Maitripa, Dampa Sangye, and Gampopa. Thus, after praising lamas who exemplify compassion and the perfection of wisdom in general and Maitreya in particular, he bow[s] to Maitripa in whom the treatise of the *Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyāna*-Uttaratantra [began to] blaze, as a consequence of having found [the realization of] mahāmudrā through the kindness of the venerable Śabaripa. (DRSM, 2.6-7)

That the commentary’s main purpose is to teach and justify a sūtra-based form of mahāmudrā is also shown by the fact that the following stanzas of Zhönu Pal’s initial praise are dedicated to Dampa Sangye and Gampopa. It was Gampopa who made the famous statement that the *Ratnagotravibhāga* was the basic text of their mahāmudrā tradition. As a doctrinal support for his sūtra- or pāramitā-based mahāmudrā, Zhönu Pal repeatedly adduces Sahajavajra’s *Tattvadaśaṅkāśikā* and Jñānakirti’s *Tattvavatāra*. In the introduction to his *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary, Zhönu Pal informs us that these pāramitā-based pith instructions, called mahāmudrā, were further explained by Maitripa’s heart disciples Vajrapāṇi and Dampa Sangye. Tsen Kawoché, who—based on teachings from Sajjana—founded the “meditation tradition” of the Maitreya works, is also considered to have followed exclusively the tradition of Maitreya. This is the tradition, too, in which Zhönu Pal’s *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary stands. Thus, Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé says in the introduction of his *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary:
Zu Gawai Dorjé composed, in accordance with Sajjana’s teaching, a commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, and also translated the root text of the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* and its *vṛtti*. They (i.e., Zu Gawai Dorjé and Tsen Kawoche) also became well known as followers of the meditation tradition of the Maitreya works, which was very special in terms of [both] uncommon explanations and practice. Among those grounded in this1902 tradition was the Omniscient Rangjung Dorjé, who, through his vision of wisdom, precisely realized the underlying intention of the invincible [Maitreya and] composed a summary of the contents of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. Karma Könzhön (b. 1333) and others commented at length [on it], while the great Karma Trinlepa composed a commentary containing corrections [to the *Ratnagotravibhāga*]. The great translator from Gö, Zhönu Pal, composed a very expanded commentary on Asanga’s *vyākhyā*.

The great omniscient Dölpopa introduced an extraordinary tradition, which accords with this tradition,1903 and adhering to [his] commentary, his lineage of disciples in general, and the omniscient Tāranātha and others in particular, established a textual tradition based on explanation and practice. The oral transmission of these commentaries continues up to the present day.1904

The Three Dharmacakras: Mahāmudrā Hermeneutics

That Zhönu Pal comments on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* from within the tradition of meditation is also clear from his colophon:

The Dharma master Drigungpa [Jigten Sumgön] rejoiced in Jé Gampopa’s statement that the basic text of these mahāmudrā instructions of ours is the [*Ratnagotravibhāga*] *Mahāyāno-tanatantraśāstra* composed by the illustrious Maitreya; and since it is evident that the notes to [his] *Uttaratantra* explanations, the points he makes when presenting the three dharmacakras, and also the explanations deriving from Sajjana’s heart disciple Tsen Kawoché, are [all] in accordance with mahāmudrā proper, I have relied on them and have made [this] clear to others as best as I could. (DRSM, 574.9–12)
Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate any Ratnagotravibhāga notes by Jigten Sumgön, but as we have already seen in part I of this study, the Chos kyi ’khor lo legs par gtan la phab pa states that the mahāmudrā practiced by Jigten Sumgön is in accordance with the Ratnagotravibhāga, its seven vajra points being a commentary on the meaning of the third dharmacakra, which is described as the dharmacakra of definitive meaning. In his Dgongs gcig, Jigten Sumgön further explains that the three dharmacakras differ with regard to the concepts of different groups of disciples, that all three dharmacakras are contained in each dharmacakra, and that the seed of any subsequent dharmacakras is already latent in the previous ones. The seed of the three dharmacakras is of definitive meaning, and in this sense all dharmacakras have definitive meaning. Still, the third dharmacakra is considered superior in its effectiveness.

Zhōnu Pal embeds most of his mahāmudrā exposition in his commentary on RGVV I.2, where the three dharmacakras are compared to three successive, ever-finer processes of purifying a vaidūrya stone in the Dhāraṇīstavarājasūtra. He follows the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra in putting the third dharmacakra at the top of his hermeneutical ladder. According to Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra VII.30, the Buddha taught the four noble truths in the first dharmacakra. He taught both the second and the third dharmacakras beginning with the lack of an own-being in phenomena—that they neither arise nor pass out of existence, that they are quiescent from the beginning, and that they are naturally in a state of nirvāṇa—in other words, emptiness as taught in the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras and the analytical Madhyamaka works of Nāgāruma. Thus the last two dharmacakras are not different in terms of ontology. Still, the third dharmacakra differs in the fine distinctions it offers, and for this reason alone it has—contrary to the first two—definitive meaning (nītārtha), and so outshines the second dharmacakra by an uncountable factor. In VII.3 the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra explains that the Buddha was thinking of the three types of “lack of own-being” (niḥsvabhāvata) when he turned the dharmacakra beginning with the lack of an own-being in phenomena. In the following paragraphs (SNS VII.3–13) it becomes clear that the three niḥsvabhāvataś are the three natures of the Yogācāra (that is, the imagined, dependent, and perfect natures), while SNS VII.24 states that the formula “beginning with the lack of own-being, etc.,” is intentional—in other words, must be understood in terms of the three niḥsvabhāvataś. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the correct distinction between them is what makes the third dharmacakra definitive.
Confronted with the conclusion that the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* then teaches, that the *prajñāpāramitā* and Nāgārjuna’s Madhyamaka are provisional and the *cittamātra* view is definitive, Candrakīrti tries to show in his *Madhyamakāvatāra* that the central Yogācāra tenets, on which the hermeneutics of the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* rest, are provisional notwithstanding that this sūtra explicitly claims the contrary. Kamalaśīla affirms in his *Madhyamakāloka*, however, that the hermeneutics of the *Akṣayatīrīṣa* and the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* are compatible. The teaching of nonarising in the *prajñāpāramitā* (i.e., the emptiness of the *Akṣayatīrīṣa*) refers exclusively to the ultimate, while the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*’s clarification of this emptiness with the help of the three *niḥsvabhāva-vatās* helps to avoid the two extremes of wrong denial and superimposition on the Madhyamaka path.¹⁹¹³

It is clear that Zhōnū Pal adopts the hermeneutics of the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*. Not only does he not mention the competing *Akṣayatīrīṣa* at all; he even dedicates some thirty pages of his introductory study to showing that the third dharmacakra is superior in every respect, whether compassion, view, or meditation.¹⁹¹⁴ Technically, his long explanations are part of a commentary on the comparison of the threefold spiritual purification to the gradually more refined polishing of a *vaiḍūrya* made in the *Dharaṇīsvara-rājasūtra*, which is quoted by the *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā* on I.2. This example shows, in line with the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, that there is ultimately only one vehicle for all sentient beings,¹⁹¹⁵ and that everybody eventually becomes purified with the help of the three dharmacakras.

This is made clearer in the commentary following the third quotation from the *Dharaṇīsvara-rājasūtra*, where it is said that you enter the sphere of a tathāgata with the help of the irreversible (i.e., third) dharmacakra, or the teaching of threefold purity.¹⁹¹⁶ According to the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, Zhōnū Pal notes, the seventh level is still defiled in a sense, because you still long for the wisdom of a tathāgata at this stage. It is, of course, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* with its teaching of a buddha element empty of adventitious stains that is the main commentary on the third dharmacakra.¹⁹¹⁷ That Zhōnū Pal follows the distinction made in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* between *neyārtha* and *nītārtha* is evident from his comment on RGV V.5, which says that only hearing one word of these teachings on the buddha element yields much more merit than anything else.¹⁹¹⁸ Zhōnū Pal explains:

The meaning [of this] should be understood according to the teaching in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* on the difference in merit [resulting] from devotion to sūtras of provisional meaning and [to those of] definitive meaning. (DRSM, 561.22–23)
There is not the slightest attempt to elevate the second dharmacakra to the same level as the third; Zhönu Pal goes so far as to quote in full length the *Saṅdhinirmocana-sūtra*’s description of how the third dharmacakra is superior, and concludes that, since the benefit derived from merely hearing its definitive meaning is that great, the profound and vast meaning of the last dharmacakra stands out accordingly. Thus, having determined the nature of mind in the third dharmacakra, Zhönu Pal now finds the generation of compassion much more effective; for you can rejoice in the fact that everybody including yourself already possesses amazing qualities.

Referring to the *Bodhicittavivaraṇa* (a work ascribed by tradition to Nāgārjuna), he further contends that the ultimate bodhicitta is the supreme generation of bodhicitta, since it arises through the power of seeing the similarity between your own enlightenment and sentient beings’ luminosity of mind. In other words, the superior conduct of a bodhisattva in the third dharmacakra is directly linked with his realization of luminosity.

The related view is corroborated by a famous passage from the *Dharmadhātu-stotra* (stanzas 18–22) in which the fire of wisdom is said to burn away the adventitious stains of the ordinary mind but not mind’s luminous nature. Moreover, the luminous nature (equated with the [buddha] element) is not diminished by those sūtras that were taught in order to reveal emptiness. Based on such considerations, Zhönu Pal defines the view of the third dharmacakra:

If you take the way things appear as the measure, without considering the essential mode of phenomena, they exist in the modes of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, material things and consciousness, the material world and beings. If, on the other hand, the essential mode serves as the measure, nothing whatsoever exists as something different from the mind, and it (i.e., the view) is the insight (*prajñā*)—the knowledge—that even the true nature of mind (*sems nyid*) is the natural mind, which in no way exists as a phenomenon that possesses [characteristic] signs. The emptiness that is examined by reasoning and that which is grounded in luminosity—[neither] can be destroyed by anything; [both] are buddha nature. (DRSM, 47.26–48.4)

Zhönu Pal stresses that mind’s luminosity is taught in many scriptures, such as the *Ghanavyūhasūtra* and the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*. In the latter it is explained in the same way as the emptiness of an own-being is taught in the Madhyamaka treatises. The superior meditation of the third dharmacakra
is then mainly justified as a direct approach to natural luminosity, as explained in mahāmudrā pith instructions.

Still, in his commentary on RGV I.159–60 (J I.156–57), Zhönu Pal points out that the teachings of the second and third dharmacakras, namely of emptiness and buddha nature respectively, do not contradict each other. It is only that the teachings of the second dharmacakra do not clearly formulate what ultimate truth really is.\textsuperscript{1924}

The superiority of the third dharmacakra is mainly based on special mahāmudrā techniques, particularly ones that lead to a sudden realization of your nature of mind, and not on an ontological zhENTong distinction in the manner of Dölpopa. At the end of his long demonstration of the superiority of the third dharmacakra, Zhönu Pal clearly states that you can reach only the seventh bodhisattva level with the teachings of the second dharmacakra, whereas the fruit of the third dharmacakra is the three final, pure levels.\textsuperscript{1925} This is perfectly in line with what Jigten Sumgön taught in his autocommentary on the Chos 'khor gyan phab:

> Even our teacher, the illustrious Buddha, first generated a mind directed toward unsurpassable enlightenment, and during an incalculable eon traversed the path up to the first [bodhisattva] level by means of the first dharmacakra. During [another] incalculable [eon] he traversed the path up to the seventh level by means of the second dharmacakra, and during a [third] incalculable [eon] he traversed the three pure levels by means of the third dharmacakra.\textsuperscript{1926}

Zhönu Pal also adopted a distinction between the gradualist and simultaneist. Quoting the Laṅkāvatārasūtra passage on the gradual and instantaneous purification of the mindstream, he explains in his commentary on the description of the third dharmacakra in the Dhāraṇīsvararājasūtra that on the pure bodhisattva levels all objects of knowledge appear instantaneously, the gradual purification of stains through the three dharmacakras going up only to the seventh level.\textsuperscript{1927} Referring to the Vairocanaḥbhisambodhitantra, Zhönu Pal further argues that this seventh level may be also a provisional one already found on the path of accumulation,\textsuperscript{1928} one that brings sudden realization within the reach of more ordinary practitioners.

This latter explanation seems to contradict the Chos 'khor gyan phab, which contends that all sentient beings attain enlightenment gradually, while only someone who has accumulated merit previously and who attains enlightenment at the time of the fruit is called a simultaneist. Still, Jigten
Sumgön claims in his *Dgongs gcig* (IV.18) that “all levels and paths are traversed with the same realization,” while in the sixth chapter of the *Dgongs gcig* he explains that this realization, which is at the same time the supreme view, is created by devotion (VI.6–7), with meditation taken to be the cultivation of this view (VI.10). In other words, a devoted practitioner can rely at a relatively early stage on the one realization of the true nature of his mind, which leads him through all the levels to buddhahood. This brings sudden realization within the reach of more ordinary practitioners who are well short of the actual path of seeing. In support of such an interpretation, Zhönu Pal refers to a statement in the biography of Jigten Sumgön’s disciple Nyö Gyalwa Lhanangpa written by a certain Yeshé Dorjé. Even more important for Zhönu Pal’s simultaneist mahāmudrā, however, is a passage from Zhang Tsalpa Tsöndrü’s *Phyag rgya chen po lam zab mthar thug* to the effect that mahāmudrā is attained in one go, so that the confused err when they reckon it in terms of levels and paths.

To conclude, the *Phyag rgya chen po lam zab mthar thug* and similar mahāmudrā works are quoted in Zhönu Pal’s discussion of the three dharmacakras in RGVV I.2 in order to establish a connection between the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and his mahāmudrā tradition. The determination of the ultimate as buddha nature or natural luminosity in the third dharmacakra is taken to be the direct mahāmudrā approach to the nature of mind. This approach is not really different from the emptiness of the second dharmacakra. While the analytical methods of the second dharmacakra deflate all concepts, coarse and subtle, about things, the third one purifies phenomenal appearances that hinder the proper perception of buddha nature.

**The Mahāmudrā Approach of Yogic Direct Valid Cognitions**

The key to understanding how the *Ratnagotravibhāga* can be used to support a pāramitā-based mahāmudrā tradition is Rangjung Dorjé’s equation of buddha nature with the mahāmudrā term *unfabricated natural mind*, which is—like buddha nature—neither improved by the noble ones nor demolished by sentient beings. The fact that this unfabricated natural mind is empty of fabricated adventitious stains is also described as “awareness-emptiness,” which Maitripa, according to Zhönu Pal, equates with the supreme Madhyamaka of the third dharmacakra. This awareness cannot be grasped by relying on the inferential valid cognitions of Madhyamaka reasoning in the second dharmacakra but must be realized directly.
The intellectual approach to the ultimate can only negate without implying anything, and the result is a nonaffirming negation that is realized by means of an inferential valid cognition. Zhōnu Pal follows Bhavya’s *Tarkajvalā* in pointing out that this cannot be the ultimate that is beyond the intellect, but only the ultimate taken as the qualification of a thesis. It is the ultimate that is attainable when you are engaged in performance, the ultimate that is in accordance with the accumulation of merit and wisdom, and is called worldly wisdom endowed with mental fabrications.\(^{1938}\)

In the third dharma-cakra, the scope of such a nonaffirming negation is restricted to the adventitious stains, whose lack of an own-being has been established by inferential valid cognitions. The ultimate that is beyond the intellect is taken to be the emptiness that is buddha nature, or the element of awareness. To support his stance, Zhōnu Pal quotes Bhavya, who concludes his *Prajñāprādīpa* with the statement that the ultimate, or the reality, of nonconceptual wisdom must be realized in such a way that for the perceiving subject all mental fabrications are pacified. Someone, however, who imagines truly existent things does not perceive reality like a buddha, but has for the time being to rely on inferential cognitions.\(^{1939}\)

In his commentary on how the example of the piece of gold in the mud (the fourth example from the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*) illustrates the suchness of buddha nature,\(^{1940}\) Zhōnu Pal explains that realizing the selflessness of persons and phenomena with the help of a nonaffirming negation removes coarse ignorance only:

You may ponder the question: “It is through knowledge of both [types of] selflessness endowed with the defining characteristics of a nonaffirming negation that the root of [saṁśāric] existence is removed, and if this [knowledge] yields liberation as well, why call it buddha nature, a second [kind of] suchness?” [Answer:] Knowledge that possesses the defining characteristics of a nonaffirming negation removes coarse ignorance but not [its] subtle form, for when meditating on this [negation], you search for another object, without thoroughly knowing yourself by yourself, and that is why dualistic appearances are not uprooted. Therefore mere [nonaffirming negation] does not get one beyond the stage characterized by the mental imprints of ignorance. (DRSM, 426.9–13)

On the other hand, it is important to note that for Zhōnu Pal the emptiness of nonaffirming negation taught in the middle dharma-cakra and the
truth of buddha nature taught in the last dharmacakra are different with regard to the objects of discourse, but he does not assert that there is a difference when there is direct realization:

Even though there is a difference with regard to the objects these words (i.e., nonaffirming negation and buddha nature) refer to, there is no difference when the joy of direct [perception] is realized. This follows from a number of pith instructions, and [in these] I have placed faith. (DRSM, 110.15–17)

In other words, it is only on the level of intellectual understanding that a difference is made between buddha nature and adventitious stains (with only the stains being subject to nonaffirming negations). Against the background of the previous explanation, this must mean that as long as the process of investigating emptiness through inferential valid cognitions continues, there are still subtle forms of ignorance, so that reality (or buddha nature) cannot be directly realized. From this it does not follow, however, that there is an ontological difference between an ultimate true nature and an apparent truth. According to Thrangu Rinpoche, this also explains the difference between zhentong and mahamudrā. In analysis the adventitious stains and buddha nature are necessarily differentiated, since buddha nature is empty of what does not belong to it (i.e., it is “empty of other,” or zhentong). But when buddha nature is directly realized (mahamudrā), there is no longer any difference between it and the adventitious stains or apparent truth.1941

In the paragraph on the superiority of the third dharmacakra in terms of meditation, Zhönu Pal states that a direct cognition that realizes reality does not arise during an analytical meditation immediately after the thought processes of inferences have ceased but rather only when all thoughts disappear.1942 Thus it is important not to view Madhyamaka reasoning as an end in itself, but as a means to get one as expeditiously as possible to a state allowing direct access to the nature of mind. This sets the stage for the mahamudrā pith instructions, which enable such a practical direct approach to the true nature of mind, or buddha nature.

The direct cognition within awareness-emptiness of the third dharmacakra is taken to be investigative and nonconceptual at the same time. Zhönu Pal compares it to fixedly watching water in order to determine whether there are sentient beings in it. Such a direct realization can be induced by first telling the disciple to investigate his mind day and night. Then he may be told to give up all unnecessary thinking and to settle in
his mind without wavering, and this gives rise to the mahāmudrā yoga of one-pointedness. Once this has been achieved, he goes on to watch the meditating mind by turning his direct cognition inward, and this gives rise in turn to a direct perception that all phenomena lack a truly existent self.

Such pith instructions enable an immediate approach to the true nature of mind, or awareness-emptiness. By investigating in a direct way without depending on logical reasoning, you can see that everything lacks an own-being, in a way similar to approaching a cloud that looks like a mountain and finding out that it is not like one at all. It is not that the validity of analytical meditation is denied, but rather that in order to reach your goal, it is not necessary to resort to inferential cognitions again and again once you have established that all phenomena lack a true existence. You need to study a map only once or twice in order to know how to get from A to B. Once the way is familiar, you ride along without being constantly conscious of the entire itinerary. Similarly, nonconceptual meditation does not necessarily go astray even if not constantly informed by an intellectual ascertainment of emptiness.

In the paragraph on the superior meditation of the third dharmacakra, Zhönu Pal compares those who use this mahāmudrā approach to someone on a mountain ridge to whom a stream of water below appears to be immovable, like a stick. Descending into the valley, he sees from close up that the river is only a series of former and later waves, and that it is constantly moving. Likewise, when a direct perception arisen from the yoga of one-pointedness captures the mind and outer objects in any of their temporal differences, you realize that no own-being whatsoever can be apprehended in any entity. This is the way of directly realizing nonorigination. This direct realization of nonorigination is achieved in the second mahāmudrā yoga, the yoga of freedom from mental fabrication.

The continuum of direct perception that has been cultivated in the way described above repudiates concepts tied to words and meanings, and it is by virtue of this that all appearances are overcome. Zhönu Pal quotes earlier masters who explained that all appearances dissolve in the mind, and that you should constantly verify that nothing can be internalized or expressed with the help of mental constructs. This process should continue into the third mahāmudrā yoga, the yoga of one taste. In order to hammer home his point, Zhönu Pal notes that even Kamalaśīla, whose works are normally not the best support of special mahāmudrā instructions, explains in his three Bhāvanākramas and the commentary on the Nirvikalpa-praveśadhāraṇī that at the end of analysis you rest in nonconceptuality.
Even Atiśa states in the *Madhyamakopadeśa* that once you have established that all phenomena are nonexistent, then no consciousness whatsoever is conceptualized, nothing whatsoever is perceived, and all mindfulness (*dram pa*) and concentration (*yid la byed pa*) is given up. Thus Atiśa, too, accepts a nonconceptual meditation after analysis.

In quoting Gōtsangpa, Zhönu Pal leaves no doubt that his immediate mahāmudrā approach outshines any analytical meditation:

> As for the analytical meditation of the scholars and the *kusulu* meditation of resting—if the two are taken by themselves, the path in the *kusulu* tradition is faster. (DRSM, 59.22–23)

Just how low Zhönu Pal's opinion of the analytical approach of the second dharmačakra is can be seen from a remark in his commentary on RGV I.156 (J I.153):

> Among the bodhisattvas, [some] find the emptiness of non-affirming negation through inferential valid cognition, but even this valid cognition is taken to be ignorance inasmuch as it is conceptual by nature. Therefore, here, the manner of the last dharmačakra is supreme, because you are mainly engaged in the nonconceptual. (DRSM, 438.23–26)

The mahāmudrā approach is the only way for ordinary sentient beings to directly experience reality as it is. On the ordinary Mahāyāna path, this is only possible on the first bodhisattva level, the path of seeing, which is attained after eons of accumulating merit and wisdom. For a direct mahāmudrā experience of the true nature of your mind, Madhyamaka reasoning can be helpful in the beginning as a preparation for meditation, but it is not an indispensable condition for its success. On the contrary, clinging to an intellectual understanding of emptiness can become an obstacle.

**Sūtra-Based Mahāmudrā Meditation**

The way mahāmudrā meditation is doctrinally supported can be best understood in Zhönu Pal's extensive commentary on the superiority of the meditation practice of the third dharmačakra. This meditation practice, according to the *Dhāraṇīśvararājasūtra* (and thus the *Ramagotravibhāga*) assumes that everybody, even those who were first supported by the teachings of the first two dharmačakras, eventually enters into the experiential
sphere of a tathāgata and realizes the nature of the third dharmacakra. It is to this that the phrase “those who have entered all vehicles” in the definition of the third dharmacakra of the *Samādhiyamocanasūtra* refers. The experience a tathāgata shares with the practitioners of the third, irreversible dharmacakra is classically described by a passage of the *Lāṅka-vatārasūtra* (LAS II.99-105), in which the ālayavijñāna and the remaining seven forms of consciousness (including their phenomenal content) are compared to the ocean and its waves. As we have already seen in the chapter on buddha qualities, Zhōnū Pal follows the *Lāṅka-vatārasūtra* in seeing the ālayavijñāna as not only the basis of samsāra but in the end also the cause of samsāra being reversed into nirvāṇa—in seeing the ālaya-vijñāna, then, as a reflection of buddha nature. As already pointed out, Zhōnū Pal considers the *Lāṅka-vatārasūtra* a Madhyamaka work, stressing its assertion that emptiness was taught as buddha nature for those who were not capable of grasping emptiness. In other words, the ālayavijñāna is implicitly equated with emptiness as well, and this enables LAS II.99–105 to be tied in with the mahāmudrā teachings of Saraha, who adopts the simile of water and waves in his *Dohākośāgiti*, stanza 74:

Whatever emanates from the mind, [and however long such thoughts do so,]
So long will their nature be that of the protector [of all beings].
Are water and waves different or not?
[His] equality with worldly existence is by nature [that of] space.

Thus the *Lāṅka-vatārasūtra* plays an important role in linking mahāmudrā with the teaching of buddha nature and the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. Mahāmudrā practice requires, however, working with direct perceptions of the true nature of your mind right from the beginning, whereas in RGVV on I.157–58 (J I.154–55) buddha nature (or the buddha element) is said to be difficult to apprehend and not a fully experiential object for even the highest saints. Moreover, the direct perception of reality required by the mahāmudrā approach is traditionally only possible from the first bodhisattva level onward or else through tantric practice.

Besides referring to the *Tattvadāśakātikā* and the *Tattvāvatāra* as doctrinal support for a path of direct perceptions outside the tantras, Zhōnū Pal elaborates in detail on a sūtra-based interpretation of the five stages in the *Pañcakrama*, which normally involve a formal tantric practice of the completion stage in highest yogatantra. The passage into which the five stages are read is from the second chapter of the *Lāṅka-vatārasūtra* (namely from
the prose portion following LAS II.98). The first stage is called *physical isolation*, because it protects the yogin from the ordinary appearances of skandhas and the like by replacing the skandhas with manifestations of bliss and emptiness (that is, deities). The sentence from the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* that Zhōnu Pal claims this stage describes, runs:

Mahāmati, through [their] right practice, which is connected with the effortless [accomplishment] of great compassion and skillful means, through [their practice of seeing] that all sentient beings are the same as an illusion and a reflection....

Of particular interest is also the interpretation of the third stage, “blessing from within” (*svādhiṣṭhāna*), during which an initiated yogin who has already practiced the generation stage solicits his tantric master’s pith instructions on the *svādhiṣṭhāna* level in order attain the luminous state. This third stage can be reasonably read into the phrase “being endowed with the blessing of being without characteristic signs.” The passage adduced from the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* for the *svādhiṣṭhāna* level is:

[Bodhisattvas] who, through [their practice of] not seeing [objects] outside of the mind, become endowed with the blessing of being without characteristic signs, who deeply meditate as part of [their practice of] gradually pursuing [their chosen] object[s] of meditative stabilization along the stages represented by the [bodhisattva] levels, and who are convinced that the threefold world is an illusion [produced by] their own mind, they attain the meditative stabilization [of experiencing phenomena to be] illusion-like.

It should be noted that Sahajavajra explains *svādhiṣṭhāna* in a similar way:

He is “adorned by being blessed from within” means that he is blessed within himself by the nature of his mindstream, which is bound up with the nature of unconstrained reality. That which emanates from [his] nature of suchness naturally adorns him.

For Sahajavajra the yogin of *mahāmudrā* experiences unconstrained reality after abandoning characteristic signs by not becoming mentally engaged, and this is not really different from saying that the bodhisattva is “endowed with the blessing of being without characteristic signs.”
Now we are in a position to understand Zhönu Pal’s strategy: by showing that the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* teaches *(sva-)adhiśṭhāna* as the third of five stages forestalls the possible objection that the *Tattvadāśaka* and its *ṭīkā*, which offer the best support for his *pāramitā*-based mahāmudrā, are in reality tantric, describing as they do the yogin is “adorned with the blessing from within *(svādhiśṭhāna)*” in TD 9cd. But much more importantly than this, Zhönu Pal reads the five stages of the *Pāncakrama* into the fourth chapter of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (RGV IV.3–4)—the one on activity. The stanzas RGV IV.3–4 read:

The wise one[s] are always without effort,
Since thoughts about what guidance [should be undertaken],
For whom, by which [means], where,
And when do not arise [in them]. (IV.3)

For whom, [that is,] for [which] element (i.e., type of) [of sentient being] guidance is required,
By which, [that is,] by [which of the] numerous skillful means,
What, [that is, what] guidance,
Where and when, [that is, in this or] that place and at [this or that] time. (IV.4)

In Zhönu Pal’s “Pāncakrama passage” of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, the “fivefold” practice of bodhisattvas is “connected with the effortless [accomplishment] of great compassion and skillful means” (see above). As described in RGV IV.45a (J IV.43a) buddha activity pours down from the clouds of compassion. The *pāda* RGV IV.4b: “By which, [that is,] by [which of] the numerous means for those to be guided” is taught by use of the *Laṅkāvatāra* term *skillful means*; and the *pāda* RGV IV.3d: “The wise one[s] are always without effort” is taught by way of *effortless [accomplishment]*. The *Laṅkāvatāra* passage “The right practice, which is connected [with...]” means the right practice of meditation on the activity that possesses these three particular qualities, and this practice is said to possess five stages.1969

Zhönu Pal justifies his interpretation of this *Laṅkāvatāra* passage by pointing out that it goes back to Āryadeva. We are further informed that lamas who practice the pith instructions of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* explain the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in terms of stages of meditation on buddha nature called the *four* [mahāmudrā] *yogas*. Zhönu Pal admits that he has not found literal echoes of them in the scriptures, but suggests that their meaning is
explained in a prose passage following stanza II.137 in the *Laukavatārasūtra* (LAS 79.16ff.). In support of Zhaoùnù Pal, it should be noted that Jñanakirti had earlier related mahāmudrā practice with the traditional fourfold Mahāyāna meditation by equating Mahāyāna in *Laukavatārasūtra* X.257d with mahāmudrā. The pādas X.257cd ("A yogin who is established in a state without appearances, sees Mahāyāna") thus mean that you finally see or realize mahāmudrā. The prose passage following LAS II.137 introduces four meditation techniques, called dharmas, that a great bodhisattva must possess. Zhaoùnù Pal compares them to the presentation of the four mahāmudrā yogas from Zhang Tsalpa Tsöndrü’s *Phyag rgya chen po lam zab mthar thug zhang gi man ngag*. In the introduction to his commentary on the second chapter of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, Zhaoùnù Pal discusses at length the dharma chapter in the *Dharmadharmanāvibhāga*, because its ten points relating to the transformation of the basis (āśrayaparivṛtti) are similar to the *Ratnagotravibhāga*’s presentation of enlightenment. During his exposition of the four “meditation practices” (prayoga) in the *Dharmadharmanāvibhāga*, Zhaoùnù Pal maintains that these four prayogas, which are also found in the *Laukavatārasūtra*, the Mahāyānasūtra-laṅkāra, and the Madhyāntavibhāga, correspond to the four yogas of mahāmudrā. This is why he sees in the Maîtreya works a basis for mahāmudrā practice.

The First Mahāmudrā Yoga of One-Pointedness

The yoga of one-pointedness is compared to the first dharma in the prose passage following LAS II.137, that is, the meditation that appearances are your own mind. Your own mind is said to lack an I or mine, and does not adopt or discard. It is permeated by mental imprints of baseness and indulges in the manifold forms of the triple world that appear bound up with such concepts as body and property. In accordance with these five points of the first dharma in the *Laukavatārasūtra*, the first mahāmudrā yoga of one-pointedness is described as having five distinctive features as well. The first is the meditation that everything is mind only, which means that all appearances of the threefold world have the nature of mind’s clarity and emptiness. Second is to ponder that the abiding in clarity and emptiness and the wandering of thoughts are not substantially different categories in terms of their substance. Since clarity and emptiness are in motion as thoughts, nothing whatsoever must be adopted or discarded with regard to thoughts and clarity. Third, when many thoughts occur again, know that the imprints of mental fabrication have not been given up, even though you
have seen [mind] as clarity and emptiness. The fourth is to know that the perceiving subject, which indulges in various objects, is this mind of clarity and emptiness. Fifth is to know that all the appearances of a body, property, a dwelling place, and the realms of the six types [of beings] are bound up with this same mind, in that they share the same identity. In the sūtras and sāstras it is explained that you can understand mind only because the connection between names and their referents is ascertained to be imagined. The mind possesses the ability to clearly display the phenomenal world, including all other mental events, with all these appearances being empty. This is how Zhang Tsalpa Tsöndrü explains the first mahāmudrā yoga:

When the yoga of one-pointedness has arisen, you realize the nature (rang bzhin) of your own mind. Clarity and emptiness are not obstructed and are without middle and extreme, like the vault of pure space. To remain in this brightness is the meditative equipoise of the first yoga. (DRSM, 61.23–25)

In his commentary on the dharmatā chapter of the Dharmadharmaṭāvibhāgakārikās, Zhönu Pal reads this first mahāmudrā yoga into the first prayoga of the Dharmadharmaṭāvibhāga, which consists of the practice of apprehending that everything is a mere image. From the latter commentary it is clear that Zhönu Pal interprets the cittamātra denial of an outer material world and a perceiving subject on the basis of the Madhyamaka negation of an own-being or independent existence of an own-being. In other words, wherever the Dharmadharmaṭāvibhāga negates outright the existence of outer objects, Zhönu Pal restricts this negation to the own-being of such objects. Consequently, it is also not the objective of the first mahāmudrā yoga to establish that everything is mind or perception only. The yogin rather directs his investigative attention inward, as called for in the pith instructions, and only deals with what appears in the mind. In his Dharmadharmaṭāvibhāga commentary, Zhönu Pal defines the first yoga:

The first [mahāmudrā yoga] is to look inward and to apprehend that [everything] is your own mind only (cittamātra). (DRSM, 465.13)

The Second Mahāmudrā Yoga of Freedom from Mental Fabrications

The second dharma of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra answers well to the mahāmudrā yoga of freedom from mental fabrications, since you have to
abandon the wrong view that phenomena arise, abide, and pass out of existence. This results in the realization that external entities do not exist. Not apprehending any inner or outer phenomena, the bodhisattva really sees that the triple world lacks an own-being. Here in the second dharma or mahāmudrā yoga, Zhönu Pal distinguishes again five levels. The yoga of freedom from mental fabrication starts by realizing that the totality of all appearances is mind, for when the mind is happy or suffering, its appearances are similar. Second, having thus seen that the mind lacks an own-being, you realize that appearances are the mind’s “doors of appearance” and also that appearances lack an own-being. Third, once this realization has arisen, the sense faculties turn inward, and the five forms of consciousness no longer engage with objects. Fourth, the five sense faculties, their respective objects, and nonperception (avijñapti) are understood as lacking an own-being. Finally, the yogin increasingly sees on the fifth level of this second yoga that the outer and inner skandhas lack an own-being, and realizes that the entire threefold world has arisen under the conditions of inner thought.

A little disturbing for Zhönu Pal’s enterprise is that you attain the endurance of nonorigination in the second dharma of the Lankāvatāra-sūtra, since this usually happens on the eighth bodhisattva level, whereas according to Götsangpa, the yoga of freedom from mental fabrications corresponds to the first level. This is probably one reason why this passage of the Lankāvatāra-sūtra was slightly distorted in both Tibetan translations, the one directly from the Sanskrit and the other from the Chinese. Apart from this, the second dharma fits well with Zhang Tsalpa Tsöndrü’s presentation of the second mahāmudrā yoga:

When the yoga of freedom from mental fabrication has arisen, you realize the true nature (ngo bo) of your own mind. It is uninterrupted awareness, free from mental fabrication. Your own mind, which is without origination and cessation, adopting and discarding, is based in the dharma-kāya, and this is the meditative equipoise of the second yoga. (DRSM, 61.26–62.2)

The second step in the Dharmadharma-tāvibhāga is to realize the nonexistence of mere external entities. The nonapprehension of the perceiving subject comes with the third prayoga. In his Dharmadharma-tāvibhāga commentary, Zhönu Pal presents the second yoga:

As for the explanation in the second [prayoga] that there is nothing outside, it is the [mahāmudrā yoga of] freedom from mental
fabrications, in which you realize that all phenomena that have become the object of mind lack any basis. (DRSM 465.14–15)

It is only by understanding this second prayoga as meaning that the nonexistence of external objects refers to the lack of their own-being that it can be brought into line with the second mahāmudrā yoga, freedom from mental fabrications.

The Third Mahāmudrā Yoga of One Taste

The objective of the third dharma in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra is to establish that external entities do not exist in reality but only as in a dream. The difference from the first dharma is the emphasis placed on the nonexistence of external entities rather than simply saying that appearances are your own mind. Unlike the first and second dharmas, the third one is clearly based on the notion that all phenomena are caused by mental imprints and lack an own-being. Zhönu Pal explains that a dam is not needed for the water of a fata morgana, and likewise, once you see into the essential nature of mind, not the slightest endeavor to establish a view is needed to repel appearances. Therefore, you realize that all appearances in the form of entities are this very true nature of mind (sems nyid), which lacks an own-being. Realizing, as a consequence of this, that appearances and dharmatā are of one taste, you do not abandon or adopt anything. Still, manifold appearances arise due to mental imprints. It is interesting that Zhönu Pal refers here to the Mahāyānābhidharmasūtra ("The beginningless sphere (i.e., buddha element) is the basis of all phenomena"), which reflects his particular understanding of buddha nature as possessing mental imprints in the same way as the basic consciousness. Since you thus realize that mind and appearances are of one taste, such a meditation is called the yoga of one taste. In order to induce the experience of one taste, Zhang Tsalpa Tsön-drü’s description of the third mahāmudrā yoga stresses the point that everything arises from your own mind:

When the yoga of one taste has arisen, you realize the defining characteristics of your own mind. You realize that from your own mind, which is the dharma-kāya and free from mental fabrication, manifold saṁsāra and nirvāṇa arise. The entire multiplicity [including] thoughts and the nonconceptual, appearances and nonappearance, abiding and not, being empty and not, has, in terms of luminosity and dharma-kāya, one taste. Therefore,
you see the appearance of the great dharmakāya but not the con­ceptual, which is not luminosity. The realization of the sameness of taste in this way, [that is,] the moment of capturing it with the mental faculty (yid), is the meditative equipoise of the third yoga. (DRSM, 62.3–7)

Since phenomena caused by mental imprints include inner ones as well, this third mahāmudrā yoga is indeed similar to the third prayoga in the Dharmadharmaṃtavibhāga, which proceeds from the nonexistence of a perceived object to the nonapprehension of a perceiving subject.

In the third stage of the Dharmadharmaṃtavibhāga even mind-only is no longer apprehended. It is therein explained as no longer apprehending even a perceiving subject, since without a perceived object such a subject simply does not make sense. That everything, inside and outside, is no longer apprehended amounts for Zhönu Pal to the same thing as realizing that both lack an own-being. In other words, both are free from mental fabrication, and it is in this sense that everything is of one taste. In his Dharmadharmaṃtavibhāga commentary, Zhönu Pal says about the third yoga:

The realization that outside appearances and the inner mind are free from mental fabrications and of one taste (i.e., of the same nature) is the prayoga of the nonapprehension of apprehension (that is, the apprehension of mind-only is not apprehended). (DRSM, 465.15)

It should be noted that in this explanation of the third prayoga, outer appearances are not completely negated either.

The Fourth Mahāmudrā Yoga of Nonmeditation

The fourth dharma in the passage following LAS II.137 is the determination to realize the noble wisdom within yourself. It corresponds to the eighth bodhisattva level, on which you realize the mind, the mental faculty, the mental consciousness, the five dharmas, the three natures, and the two types of selflessness. In addition, a mental body is attained. Zhönu Pal explains that on this advanced level the yogin thoroughly understands by himself, and this is called nonmeditation, for what is called meditation is the vigor of the wish to meditate, and this vigor does not exist from this level on. Given this advanced stage, it is reasonable to compare the fourth dharma of the Lankāvatārasūtra to the corresponding mahāmudrā yoga of nonmeditation:
When the yoga of nonmeditation has arisen, the yogin does not need to meditate, the nature of awareness [now] being free of [the need for any] support. There is no meditator; he has disappeared. It is said that the Buddha with his three kāyas and five types of wisdom has become fully complete in you. Now you [realize your] primordial knowledge, that this [Buddha] is you. This is the accomplishment of mahāmudrā. (DRSM, 62.9–11)

The fourth stage of the Dharmadharmatāvibhāga reflects the common Yogācāra practice of referring to the absence of duality as something positive as well. Thus, the nonapprehension of a perceived object and perceiving subject leads to the apprehension of nonduality. In the Laṅkāvatārasūtra (X.257) it is taken to be wisdom seeing the most excellent, in the Mahāyānasūtraśāstra as the abiding in dharma-dhatu. Since Zhōnu Pal does not want to see in the absence of duality an affirming negation, he explains that on the level of this prayoga you simply perceive again in a special way that object and subject do not exist as two, and this is called the yoga of nonmeditation. In his Dharmadharmatāvibhāga commentary, he says about the fourth yoga:

Perceiving again in a special way that the perceived object and the perceiving subject do not exist as two, you do not meditate, and this is called nonmeditation, the fourth [mahāmudrā] yoga. (DRSM, 465.16)

The Four Mahāmudrā Yogas and the Ratnagotravibhāga

The four yogas cannot be read directly into the Ratnagotravibhāga. But since the dharmatā portion of the Dharmadharmatāvibhāga is considered to be a commentary on the second chapter of the Ratnagotravibhāga, this does not really make a difference to Zhōnu Pal. Moreover, Tibetan tradition has it that the Dharmadharmatāvibhāga was rediscovered together with the Ratnagotravibhāga by Maitripa. Thus there is not only a close connection between these two works but also a common link to the Indian mahāsiddha who taught the mahāmudrā pith instructions being discussed here. Indeed, Zhōnu Pal finds passages in the Ratnagotravibhāga itself that back up the teaching of the four yogas.

Having explained the nonconceptual nature of awareness-emptiness with the aid of pith instructions in the introduction of his Ratnagotravibhāga commentary, Zhōnu Pal goes on to maintain that the first two
padas of RGV I.13 teach the first two mahāmudrā yogas, i.e., the yoga of one-pointedness and the yoga of freedom from mental fabrications. He repeats this assertion in his commentary on the corresponding passage in the Ratnagotrāvibhāga-vyākhyā. The stanza introduces the third vajra point, the Jewel of the Saṅgha:

I bow before those who see that—in view of the natural luminosity of their mind—defilements lack an own-being, (I.13a)
And, as a consequence of that, have completely realized the extreme limit of selflessness of all sentient beings and the world as quiescent, (I.13b)
Who see that buddhahood is all-pervading, whose intellect is unobstructed, (I.13c)
And whose vision of wisdom embraces the purity and infinitude of sentient beings. (I.13d)

For Zhōnu Pal, the first line teaches the yoga of one-pointedness and the second line the yoga of freedom from mental fabrication. The following stanza is an explanation of the preceding one:

Because of the purity of their vision [attained] through an inner wisdom embracing both the quality and the extent [of the nature of mind],
The assembly of the wise ones on the irreversible [level] possesses unsurpassable qualities. (RGV I.14)

Thus the first half of RGV I.13 teaches the wisdom that embraces the quality, while the second half elucidates the wisdom that embraces the extent of the true nature of mind. In other words, Zhōnu Pal identifies the inner wisdom that reveals the quality of the nature of mind with the first two mahāmudrā yogas. It is explained by the following stanza and its vyākhyā:

[The wisdom that embraces] the quality results from [the] realization [of the wise ones] that the world is quiescent in its true nature, and this [realization] results from the fact that [their mind] is naturally pure, and that they see that all defilements have been removed [from the true nature of mind] throughout beginningless time. (RGV I.15)

The corresponding portion of the vyākhyā is:
In this regard, you should know that [the wisdom that embraces] the quality results from realizing the extreme limit of selflessness of the entire world, which is called *persons and phenomena*.\textsuperscript{987}

For Zhōnu Pal, the second part of this sentence, starting with “results from...,” teaches the yoga of freedom from mental fabrication; and the sentence that follows in the *vyākhyā*, the yoga of one-pointedness:

In short, the realization that persons and phenomena are not destroyed because it has always been their nature to be quiescent arises from two causes: that they see the natural luminosity of mind and that the mind’s defilements have been removed and stopped [in the true nature of mind] throughout beginningless time.\textsuperscript{988}

The remaining portion of the *vyākhyā* goes into greater detail:

Here, the natural luminosity of mind and its [simultaneous] defilement—it is very difficult to realize that these two [properties coexist] in the immaculate element, for [it is a common Buddhist opinion that] a virtuous and nonvirtuous mind [always] occur [only] one at a time, given that [the one cannot] unite with the other (lit., “second”). Therefore it is said [in the *Śrimālādevīsūtra*]: “Illustrious one, momentary is the virtuous mind; it is not impaired by defilements. Momentary, too, is the nonvirtuous mind; this mind is not impaired by defilements [either]. Illustrious one, the defilements do not touch this mind, nor does the mind [touch] the defilements. How is it possible, then, illustrious one, that the mind, which has the property of not being touched, is defiled by darkness? Illustrious one, defilements exist. The defiled mind exists. It is in such a way, illustrious one, that defilements of a naturally pure mind are difficult to understand.”\textsuperscript{989}

Here the momentariness of the mind is its true nature, which is natural luminosity. In other words, the true nature of both the virtuous and nonvirtuous mind is natural luminosity.\textsuperscript{990} Thus the yoga of one-pointedness consists in seeing the natural luminosity of the immaculate element that contains defilements, even though it is not defiled by nature, just as—to use one of Zhōnu Pal’s examples—iron can be hot even though heat is not the natural property of iron.
Both mahāmudrā yogas result in the vision of the wisdom of equality, which sees that the entire world is empty of a self of persons and phenomena. The question, though, is how you attain this vision of selflessness. It is possible to refute the self of a phenomenon through reasoning followed by a meditation on its selflessness. But in Zhōnu Pal’s opinion it is much better to follow the Kāśyapaparivartasūtra and destroy the view of a self through nonconceptual mind, and this is what practitioners of mahāmudrā do. Zhōnu Pal explains:

The followers of mahāmudrā uphold the tradition [of destroying the view of a self through nonconceptual mind]. When the thought of viewing a self has arisen, the very same mind that has attained the yoga of one-pointedness before merely gazes at that thought of viewing a self. This occurs without the arising of a thought afterward—one that gives up that thought [of a self] and analyzes it by reasoning. Nevertheless, for those who are not devoted to this tradition and also lack the mental strength, the cultivation of selflessness on the basis of analytical inferences is a good path. (DRSM, 144.18–22)

The dominant role of direct valid cognitions in the mahāmudrā approach is further elucidated in the following passage, a little further down in the same section, on the lack of a self in persons:

As for the remedy that prevents such a view of the transitory collection [as a real I and mine] from arising [again] later, valid cognitions are what is definitely needed, for it is said in the Pramāṇajñavārttika [IV.99cd]: “Whoever has valid cognitions invalidates the other [who is without such cognitions].” In this regard, the followers of mahāmudrā operate strictly with direct valid cognitions while others operate with inferential valid cognitions. (DRSM, 149.17–20)

Again, with regard to the meditation on the selflessness of phenomena, two different approaches are distinguished in accord with the different capacities of practitioners:

The first is to generate insight (prajña), [that] of realizing the lack of an own-being—which arises from a valid cognition as a remedy for the [wrong] notion that outer and inner phenomena
possess an own-being. The second is to see that the root of the threefold world, [that is,] the clinging to characteristic signs and the notion that entities have an own-being, has arisen merely from appearances of the mind, and then to meditate on pure appearances with the mahāmudrā yoga of self-realization. As a result of this, obstinate clinging to all knowable objects as entities does not occur. [This is achieved] by eliminating the effect, [which is achieved] by reversing the cause. In this connection, it is said many times in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra that the mental appearances [that are] your own mindstream are pure. As for the stages of meditation, they are the five stages explained before.1993 (DRSM, 166.14–19)

The key to this nonconceptual mahāmudrā approach is a particular understanding of nonconceptual wisdom in the Dharmadharmanātāvibhāga, namely Maitripa’s and Sahajavajra’s explanation of it. In his commentary on the second vajra point, Zhö nu Pal explains the path in terms of nonconceptual wisdom by first quoting its five negative defining characteristics from the Dharmadharmanātāvibhāga-vrtti. According to this, nonconceptual wisdom means (1) not only ceasing to direct your attention to concepts, since otherwise fools and small children would also possess nonconceptual wisdom. (2) It means not simply going beyond concepts, unless you include the second dhyāna here as well. (3) Nor is it only the nature of quiescence, since this state is also attained during sleep or drunkenness. (4) Nor is it the actual nonconceptual itself; otherwise visible objects such as stones would possess nonconceptual wisdom. (5) Finally, it is not the act of imagining the nonconceptual either, for imagination is again a concept.1994 Zhö nu Pal then comments:

With regard to the meaning [of these five negative defining characteristics] here, they have been determined as [being] concepts that possess words and meanings, for nonconceptual wisdom must refer to a direct [cognition] free from such concepts. Its negative [component], “nonconceptual,” is a remedy, the remedy for the four types of clinging to characteristic signs. These are the four characteristic signs of [what is] opposite [to liberation (for example, attachment)]; of the remedy; of suchness; and [of] the property of realization. The underlying thrust [of this teaching] is that the obstinate clinging to these four characteristic signs [yields] “concepts”; and being a remedy for this, [wisdom] is “nonconceptual.” (DRSM, 114.4–8)
As to what has been taught in the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* along these lines, the meaning of entering the nonconceptual is established. There are obviously two traditions[, however,] of fathoming the meaning of this sūtra:1995 Kamalaśīla maintains that the [interpretive] imaginations that must be given up can only be given up on the strength of the insight of thorough investigation. [On the other hand,] it is maintained in the commentary on Maitripa’s *Tattvadāsākā* that they are given up on the strength not of thorough investigation, but of the meditative stabilization [during] which [you experience] reality exactly as it is.1996 [To be in] this meditation [is] to know the intrinsic nature of [even] what must be given up as luminosity. Here, it is reasonable to follow Maitripa, who [re]discovered this treatise. (DRSM, II4.8–12)

In this context, Zhōnu Pal explains that according to the *Vairocanābhīṣambodhiṭantra* nonconceptual wisdom is present already well below the first bodhisattva level:

> There are two different types of nonconceptual: the paths of seeing and meditation. The path of seeing is well known under that name, given that you directly see the true nature that was not seen before, but nevertheless, based on the *Vairocanābhīṣambodhiṭantra*, there is [already] a direct seeing of the true nature when on the level [called] *engagement based on conviction*. Therefore, the consciousness (*shes pa*) that sees the true nature on the first level refers to what has arisen as the direct [cognition] of self-realization. With regard to the continuous cultivation of this seeing, there is also a consciousness that is not direct, but here, concerning what is to be taken as the defining basis of the truth of the path, you should refer to direct [cognition] only. (DRSM, II4.12–17)

The abandoning of the four characteristic signs is also discussed in Zhōnu Pal’s explanation of the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* at the beginning of the second chapter of his *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary. After a long quote from Sahajavajra’s *Tattvadaśakaṭākā* on the seventh stanza, which teaches that the world is empty of duality and that the vain intellectual approach to emptiness is itself nothing other than luminosity, Zhōnu Pal addresses the possible objection brought forth by Sahajavajra that Maitripa postulates
characteristic signs in the guise of such concepts as nondual bodhicitta (the characteristic sign of reality or suchness), yathābhūtasmaṇḍhī (the characteristic sign of the remedy), and realization (the characteristic sign of the fruit), whereas according to the Nirvikalpa-pravṛtisadhmānaṇī all characteristic signs must be abandoned on the strength of not becoming mentally engaged. After presenting Kamalaśīla’s reply, which he considers inadequate for adepts with sharp faculties, he presents his own tradition, in line with Maitripa’s Tattvādaśaka:

If an [inferential] valid cognition did not arise, the teaching that [characteristic signs] must be abandoned would be fruitless, because there would be no other means of abandoning the four characteristic signs. Later on, having familiarized yourself [with this cognition] in meditation, you abandon even the characteristic signs related to what must be accomplished and so forth. Thus it has been said. Since inferences are a remedy for characteristic signs, they are said to be “without characteristic signs.” This also [follows], among other things, from the yoga of abandonment. If you take [such inferential] knowledge without characteristic signs as the beginning [of meditation], how does this contradict the sūtra? …Even though this first reply reflects the position of Kamalaśīla, it is not meant for those with sharp faculties. As for my own tradition, even though you vainly adhere to the nonexistence of dualities such as knowledge and knowable objects, [the mental event that is this vain adhering] is not [really] different from luminosity. Thus, after becoming acquainted with [vain adhering] in the form of luminosity, you meditate [on it]. Since you meditate on the fact that even thoughts of what must be accomplished and what accomplishes [it] are luminosity, you know that the intrinsic nature of [their] corresponding appearances is luminosity, and [so automatically] abandon characteristic signs. This is the tradition for those with sharp faculties. (DRSM, 464.7–15)

Contrary to Kamalaśīla, Maitripa’s tradition employs direct perceptions of the luminous nature of all characteristic signs, as a result of which the characteristic signs simply disappear, or rather appear as what they really are—luminosity. Sahajavajra’s Tattvādaśakaṭikā is again quoted at length when Zhönu Pal explains the superiority of meditation in the third dharma-cakra. While analysis is said to play an important role for Kamalaśīla,
you should start in on meditation without an analytical mind right from the beginning after receiving paramita-based mahamudra instruction. Based on the lama’s special instruction, you investigate the nature of your mind by directly observing it. Zhōnu Pal compares the momentum of recalling the three modes of proof and the disputant who sees what has to be established on the analytical path to your conviction and the lama’s realization of emptiness on the path of direct perception. To be sure, for Zhōnu Pal it is better not to precede a direct cognition of emptiness with inferential reasoning.1998

Zhōnu Pal points out that such a nonanalytical approach to reality is supported by the Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā. Indeed in the introduction to the crucial paragraph on the defining characteristics of buddha nature (RGV I.156–58 [J I.153–55]), the statement that buddha nature exists always and everywhere without a difference is based on the principle of true nature (dharmaṭāyukti). This true nature is said to be reliance and principle at the same time:

Everywhere it is precisely the true nature of phenomena that is what is relied upon:1999 the principle underlying an accurate realization of the mind [and] a correct knowledge of it. The true nature of phenomena is inconceivable and unthinkable; it must be rather believed in.2000

For Zhōnu Pal, this means that the nonconceptualizing mind is generated by respectful faith in, and devotion to, the lama. This is the only way for a beginner to directly realize with certainty the mind’s quality of nonorigination and luminosity.2001

A good explanation of how you begin the nonanalytical approach to emptiness or natural luminosity is found in the commentary on the second vajra point, where Zhōnu Pal explains the first mahāmudrā yoga of one-pointedness:

The practitioners of the mahāmudrā pith instructions deriving from Maitripa say that when you abide in that which is not anything, being free from [unnecessary] thinking about the past, present, and future, a thought that distracts you from this may arise. In this case, you gaze at it without getting agitated about what exactly has arisen. This very gazing is a thorough searching of how [the mind operates] with regard to that thought. Thus it is said. Even though all other thoughts become completely pacified in this way, you must [continue to] meditate. The mind
meditates and a subtle thought of abiding arises. When you gaze [with] naked [awareness] also at this, this subtle thought too ceases, and a mind arises that is like space in being free from a middle and extremes. This is called the yoga of one-pointedness. [DRSM, 137.23–138.2]

Also Nāgārjuna has said [in his Bodhicittavivaraṇa, stanza 51]: “The defining characteristics of abiding in [a state of] mind without apprehension are those of space. I assert that whoever meditates on space meditates on emptiness.” Having realized that the forms of the objects of all thoughts wandering about as the objects of the external [world] are false, the subject too melts into the sphere of this very same mind, which is like space. When you see this, [neither] the [false] imagining, which is the cause of the defilements, [nor] the focus of this [false] imagining is seen as something at all permanent, joyful, or the like. Such a yoga must be practiced once it is seen in this way. [DRSM, 138.2–6]

A little further down, after quoting Lārikāvatārasūtra X.256ab and Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra XIV.23–27 in support, Zhōnu Pal shows that his mahāmudrā approach can be brought into line with Haribhadra but not Kamalaśila:

The master Haribhadra maintains that through meditation on the Madhyamaka view that all phenomena completely lack an own-being, the three clear appearances—small, middle, and large—of being without a perceived object and the one clear appearance of being without a perceiving subject arise when on [the path] of penetration, while the clear appearance of realizing the lack of own-being arises on the first level. The followers of mahāmudrā claim that the clear appearances of the four [levels of the path of] preparation arise gradually from a single direct cultivation of abiding in a state of not directing your mind on anything. In this regard the great scholar Kamalaśila has said: “When the form of the perceiving subject and even nondual knowledge are destroyed, this [level] is called the supreme quality on [the path of] partial concordance with penetration (i.e., its fourth level).” I think that the explicit teaching to meditate on the stage of the supreme quality, [namely,] that nondual knowledge is not true, does not exactly accord with Haribhadra. (DRSM, 138.21–139.2)
At the end of his explanation of the stanza RGV I.31, in which the own-being of buddha nature is said to resemble the qualities of a wish-fulfilling jewel, the sky, and water, Zhönu Pal quotes Dampa Sangyé, who teaches the four mahāmudrā yogas based on this stanza:

In view of its (i.e., the buddha element’s) nature of power, unchangingness, and adhesiveness,
It bears resemblance, in these, to the qualities of a wish-fulfilling jewel, the sky, and water. 2002 (RGV I.31)

Dampa Sangyé maintains the following:

Through the yoga of one-pointedness you settle [your] mind [in such a way that it is] not moved by thoughts, like [unstirred] water [becoming] clear. By doing so, you realize space-like suchness that is free from mental fabrication. With this as the base, you [practice] the yoga of one taste, and in doing so, you may be [again] focused on the outside with the eyes and the other [senses], but you realize the suchness of pure aspects. When the jewel-like, effortless yoga of nonmeditation has arisen, compassion arises without effort for the master of meditation. This is therefore the state of a great bodhisattva hero, who works liberally for the sake of others. (DRSM, 272.6–10)

Zhönu Pal elucidates the first three of the four yogas once more in connection with his presentation of the three natures of the buddha element, namely those associated with its being the dharmakāya, suchness, and the buddha potential (RGV I.147–52 [J I.144–52]). These three aspects are illustrated by the nine examples from the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra. The first three examples illustrate the dharmakāya, the fourth suchness, and the remaining five the buddha potential. In meditation practice, however, this three-fold classification does not matter for Zhönu Pal:

Even though the [buddha] element was explained in terms of separate [aspects] in line with the distinction among its three natures, in [meditation] practice these may be taken to be identical. (DRSM, 430.25–26)

Nevertheless, Zhönu Pal links the three mahāmudrā yogas with these three aspects, and with the three particular features of the buddha qualities
that are gradually realized in the three yogas. The three particular features are explained in a passage from the Śrīmālādevisūtra quoted in the vyākhyā on I.152–55 (J I.149–52):

Therefore, illustrious one, buddha nature is the basis, foundation, and support of the unconditioned [buddha] qualities, which are connected [with it], inseparable [from it], and which [can] not be recognized as being disconnected [from it].\textsuperscript{2003}

Zhönu Pal explains the particular feature of being connected with the gloss “in the sense of having the same identity (bdag nyid geig);” inseparable means that “they are not different in essence”; and the last feature implies that “even though a long period of time has passed nobody knows of a method to separate them.”\textsuperscript{2004} The following explanation of the three yogas is a commentary on a subsequent passage of the vyākhyā that introduces a section dealing with the defining characteristics of buddha nature:\textsuperscript{2005}

The yogins of mahāmudrā gradually come to see the three particular features [of the buddha qualities]. Here, through the yoga of great one-pointedness, you see the vastness [of buddha nature],\textsuperscript{2006} seeing as you do your own mind to be without extremes and a middle, just like space. When you realize as it indeed is, the [extreme] limit of the selflessness of all phenomena through the yoga of freedom from mental fabrication, [you see that] nothing becomes empty later that was not [already] empty before. Since you realize that the nature of the fundamental state has ever been like this, and that nothing deviates from this fundamental state even when you become a buddha later, you see [buddha nature] as not being separate [from] suchness. Because you realize through the yoga of one taste that appearances and [their] empty [nature] are of one taste, you know that the mind of all sentient beings is like your own mind. Since you know that the mind of sentient beings is very similar to the pure dharmakāya of the buddhas, you see [buddha nature] as the nature of a definite potential. (DRSM, 431.6–13)

In the following, Zhönu Pal stresses that in the Ratnagotravibhāga the approach to reality or the buddha element is based on the principle of true nature (dharmaṭāyukti), which means that reality is simply of a certain
nature. It is inconceivable and cannot be realized through an ordinary direct cognition obtained on the basis of familiarity with the content of inferences:

Well then, you may ask whether such a seeing is one that has become a direct [cognition] from first realizing [buddha nature] in an inferential valid cognition based on the principle of proving on the basis of feasibility, and [then] becoming continuously used to it (i.e., the content of the inferential cognition); or whether it is a seeing that [occurs] for no major reason, [that is,] adventitiously? It is neither a seeing based on [the principle of] proving on the basis of feasibility nor a seeing without reason. It is a seeing based on the principle of true nature (dharmatāyukti). (DRSM, 431.13–16)

The yoga of nonmeditation is explained a little further down:

You realize that the mind has never arisen, as time itself is free from mental fabrication. In consideration, however, that [mind] appears as if the mind to be meditated upon and the meditating mind were different, the conventional expression “nothing to meditate upon” (or nonmeditation) is used when you have actualized [the truth] that the two forms of an object and a subject do not exist, in the same way as a lamp does not illuminate itself. This [level] of nonmeditation, moreover, has states that are small, middle, and large according to differences in gross, average, or subtle [degrees of] abandoning what must be given up. As for Maitripa, who said that there are no stages, he did not think that there are no differentiations according to small and average; he thought that everything has one single taste—the taste of emptiness. (DRSM, 433.7–12)

Zhōnu Pal’s Justification of a Sudden Mahāmudrā Path

In the description of the four mahāmudrā yogas above, Zhōnu Pal quotes Gōtsangpa because he relates them with the more common system of the five paths and ten bodhisattva levels. The yoga of one-pointedness corresponds to the path of accumulation and preparation, the yoga of freedom from mental fabrications to the path of seeing and the first bodhisattva
level, the yoga of one taste to the subsequent impure bodhisattva levels up to the seventh, and the yoga of nonmeditation to the last three pure levels.

On the other hand, the stance that mahāmudrā is attained in one go is also endorsed: Zhönu Pal quotes a pertinent passage from Zhang’s Phyag rgya chen po lam zab mthar thug\textsuperscript{2007} to the effect that the true nature of phenomena (dharmatā) is directly realized on the path of seeing and that the ensuing bodhisattva levels cannot be distinguished so as to correspond to various parts of the dharmatā, for the dharmatā is indivisible. As Zhang says, once the sun has risen, nobody will stand up and say it is not the sun because it cannot melt ice immediately. To support this point, Zhönu Pal refers to Haribhadra, who says that nothing new is actualized on the path of meditation that has not already been seen on the path of seeing.\textsuperscript{2008} As further support, Zhönu Pal quotes Candrakīrti’s Madhyamakāvatāra-bhāṣya, which compares advancement on the bodhisattva levels to the trail of a bird in the sky, which cannot be expressed or seen even by the wise.\textsuperscript{2009}

Zhönu Pal goes one step further and contends that the levels of the vehicle of defining characteristics are not real levels but only “preliminary levels,” that is, levels on the path of preparation. Under this assumption, it is not only the real bodhisattva levels of the paths of seeing and meditation that are like the trail of a bird in the sky but also the preliminary ones. To support his argumentation, Zhönu Pal draws our attention to a presentation of the ten pāramitās on the level of engagement based on conviction in the Vairocanābhisambodhitāntara.\textsuperscript{2010} According to the Vairocanābhisambodhitāntrapiṇḍārtha, these correspond to the preliminary bodhisattva levels and so are below the actual path of seeing or the first true bodhisattva level.\textsuperscript{2011} Zhönu Pal further tries to show that the four yogas of mahāmudrā are in accordance with the four states of penetration as explained in the Abhisamayālāṃkāra,\textsuperscript{2012} and claims that from the eighth [preliminary] level onward, all four yogas are completed in one instant.\textsuperscript{2013} Finally, Zhönu Pal holds that it is even possible to include the path of accumulation under “engagement based on conviction.”

In order to establish that the levels and paths of the vehicle of defining characteristics belong in reality to the path of preparation, it is necessary to show that the arhats enter the bodhisattva path below the actual path of seeing. Zhönu Pal explains that there are different opinions about the level on which arhats join the Mahāyāna:

...before, in my own tradition, this used to be explained by adducing the discourses (lung) of Buddhaguhya.\textsuperscript{2014} But as to this “entering on the eighth level”—if an arhat of the Śrāvakāyāna
entered the Mahāyāna, [and] if you maintained that his conversion to the Mahāyāna and the arising of the wisdom of the eighth level were simultaneous, and if you achieved in three lifetimes of an arhat what has to be accomplished on the basis of your conduct [over] many incalculable eons from the first to the seventh level, then you would fall prey to error, [namely,] the unacceptable consequence that arhats have sharper faculties then bodhisattvas, and this would be completely against reason. (DRSM, 500.7-11)

The entering into the Mahāyāna on the eighth level has to be understood rather in the following way:

In the same way as beginner bodhisattvas are said to enter [the state of] buddhahood on account of having generated a mind that wishes to enter buddhahood, some arhats who generate the wish to attain the eighth level of the Mahāyāna by focusing [on it], and who are said to learn as much as they can [to attain it], are called “the ones who enter the eighth level.” In this case I do not see any contradiction. (DRSM, 500.12-14)

Thus, based on the Vairocanābhisambodhitantra, Zhōnu Pal relegates the five paths and ten levels commonly explained in Mahāyāna and the four yogas of mahāmudrā to a level called engagement based on conviction, which in reality corresponds to the paths of accumulation and preparation. If this is accepted, you can maintain that even a beginner can have a direct experience of the true nature of his mind, and this is what is referred to as attaining mahāmudrā in one go.

A combination of gradual and spontaneous aspects of the path of purification can be found in a prose passage following stanza II.127 in the Lankāvatārasūtra (LAS 55.3-56.6),2015 which illustrates the gradual aspects with examples such as the growing of grass or the mastery of skills, and the spontaneous with reflections in a mirror and the brilliance of the sun and the moon. Basing himself on this, Zhōnu Pal explains that the stains are gradually purified up to the seventh bodhisattva level, while after that the objects of knowledge appear instantaneously, as in a mirror.

From what has been said above, it follows that Zhōnu Pal interprets the seventh bodhisattva level of the Lankāvatārasūtra as the Vairocanābhisambodhitantra does, namely as a preliminary one. It follows further that the gradual process of purification of stains within the three dharmacakras goes
only up to the preliminary seventh level. Does this also mean, however, that the nonconceptual wisdom fully ripens after the preliminary seventh level,\textsuperscript{2016} that is, that complete buddhahood is attained, instantaneously, already at that level? The example of the rising sun, used by Zhang to illustrate the attainment of mahāmudrā in one go, does not suggest an instantaneous attainment of complete buddhahood entirely; for even though nobody maintains that the newly risen sun is not the sun, the ice does not immediately melt.\textsuperscript{2017}

In a discussion of a supposed tension between Haribhadra’s statement that the entire dharmadhātu is seen on the first bodhisattva level on the one hand, and the Dharmadhātustotra on the other, according to which only a tiny part of the dharmakāya is seen even on the tenth level, Zhönu Pal says that Haribhadra takes the dharmadhātu as the selflessness of phenomena, as something that has the defining characteristics of a negation. Therefore, it makes sense to say that it is seen completely on the first level. But attaining the dharmakāya of a buddha is something else again, because for Zhönu Pal dharmadhātu is not just a different name for the dharmakāya. The difference is that on the first level you see only your own buddha nature directly, but not that of others.\textsuperscript{2018} Attaining mahāmudrā thus means for Zhönu Pal that the direct vision of emptiness on the first level is not different from seeing it on the tenth level. But the extent of perceived reality or buddha nature necessarily increases, so that the buddha nature of other beings are seen as well, in the same way as Zhang’s newly risen sun still gets stronger and melts the ice.

We can now better appreciate Zhönu Pal’s great effort to interpret the Ratnagotravibhāga as implying that there is a difference between the three aspects of the buddha element, namely the dharmakāya, suchness, and the buddha potential, and that accordingly, buddha qualities exist in ordinary beings only in a subtle form and must naturally mature. During meditation practice, however, these three aspects can be taken to be identical, according to Zhönu Pal.\textsuperscript{2019} In other words, with regard to gazing at your true nature of mind in meditation,\textsuperscript{2020} there is no difference on the various bodhisattva levels; still, the buddha qualities mature gradually on these levels,\textsuperscript{2021} in the same way as Zhang’s sun gradually gains strength. For Zhönu Pal, such a view is in perfect harmony with scholars such as Haribhadra or Candrakīrti, and thus with mainstream Indian Mahāyāna.\textsuperscript{2022}

To be sure, an instantaneous experience of mahāmudrā, which occurs once the mind first becomes free from mental fabrication on the level of engagement based on conviction, does not entail that the buddha qualities have already matured on this early level. Referring to Zhang Tsalpa
Tsöndrü and Drigung Jigten Sumgön, Zhönu Pal argues that it would follow therefore that the sun has not risen because its qualities (such as melting ice) are not yet in evidence during the first hours of the day. As a further support, Zhönu Pal adduces the *Dasabhumikasūtra* according to which you attain 112 qualities only in the life after the one in which you have reached the first level. It is only against this background that we can fully understand the importance of maintaining that the buddha qualities have to grow naturally. By taking such an approach, Zhönu Pal protects his understanding of mahāmudrā from being classified as “Chinese Buddhism.”

Zhönu Pal does not seek open controversy over his mahāmudrā interpretation of buddha nature and avoids the controversial mahāmudrā term *white panacea* (*dkar po chig thub*), which stands for the self-sufficient means of directly realizing your natural mind. He is also not much concerned with directly justifying his mahāmudrā explanations, the mere possibility of interpreting the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in line with mahāmudrā being justification enough for him. Only once does he indirectly address the criticism that his mahāmudrā is “Chinese Buddhism.”

This charge of being “Chinese Buddhism” is addressed in the commentary on *RGV* I.15, in which the wisdom of “quality” (*yathāvadbhāvikatā*), that is, the realization of natural luminosity and the two types of selflessness, is understood in terms of the first two mahāmudrā yogas. Zhönu Pal leads into the topic “selflessness of phenomena” with a quote from Śāntideva’s *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, stanza IX.55:

The remedy for the darkness of the hindrances of defilements and the knowable is emptiness. Why does not [the yogin] who wishes [to obtain] omniscience quickly meditate on it? (DRSM, 165.21–22)

...and skillfully directs the matter of “Chinese Buddhism” away from his mahāmudrā tradition toward Śāntideva by asking:

Well then, is the explanation of the Chinese monk called Mahāyāna not appropriate? The Chinese monk said, “Everything that must be given up is only eliminated by meditating on emptiness, and since doing so confers the ability to realize everything knowable, the teachings relating to skillful means—such as compassion, the generation of an enlightened attitude, the [first] five *pāramitās*, and the four [means of] conversion—are only for the
Zhōnū Pal comes to the aid of Śāntideva with three arguments:

This is not the case. The first reply is [as follows]: Master Nāgārjuna says [in his Bodhicittavivarana, stanza 73]: “When yogins have thus meditated on emptiness, [their] mind will, beyond all doubt, rejoice in benefiting others.” Thus meditation on emptiness gives rise to compassion, and through it you become engaged in applying skillful means. (DRSM, 165.25–166.1)

The second reply: It is not only that by meditating on emptiness you finally achieve omniscience; along the way, you come to know many things not known before by becoming free from gross hindrances. Therefore Śāntideva says [in his Bodhicaryāvatāra VIII.94ab]: “I must remove the suffering of others, because it is suffering like my own suffering.” From this reasoning, therefore, an inferential valid cognition arises involving the realization that the suffering of others must be removed, and it is [further] taught that you become active for the sake of others. When many knowable objects appear as a result of meditation, you realize by means of valid cognition that it is inappropriate not to work for the sake of others. (DRSM, 166.1–6)

The third reply: Also, the great compassion of a tathāgata is included in the teaching of the last dharmacakra that sentient beings are naturally endowed with the qualities of a buddha. As both insight and compassion have always been connected in terms of their nature, you [automatically] apply abundant skillful means by merely realizing emptiness and exhausting all hindrances—[even in the case of] those who [first] abandon neither the hindrances of not attending to the benefit of sentient beings nor the ignorance [of the need] to benefit the countless sentient beings, the abundant skillful means of benefiting others not having been taught [to them]. (DRSM, 166.6–10)

In other words, there is nothing wrong with the strong emphasis on “gazing at your own nature” in mahāmudrā practice, since it is nothing other than the direct perception of emptiness in mainstream Madhyamaka.

According to the Bodhicaryāvatāra itself, the need for the first five pāramitās
is in no way questioned by seeing meditation on emptiness as the remedy that removes all defilements.

The Fourth Chödrak Yeshé expresses the following complaint in his commentary on the Bodhicittavivaraṇa, which he had composed on the basis of explanations by his teacher Zhönu Pal:

Such a meditation (i.e., nonconceptual meditation on emptiness), which was praised by Ārya Nāgārjuna, was proclaimed by some [masters] during the earlier and later [diffusion of the Dharma] in Tibet as being the meditation of the Chinese Hva shang; still, here in this treatise (i.e., the Bodhicittavivaraṇa) it is taken as the tradition of the great bodhisattvas.

In order to support the stance that mahāmudrā is attained in one go, it is necessary to show that the qualities of the dharmakāya (at least in their subtle form) are already present in ordinary beings as the very nature of their adventitious defilements. For Zhönu Pal, the four qualities of the dharmakāya, namely the perfections of purity, self, bliss, and permanence, are a key to understanding this. They are explained in RGV I.35–36 as the fruit of four causes within buddha nature: conviction, insight, meditative stabilization, and compassion.

The perfection of the qualities purity, self, bliss, and permanence are its fruit. [To attain this fruit] it acts with aversion to suffering and longing and praying for the attainment of peace. (RGV I.35)

What is taught here in the first half of the stanza?

The fruit (i.e., the four qualities) of these [four causes] is, in short, constituted by the antidote to what has [again] become a fourfold mistaken [view], the opposite [of the four mistaken views concerning samsāra having been wrongly applied] to the dharmakāya. (RGV I.36)

Ordinary people usually think that the conditioned phenomena of worldly existence are pure, possessing a self, blissful, and permanent. These mistaken views are cured by the correct notions that such phenomena are impure, without a self, suffering, and impermanent. It would be wrong, however, to extend these predications to the dharmakāya. Generating the
perfections of purity, self, bliss, and permanence is the way to correct such a mistake.

Zhönu Pal points out that this is not achieved by a contrary mode of apprehension but by cultivating the path that appears as bliss:

You internalize that here, in the last dharmacakra, notions of impurity and the like are abandoned with the aid of the notions of purity and so forth. Therefore, when the entire world appears to the noble śrāvakas as suffering, [such a notion] is abandoned by cultivating its antidote, [that is,] the path that appears as bliss but not a path involving a contrary mode of apprehension. (DRSM, 290.10–13)

Liberation through the appearance of the path as bliss is compared to the liberation that comes from seeing emptiness. In order to remove wrong notions, which can be compared to the eye sickness of seeing falling hairs, it is the medicine of emptiness that must be relied on to cure ailing eyes, and not inferential valid cognitions. Such an application of emptiness is the practice of mahāmudrā:

To abide in the sphere in which appearances [simply] occur as they are, without disturbing the mental faculty with thoughts, with something involving the cognitive modes of removing and negating or positing and establishing, is mahāmudrā yoga. [Another] name for it is emptiness, and here it is [like] eye medicine. Moreover, the teaching of the four notions of purity and the rest with regard to the dharmaśākṣa relates to the path of mahāmudrā. Apart from this, they are not notions that fix on [any] characteristic sign. (DRSM, 290.19–23)

If you ask how [this can be], in [RGV I.140 (J I.137) it is said]: “Just like filth is repulsive [even for ordinary people], the active states [of defilements are repulsive] for those possessed by desire; [they are] like filth, for they are the cause of their indulging in [unpleasant objects of] desire.” This has been said with regard to the path of apparent [truth]. Here, [in such a state,] when terrible imaginings of attachment have arisen, you are disturbed by them, and a mind turned away from them does not arise. When you rest within the very thought of attachment, then that disturbed mental faculty itself, the condition that gives rise to attachment, calms down. (DRSM, 290.23–26)
Something like that is called meditation on purity; and it is not impurity. Nor is it to internalize the thought of blindly labeling it ultimate purity. (DRSM, 290.26–291.2)

Likewise, when you abide in that same sphere, abiding as in the former continuous flow of mind, there is no high and low of dualistic appearances, and therefore you attach notionally [to the mind] the name permanent. (DRSM, 291.2–3)

Likewise, when you abide in a single continuity, like space, after such an abiding mind (i.e., abiding within attachment) has become free from the clouds of mistaken appearances, the mind is said to have attained independence, and is notionally labeled as self: (DRSM, 291.3–5)

When you abide within this same sphere [of attachment] after gaining the certainty that all mistaken appearances [result] from an object and subject, [that is, from] dualistic appearances, non-dual wisdom, [that is,] thorough self-realization, arises. By virtue of it, all thoughts, such as the wish to abandon saṃsāra or attain nirvāṇa, are pacified, and the mind has no more thorns. You are free from all appearances of suffering, and this is called meditation on bliss. (DRSM, 291.5–8)

Thus, every samsaric state of mind can be the starting point of mahāmudrā, even the wildest forms of defilement can be experienced as the perfection of purity, bliss, and the like by simply abiding and relaxing within them and calming down. The qualities of buddha nature are not something other than or somewhere else than in defilements. This requires that both of them, namely the two truths, are not taken to be different with regard to their nature. Thus Zhönu Pal explains a little further down:

As for the definitive meaning, attachment and so forth are ultimately of the nature (rang bzhin) of the dharmakāya. The noble śrāvakas make a mistake in clinging to attachment as something real…. (DRSM, 292.17–19)

This is also clear from the commentary on the two stanzas RGV I.157–58 (J I.154–55), which teach the defining characteristics of the two types of emptiness:

A bodhisattva who is versed in the two modes of the particular features of emptiness, namely being empty of adventitious stains
but not empty of qualities, is somebody in possession of the full meaning of emptiness. As for the mode of identity [and] difference—not [a form of] emptiness, [namely,] the interruption [of attachment to a desired object] as something different from, or outside of, the mind—you are distracted and very perplexed by a mind that is engaged in many forms. In terms of the view, [when holding] such views, [and] this view [in particular], you do not dwell in meditative equipoise [focused] on full meaning, nor do you even obtain deep insight. Since the calm abiding of one-pointedness is not obtained either, the mind is said to be distracted from emptiness in the states of both view and meditation. (DRSM, 444.9–14)

If you know the emptiness explained here, you do not think that the interruption of attachment is emptiness. Nor do you think that attachment itself is emptiness. Because you do not see emptiness existing as something different from attachment either, you let [your mind] rest in that very attachment, just as it appears, without refuting or establishing [anything]. By doing so, you also come to see the natural luminosity [of attachment] through deep insight. Whatever thought arises becomes a friend of meditative stabilization and therefore becomes [the mahāmudrā yoga of] one-pointedness as well. Moreover, emptiness is here declared to be ultimate emptiness. It is the very buddha nature itself, declared to be the ultimate truth, that is, the truth of the noble ones. (DRSM, 444.14–19)

The assertion that ultimate emptiness (equated with buddha nature) and defilements, or nirvāṇa and saṃsāra, are in reality inseparable, and both your own mind, is one of the central tenets in mahāmudrā. It goes back to Saraha, who compares the two with two trunks growing from one seed.2036

Pairs of Paradoxes

By maintaining that the buddha element and the adventitious stains are identical in terms of their empty nature, Zhö nu Pal protects himself against a too-ontological interpretation of the third dharmacakra’s positive predications of the ultimate. According to his mahāmudrā tradition, such cataphatic statements, as Seyfort Ruegg and Schaeffer2037 proposed calling them, are usually contrasted with or, more accurately, complemented by a negation. Such an apophasis, to use the Greek term for this kind of nega-
tion, ensures that cataphatic statements do not mislead you into thinking that the true nature of mind consists of independently existing entities. Since the true nature of mind is beyond the reach of language or logical forms of expression, it can be only tentatively expressed, by pairs of paradoxes. Thus, mahāmudrā descriptions of the ultimate consist of sheer endlessly creative play between cataphatic and apophatic terms. They are not a senseless repetition of paradoxes but pith instructions that directly point to your own true nature.

Cataphatic terms can be subsumed under freedom from mental fabrications and apophatic terms under awareness. The awareness has nothing to do with ordinary consciousness but rather is a synonym of the ultimate. For Zhö nu Pal buddha nature is best described by a combination of both: “awareness that is free of mental fabrication.” The first problem is that any statement about the ultimate harbors a paradox, in that it is necessarily an object of the intellect (being labeled as buddha nature, for example), as reflected in its being able to function as a grammatical substantive. Something that is termed free from mental fabrications is being mentally fabricated in the very process of calling it such. This paradox is only heightened by combining the predication free from mental fabrications with the predication awareness. Understood as a stream of moments, awareness is momentary and thus, strictly speaking, an apparent truth (and so, according to Buddhist terminology, a mental fabrication). The combination of two terms that are prima facie paradoxical not only points to the limitations of logical forms of expression but also works toward transcending the limited capacity of the intellect and realizing the paradoxical nature of the ultimate in a direct valid cognition. Such pairs of paradoxes go back to the prajñāpāramitā literature, where the cataphatic term form is combined with the apophatic term empty. The endless repetition of this paradox in different variants may be tiring for the reader bent on a purely intellectual approach, but the constant confrontation with the paradoxical nature of the ultimate during a traditional recitation is a skillful practice designed to make emptiness realizable.

The inconceivable nature of the relation between the two members of such paradoxical pairs is dealt with in the stanzas RGV I.23–25, which provides for each of the four objects of the omniscient—namely, suchness mingled with stains (buddha nature), stainless suchness (enlightenment), qualities, and activity—a reason why they are inconceivable.

Suchness mingled with stains and then suchness apart from stains, The stainless buddha qualities and buddha activity,
Are the objects for those who see the ultimate [truth];
From them the sublime Three Jewels arise.\textsuperscript{2039} (RGV I.23)

The potential of [these] Three Jewels
Is the object of those who see everything;
This fourfold [object] is inconceivable
For four reasons in sequence:\textsuperscript{2040} (RGV I.24)

Because [suchness] is endowed with both purity and defilements;
Because [suchness] has [ever been] free from all defilements and
[still] has been purified;
Because the properties [of a buddha] are inseparable;
And because [buddha activity] is without effort and thought.\textsuperscript{2041}
(RGV I.25)

The \textit{vyākhyā} explains the four reasons in the following way:

1. The [first] point here is inconceivable, because suchness mingled with stains is simultaneously—at one and the same time—pure and defiled, being an object of experience not even for pratyekabuddhas, who are convinced of what the profound Dharma is like.\textsuperscript{2042}

2. The [second] point here is inconceivable, because suchness, which is free from stains, is first defiled with stains and [only] later is pure.\textsuperscript{2043}

3. The [third] point here is inconceivable, because stainless buddha qualities are found to be not different in terms of their inseparable true nature, before and later, even on the level of ordinary people, which is invariably defiled.\textsuperscript{2044}

4. The [fourth] point here is inconceivable, because buddha activity unfolds in sentient beings simultaneously, everywhere, at all times, and without effort and thought in accordance with their mental disposition and [the capacity of the] disciples, and this without fault and in an appropriate way each time.\textsuperscript{2045}

The first two points are inconceivable because suchness that has ever been naturally pure can be mingled with stains. Related to this paradox, of course, are the stainless buddha qualities, which are inseparable from suchness even on the level of ordinary beings. The unlimited activity that unfolds on the basis of these qualities just adds to the inconceivable nature of the buddha element, which in its purity possesses these qualities and is nevertheless the basis of saṁsāra.
Based on the explanation in stanzas RGV I.157–58 (J I.154–55) that it is the adventitious stains, not the qualities, that are separable, we might imagine that the buddha element is something essentially different from the stains. Even though the two can mix with one another and coexist, they do not interfere with each other, except that the stains prevent the manifestation of the primordial buddha nature with its inseparable qualities. This would be the Jonangpa zhentong view.

For Zhönu Pal, the buddha qualities and the stains are properties of exactly the same buddha element, \(^{2046}\) and what is really inconceivable is that the true nature of mind can have such contradictory or paradoxical properties at the same time. Of particular interest is Zhönu Pal’s concluding commentary on RGVV I.25, in which the first two reasons of why the stages of purification (buddha nature and enlightenment) are inconceivable are related with awakening (sangs), cleansing (byang), and freedom from mental fabrications, while the second two reasons—why the naturally present qualities and activity are inconceivable—illustrate blossoming (rgyas), accomplishment (chub), and awareness:

The main subject discussed in this treatise is the enlightenment of the Buddha. In this regard, the first two reasons show the [Buddha’s] awakening (sangs) and cleansing (byang), in that they show the stages of purification. The second two show the [Buddha’s] blossoming and accomplishment (chub), in that they show the qualities and the activities associated with them. With regard to the basis, the first two reasons mainly show the mode of being free from mental fabrication; they show that [the element] has been ever empty of suffering and the origin [of suffering], [which are] the characteristic signs of what is adventitious. The second two reasons mainly show the element in its mode of abiding in the form of awareness; they show the qualities and their activities. [As to what results] from the element’s freedom from mental fabrication [it is the three nirvāṇas], for based on whether [only] one side of it is realized or it is completely realized, it [can] become [any of] the nirvāṇas of the three vehicles. From its mode as awareness, the element develops into the phenomena of saṁsāra, given that the whole of saṁsāra arises from the basic consciousness, which is a reflection of this appearing mode [of awareness]. (ZhP 241.6–14)
That the same buddha element is able to turn into saṃsāra and nirvāṇa in its respective modes of awareness and freedom from mental fabrication pointedly illustrates the paradoxical nature of awareness that is free from mental fabrication, or to be more exact, “the element that is both awareness and freedom from mental fabrication.” This can be sensed in the very terms for Buddha (sangs rgyas) and enlightenment (byang chub) in Tibetan. While the first syllables sangs and byang are apophatic, expressing the nonexistence or negation of defilements, the second syllables denote the blossoming of qualities and the accomplishment of the activity associated with them and are cataphatic in nature, that is to say, they assert something.

Mahāmudrā descriptions of the true nature of mind normally suggest that the true nature of mind is not really different from the mind of buddhas. Even Zhönu Pal, who otherwise carefully distinguishes the subtle qualities of ordinary beings from the blossomed qualities of buddhas, says that there is no difference in meditation practice. Enlightenment is thus, as awareness, the true nature of suffering.

Pairs of paradoxes can also be identified in the explanation of the four qualities of the dharmakāya. Awareness, whose reflection is the basic consciousness with all the mental imprints, can manifest saṃsāric states of mind, such as suffering. Since ordinary people cling to such states as something supposedly blissful, the first step is to negate such a wrong perception. Indeed the śrāvakas realize that suffering is not blissful. The true nature of suffering is, however, the dharmakāya's perfections of bliss, etc., but this is recognized neither by simply clinging to suffering as bliss nor by simply negating the notion that it is bliss. By resting your mind in suffering just as it is, you actualize the emptiness of the suffering, or you gain freedom from mental fabrication, transcend the level on which bliss and nonbliss form a paradoxical pair, and attain the perfection of bliss beyond bliss and nonbliss. The same holds true for the dharmakāya's perfections of self, purity, and permanence.

The crux that paradoxes boil down to is to serve the purpose of transcending the ordinary. Thus a simple predication is not enough to point out the true nature of mind. Even the most accurate terms, including spontaneous presence, coemergent, magical display, and luminosity, do not do this entirely, unless they are complemented by a corresponding apophatic formulation, such as free from the extremes of thought and expression; without origination, abiding, and cessation; having no form, shape, or color; or not being established as anything. Still, paradoxical pairs can only point to something beyond words.
ZHÖNU PAL, as his biography shows, commanded a wide range of knowledge. Not only did he enjoy a full-fledged Kadampa education at Chenyé, he also studied at nearly every monastic or religious center in Ü and Tsang. Zhönu Pal wrote his *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary when he was eighty-one years old, and he must have considered the various views of his teachers in doing so. Our study confirms what Zhönu Pal claims in the colophon, namely that he combined the commentarial tradition of Loden Sherab with Gampopa’s and Drigung Jigten Sumgön’s mahāmudrā interpretation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. Zhönu Pal’s close relation to the Pagmo Drupa rulers could be an explanation for this preference.

When the six positions described in part I of this work are compared, it can be said that Zhönu Pal’s way of interpreting the *Ratnagotravibhāga* most resembles the position of the Drupa Kagyü master Barawa Gyaltsen Palzang. Both hold that only the svābhāvikakāya partakes of the ultimate truth, which means that for them there is not only a blank nothingness in the end but also an aspect of clarity or awareness. Consequently, they only accept that the ultimate space-like qualities that resemble the svābhāvikakāya, namely the natural luminosity of the dharmatā of the mind, exist throughout beginningless time. For both, the inseparability of buddha qualities is related to this dharmatā, which cannot be differentiated in terms of shape, color, or quantifiable numbers. As I have shown in the introduction, a few passages in the *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā* do indeed suggest that this was the intention of its author.

Barawa restricts the inseparability of the qualities to their true nature, however, and concludes that the qualities of both the dharmakāya and the form kāyas are themselves separable, the former (namely the ten strengths, etc.) being multiple and the latter (namely the major and minor marks of a buddha) having shape and color. Zhönu Pal disagrees at least with
regard to the qualities of the dharmakāya, contending that the ten strengths only differ in terms of how wisdom experiences different objects, which does not have the undesired consequence that the dharmakāya consists of multiple features. On the other hand, Zhönu Pal is far from endorsing the view of the zhentongpas or Longchenpa that the qualities of both the dharmakāya and the form kāyas exist throughout beginningless time.

If anything, it is the qualities of the dharmakāya, in the eyes of Zhönu Pal, that abide primordially, because they do not depend on a newly attained substantial cause for their abiding nature. They appear directly and blossom merely by becoming free from hindrances. Still, they exist in an ordinary mindstream only in a subtle form. The qualities of the form kāyas do not primordially exist even in a subtle form, because they depend on a substantial cause in the form of an artificially appropriated potential. Zhönu Pal’s theory of subtle qualities is a compromise between the clear statements of the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra, Śrīmālādevīsūtra, and other texts to the effect that buddha nature is inseparably endowed with innumerable qualities and the various attempts to bring the teaching of buddha nature into line with mainstream Madhyamaka. When we consider how these subtle qualities are explained, though, they are seen to be compared to the subtle seeds of empty space that is due to form another world after the current world has vanished. These space-like subtle seeds are said to resemble the svabhāvikakāya and its ultimate qualities, and in the final analysis this theory of subtle qualities does not differ from Barawa’s position. In other words, both Barawa and Zhönu Pal are careful enough not to violate the Madhyamika’s dictum of emptiness.

A similar approach can be observed in the case of Ngog Loden Sherab, for whom nothing is newly acquired in terms of the essence of enlightenment. Nevertheless, the realization of the ultimate is taken as the cause of all qualities, which gather as if called, and are thus naturally connected. It seems very likely that Zhönu Pal’s theory of subtle qualities is a further development of Loden Sherab’s “gathering of naturally connected qualities.” Loden Sherab’s interpretation was at least helpful in getting the notion of a natural growth of qualities accepted.

In view of this theory of subtle qualities, it is difficult to see how Zhönu Pal could have adopted Tsongkhapa’s explanations of the Ratnagotravibhāga, as the Fourth Zhamarpa Chödrag Yeshe suggested he did when he reported that Zhönu Pal was fond of Tsongkhapa’s Ratnagotravibhāga-based hermeneutics. Mikyö Dorjé, too, informs us that Zhönu Pal was influenced by Tsongkhapa in his presentation of the natural and fortified potentials in the Kalacakra commentary Rgyud gsum gsang ba. In that
commentary, Zhönu Pal seems to claim further that buddha nature in sentient beings is merely their six āyatanas, which resemble a buddha. Zhönu Pal clearly rules out such an interpretation in his commentary on RGV I.25. His commentary on RGV I.26, for its part, shows that he followed Loden Sherab’s explanation of the buddha element as a cause, and thus differed from Gyaltsab Je. Zhönu Pal may indeed have written his Rgyud gsum gsang ba (in 1442) while still under the strong influence of his teacher Rimibabpa Sönam Rinchen, who advised him to abandon neither the mahāmudrā view nor the tradition of the Gelugpas. But in the Ratnagotravibhāga commentary, which Zhönu Pal wrote in 1473, Tsongkhapa is not referred to even once.

To be sure, Zhönu Pal’s subtle qualities refer to the natural luminosity of an ordinary mindstream and not to distinct entities on the order of the ten strengths and the like. In this respect it is interesting that Barawa claims that even Dölpopa was thinking of natural luminosity or the ultimate qualities of the svabhāvikakāya (i.e., the qualities described in RGV II.46c–47d) when he said that buddha nature is not empty of the ten strengths and so on (i.e., the qualities of both the dharma-kāya and the form kāyas). Moreover, it is noteworthy that Longchenpa speaks of “luminous major and minor marks of the Buddha” (‘od mthson dpe) when referring to primordial qualities.

Various passages show that in the eyes of Zhönu Pal, every mindstream has its own subtle qualities that naturally blossom into their own enlightened dharma-kāya. In other words, he adheres to explanation number 9 in my list of Zhönu Pal’s own summary of possible positions on buddha nature: you realize your own natural mind and so understand that the mind of a buddha and the mind of all sentient beings are of a similar nature. This means that the fully blossomed wisdom of the buddhas with its ten strengths and so forth is not contained in the mindstream of sentient beings, and the real buddha kāyas do not pervade sentient beings (in the sense of sharing a common part of space). This is clear from Zhönu Pal’s explanation of the example of the vaiḍūrya stone (which illustrates the dharma-kāya) and the mud in the Sāgaramati-paripṛcchā: the example of a vaiḍūrya stone is chosen in order to reinforce the notion that sentient beings’ nature of mind and the dharma-kāya are very much similar in type (but not the same thing).

Zhönu Pal informs us himself that he is here following Ngog Loden Sherab who distinguished a twofold “circle” (‘khor lo) with regard to the sevenfold subject matter in the Ratnagotravibhāga: the circle of the nonabiding nirvāṇa and the circle of the Three Jewels. In the first circle, sentient beings
attain enlightenment through their practice, with their buddha nature functioning as a cause (rgyu) and the Three Jewels as an attendant condition (lhan cig byed pa'i rkyen). Since by these three still other disciples are guided, and by the next set of three again still others, the whole is called a circle. Once disciples have become buddhas themselves, they assist other sentient beings in a second “circle” by acting as attendant conditions for these other’s enlightenment. 

Zhonu Pal’s and Ngog Loden Sherab’s understanding of distinct mindstreams that become buddhas on their own is supported by a passage from the Avatamsakasūtra quoted in RGVV I.25. This early stage of the tathāgatagarbha doctrine does not vindicate monism, since enlightenment is described as being equal to but not identical with an already existing tathāgata. This is in sharp contrast to the zhentong of Dolpopa, and, if you follow Mikyö Dorjé, also of Rangjung Dorjé, who maintains that the ultimate buddha kayas literally pervade the entire universe, including all sentient beings. According to Dolpopa, it is in this sense that all buddha qualities are already complete in you. Still, the buddha kayas, or buddha nature (which is the same thing in this form of zhentong), are not considered to inhere in the mindstreams of sentient beings. On this point, zhentong is similar to the view of Loden Sherab. Both have in common the belief that wisdom or luminosity is in reality the enlightened mind of a tathāgata. The difference, of course, is that for Loden Sherab individual mindstreams generate their own buddha qualities.

Zhonu Pal does not follow Loden Sherab in every respect, though. For Loden Sherab, awareness of wisdom or luminosity results from the enlightened mind penetrating the emptiness of all phenomena, including the mental factors of an ordinary mindstream, whereas for Zhonu Pal, and also Barawa, the emptiness of such a mind has also an aspect of clarity. In this respect, Zhonu Pal’s subtle qualities amount to something more than the emptiness of a blank nothingness. The process of natural growth undergone by these subtle qualities is compared to turmeric powder turning red when it comes into contact with lime, which stands for the purifying factors of the buddhas. In other words, the individual mindstream and the activity of the buddhas both contribute substantially to your enlightenment.

A slightly different picture is drawn when Zhonu Pal explains, based on Rangjung Dorjé’s equation of the unfabricated “natural mind” (tha mal gyi shes pa) with the dharmadhātu and the nature of the victorious ones (i.e., buddha nature), that the mind does not alter its nature even when disturbed by defilements. Zhonu Pal comments that the mind
remains natural and pure with regard to all those defilements; and since purity is the nature of the qualities, these qualities increase naturally within it, like space when a house is being destroyed. This picture is more in line with zhentong, in that the qualities are compared to space, which increases by removing the enclosure of defilements. In other words, something that is omnipresent and fully developed throughout beginningless time is only being revealed, and thus only appears to grow in your individual mindstream.

You could argue that it is unlikely that a scholar like Zhönu Pal did not see the obvious contradictions between these two examples and the exegetical traditions they represent, and that he therefore followed a strategy similar to that of Dölpopa, who would call Loden Sherab’s commentarial tradition ordinary, the extraordinary explanation being tantric and one only hinted at occasionally in general Mahāyāna presentations. In order to settle this question it would be necessary to consult Zhönu Pal’s works on the tantras, especially the Kālacakra-tantra, which are unfortunately not available at present. But Zhamar Chödrag Yeshé does describe Zhönu Pal’s view on the “reflections of emptiness” (śūnyatābimba), which are experienced during the Kālacakra practice of the six-branch yoga. Thus the reflections of emptiness cannot be established by analysis as not truly existing; to see them rather means to see the true nature of your mind. This seems to be in line with the Jonang position. In fact, one of Zhönu Pal’s Kālacakra teachers, Lhakhang Tengpa Sangyé Rinchen, was a disciple of the great Jonang abbot Choglé Namgyal, and Zhönu Pal must have known through Sangyé Rinchen (whom he greatly respected) the extraordinary zhentong interpretation of the Kālacakra as propounded by the Jonangpas. Moreover, Zhönu Pal is described by Zhamar Chödrag Yeshé as having blended the teachings of various traditions including the one by Yumowa Mikyö Dorjé, whom Tuken Lozang Chökyi Nyima considers as the originator of zhentong teachings. If Zhönu Pal was in reality a zhentongpa, he would definitely have been one in the same mold as Rangjung Dorjé, for both claim, contrary to the Jonangpas, that buddha nature undergoes momentariness. In fact, Zhönu Pal tries to show at length that even space is momentary in some sense.

Mikyö Dorjé for his part observes no such similarity between Rangjung Dorjé and Zhönu Pal, but rather criticizes Zhönu Pal for citing Rangjung Dorjé in support of his claim that buddha nature in sentient beings is merely their six sense fields (āyatanas), which resemble a buddha. Mikyö Dorjé makes it clear that the “[buddha] element” (Skt. dhātu), or the potential, is nothing less than the dharmadātu, or rather, the dharmadātu wisdom.
and not a cause in any real sense of the word. Thus, he rejects any attempt to see in the buddha element a real cause. But most importantly, Mikyö Dorjé does not approve of Zhönu Pal quoting Rangjung Dorjé in support of his explanation of buddha nature. Right at the beginning of his review of the *Rgyud gsum gsang ba*, Mikyö Dorjé makes it clear in what way he takes the positions of Rangjung Dorjé and Zhönu Pal to be different. After summarizing his and Rangjung Dorjé’s view that buddha nature is identical with the all-pervading buddha kāyas, he deals at length with a possible objection from Zhönu Pal’s side:

In your proposed way of how buddha nature exists in sentient beings, the husk of sentient beings does not exist... Well, it would then be proper to take a vase as the essence of a rabbit’s horn.

This raises the question of how Zhönu Pal defines the relationship between the ordinary impure mind and buddha nature, or apparent and ultimate truths. In chapter 2 we saw that Dölpopa regards the two as being different in that their identity is negated (gcig pa bkag bai tha dad pa), whereas Barawa’s mahāmudrā stance of equating buddha nature with the *ālayavijñāna* requires the two truths to be one in essence. Basing himself on the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, Barawa maintains that the *ālayavijñāna* and buddha nature are the same in essence but bear different names, and even accepts the consequence that buddha nature experiences suffering in virtue of its awareness. According to Mikyö Dorjé, Zhönu Pal claims in his *Rgyud gsum gsang ba* that buddha nature is identical with the *ālayavijñāna* and that it also experiences suffering. But in his *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary there is nothing to this effect, and even though the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* is repeatedly quoted, Zhönu Pal refrains from fully endorsing the sūtra’s equation of buddha nature with the *ālayavijñāna* but rather takes the *ālayavijñāna* to be a reflection of buddha nature. Here again, Zhönu Pal follows Loden Sherab, who brings the buddha element into relation with the *ālayavijñāna*, maintaining that all sentient beings arise from the buddha element under certain specific conditions.

As we saw in chapter 2, Rangjung Dorjé combines a strict Yogācāra distinction between the *ālayavijñāna* and the supramundane pure mind (similar to zhentong) with Saraha’s mahāmudrā explanation (the mind is the basis of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa), including as he does—based on the works of Maitreya—mere appearances empty of duality, or the stainlessness of the eight types of consciousness, within buddha nature. Once apparent truth
has been restricted to these mere appearances, the distinction between a pure and impure mind no longer affects the question of the relationship between the two truths, since the two truths are only distinguished from that of which both are empty: duality. Rangjung Dorje is thus in a position to assert in his mahāmudrā works that both truths are one in essence, notwithstanding his predilection for Yogācāra.

In a similar way, Zhönu Pal explains that the two truths, or adventitious stains and buddha nature, are not separate entities, and repeatedly illustrates this with examples such as ice and water or waves and the ocean. In other words, adventitious stains and buddha nature are not two substances that have become mixed up (this is how Zhönu Pal describes the Jonang position); it is buddha nature itself that manifests as defilements, just as the property of heat is not different from that of hot iron. In his commentary on the transformation of the basis in RGVV II.1, Zhönu Pal explains that in an ordinary state buddha nature functions as a basis that brings forth all defilements. When it is irreversibly purified from its stains, it no longer functions as a basis of defilements, which is called the transformation of the basis (āsrayaparivṛtti). The two, the buddha element and the transformed basis, are only differentiated on the basis of whether they possess stains or not, for their own-being is very suchness.

Still, for Zhönu Pal the teaching of a buddha nature that is both not empty of qualities and empty of adventitious stains is nothing other than the explanation in the Dharmadharmatāvibhāga according to which the existing dharmatā differs from nonexisting dharmas. In other words, even though buddha nature can be the basis for adventitious stains, there is still a difference between buddha nature and the adventitious stains, in that buddha nature exists and adventitious stains do not. Dharmatā is defined by Zhönu Pal as the continuity of the stainless mind, which is free from thought but still not beyond all phenomena of saṃsāra. In the eyes of Zhönu Pal, Vasubandhu’s Dharmadharmatāvibhāgavṛtti belongs to the Madhyamaka tradition, because it teaches, contrary to the Yogācāra treatises, that there is a naturally pure continuation of natural luminosity within the continuum of all defilements. What Zhönu Pal had in mind here were probably Yogācāra works, such as Asaṅga’s Mahāyānasamgraha, where a clear line is drawn between an impure ālayavijñāna and a pure supramundane mind, or pure dharmadhātu—in other words, passages such as the one Rangjung Dorje incorporated into his interpretation of buddha nature in his autocommentary on the Zab mo nang gi don.

The differences Mikyö Dorje detected between Zhönu Pal and Rangjung Dorje can thus be traced back to differences between the Maitreya
works and the *Mahāyānasamgraha*. Rangjung Dorjé, however, also defines the relationship between the two truths, along the lines of the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*, as being neither identical nor different, and includes his notion of “mere appearances” or “stainlessness of the eight types of consciousness” in buddha nature. In other words, here we have again a continuum of the stainless mind within the continuum of defilements, and in the same way as (according to Zhö nu Pal) buddha nature can be the basis of defilements, Rangjung Dorjé’s mere appearances can be the basis of defilements if misunderstood and perceived dualistically.

It is difficult, though, to compare two masters who have both drawn on different strands of Buddhist thought. Given the central place the *Mahāyānasamgraha* has in Rangjung Dorjé’s autocommentary on the *Zab mo nang gi don*, it is safe to say that Zhö nu Pal ends up closer to Barawa than to the Third Karmapa.

The position of Zhö nu Pal, who after all received so great a number of Nyingma teachings that Khetsun Sangpo considers him a Nyingma lineage holder, also differs considerably from the way Longchen Rabjampa explains the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in the *Grub mtha’ mdzod*. In this work, Longchenpa shows that, with regard to the ground (*gzhi*), dzogchen does not differ from the teaching of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, which means that buddha nature is such that you already possess all spontaneously present buddha qualities of the three kāyas (with the restriction that your own major and minor marks of a buddha are only of a luminous nature). The particular role the *Ratnagotravibhāga* plays in the *Grub mtha’ mdzod* can best be inferred from the fact that Longchenpa justifies the superiority of dzogchen over the sūtras by quoting RGV I.5a, which states that buddhahood is unconditioned and spontaneously present.

In a similar way, Zhö nu Pal explains that “unconditioned” buddhahood refers to primordially present (but subtle) qualities that do not depend on a newly attained substantial cause for them. Unconditioned further means for Zhö nu Pal that buddha nature is not artificially (*'phral du*) conditioned or influenced by adventitious causes and conditions. But this only applies to the qualities of the dharma kāya, the qualities of the form kāyas (the major and minor marks of a buddha) being established by a substantial cause that comes into play through a continuation of individual merit, which is in turn based on an artificially appropriated potential. Another difference is that Longchenpa reads the dzogchen meaning of spontaneously present (*lhun grub*) into the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, namely, as referring to the buddha qualities, while Zhö nu Pal holds the traditional view that it qualifies the activity of a buddha, which is without effort (*lhun
grub). In a sense, the way Zhönu Pal explains the buddha qualities is similar to Lodrö Tsungmé's. In the eyes of Lodrö Tsungmé, the qualities of the form kāyas are artificially created through the accumulation of merit. Even though this does not apply to the qualities of the dharmakāya, Lodrö Tsungmé distinguishes between the ten strengths and the like of ordinary beings and the ones of a buddha. But again, we do not yet know Zhönu Pal's tantric explanation of buddha nature.

It is true that Zhönu Pal does not make use of the term zhentong, but he does, based on the teachings of the second and third dharmacakras, distinguish two types of emptiness. Emptiness is thus not only the non-affirming negation of the analytical Madhyamaka works, but also positively described as awareness-emptiness in the teachings of the third dharmacakra, to which the Ratnagotravibhāga belongs. Following the tradition of Maitripā, Zhönu Pal defines emptiness as awareness or buddha nature when directly experienced (in the same way as phenomena are also experienced as luminosity in yathābhūtasamādhi in TD 5). In the third dharmacakra, the emptiness of an own-being (that is, the emptiness of the second dharmacakra) is applied to the outer husk of the adventitious stains. Then the emptiness that is buddha nature is ascertained in a direct valid cognition, not, that is, as a nonaffirming negation of an own-being. In his commentary on the fourth point (buddha nature) of the topical outline in RGV I.1.1ab, Zhönu Pal brings this to the point:

From sentient beings up to a buddha [something] exists [that is] established as the nature of mind because it is neither impaired nor fabricated by other conditions. It is called empty of fabricated adventitious phenomena. (DRSM, 15.20–22)

He could have equally said that an existing true nature of mind is zhentong, “empty of other,” that is, empty of fabricated adventitious phenomena. The adventitious phenomena do not arise as something entirely different from the nature of mind, though. It is like space, for example. Even though space does not turn into phenomena like clouds and mountains, and is thus termed “empty,” it would be wrong to say that these clouds and the rest abide anywhere else than in space. Similarly, buddha nature is empty of, but not different from, everything artificial, including what is produced out of ignorance—even the outer material world. It should be noted that such a positively defined true nature of mind is not established as something possessing characteristic signs, and as we have seen above, the qualities of the true nature of mind are only space-like
seeds. If you want to call this *zhentong*, you should be aware that it differs from both the Jonang and Kagyū versions of it. In his biography, Zhönu Pal is thus said to have criticized Dölpopa for taking the appearances [produced by] *karman* and the appearance related to wisdom as two separate individual entities that have been mixed together. Zhönu Pal prefers to define the relation between the two in accordance with the example of ice and water, which are only two different states of the same substance (H₂O). In a similar way, Zhönu Pal prefers the equation of buddha nature with the ālayavijñāna in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (even though he takes the ālayavijñāna as only a reflection of buddha nature), and not the distinction in the *Mahāyānasamgraḥa* between an impure ālayavijñāna and a pure dharmadhātu, this distinction being the preference of the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé. This definitely reflects Zhönu Pal’s Kadam and Sakya education, which prevented him from being overly influenced by the views of the Jonangpas or Rangjung Dorjé in this matter. Thus he was indeed being careful when he shored up his presentation of buddha nature with the commentarial tradition of Loden Sherab.

When it came to mahāmudrā hermeneutics, however, Zhönu Pal did not pay heed to the commentarial tradition of either Loden Sherab or the Kadampas and Sakyapas to any great extent. Guided by Gampopa and Drigung Jigten Sumgon, Zhönu Pal claims that the gradual purification of the three dharmacakras only leads up to a provisional seventh bodhisattva level, well below the actual bodhisattva levels. As can be seen from my translation (DRSM, 36.24–74.26), Zhönu Pal justifies the superiority of the third dharmacakra on the basis of mahāmudrā explanations given by various Indian and Tibetan masters. In doing so, he tries to show that two controversial currents within Kagyū mahāmudrā, namely the ones later classified as sūtra-based mahāmudrā and essence mahāmudrā, stem from Indian traditions and are not Chinese Ch’an Buddhism in disguise, a charge mainly leveled by the Sakyapas. Writing a commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, Zhönu Pal could not enter directly into this debate. Nevertheless, under the pretext of showing the superiority of the third dharmacakra, he goes so far as to endorse Zhang Tsalpa Tsöndrü’s controversial statement that mahāmudrā is attained in one go, and that the confused err when they reckon in terms of levels and paths. Such a teaching, which belongs to the later category of essence mahāmudrā, can be justified, according to Zhönu Pal, by combining the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* passage on the gradual and instantaneous purification of the mindstream with the presentation of provisional bodhisattva levels in the *Vairocanābhisambodhitāntra*. For Zhönu Pal, all objects of knowledge appear instantaneously on the pure bodhi-
sattva levels (namely from the eighth level onward), and since there are already “provisional pure levels” even on the path of accumulation, an instantaneous realization of mahāmudrā comes within the reach of practitioners well below the actual bodhisattva levels. In terms of “sūtra-based mahāmudrā,” Zhōnu Pal shows how the four mahāmudrā yogas are already latently contained in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra and various passages of the Ratnagotra-vibhāga, and it is with this in mind that his Ratnagotra-vibhāga commentary can be called a “direct path to the buddha within.”
Notes

5. According to the Chinese tradition, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* was written by Sāramati (Frauwallner 1969:255–56). For a discussion of the authorship of the Maitreya works see Mathes 1996:11–17.
7. See the final section of the introduction.
9. Jñānakīrti’s *Tattvāvatāra* was translated by Rin chen bzang po (958–1055).
11. The Sanskrit original of DhDh V 18–19 is quoted in JNĀ, 432.10–13, while RGV I.9 is summarized in JNĀ 478.11.
12. The verses II.95c–97b (JNĀ, 537.4–7) are nearly identical with RGV I.154–55 (J I.151–52).
13. This will be discussed in detail in Kano’s forthcoming dissertation.
15. Dol po pa only informs us in his *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho* that his final view of *gzhan stong* is an extraordinary Vajrayāna explanation of buddha nature (see “The Position of Dölpopa Sherab Gyaltset” in chapter 2 of this work). It should by noted, however, that at the beginning of his commentary for those with average faculties, Gzhon nu dpal remarks that the full-fledged commentary (for those with “inferior faculties”) is meant to be for those who are clever and faithful (DRSM, 13.9–10).
16. The hermeneutic device in question divides the entire Buddhist teaching into three groups or dharmacakras, the first group consisting of the Hinayāna, the second of the *prajñāpāramitā* and Madhyamaka, and the third of the Yogacāra, buddha nature, mahāmudrā, and tantra (see also Mathes 1996:155–56).
17. See Perler (2002:23–30) for similar methodological principles defined in order to structure and evaluate text material in the context of describing theories of intentionality in medieval Europe.
18. Gzhon nu dpal not only enjoyed a full-fledged Bka’ gdams education, but studied at nearly every important monastic or religious center in Dbus and Gtsang. See chapter 3 in this work.
20. See DRSM, 574.10–12.
21. According to Kong spal Blo gros mtha’ yas’s introduction to his *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary (Rgyud bla ma’i bshad srol, 981–1001).
22. To be precise, my presentation of Klong chen pa’s position on buddha nature is limited to the one expounded in the *Grub mtha’ mdzod* (see the section on Klong chen pa’s position in chapter 2).
24 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: *Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar*, 18a3–6.
26 In fact, Rang byung rdo rje studied under Shāk gzhon, among other texts, the Maitreya works (see Śtu Paṇ chen Chos kyi ’byung gnas and ‘Be lo Tshe dbang kun khyab: *Sgrub brgyud karma kāṁ tshang brgyud pa rin po ché’i rnam par thar pa*, 1991–4).
27 The stanza numbering of the RGV refers to the one used in my edition of Gzhon nu dpal’s commentary on the RGVV, and the one in parentheses to Johnston’s edition of the Sanskrit text.
29 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: *Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar*, 10b1–2. The Eighth Karmapa Mi bskyod rdo rje (“Rje Yid’ bzang rtse ba’i Rgyud gsum gsang ba...”, 998.6: ...khyod rang gi bla ma tsong kha (text: ga) pas...) even refers to Gzhon nu dpal as a disciple of Tsong kha pa.
30 Anyone who has worked with prints from the Patna films of both *Ratnagotra-vibhāgavākyāh* manuscripts must admit that Johnston’s edition is surprisingly good.
31 For a detailed review of Seyfort Ruegg’s study on buddha nature, see Schmithausen 1973.
33 RGVV, 3.4–6: yo ’yam śāriputra tathāgatanirdiṣṭo dharmakāyaḥ so ’yam avinirbhāgadharmaḥ/avinarinmuktānāgaguno yad uta gangānādivālīkāvayatikrāntais tathāgatadharmabhāṣā itidam śāthān vajrapadam antinatvā/pūrṇatvanirdśānusāraṇaṇagantavyam l.
34 As also correctly understood by Seyfort Ruegg 1969:314.
35 For a detailed discussion of both compounds, see Schmithausen 1971:131–32.
36 Zimmermann 2002:64.
38 Zimmermann 2002:63–64.
39 Gzhon nu dpal views this equation in the context of RGV I.27, where the fruit, or the dharmakāya, has been only metaphorically applied to buddha nature (DSRM, 24.2–5). In RGV I.27 the third reason for the presence of a buddha nature in sentient beings is that “its (i.e., buddha nature’s) fruit has been metaphorically applied to the buddha potential.” (RGVV, 26.3–4: bauddhe gotre tathphalasopacārād.)
43 RGVV, 76.3–4: śūnya āgantukā dhātuḥ savinīrbhāgalakṣaṇaḥ / aśūnya 'nuttaraṁ dharmair avinīrbhāgalakṣaṇaṁ //

44 The Derge Tengyur and DRSM, 441.24 translate chos dag pa'i chos nyid (Nakamura 1967:149.7): ... inseparable from the “true nature of Buddha properties.” But in view of the following quotation of the Śrīmālādevīśītra, the reading of the Narthang and Peking editions (chos dag nyid) are preferred, with the compound avinīrbhāgauddhādharmaṁ taken as the abstract of a bahuvrihi.

45 RGVV, 76.5–7: kim anena paridīpaṁ / yato na kīnicē apeaneyam asta atāḥ prakṛtiparipāsuddhāḥ tathāgatah dhātoḥ samākṣeṣaṁi mittaṁ āgantukalāsānyatapra-kṛtīvasaṣya / nāpya atra kīnicē upaaneyam asti vyavādaṇīsimitam avinīrbhāgauuddhādharmaṁ prakṛtīvaṣa / tata ucyate / śūnyas tathāgatabhagaro vinīrbhāgair muktānāṁ sarvakleśakoṣaṁ / aśūnya gaṅgānādi-vāśāya vīṣayāttair avinīrbhāgair amuktānāṁ acintyaṁ buddhādharmaṁ iti / evam yad yatā nāsti tat tena śūnyam iti samanupāṣyati / yat punar atrāvāsaṁi bhavati tat saṁhitā yathābhūtaṁ praṇānāṁ / saṁāropavādānta-praparjanād aviparitaṁ śūnyatālakṣaṇam anena sloka-vayena paridīpatiṁ. /

a See A (1944) and B (39b3). Johnston omits, probably inadvertently, -tā-. 

b Corrected according to A (1944) and B (39b5).


47 It is difficult to see how space-like qualities could be left over in emptiness. Would such a remainder make any difference in terms of the nature of emptiness?

48 RGVV, 76.15: tathāgatabhagabhaññanānaṁ eva tathāgata-anāṁ śūnyatāññanāṁ.


50 Schmithausen 1973:133.

51 RGVV, 26.11–15: svabhāvahetvah phalakarmaṇa-vartiṣṭaḥ avasthāya atha sarvakṛtadvadāh vaddhāya ṣaḍāvīkārikavaguneyo abbedha jñeyo ṭhhasamāndhēḥ paramāttadhātoḥ. /

a B (15a1) has avasthāneḥ atha sarva-vatve, which is against the meter; A is not available. According to the Tibetan (Nakamura 1967:49.17): “[the ten points] have the intended meaning of the ultimate [buddha] element.”

52 Strictly speaking, the ten strengths, etc., belong to the ultimate kāya, which is, according to RGV I.148 (J.145), only the first aspect of the dharmakāya, i.e., the pure dharmadhātu. Its second aspect corresponds to the sambhogakāya. The latter forms together with the nirmānakāya the so-called form kāyas, which possess the thirty-two marks of a great being. This lack of a consistent presentation of the kāyas in the RGV reflects its different layers. For convenience sake I follow the common usage in Tibetan scholarly discourse and call the ten strengths, etc., the qualities of the dharmakāya.

53 According to RGV III.1–3. See below in this paragraph.

54 These stanzas present the fifteen defining characteristics of the ultimate. These are explained as buddhahood that is (1) inconceivable, (2) eternal, (3) everlasting, (4) quiescent, (5) constant, (6) perfectly pacified, (7) all pervading, (8) nondiscriminative, (9) without attachment, (10) without hindrance, (11) devoid of gross sensation, (12) imperceptible, (13) incognizable, (14) pure, and (15) immaculate (see Takasaki 1966:323–24).

55 RGVV, 84.3–4: yad uktam ākāsālakṣaṇo buddha iti tat pānāmaṁthikam āvēnīkanān tathāgata-nāṁ buddha-lakṣaṇāṁ abhisamādhyāyotkāṃ /

56 RGVV, 87.2–4: prabhāsvaram āvīśuddher ca dharmadhāte svabhāvataḥ / aprameyair asaṁkhya-yair acintyaṁ asaṁmair guṇaiḥ / āvīśuddhaṁ[ā]trāśpraptair yuktāṁ svabhāvikaṁ vapaḥ /

a Schmithausen (1971:164) proposes reading dharmadhātu in compound against B (44a3).

b B (44a3) and Johnston read -mi-. 

57 According to RGV III.1–3. See below in this paragraph.
57 For the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra see Zimmermann 2002:121.
58 See RGV, 63.18.
a Not readable in B (13a4); A is not available.
61 DRSM, 150.10–12.
62 See also Schmithausen 1973:131.
63 RGV, 91.5–13: svārthaḥ parārthaḥ paramārthaḥkāyaḥ tadārūtaḥ saṁvittikāyāca / phalaṁ visānyogāvīpakhābhāvād etac cayitaṣṭigunaprabhād / ātmasan-pattaya- 

bhiṣhānam sarīrāṃ paramārthikam / parasāmpattya-bhiṣhānam śeṣe śāṅketikām / vapūḥ / visānyogānuṣānā uktaṁ vapūr ādyāṁ balādbhīḥ / vaiśāpikāikā dvitiyāṁ / 

64 According to B (45b2); A is not available. Johnston reads, probably for metrical reasons, -kāyas instead of -kāyātā. But the upajāti meter allows twelve for the normal eleven syllables in a pada. B is supported by the Jñānavīramitranibandhāvalī, which quotes RGV II.1 on p. 502, II.9–13 and p. 536, II.13–16.
65 The paripūṣṭagotra is equated with the samudānagotra in MSABh III.4.
66 Skt. ārya; the Tibetan has “source” (gter). This is in accordance with a variant reading of this stanza (RGV I.154 (J I.131)) in the Sākārasanigrāha (see JNĀ, 537.5 and 537, fn. 1): -rānakāre vau- (read: -rāmakāra-).
67 According to both manuscripts (A 19b2; B 40a5). Johnston's omission of āha is probably only a reading mistake (see also Schmithausen 1971:160).
b Johnston inserts between bala- and -janam, against both manuscripts (A 19b2; B 40a5), -prthag-.
c Both manuscripts (A 19b3; B 40a6) have astti, which violates both sandhi and meter.
69 It should be noted that abhiprāya in abhiprāyika refers either to the hidden intention of a neyārtha statement (and this is the common usage in Madhyamaka hermeneutics) or to the thought content of what is really true. While the first meaning is found in Candrakirti’s Madhyamakāvatāra (see MA VI.94), the second is more common in Yogaśāstra (see, for example, Vasubandhu’s Vinśātikā 9–10).
71 According to the Prasphuṭapadā, the canonical allusions to an ātman and alaya-vijñāna are provisional statements (neyārtha) motivated by specific salvific goals.
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(prayojana) of the Buddha, and have as their “intentional ground” (Tib. dgongs gzhi) emptiness (see Seyfort Ruegg 1988b:2).

72 This is the view of Sa skya Paññita and Bu ston Rin chen grub (Seyfort Ruegg 1973:29–33).

73 These principles are laid out in a famous stanza (see below) quoted in the Vyākhyāyukti (see VY, 6.13–16). Gzhon nu dpal (DRSM, 13.2–6) quotes the same stanza from an unknown work by Vasubandhu, namely the Rje btsun gyi man ngag thob pa, rje btsun standing for Maitreya. This is an indication that the Yogācāra principles of exegesis were taken as having been set forth by Maitreya.

74 Thanks to a quotation in Haribhadra’s Abhisamayālaṃkāraloka (AAA, 15.24–25) the Sanskrit of the stanza at the beginning of Vasubandhu’s Vyākhyāyukti (VY, 6.13–16) is available: prajñānam sapindārthaṃ padārthaḥ sānusādhikaḥ / sacodaparibhārā ca vācyāḥ sitārthavādibhyḥ ॥.

See the beginning of RGVV I.1 (RGVV, 1.6–10): “They are vajra words (otherwise translated as vajra base or vajra point) in view of being the words or support of the vajra-like meaning, [in the sense of the object] of realization. With regard to this, it should be known that [this] naturally ineffable meaning (or object) of self-realization is like a vajra, because it is difficult to understand with a knowledge that results from listening and reflection. The letters that express this meaning by teaching the favorable path for attaining it are called the base inasmuch as they are the support of this [meaning]. Thus, in view of its being difficult to understand and being the support as well, it should be known in terms of meaning and syllables, as the vajra base (vajrapada).” (vajramāyaśādhyāmārthaḥ padam sthānam iti vajrapadam / tatra śrute cintāmyājanānadaśpraviveśvādānāḥ / bhilāpyavabhāvyāḥ pratyāmvadaniyo ’rhoh vajravad veditavyāḥ / yānī aksaranī tam artham anuvadantī tatprāpyanukulāmārthaḥdhyotanatas tāṁi tatpratīśthāḥ [bhūtātvāt padam ity ucyante /] iti dūpravivedhārthena pratiśhārthena ca vajrādhatam atbhāyājanayor anugantavyam /).

a Johnston wrongly reads śruti (cf. B (tb2)).

b In B (tb2) four aksanas are missing; A is not available. The gap is therefore filled in with the grammatically more correct -dhavatvāna- (Johnston proposes: -dhaḍāna-). Cf. also Schmithausen 1971:131.

c Johnston wrongly reads abhi- in preference to anu- (cf. B (tb2)). In fact, anu-vad, (“to tell,” “to say,” or “to narrate”), fits much better the context here.

d Not readable and partly missing in B (tb3); A is not available.

75 This, at least, is what Gzhon nu dpal claims in his commentary on RGV I.1. Having quoted the stanza with the five principles, he prefers, however, to define the goal in line with Haribhadra’s four anubandhas (Tib dgos ’brel, “goal and connection”), which are applied in Haribhadra’s Abhisamayālaṃkāraloka (see DRSM, 13.3–18). These four are (1) the connection [between the subject matter and the goal] (Skt. sambandha); (2) the subject matter (Skt. abhideya), (3) the goal/motive (Skt.prayojana), and (4) the “goal of the goal” or the “goal that is also attainable” (Skt. prayojanaprayojana) (see AAA, 2.3–5). For a Tibetan explanation of these four dgos ’brel see Bod rgya tshig mdzad chen mo, s.v.

76 This depends on whether one follows Haribhadra’s way of explaining the prayojana of the Vyākhyāyukti in terms of his four anubandhas (see AAA, 15.26–27).

77 This is the view of Sa skya Paññita and Bu ston Rin chen grub (Seyfort Ruegg 1973:29–33).

78 VY, 8.13–16: “[Possible goals are:] to correctly teach those who are completely confused, to cause the unattentive to adopt [virtues], to praise [virtues] to those who are disheartened, and to cheer up those who have correctly entered the path.” (kun tu rmons pa la yang dag par bstan pa dang / bag med pa rnams la yang dag par len du gebug pa dang / kun tu zhum pa rnams la yang dag par gzeng bstod pa dang / yang dag par zhugs pa rnams la yang dag par della bar bya ste /;)
The first rule of the *Vyākyāyukti* (the goal of the sūtra must be stated) applies in general to all sūtras one wishes to comment upon (see *VY, 8.11–12.26*). In the context of Yogācāra, the thought content (*abhiprāya*) of what is really true.


“*It is just like having taught* [stanzas] such as *‘having killed father and mother, [...the Brahmin remains without sin’ (= *Udānavarga* XXIX.24).* Without doubt this needs [further] explanation.... Passages such as *‘All phenomena lack an own-being, do not arise nor cease’* need [further] explanation, too. Why is that? It is in order to remove the clinging of the foolish to the existence of the imagined nature,...and to remove the clinging of the ignorant to the nonexistence of phenomena, which are inexpressible by nature (=dependent nature).” (*pha dang ma ni bsad byas shing / zhes bya ba de lta bu la sogs pa bstan pa ji lta bu yin / de ni gdon mi za bar bshad par bya ste / ...chos thams cad ni ngo bo med pa / ma skyes pa ma ’gags pa zhes bya ba de lta bu la sogs pa ’di yang bshad par bya’o / ci’i phyir zhe na / byis pas kun tu brtags pa’i ngo bo nyid yod pa nyid du ’dezin pa bsal pa’i phyir / ...mgo smos pa mi shes pa rnam brjod du med pa’i ngo bo’i chos med par ’dezin pa bsal ba’i phyir*). In other words, the teaching of emptiness needs further clarification in terms of the *trisvabhāva*-theory.

Gumamati glosses Tib. *mgo smos pa mi shes pa rnam* in his *Vyākyāyuktiśīka* (Peking Tengyur no. 5570, *sems tsam*, vol. i, fol. 154a3) as *gang dag don rnam ma phye ba mi rtags pa de dag* (Skt. *e avibhaktiirtham apratipadyante te*) “those who do not realize the undetermined meaning”; in other words, those who do not understand *neyārthaśūtras* (see Lee 2001a:80).

See *VY, 225.8–16*.

See my translation of DRSM, 37.8–40.8.

A similar line of thought is followed by the Dge lugs scholar Gung thang Jam pa’i dbyangs (1762–1823) (see Seyfort Ruegg 1969:402). It is interesting in this context to note that Tsong kha pa, according to Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes (*Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 1081*), said in Gnyal in 1415: “*One way to distinguish the provisional and definitive [meanings] that does not contradict what has been explained here is to do the explaining according to the Mahāyānottaratantra (= *Ratnagotravibhāga*).*” (*...’dir bshad pa dang ’gal ba min pa’i drang nges kyi ’byed lugs shig theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma nas bshad ’dag.*)

See Takasaki 1966:381.

See DRSM, 45.7–21.

The context clearly requires a past participle with the meaning of “taught” or “expounded.” Skt. *nita* (translated as *bzhagin* in Tibetan) does not exactly have this meaning (Skt. *prarzitam* would be better in fact), but it does have the advantage of alluding to the adjective *nītārtham*, which modifies *sūtram*. This stylistic device (known as *tantra* in Sanskrit grammar) is used to hint at the hermeneutic term “definitive meaning” (*nītārtha*). See also de Jong (1979:579), who translates the word as “taught as definitive.”

RGVV, 118.3–6: *yasmān neha jināt supaṇḍitatatamo loke ’sti kaścit kvacit sarvaivaṁ sakalaṁ sa vedā vidhivat tatadvā pariṇāṁ nāpāraḥ / tasmād yat svayam eva nītam riśna sūtraṁ vicālayaṁ na tat saddharmapratibhāvanāṁ bi tad api svān nītibhedān muneḥ //.

See DRSM, 7.9–13.


RGVV, 24.4–6: *yan nu abham esāṁ sattvānāṁ āryaṁ mārgopadeśena sarvasaṁjñaṁ śaktabandhāḥ nāpāryanāṁ kuryāṁ yatāḥ svayam evāryamārgabālādānāṁ mahato samjñāgāntāśc vinivartavi tathāgatajñānāṁ prayabhiḥjñānīrṇān / tathāgata-samataṁ cānuprāpmyaḥ //.

90 See DRSM, 7.9–13.


92 RGVV, 24.4–6: *yan nu abham esāṁ sattvānāṁ āryaṁ mārgopadeśena sarvasaṁjñaṁ śaktabandhāḥ nāpāryanāṁ kuryāṁ yatāḥ svayam evāryamārgabālādānāṁ mahato samjñāgāntāśc vinivartavi tathāgatajñānāṁ prayabhiḥjñānīrṇān / tathāgata-samataṁ cānuprāpmyaḥ //.
a Johnston reads āryena (corrected according to Takasaki 1966:192).

b B (1444) inserts against A (1722) the letter na.

93 LAS, 77.15–17: “You illustrated it as being pure in terms of the purity of natural luminosity and so forth and as being the bearer of the thirty-two marks and as being inside the body of all sentient beings.” (sa ca kīla tvāyā prakṛtiprabhāsavivṛtivīśuddha eva varṇyate dvātrimśālalakṣaṇādharāḥ sarvasattvadehāntargato...)

94 Skt. mahāmate is only rendered once.

95 LAS, 77·1·5–1·7: “You illustrated it as being pure in terms of the purity of natural luminosity and so forth and as being the bearer of the thirty-two marks and as being inside the body of all sentient beings.” (sa ca kīla tvāyā prakṛtiprabhāsavarṇāfuddhyādīvīśuddha eva varṇyate dvātrimśālalakṣaṇādharāḥ sarvasattvadehāntargato...)

96 a According the ms. T (1744) of Nanjio’s edition.

96 a According the ms. T (1744) of Nanjio’s edition.

96 a According the ms. T (1744) of Nanjio’s edition.

97 I.e., the passage that claims that buddha nature teaches emptiness.
This gap will be filled, however, by the forthcoming thesis of Kazuo Kano.

In July 1994 I managed to find a complete block print of this commentary in the library of the Shel ri sprul skus in Dolpo and could thus restore the first folio, which was missing in the copy of Dvags po Rin po che (the NGMPP reel number of the text from Dolpo is L 519/4).


Lit., “actually.”

But they are, in fact. In other words, the ultimate does even not appear in a non-conceptual direct cognition. Thus, it does not become the basis for a verbal ascertainment in the same way as a vase.

Rngog Blo ldan shes rab: Theg chen rgyud bla'i don bsdu pa, 6b1–2: don dam pa ni Ngag yul ma yin pa'i phyir te / nram par rtog pa ni kun rdzob yin pa don dam pa rtog pa'i yul ma yin pa'i phyir ro / / ngagis brjod du med pa don yang 'dir sgra dang rtog pa'i yul ma yin pa la dgyongs te / dngos su sgru'i shes pa la mi snang ba tsam ni ma yin no // 'di ltar yin na ni kun rdzob pa bum pa la sogs pa yang de ltar thal bai phyir ro // See also Jackson 1994:18–19.


This translation as a relative clause requires taking the preceding clauses ending in ston pa as (genitive?) attributes depending on the following Mahāyānottaratantra.

Tib. tshul gcig (Skt. ekanaya) “single mode” refers to the theory of ekayāna (see Blo ldan shes rab's (op. cit., 44b1–2) explanation of ekanayadhammadhātu (RGVV, 77-7)).

Rngog Blo ldan shes rab: Theg chen rgyud bla'i don bsdu pa, 1b2–4: bcom ldan 'das byams pas bde bar sde gshigs pa'i bka'is dgyongs pa phyin ci ma log par gsal bar mdo zin pa na / nges pa don gyi mdo sde rin po che phyir mi idog pa'i chos kyi 'khor lo / chos kyi db.yings tshul gcig tu ston pa / shin tu rnam par rtog pa don mi za ba'i chos kyi rnam grangs thams cad kyi don rat bu tu ston pa / theg pa chen po rgyud bla'i mthun bcos 'di mdo zin pa / theg pa chen po don gyi de kho na rnam par sde gshigs pa yin no /

That the Ratnaprabhāgā has definitive meaning for Blo ldan shes rab is also clear from his commentary on RGV I.159–60 (J 1.156–57); see Rngog Blo ldan shes rab: op. cit., 44b6–46a5.

Rngog Blo ldan shes rab: op. cit., 1b4–2a1.

Gzhon nu dpal: Deb ther sngon po, 309.5–7: ..lo tsā ba chen po dang slob dpon gsal nag pa ni de bdzin sde gshigs pa'i snying po zhes bya ba don dam pa'i bden pa la zer mod kyi / don dam pa'i bden pa ni sgra dang rtog (text: rtogs) pa'i dangos kyi yul ma yin pa la zhol / zhen pa'i yul tsam yin ma yin zhes grangs / slob dpon Phya pa ni dangs po rnam bden pas stong pa'i med pa dga'pa ni don dam pa'i bden pa yin zhing / de sgra rtog gi zhen pa yin pa la yul du yang bzhed /.

Rngog Blo ldan shes rab: op. cit., 22b4–23a1: ji snyed yod po nyid rig pa ni thams cad la ra'zogs pa'i sangs rgyas rjes zhus gshigs pa zhes bya ba ste / thun mong gyi mthun nyid chos dang gang zang gi bdag med pa de nyid ni / de bdzin gshigs pa'i rang bdzin sangs rgyas kyi snying po yin la / de'a'n gten sems can gyi kham sthams cad la khyab par rjes tu zhus par rig pa ni ji snyed yod pa zhes yin la / / de la grol ba thams cad la yod pa'i bdag med pa nyid de kho na phyin ci ma log par rig pa ni ji tsas ba rig pa yin la / des gten thams cad la khyab par dmigs pa ni ji snyed pa rig pa yin no // gnyis ka yang 'jig rten las 'das pa'i shes rab don dam pa'i yul yin gyi / kun rdzob kyi yul can ni ma yin no /

Rngog Blo ldan shes rab: op. cit., 29a4–29b2: / de la rnam par dag pa'i de bdzin
nyid rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas kyi sku yin la / de la 'phro ba ni des khyab pa ste / sems can thams cad kyis thob tu rung bai phyir khyab pa yin no l/ phyogs di la ni de dbzin gshegs pa ni dngos po yin la / sems can di'i snying po can du ni btags pa yin te / de thob pa'i skal ba yod pa la des khyab par btags pa' phyir ro l/ ... rigs yod pa' phyir na zhes bya ba ni / de dbzin nyid nram par dag pa' gnas skabs thob pa' rgyu age bai bag chags shes rab dang snying rje'i sa bon ni de dbzin gshegs pa' rgyu yin pas de dbzin gshegs pa' zhes btags pa yin la / sems can gyi snying po ni dngos po kho na yin no l.

126 This is quoted in RGVV l.25. The immeasurable qualities are compared to a one-to-one scale painting of the universe on a silk cloth that has been put inside an atom.

127 Rngog Blo ldan shes rab: op. cit., 28b4-6: / 'dir dar yug gi ri mo rdul phra rab la yod pa de bzhin du / sangs gshegs kyie shes sems can gyi rgyud la yod pa de gang zhe na / chos kyi dbhyings so / de ji ltar ye shes yin zhe na / bcom ldan' das kyischos thams cad mthshan nyid med par skad cig gcig dang ldan pa'she slob kyis mkhyen pas (text: bais) na / shes rab de shes bya dang dbyer med do / des na don dam pa cho kyis dbhyings nyid de rig pa'i ye shes yin la / deyang sems can thams cad la ma tshang ba med par gnas pas dpe don / di ni shin tu 'thab pao l.

128 Ibid., 41a6-61: lus pa med pa'sem can gyi khams khyab pa zhes bya ba ni / de dbzin gshegs pa snga ma nrams kyis trotgs pa' i chos dpag tu med pa 'tskogs las yang dag par grub pa / shin tu rnam par dag pa' de bzhin nyid dang / de dngi'se pa yesh the dad pa' rang bzhin des sems can thams cad la khyab pa ste / chos sku de ni stong pa nyid yin la / stong pa nyid kyang sems can la yod pa' phyir ro l.

129 Ibid., 49b3-50a3.

130 Ibid., 195b-6 and 20a5.

131 Ibid., 5b3: "The continuum of mind, which has the nature of emptiness, is the [buddha] element" (... stong pa nyid kyi rang bzhin du gyur pa'i sems kyi rgyud ni khamns yin no).

132 Ibid., 42a-3: ... med par dag pa' tha snayd kyi yul du gyur pa'i khams ni med par dag pa' i tha snayd kyi yul du gyur pa'i nyan len du brjod kyir skyes byed pa' don nyid ni dngos su yod pa ma yin no l/ / tha snayd kyir yul zhes bya ba ni / med par dag pa rang bzhin du grub pa de kho nar med pa' don te l.

133 RGVV, 148.2-4: buddhatvam... sarvair buddha sugha prakrtiyogataram... / / khyab pa snga ma rnam gyi sgrib pa dang bcas pat gnas na yod pa nyid du rang bzhin du grub pa de kho nar med pa' don te l.

134 Rngog Blo ldan shes rab: op. cit., 27a6-62: ... dri med sangs gshegs yon tan kun ldan / rtag brtag gyung drol ngi sangs gshegs nyid do // zhes bya bas ye shes dang spangs pa dang / de la brten pa' yon tan dang / de yang sngom med pa skyes pa ni ma yin te / sngom gyi sgrig pa dang boas pa' gnas skabs na yod pa nyid du brjod pas ni nge bo bstan pa to // de'i rgyu ni de la chos la ni rtag pa' ye shes dang / de'i rjes las thob pa rnam 'byed ye shes te l.

135 "Because it is endowed with the state of having adventitious faults, and naturally endowed with qualities, it is of an unchangeable nature—as it was before, so it is after." (RGVV, 41.20-21: doṣa-gantukatāyogād gunaprakrtiyogatāthathā pūrvarnathā paścād avikāritvadharmatā //.)

136 Gzhon nu dpal explains in this context that "endowed" (Tib. ldan pa') has to be understood in the sense of "being connected" ('brel pa). To support his interpretation, Gzhon nu dpal quotes Vinayadeva's "Hevajravajrapadoddharamāma-paṇjikā, and explains that defining the relation between buddha nature and the qualities in terms of 'brel pa underscores both that the qualities have arisen from buddha nature and that the two have an identical nature (see DRSM, 29.18-21 and DRSM, 323.19-23).

137 Tib. yon tan rang bzhin is difficult to construe. Either yon tan is taken as a genitive attribute (yon tan gyi rang bzhin), or rang bzhin as an adverb (rang bzhin gyis).

138 Rngog Blo ldan shes rab: op. cit., 33a6-33b3: / yon tan rang bzhin nyid ldan phyir
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I I hles bya ba ni shin tu rnam par dag pa'i gnas skabs na yon tan gyi chos kyi mi 'gyur ba'i thad pa bstan te / yon tan glo bur du gsal ba'i gnap skabs kyi rang bzhin la ma gos pa'i don te / rang bzhin gyi yon tan mtha' dag dang bral ba ma myong bao / / dper na ma dag pa'i gnas skabs na sngon med pa'i yon tan gyi khyad par can du ma bsgsrs pa bzhin no / / yon tan rang bzhin gys grub pa'i don yang / yon tan rang bzhin dmigs pa sgro ma btags pa grub pa'am / yon tan gyi rgyu'i dmigs pa rab tu grub pa phyir te / yang dag pa'i kun rdzob sgro ma btags pa gnas pa'am / don dam pa de lhar gnas pa'i phyir / rim (text: rgya) pa bzhin no / don dam pa rtags pa ni yon tan kun gyi rgyu yin te / chos kyi dbyings rtags na sgang rgyas kyi yon tan thams cad bo pa bzhin du 'du pa' phyir ro II.

a The conjecture is according to Kano.

139 Tib. kun rdzob, otherwise translated as “apparent.”

140 According to the Skt. and DRSN, 439.25: "di las bsla bya ci yang med /.

141 Rngog Blo ldan shes rab: op. cit., 42b3–6: kun nas nyan mongs pa'i dmigs pa don dam par yod par sgro mi 'dogs pa dang / rnam par byang ba'i sengs dang sems la byang ba'i dmigs pa kun rdzob tu yod pa la skur ba mi 'debs pas / bden pa gnyis ji la ba bzhin gnas pa ni / / stong pa don phyin ci ma log pa yin no zhes brjod pa ni / 'di la bsla bya ci yang med ces bya ba'o / de kho na nyid 'di la bsla bar bya ba kun nas nyan mongs pa'i dmigs pa ni ci yang med de / gudod ma nas ma grub pa'i phyir ro / / de kho na nyid 'dir gezog par bya ba rnam par byang ba'i mshsan ma stobs dang mngon par shes pa la sog pa tshang cung zad med do / / stobs la sog pa rnam par byang ba'i dmigs pa kun rdzob tu yod pa ni / thog ma med pa na gnas pa'i phyir ro /.

142 Ibid., 4333–5: rnam dbypa'i mshsan nyid can / zhes bya ba ni bla na med pa ma yi don tan mi dmigs pa kun rdzob tu yod pa sde / de kho na nyid dang kun rdzob tu yod pa mi 'gal ba'i phyir / rang bzhin nyid la yod par brjod do / / des na kun rdzob sguy ma la bu de mngon sum du rtags na yon tan de dag 'grub pa yin te / yon tan gyi rang bzhin ni de dag la dmigs pa kho na yin pa'i phyir ro /.

143 Śākyapa mchog ladan: "Blo mchog pa'i dri lan," 568.6–7: dang po la gnyis te / snying po'i ngos 'des stobs la sogs yon tan gyz khyad pa dur ma byas pa'i med dgag gi cha la bzhed pa dang... dang po ni ngog lo ts'a chen po rjes 'brang dang bcas po'. For a discussion of this dri lan see also Kano 2001:55–56.

144 “The beginningless [buddha] element is the basis of all phenomena.” (RGVV, 72.13: anadikaliko dhatub sarvadharmasamiiJrayab.)


147 Gzhon nu dpal: Deb ther sngon po, 309.7: btsan lugs pa rnam si snying kyi rang bzhin 'od gsal ba bde bar gshogs pa'i snying po yin pas / de snying rgyas kyi rgyu yang grung por bzhed. Śākyapa mchog ladan, too, informs us in his Dbu ma'i byung tshul (p. 240) that Btsan Kha bo che takes buddha nature to be natural luminosity (for a short description of Śākyapa mchog ladan’s position see Tillemans and Tomabechi 1995: 891–96).

148 Shes rab rgya mtsho mentions in his list of rare texts (cf. Lokesh Chandra 1963, vol. 3, no. 11338) “an explanation of the Uttaratantra recorded (in the form of notes) by the translator Gzu Dga’ [ba] rdo [rje] on the basis of teachings given by the Panḍita Sajjana” (paṇḍita sajjana'gi grung la lo ts'a ba gzu dga' rdo rgyi zin bris byas pa'i rgyud bla ma'i rnam bshad).

149 Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas: Rgyud bla ma'i bshad srol, 9b1–4.

150 These include “not specifically tantric” mahāmudrā meditation techniques that do not require any initiation or formal tantric practice.

151 DRSN, 574.5–12.

152 Śākyapa mchog ladan: “Blo mchog pa'i dri lan,” 569.1–3: snying po'i ngos 'des rang bzhin rnam dang rkyang pa'i cha la bzhed pa dang / de dang yon tan dbyor med kyi
\[\text{tshogs don la bzhed pa'o} / \text{gnyis pa la'ang} / \text{yon tan de dag rtogs pa chos skui yon tan go chod por 'dod pa dang / rang bezhin chos skui yon tan du 'dod pa'o / ... / gnyis pa ni rje phag mo gru pa sogs rje dvags po'i bka' brgyud 'dzin pa mang po dag go.}

I have to thank Kazuo Kano for drawing my attention to this reference.

153 Rang byung rdo rje: Dbu ma cho dbyings bstod pa'i rnam par bshad pa, 223-4.

154 The text in the Peking Tengyur (TA, 43b5) reads phyag rgya chen po las byung ba (“what has arisen from mahamudrā”) instead of phyag rgya chen po.

155 Gzhon nu dpal: Deb tber sngon po, 632.6-633.4: de yang dvags po rin po ches dpal phag mo gru pa la / o skol gyi phyag rgya chen po 'di'i gezung ni bcom ldan 'das byams pas mdzad pa'i tseg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos 'di yin zhes gsungs shing dpal phag mo gru pas kyang rue ' bri gung (text: khung) pa la de skad du gsungs pas / rue ' bri gung (text: khung) pa dpon slob kyi gsung rab nams su tseg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bshad pa mang du 'byung ba de yin no / 'di la chos rje sa skyas pas pho rol tu phyin pa'i lugs las phyag rgya chen po'i thya snyad med cing / phyag rgya chen po ye shes gang yin pa de ni dbang las skyes pa'i ye shes kha no yin no zhes bzhed mod kyi / slob dpon ye shes grags pas mdzad pa'i de kho na nyid la 'jug par / pho rol tu phyin pa la mngon par brtson pa'i dbang po rab ni / zhi gnas dang lbag mthong bsgoms pas so so'i skye bo'i gnas skabs nyid na phyag rgya chen po dang nges par ldan pa yin dag par rtogs pas phyir mi ldog pa'i rtogs nyid dlang / zhes gsungs la / de kho na nyid bu'i 'grel pa (text: 'brel ba) lhan cig skyes pa'i rdo rjes mdzad par yang / ngo bo pha rol tu phyin pa / snags dang rjes su mthun pa / ming phyag rgya chen po zhes bya ba'i khyard par gsum dlang ldan pa'i de bezhin nyid rtogs pa'i ye shes gsal bar bshad do / de bas na rje sgam po pa'i pha rol tu (text: du) phyin pa phyag rgya chen po ni mnga' bdag mai tri (text: tri) pa'i bzhed pa yin par rje rgod tshang pas kyang bshad do l. See also Roerich 1949-53:724-25.

156 See also Jackson 1994:17-19.

157 Sa skyas Panḍita claims in his Sdom gsum rab dbye that there is no substantial difference between such a mahāmudrā and the rdzogs chen of the Chinese tradition (see Rhoton 2002:118).


159 See my translation of DRSM, 5.12-15.

160 Mi bskyod rdo rje: Dbu ma la 'jug pa'i rnam bshad, 5.4-5.


162 DRSM, 343.2.

163 According to the colophon, the Tattvāvatāra was translated by Rin chen bzang po (958-1055).

164 TA, 462a-3: yum chen mo shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa nyid kyi mishan gzhban ni phyag rgya chen po ste / de ni gnyis su med pa'i ye shes kyi ngo bo nyid yin pa'i phyir ro l.

165 These pādas mark the end of a traditional description of the fourfold Mahāyāna meditation in the Lankāvatārasūtra (LAS 298.15-299.1): “Based on the apprehension of suchness, one should pass beyond [even] mind only (X.256cd). Having passed beyond mind only, one should pass beyond a state that is without appearances. A yogin who is established in a state without appearances, sees the Mahāyāna (X.257).” (cittamātram samārūhya bābyam arthaṁ na kalpaṁ/ tathātālamante shtiva cittamātram atikramet // (X.256) cittamātram atikramya nirābhāsam atikramet // nirābhāsaṁsthi yogī mahāyānam saś paśyati // (X.257).)

a According to ms. T in Nanjio’s edition.

167 See LAS, 79.16–82.4.
169 Tattvadasaaka stanza no. 9 is as follows (TD, 94.7–8): “[The yogin] who has left the [eight] worldly dharmas behind and adopted a yogic conduct does everything without a reference point, being adorned with the blessing from within.” (lokadharmavyatito 'sau unmattavataram āśritah / sarvam karoty anālambaḥ svādhiṣṭānāvibhūṣitaḥ //)
170 KDN, 14.10–15.
171 TDT, 193b6: “Yogic conduct (unmattavrata) means acting without the thoughts of the mental faculty” (smyon pa’i brtul zhugs ni yid kyis bsam pa med par byed nyid do //); and TDT, 194a3-4: “He is adorned by his being blessed from within means that he is blessed by himself in the nature of his mindstream, which is connected with the nature of uncontrived reality. That which emanates from [his] nature of suchness naturally adorns him.” (rang byin brlabs pas rnam bryan pa’o zhes bya ba ni rang nyid gnyug ma’i de kho na nyid kyi bdag nyid du ’byor pa’i sens kyi rgyun dê'i bdag nyid du byin gyzs brlabs pa’o // de bzhin nyid kyi rang bzhin las ’phro ba rang bzhin gyzs rgyan pa....)
172 PK III, introduction (31.3–7): upatikkramānusārena prāptābhisekhab...vaijagraṃ samyag arāddyba / ...tadanantaram guruvakratrā āptasvādhiṣṭānāvamakaṃpadesā//.
173 PK III.14: svādhiṣṭānānupāryena prāpyate hi prabhāsvaram / tasmād vaijagraṃ pārvam svādhiṣṭānām pradarśayet //.
175 See the translation of DRSM, 61.18 below.
176 TD, 92.9–94.2: evam ekaraśa dharmā nirārsaṃ nirāspadāḥ / prabhāsvārām āmi sarve yathābhūtatasamādhiḥ / yathābhūtatasamādhiḥ ca bhavet prasthānacittataḥ / āsaraṃ ājñate tattvaṃ yasmāt tatpadavedīnam //.
177 See Mathes 2006:222–23.
178 I.e., the works of Kamalasila.
179 According to the reading in Gzhon nu dpal’s quote: “right from the beginning” (dang po nas); see DRSM, 55.9.
180 TDT, 189a1–2: “...jug pa’i sens pha rol tu phyin pa’i tshul gyi rab tu dbye ba rnam ni ka ma la shi la’i gom pa’i rim pa la sogs par bsus pa dang rgyas par bzhag ste (corrected according to Gzhon nu dpal’s quote (see DRSM, 55.6–7); the Peking Tengyur reads kā ma la shi la la sogs pa’i sgo nas bstan te) / de nyid du rtogs par bya’o // ’dir rgyas pa’i ’jigs pas ma bris so // de lta bur gyur pa’i ’jag pa’i sens ni ’dir dgongs ma yin no / ’dir de dpyad pa la byas pa yongs su ma dag pa’i phyir ro / ’dir dpyad pa med pa’i sens kyi sngon (text: kyi sngon) du bsgom bya ba nyid do //.
181 MV, 76.11–12: dharmaskandhasahasrasya bhuvṛtyātām nāma sūnyatā / bhuddhā nāsau paramārśidd vināśārthavā bhaved guroh //.
182 a According to the manuscript (NGMPP reed no. B 22/24, fol. 34b5); the Japanese edition has ba-.
183 b The manuscript (NGMPP reed no. B 22/24, fol. 34b5) and the Japanese edition have bu-.
184 TDT, 189b6: thabs dang shes rab bdag nyid kyi shes pa gnyis med pa’i de kho na nyid byang chub kyi sens so //.
185 a According to the Japanese edition. The manuscript reads -noya-, Bhattacharya -ropa-.
186 a My translation follows the Sanskrit here.
187 SN, 58.13–14: pratipakṣe shrīha naivā tattvāsakta ’pi naiva yah / gāṛddhyam naivā phale yasya mahāmudrām sa vinātaī //.
188 TDT, 190a4–6: / gnyis dang bral bar rлом pa yang // gang phyir de ni ’od gsal ’dod
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186 TDT, 190b8–191a2.

187 Sahajavajra (TDT, 191b8) glosses gang des (yena tena) as “by [living on] any food. Whether it is [good] food or not, it must be eaten as found. One should not cling thereby to any thoughts about what one likes and what not” (zas kyi so // bza' dang bza' min de bzhin du // ji ltar rnyed pa bza' bar bya // 'dod dang mi 'dod rnam rtog rnam /// 'dzin pa 'dir mi byado ///).

188 Sahajavajra (TDT, 191b8–192a1) glosses ji ltar de ltar (yathii tathii) as “whoever it is, by the aspects of his body, speech, and mind” (gang dang gang de'i lus dang / ngag dang / yid kyi rnam pas so ///). In other words, the yogin fully experiences the nondual reality of every moment in any situation without any thought as to what he likes.

189 TDT, 94.5–6: etattattvavabodhena yena tena yathii tathii / vivyayko bhnamed yogi kesarivsa samantatath. 

190 The instrumental (rnal 'byor pas) indicates that the subject of the root text is glossed where yogin together with its attribute is in this case (rnal 'byor mig ni rgyas 'gyur pas).

191 TDT, 191b5–6: ...sngar bstan pa'i gnyis su med pa'i de kho na nyid du (omit du?) bla ma dam pa'i man ngagis nges par rtogs pa'i rnal 'byor pas so ///.

192 TDT, 192a5–bi: 'o na gang sngags kyi tshul gyi rnal 'byor pa dan byag byag byag ci yod ce na // phyag rgya bzhi'i rjes su 'gro ba med pa'i phyir dang / lha'i nga rgyal gyi bde ba chen pa'i ro med pas // btang snyoms kyi rnam pas mgon par byang chub pa dus ring pos rdzogs pa'i phyir / bsgrub par bya ba dang sgrub par byed pa nyid kyi rnam pas (text: pa) byag byag nyid shin tu che'o /// gezhan gynis (text: gyi) pha rol tu phyin pa'i tshul gyi rnal 'byor pa las 'di khyad par yod de / bla ma dam pa'i man ngagis apdag pa'i stong pa na nyid zang du 'jug pa'i de bzhin nyid nges par rtogs pas shin tu khyad par phags pa'i phyir ro /// 'de phyir 'di nyid dka' ba'i sbyod pa med pa 'di nyid ni stong pa nyid du ro gcig pa'i de kho na nyid shin tu nges pa dag ni yul gyi grong gis sbrul 'dzin pa ltar sbrul la rse yang 'de'i 'bigs par mi 'gyur ro /// 'di nyid la de kho na nyid kyi ye shes phyag rgya chen po zhes kha cib brjod ///.

193 This means that phenomena cannot be ascertained to be either single individu­als (wholes) or plural composites (parts).

194 Sgam po pa: “Tshogs chos yon tan phun tshogs,” 556.4–557.3: de la rjes dpag lam du byed pa ni / chos thams cad gcig dang du bral gyi gtan tshigs kyi gezhi (text: gezhi) nas / 'gro sa 'di las med zer nas thams cad stong par byas nas 'jog pa ni rjes dpag go / lha'i sku bskyed pa'i rim pa la brten nas rtsa rtun dang thig le dang / sngags kyi bzlaz brjod la sogs pa byin rlaus kyi lam mo /// mgon par lam du byed pa ni bla ma dam pa cib gcig gis sens nyid lhan cib skyes pa chos kyi sku 'od gsal bya ba yin gsum ba de lta bu nges pa'i don gyi gdams ngag phyin ci ma log bstan pas / rang la nges pa'i shes pa lhan cib skyes pa de la lta spyod sgom gsum ya ma bral bar gnyug ma'i shes pa lam du khyer ba ///.
195 Jackson 1994:34.

196 Lit., “somebody whose [realization] is instantaneous.” The term simultaneist takes into account that realization may already occur together with otherwise ordinary modes of consciousness.

197 The date is according to Karmay 1988:102.


200 Kapstein (2000:77) suggests that Sgam po pa did not quote directly from sūtras in support of his mahāmudrā, but was culling them from pre-existing meditation manuals, such as the Bsam gtan mig gsyor. Indeed, he was careful to employ only passages attributed to sūtras in order to avoid being accused of propagating Chinese Ch' an Buddhism. But several of the sūtras were Ch' an apocryphal writings.

201 ‘Jig rten gsum mgon: “Chos 'khor 'ong ges zhus pa'i gzhung gi rtsa ba,” 15.12–14: phyag rgya chen po theg chen bla ma'i rgyud / 'di yi khrid la 'bad pas nan tan byas / 'jig rten mgon las yaw dang yang du thos.

202 “Chos 'khor 'ong ges zhus pa'i gzhung gi 'grel pa,” 317.9–12: dpal 'bri gung pa chen po kho (text: khong) yaw nyid kyi thugs dam mzas'd pa'i phyag rgya chen po de ni theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma 'di nyid dang mthun te / phyag rgya chen po yon tan de ni theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma rgya don de ni theg don ni yid bstan pa'o.

203 ‘Jig rten gsum mgon: “Chos 'khor 'ong ges zhus pa'i gzhung gi rtsa ba,” 14.17–15.2: “This summary supreme of the seven vajra points was made by the illustrious [Maitreya]nātha as a commentary on the third dharmacakra.” (‘lde rje gnas bdun mchog tu bsdus pa 'di / 'chos kyi 'khor lo gsum pa'i don 'grel du / bcom ldan mgon pos mzas de gsur...)

204 Ibid., 10.17: “This [third] dharmacakra of definitive meaning.....” (‘nges pa'i don gyi chos kyi 'khor lo 'di /)

205 In fact, the “Dam chos dgongs pa gcig pa'i gzhung” was written down by 'Bri gung 'Jig rten gsum mgon's disciple Spyan snga Shes rab byung gnas (1187–1241).

206 ‘Jig rten gsum mgon: “Dam chos dgongs pa gcig pa'i gzhung,” 11.11–13: “The three aspects of the dharmacakras (dharma circle) differ in accordance with the thought [characteristic of] the circle of disciples. In each dharmacakra all three are complete. The seed of the following [dharmacakra] already abides in the previous one” (chos 'khor rnam gsum 'khor gyi rtag pa' ki khyad / 'khor lo re la yang gsum ga tshang // phyi ma'i sa bon snga ma snga mar gnas /). See also Rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa: “Dam pa'i chos dgongs pa gcig pa'i rnam bshad lung don gsal byed nyi ma'i snang ba,” 43.8–52.14.

207 ‘Jig rten gsum mgon: “Chos 'khor 'ong ges zhus pa'i gzhung gi 'grel pa,” 330.17–331.3: “In general, it is the seed of the three dharmacakras, and in particular the subject matter of the dharmacakra of definitive meaning..... All yīnas—such can be definitely ascertained—[lead] ultimately [to] a uniform path, the single yāna” (spyir 'khor lo gsum gyi sa bon / bye brag tu 'nges don chos kyi 'khor lo'i brjod bya / ...teg pa thams cad mthar thug tshul gcig pa theg pa gcig tu 'nges par gtan la phabs te /)

208 It is said, for example, the first dharmacakra makes one mature (smin); the second one makes one mature very much (shin tu smin); and the third one makes one mature to the utmost (shin tu rab tu smin) (Ibid., 346.19–347.6).

209 ‘Jig rten gsum mgon: “Chos 'khor 'ong ges zhus pa'i gzhung gi rtsa ba,” 18.10–14: / cig car ba dang rim gyis pa zhes pa / 'sems can kham s kyis (text: kyi) byang chub thob byed pa / / rim gyis thob kyi cig car ma yin zhes / ... / dang por byang chub mchog tu 'nges bskyed nas / 'khor lo gsum po rim gyis bgrag pa dang /.
'Jig rten gsum mgon: “Chos 'khor 'ong ges zhus pa'i gzhung gi 'grel pa,” 338.1-7: cig car ni rnam pa thams cad du mi srid pa yin / 'o na cig car ba gang la zer snyam na / sgon bood nams bsags pa'i 'bras bu tshe 'dir thob pa la cig car ba zhes brags / de ltar na bdag cag gi stong pa rnam gyas bcom ldan 'das kyang cig car ba yin te / sgon bskal pa grangs med pa rnam su thsogs bsags pa'i 'bras bus tshe 'dir sangs rgyas pa yin / 'on kyang sgon bood nams bsags pa la ma ltos pa tshe 'dir 'bras bu thob pa mi 'ong bus de ltar na lam thams cad rim gyis pa yin te /.

Ibid., 338.12-17: bdag cag gi ston pa rabs rgyas bcom ldan 'das 'di nyid kyang / ... dang po bla na med pa'i byang chub tu bse bskyed nas / sa dang po man chad bskal pa grangs med gcig 'khor lo dang po'i tshul gyis lam bgrod / sa bdun man chad du man chad du grangs med gcig 'khor lo ngyis pa'i tshul gyis lam bgrod / dag pa sa rabs rgyas grangs med gcig 'khor lo gsum pa'i tshul gyis lam bgrod pa yin ....

212 'Jig rten gsum mgon: “Dam chos dgongs pa gcig pa'i gzhung,” 12.4-5: jiy sned lam rnam sa bcos bgrod pa ste / de yang rim gyis 'jug pa.

213 Rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa: “Dam pa'i chos dgongs pa gcig pa'i rnam bshad lung don gsal byed nyi ma'i sna ng ba,” 75.9-15: / rgyan yang dpal phag mo gru pa / / cig car 'jug pa'i gang zag de / / thsogs bsags bsags pa yi gang zag yin / / rgyud sbyangs sbyangs pa yi gang zag yin / / blo btul btul ba yi gang zag yin / / nyams skyes skyes pa yi gang zag yin / / zhes gsungs pa ni skye ba 'di'i rim gyis pa yang ma zad par skye ba mang po 'sng a rol nas bsags sbyang byas pa la dgongs pa tshe 'di'i rtogs pa skye myur gcig car ba zhes bod pa de yang skye ba sng a ma nas rim gyis sbyangs pa la dgongs so /.

214 'Jig rten gsum mgon: “Dam chos dgongs pa gcig pa'i gzhung,” 12.4-5: / / sbya' di sgrib pa thog mar spong ba d'ang yod /.

Ibid., 15.4: / rtogs pa gcig gis sa lam ma lus bgrod /.

Ibid., 17.1-2: / rtogs pa skye med thabs mos gus kho nar nges /.

Ibid., 17.2: / la ba'i mchog gyur rtogs pa dang ldan pa /.

Ibid., 17.4: / rtogs pa goms par byed pa sdom pa ste /.

According to oral explanations of Lama Jorphel (Kathmandu).

220 DRSM, 73.3-5. See also Martin 1992:287 and Jackson 1990:52-53.

221 DRSM, 74.18-25.

222 DRSM, 272.6-10; see chapter 7 of this work.


224 Oral information by Ponlob Rinpoche.

225 DRSM, 73.8-10.

226 See also Broido 1987:67.

227 See DRSM, 74-75.

228 See Mathes 2000:195-223.

229 Hookham (1991) and Stearns (1999) have already described Dol po pa's system of interpretation at length. Moreover, Stearns has given a detailed account of Dol po pa's life, based on two early biographies written by his disciples Lha'i rgyal mtsan (1319-1401) and Kun spangs Chos grags dpal bzang (1283-1363?) (Stearns 1999:11-39).

230 Dol po pa: Ri chos nges don rgya mtsbo, 150.4-6: kun bsags dang gezan dbang gis stong pa'i chos nyid yongs grub don dam du yod par gsungs pa'i phyin don dam gezan stong nyid du legs par grub po /.

231 This point used to be misrepresented by the Dge lugs pas. See for example the description of the Jo nang position in the Grub mtha' shel gyi me long (Seyfort Ruegg 1963:73-91).

232 Dol po pa: Ri chos nges don rgya mtsbo, 446.26-447.1: chos sku de ni ggod nas spro dang dral / spros dang dral ngo shes pas bden par grub /

233 Cf. also Dol po pa's definition of ultimate truth in the Ri chos nges don rgya mtsbo
"Ultimate truth means that [something] is true ultimately, and not on the level of apparent [truth]."

(258-259)

234

235

236
It is important to note that Sajjana himself does not use the term gebsan stong within his system of interpretation, it being Kun dga’ gro lmcho who uses this term to describe it.

237
This and the following are of course allusions to the Madhyāntavibhāga and Dharmadharma-tavibhāga.

238
Kun dga’ gro lmcho: “Khrid brgya’i brgyud pa’i lo rgyus bzhus so,” 83.6-84.1 (See also Jo nang kun dga’ gro lmcho gi khrid brgya’i skor, 104.3-5): / kha che pandita sajjana’i gsung gis rgyal bas ’khor lo dang po bden bzhis / bar pa mtshan nyid med pa / mthar legs par rnam par phyed bai’i kyi ’khor lo bzhas pa lan gsum bskor ba las snga ma ngyis dangs btag ba phyed ba / phyed ma don dam par nges pa’i dhe / dbu dang mtha’i phyed / chos dang chos nyid phyed nas gsungs zhung l. My translation follows closely the one by Stearns (1995:42–43). In the following, Kun dga’ gro lmcho tells us that this statement appears in an old notebook written by Btsan Kha bo che himself and called Padma lcags kyu (Ibid.).

239
See van der Kuijp 1983:41.

240
See Dol po pa: Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho, 341.4–344.16.

241
Such a hermeneutic strategy is also referred to in the introduction of Kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas’ Ratnagaravibhāga commentary, where it is stated with regard to the Btsan tradition of interpreting the same text: “In accordance with this tradition, the great Omniscient Dol po pa introduced an extraordinary tradition, and following [his] commentary, [his] lineage of disciples in general, and such masters as the Omniscient Taranātha in particular, established a textual tradition based on explanation and practice. The oral transmission of these commentaries continues up to the present day” (Kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas: Rgyud bla ma’i bshad srol, 985–1014: ...lugs ‘di dang mthun pa / kun mkhyen dol po pa chen pos thun mong ma yin pa’i srol phyed ste (text: phyed te) ’gel pa’i rjes su ‘brangs nas slob brgyud spyi dang bye brag thams cad mkhyen pa tāranātha sogs kyi bshad pa dang nyams len gyes ghungs btsugs pa’i ’gel pa’i lung rgyun da ttar bar bzhugs pa dang l).

242

243

244

245
This restriction is also explained in Taranātha’s Gebsan stong snying po (see Mathes 2000:219–20).

246

247
Lamotte 1938:19–20; see “The Position of the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje” in chapter 2 of this work, where MS I.48 is quoted and discussed.

248
See Frauwallner 1951:148–59. Seyfort Ruegg (1973:7) took this distinction to be a forerunner of gebsan stong.

249
Closely related to this topic are, of course, the questions of gebsan stong, two types of emptiness, and the relationship between the two truths.

250
See Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 109f. and 194–6 (see chapter 3).

251
Thus, for Rong ston, the buddha element is not empty of the selflessness of phenomena and persons, whereas Gzhon nu dpal propounds his “subtle qualities,” of which the buddha element is not empty. (Rong ston: Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma’i bstan bcos legs par bshad pa, 143.3–146.19.)

252
Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes reports (Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 194–5) that
Gzhon nu dpal received Ratnagotravibhāga explanations from Rong ston in Thang po che in 1421.

253 Ibid., i081–2.
254 Ri mi 'babs pa, who was a disciple of the second Zhva dmar pa, eventually became a follower of the Dge lugs pa (see Roerich 1949–53:556).
255 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gi rnam thar, 30b5–31a5.
256 Mi bskyod rdo rje: “Rje yid bzang rtse ba’i Rgyud gsum gsang ba…”, 989.2–3: yang bla ma rin po che blo bzang grags pa’i lta grub shad mar yang khas blangs nas / mnyam med duags po bka’ bryug kyi srol ’dzin du bzhes pa dpon slob yid (text: yig) bzang rtse pa dag !
257 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gi rnam thar, 29a2–3.
258 Ibid., 1087–11a2.
259 RGVV, 25.11–13: tatvajāśin catunāṁ padanāṁ prathamaṁ lokottaradharmaṁvaṁ pratyatmyaṁsānamāsikāraśāṁśrayeṇa tadvaidūdhīṁ upādayāṁ tiraṃvadaitīkaḥ anuvanatavyah !
260 DRSM, 261.13–4 and rNgog Blo ldan shes rab: Theg chen rgyud bla’i bsdus don, 3a1.
261 According to the ‘Bras spungs dkar chag (vol. 1, p. 3, phyi ka, no. 00002) the full title is: Dpal dus kyi ’khor lo’i rgyud bshad pa la ’jug pa rgyud gsum gyi gsang ba rnam par phyre ba. Unfortunately, this text has not been available to me.
262 This is at least what follows from the way Mi bskyod rdo rje criticizes the Rgyud gsum gsang ba. His own view (which he claims is in accordance with Rang byung rdo rje) is as follows ("Rje yid bzang rtse ba’i Rgyud gsum gsang ba…", 984.5–6): “[It is true that buddha nature] has been also taught as a term for the cause of a buddha. But to give buddha nature the names of cause and fruit is [to engage in] mere metaphor. As to buddha nature, it cannot be the fruit of anything, because no distinctions can be made on the basis of it in terms of a substantial cause and attendant conditions." (sangs rgyas kyi rgyu’i ming khyang gsungs la / sangs rgyas kyi snying po de la rgyu dang ’bras bu’i ming gi bsags pa ni bsags pa tsam du zad kyi / sangs rgyas kyi snying po ni gngan gi ’ang ’bras bur mi rung ste sangs rgyas kyi snying po de nyid la skyed byed kyi nyer len gnyu dang ilhan cig byed pa’i rkyen gnyi khyad par du byar med pa’i phyir.)
263 The fortified potential is usually explained as the accumulation of merit.
264 Seyfort Ruegg 1969:294–96. Rgyal tshab rje prefers to call the buddha element a “substantial basis” (nyc bar len pa’i gnas), given that it does not produce anything in a strict sense.
265 Mi bskyod rdo rje: op. cit., 1007.6–1008.2: rang bzhin gnas rigs dang rgyas ’gyur gyi-rigs ngos ma zin pas ’khrul dngos ma yin pa ji ’lmar ’dra yang de mi ’gyur bar bstan / des ni ’di dpon slob kyi lugs la rje Tson kha pa dpon slob kyi lta grub kyi ’dres yod pas dod pa ni kha cig la tshad mar mi ’gro bar bstan pa’o !
266 Ibid., 1003.3–5: khyod kyi sms can thams cad la sangs rgyas kyi snying po gnas pa’i tsho / sangs rgyas de gnas pa min / sangs rgyas de’i rigs dang ’dra ba zhig gnas pa yin / ’dra ba de la skyed meh drug gi khyad par ba yin pas’ ’di tsa bu zhig sms can la yod pa yin zer nas / dpal karmapa rang byung rdo rje gi lung dvangs mod / ’di mi ’thad pa la !…
267 DRSM, 239.15–18: “Utterances that the view of the transitory collection [as I and mine] is the lineage of the Buddha do not have any effect…. I think that [such a position] is too far removed from the underlying intention of the teaching that the properties of the qualities are never known as something separate from the mind, [contrary to] attachment, etc., which are. Well then, the qualities of realization, such as the [ten] strengths, are present in the sentient beings in a subtle form.”
The form kayas of the buddhas have arisen from the accumulation of merit, and the dharmakaya, in short, is born from the king, the accumulation of wisdom. Likewise these two accumulations are the cause for [one's] attainment of buddhahood. This has been [taught] extensively in the Uttaratantra and Candrakirti, too, taught it in [his] Madhyamakavatara (sangs rgyas nams kyi gzugs sku'i 'di/bsod nams tshogs las byung ba ste/chos kyi sku ni mdor bedus na/rgyal po ye shes tshogs las 'khrungs/de la bsas na tshogs/’di gnyis/sangs rgyas nyid ni thob pa’i rgyu/’zhes bya ba dang rgya cher rgyud bla ma ma dang slob dpön zla ba grags pas kyang dbu ma ’jug par bstan te).

That which abides in a naturally pure and stainless way in all those who have these hindrances is the dharmadhatu, and since it is quite simply the Buddha, I pay homage [to it] (sgrib pa de dang ldan pa kun la rang bzhin gyis dag cing dri ma med par bzhugs pa ni chos kyi dbyings te [text: steng rgyas ni de yin pas phyag ’bshal lo]).

Hindrances are cleared through the [causal] condition of practicing the path. Therefore one speaks of the [resulting] appearance as a buddha, but it is not that he has arisen on his own, through another, a combination of both, or from no cause (lam rnam par bsgrub pa’i rkyen las bsgrib pa gsal bas sangs rgyas su snang bar brjod kyi bdag dang sgar dang gyis ka dang/rgyu med pa las byung ba ma yin no).

This is clear from Rang byung rdo rje’s summary of the seven examples; the banana tree and its fruits being said to illustrate the transformation of the basis of thoughts and the fruit of the nirmakāya (see further below).
279 Rang byung rdo rje: op. cit., 12at-6: de tshar kham rang bzhin gys nram par dag pa dpe rnams kyi (text: kyi) bstan pa'i rim pa 'di yang mar gyi dpes ni sems can gyi dus na' o ma la chu dang mar gcig tu 'dres par snang ba tshar sems can nyid snang gi 'sangs rgyas ni mi snang la 'sangs rgyas par gyur pa na dri ma dang 'dres pa med de / mar chu la gian mi 'dre bar snang ba bzhin du ngo bo bstan pao / mar mei' dpes ni yon tan gyi 'od la ma dag pa dang dag pa'i dus thams cad du khyad med kyang / sgrib g.yog gi rkyen gys che ba dang chung ba tshar snang ba la 'gal ba med pa'i ldan pao'i yon tan bstan to / nor bu'i dpes ni chos sku rang gi yon tan sgrib pa thams cad bral ba dang / rnam par rtog pa med pa'i 'phrin las 'jug pao yon tan can du bstan no / sger gyi dpes ni / byas pa ma yin pa dang / 'dres ba dang rnam par dag pa'i yid kyi rang bzhin longs spyod rdzogs pa'i rgyu 'bras ston to / 'bras shun gyi dpes ma rig pa bag chags kyi ma grol gyi bar la blos mi mthong bar bstan no / chu shing gi dpes 'dzin pa dang rnam par rtog pa gnas gyur pa'i sprul pa'i sku'i 'bras bu'i dpe ste /.


281 Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas: Rgyud bla ma'i bshad srol, 180a3-4 and 181b5.

282 Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas: Shes bya kun khyab mdzod, vol. 1, 460.2–461.6. See also the last section of chapter 1.

283 It should be noted that the term gzhan stong does not occur in Rang byung rdo rje's works even once. Kong sprul himself uses Jo nang terminology in order to impart his particular interpretation of Nagarjuna's hymns and the Maitreya works.


285 Tauscher (1999:vii) notes that Gtsang nag pa was one of the "eight mighty lions" who were disciples of Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge (1109–69). He held the office of abbot at Gsang phu Sne'u thog and was, according to Tauscher, a strict follower of Rngog Blo ldan shes rab's Svatantrika tradition (Tauscher 1999:vii–viii). Gzhon nu dpal informs us in his Blue Annals that there is a difference, however, in the two masters' presentation of the ultimate truth (see Deb ther sngon po, 309.5–7).

According to van der Kuijp (1978:357), Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge was nonsectarian, although in fact he is frequently mentioned in Bka' gdams pa biographies.

286 That is, if the buddha nature of ordinary beings is taken to be identical with a "perfect Buddha whose wisdom is fully blossomed."

287 The trilogy of texts known as the Sems 'grel skor gsun comprises the Vimalaprabhā (Peking Tengyur no. 2064), the Hevajrapradāthathākā (Peking Tengyur no. 2310) and a Cakrasamvara commentary with the title "Lakṣābhīdbhābuddhavivaranā" (Peking Tengyur no. 2117) (see Stearns 1999:178).

According to the catalogue of the Peking Tengyur: 'brita-. The Sanskrit title is probably a reconstruction from the Tibetan.

288 Karma 'Phrin las pa: "Dris lan yid kyi mun sel zhes bya ba lcags mo'i dri lens bzhugs," 91.1–4: / bdag gi bla ma thams cad mkhyen pa gsung | l/ding sang gezan stong smna bar rlong pa 'ga' / don dam rtag britan ther zug mi gyur ba / bden par grub 'di dzog 'dzin glo (text: blo) bur bas / stong phyir gezan stong zab mo 'di yin lo / 'di i'ra rtag pae lta ba la dag'a bas / mtha'ar 'dzin stong nyid zab mar smna byed pae / brdzun gyi zol tshig yan gyi mdo sde las / gsungs pa'i gezan stong rnam dag de ma yin / l/bla med chos kyi sams nyid mi stong zhges / rgyal ba byams pa gsung pa la 'khrul nas / l/gzhi ba bzhugs pae yon tan drug bcu bzhin / glo (text: blo) bur dri mas stong la gezan stong zhes / sgrib pa kun zad ye shes rab rgyas pae / rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas dmyal ba la sogs pa / 'gro ba drug gi sdu gnal nyid bha phyir / 'khor bar 'khor zhres rgyal la skrub bta bo / l/rgyud dang sams 'grel mdo sde du ma dang / byamschos rje 'brang bcas las gsungs pae don / rang byung rdo rje bzhed pa' gezan stong ni / l/rgyal bai' dbang po'i gsung las 'di skad thos l.
According to Thrangu Rinpoche they refer to the tantric forms of the sambhoga-kāya such as Rdo rje chang.

Mi bskyod rdo rje: “Yid bzang rtse ba’i Rgyud gsum gsang ba…” 976.3-6: “The Sugata is the Buddha endowed with both purities. As for its essence (i.e., buddha nature), it is the mind of the Buddha, nonconceptual wisdom, and suchness. In view of his possessing both purities, the Sugata is the tantric form kāya and the display of the indestructible illusory [body]. In view of [his possessing] the indestructible illusory body, he is the dharmakāya of luminosity and indestructible wisdom. With the former in mind it has been said [in RGV I.28a]: ‘because of being pervaded by the body of the perfect Buddha’; and thinking of this: ‘because its suchness cannot be differentiated’ (RGV I.28b).” (bde bar gshegs pa ni dag pa gnyis dang ldan gi sangs rgyas yin la / de’i snying po ni i sangs rgyas kyi thugs rnam par mi rtag pai ye shes de bzhin nyid yin la / dag pa gnyis ldan ’di nyid kyi dbang du byas pai bde bar gshegs pa ni rdo rje’i geugs sku dang / sgyu ’phrul mi shigs pai bkod pa / gnyis pai dbang du byas nas ’od gsal bai cho sku dang / gzhig med pa’i ye shes yin la / ’di yi snga ma la dgongs nas / / rdozogs sangs sku ni ’phro phyir dang / / zhes dang / phyi ma la dgongs nas / de bzhin nyid dbyen med phyir dang / zhes ’byung la /)


See my sections on the positions of Dol po pa and Sa bzang Mati pa in chapter 2.

Stearns, who elaborates the two positions in a section in his The Buddha from Dolpo (1999:98–105), points out that Dol po pa did not depart from the position of the founders of Sa skya, the first of whom, Sa chen Kun dga’ snying po (1092–1158), maintained (in a tantric doctrinal context) that birth in samsara occurs because the vital winds have not been drawn into the central channel. For Dol po pa, it is thus not enough to simply recognize deluded appearances for what they are.

Smith 1970:34.

So, for example, Kurtis Schaeffer (1995) in his unpublished M.A. thesis.

Stearns 1999:49–52.

The term ālaya without viññāna is already being used in the Ghanavyāha to denote the different bodhisattva levels (see Seyfort Ruegg 1973:35). According to Frauwallner (1951:148), this distinction reflects an old quarrel between two Indian missionaries, Bodhiruci and Ratnamati (the latter came to China in 508). While Bodhiruci claimed that it is the ālayavijñāna that is the basis of all perceptions, Ratnamati thought that it was “suchness” (tathatā).

Otherwise translated as “basic consciousness.”

Rang byung rdo rje: Zab mo nang gi don gsal bar byed pa’i ’grel pa bzhugs so, 8a6–7: ’di la kun gshi zhes bya ba rnam par shes pai sgra ma smos na de bzhin nyid la yang kun gshi brjod du rung bai phyir rnam par shes pa smos so /

Rang byung rdo rje: Zab mo nang gi don zhes bya ba’i gzhung bzhugs, 2b4: rgyu ni sams nyid thog med la / /rgya chad phyogs thung ma mchis byang // de nyid ma ’gags rol pa las /

The Tibetan has no equivalent for Skt. sādā.

Usually the translation of de bzhin gshegs pa’i snying po. Rang byung rdo rje prefers the terms sangs rgyas kyi snying po, rgyal ba’i snying po, or simply snying po (in order to hint at his extraordinary tantric interpretation of buddha nature?).
304 Rang byung rdo rje: Zab mo nang gi don gal byed pa'i 'grel pa, 7b6–8a1: / rgyud bla ma las / [RGV I.55–57] / ces gsungs te 'di ni sangs rgyas kyi snying po la sems su brjod cing 'khor 'das thams cad kyi gzi'i don yin no l./

The quoted stanza is from the "Dohās for the People" ("Do ha mdzod kyi glu bzhugs so," 289.5). The Apabhramsa version of this stanza is as follows: cittekka saala biam bhavanivāṇa vi jamṣi viphuranti / tam cintāmanī-rūmā pañamaḥa icchāphalāṃ dei l./ (Shahidullah 1928:140, stanza 43).

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306 And not like 'Ba' ra ba, for example, who follows the Laṅkāvatārasūtra, which fully equates the alayavījñāna with buddha nature (see above in the last section of chapter 1).

307 According to Lamotte.

308 See Lamotte 1938: vol. 1, 19.26. But in Mi bskyod rdo rje's Abhisamayālamkāra commentary (Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i lung..., 239.5), in which this passage is quoted, we have the correct reading ngo bo nyid.

309 Rang byung rdo rje: Rang 'grel, 9b4–6 (cf. Lamotte 1938: vol. 1, 19.1–8): sa bon thams cad pa rnam par smin pa'i rnam par shes pa ni kun nas nyon mongs pa'i rgyu yin na / de'i gnyen po 'jig rten las 'das pa'i sems kyi sa bon ji ltar rung [/] 'jig rten las 'das pa'i sems ni ma 'dris (text: 'dres) pas de'i bag chags med pa na nyid do / bag chags med na sa bon gang las 'byung (text: byung) ba brjod dagos so zhe na / 'chos kyi dbyings shin tu rnam par dag pa'i rgyu mthun pa thos pa'i bag chags sa bon (text: son pa) las de 'byung (text: byung) ngo l.

a According to Lamotte.

310 Lit., "hearing."

311 Rang byung rdo rje: Rang 'grel, 9b6–10a4 (cf. Lamotte 1938: vol. 1, 19.9–20.4): thos pa'i bag chags gang yin pa de yang l ci kun gzi'i rnam par shes pa'i ngo bo nyid yin nam / on te ma yin l gal te kun gzi rnam par shes pa'i ngo bo yin na ni ji ltar de'i gnyen po sa bon du rung / ci te de'i ngo bo nyid ma yin na ni 'thos pa'i bag chags de'yi sa bon gzi gnas gang zhi yin par lta zhe na / sangs rgyas kyi byang chub la brten nas thos pa'i bag chags su gyur ste l/ gnas gang la 'jug pa de lhan cig 'byung bai tshul gyis rnam par smin pa'n rnam par shes pa la chu dang 'o ma bzhi du 'jug kyang l de ni kun gzi'i rnam par shes pa ma yin ye / de'i gnyen po sa bon nyid yin pa'i phyir ro l/ de yang bag chags chung ngu las 'brings dang de las chen por 'gyur te / thos bsam bsgom pa la lan mang du byas pa dang ldan pa'i phyir / de ni/ chos kyi sku'i sa bon du bsla ste / kun gzi'i rnam shes kyi gnyen po yin pas kun gzi'i rnam shes kyi 'ngo bo ma yin pa dang / 'jig rten pa yin yang 'jig rten las 'das pa yi chos kyi dbyings shin tu rnam par dag pa'i rgyu mthun pa yin pas 'jig rten las 'das pa'i sems kyi sa bon du gyur pa'o / de ni 'jig rten las 'das pa'i sems ma byang du zin kyang nyon mongs pa' Kun nas dker 'pa dang ngan 'gro dang / ryes pa thams cad dangs par byed pa'i gnyen po yin no / sangs rgyas dang byang chub sampa dang phrad pa'i rjes su mthun pa'o l.

a Lamotte (19.12–13): des thos pa'i bag chags kyi sa bon de'i gnas ci zhig yin par blta (as translated here).
b Lamotte (19.15): 'jug par 'gyur gang yin pa.

c Lamotte (19.16–17): 'jug te / 'o ma dang chu bzhin no /

d Lamotte (19.19–24): bag chags chung ngu la brten nas bag chags 'bring por 'gyur ro // bags chags 'bring po la brten nas bag chags chen po 'gyur ste / thos pa dang bsam pa dang / bsgom pa lan mang du bya ha dang ldan pa'i phyir ro // de la thos pa'i bag chags kyi sa bon chung ngu dang 'bring dang chen po yang.

e Lamotte (19.26): ngo bo nyid.


317 The vimuktikaya of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas.

318 It is interesting that Mi bskyod rdo rje, who incorporated this passage into his Abhisamayālaṃkāra commentary (Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i lung...), 240.2 replaced 'phel ("develop") with bar ("blaze"), thereby giving the sentence a stronger gzhan stong connotation.

320 The four wisdoms are the mirror-like wisdom, the wisdom of equality, and the discriminating and all-accomplishing wisdoms, which manifest as: a result of transforming the eight consciousnesses.

322 Mi bskyod rdo rje: Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i lung..., 234–59. I am indebted to Karl Brunnholzl for drawing my attention to this passage.

323 Mi bskyod rdo rje (Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i lung..., 238.3) uses this term.

324 Ibid., 235.6.

325 In MAV I.14 the following synonyms for emptiness are given: suchness, the extreme limit of reality, signlessness, ultimate truth, and the dharmadhātu. (See Nagao 1964:23. The reference in Mi bskyod rdo rje's Abhisamayālaṃkāra commentary is on p. 238, ll. 3–4, where the term kun gzhi'i ye shes is expressly mentioned.

326 Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas: Zab mo nang gi don gyi 'grel pa, 17b4–6: 'dir rang 'grel las / 'khor 'das thams cad kyi gezihr gyur pa'i chos nyid de bzhin nyid la kun geziх'i sgrang gungs nas de'i nang gses dag pa dang bças pa la kun geziх'i ye shes dang sa bon
A comparison of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentaries of Dol po pa and Kong sprul shows that Kong sprul was well aware of the difference between his *gezhan stong* view and that of the Jo nang pas (see above and my section on Sa bzang Mati paṅ chen in chapter 2).

Mathes 2001:313.

Stearns 1999:52.

Ibid., 47–48.

The first pāda of the first chapter is: “As for the [first] cause [of everything], it is the beginningless true nature of mind (*sems nyid*)” (my additions are according to the context of the first chapter of the *Zab mo nang gi don*).

Rang byung rdo rje: Rang 'grel, 103b-4: *thog med la zhes bya ba ni / dus kyi thog ma dang tha ma ni rtog pas sgyo btags pa yin pas ’dir ni dri ma med pa dang dri ma dang bcas pa’i rang gi ngo bo ni rten cing ’brel bar ’byung ba de nyid dang gezhan las rnam par grol ba ste / de las thog ma gezhan med pa’i phyir thog ma med pa’i dus zhes bya ste /.

The term *gezhan stong* was not invented by Dol po pa but already in use at the time Rang byung rdo rje wrote his autocommentary. Thus Dol po pa refers to a certain Pho ri ba who also defines the ultimate as *gezhan gyis stong pa* (see Stearns 1999:50).

Mi bskyod rdo rje: Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa’i lung, 250.1–5: *blun po lo la zhig sens can gyi sens kyi chos dbyings la bde gshegs snying po de dbzer mi phyed pa’i tshul gyis yod pa ni theg pa che phug yed ma’i dgongs par thams cad mkhyen pa a’i snying po chin la dang / dam pa de nyid ni de iin la dbal bzhed pa ma yin te / zab mo nang don gyi rang ’grel du dang pa la sens su brjod pa dang / ma dang pa la sens su brjod pa zhes rnam pa gyis su dbye bar mdzad de / ma dag pa’i sens pa can de la sens can du bshad nas de lia bu’i sens can la chos kyi dbyings med par bshad pa dang / sens can de nyid chos dbyings las phyin ci log tu gyur pa’i yang dag pa ma yin pa’i kun rtog gyi bskyed pa glo burs ba’i dri mar bzhag go / / dag pa’i sens de ni tha mal gyi shes pa dang / dang pa’i mgon po dang / dang po’i sangs rgyas sogs su mtshan gsal nas de nyid la sangs rgyas kyi yon tan rnam dang dbyer mi phyed pa’i tshul can yin par gsungs pa dang /.

My translation of this quote follows Karl Brunnhölzl’s unpublished translation of Mi bskyod rdo rje’s commentary, except that some terms have been altered in order to maintain consistency with the rest of the work.

Stearns (1999:203), who ponders the same question (except that he is comparing Dol-po pa’s *gezhan stong* with these mahāmudrā stanzas), must have had these stanzas in mind when he referred to pages 97–98 of the *Mgur rnam*. 

Rang byung rdo rje’i *mgur rnam*, 97.6–98.3: *kun gezi ’khor ’das kun gyi gezi / ma rtogs (text: rtog) dus na ’khor ba ste / rtogs na de bzhin gshegs pa’i thugs / kun gezi’i ngo bo brjod pa lags / dper na me long g.ya’ dag la / geugs brnyan ’char ba ji lta bar / rang sens dri med dbyings nyid la / sna tshogs shes pa ldang zhing ’gag / yul dang yul can gyis ’dezi ’di / rang gir dbyings la snang ldang phyir / ’khor ’das gyis ma ngo bo geig / ma rtogs (text: rtog) ’khrul zhing rtings nas grol / rtog bya rtags byed gyis md geang / gyis su bzang bas ’khor ba’i gezi / gyis ma ngo bo mthong ba na / rgyal ba’i snying po mgon du gyur.

Since the meaning of Tib. *ngo bo* varies considerably according to context, it is impossible to use a single English word consistently. As a rdzogs chen category, *ngo bo* refers to the essential nature of primordial awareness.

That “compassionate responsiveness” (*thugs rje*) is intended here is clear from the commentary on the beginning of the fifth chapter, where the seminal drops...
(bindu), seen as being free from mental fabrications, are explained as one's own coemergent nature of mind. This mind is explained in the commentary (Rang byung rdo rje: Rang 'grel, 41a2) in the following way: "...[its] essence is empty, [its] nature is clear, and [its compassionate responsiveness] is unimpeded. These three are [respectively]: (a) the dharmakāya, which is free from mental fabrications, (b) clarity, namely the sambhogakāya, and (c) compassionate responsiveness, [which can] accomplish anything, namely the nirmanakāya" (ngo bo stong / rang bezin gal / rnam pa 'gag pa med pa gsum po spros pa dang bral bai chos kyi sku dang / gal ba longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku dang / thugs rje cir yang grub pa sprul pa'i sku ste l).
This is what Schaeffer (1995) claims on the basis of the root text. And indeed it is understandable why one might reach such a conclusion in the absence of Rang byung rdo rje's commentary.

353 This is what Schaeffer (1995) claims on the basis of the root text. And indeed it is understandable why one might reach such a conclusion in the absence of Rang byung rdo rje's commentary.


355 For a translation of this quote see my translation below of Gzhon nu dpal's commentary for those with average faculties (DRSM, 46.5–11).

356 MAVBh, 18.21–22: arhasattvaîmavijñaptipratibhasam prajñâya / viññânâm nãsti cãyãrthaâs tadbhãvât tadh apy asat. My additions in brackets are according to Vasubandhu's bhāṣya.

357 Rang byung rdo rje: Rang 'grel, 63a3–5: / gsung ba dang 'dzin pa gnyis su kun brtags pa ni rnam pa thams cad du med pa dag yin te / 'phags pa byams pa'i zhal snga nas kyang / [MĀV I.3] / ces kun brtags pa'i gsung ba dang 'dzin pa thams cad rnam pa thams cad du med pa nyid du gsungs so / / 'o na bden pa ji ltar bzlhag ce na / med bzhin du yang snang ba tsam de ni kun rdzob kyi bden pa zhes bya stie / bslu ba med pa'i rang gi ngo bo nyid yin pa'i phiyir ro /.

358 Ibid., 63a5–6: /di yang rnam grangs kyi don dam par bzlhag pa yod mod kyi / chos nyid kyi rigs pa'i rjes su 'brel pa dag ni stong pa nyid chen po bo bryag yid kyi rnam par bshad pa'i rang kyi bzhin stong pa nyid snga smos pa de nyid don dam pa bden pa yin no /. For the meaning of chos nyid kyi rigs (dharmatdyukti) see the introductory remarks on RGV I.156–58 (J I.153–55), which is quoted in the part of Gzhon nu dpal's commentary I have translated (DRSM, 55.24–56.5).

359 Rang byung rdo rje: Dbu ma chos dbyings bstod pa'i rnam par bshad pa, 7b1–2: bden pa gnyis kyi rang gi mtshan nyid kyi 'gyur ba med pa dag phyin ci ma log pa gnyis so / /'jig rten pa dang rigs pa'i grags pa ni / kun rdzob bden pa'i bye brag stie /.

360 Ibid., 63b1–2: de ltar bshad pa'i bden pa gnyis po 'di yang chos rnas dang chos nyid ji lta ba bzhin du de bzhin nyid dang gzhân las rnam par grol ba yin pa greg pa dang tha dad gang du 'ang brjod du med do / tshul 'di ni sangs rgyas bcom ldan rnas kyi rtags shing bstan pa'i chos thams cad kyi don kyang yin te /.


363 MAVBh, 18.2–3: súnyatâ tasyabhûtaarparikalpastryâgrâhyâgrâhâkabhâvena virahitaâ (stong pa nyid ni yang dag pa ma yin pa'i kun tu rtag pa de gsung ba dang 'dzin pa'i drgos po dang bral ba ndo, Peking Tengyur, sems tsam, vol. bi, fol. 2b2).

364 For example, in SNS VII.7 (see Mathes 2000:216).

365 See the section on Dol po pa's position below.

366 See Dol po pa: “Bden pa gnyis gsal ba'i nîn yîn ma,” 13ff. According to Dol po pa, a buddha still knows the world in the same way as one remembers the appearances of a dream but no longer sees them after waking up (see Mathes 1998:464–65).

367 This is made particularly clear in Taranâtha's gzhân stong snying po (see Mathes 2000:195–223).

368 Mathes 2000:220.

369 See MAV III.10cd, where “ultimate,” or literally the “highest object” (para- mârtha), is taken to have three different meanings according to the three possible ways of analyzing a compound in Sanskrit. (1) Tatpurṣa: “The ultimate in terms of object is suchness in the sense of being the object of the highest wisdom” (arhaparamârtha tathâta paramasya jñânasyârtha tii krtvâ). (2) Karmadhâraya: “The ultimate in terms of attainment is nirvâna in the sense of being the highest
object" (prātiparamārtho nirvāṇam paramo 'ṛtha iti kṛtvā). (3) Bhavvrihi: “The ultimate in terms of practice is the path in the sense that the highest is its object” (pratipattiparamārtho mārgab paramo 'yārtha iti kṛtvā). The path on the higher levels is taken as the nonconceptual cognition of suchness in the Madhyantaviibhāga. For the Sanskrit see MAVBh, 41.18-21.

370 Rang byung rdo rje: Rang 'grel, 103-4: thog med la zhes bya ba ni / ...dir ni dri ma med pa dang dri ma dang bcas pa'i rang gi ngo bo ni rin cing 'brel bar 'byung ba de nyid dang gzhau las rnam par grol ba ste l./

371 Seyfort Ruegg (1971:466): šūnyatāhāraṅkāḥ sātāra ye kecid bhāṣītā jinaīh / sarvais tātī klesaryārṣīrī naiva dhātuvināśanam // (DhŚ 22).

372 The first quoted pāda is not in the root text of the Ratnagotravibhāga. The remaining two are RGV I.147ab (J I.144ab): svabhāvo dharmakāyo 'ya tathātā go-tram ity api / (RGVV, 69.19). Rang byung rdo rje's insertion does not alter the meaning, but simply clarifies what the demonstrative pronoun asya refers to.

373 Rang byung rdo rje: Rang 'grel, 64a6-64b1: stong pa nyid ni ston pa'i mdo / / rgyal bas ji snyed gsungs pa de l/ de dag kun gyis nyon mongs ldag / kham pa de nyams par byed ma yin l/ / shes bya la sogs pa rgyas par gsungs shing / 'di ming gi rnam grangs ni / rgyud bla ma las / sens kyi rnam par dag pa'i khamas / 'di yi rang bzhin chos sku dang l/ de bzhin nyid dang rigs kyang ste l/ / zhes bya ba la sogs pa shin tu rgyas par gsungs shing l/ dpe dgu nyon mongs pa ji snyed pa mdor bsus pas drung cu rtsa bzhī rnam par sbyangs pa las dri ma med pa'i sags rgyas kyi yon tan cu drung cu rtsa bzhī snang bar byed pa l/.

374 Such an understanding could be based on the Lāṅkāvatārasūtra (see LAS, 77.15-78.11 and section 4 of my introduction), where buddha nature, which bears the thirty-two marks, is compared to a gem enveloped in the garment of skandhas.

375 Rang byung rdo rje: Zab mo nang gi don, 1b3-2a1: lhan skyes gcig dngos gnyis kyi bdag l/ / sku gsum rtsa rlung thig le can l/ / gnas skabs bzhī po sku bzhī nyid l/ / sku lngai bdag nyid la phyag 'shal l/.

376 Rang byung rdo rje: Rang 'grel, 3b6-4a3: lhan cig skyes pa gcig dngos ni / sens can thams cad la dbya ba med par dri ma dang bcas te gnas pa sangs rgyas thams kyi chos sku yan ton phrin las dang bcas pa yin la / gnyis kyi bdag ni thabs dang shes rab dang l/ kun rdzob dang don dam pa'i rang bzhīn 'bras bu chos kyi dbyings shin tu dri ma med pa dang kun de'i rgyu mthun pa rab tu zab pa'i sku gnyis so l/ / sku gsum rtsa rlung thig le can zhes pa ni don dam pa bde ba chen po chos kyi dbyings ni chos kyi sku yin la kun rdzob kyi bden pa la brten pa rgyu mthun par rab tu zab pa'i sku de la rmi lam dag pa dang kun gze la brten pa yi'd sog gi rlung dang bcas pa gnas guy pa longs spyod rdzogs pa sku dang l/ tha ma gyi snang ba dngos po la 'jug pa'i rnam par shes pa dag pas sprul pa'i sku 'byung ste l/ 'di yang rtsa ni sku / rlung gsung / thig le thugs rdo rje ste l/ 'di gsum rnam par sbyangs pas thob par gsungs pa'i phyir sangs rgyas thams cad kyi sku gsung thugs kyi nga bor gsungs so l.

377 RGV I.172-55 (J I.149-52) and III.1-3.

378 Rang byung rdo rje: op. cit., 44a: ...ye shes kyi sku ste sens can rnam s kyi sgrīb pa dang bcas pa'o.

379 Rang byung rdo rje: Snying po bstan pa, 35a6-35b3.

380 RGVV, 37.6-9: anādībhūto 'pi hi sātvasānihā svabhāvasuddho dhrvadhar-masambhāh / anādikosāt niśvino na dhyāte swarnabimbhām paricchāditaṁ yathā \//. This stanza of unknown origin is quoted in RGVV I.41 and resembles the ninth simile in the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra.

a Johnston and A (21b4) read cā-, which is difficult to construe.

b Johnston and A (21b4) read bahir- in place of ni-, which goes against the meter and the Tibetan.
381 Kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas makes this important distinction in his commentary on RGV I.6 (see Tsultrim Gyamtho and Fuchs 2000:103–4).

382 Rang byung rdo rje: Snying po bstan pa, 35b1–2: / thog ma med pa’i dus kyi khams / chos rna ms kun gyi gnas yin te // ’di yod pas na ’gro kun dang // mya ngan ’das pa’ang thob pa yin / Cf. RGVV, 72.13–14: anatikāliko dhātubhā savadharmasamāśrayah / tasmān sati gatīḥ savā nirvānādhihamo ‘pi ca //.

383 HT, 188.5–6.

384 See HT, 185.3–4 (Hevajratantra, part 2, IV,51): “The three kāyas are said to be located within the body in the form of cakras. The fivefold wisdom of the three kāyas is known as the cakra of great bliss (mahāsukhacakra)” (triṃkāyaṃ dehama-dhye tu cakrārūpeṇa kathaye / triṃkāyasva pañicajñānam cakra[m] mahāsukham matam //).

385 Rang byung rdo rje: Snying po bstan pa, 36a4–6.

386 Ibid., 36a6–37a1.

387 See Kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas: Rnam par shes pa dang ye shes ’byed pa’i bstan bcos kyi tshig don go gsal du ’grel pa, 8a2: “In Tibet [some] claim that the outer world and its content (i.e., sentient beings), all good and bad, were created by a certain Sgam pa phyva.” (bod du snod bcud legs nyes thams cad sgam pa phyva (=phyva?) zhes ba bas byas par ’dod pa….)

388 Ibid., 37a2–5: de la gzugs sku gnyis rang bzhin // sum cu rtsa gnyis mshan dpe byad // tho’p bai yan tan rang lus te // lus de bdag dang phyva dbang phyug / tshangs dang phyi rol bden pa’i rdul / phag na mo yis byas pa min // go lnga gzung dang ’dezin pa yi // rnam ’gyur ma dag de sbyangs pas // de tshe tho’b par tha snyad byas / de bas rtsa rlung thig le rnam // dag po dag pa’i gzugs sku ste // ma sbyang ma dag gzugs sku’o /.

389 According to the above-quoted passage from the Zab mo nang gi don and its auto­commentary it would be only the nāḍis and prāṇa which correspond to the form kāyas, though.

390 Which is quoted in RGVV I.2 (see my translation of Gzhon nu dpal’s Ratnagotravibhāga commentary DRSM, 37.8–13).

391 It is interesting that Rang byung rdo rje chooses ’du byed (saṃskāra, saṃskṛta) instead of ’dus byas (saṃskṛta)—probably because buddhahood is said to be ’dus ma byas in RGV I.5. Gzhon nu dpal, who adheres to the same view as Rang byung rdo rje, solves this apparent contradiction in his Ratnagotravibhāga commentary (DRSM, 83.11–13) by restricting the predicate “unconditioned” with the help of the adverb “not artificially” (ma ’phral du), which does not exclude momentariness altogether.


396 Stearns 1999:22.

397 The entire Buddhist tradition accepts only three great councils in India held for the purpose of consolidating the teaching after the Buddha’s nirvāṇa.

398 Stearns 1999:123.

399 Cf. VPT, 74.5–8 (stanza l.22).

400 Kapstein 2000:115–16.
405 Dol po pa: “Nyi ma’i ’od zer,” 990.6–7.
406 See the commentary on I.155 (J I.152) (Ibid., 988.3–4).
407 Namely on the grounds that it was copied by Kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas nearly verbatim (Hookham 1991:173–74). But such an assumption is not only baseless but also unlikely, since the text is signed by the “One Endowed with the Four Reliances” (rtön pa bzhi ldan), which was the most common pseudonym used by Dol po pa in his works (Stearns 1999:201).
408 Hookham (1991:183) early on observed that Dol po pa did not read his gzhan stong view explicitly into the Ratnagotravibhāga. In fact, she even criticizes the Ratnagotravibhāga and the vyākhyā itself for not being more consistent with gzhan stong. Thus she writes: “One feels that, in Shentong terms, all this (i.e., RGV I.30–34) deviates from the essential message of the RGV” (Ibid., 200). And about the following paragraph on the gunapāramitās (RGV I.35–39), too, she is less than happy: “Again the explanations [of the vyākhyā] in this section are rather disappointing from a Shentong point of view. They give the impression that the four transcendental qualities are separate results of different contributory causes of buddhahood; even transcendental permanence is explained as continuous activity rather than nonarising, nondwelling, nonceasing, uncompounded, and so on.”—and then goes on to quote the Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho for a correct presentation of this point (Ibid., 202). In my opinion, Hookham does not sufficiently appreciate the fact that the Ratnagotravibhāga consists of different layers with at times heterogeneous structures (even though she observed that according to Takasaki RGV I.32–33 does not belong to the original text), or the elegant way Dol po pa (who was of course aware of these inconsistencies) handles these problems.
409 For a translation of RGV III.1–3 see p. 12.
410 This statement indicates that Dol po pa is reporting the conventional Mahāyāna explanation of this topic.
411 Dol po pa: Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho, 340.15–341.3: zhes bral ’bras chos sku gang yin pa ’gyur med yongs grub dang de bzhin nyid kyi sku la bral bai yon tan stobs la sogs pa tshang ba dang / bskeyed ’bras gesgs sku gang yin pa phyin ci ma log pai yongs grub dang yang dag ye shes ldan pa la bskeyed pai yon tan mtshan la sogs pa yod par gsungs so / ’di dag gis ni kha cig chos sku ’ang bskeyed ’bras kun rdzob tu ’dod pa dang / kha cig gesgs sku’ang bral ’bras don dam du ’dod pa bsal ba yin no / . . .de bzhin du kha cig chos sku’ang sens can rnam la dang po nas med par ’dod pa dang / kha cig gesgs skb’ang sens can rnam la dang po nas yod par ’dod pa (text: par) yang shin tu khrul te gter dang ’bras bu’i shing bzhin du / zhes sogs rgya cher gsungs pa’i phyir ro /.
412 Ibid., 341–42.
414 Dol po pa: Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho, 343.19–21 and 344.8–9: de la gsungs sku rnam pa gnyis ni kun rdzob kyi longs spyod rdzogs pa dang sprul pai sku ste thun mong du rab tu grags pa’o / / don dam pai longs spyod rdzogs pa dang sprul pai sku ni chos nyid yongs grub de bzhin nyid la tshang ste / . . .des na don dam gyi longs spyod rdzogs pa dang sprul pai’i sku ni thun mong ma yin pa sngags kyi tshul la grags pa’o /.
415 Cf. Ibid., 284.9–12.
416 The second chapter on the path is introduced in the following way (Ibid., 128.17–21): “In this way, even though the ultimate Buddha, [or] dharmakāya, whose nature is the endless inseparable qualities, exists intrinsically in all sentient beings, it is not the case that the two accumulations of the path are not needed, given that the adventitious stains must be removed, and the purpose of all sentient beings fulfilled, once the apparent form kayas have been generated.”

417 Ibid., 118.22–24 and 119.19–22: “...spangs pa la yang gnyis te / dri ma thams cad gdod nas rang bzhiin gnyis ma grub pa’s spangs pa dang dri ma glo bur ba gnyen pos bcom nas zad pa’o / ...de bzhiin du sangs rgyas kyi rtogs pa la yang gnyis te / gdod naschos nyid rang gis rang rig pa’i rtogs pa rang byung ye shes dang / lam zab mo bsog ma las skyes pa’i rtogs pa gzhban byung ye shes so /”.

418 This negation of identity has been often misunderstood and represented in a wrong way. (Cf. Newland, who writes that for Dol po pa the two truths are different entities (ngo bo tha dad pa). Instead of referring to the Jo nang material, however, he quotes Seyfot Ruegg, Hopkins, and Thurman (Newland 1992:30 and 260). Thus, Dol po pa negates not only identity but also difference. In his “Bden gnyis gsal ba’i nyi ma,” 23.2–3) Dol po pa explains that “the two truths should be called neither identical (de nyid) in terms of their nature nor different (gzhan) [in terms of their nature].”

419 For Tib. de nyid dang gzhban, Skt. tattvāṇyatva, see MAVBh, 23.10.

420 See Mathes 1996:122–23.

421 See Lamotte (ed.) 1935:47.

422 See also Broido (1989:88) who has made the same observation with regard to two sets of skandhas in the Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho.

423 RGVV, 12.14: ayam eva ca bhagavām tathāgatadhidharmakāyo vinirmuktakleśakośas tathāgatagarbhā ity ucyate. a

424 See Schmithausen (1971:137) proposes reading ity ucyate instead of sūcyate (B is not clear, A not available).

425 Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho, 324.9–21.
426 RGVV, 7.14–15: asanākṛtam anābhogam [aparapratyādityatam / buddhayavānum āyukṣetanāṃ dvāyārthavat [].

427 Dol po pa: Ri chos nges don rgya mtho, 97.15–17: 'dus ma byas shing lhung gi sus grub / ces pa la sogs pas mthar thug gi sangs rgyas 'dus ma byas su sgun gi pa yang skad cig dang bral ba la dongs pa yin no /.

428 Dol po pa: "Nyi ma'i 'od zert," 908.6–909.1: dri ma med pa'i sangs rgyas gi yon tan ni / chos sku de nyid dang 'brel pa'i stobs bcu dang / mi 'jigs pa bzhi dang / ma 'dres pa bco brya sa la sogs pa bral ba'i 'bras bu dang / mshan dpe so (omit so?) sum cu rtsa gnyis la sogs pa smin pa'i 'bras bu bsdu dus pa'i sangs rgyas kyi chos gang yin pa'o /

429 Ibid., 909.1: rgyal ba'i meddad pa ni stobs bcu la sogs pa yon tan de nams yang dag par 'grub pa'i nus pas.

430 In RGV I.23 four reasons are presented why exactly the four points of RGV I.23 are inconceivable.

431 Dol po pa: "Nyi ma'i 'od zert," 911.3–4: dri ma med pa'i sangs rgyas kyi yon tan gi don ni / stobs bcu la sogs pa don dam pa'i yon tan nams mtha' gcig tu kun nas nyon mongs pa dang bcas pa so so'i skye bo'i gnas skabs na yang nram par dbye ba med pa'i chos nyid du yod pa yang yin la / mgnon du gyur yang ma yin pa'i phyir 'gal ba la tar snang bas bsam giis mi khyab pa ste /.

432 Ibid., 914.2–5: rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas kyi chos kyi sku ni / chos thams cad la 'pho zhung khyab pa'i phyir dang / khor 'das thams cad kyi chos nyid la nram par dbye ba med pa'i phyir dang / de bzhi ghsegs pa'i rigs / chos kyi dbiyings rang gzhin giis dag pa sgrib pa sbyang rung du sens can thams cad la yod pa'i phyir na lus can kun kyang thog ma med pa ni yid nas dus rtag tu rgyun ma chad par don dam pa'i sangs rgyas kyi snying po can yin te /.

433 Ibid., 989.6.

434 Compare, for example, Klong chen pa's commentary on these stanzas.

435 Dol po pa: "Nyi ma'i 'od zert," 986.6–987.3: dpal na 'bad rtsol giis gsar du ma bsgubs shing longs spyaod zad ma shes pa dang ldan pa'i gter chen sāi 'og na rang bzhin giis gnas pa dang 'bad rtsol giis bsgubs pas 'bras bu dang bcas pa'i shing ljon sa skyped mos tshal du rim giis skye ba ji lia ba bzhin du sku gsum 'byung du rung bai 'sangs rgyas kyi rigs de yang nram gnis su shes par bya ste / thog ma med pa'i dus nas sens kyi rang bzhin du nye bar gnas pa'i chos kyi dbiyings nram par dag pa rang bzhin giis rigs dang / de la dmigs te thos pa la sogs pa byas pas 'bad rtsol giis gsar du yang dag par blangs pa las 'byung bai 'dge ba thar pa'i cha dang mthun pas mchog tu gyur pa rgyas gyur giis rigs nyid do."

436 Ibid., 987.3–6: sku gsum thob tshul ni / rgyu rang bzhin dang rgyas pa'i rigs 'di gnyis las 'bras bu rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas kyi sku gsum thob par 'dod pa yin la / de yang dang por rang bzhin du gnas pa'i rigs de nyid ye shes kyi tshogs mang pos mthar phyin par byas nas glo bur gyi dri ma mtha' dag dang bral ba las sgs ni dang po dag gnyis ldan chos nyid ngö bo nyid kyi sku ni 'thob pa ste / gnyis pa rgyas 'gyur giis rigs 'phel ba las bsod nams kyi tshogs mthar phyin pa yis ni sku phyi ma gdul bya nye ba dang ring ba la snang ba langs spyo rdzogs pa'i sku dang sprul pa'i sku gsum po thob bo /.


439 Sa skya pa'i mkhas pa nrams kyi gsung skor, vol. 4, 1–520.


441 He appears under this name in the colophon of the new Jo nang translation of the Kalacakratantra made by him together with Blo gros dpal (see Stearns 1999:24 and 185).

442 Oral information from Khenpo Abbey.

443 Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa: Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me, 33.21–22.

chos sku gnyis dang / yang dag par blangs pa las byung ba'i rigs dang / gzugs sku ni zbar las byung ba dbye ba la mkhas pa'i ched du yin gyi thams cad la khyab pa'i phyir ni ma yin no // on kyang de dag gi rten zag pa med pa'i dbyings ni thams cad la khyab pa nyid do /

Skt. upacāra. Gzhon nu dpal explains this term by citing the example of a Brahmin boy who is called a lion because he is a hero and fearless (DRSM, 150.10–12). Whereas a real lion is an animal, here the word lion is only metaphorically applied to the brave boy.

RGVV, 26.3: bauddhe gotre tatphalasyopacārād.

See Mati pañ chen: “Nges don rab gsal,” 151.5–516.1: “Motivated by [my] strong devotion to the very profound principle [of the RGV] I also made, based on the Indian text, a few changes and carefully proofread [the translation].” (bdag las kyang mchog tu zab pa'i tshul la lhag par mos pa'i dbang gis rgya gar 'phags pa'i yul gyi dpe la gzugs te / cung zad bcos shing shin tu dag par bgyis pa'o /)

Mati pañ chen: “Nges don rab gsal,” 128.5–6: sangs rgyas nyid 'grub pa'i rigs kham sgrub pa dang bcas pa'i gnas skabs la yang de dri ma dang bral ba'i 'bras bu chos sku tha dad med par nge bar spyod cing yod pa'i phyir na / 'gro ba ma lus pa kun don dam pa'i sangs rgyas kyi snying po can....


Mati pañ chen: “Nges don rab gsal,” 122.6–123.5: rtag dngos su thal ba spong ba ni / 'on te snga ma phyi ma khyad par med pa yang yin la rgyu dang rkeyen la llos nas 'bras bu grub pa yang yin pa'i phyir dbhyings gang yin pa de ni rtag pa dngos po by 'gyur ro zhe na / 'dus ma byas pa nyid kyi phyir rtag pa ni 'gyur mod / skeye ba dang 'jig pa dang gnas pa'i mthar nyid gsum dang bral ba'i phyir 'dus byas kyi dngos po ni la ga 'gyur / ...de la na yang don byed nus pa'i phyir dngos po by 'gyur ro zhe na / rnam pa thams cad du don gnyis mthar phyin po byed na nus pa dang ni ldan mod / de nyid kyi phyir nyi tsbe ba 'dus byas kyi dngos po ni mi 'gyur te / 'dus byas thams cad ni brdzun po slu ba snying po med pa nyid yin pa'i phyir ro / on kyang rtag pa yang yin la 'dus ma byas pa'i dngos po yang yin pa zhes byod pa la ni 'gal ba med de /

In defense of the Jo nang pas it should be noted that an "entity" (Skt. bhāva, Tib. dngos po)—or better, "state of being"—in this context—described as the nonexistence of duality is taken as a defining characteristic of emptiness in MAV l.12 (see MAVBh 22.23).


An exception is Kazuo Kano's unpublished Master's thesis (Kyoto 2001), which includes an edition and a Japanese translation. Seyfort Ruegg (2000:78–79) stresses the importance of this commentary in his recent publication on the history of Indian and Tibetan Madhyamaka philosophy.

The actual commentary is exactly identical with what Tsetan Dorji reproduced in 1974, namely the ancient manuscript from the library of Ri bo che Rje drung Rin po che of Padma bkod. In the colophon that Paldan Sherab added to this text (p. 686, ll. 2–5), he claims that he revealed this profound gter ma in America ("This profound treasure, which remained hidden... for more than six hundred human years... was later revealed from the rich country of America by... Paldan Sherab." mi lo drug brgya lha tsa mnyer brgal ba'i / mi snang rgyas btab gzims pa'i zab gter gang / phyi ma'i dus 'dir mkhan slob chos gsum dang / kun mkhyen chos kyi rgyal pos thugs bskyed las / byor rgyas a mi ri ka'i rgyal khab nas / sangs rgyas pad-ma'i thugs rjes nyes 'tsal mkhan / dpal ldan shes rab gang gis slar yang bton /

Gter bdag gling pa 'Gyur med rdo rje: Dus gsum rgyal ba... 5b5. In this stotra, Klong chen r'byams pa is praised under a number of different names.

A copy of this "fabricated text" found its way into the Newark Museum. Gene Smith informed me that the late Bdzud 'joms Rin po che became aware of the ex-
istence of this text while visiting the museum (the first page with the handwritten \textit{dbu med} title looks very authentic indeed) and took a copy of it back to Nepal. In December 1997 I located this legendary \textit{Rgyud bla ma} commentary by Klong chen pa in the Bla brang of Bsdud \textquotesingle joms Rin po che in Kathmandu.

472 I.e., the Byamschos sde lngar spyi don sher mdo and the \textit{Rgyud blar} 'grel pa rin chen sgron me (see p. 687 of Paldan Sherab's altered text).


474 Gzhon nu dpal: \textit{Deb ther sngon po}, 456.7–458.3. According to the \textit{Deb ther dmar po} (p. 70.15–20), Blo gros mtshungs med studied under Shāk gzhon, when on the latter held the seat of Sne'u thog.


476 Both the author Blo gros mtshungs med and the place Gsang phu Sne'u thog are mentioned in the colophon of the "Nges don gsal byed sgron me," 565.3–4.

477 Klong chen pa went to Gsang phu when he was nineteen and studied under the fifteenth abbot Slob dpon Btsan dgon and the sixteenth abbot Bla brang pa Chos dpal rgyal mtshan (\textit{Kun mkhyen klong chen rab byams kyi rnam thar}, 26.13–21 and 172.20–173.6).

478 Dorji Wangchuk (Hamburg) has informed me that a previous teacher of his, Pema Sherab from the Ngagyur Rnying ma Institute in Mysore, is of the same opinion. In fact, Dorji Wangchuk has seen a copy of Paldan Sherab's fabricated Klong chen pa commentary, to which Pema Sherab had added his own refutation of Paldan Sherab's hypothesis on the basis of internal evidence. See also Wangchuk 2004:187–88 (When Dorji Wangchuk's article appeared, I had already completed my work and could thus not appreciate his observations, which fully corroborate my point).

482 The collected works of Dam pa Bsdod nams rgyal mtshan, Gnas drug pa Blo gros mtshungs med is repeatedly mentioned as a scribe, and once even as the spiritual friend who requested Bla ma Dam pa to compose an exegesis of the \textit{Heva-jratansra}. See van der Kuijp 1993:127–28 and 141–42 and Kano 2001:32–36. There is still another lama, a certain Ri khrod pa Blo gros brtan pa (1316–58), who is called 'Blo gros mtshungs med, but it can be excluded that this one is the 'Blo gros mtshungs med from Gnas drug (Kuijp 1993:128, fn. 32).

484 Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas: \textit{Rgyud bla ma'i bshad srol}, 9a2–3.

485 See Bu ston Rin chen 'grub: \textit{Bu ston chos byung}, 363.17–21; Seyfort Ruegg 1966:152; and Kano 2001:35. It was because of this argument that Bu ston composed his \textit{Bde gshegs snying po'i mdzes rgyan} (translated and analyzed by Seyfort Ruegg (1973)).

486 \textit{Blo gros mtshungs med: "Nges don gsal byed sgron me,"} 251.2–3.

Technically speaking, Blo gros mtshungs med does not agree that in the first reason *tathāgata* is real and *garbha* metaphorical; or that in the third reason *tathāgata* is metaphorical and *garbha* real (Blo gros mtshungs med: “Nges don gsal byed sgron me,” 345.4–346.2).

I.e., the fortified potential.

See Blo gros mtshungs med (“Nges don gsal byed sgron me,” 419.3) on RGV I.154: “the fortified potential does not exist as something pervading all sentient beings, since it is a potential that has been newly accomplished through conditions.”

(rgyas ’gyur gyi rigs ni rkyen gyis rigs gar du bsgrubs pa yan pas sems can thams cad la khyab byed du med do /.)

Ibid., 346.3–347.1: *chos kyi sku ni yon tan dang dbyer med pa’i chos kyi dbying yin la de sems can thams cad la bdag gcig tu khyab byed du yod pa’i dngos yan pa la gnid byed med pa’i phyir btags pa bar ’jog pa de mi ’thad pa dang / chos sku ’phro ba’i don de thob tu rlung ba yin na rigs yod pa la lhos su byar med pa’i phyir ro / gal te rigs yod pa bsgrubs pa las byung ba yin no zhe na /’o na de sems can thams cad la khyab byed du yod par ’gyur te / de khyab byed du yod pa’i rgyu mtshan gyis sems can thams cad de bzhin gshegs pa’i snying po can du bsgrub nus pa’i phyir ro / ...de gnyis las sems can la khyab pa ni rang bzhin du gnas pa’i rigs yin no / des na dngos su gsungs pa’i de bzhin gshegs pa’i snying po dor nas sems can gyi snying po ’chad pa ni nges pa’i don gyi gsung rab kyi dgongs pa ma yin no /

On Blo gros mtshungs med’s presentation of Phyva pa’s stance see also Kano 2003:109–11.

In his introduction, Blo gros mtshungs med (op. cit., 257.5–258.1) describes apparent truth with regard to the seven vajra points: “The ultimate buddha element is the naturally present pure dharmatā of the mind; its [corresponding] apparent [truth] is that aspect of it that has the ability to generate undefiled [buddha] properties, which possess the primordial mental imprints of virtue. [These imprints] are [the potential] that has arisen from practice. With regard to enlightenment, the ultimate is the dharmakāya and the apparent [truth] the form kāyas. With re-
gard to the qualities, the ultimate is the [ten] strengths, etc., and the apparent [truth] the thirty-two marks [of a buddha].” (khams don dam pa ni sens kyi chos nyid rnam par dag pa rang bzhin du gnas pao / kun rdzob pa ni dge ba'i bag chags thog ma med pa can zag pa med pa'i chos skyped pa'i nus pa'i cha ste bsgrubs pa las byung bao / byang chub la yang don dam pa ni chos sku yin la kun rdzob pa ni gzugs sku yin no / yon tan yang don dam pa ni stobs la sogs pa yin la kun rdzob pa ni mtsphan sum cu rtsa gnyis yin no /).  

500 Ibid., 343.4–6: gal te rang bzhin du gnas pa'i rigs rgyu mthshan nyid pa yin na dngos por 'gyur ro zhe na / de la rang bzhin du gnas pa'i rigs ni thog ma med pa'i dus can gyi dri ma dang bcas pa'i chos nyid stong pa nyid yon tan thsad med pa dbyar med du gnas pa yin cing / de la chos nyid stong pa nyid kyi cha ni dri ma med pa'i chos kyi sk'u' gnas gyur pa'i rgyu yin yang skyed byed kyi rgyu ma yin pas dngos por mi 'gyur ro / ye shes kyi cha ni / rigs 'dra phyi ma sangs rgyas kyi stobs sogs skyed par byed pa'i rgyu yin pas dngos po yin pa la gnod pa med do /.

501 Blo gros mtshung's comments (Ibid., 319.6) on RGV I.16: 'sems rang bzhin gyis 'od gsal ba ni rang bzhin gyis gnas pa'i ye shes yin la.

502 Ibid., 334.6–335.1: snying po ni dbyings kyi cha nas ngos bzang na dri ma dang bcas pa'i sens kyi chos nyid bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i sangs rgyas kyi yon tan rnam dang dbyer med pa / gdod ma nas grub pa'i chos sku yin te /.

503 On the question whether primordial wisdom can be subsumed under the naturally present potential, see Blo gros mtshung's (op. cit., 336.1) commentary on RGV I.16: “The sphere and wisdom, which exist throughout beginningless time, are the naturally present potential.” (dbyings dang ye shes gdod ma nas grub pa ni rang bzhin du gnas pa'i rigs yin la.)

504 Ibid., 337.3: rgyu la 'bras bu gnas par 'gyur ro zhe na / mi 'gyur te dri ma thams cad kyi rnam par dag pa ye shes 'bras bu yin yang sens can la med dri ma dang bcas pa'i ye shes sens can gyi rgyud la yod kyang de 'bras bu ma yin no /.

505 For a translation of these stanzas see above, introduction, section 3 (“The Ratna-gotrabhāga and its Vyākhyā”).

506 Tib. dngos po ngo bo nyid kyi sku; translated in accordance with an explanation given (orally) by Thrangu Rinpoche.

507 The Tibetan renders Skt. iti by means of a causal construction.

508 Blo gros mtshung's: “Nges don gsal byed sgron me,” 416.4–417.2: rang bzhin du gnas pa dang bsgrubs pa las byung bai' rigs 'di gnyis las 'bras bu rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas kyi rnam par dag pa ye shes 'bras bu yin yang sens can la med dri ma dang bcas pa'i ye shes sens can gyi rgyud la yod kyang de 'bras bu ma yin no /.

509 Blo gros mtshung's med: “Nges don gsal byed sgron me,” 417.4–5 and 418.2–3:
I.e., the three natures of the buddha element.

Thus, the buddha element or sphere (dbhātu) in the Ratnagotravibhāga is systematically brought into relation with the rdzogs chen notions of primordial ground of manifestation (char gebi), self-arisen wisdom (rang byung ye shes), and awareness (rig pa) in the Grub mthā' mdzod. Germano (1992:79) has observed that “the entirety of [Klong chen pa’s] Tshig don mdzod can be understood as an innovative commentary on the significance of the... ‘buddha nature,’ which the beginning of the Tshig don mdzod refers to as ‘the adamantine nucleus of radiant light.’”

They are: (1–2) The two yānas of gods and men, (3–4) the two non-Buddhist yānas, (5–6) the two yānas of the śrāvakas, namely Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika, (7–8) the two yānas of the followers of Cittamātra and the Svātāntrikā-Mādhyamikas, (9) the yāna of the Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamikas, (10–15) the yānas of Kriya, Cārya, Yoga, Mahā, Anu and Ati, and (16) the yāna of the spontaneously present clear light, the vajra essence (Klong chen pa: Grub mthā' mdzod, 59.1–3).

The eight chapters of the treatise are:

1. How the teacher, the Buddha, came [into the world] (8.3)
2. A presentation of the nature of [his] teaching, the correct Dharma (25.3)
3. A detailed explanation of the divisions of the ocean of one’s own and other tenets (55.6)
4. A precise explanation of how to proceed on the paths of these [tenets] (137.5)
5. A presentation of the secret mantra [path], or Vajrayāna (257.6)
6. A presentation of the secret mantra [path] (282.1)
7. A presentation of the old [tradition of] the secret mantra [path] (310.4)
8. A precise explanation of the path of clear light, [or] vajra essence (361.3)

That is, the eighth chapter starting on p. 361.
NOTES TO PAGES 99–101

522 Klang chen pa: Grub mtha’ mdzod, 364.4–6.
523 Ibid., 364.6–365.1; cf. RGVV, 72.13–14 and Takasaki 1966:290.
524 The quoted stanza is from the “Dohās for the People” (“Do ha mdzod kyi glu bzhugs so,” 289.4).
525 Shahidullah (1928:173) translates on the basis of the Apabhraṣṭa: “Faites obéissance à celui qui est comme la pierre magique....”
526 Klang chen pa: Grub mtha’ mdzod, 365.1–2: sens nyid gcig pu kun gyi sa bon te / gang la srid dang mya ngan ’das ’phro ba / / dad pa’i ’bras bu ster bar byed pa yi // yid bezhin nor ’dra’i sens la phyag ’tshal lo /. The translation follows Karma Phrin las’ pa’s commentary (see my note on the translation of DRSM, 51.18–19). See Shahidullah 1928:140.
527 Klang chen pa: op. cit., 365.5.
528 Equated with buddha nature on the same page (Ibid., 369.6).
529 As denoting a hindrance, the term kun gzhi must here stand for kun gzhi rnam shes, one of the eight accumulations.
530 Klang chen pa: Grub mtha’ mdzod, 369.2–5: rig pa de yang ngo bo stong / rang bezhin ’od lngar gnas la / thugs rje zer du khyab pa sku dang ye shes kyi ’byung gnas chen por bzhugs kyang / ngo bo cho khu stong pa ye shes gzigs pa dag pa’i cha la kun gzhi dang tshogs brgyas kyis bsgribs / rang bezhin ’od lngar gsal ba la / gdos (text: rdos) bcas sha khrang gi phung pos bsgribs / thugs rje zer dang rig pa ’char byed du gnas pa la las dang bag chags kyis bsgribs te / shin tu bsha bar da’ka’i bdag nyid du bzhugs nayang / med pa ma yin te sens can kun la khyab par rang rang gi lus la rien bcas nas yod de /.
531 Ibid., at the beginning of chapter 6, on p. 282.1.
532 Lit., “without union and separation.”
533 As in the quotation above, kun gzhi must be taken as kun gzhi rnam shes, which is one of the eight accumulations.
534 Klang chen pa: Grub mtha’ mdzod, 282.3–6: ...mtshan gzhi ni / ’od gsal ba’i rang bezhin sku dang ye shes ’du ’bral med pa’i dbyings rang bezhin gyis dag pa dang de la brten pa’i chos sbyang bya sbyong byed dang bcas pa thams cad yin no / ...dbyings ’od gsal ba’i choe nyid rang bezhin rnam dag ni sbyang ba’i gzhi/o / / glo (text: blo) bur gyi grib pa la dang nyon mongs pa ’kor ba’i chos kun gzhi tshogs bryad dang bcas pa ni sbyang bar bya ba’i dri ma’o / deang bag chags nsa sbsogs pa kun gzhi ni ’kor ba’i rsa ba yin pa ldog la / gnas lugs don gyi kun gzhi’i don mi ldog kyang / tha snyad gzhirs btags pa’i ming gi cha de log nas choi kyi dbyings kyi ye shes zhes bya bar gyur ba’o /.
535 Both Tib. dbyings and kham are used to translate Skt. dhātu, the term employed in the Ratnagotrīyāgha for the buddha element that is not empty of qualities. Cf. the different Tibetan translations of the stanza from the Mahāyānabhādhar­masūtra (RGVV, 72.13: anādikāliko dhātub sarvadharmanāmaśrayah /). In the quotation in the Ratnagotrīyāghagavāyākhyā, the Tibetan fox dhātu is kham, whereas it is dbyings in the translation of this stanza in the Trimśikābhāṣya (see Takasaki 1966:290).
536 In his autocommentary on the Zab mo nang gi don, Rang byung rdo rje distinguishes, based on Mahāyānasaṃgraha I.45–48, an impure kun gzhi rnam par shes pa from a pure dharmaḥātu in a similar way, and remarks that in this context the term kun gzhi alone can also refer to suchness, and thus to the pure dharmaḥātu (see above, “The Position of the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje”). I am indebted to Stearns (1999:51) for this reference. Without translating or further analyzing the passage, Stearns observes that this passage “has none of the connotations inherent in Dol po pa’s usage.”
537 Further down, Klang chen pa explains that the actual sun is empty of what is
referred to by synonyms such as "light-maker" or "[the one drawn by] seven horses," neither of which captures its real meaning (Rdzogs pa chen po sems nyid ngl gos'i 'grel pa, 221.6–222.1).

539 Such as skandhas, dhātuṣ, and ayatanas (Ibid., 222.1–2).

540 Klong chen pa: Rdzogs pa chen po sems nyid ngl gos'i 'grel pa, 220.1–221.5; rang gis stong pa ni med bzhin mthong bas don dam bden pa mthong zhes bya'i / cir yang med pa'i stong nyid mthong kyang don dam bden pa ma yin no / de'ang byis pa so so skye bo rang / las dang po dag btag tu zhen pa'i gnyen por bdag med pa la sogs pa bstan pa yin gyi (text: gyis) / don la dbyings 'od gsal ba 'das ma byas shing lhun grub tu yod pa shes par bya ste /.

541 In this rhetorical question (Klong chen pa: Grub mtha' mdzod, 329.4) the Tibetan term khams is used for the buddha element (Skt. dhātuṣ), just as in the Ratnagotravibhāgā (Klong chen pa otherwise uses dbyings). Apart from the doctrinally close Mahāratnakārtasūtra, the Ratnagotravibhāgā is the only nontantric work quoted in the chapters on Vajrayana and rdzogs chen in the Grub mtha' mdzod.

542 Ibid., 185.6–186.2: de'ang don dam pa'i bden pa dbyings yin la / 'di'i rang bzhin mthong bas don dam bden pa mthong zhes bya'i / cir yang med pa'i stong nyid mthong kyang don dam bden pa ma yin no / de'ang byis pa so so skye bo rang / las dang po dag btag tu zhen pa'i gnyen por bdag med pa la sogs pa bstan pa yin gyi (text: gyis) / don la dbyings 'od gsal ba 'das ma byas shing lhun grub tu yod pa shes par bya ste /.

543 A cycle of tantras of the sems sde (see Achard 1999:60).

544 Klong chen pa: Grub mtha' mdzod, 329.5; rang byung gi ye shes rdo rje pa chen po nyid ye nas sans rgyas kyi che bai'yon tan lhun grub tu yod pa / sku gsum rang chas su tshang bai'phyir logs nas btsal mi dgos....

545 Ibid., 325.5–6.

546 Ibid., 326.6–327.1: rang bzhin rdzogs pa chen po 'od gsal dbyings kyis kyi ngo bo rang byung gi ye shes te / 'di la bskyed bya skyed byed kyi rgyu 'bras rkyen dang btag ba ma yin / rang byung gi ye bzhin du ye nas yod pa....

547 A cycle of tantras of the sems sde (see Achard 1999:60).

548 Klong chen pa: Grub mtha' mdzod, 327.2: ji ltar sngon (RGV: sngar) bzhin phyis de bzhin / gyur ba med pa'i chos nyid do (RGVV, 41.21: yathā pūrvaṁ tathā pāścād avikāritaśvādhatvamā /).

549 Klong chen pa: op. cit., 327.2.

550 RGVV, 7.14–15: asamksyam anbhahogam [aparapatrayoditaḥ / buddhatvarjan jñānākārṇavyaśaktupetāṁ dvaśvārthavat /].

551 Klong chen pa: op. cit., 55–137.

552 For the combination of the trisvabhāva with the tathāgatagarbha theory see Mathes 2000:218–20.

553 See Klong chen pa: op. cit., 282.5–6, where the actual basis of everything is clearly distinguished from the kun gebi as alayavijñāna. Whereas the kun gebi is not affected by the transformation of the basis, the alayavijñāna is turned back.

554 On dbu ma chen po, see van der Kuijp 1983:35–45.

555 See Mathes 2000:196.

556 Klong chen pa: Yid bzhin rin po che'i mdzod kyi 'grel pa padma dkar po, 840.1–3. (I am indebted to F.-K. Ehrhard for this reference.)
Strictly speaking, nothing is really transformed for Klong chen pa, who explains (Grub mtha’ mdzod, 240.4–5): “In terms of that which appears by virtue of [becoming] free from the hindering [stains] on the basis of the wisdom that exists in oneself; a transformation of the basis [occurs only] in a metaphorical sense” (rang la yod pa’i ye shes de’i steng gi sgrib byed bral stobs kyis snang ba’i cha nas gnas gyur du btags pa ste /).

Cf. MA 361.14, which reads sems ’gags pas instead of sems ’gags pa (Klong chen pa: Grub mtha’ mdzod, 244.6).

Lit., “presentation.”

Klong chen pa: op. cit., 244.4–245.3: dbu ma par ‘dog pa kha cig sangs rgyas la ye shes med pas / ye shes kyi mthyen pa’ang med de shes bya spros pa yin la / de dang bral ba’i phyir dang / ... ‘jug pa las / sems ’gags pa de sku yis mgon sum mdzad / ces gsungs pa’i phyir ro zhe na / de ni mi rigs te / stong ngos chos sku la ltos na ye shes yod med gnyis kar ma grub pas yod ces bzhag kyang ’gog la / med ces ’dod kyung ’gog pa mtshungs pa’i phyir med pa’ang mi ’tbad la / snang ngos gsungs sku la ltos na / gdul bya snang nas don mdzad pa snang dgos pas ye shes kyung snang dgos pa’i phyir dang / shes bya shes byed la sogs pa’i grub mtha’ btags pa thams cad spros pa yin yang / gang gis kyang ma btags par snang ba’i rnam gebsag gi yul rnam spros pa zhes gebsag tu med pa /...
the] disciples—and this without fail and in an appropriate way each time. (RGVV, 22.8-10 and 24.9-10: tatra vimala bhagavata purusāpyena kaṁkṣaṇam api prthajānaṁ bhumīvāminīr bhagadharmanāya nirviṣṭā vidyanta ity acintyam etat sthānam / ... tatra jinakriyā yugapat sarvatva sarvakālam anābhogena vikalpato yathāśāyasya yathāvaineyikeśu sattveṣu akṣiṇam anuṣṭoṣam pravartata ity acintyam etat sthānam /

a A (7a3) reads yathāvaineyikeśu, B (14a6) yathāvainai(or -ne-)keśu. The conjecture is according to Takasaki 1966:192 and Schmithausen 1971:141.

b B (14a6) reads akṣiṇam or akṣiṇatvam.

571 The Sanskrit root tar usually means “to come out,” “to arise.” The Tibetan rendition of tar as sgrol suggests to take a causative form of tar.

572 Klong chen pa: Grub mtha’ mdzod, 170.2-3: gautra zhes pa’i go guņa zhes bsgyur na yon tan yin la / tra tara zhes bsgyur na sgrol ba ste / yon tan gyis (text: gyi sat) rten byas nas ’khor na’ipha rol du sgrol bas te / de nyid las / yon tan ni / sgrol ba’i don shes par bya zhes so /

573 My translation follows the Tibetan and the way Klong chen pa obviously interprets this stanza. If one does not take the Sanskrit or Vasubandhu’s bhāṣya into account, this is the most reasonable way to do so. For a paraphrase of the Sanskrit (MSABh, 11.8-9: prakṛtyā paripūṭāṃ ca āśrayaś caśrītam ca tat / sa dha sa caiva vijñeyāṇi guṇottarārthaārthataḥ) see Seyfort Ruegg 1969:79: “La Lignée [Tib. rigs, Skt. gotra, is translated by me as ‘potential’] existant par nature et la développée, ou le support et le supporté; de plus, le gotra est existant en tant que cause mais inexistant en tant que fruit; enfin ce facteur reçoit le nom de gotra puisqu’il réalise les qualités.” Seyfort Ruegg notes that uttarāṇa has the meaning of “to realize” or “to carry out [a promise].” The bhāṣya explains the compound guṇottarārtha- in the following way: “the qualities come out in the sense that they arise from it (sc. the potential)” (guṇā uttaranty asmād udbhavantiti kṛtvā (MSABh, 11.12)).

I.e., the cause liberating the dharmakāya and the svabhāvikakāya from the adventitious stains.

574 I.e., the cause liberating the form kāyas from the adventitious stains.

575 Klong chen pa: Grub mtha’ mdzod, 170.5-6: dbhyings stong pa’i ni chos khu go bo nyid sku’i bral gnyur rten yin la / ye shes sngan ba rang ’od mshan dpe dang bcas pa ni bten pa geugs sku gnyis kyi bral gnyur gnas pa ste /

576 Lit., “accomplishment.”

577 I.e., taking a causative form of tar.

578 Tib. sgrol.

580 Blo gros mtshungs med: “Nges don gsal byed sgron me,” 332.2-4: bsgrubs pa las byung ba ni ’phags pa’i rigs tha dad pa la sogs pa’i rkyen gyis gsar du bsgrubs pão / de la rang bzhin du gnas pa ni rten yin cing bsgrubs pa las byung ba ni bten pa yin no / rigs kyi mshan nyid ni / dri ma dang bcas pa’i gnas skabs kyi cho dang zhi ng ’phags pa’i spang ri’gs byung du rung bar / sgra don ni gotra zhes pa la go’i bar nas gu byung ste / gu na (text: na) zhes pa yon tan yin la ta dang na phral bas tara zhes pa sgrol ba ste gu na (text: na) ta ra zhes pa / yon tan sgral zhi ng ‘byung ba na rigs so /

581 Skt. uttaranty; the reading “[the qualities] liberate” would require the causative form uttarānti.

582 MSABh, 11.11-12: guṇottarārthaṇa gotraṇi veditavyaṇi guṇā uttaranty asmād udbhavantiti kṛtvā.

583 In fact, something similar can be observed with regard to the works of Gser mdog paṅ chen Šākya mchog ldan, who seems to fully endorse the geban stong view only in works written after his first meeting with the Seventh Karmapa in 1484 (see Dreyfus 1997:29). For a short description of Šākya mchog ldan’s position, see also Tilmans and Tomabechi 1995:891-96: “Le dbu ma’i byung tshul de Šākya mchog ldan.”
For a translation of RGV I.152–55 (J I.149–52), see the third section of my introduction.

Tib. 'char gezi. “In rdzogs chen it has the technical sense of the ground’s virtual dynamics, which remain nonmanifest internal radiance but are the energetic and intelligent source of everything that exists in manifest actuality” (see Germano 1992:29).

Klong chen pa: Grub mtha’ mdzod, 171.3–172.1: de’ang rang bzhin du gnas pa’i rigs dang / yang dag par blang ba’i rigs la ghzi dang lam gyi dbye bas nmam pa gnyis su dbye ste / dbyings kyi rang bzhin gezi kun la khyab par gnas dus na / ‘char gezi dbyings kyi cha ni nor bu rin po ch’i gter dang ‘dra ste / gang ‘dod ‘byung ba’i ghzi ghur gnas la dngos su gang du’an ma chad pa bzhin du /chos sku ngo bo nyid sku’i dbyings te sku dang ye shes ‘char bai’i go ‘byed pas bshag la / shar bai ye shes snang ba’i cha rig pa dang sku ni rkyen sgrub pa bral stobs khyang rang la yod pa’yon tan mngon par ‘gyur nges kyi cha tsam nas bras bu can gyi ljon shing gong du ‘phel bai’i dpe gsungs te / dag rgyu la dag’bras kyi ming gis btags pa’o / mdo sde rgyan las / gser gyi rigs dang rin chen mchog gi dper bshag pa yin /.

Ibid., 172.1–4: zhar la lam la slob dus liar bshad na / dbyings kyi rigs de gnyis ka rang bzhin lhus grub tu yod pas rang bzhin gyi rigs ser te rten du gnas la / de’i steng du sens dang po bskyed pa nas bzung ste sa bcu rgyan mtha’i bar gyi dge rsa bsdod nams dang ye shes kyi gnyis gnyis gsud pa thams cad la yang dag par blangs pa’am rgyas ‘gyur gyi rigs shes bya ste / dge ba de yang dag par blangs pa can rang bzhin rigs kyi dri ma bsal stobs khyang rang la yod pa’yon tan gsar du skye ba liar ston pa’i phyir ro / ding sang ni gezi la rigs de gnyis mi brtsi bar / gezi de bzhin dang / lam ni rgyas (text: rgya la) gyur du ’jog pa ni dbyings ma go bai’i rnam ‘gyur du snang ste / gezi la snang stong lhus grub tu yod pa dang ‘gal ba’i phyir te / ....

Ibid., 183.4–5: lam sbyangs nas dri ma bud stobs kyi skus bskyed pa liar stang bai’i cha nas rigs kyi rang bzhin zhes bya ste / gter dang shing dang / rin po ch’i sku dang /’kor los sgyur ba dang / gser gyi gsungs kyi dpe lngas bstan to /

See Ibid., 170.5–6.

According to Germano (1992:77–78), Klong chen pa says in the seventh chapter of the Tshig don mdzod that the teaching of the second dharmaakra, i.e., the prajñāpāramitā and so on, have provisional meaning (neyartha) and are surpassed by the nitartha teachings of the third dharmaakra.


Ibid., 496.4–6: /chos rje bu ston pa / sens can la bde gshegs snying po med par ‘dod do zhes pa dang / kun mkhyen pa sens can la / dag pa ye shes kyi kun gebi dang / ma dag-pa rnam shes kyi kun gebi gnyis yod par ‘dod cing / de gnyis rang bzhin mi gcig par ‘dod pa dang / stong gsugs bde gshegs [snying] po yid brtan (text: bstan) du rung par ‘dod do zer ba gsan pas /

See Mathes 2000:319.

Lit., the “intentional ground.”


Ibid., 29–30.


Seyfort Ruegg 1973:32.


RGVV, 12.14: ‘ayam eva ca bhagavāṁśa tathāgatadharmakāyo ‘vinirmuktakalākāsā
tathāgatagarbha ity ucyate. (de bzhin gshegs pa'i cho kyi sku 'di nyid nyon mongs pa'i sbubs las ma grol ba 'di ni de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po'o l, 'Ba' ra ba: op. cit., 498.4–5.)

a Schmithausen (1971:137) proposes reading ity ucyate instead of siicyate (B (8a3) is not clear, A not available).


603 Ibid., 38ff.

604 'Ba' ra ba: “Chos rje rnam gnyis kyi dngongs bshad nyi ma'i 'od zer,” 512.3–5:

In order to reinforce this point 'Ba' ra ba refers to RGV III.4a: “The [Buddha’s] state of [the ten] strengths is like a vajra [acting] on those who are hindered by ignorance." (RGVV, 91.15: balavatvam ajñānāvastu vajravad.)

605 In this regard Sgra tshad pa refers to Sa skya Pañcita, who never accepted the truth of any dharma that is established on an ultimate level, however subtle it may be (see Seyfort Ruegg 1973:31). In other words, if 'Ba' ra ba's existence of luminosity that is empty of shapes and colors entails that anything luminous whatsoever is left over in emptiness, it would not be accepted by Sa pañ, Sgra tshad, or probably even Bu ston.

606 'Ba' ra ba: “Chos rje rnam gnyis kyi dngongs bshad nyi ma'i 'od zer,” 515.4 and 516.6.

607 Ibid., 518.2: chos nyid 'od gsal yod pa la dngongs nas yor par gongs dbyibs kha dog med pa la dngongs nas stong par gungs /.

According to an explanation of Thrangu Rinpoche.

608 'Ba' ra ba: “Chos rje rnam gnyis kyi dngongs bshad nyi ma'i 'od zer,” 501.3–502.2: de'ang sens can la yod pa'i bde gshegs snying po de nyon mongs pa'i dri ma dang bcas pa / de nyid rang gis gnas lugs ma rtags par 'khrul pa de ma rig pa yin la / ma rig pa de la nyon mongs pa dang po / (text: blo) bur sgrigs zer ba yin la / de las gzhan pa'i dbyibs kha dog gi dngongs por gru pa mi gsal ba la bu / gang gis kyang sgrigs pa med pa'i gsal la dang pas de la 'od gsal dang / rang bzhin rnam dag zer la / de nyid kyis rang nyid ngo ma sib pa ma rig pa de khyen gyi dbang gi gsal gis (text: bsun) 'dzin na thogs su shar ba 'kor bar khyams pas / 'kor ba'i chos kyi sa bon nam / sens can gi bde gshegs snying po de / ... chos nyid nyams su blangs pas / las dang nyon mongs pa'i sbubs na gnas pa de'i las dang nyon mongs pa bag chags dang bcs pas de dang pas / chos nyid 'od gsal ba de mngon du gyur pa ste / langs gnyis kyi sa yi chos sku'am / bde gshegs snying po ste l.

609 Basing himself on the Lankāvatārasūtra (LAS, 220.9–16; see p. 18 in the introduction of this work) 'Ba' ra ba explains (op. cit., 509.2–3: “An alaya[vijñāna] that is different from buddha nature does not exist. That which is one in essence has thus been given two different names” (bde gshegs snying po las tha dad pa'i kun gshi med par grub pas / ngo bo geig la ming tha dad pa gnyis btags). 'Ba' ra ba also refers to the Ghanavyuhaśūtra, which says (see Peking Kangyur no. 778, ma nang tshogs, vol. cu, 62b1): “The Tathāgata taught buddha nature with recourse to the term alaya[vijñāna]” (bde gshegs snying po dge'ang // snying po la kun gshi grasa / de bzhin
gshegs pa ston pa mdzad). For the unusual form ...snying po dge'ang see Ibid., 49a8: de bzhin kun ge' ri nam shes pa l/ de bzhin gshegs pai e ge snying po.

a It should be noted that 'Ba' ra ba explicitly equates kun ge' ri and kun ge' ri nam shes in his “Chos rje rnam gnyis kyi dgongs bshad nyi ma'i ’od zer,” 499.3–4.

It should be noted in this regard that neither the Lankavatāratātra nor the Ghanavyūha is quoted in the Ratnagotrāvibhāgavākyākhyā.

'Ba' ra ba: “Kun ge' ri nam shes dang ye shes kyi rnam bzhag,” 620.1–4. In his “Chos rje rnam gnyis kyi dgongs bshad nyi ma'i ’od zer” (527.6) 'Ba' ra ba explains that it is by virtue of its awareness that the buddha nature experiences suffering. This is like the experience of suffering in a dream (rig pa'i cha des du kha myong baste rmi lam gyidu kha myong ba bzhin no).

It should be noted that 'Ba' ra ba explicitly equates kun gzhi and kun gzhi'i rnam shes pa in his “Chos rje rnam gnyis kyi dgongs bshad nyi ma'i ’od zer,” 499.3–4.

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RGVV, 35.18–19 and 36.7–9: buddhadhatu sa cenn na syan nirvid duhkhe 'pi no bhavet / netchā na prārthanā nāpi prāṇidhibhavat bhavet // bhavanimanātaduḥkhasukhadojagnenkaṃ gottre sati bhavaty etad agotraṇānī na tad yataḥ // .

a Johnston reads vidyate in place of tad yataḥ (I here follow Schmithausen 1971:145).

See 'Ba' ra ba (“Chos rje rnam gnyis kyi dgongs bshad nyi ma'i ’od zer,” 503.4), where the attainment of the dharma-kāya is called the “buddha nature of a buddha.”

RGVV, 26.3: buddhe gotre tatphalāsya ca dhrdtarah.

'Ba' ra ba: “Chos rje rnam gnyis kyi dgongs bshad nyi ma'i ’od zer,” 519.4–6: chos rje rin po che kun mkhyen pa l/ sens can gyi bde gshegs snying po sangs rgyas yin pa dang / sangs rgyas kyi yon tan yod par bzhed (text: geshed) ces pa ’di ni l/ bde gshegs snying po chos nyid ’od sgol yin pa ni / de sens can la yod pa dang sings rgyas la yod pai ngo bo la khyad med pa la dgongs nas / sens can la yod pa bde gshegs snying po sangs rgyas yin par gsungs te l/ rgyu la ’bras bus rgyas gdab pa la dgongs pa dang l/ rgyu la ’bras bu'i ming btags so l/ sens can gyi bde gshegs snying po la sangs rgyas kyi sa'i yon tan yod thams de dang dang bas / sangs rgyas kyis yin,' doha las / gyur la kun gyi sa bon .

Because [the buddha element] is endowed with faults in [only] an adventitious way, but naturally endowed with qualities, it is of an unchangeable nature: as it...
was before so it is after.” (RGVV, 41.20–21: *doṣāgantukatāyogād gunaprakṛtiyo-

gataḥ / yathā pārvuṁ tathā paścād avikārivadharmatā//)

625 'Ba' ra ba: “Chos rje rnam gnyis kyi dgongs bshad nyi ma'i 'od zer,” 545.1: yon tan 
rang bezhin nyid ldan phyir gsungs kyi / stobs sog sion tan nyid ldan phyir / ma gsungs 
pas so //

626 RGGV, 84.3–4: yad uktam akāśalakṣaṇo buddha iti tāt pāramārthikam āvēni̱kām 
tathāgatānām buddhalaṅkāṇam abhisāṃdhāyoktam //. The quotation is an introdu-
ction to stanzas RGV II.29–37.

627 'Ba' ra ba: "Chos rje rnam gnyis kyi dgongs bshad nyi ma'i 'od zer," 545.1: "Buddha 
nature possesses the five qualities of the svabhavikakāya in actuality" (ngo bo nyid 
sku'i yon tan lnga ni / bde gshegs snying po yod de //)

631 RGVV, 26.14: *abhede jiyeo 'rthasamdhi~ paramārthadhato~ /.

632 'Ba' ra ba: "Chos rje rnam gnyis kyi dgongs bshad nyi ma'i 'od zer," 543.3: “Buddha 
nature possesses the five qualities of the svabhavikakāya in actuality” (ngo bo nyid 
sku'i yon tan lnga ni / bde gshegs snying po yod de //)

636 Ibid., 523.5–6: chos dbyings rnam pa'i dag pa la chos sku'i yon tan du gsungs te / 
dbyibs kha dog dang gsangs dang dbyer med pa'o // mtsphan de'e la dbyibs kha dog yod 
/ stobs sog sion kyi grangs yod pas dbyer yod de //

637 'Ba' ra ba: "Kun gzhi'i rnam shes dang ye shes kyi rnam bzhag," 623.4–6: *nam 
pa'i khyad par dbyibs sna thsogs pa dang / kha dog sna thsogs par bstan du yod pa / 
snang ba 'tar ma grub pas / stong pa ni glo bur ba kun rdzog kyi cho dang / bde gshegs 
snying po ni rnam pa'i khyad par dbyibs sna thsogs pa dang / kha dog sna thsogs pa 
dbyer med pa'i mtsphan nyid can / mtsphan ma med pa / rang (text: ring) rig pa'i ye shes 
spros pa thams cad dang bral ba / bla na med pa'i cho sion nyid ni med pa ma yin par 
gsungs pa la //

638 'Ba' ra ba: "Chos rje rnam gnyis kyi dgongs bshad nyi ma'i 'od zer," 530.1–532.4.
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639 Ibid., 541.5–6: nyi ma'i 'od nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor dgon as yin kyang / nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor gyi g dang ma 'gags 'od du shar bas / nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor las 'od tha dad pa ma yin pas / nyi ma'i 'od mthong ba la nyi ma mthong zer ba bzhin / stong gzugs bde gshegs snying po dngos ma yin kyang bde gshegs snying po'i g dangs ma 'gags pas du ba la sogs pa'i rtags bcur shar bas / bde gshegs snying po las tha dad pa ma yin pa dgon pa yin te / stong gzugs la bde gshegs snying po gsungs pa'o //

640 This is made clear in 'Ba' ra ba's reply (op. cit., 531.4–6) to an opponent who insists that, according to the Angulimaliyaśāra, buddha nature is adorned with the major and minor marks. It should be noted that 'Ba' ra ba does not adopt Dol po pa's controversial Dharma term kun gezi ye shes.


642 Ibid., 532.4–6: ma dag pa'i kun gezi'i bde gshegs snying po'i rig pa ste rang ngo ma shes par 'khrul pas / kha phyir las kyi rnam rtags sna tshogs par shar bas / ...'khor bai chos rnam kyi gezi byed pas / ma dag pa'i kun gezi'i rnam shes te / stobs sogs kyi yon tan med pas sems can no /.

643 Ibid., 533.2–3: bde gshegs snying po rang gis rang ngo shes te 'khrul med rang so tshugs pa na rgyal stobs sogs pa'i phyir ro / kha phyir las kyi rnam rtags sna tshogs par shar bas / ...'khor bai gezi mi byed do / stobs sogs kyi yon tan med pas so / dag pa ye shes kyi kun gezi's 'khor bai gezi mi byed do / glo bur dri ma med pas 'khor bai bde sduug la sogs pa mi myong bas so / / des na ldog cha la dbyar na rgyal kham cho nges gnyis su bzhed pa yin la / kun gezi gnyis po de'i rang bzhin bde gshegs snying po yin pas ngo bo gcig yin no /


645 Dharma and dharmatā are defined in the Dharmadharmaaśāvibhāga as being neither different nor identical. They are not identical because the ultimate (dharma) exists and the apparent (dharmas) not (negation of identity). On the other hand, dharmatā is defined as the absence of duality (equated with dharmas) and as such also in a sense not different from the nonexistent dharmas (negation of difference) (See Mathes 1996:122–23).


647 See Stearns 1999:162.

648 For the translation and explanation of these experiential mahāmudrā terms see Callahan 2001:389–91.

649 'Ba' ra ba: "Dus 'khor ba rdo rje snying po la dri ba yi ger bskur," 587.6–588.1: ji las khyad par med ces na rnam dga' ri yid ni chos pas med pa sam gnyis rab tu phyre ba yin te / gzugs la sogs pa'i khyad par med pa'i phyir ro // ces pas / dag pa chos rgyid / ma dag pa rnam shes sam chos na rang bzhin dbyar med yin la chos rgyid nges mtha' shes ni rang bzhin du 'gags pa ste / sems gnyis su byung pas ba kun bzhin du kun rgyud sna tshogs su shar ba ni kun rtags kyi bden pa'o / lam bsgom pa'i dus su sems gsal rig stong gsum ston nam dangs pa bzhin du / sal le / sing nge / brig ge nyams su myong ba de don dam pa'o / bden pa la.

650 See my translation of Gzhon nu dpal's Ratnagotravibhāga commentary (DRSM, 43.2–4).

651 See Stearns 1999:162.

652 For the translation and explanation of these experiential mahāmudrā terms see Callahan 2001:389–91.

653 'Ba' ra ba: "Chos rje rnam gnyis kyi dgongs bshad nyi ma'i 'od zer," 550.4–5: de la bu'i gsal rig stong gsum dbyar med de don dam pa'i bden pa ste / gezi lam 'bras bu thams cad du 'gyur ba med pa'o // de'i char sgo ma 'gags pa ste bag chags kyi dbang bzhin du gzung 'dzin sna tshogs su shar ba ni kun rtags kyi bden pa'o // lam bsgom pa'i dus su sems gsal rig stong gsum ston nam dangs pa bzhin du / sal le / sing nge / brig ge nyams su myong ba de don dam pa'o / bden pa la.

654 'Ba' ra ba: "Dus 'khor ba rdo rje snying po la dri ba yi ge bskur," 585.2–3: chos rgyid rang ngo ma shes pa la sas thad pa'i spang bya med pas / chos rgyid rang ngo mtha' shes pa na / spang gnyen ye shes skyes pa ste / chos rgyid rang ngo ma shes pas med par song pas
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I

spang bya med par song yang / rang ngo shes pa med par ma song bas / gnyen po med par mi 'gro ba bao /

Ibid., 574.1–2: chu nyid rlung la sogs pa grang ba'i rkyen gyis 'khyags te / rdo bzhin du song kyang khyag pa dang chu gnyis rang bzhin cig tu (text: du) gnas cing / me la sogs pa'i rkyen gyis khyag pa bzhu ste / khyag pa med par song yang / chu med par mi 'gro ba bzhin nam /

See van der Kuijip 1983:41.

"Being empty in essence" could refer to gzhan stong emptiness, of course.

658 Blo gros mtshungs med: "Nges don gsal byed sgron me," 257.5–6 and 277.5.

See above in the section on Dol po pa's view.


"Being empty in essence" could refer to gzhan stong emptiness, of course.

660 Blo gros mtshungs med: "Nges don gsal byed sgron me," 257.5–6 and 277.5.

See above in the section on Dol po pa's view.

661 Tib. rnam par grol ba.

662 Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas: Shes bya kun khyab mdzod, vol. 3, 34.7–9: ... bden pa gnyis po 'di'ang chos rnams dang chos nyid ji tla ba bzhin du de nyid dang gzhan las rnam par grol ba yin pas geig pa dang thad gang du'ang brjod du med do.

I am indebted to Karl Brunnhölzl for drawing my attention to this passage.

663 Based on the common Madhyamaka reasoning that anything can be conceived of as a member of a pair of opposites, from which it follows that something only exists in view of its respective opposite (cold is only possible in dependence on hot and vice versa): 

"...because the [two truths] are mutually determined, with falseness being [defined] in view of truth, and truth in view of falseness." (Mi bsnyod rdo rje: Dbu mala Jugpa'i rnam bshad, 147:24: 'di dag phan tshun bden pa la lhos nas brdzun pa dang / brdzun pa la lhos nas bden par rnam par bzhag pa'i phyir te ...)

666 Ibid., 149a2–3: 

"[These mahamudra teachings] do not say that samsara and nirvāṇa, taken as actual things, are one in essence. Phrases [like] 'one in being equal in terms of lacking an own-being' are found among the words of all the discourses that teach the profound definitive meaning, such as the prajñāpāramitā (lit. 'the mother of the victorious ones') of the illustrious one" (... 'khor 'das sogs kyi dngos don ngo bo geig tu gsungs ma yin te / rang bzhin med pa'i tshul la mynam pa nyid du geig pa'i sgra shbor ba 'di ni bcom ldan 'das kyi rgyal ba'i yum sogs nges don zab ma ston pa'i gsung rabs thams kad kyi ishig zin la ...).

655 Ibid., 147b5–6: 

"Thinking that the two truths are in reality not different, Bka' brgyud Rin po ches teach that thoughts are the dharmakāya, that sāṃśāra is nirvāṇa, and that defilements are wisdom. Nevertheless it has not been established that [pairs of categories] with the meaning of the two truths, such as thought and dharmakāya, and sāṃśāra and nirvāṇa, are one in essence." (... bden pa gnyis ni don la thad du yod du min pa la dgos nas / bka' brgyud rin po ches rnam rtog chos sku dang 'khor ba myang 'das dang nyan mongs ye shes su gsung gi / de ltar gsung na'ang bden gnyis gi don can gi rnam rtog chos sku 'khor 'das sogs ngo bo geig yin par bgrub pa ni ma yin te /)

667 Ibid., 149a3f.

668 According to the colophon (Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 742–6), Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes requested one of Gzhon nu dpal's closest disciples, Slob don Smon lam grags pa, to compose a biography, which Chos grags ye shes expanded upon and completed in Yang pa can in a fire ox year (1517). I am indebted to Leonard van der Kuijip, Harvard University, for providing me with a copy of this biography.

I cross-checked this work with the short biographies contained in Situ's and 'Belos' Kan tshang brgyud pa rin po che'i rnam thar (vol. I, 636.4–637.2), the Gangs
For a description of Zwah dmar Cho's grags ye shes's biography of Gzhon nu dpal and Bsod nams rgya mtsho, see Ehrhard 2002:11–13.

669 Occasionally the variant readings Rtse and Rtsed occur.

670 See also Ehrhard 2002:13.

671 Zwah dmar Cho's grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 12b1–3: “[Gzhon nu dpal] told [me: Once] I was followed by a drunken horseman from Khams Mi nyag. I told [myself it would be better] to leave the way. He also left [the way], trailed [me], drew his sword and came after me. He hit the bag on my back, but I was not hurt. When he made to strike again, [his] sword fell to the ground, and I plucked up courage and jumped from behind on the horse. I thought of stabbing [him] with a small knife I had with me, but controlling myself with a [Buddhist] remedy, only threw him off the horse on the ground and did not harm him otherwise.” (khams pa mi nyag rta pa chang gi mnos pa zhi rig la byung / las zur zer bas bser byon yang / las ral gri bton nas ded cing rgyab pa / khu rgyab kyi 'bo khris la phog kyang rna ma byung / las brdarg par btsats mas pas ral gri sa la lhun / der thugs ngar langs te / rta rgyab tu rgyangs kyi mchongs / gri chung yod pa bsun rtsis kyi mod la gnyen pos zin / rta kha nas sa la bskyur ba tsam ma gtags gnod pa gshen ci yang ma byas gshung /)

672 Ibid., 2b3–4: sku'i skye bsa snga ma mang po rlbs po chon'gi spyd pa rab tu spyd pa zhes bha ba ni / grub chen o (text: u) rgyan pa'i slob ma go lung pa Gzhon nu dpal du gyuur to zhes bya ba dang /

For a short biography of O rgyan pa, see the Blue Annals (Roerich: 1949–53: 696 and 700–705). Although a disciple of Rgod tshang pa (1189–1258), O rgyan pa received his main practice (namely the O rgyan bsnyen grub) from a dâkini in Oddlyâna. It was considered to differ from both the Bka' brgyud practices and the Kâlacakra system (see Smith 2001:46).

673 Zwah dmar Cho's grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 2b4–6: khyad par du dad 'phel zhing dang po sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa 'dzugs pa'i dus su snges pa bya ba rnam la gtags pa zhi rig yin bams pa skye bsa zhi rig yong gi 'du / su yin ni mi shes bstan pa 'dzugs pa'i dus su snges pa btsan yas su skyes pa' 'dra gshung zhing / bams yaw bzhangs pa'i lo rgyus dang / rgyal blon rnam kyi bya ba ji ltar mzdad pa dang / mkhan po bo dhi sa tsa dang slob da bzhed pa bzhed pa btsan pa btsugs pa dang / lo tsa ba chen po rnam kyi chos ji ltar bskyur ba gshung dus sbyan chab mang du 'byin zhing /.../

674 Ibid., 32a–3: bdag gi bla ma mthshungs med nam mkha' blo gros kyi zhal snags nas ni / kho bo bla ma dam pa' di dpal phag mo gru pa dpal slob kyi skor de na bzhugs pa zhi gis kyang yin bams pa yod gshung /

675 Ibid., 32a–3:chos rje rin po the lo chen gyi zhal nas / mdo sngags thams cad la mkhyen pa mtha' yas shing / lo tsa (text: tsa) byang ba dang de'i rtsom pa rnam la'ang dagyes par sngag bas / nges par rong zom chos kyi bzang po'i sku skye yin pa' 'dra zhes bdag la yang yang gshung ngos /

676 Ibid., 32b–4: ngas rgyud bla ma' di dang por blo la bzang ste zin pa dang go ba mnyam du byung nas slob gnyer gsar du byed ma mga' dus phyis su song nas kyang zhig cha kha yar la blo bskyed ni byung /

677 See for example DRSM, 22.23–24 or 94.4–5.

678 Cho's grags ye shes's biography of Gzhon nu dpal has only “valley” without specifying whether it was 'Phyong rgyas or Yar klung. According to the Gangs can
mkhas grub rim byon ming mdzad (348.10), his birthplace was in the 'Phyong rgyas valley of Lho kha region.

679 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 431: /rgya sman lha khang gi mda’ grong nag mo / de'i nang nas kyang dbus shyim zhes bya bar chu pho spre’i lo la sku bitam pa /.

680 Ibid., 347: ...bod rgyal po'i blon po 'gos rgyan gyi rgyud pa yin / 'gos yul 'bring mthams nas...yab mes snga mo'i dus su dbus su lhags nas / rgya sman yang po sar phebs te....

681 Ibid., 442–3: ...yab kyi khams bsang ba thugs kyi dran / ...yab snga mo nas mi lag tu song bas yum gyis legs par bskyangs !.

It is not clear when this happened, but the event must have occurred before Gzhon nu dpal completed his ninth year (446).

682 The monastery at that time followed the teaching tradition of Bya yul ba Gzhon nu 'od (1075–1138), who was one of Sgam po pa's Bka' gdam pa teachers (see Ehrhard 2002:13).

683 Las chen Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan: Bka’ gdam kyi rnam par thar pa bka’ gdam chos byang gsal bai'i sgron me, 1.4–5: lo dgu bzhes pa na spany g.yas su mkhan chen rin po che sangs rgyas bstan pa'i drung du rab tu byung / mtshan Gzhon nu dpal zhes bya bar byang /.

684 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 4b2–3: slob dpon bsam bsang pa dang dpon slob gnyis kyi bsnyen par rdzogs pa mdzad de !.

685 Ibid., 4b3: chos brtse de bshin gshegs pa karnapa...pa'n chen vanarata‘i drung du byang chub mchog tu thogs bskyed cing !.

686 Ibid., 4b4: chos rgyun gnyan ba la bde mchog dril bu las dkyil gyi dbang bskur....

687 Ibid., 4b6–7: sngon gyi dag ba'i bag chags bsang pos rigs sad pa'i skye bu chen po...nages don gyi chos skad thams cu kyi klong rdol / mdo sde zab mo rnam kyi drang ba dang nges pa'i don rnam par 'byed pa la thogs pa med par gyur pa yin....

688 Ibid., 5a4: mkhas shing grub pa'i skyes bu drug bcu rtsa drug la bren nas thos bsam phyogs med du mdzad pa ni !.

689 Ibid., 5a4–6: rab tu byung nas lo gsum gyi bar du dbyar yun kyi las gregs re tsam mdzad pa ma gtogs spany g.yas su khus bo slob dpon sangs (text: sang) gregs pa'i sar bzhugs te / byang chub mchog dem pa'i spodyo pa la 'jug pa la thugs legs par byangs / slob dpon shes rab dar ba...de la'ang spodyo 'jug gsan / de dus dbang grags pa rgyal mtshan bsnyel bai' sku rim la spany g.yas pa rnam kyi phyogs (text: phogs) blangs nas sman blu ma dang du gtsong dbang phyogs bas dang por thsar kha yar cig deb thog nas btang pas thugs la zin nas....

690 Ibid., 5b1–3: dgung lo bcu gnyis bzhes pa chu mo lug gi llo dgon chos kyi dus su rtses thang du slob guyer la phibs / ...slob dpon bsam grubs bsang po bai's bzhugs / tshad ma rnam 'grel la thugs bskyangs / ...slob dpon yang spany rtsa dmar shig ge ba zhal ngom kyang nag pa / non shin du che bar 'dug pas 'dis cig brdung du 'ong dangos pa byang !.

In his Blue Annals (Roerich 1949–53:324–27) Gzhon nu dpal mentions Bsam grub bsang po ba as the last member of the lineage of the Pramāṇavārttika.

691 I.e., So ston 'Sākya dpal.

692 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 5b3–6: de nas shing pho spre’i dpyid kyi dus / mdo lung pa'i phu'i chos sding dgon par chos bar la thugs de...bya lo la...slob dpon ston sák pa la phar phyn gsan / phag lo'i bar du thsad ma'i gzhung dang nor bzang tik'a (text: tika) la thugs legs par sbyangs pas...rei bar la slob dpon pa'i phyag 'jug kyang mang du khur / lan cig sa rub gdong cig tu phyag bcug pas bros thar te / chos ldings kyi ri'i mthub la bros pas ma zin par !.

In his Blue Annals (Roerich 1949–53:324–27) Gzhon nu dpal mentions Bsam grub bsang po ba as the last member of the lineage of the Pramāṇavārttika.

693 I.e., So ston 'Sākya dpal.

694 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 5b7: khyi llo dgon rtses thang gzhung gsum dang bshad sion mdzad !.

695 Ibid., 6b1–2: slob dpon bsam bsang pa de slob dpon bsam yas pa'i grva (text: gra) pa yin pa la dus phyis slob dpon ston sák pa'i grva (text: gra) tshang du 'phos nas so sor
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711 Ibid., 9a6: de res chos rje de bzhin gshigs pa rises thang du phibs nas tshogs su byang chub mchog tu thugs bskyed pa dang / naro chos drug bsuds pa dang / ’jam dbyangs kyi sgrub thabs dang / tshe dpag tu med pa’i mdo rnam gsan l.

712 Ibid., 9b4-5: rta lori agun de rises thang du bla ma rkyang chen pa la rtis zhus nas ... lug gi dpyi de thang po chen chos bar mzas nas gser khang du bzhugs / de dus kyang rtis la legs par bsams pa yin gsung l.

713 Ibid., 13b7: me pho byi’i lori dpyi de snar thang du sgra slob tu thegs te chen po sangha sri pa la gugs / slob (one syllable unclear) gyi stengs nas kala’pa sgra’i sa ris thang mar bzang l.

714 Ibid., 46b1-3: kar rtis la dus ’khor rgyud ’grel gyi dongs pa ji ba bzhin ma longs te / bod kyi mchas pa snga phyi mang po yang nyung na’i byed rtis sangs rgyas pa rang lugs su ’khrul pa’dbang gis grub mtha’i rtis ngos ma zin par / ’das lori gangs dang ni ldog ma dag cing / bod kyi rgyal khrims zhiig rjes zla bai ngos ’dzin ’chugs pa sogs ma ’khrul ba dongs nas rtis la ’khrul sel brsams pas ... las bzhed pa de ’gog pa lugs dang gezan dag de’i lugs ’thab par bzang ste / gtan chen por gyur zhing / ... naro chos drug ji ltar gnang bai ’gsungs la zin bris kyang mzas / ... gsan l.

715 Ibid., 10a2: ’dul ba ’dzin pa grags pa rgyal mishan pa yang phyag phyir phibs pa lags ....

716 Ibid., 9b6-10a2: de’i ston khar song ba na dbang grags pa rgyal mishan gyes / rje rin po che blo bzang grags pa ... sgyan drangs nas chos kyi ’khor lo rgya chen po bo skor bar ’dug pa’drung du thegs / blai’i rnal byor / byang chub lam gyi rim pa / ... naro chos drug ji ltar gnang bai’i gsungs la zin bris kyang mzas / ... gsan l.

717 Ibid., 29a2: khyed dga’ ldan pa ’di rnam byang chub lam gyi rim pa de la shin tu mchas te / de gang la brten pa’i lam sgron mi mchas l.

718 Ibid., 10b1: ’di bshad pa dang ’gal ba min pa’drang nges kyi ’byed lugs shig theg pa chen po rgyud ma na bshad ’dug ....

719 Ibid., 10b7—11a3: sngar chos rje rgyal tshab rin po che gungs sngags bla med kyi bde chen gyi ngos ’dzin gyi brsoms pa gsgs pas / de la thugs ’gro ba byang nas / skabs shig tu / de legs pa’dug ste der bde chen de bde ba gezan ’di yang min ’di yang min zhues mtha’ bcad nas / rang lugs zhu ba de la ngos bzungs ’dug tshul zhus pas / des mi ’ong chags pa dkar po’i phyogs kyang ma yin / chags bral nag po’i phyogs kyang ma yin pa’i bcu drug pa zer ba gcig yod pa yin gsung ba de la thugs ches lhag par ’khrungs nas / de gcig pus chog par yong / de res skabs tog che bar ma grub / chos rje thugs spros pa chung bas l ....

720 Ibid., 6b2: nged gsun rkyang chen pa la sras pa yin / de phyis nga la dus ’khor yong ba de’i rten ’brel du song ’dug l.

721 Ibid., 10b2—5: lug gi agun de dus ’khor la thugs sbyong bar bzhes nas bla ma rkyang chen pa’drung du gsal ba biab pas / de la sbyor drug gi khrid theb ggsos gsung / ... khris gnang brus zhas nga khris byed gyi med gsung / bha na su la zhu zhus pas ’ju la kla khang stengs su zhus gsungs / ... de nas chas kha bsnams nas thegs te dus kyi ’khor lori mchog dbang / sbyor drug ... gnang l.

See also Ehrhard 2002:41, fn. 9 and 78, fn. 43.

722 See Ehrhard 2002:78, fn. 43.

723 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gezon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 11a4: de’i dbyar rkyang chen pa dang dpon slob guysis lha khang stengs su thegs nas / dpal dus kyi ’khor lori rdul tshon gyi dkyil ’khor du dbang bdun / gong ma chen po / rdo rje slob dpon bdag po’i dbang yongs su rdzogs pa dang / ....

724 Ibid., 11a5: jo nang kun mkhyen chen po: mzas pa’i nges don rgya msho’i lung gsan l.

725 I.e., the schools of the second diffusion of the Dharma in Tibet.

726 Ibid., 18a3—6: chos rje lha khang stengs pa rang bzhin (?) du thugs rjes ’dein pa’i stobs kyi / ... thams cad thugs degyes par byung ba yin / spyir bla ma thams cad sku drin che / khyad par chos rje ’di shin tu sku drin che ba yin / da ltar thes ring po yod pa
'di yang khong gi tshe sgrub gcig gnang ba de'i yon tan yin pa 'dra / ...chos rje rin po che...nying mai bka' get gnyis kai' mckhyen pa rgya che / gsar mai dus 'khor la sogs pa'i rgyud dang sgrub thabs la sogs pa du ma mckhyen / kun mckhyen chen po jo mo nang pa dang / chos rje bla ma dam pa dang / ...skyes bu dam pa mang du bsten /.

727 Las chen Kun dga' rgyal mtshan: Bka' gdams kyi rnam par thar pa bka' gdams cho 'byung gsal ba'i sgron me, 4.5: 'chos rje lha khang stengs pa la Jo nang sbyor drug.

728 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gezhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 12b3–5: spre'i lo'i ston 'jug tu song ba na lha khang steng su thegs nas / gsum idan gyi bla ma zbu ba yin zhes sems 'grel skor gsum rnamns tshang mar gsan /

729 The trilogy of texts known as the Sems 'grel skor gsum comprises the Vimalaprabha (Peking Tengyur no. 2064), the Hevajrapindhārthātikā (Peking Tengyur no. 2310), and a Caṅtrasāntvāra commentary (Peking Tengyur no. 2117) (see Stearns 1999:178).

730 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gezhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 12b3–5: kun mckhyen shangs pa'i drung du thegs pas... dus 'khor rgyud 'grel la 'dad pa yod pa de [la] legs gsung nas zhal gibs bzhes byung gsung / der zla ba lnga'i bar du bzhugs nas rgyud 'grel gyi bshad pa legs par gsan / ... bu ston thams cad mckhyen pa'i sa bcdad dang mchan bu la brten nas / gsung b'ai bshad pa grol khar / da nyid kyis dus 'khor legs par shod cig /

731 Ibid., 13a3–4: kun mckhyen pa'i drung du... bu rin po che'i mong dkyil gyi steng nas dus 'khor gyi dbang yongs su rzązsogs pa /

732 Ibid., 27b2–3: pan chen rin po che'i drung du... dpal dus 'khor lo'i dbang...gsan /

733 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Lo chen gyi rnam thar, 14b7–15a2: memo yos kyi drung du rgyud thams kyi bla ma dpal dus kyi 'khor lo rgyud 'grel pa dang bcas pa gsan...khyed nges par sbyor drug don du gnyer na / pan chen rin po che la bsnyen pa las gchen pa'i gnas gang yang med /


735 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gezhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 18a1–2: lan cig lha khang stengs pa'i gnang nas gdu sa pa la khyed kyis gar phyin gsung / ngas drung pa dang 'bel gtam byas pa lags zhus pas / khong gi dus 'khor chos rje phyogs pa dang 'thun par 'dug gsang / mi mthun par 'dug lags zhus pas de ci yin nam ma 'thun pa cig 'ong thang ba la / khong skye ba snga ma dus 'khor mckhyen pa cig yin par 'dug gsang skad / de thugs bar dang 'dus 'di yang skye ba snga ma slob myong 'dug /

736 Ibid., 19a1–2: de nas rtses thang gi sna ng ba khra mor bzhugs nas dus 'khor le'u dang po'i mjug gi go sla'i tika (text: tika) dang mo rnam rten yang brtsams /

737 Ibid., 56b3–57a1: lcags pho byi bai lo yan du... lo de'i dbyar sphyan gyas su ston pa rin chen dpal bzang zhes bya ba mi phyed pa'i gus pa can grol ba btar pa ldar / ... dpal dus kyi 'khor lo'i rgyud 'grel chen dri ma med pa'i 'od dang bcas pa bshad pa rzązsogs par gsan /

738 Las chen Kun dga' rgyal mtshan: Bka' gdams kyi rnam par thar pa bka' gdams cho 'byung gsal ba'i sgron me, 8.3–5: rgyud thams cad kyi rtsa mo dpal ba 'dus pa dang dus kyi 'khor lo gnyis kyi tika...poti bcu tsam brtsos sna ng.

739 Ehrhard 2002:41, fn. 9.


741 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gezhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 15a6–b2: ...dgung lo nyi sbu rtsa brygad bzhes pa phag lo'i dpyid de rta nag tu sgrol mak thegs / ... chos rje sgrol ma'i drung du...nying mai skor gyi poti mi gcig pa lnga bcur nye gcig la thugs sbyong chen po mdzad pas....


744 Ehrhard 2002:37.
745 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 28a7–b1: ...chos sdings su rgod phrug chos rje'i sku mdun du chos gsan du thegs nas...chos rje dang snag yang mang du mjol / khyad par rgyal bzsangs su mjol nas bka' lung mang po gnang mzdad de / ...de res the rings mched lnga'i rjes gnang dang phag mo gzhung drug gi skor mkhan chen rin rgyal bai' yig ch'ai stengs nas gnang ba gsan /.

746 Las chen Kun dga' rgyal mshan: Bka' gdam gyi rnam par thar pa bka' gdam chos 'byung gsal bai' sgron me, 4.4: rgod phrug grags pa 'byung gnas pa'i drung du bsnyen sgrub sogs 'brug pa'i chos skor....

747 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 52b5-6: sgrib pa med pa'i chos kyi sgo phul du 'byung ba mngon du bryneda pa zhes pa ni / snag zur tsam smos pa bzhin / rong sion smra bai' seng ge chen po snye phu na chos gsung pa'i sar byon nas /.

748 Ibid., 19a4-5: glang lo'i dbyar chos rje rong chen pa dpon slob thang po cher chos bar la thegs pas der thegs nas dpon slob mams la bsnyen bkur zhig kyang zhus / rgyud bla ma gzhung rkyang gi bshad pa dang rnam nges kyi bshad pa gsan zhing / ...gsang 'dus rim lnga'i bshad pa cig sbrus pas...gsungs nas gnang /.

750 Ibid., 20a7: ...chos rje rong chen pa...sku mdun du thegs / spyi chos gang gsung mrams dang / khyad par...du ma 'jug pa gsan....

751 Las chen Kun dga' rgyal mshan: Bka' gdam gyi rnam par thar pa bka' gdam chos 'byung gsal bai' sgron me, 3.3: rong sion smra bai' seng ge la phar phyin dang spyojug 'sog sgsan /.

752 For an account of the lamas of the Rngog familial lineage of Spre'u zhing, see Roerich 1949-53:406-14.

753 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 21b3–22b1: spre'u zhing du thegs nas rin po che 'byung chub dpal pa'i zhas la grugs te ddu mzdad bera shis dpal zhes bhyi bai' sar bzhugs nas / dge 'dan sngan pa' mkhan chen seng ge dpal ba dang lhan du gsan pa la /....


755 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 22b1–2: chos rje nyer gnyis rin po che'i sku mdun du phal cher thegs / sku mdun der dge bai' bshes gnyen mang du tshogs nas 'bel gsum khye nas dus 'da' ba yin pa la / spyan snga rin po che yang dge bshes gzhung mrams kyi chos skad las ches lhag pa thugs mthong chen po yang gnang /.

756 Ibid., 24b2–25a5: lcags pho khyi'i so ka cha chu bo ni da bdag nyid chen po blo gros thegs re bzhugs / der chu mig dgon gar nas bla ma tshul rgyal ba phibs byon pa la / thugs rje chen po bsgom bglas gsal /.

757 Ibid., 33a4–5: lcags mo phag gi lo la chos rje sams dpai' chen po gra na bzhugs pa'i sku
mdun du thegs te gsang 'dus gsgron mtshali mcham mth’i geod dang bcas pa'i steng nas bshad pa legs par gsan /.

760 Ibid., 25a7–b3: de nas spre’u zhing du rin po che’i drung du thegs nas / mthshan brjod phan yon dang bcas pa / rnam snang sgyu dra / bshad rgyud rdor phreng / rtoq bsdun / rtoq gsum / dam rdzas kyi rtoq pa / gdragon drug / gshed dmar rim par phye ba bceu dgu pa / rdo rje snying po rgyan gyi rgyud / phyag chen thig le / ye shes thig le / de kho na nyid kyi sgron ma / ... thus nas gsan /.

761 Ibid., 26a2–3: chu pho byi bai’i lo la rtes thang du bshugs nas cho man du gsungs /.

762 And the rise of the Rin spungs family. These events marked also the beginning of a century-long power struggle between the provinces of Dbus and Tsang (see Ehrhard 2004:249–50).

763 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 27b5–6: byi bai’i lo nas sbrul lo’i bar du gong gi thugs kyi legs par bsng ba sne’u gdragon rtsur sku mdun du bshugs nas / dge bai’i bshes gnyen rnam dang / ’bel gnam kyo nas dus’ da’i bar mdzad / res rtes thang du bshugs nas cho man du gsungs kyang phal chel sne’u gdragon du thegs’i agos pas dang po rgya dur du tshud nas ci thon byas pas thon byung te / ’dir rgyan tu sku mdun kyo nar sdom agos pa ’di yang mdun ma’i phugs bsng po mcig ’dug bsam nas mdun ma bsgru’ ’dod chen po byung ba yin gsung /.

764 For the rise of the Phag gru dynasty see Petech 1990:85–137.

765 The foundation of Rteses thang is described by van der Kuijp (1991:315–21).

766 The title spyan snga points to his religious function as the successor of Spyan snga Rin po che Grags pa ’byung gnas (1175–1255), the spiritual forefather of the family (see Ehrhard 2002:20 and 54–55).

767 See Mathes 2003:xiii.

768 I.e., the Tshal pa Kangyur (see Imaeda 1982:13).

769 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 26b3: de’i ston ma’i byar rgyal bsangs su gong ma chen po’i dgos rdo rje snying po rgyan gyi sbyor drug logs su phyung ba lta bur ’dug gsung /.

770 Ibid., 26a4–b3: gling lo’i dpyid grub pa’i dbang phyung nags kyi rin po che ... rtes thang du phibs pa’i thes sku mdun du thegs nas dri ba ma dang du zhus / ... slob don klu sgrub kyi mdzad pa’i sbyor drug gi rgya dpe gzig phyag na ’dug pas de legs par gsan / de g Gron gsal gyi sbyor drug logs su phyung ba lla bur ’dug gsung / de rjes suang byagd stong pa / rdo rje phreng ba / rdo rje gur / mthshan brjod kyi’i grel pa nyi ma dpal ye shes kyi mdzad pa / vibhütis mdzad pa / de’i grel bshad / don yod lha’i grel pa / dbang mdor bstan gyal grel pa / rnapa / sadhuputra / byang chub rdo rje gsum gyis mdzad pa / chos’i byung zha’i mchod chog / mngon rtogs rgyan / mdo sde gyan / dbu mdha’i rtsa’i grel / nyi khri rnam’i grel / rnam’i grel le’u dang po’i grel bshad / slob don kalukas mdzad pa / dba ma thig sgral nams kyi grya dpe gzig skabs ’gar dri ba dang bshad pa ma dang du gsan / ... do bha la sogs po’i rgya dpe rnam gnang sgrigs nas dri dang bsang pa ma dang du zhus pas ... bde mchog li’i pa’i dbang yang gsan / zhab pa te kyang ma dang du mdzad sthod gsung /.

771 For a description of this visit see ’Gos Lo tsä ba Gzhon nu dpal: Mkhas pa chen po dpal nags kyi rin chen gyi rnam par thar pa, 42.6–43.6: ... spa gror byon te / ... de nas spa gro nas yos lo (=1435) la nyang stod du phibs / de nas rin spungs su phibs nas ....

772 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 27a1–2: de rjes pan chen nags kyi rin po che slar yang bod du phibs te rtes thang du dge bai’i bshes gnyen mang po la nmal ’byor yan lag drug pa’i khrid gnang ba gsan zhung / mi gyo bla med kyi dbang yang zhus /.

773 Ibid., 27a2–6: ’brug lo’i dbyar pan chen rin po che bsam yas mchims phur bsbud pa’i phyag phyir thegs nas bshugs te ... der yang dri ba dang ’bel gnam ma dang du zhus /.
...de rjes chos rje pañ chen rin po che snev'udong du bzhugs pa'i zhabs phyir yang yun ring bar bzhugs nas 'gyur mang du mdzad /

774 Ibid., 27b4: pañ chen rin po che'zhal nas ngas dzambu'i gling gi sum gnyis tsam du phyin pa la pandita chen po mi i n y i ma shes rab che bar mthong / de'i 'og na kumāraśrī las shes rab che ba ma mthong zhes gsungs ba yin yang zer /

775 For a description of this third visit see Ehrhard 2004:253–56.

776 Lo tsā ba Mañjuśrī was assigned the task of interpreting by his own master Seng ge rgyal mtshan (from Stag tshang Chos 'khor sgang) during Varanatna's first visit to Tibet (see Ehrhard 2004:248).

777 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 36a1: pañ chen gnyis mdzad pa'i sha ba rai bsod pa yang bsgyur / de nas la s tod byang du lo tsā ba mañjuśrī ma pheds kyi bar du pañ chen chos gsung ba dang dbang bskur ba la sogs pa'i lo tsā yang mdzad /

778 Ibid., 37a3-4: de nas rim gnyis pañ chen rin po che snev'udong rtser spyan drangs...de nas zla ggcīg tsam song bā'i dhe gong ma chen po thugs rang bzhin du mi gnas pa'i rnam par 'gyur ba la rien / skyam 'chad pa stengs su dben par bzhugs /

779 Ibid., 27b7-28a1: de nas dvags (text: dags) po phyogs su thegs par bzhed nas dvags (text: dags) po 'bru mda' ba la sbyin bdag yong mi yong dris pas / 'ong bā'i zhu ba byung nas pho rta'i lo gsar 'phral de nas / tsā ri phyogs la thegs chog pa'i zhu ba nyin re bzhin du phul bas / gong ma mi 'thab gsung nas ni bhang ba'ng la gza ba bdun pa'i zhes ngsi bu bdun gyi bar lus gsung /

780 Dmar ston Rgyal mthshan 'od zer seems to have been a descendant of Dmar ston Chos kyi rgyal po (eleventh / twelfth century). See Ehrhard 2002:36–37.

781 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 8b1: ...de'i ston dbyar gyi dus su dmar ston pas 'on gyi chos sgrigs sgs du mthongs / 'byung ba'i zhabs la gŋas / gnyis tshogs la dang / gnyis tshogs la dang / 'byung gnas pa'i bjor ba'i zhus ba'i btsan thang na dag la dang / jigs byed ro langs bgyad skor sogs ga' sas kyi dbang gsan /

782 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Lo chen kun dga' rgyal mthshan: Bka' gdams kyi rnam par thar pa bka' gdams chos 'byung gsal bā'i sgron me, 4.4: rgod phrug grags pa 'byung gnas pa'i drung du bsnyen sgrub sogs 'brug pa'i chos skor /

783 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 28a7-8a1: jigs byed ro langs bgyad skor sogs ga' sas kyi dbang gsan /

784 Las chen Kun dga' rgyal mthshan: Bka' gdams kyi rnam par thar pa bka' gdams chos 'byung gsal bā'i sgron me, 4.4: rgod phrug grags pa 'byung gnas pa'i drung du bsnyen sgrub sogs 'brug pa'i chos skor /

785 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 28b3-5: zla ba bsdun pa'i nang du kong por 'gro bā'i grul pa mang du 'dug pa de'i zla la thegs par thag bcad yod pa'i zhu ba bsges ba dang / de nas sne'u gdong rtser su mthuns du thegs pas da khong gi bya bral byed pa la dra ba cig dang gtor cha cigs la sogs pa'i gnang byin gyis
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788 Ibid., 39a2–3: khyed dga’ldan pa ’di rnams byang chub lam gyi rim pa de la shin tu mKhas te / de gang la brten pa’i lam sgon mi mKhas /
789 Ibid., 28b7: ... mKhan chen bkra’ shis byang bas thugs dgyes dgyes (sic!) kyi ’phros gtam mang du byung /
790 Ibid., 29b1–2: rta lo’i sgam de sKu rab tu sKu rab khri dpon dpal ’byor bsang po bas sPyan drangs nas chos gsungs /
791 Ibid., 30a6–b2: lug lo’i sTon mjung kong po nas chos rje chos dpal ye sHes pa dpon slob rnams ’bru mdar phibs nas / zhang buz bi’i bar du bzhugs pa’i sKu mdun du dpal mkha’ spyod dbang po’i chos drung chen mo / karma paksI (text: pg shi) ’i dam ishig gi bshad pa dpal rang byung rdo rjes mdzad pa dam ishig rgya mtsho sHes bya’i lung gsan /
792 Situ and ’Be lo: Ka’m tshang bsryud pa rin po che’i rnam thar, 637.1: zhva dmar chos dpal ye sHes las chos chugs zhus /
793 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye sHes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 30a3: sPre’u lo’i sPryid sgam po sKor du thegs....
794 Ibid., 30b5–31a3: de nas spre’u’i lo’i sTon dvags (text: dags) po la bar du thegs nas chos rje ri mi ’Babs pa bsod nams rin chen pa’i drung du dpal mkha’ spyod dbang po’i sKyEs sbyor / ngo sProd gnad kyi me long / gsal ba’i me long / ... ri chos gcig shes kun grol / ... chos rje rang byung rdo rjes mdzad pa’i gKud khrid dang / zab don nang don rtsa ’grel / chos dbYings bitod pa’i ’grel pa / de bezhin gShegs pa’i sNyig po sTon pa’i sTsan boS / sKu gSung gYo sProd kyi sKyEs khrid rNams / mi nyag shes rab bsang po mdzad pa’i do ha’i khrid yig do ha skor gSurn / rmangs do ha’i rnams bShad / ... sGan /
795 Ibid., 31a5–6: lar gI gyo ngtshar che khong phyaq rgya chen po’i lSa ba’i ngas kyang bLos mi gTong / khos kyang bLos gTong mi ’on g/ dge ldan pa’i rang (text: ngang) tshugs ’di ngas kyang kbo bLos mi gTong / khos kyang gTong mi ’on gSung nas rang (text: dAng) tshugs shin tu dam par mdzad gSung gSuns shIn tu gUs pa gNang /
796 According to the ’Bras spungs dkar chag (vol. r, p. 1, phyi ka, no. 000012) the full title is: Dpal dus kyi ’khor lo’i rgyud bshad pa la’i jug pa rgyud gsum gyi gsang ba rnams par phyie ba /
797 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye sHes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 33a3: de’i zha’r la rgyud gsum gyi gsang ba rnams par phyie ba’i brtsom pa....
798 Mi bsKyod rdo rje: “Rje yid bsang rtse b’ai Rgyud gsum gsang ba....” 989.2–3: yang bla ma rin po che blo bsang grags pa’i lSa grub thsad mar yang khas blangs nas / mnyam med dvags po bka’ bSryud kyi sRol’ezin du bShed pa dpon slob yid (text: yIG) bsang rTse pa dag /
799 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye sHes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 31a6–b2: sPre’u lo’i dbyar kong por chos rje chos dpal ye sHes pa’i drung du chos mang du bsan pa’i phyir thegs par brtsams pa na / sbyin bdag gi gSung nas de mdzad na’i khor ’di nlams la nor nyan pa cI mi ’on gSung nas shol bsam thon pa yin gsung / ’bru mdar gShegs dmar gi dbang yang legs par gnang / de nas yar phibs par bzhed pa na sbyin bdag sku mChed thams cad kyis gZhi phab nas bzhugs par zhUs na’ang ma bzhugs / .... sPre’u lo’i sGun yar klungs su phibs /
800 Ibid., 31b5–7: bya lo’i dpyid gong ma grags pa’i byung gnas pa’i bka’ lung gis gdan sa thel du dge’i bshes gnyen chen po du ma bsdu sNon lam mdzad pa’i grar thegs nas rGod phrung chos rje ’jag spyil na bzhugs pa’i drung du nyin bsun bzhugs / de theng rting sna mo rDson ma bzhugs nas / chos rje rin po che nam mkha’ blo gros / chos rje rin po che lo chen / ... man gpo la phar phyin la sos pa’i gshung chos dang ’bel gSam gyis chos kyi smha’ dag la snang ba ren po gYas par mdzad /
801 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye sHes: Lo chen gyi rnam thar, 15b5–16a1: dgLong lo ni sHu rTa’ inga bsheS pa ’brug gi lo (=1448) la / rje ’gos bzang pho bZang du bzhugs pa’i drung
du thegs nas...chos rje nam pa dang rnam gnyis lhan du gsan zhing / ...de dus rje 'gos kyi zhal la kyang / khong rnam gnyis la rin po che lta bu'i slob mar gzung nas / nges don gyi bshad pa bya rgyu 'dug tshang byas pa yin / de dus nges don bshad pa tsam gezan gang du'ang byas pa med gzung I.

The same quotation is also found in Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 60a3.

802 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 31b7–32a1: de'i dbyar 'onchos sdings su rgod phrug chos rje'i sku mdun du thegs nas / grub chen u rgyan pa'i rdo rje gsum gyi bsnyn grub kyi nyams khrigs legs pa gzan pas....

803 Ibid., 33a3: ...slar yang rgod phrug chos rje'i sku mdun du rgod tshang brag tu thegs pa na/....


805 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 58a7: drung rgyal mtshan pa sne'u gdong gyi gnyer son bzhugs pa la phur pa man ngag drug pa lo sogs pa'i dbang gnang/.

806 Ibid., 32b4–7: de'i ston mjug kun bzang rtsa ba drung bsod nams rgyul mtshan pas shiyin bdag mdzad cing sne'u gdong rtsi' snang bzhugs nas / bsheed pa dang 'tbum pa'i dbang mang du gzung / ...i/yid bzang rtsa rnying par phyags phab cing slob dpon nam mkha' dpal 'byor pas nye gnas kyi khur blangs te bya lori degn bzhugs/.

807 Ibid., 58b1: yid bzang rtsa drung nas kyi gso lba tsab pas nyal 'byor yan lag drug pa'i khrigs gnang....

808 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Lo chen gyi rnam thar, 14b3: ...yid bzang rtsa rje 'gos kyi drung du doha skor gsum dang / sgo rim... gsan zhing / khyad par du me pho stag gi lo la btag gnyis kyi bshad pa gzan te l.

809 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 33b6: dgung lo lnga bcu rtsa gcig pa chu pho khyi'i dgun nas drug bcu rtsa gcig bshes pa chu pho spre'u'i bar du chos ji ltar gsungs / tshul rgyas par 'og tu 'chad par 'gyur ro l.

810 Ibid., 37b6–38a1: dgung lo drug bcu rtsa lnga bshes pa me po byi ba'di' agn stod gra'i sman gcig tu thegs nas cho rje sman gcig pa shes rab bzang po'i drung du zhi byed... gsan nas sgrub pa'i dam bca zla ba drug phul l.

811 Ibid., 38a4: geban yang...shin tu mang bar gsan / ...yar klungs su phibs l.

812 Ibid., 38b2: de nas chu pho rta'i bar du zla ba gcig ma gtos kyi mtshams la bzhugs nas dege bai'i bshes gnyen gshung gi bdud rtsi bshes pa bsheads pa rnam dang bral ba zhiig mdzad pa yin no l.

813 Ibid., 38b5–6: dgung lo bryad bcu rtsa bzhis bshes pa shing mo lug gi lori sos bdag mdo khams sogs bskor te l.

814 Ibid., 39a4–7: de nas me po spre'u'i lo zla ba gnyis pa'i tshes bdun gyi nyin / sku mdun bdag gis slob pa la bkur sti gnyas po dang / gser zho brya la sogs pa'i gnang...chos 'bul degos pa'i bka' lung phibs pas... dpal mkha' spyyod dbang po'i yig cha'i stengs nas gsum 'dus rim lnga dang / ...chos rje rang byung rdo rje'i bka' 'bum nas 'brei pa bzhis ldan sogs kyi lung / chos skyong ber nag can gyi dbang bzhis rdzogs phul zhing / me mo bya'i ston mjug phag mo lha lnga'i dbang / ...sa pho khyi'i ston bde mchog mkha' 'gro rgya msho'i rgyud 'glel... phul lo l.

815 Ibid., 55b4–5: zhi bar gshes khar yang / rgyud bla ma'i 'grel bshad brtson pa'i skabs las don gyi go ba ngan du ma song bar 'dug....

816 Ibid., 56b1–2: ...rgyud bla ma'i 'grel bshad rtsom pa'i skabs su tshig bzhis pa'i tshigs su bcad pa gcig bshal par gsums kyang de'i don zad par mi 'gyur ba'i spobs pa mnga' bar / slob dpon smon lam grags pa yi ge pa yin pas / de la btsa go ni rje nyid kyi byin brlabs su nges so zhes....

817 Ibid., 69b5–70a1: sprul lori sos ka rgyud bla'i 'grel bshad chen po brtson par gso lta btsab pas zhal gi gis bshes te rtsom pa la zug pa'i nyin / gezims khang nang na dpon slob gnyis las mi bzhugs pa la sa g.yo bai' cho 'phurl chen po byung / gezan sus kyang...
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ma tshor bar 'dug / zla ba bzhid pa la zug nas brgyad pa'i tshis bcva lnga la legs par grub / spyan gyis nyin nub dgongs pa tams las med kyang bshad pa dang lung 'dren la sogs pa thams cad sngar spyan gyis gezigs pas (text: pa bas) tshigs chung zhung rgyas pas / tham s cad ngor mishar du gyur pas mthon te / rtsom pa gang gnang na'ang / snga gezigs zhib mo dang tikä (text: tika) sog s jiitar mdzad pa'i don thugs bsam gyis gten la phab rjes / lung 'dren gyi skabs so so khöl 'don gnang rting / yi ge ci tsaam zin pa ltar zhal nas spro (text: spod) pa ma gtos / rtsom stan gyi tbon du bsgyur 'god snon 'bring mang po mi dgos pa la zhal nas / ngas brtsan sian gyi snon 'bring bsam mno kho nas byed pa yin pas / mang du bcos (text: bco) mi dgos po yin zhes gsung ngo /.

818 Ibid., 71b6: sa pho khyi lo la deb ther (text: ter) sngon po che bai' brtsom pa gnang zhing / ....

819 Ibid., 53a6-7: 'dir dpal phag mo gru pas bden pa gezi pa yin dgongs pa'i thugs kyi dad pa'i stobs lhag par rgyas bzhin pas thegs te / re zhig gi bar du bzhugs nas dgongs pa legs par btang bas / ....

820 Ibid., 53a7-b1: de bzhin sgebs pa'i snying po sems rang bzhin gyis 'od gsal ba 'khor 'das thams cad kyi gezi po gang yin pa de'gi gnas tshul thugs su ji lta bar byon te / sangs rgyas nas sans can gyi bar gyi gnas tshul 'di lta bu shig 'dug / bjöod par bya ba ldog pa ste / sams kyi spyod yul la ldog pas so / zhes bya la sogs pa dbu ma las 'byung bai' bshad pa thams cad kyang 'dir 'jug cing / ....

821 Ibid., 53b2-6: ...gsang ba bla na med pa'i tshul las 'byung bai' zung du 'jug pa zhes bya bai'i sgra bo che gang yin pa de yang da gzod 'bras bu'i dbang du byas pa min par cho thams cad kyi gnas lugs su gтан la phab nas / byis pa so sòi skye bo tha mad pa dag gis kyang nyams su bhang du yod par rgya cher gsung rab kyi sgo nas ston cing / nyams myong cung cad tsaam dang ldan pa dag la'ang de nyid kyi steng nas yang dag par ngor spro par mdzad de / de yang tshig skam po 'bzung nas gsung ba ne tsòi 'don pa lta bu mdzad pa ma yin / rang nyid kyi thugs su legs par chud de / ...legs par gsung shing / ...thsugs su byon pa'i yon tan gyi khyad par thams cad kyang zung 'jug gi lta ba mhar thug pa ngas pa de'i dbang las byung zhing / ....

822 Ibid., 54a5-6: kun mkhyen jo mo nang pas las snang dang ye shes kyi snang pa zhes so so ba rigs mi gcig pa'chos gnyis bres nas bzhag pa skad du gsung ste / las snang 'di nyid ye shes kyi snang bai'khyag par tha snyad biags te ye shes kyi snang ba ngo spro / ...chu dang khyag pa'i dpe ston par mdzad cing / ji sim rang dang gzhan / mod dang bcud zer ba de srid du de'i tha snyad bzhag ste de nas ni ye shes kyi snang bar ro gcig gsung /.

823 Ibid., 54a3-4: yang kha cig gsang sgangs bla na med pa'i skabs su'ang stong pa nyid kyi gsangs brnyan chos can / bden par med de / zhes bya bai'i tshul du dpayr pa 'dod mod kyi? stong gzugs mthong ba de nyid sans kyi gnas lugs mthong ba yin par bzhed /.

824 Stearns (1999:44) points out that Yu mo ba's understanding of the Kalacakra concept “reflections of emptiness” found its way into Dol po pa's work.

825 I.e., the translator of Vanaratna (Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gbeho nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 36a1-2: de nas stod byang du lo tsa ba matjušri ma phebs kyi bar du pan chen chos gsung du dang dbang bskur ba la sogs pa'i lta ya yang mdzad /).

826 Ibid., 54a6-b1: sngon byon pa'i dge bai' bshes gnyen rnam las grub chen yu mo'is gsung rab rnam dang / dpal sgam po pa slob ma dang bcsa pa'i gsung rnam dang / grub pa'i dbang phyog nags kyi rin chen gyi gsung rnam dang / byang chub sans dpal'i 'grei pa rnam dang / 'dus pa sgron ma gsal ba la sogs pa dang ! jam dpal zhal gyi lung la sogs pa dang / zab mo'is mdo sde du ma rnam dang / gsang sgangs snga 'gyur gyi skor mang po la sogs pa 'gal med du yang dang par bstan mdzad pas / ....

827 I would like to thank here again His Holiness the Drikung Kyabgon Trinley Lhundrup (Chetsang Rinpoche) for providing a copy of the handwritten dbu med
text of Gzhon nu dpal’s *Ratnagotravibhāga-vyākhyā* commentary, and Ven. Dzog-chen Ponlop Rinpoche for an old block print of the same text.

828 According to a cover page, the first chapter has 550 folios, the second 68 folios, the third 23 folios, the fourth 36 folios, and the fifth 21 folios.

829 This is according to a 34-page-long list of 430 photocopied texts that the Seventeenth Karmapa Dro dul Ugyen Trinley Dorje received from the Potala Palace when he was still at Tshur phu (Gzhon nu dpal’s *Ratnagotravibhāga-vyākhyā* commentary is the first entry).


831 Such as *chu ’thungs pas* instead of *mthu chung bas* on p. 3.23, or *snyon mongs* instead of *nyon mongs* on p. 142.17.

832 A reads … *gcig yin pa’i phyir / dper na phung po bzbin / yang na phung po rtog pa dag tu ’gyur te / bdag dang (gcig yin pa’i phyir / dper na phung po bzbin yang na phung po rtog pa dag tu ’gyur te / bdag dang) gcig yin pa’i phyir /*, as opposed to B: *gcig yin pa’i phyir / dper na phung po bzbin / yang na phung po rtog pa dag tu ’gyur te / bdag dang gcig yin pa’i phyir /*. The portion in parentheses is wrongly inserted by A.

833 DRSM, 575.7.

834 Zhma dmar Chos grags ye shes: *Lo chen gyi rnam thar*, 92a7–b1: *zla ba bcu gnyis pa’i nang du smon sdang mkhar du rje ’gos kyi drung du phyag phul la thogs/der bdzhugs ring zhab s tog bzang po ’bul ba gnang/ phar phyin gyi khrig gsan/.

This visit is recorded in the biography of Gzhon nu dpal as falling in the winter of the year 1472 (Zhma dmar Chos grags ye shes: *Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar*, 69b1–3: *brug gi dpyid ... de’i dgun chos rje rin po che lo chen pa’i zhal snga nas phyag ’bul phets pa la shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa sgom pa’i rim pa gsung/).

835 Zhma dmar Chos grags ye shes: *Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar*, 68b5–6: *de rjes smon ldang mkhar du bdzhugs nas sgrong gsal tik’a (text: tik’a le’u bcu pa yan medad/Ag ox year (=1469) is mentioned on fol. 68a5.

836 Ibid., 69b5–70a1 (see above in p. 145).

837 At the end of his biography of Lo chen Bsod nam gya mtsho, in the section that covers the years 1479–81, Zhma dmar Chos grags ye shes informs us that the king of the “southern region” (Lho rgyud) was a certain Bkra shis dar rgyas legs pa (Zhma dmar Chos grags ye shes: *Lo chen gyi rnam thar*, 121a6: *skabs der lho rgyud yangs pa’i rgyal bham la dbang sgyur ba bkra shis dar rgyas legs pa’i rgyal po ... *).

838 Lit., “in one step.”


840 The term *chos kyi spyan snga* is of course descriptive of religious duties as the successor of Spyan snga Rin po che Grags pa ’byung gnas (1175–1255).

841 Lit., “the one who is free from ignorance.”

842 Lit., “[the period of] the very clear springing up.”

843 DRSM, 575.23–576.8.

844 See Ehrhard 2002:23.

845 See Mathes 2003.

846 Tibetan translations from the Sanskrit are extremely technical, and in many cases a comparison with the Sanskrit ensures a more accurate rendering of the Tibetan. Still, it is my policy to follow the Tibetan wherever possible; the Sanskrit is only given as a reference in the endnotes.

847 See Johnston 1950:vi.


849 For a description of the concerned photographs, see Ibid., 31–33.

850 LAS, 40.14; the six manuscripts are: NGMPP reel nos. B 88/2, 23b5; C 13/7, 19a3; D 55/3, 16b2; E 446/15, 19a3; E 625/14, 26b2; and E 712/4, 14b8.
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851 See C 13/7, 150a4: ...neparabdade vahmi-muni-mätyke... (N.S. 873; 1753 A.D.).

852 None of the six is dated, but the use of a character symbol on top of the usual pagination—an old custom of marking a text as a copy—suggests an older age than the other five (this is according to the judgment of Diwakar Acharya).


854 Reel nos. A 112/10, 25a4–5; D 58/6, 24a3; and E 1200/8, 17a7 read traidhätukas-vacitattamāyādhimuktītaḥ instead of traiḍhātukasvacitatasyādhimuktītaḥ in the remaining mss. (LAS, 42.12–13).

855 A 112/10, 24a3 reads -satvā- against all other mss. (LAS, 40.14: -śraddhā-).

856 Reel nos. D 58/6, 63b1 and E 1200/8, 44b6 read padāḥ prabhīvāmīnāḥ instead of padāvīthāvīmīnaḥ in the remaining mss. (LAS, 113.6–7).

857 See E 1200/8, 133b7: ...samvat818... (= 1698 A.D.).

858 Reel nos. D 52/5, 30a3 and D 55/3, 33b7 read padiīb prthiviigmīnaḥ instead of padavīthīgīmin in the remaining mss. (LAS, 81.2–3).

859 Reel nos. A 917/6, 54b6 and C 13/7, 52a7 read yāvam lakṣāḥ instead of yāvad dhakārāḥ in the remaining mss. (LAS, 113т.5).

860 This is a deft allusion to the particular mahāmudrā tradition within which Gzhon nu dpal expounds the Ratnagotravibhāga. In his Deb ther sngon po Gzhon nu dpal characterizes Sgam po pa’s pāramitā-mahāmudrā as being the pāramitā in essence and also in accordance with the secret mantra[yin]. From his reading of Maitripa’s Tattvadāsakā and Sahajavajra’s Tattvadāsakāśikā, he follows Rgod tshang pa in claiming that Rje Sgam po pa’s pāramitā-based mahāmudrā is grounded in Maitriapa. (‘Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal: Deb ther sngon po, 632.6–633.4.)

861 According to RGV I.30–31, water or moisture exemplifies the undefiled nature of the buddha element, an aspect of vātṛagatagarbha, and in the corresponding vyākhyā water stands for the buddha element’s moist nature of compassion toward sentient beings (see Takasaki 1966:200–201). This quality is symbolized by the rain-bringing clouds of Maitreya, described here as the most excellent among the sons of the victorious one.

862 Corresponding to the buddha element of sentient beings.

863 A disciple of Maitripa who was known for spreading the tradition of pāramitā-based mahāmudrā in Tibet under the name of Sdug bsnag zhi byed. See DRSM, 5.18–19 and Seyfort Ruegg 1988а:13.

864 His full name is: Sgam po pa Dvags po Lha rje Bsod nams rin chen (see Guenther 1989:9–11).

865 The identification of Lama Rin chen with Sgam po pa is suggested by the poetic figure of the “youthful moonlight,” the same name as the ever young Bodhisattva Candraprabha. According to Rgyal ba Yang dgon pa (1213–58), Sgam po pa had once been Candraprabha, who requested from the Munindra the teaching of the Samādhīrājāsūtra in Rājagha. Candraprabha promised to remain faithful to this sūtra and its teacher in order that they might help him in the future. Thus the Muni became Sgam po pa’s disciple Phag mo gru pa (see Roerich 1949–53: 451–52). In “Sgam po pa’s Song of Response to the Three Men of Khams,” which is contained in the Bka’ brgyud mgur mtho, Sgam po pa himself claims that he is the reincarnation of Candraprabha prophesied in the Samādhīrājāsūtra (Trungpa 1989:277–78).

866 Tib. snying po, otherwise translated as “nature” in the the compound de bzhi gnseg pa’s snying po.

867 One way to define buddha nature is to follow the Pradīpodhyotana (a commentary
On the Guhyasamājatantra) and simply equate it with sentient beings (see DRSM, 7.21–22).

868 For Gzhon nu dpal’s use of de la, see DRSM, 20.22.

869 In the Peking Kangyur (no. 126) the Tibetan title is: Rnam par snang mdzad chen po mngon par rdzogs par byang chub pa rnam par sprul ba byin gyis rlob pa shin tu rgyus pa mdo sde’i dbang po rgyal po zhes bya’i chos kyi rnam grangs, while the Sanskrit title is given as: Mahāvairocanaḥbhisambodhivīraḥdhiḥśānaḥvaiḥ-ulyasitendraṣṭaḥsamādhaṃpravajjya (according to the Tōhoku Catalogue). In the Peking Kangyur, the quoted passage is in section rgyud, vol. tha, fols. 1197–1203a.

870 Tib. gsang ba’i bdag po; see LC, s.v.

871 The Peking Kangyur reads mthungs pa rnam las instead of mthungs pa rnam la. In the Peking Kangyur la la dag la is omitted.

873 The Peking Kangyur reads de’i rgyu nyid kyi instead of de’i rgyu nyid kyi. The instrumental is, however, confirmed by the vṛtti (see next footnote): smyung bar byed pa de nyid la goms par byed pa’i rgyus (rgyud ’grel, vol. cu, fol. 235a).

874 Buddha-guhya explains in his commentary the Vairocanaḥbhisambodhivīraḥdhiḥśānaḥmahāṣṭvantra-vṛtti (Peking Tengyur 3490a), which was translated by Gzhon nu dpal (rgyud ’grel, vol. cu, fol. 234a–2): “After fasting, one has a mind to offer and give. [Thus] it is not a fault to take fasting as an immediately preceding condition of virtue—generosity and the like” (smyung bar byas pa’i ’og tu mchod pa dang sbyin pa’i sens ’byung ba ste smyung ba de ni sbyin pa la sogs pa’i dge bai de ma thag pa’i rkyen byed pas nyes pa med do).

875 The commentary (Ibid., fol. 233a) glosses mshstan ma dang bcos pa’i nying nams pa zla ba dang skar ma dang nyi ma la sogs pa bzang po’i nyin bar (“during a day marked by a good [configuration of] the moon, stars, sun, and so forth…”).

876 The Peking Kangyur reads thams cad ’byor pa instead of thams cad grub pa.

877 See Schneider 1993:313.

878 Šaṅkara and Rudra are both an epithet of Mahādeva (Schneider 1993:311).

879 The god of war (Schneider 1993:308).

880 An epithet of Kubera (MW, s.v.).

881 The Peking Kangyur reads dus mthshan instead of dus mthshams. The Bod skad dang legs sbyar gyi shis bi mdzod chen mo (s.v.) gives Kālarātri for dus mshan ma, a goddess who is not unexpected in the company of Yama and Nirṛti.

882 Tib. mya ngan ’das. Personification of the goddess of death (see MW, s.v.).

883 Lit., “Chief of the World” (Tib. jig rten gso). Some of the preceding eight gods correspond to a list of the “Chiefs of the Eight Directions” (lit., ...of the east, etc.) given in Amarakośa I.3.2cd–3ab, for example: indro vahnih pitpati’i nairyo varunuo maru / kubera isa‘h patayah pūrvadīnāṁ dīśāṁ kramāt // (See Pant 2000, vol. 2:60).

884 I.e., Supārśa, Aruṇa, and Garuḍa (MW, s.v.).

885 An epithet of Umā (Schneider 1993:315).

886 From tapas (dka’ thub) and taka (elo) (MW, s.v.).

887 Padma starts a list of Nāgarajas that correspond (unsequentially) to the eight Nāgarajas given in Mahāvyutpatti § CLXVIII, nos. 3227–34: Šaṅkha, Karkotaka, Kulika, Padma, Mahāpadma, Vāsuki, Ananta, Taksaka.

888 Tib. nor ldan. According to MVY no. 3232: nor rgyas.

889 Tib. gdengs ka mang, “having many nāga heads.” Ṣeṣa is, among other things, called the “thousand-headed” (see MW, s.v.). The MVY (no. 3337) has listed Mahāpañaka (Tib. gdengs ka chen po) as the name of an ordinary nāga. Together
with the following rtag tu, Skt. Sadā (?) , it has been inserted between the seventh and eighth Nāgarāja.

890 The Nāgarāja Ananta (see MVY no. 3233).

891 Ādīdeva can refer to any of the main Hindu gods.

892 Tib. rig byed means Veda only. According to Dwakar Acharya (personal communication) the personification of the Veda is either Vedapuruṣa or Brahmaṇaspati.

893 I.e., the five Pāndava brothers (MW, s.v.).

894 The Peking Kangyur reads de 'dra'i tshig instead of de'i tshig.


896 Tib. bsam pa brlag pa rnams is glossed as byis pa in the Viśeṣaṭavaṭṭikā. In order to avoid a clumsy repetition, I follow Schneider (1993:264) and translate it as "fools."

897 The counting of chapters and stanzas follows Steinkellner’s (1977) Verse-Index (i.e., the chapter on svārthaṇumāna is taken as the first one).

898 The compound durbodhī refers to both nirdofatiipi and anyadofii. See Schneider 1993:52–53.


901 Tib. phyogs [su] 'dein pa, which is glossed by the Devātiṣṭayaśotraṭikā as phyogs su lhung ba (Peking Tengyur (no. 2005), bstod tshogs, vol. ka, fols. 67b8–68a1). The commentary on stanza 17 is introduced in the following way: "You [may] think that he (i.e., the author of the stotra) said this because he is partial. Therefore he said: ‘I [have not taken the side], etc.” (khyed ni phyogs su !hung bas de skad smra ba yin no snyam pa la / de'i phyir bdag ni zhes bya ba la sogs pa smras pa yin te, Ibid., ka, 67b8–68a1).

902 Cf. the explanation of the commentary (Ibid., ka, 60a3): gang dag gi tshig rigs pa dang ldan zhiing / tshad mas gezhal bar brnod pa de nyid la stom pa nyid du yongs su bzung bar bya zhiing... “One must hold as [one’s] teachers all those whose words are suitable and [able to] stand up to the demands of valid cognition...."

903 See dpyad pa gsum gyi dag pa'i lung (Tshig mdzod chen mo, s.v.).


905 Lit., "taught without a measure."

906 Tib. mdo sde.

907 The context clearly requires a past participle with the meaning of “taught” or “expounded.” Skt. nita (translated as bezag in Tib.) does not exactly have this meaning (Skt. utkram would be better in fact), but does it allude to the adjective nitrtham depending on sūtram. By means of this stylistic device (known as tantra in Sanskrit grammar) the hermeneutic term definitive meaning can be hinted at. See also de Jong (1979:579) who translates “taught as definitive.”

908 RGVV, 118.3–6: yasmin neha jināt supaṇḍitatamloke ’sti kaścit kvacit sarvajñāṇaḥ sakalāṁ sa veda vidhiṣat tattvaṁ paramā nāparah / tasmād yat suyam eva nītam
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909 Lit., “with a measure.”

910 What Gzhon nu dpal has in mind, of course, is the distinction between the provisional and definitive meaning (neyārtha and nitārtha) according to the Sarthindhinirmocanasūtra. This is clear from his commentary on RGV V.5, which says that hearing a word of these teachings on the buddha element yields much more merit than anything else could. Gzhon nu dpal explains that this stanza should be read according to the teaching in the Sarthindhinirmocanasūtra on the difference of merit resulting from the devotion to sūtras of provisional and definitive meaning (DRSM, 561.22–23).

911 The translators Dpal brtsegs and Ye shes sde are listed in a transmission lineage of the Abhidharmasamuccaya, which goes back to Maitreya (see the Blue Annals (Roerich 1949–53:344–45)).


913 Lit., “wrote the texts.” In the Deb ther sngon po (308.6) it is said that “he also wrote down [each page of the] texts one by one and gave it to the scholar Jñānaśri and others” (dpe yang kha yar bris nas mkhas pa jñānaśri la sogs pa la phul).

914 Lit., “with regard to those [texts].”

915 Probably the Thong chen rgyud bla'i don bsdus pa.

916 Lit., “to place in [his] mind.” Cf. the corresponding sentence in the Deb ther sngon po (423.1–2): ... byams pa'i chos la 'chi cho byed pas de'i bshad pa yang dag pa zhig gnang bar zhu zhes zhus !.

917 Cf Deb ther sngon po, 309.3: gnas tha dad pa rnas su ji ltar rigs par dge bai bshes gnyen don du gnyer ba rnas la byams chos kyi bshad pa mdeaz.

918 Cf. Lokesh Chandra 1963, vol. 3, no. 1138: “An explanation of the Uttaratantra, recorded (in the form of notes) by the translator Gzu Dga' [ba] rdo [rje] on the basis of teachings given by the Pandita Sajjana” (pañḍita sajjana'i gsung la lo tsā ba gzu dga' rdo rgyi zin bris byas pa'i rgyud bla ma'i rnam bshad).

919 Tib. Begyad stong grel chen. See Lokesh Chandra: Tibetan-Sanskrit Dictionary, s.v.

920 See Roerich 1949–53:328 and 404.

921 Ibid., 350.

922 See Khetsun Sangpo 1973 (vol. 5):45–47. Sha ra ba pa was a disciple of the Bka' gdams master Po to ba (1031–1105).


924 See Ibid., 14–16: Gro lung pa Blo gros 'byung gnas was the chief disciple of Rngog Blo ldan shes rab (see also Roerich 1949–53:331).

925 That is, Zhang 'tshes Spong ba Chos kyi ye shes (Ibid., 332).

926 Phya pa's main teacher was Gro lung pa Blo gros 'byung gnas. Phya pa himself held the office of abbot at Gsang phu Sne'u thog and was, according to Tauscher, a strict follower of Rngog Blo ldan shes rab's Svatantrika tradition (Tauscher 1999:vii–viii). Gzhon nu dpal informs us in his Blue Annals that there is a difference, however, in the two masters' presentation of the ultimate truth (see Deb ther sngon po, 309.5–7). According to van der Kuijp (1978:357), Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge was nonsectarian, although in fact he is frequently mentioned in Bka' gdams pa biographies.

927 Gtsang nag pa and Dan bag pa are two of the “eight mighty lions” who stand out as disciples of Phya paconst Chos kyi seng ge (Tauscher 1999:vii).

928 Gzhon nu dpal (Deb ther sngon po, 309.6–7) informs us that Blo ldan shes rab and Gtsang nag pa equated buddha nature with ultimate truth, whereas Phya pa took the latter (and thus buddha nature) as corresponding to a nonaffirming
negation (see paragraph I.1.1., “The Ratnagotravibhāga Commentary of Rngog Blo ldan shes rab” in that work).

929 In different parts of his commentary Gzhon nu dpal explains that “endowed” (Tib. ldan pa) should be understood in the sense of “being connected” (brel pa). To support his interpretation, he quotes Vinayadeva’s Hevajravajrapadoddharaṇanāmapaṇijīka, and notes that defining the relation between buddha nature and the qualities in terms of brel pa underscores both that the qualities have arisen from buddha nature and that the two have an identical nature (see DRSM, 29.18-21 and DRSM, 323.19-23).

930 This needs to be taken as implying that one focuses on emptiness as the cause of the qualities.

931 Skt. vyavadānamimitta (RGVV, 76.7) is the term used in the Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā for that which does not need to be added. It is the ever-present suchness or emptiness. The root text (RGV I.157-58 (J I.154-55)) suggests that the phrase “nothing needs to be added” refers to the qualities, i.e., that of which the buddha element is not empty.

932 Gzhon nu dpal must follow Rngog Blo ldan shes rab’s view, since he maintains that ordinary persons only possess subtle qualities, which must grow naturally. Thus it can be only their emptiness to which nothing is added.

933 The “Three Khampas” were Rje Khams pa Rdor rgyal (see Roerich 1949-53:188), or Phag mo gru pa, together with Khams pa Dbu se (i.e., the First Karmapa), and Khams pa Gsal sto sho sgom (m6-69). Chogyam Trungpa (1989:333) informs us in his Rain of Wisdom that Gsal sto sho sgom was the founder of the Sgra legs skyabs mgon line. The Three Khampas were not only Şgam po pa’s closest disciples, but also disciples of the Gsang phu Ne’u thog abbot Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge (van der Kuijp 1978:356-57).

934 Tib. bzhogs. According to Thrangu Rinpoche bzhogs does not make any sense here, and is probably corrupt.

935 The eight stages refer to the four stages that Gzhon nu dpal identified in Buddhist literature in general: (1) emptiness of a nonaffirming negation, (2) natural luminosity of mind, (3) basic consciousness, (4) all living beings; and the four stages found in this treatise in particular: (1) dharmakaya, (2) suchness, (3) buddha potential, (4) the nonconceptual (see DRSM, 5.1-4). On the basis of the Ldog pa bsdus pa and the Tarkajviilii he introduces the first point (emptiness) by explaining the distinction between nonaffirming negations and affirming negations, and then discusses the problem of how the ultimate can be grasped by an intellectual act of negation. The understanding of buddha nature as nonaffirming negation is then contrasted with its meaning of “element of awareness” in the third turning of the dharmacakra.

936 Peking Tengyur (no. 5782), sgra rig pa, vol. le, fol. 246a5.

937 Ibid., fol. 246a7.

938 Ibid.

939 Peking Tengyur (no. 5783), sgra rig pa, vol. le, fol. 253a5-6.

940 Cf. MAVBh, 22.23-23.5 where the existence or state (Skt. bhāva, Tib. dngos po) of the nonexistence of duality is taken as a defining characteristic of emptiness: “The nonexistence of duality, which is the state (bhāva) of [duality’s] nonexistence, is the defining characteristic of empti[ness]. The nonexistence of duality, that is, of a perceived object and a perceiving subject, and the state of its (i.e., duality’s) nonexistence are the defining characteristics of emptiness. Thus the defining characteristics of emptiness have been taught in terms of the own-being of nonexistence. Moreover, this own-being of its nonexistence neither exists nor does not
exist. Why is it nonexistent? Because of the nonexistence of duality. How so is it not nonexistent? Because of the state (bhāva) of the nonexistence of duality. These are the defining characteristics of emptiness.” (dvayabhāvo bhāvasya bhāvaḥ śūnyasya laksanān / dvayāgṛhāyaḥ bhāvaḥ śūnyatāyā laksanam ity ābhāvasvabhāvalaksanatvam śūnyatāyāh paridipitam bhavati / yāc cāsa tu tam bhāvaḥ śūnyatāyaḥ sa / na bhāvo nāpi cābhāvaḥ / katham na bhāvo yasmāt dvayāgṛhāyaḥ katham nābhāvo yasmāt dvayabhāvasya bhāvaḥ / etac ca śūnyatāyā laksanān ī.)

941 Peking Tengyur (no. 5783), sgra rig pa, vol. le, fol. 253a7. The two pādas are quoted as a pratika in the commentary, but I could not find them in the root text itself.

942 Ibid., sgra rig pa, vol. le, fol. 253a7–b1.

943 According to Lindtner (1995:37–39) the form “Bhavyaviveka” is also correct, whereas the usual one, Bhavaviveka, is corrupt and should not be used.

944 Approximate dates according to Ejima 1979:496.

945 MH, 10.3: tatra bhūtasvabhāvaṁ hi norvyadī paramārthaḥ ī.

946 According to Lindtner (1995:37–39) the form “Bhavyaviveka” is also correct, whereas the usual one, Bhavaviveka, is corrupt and should not be used.

947 Tib. min, Skt. na.

948 The object or qualification of a thesis in a nonaffirming negation, such as “do not ultimately exist as their own-being,” is said to be ultimately existent. This is an insight attainable by hearing and thinking, and accords with the direct realization of suchness. In this case, both artha and parama of paramārtha (ultimate) are taken to refer to the subject (the consciousness that understands emptiness). See Lopez 1987:314–16.

949 Peking Tengyur (no. 5256), dbu ma, vol. dza, fol. 64a6–b1.

950 Read gang ngag blo instead of gang dag blo.

951 If one maintains that the ultimate, which is beyond the intellect, boils down to a nonaffirming negation, it cannot be the negation proper, inasmuch as it would then be the content or object of words.

952 The term abhisaṃskāra is normally used in the context of mental fabrication (prapañca) and mental effort (ābhoga) (see Schmithausen 1969:138–42). Anabhisāṃskāra can thus be compared to niśprapañca and anābhoga.

953 In the context of the Madhyamakahādyaya (see Lopez 1987:315).

954 In the Svātantrika-Madhyamaka there are two types of ultimate, an inexpressible ultimate (aparāyaṣparamārtha) and an expressible ultimate (paryāyaṣparamārtha). The expressible ultimate can manifest, among other things, as an understanding that has arisen through a logical proof that establishes emptiness. Cf. Jñānagarbha’s Satyadvayavyabhāga-vṛtti 4ab (Eckel 1987:71 and 114–15).


956 Stanza XVI.13 of Āryadeva’s Catuḥṣataka is contained as a pratika in Candrakīrti’s commentary (the numbering is according to Vaidya 1923:125).

957 Tib. mtshan gebi is defined as: “that which is the basis for defining the definien­
dum by means of a definiens. For example, this [particular] golden vase is the basis for defining a vase.” (Bod rgya ishīg maṅsod chen mo, s.v.)

958 Peking Tengyur (5256), dbu ma, vol. dza, fol. 183a2–4. The quotation is from the fourteenth坝b am po.

959 Lit., “a person active internally” (Tib. nang gi byed pa’i skyes bu, Skt. antarvyāpāra- puruṣa (see Hirakawa 1978, s.v.)).

960 MA, 131.17–19.

961 Hopkins (1983:617) translates: “because it abides as the nature of all the phe­

omena [that makes full enlightenment possible].” For La Vallée Poussin (1910:321) phiyir functions here as a dativus finalis expressing purpose and so he
translates: “in order to introduce to [the knowledge of] the own-being of all things” (en vue d’introduire dans [la connaissance de] l’être propre de toutes les choses).

In this case, Candrakirti would have been employing the hermeneutical principle described as avatāraṇābhisandhi (Tib. gzhiug pa la ldem po dgoṅs pa),b which states that the Buddha taught the alayavijñāna with the hidden intention of bringing into Buddhism those who would otherwise be afraid of the teaching of emptiness. In such a construction, however, one would expect a future form such as gzhiug (see MA VI.43: gzhiug par bya ba’i phyir dang por kun gzhi’i rnam par shes pa la sogs pa bstan pa... “In order to motivate [people] to enter the [path], alaya-vijñāna and the like were taught.” (MA, 133.8)). Jayānanda explains in his Madhyamakāvatāraṭīkā: “Because it follows the nature of all phenomena means: because of [alayavijñāna’s] conformity to the emptiness of phenomena—in view of [the fact that alayavijñāna, likewise,] does ‘not [arise] from self, other, and so forth.’ [For this reason] only emptiness is the alaya; and this alaya is [also] vijñāna. One should know that emptiness was taught in terms of alayavijñāna, for one thereby thoroughly comes to know [reality] from the practice of not apprehending any phenomena.” (Peking Tengyur no. 5271, dbu ma, vol. ra, fols. 200b8–201a2: dngos po thams cad kyi ran bzhin rjes su zhugs pa’i phyir zhes bya ba ni gan gi phyir / bdag las ma yin gezan las min / zhes bya ba la sogs pas dngos po stong pa nyid kyi rjes su ’jug pa’i phyir stong pa nyid kho na kun gzhi yin la de nyid rnam par shes pa ste /chos thams cad mi dmigs pa’i sbyor bas yongs su shes pa’i phyir des na stong pa nyid la kun gzhi rnam par shes pa’i sgras bstan par rig par bya’o.)


b For a list of the four hermeneutic principles termed abhisandhis, see Broido 1984:6–7 and 24.

962 Since Candrakirti explicitly refers to the Lankāvatārasūtra when he makes the statement that the term alayavijñāna conveys the notion of emptiness (MA, 131.12), it may be assumed that he was aware of the fact that the Lankāvatārasūtra equated the alayavijñāna with buddha nature, and implicitly accepted that buddha nature is emptiness as well.

963 See LAS, 78.5–11 and Candrakirti’s auto-commentary on MA VI.95 (see paragraph 4 of my introduction, pp. 17–18).

964 The explanations in brackets are according to Khenpo Lobsang (Namo Buddha, Nepal). In fact, Candrakirti could have distinguished an aspect of the tathāgatagarbha teaching that has definitive meaning (inasmuch as it teaches the emptiness of mind and the notion that all sentient beings will become buddhas) from one with provisional meaning (namely that all sentient beings are already buddhas with all major and minor marks). Cf. also Seyfort Ruegg 1973:13 and 27–28.

965 RGVV, 43.9–10: cittasya yāśau prakṛtiḥ prabhāsvarāḥ na jātuḥ sā dyaur iva yāti vikriyām /. The Tibetan does not render jātuḥ (see DRSM, 7.15–16).

a B (24b5) reads yātu; A is not available.

966 My translation follows the Tibetan here. Cf. also ’Ju Mi pham’s commentary: “Any other mind—that is, thoughts or false imagining—different from the mind of dharmatā-luminosity, which cannot be sullied by stains, is not luminosity. The stainless dharmatā-mind, or the wisdom of luminosity, is taught as being the nature of mind, or basic clarity and emptiness united into a pair.” (dri ma gos par byar med ma’i chos nyid ·od gsal ba’i sems las gezan pa’i sems gezan rnam rtog gam yang dag min pa’i rtog pa ni ·od gsal ma yin la / dri ma med pa chos nyid kyi sems sam ·od gsal ba’i ye shes ni sems kyi rang bzhin nam gzhis gsal stong zung ’jug la brjod
do / “Theg pa chen po sde'i rgyan gyi dgongs don theg mchog bdud rtsi'i dga' ston ldeh,” 356.4-5.)

The corresponding Skt. of MSA XIII.19a-d is, according to Lévi (MSABh, 88.9-10): [matam ca citam prakrtiprabhasvarum sadad tad âgantukoaîdâsîtaîm] na dharmaîcittam re 'nyacetasa prabhâsvaratvam prakrtyâ (text: prakrtya) vidhiyate //. “[The mind is taken to be luminous by nature; it is [only] tainted by adventitious faults.] A natural luminosity of (i.e., consisting of) another [dependent] mind (cetas), different from the mind as true nature (dharmaîa) is not taught.”

967 Lit., “Srimalâpariprečhâ.

968 A commentary on the Gubhayamâjatântra with this name (Peking Tengyur no. 2690) is ascribed to Candrákîrî (Nakamura 1987:334); there is also a Praddipodâyatanamâtaîkâ ascribed to Āryadeva and Bhavyakîrî (Peking Tengyur no. 2659). The quotation has not been identified.

969 RGVV, 40.11: dhâtus tisyu avasthau viditau nâmabhau trîbhû ||. The three states are: the impure state of ordinary persons, the partly pure and partly impure state of bodhisattvas, and the perfectly pure state of a tathágata (see Tâkasaki 1966:231).

970 The four aspects are the dharmakâya, suchness, the buddha potential and the nonconceptual (see DRSM, 5.3-4).

971 That is, the terms mahâyâna, uttara, tantra, and sāstra (DRSM, 8.3-13.2).

972 That is, Gzhon nu dpal's explanation of the first three stanzas of the first chapter (DRSM, 13.2.-80.11), which are a summary of the Ratnagotravibhâga.

973 DRSM, 80.11-576.19.

974 The Sanskrit has Ratnagotravibhâga Mahâyânottaranatrâsâstra (RGVV, 1.1).

975 Technically, the explanations for those with sharp and average faculties are the commentary on the first two stanzas and the first part of the commentary on the third stanza of the root text. The root text is quoted (as in the entire commentary of Gzhon nu dpal), true to the Indian commentarial tradition, in sequential parts (pratikas), and then commented upon. Since the commentary between two neighboring pratikas can be very long, and even contain numerous quotations from later parts of the Ratnagotravibhâga, the quotations that are the next portion of root text or vyâkhyây (i.e., the ones that constitute stanzas 1.1-3 and their corresponding vyâkhyây) are put in bold letters.

976 Skt. vijnâapti has the original meaning of “making known” or “act of perception / cognition.”

977 According to the Yogâcâra ontology of the Madhyântavibhâga, there are no physical sounds outside of the teacher's and the disciples' consciousness that carry audible sense data from ear to ear. Rather, the mental forms of sound that arise in the teacher when composing and explaining a treatise directly create a corresponding mental form of sound in the mindstream of the disciple.

978 NGMPP reel no. A 38/10, fol. 1b6-7 (cf. MAVT, 2.16-3.12): (line 6): [i]dam idâni[...sâ]narâpam / [sâ]strâm ki[...]. (line 7): jñâptinâm na...sya sâsanâc châstra...  

979 NGMPP reel no. A 38/10, fols. 1b8-2a1: (line 8): ...sâpârahâ'ya bhaved iti ni-nmaradîrghavi... (fol. 2a, line 1): ...strâlaksañam / etac ca dvayam api sarvasmin mahâyâne sarvasminâ ca tadvyâkhyâne vidyate nânyatreti [I] ata etac châstram / [a]ha ca / [a]c châsti ca kleśarîpitum aśeṣan saṁtrâyate durgatito bhavâc ca / [a]c châsano...  

980 Otherwise translated as “vajra point.”
RGVV, 1.6: vajropamasyādhiṣṭhātrans padamī sthānam iti [vajrapadam!]. Cf. Gzhon nu dpal's commentary on this passage (DRSM, 20.20–21).


See Nakamura 1987:137.

The 'dul ba lung sde bzhi and the mdo sde lung sde bzhi, according to the Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo (s.v.), are respectively: (1) lung nam 'byed, (2) lung gebi, (3) lung zhu ba, (4) lung phran tshogs, and: (1) lung bar ma, (2) lung ring po, (3) lung dag ldan, (4) lung gcig las 'phros pa.

According to the Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo (s.v.), the correct name of this confession ritual is rgyun chags gsum pa.


RGVV, 90.12–13: atāh kramo 'nyo 'jam api svayambhuvo 'bhisekalabdha na mahāraṣṭa vidur iti. According to Takasaki (1966:335) the final iti shows that this stanza was quoted from some older material. It (iti) was not translated into Tibetan.

MSAbh, 4.6–7: vaikalyato virodhād anupāyatvat tathāpy anupadesāt / na śrāvakāyānam idāni bhavati mahāyānadharmaṁ kāhyanī //

The Sanskrit reads parinirvāṇa.

Tib. grub pa'i tshabs min no has no equivalent in the Sanskrit.

Tib. tshabs ma yin par would be syntactically better, and also supported by Skt. anupāyāṇa.

According to the Sanskrit: "One cannot get milk from a horn into a vessel."

MSAbh, 4.8–18: vaikalyāt parārthopadesāsa na hi śrāvakāyāne kaścit parārthān upadiṣṭāḥ śrāvakānām ātmano nirvāṇīvaṃkumāṇopadeśāt / na ca svarthā eva pāreṣāpadiṣṭyāmnāḥ parārthō bhavitaṁ arhati / virodhaṁ / svārthe hi paro nīyajñānam svārtha eva prayujyate sa ātmana eva parinirvāṇārthaprayuktā 'nuttarāṁ samaṃkāṁbodhim abhisamabhotosyata iti viruddham etat / na ca śrāvakāyānenaiva cirakālanāḥ bodhau ghaṭanaṁ buddho bhavitaṁ arhati / anupāyatvat / anūpa yo hi śrāvakāyānanāḥ buddhatvaṁ eva cānupāyāṇa ciram apī prayujyāmvāṁ prārthītām artham prāpnoti / īṣrīgad īva dugdham eva bhavitum arhati / na ca śrāvakāyānenaiva cirakālanāḥ bodhau ghaṭanāno buddhaḥ bhavitaṁ arhati / anupāyatvat / anūpa yo hi śrāvakāyānanāḥ buddhatvaṁ eva cānupāyāṇa ciram apī prayujyāmvāṁ prārthītām artham prāpnoti / īṣrīgad īva dugdham eva bhavitum arhati / na ca śrāvakāyānanāḥ buddhatvaṁ eva cānupāyāṇa ciram apī prayujyāmvāṁ prārthītām artham prāpnoti / īṣrīgad īva dugdham eva bhavitum arhati / na ca śrāvakāyānanāḥ buddhatvaṁ eva cānupāyāṇa ciram apī prayujyāmvāṁ prārthītām artham prāpnoti / īṣrīgad īva dugdham eva bhavitum arhati / na ca śrāvakāyānanāḥ buddhatvaṁ eva cānupāyāṇa ciram apī prayujyāmvāṁ prārthītām artham prāpnoti / īṣrīgad īva dugdham eva bhavitum arhati //

According to the Sanskrit: "One cannot get milk from a horn into a vessel."

MSAbh, 4.19–20: āśayasopadeśasya prayogasya virodhataḥ / upastambhāsya kālasya yat hināṁ hināṁ eva tat //

The Sanskrit has parinirvāṇa.

Tib. chung ba, Skt. parītta.

According to the Sanskrit: "In a shorter time..."

MSAbh, 4.21–25: kathāṁ virodhāṁ / pañcabhir vīrodhāḥ / āśayasopadeśaprayoga upastambhākālavirodhāḥ / śrāvakāyāne bhīparatītyaṁkumāṇāyaṁ tathārthān eva prayogas parīttas ca punyājaṁśanāmābhīṣaḥsaṁghita upastambhāḥ kālāna cāpāna tathārthaprāptīr yavat tribhir api janmabhir / mahāyāne tu sarvahān viparītayaṁ / tasmād anyonyavirodhād yad yānaṁ hināṁ hināṁ eva tat / na tan mahāyānaṁ bhavitaṁ arhati //

See MSA I.10. Gzhon nu dpal forgot to enumerate the second point, bstan pa. But in the quotation of MSA I.10 above the list of five points is given correctly.

Construed with the instrumental in Sanskrit in Skrit and Tibetan.

I.e., the path of accumulation.
That is, the entire path, starting from the path of accumulation up to the end of the path of meditation.

Lit., "...and so forth," which seems to be stylistically acceptable in Tibetan.

PRSGG, 14.3-6: kim kāraṇām ayu pravucyate bodhiyāno yatāraḥhitva sa nivāpayi sarvasattvān ākāṣatulya ayu yānu mahāvimāno sukhasaṅhyakṣaṃ samahāriṇīḥ
dhāraṇīḥ //.

Skt. Madhyamaka, Tib. dbu ma. But three lines below, the Tibetan reads dbu ma pa, which fits the context better.

The Tibetan does not have an equivalent for vyākhyaṭe.

According to the Sanskrit: “In this regard, the three[fold] way of pāramitā is explained...”

TRĀ, 14.5-8 (NGMPP reel no. B 22/24, fol. 91a3): tatra triṇi yānāni / śrāvakāyaṇānānāṃ / pratyekeyaṇānānāṃ mahāyānaṇānāṃ ceti / sthitiṣyair ca tarāṇā / vaibhāṣīkāsam / trāntikāyogācāramadhyamakabhedena // tatra vaibhāṣīkasthityā śrāvakāyaṇānāṃ / pratyekeyaṇānāṃ ca vyākhyaṭe // mahāyānaṇāṃ ca dvividham / pāramitānayo mantranayaṇā ceti / tatra yaḥ pāramitanaṇaḥ sarvāṃ trāntikāyogācāramadhyamakasthityā vyākhyaṭe //.

a The manuscript reads -srau- instead of -sau-.

b The manuscript reads ya instead of yah. The Tibetan transliteration suggests tryah.

c The manuscript reads śrau- instead of sau-.

Skt. caiko 'py has no equivalent in the Tibetan.

RA, 160.17-20: yaiva caiko 'py amuktah syāt sattvah kaścid iha kvacid / tāvat tadārthham tījṣeyam bodhim prāpyāpi anuttarām //.

RA, 161.1-4: yad evam vadaṃthā punyāṃ yadi taṃ mūrtimad bhavet / gaṅgāyāḥ sikṣākkhyeyu na māyāṃ lokadhatuṣu //.

The Tibetans did not translate saṃjñeyam; in addition, they inserted 'dod (demanded by the sense?).

RA, 162.5-8: uktam etad bhagavatā hetur apan atra dhyayate / sattvadhiṭṭhir aṃeyasya hita saṃjñeyam idṛṣi //.

Skt. udāgama- for samudāgama-(cf. Tib. yang dag 'grub).

MSABh, 171.10-13: ālambanamahatvaṇān ca pratipatte dvayos tathā / jñānasya viryārmbhāsaya upāye kauśalasya ca / udāgamaṃmahatvaṇān ca mahatvaṃ buddhakarmanah / etan mahatvayogdhi mahāyānaṇā nirucyate //.

The obstacles to the first five pāramitās can only be removed by praṇā, whose focus is the emptiness of everything. It is the importance and greatness of this focus that Gzhon nu dpal is referring to.

RGVV, 117.4: "praṇā śreṣṭhā śrūtaṃ cāṣyaḥ mūlaṃ tasmāc chrutaṃ param.

According to A (26a6); B (54b2) is not clear. Johnston reads śreṣṭhā praṇā (see also Schmithausen 1971:175).

b According to A (26a6) and B (54b2).

According to the Sanskrit: “does not approach.”

According to the Sanskrit: "does not approach.”

RGVV, 35.13-14: chittvā snehaṁ praṇāyātmanny atēṣam sattvasnehān naiti śāntir kṛpāvān //.

In the context of the Ratnāvali, translated as "realm of sentient beings" (see above).

RGVV, 88.16-17: hetvanantyāśa sattvadhātvākṣayatvā / kārunyaddrdeḥ; jñānasaṅha- pattiṣyogāt //.

According to the Sanskrit: "does not approach.”

This means seeing in all sentient beings the supreme qualities of their buddha potential.
AA, 8.16: sarvasattvānāgaṇita cittaprabhāṇādhīgamatraye…

RGVV, 98.10: buddhatvāṁ sarvasattvikeśa vimalagunanidhau nirviśiṣṭam vilokyā.
   a B (49b6) reads -nidhi against the meter. The commentary (RGV IV.10cd) has vi-
   malagunanidhi- qualifying “sentient beings” and probably read -nidhau (see

RGVV, 98.11: klesajñeyabhājālamāṁ vīdhāmassa karṇaṁ vāyubbhūtā jīnānāṁ.

RGVV, 25.4: bōhāyāṁ bodhīṣ…

RGVV, 66.16–17 (RGV I.129): sattadbātār asaṁbuddhātha klesākoṣeṣu anādiṣu / cit-
   taprakṛtyavaiyāvam anādīmad api udāhyam //
   a According to A (16b6) and B (23a4); Johnston wrongly reads asaṁbuddhāṁ (see
   also Schmithauser 1971:155).
   b A (16b6) reads -mahād instead of -mad.

The last chapter (18) is listed separately in the Derge Kangyur as an appendix to
the Guhyasamājatantra (see Tohoku 442 and 443). In the edition prepared by
Bhattacharya (1967), the eighteenth chapter (from which the quoted
pādas are taken) is part of the tantra itself.

In the Sanskrit, pādas 34b and 34c are in reverse order, probably in order to better
convey the sense: “the skillful means of [attaining] it (i.e., the fruit).”
(tadupiṇyay). The Tibetan has no equivalent for tad-.

GST, 153.6–9: prabhandham tantram ākhyātaṁ tathā bhedat / ādhiṣhaḥ praktiṣaṁ caiva asaṁbhāya
   aprabhāṣet // praktiṣaṁ cākṣeret hotur asaṁbhāya
   phalam tathā / ādhiṣhaṁ tadupiṇyaś ca triṁbhī triṁśrāhāsāvyāhā /.
   a According to B (23a4); A is not available. Johnston wrongly reads aviditā. See also
   b A (23a4) reads -ātma instead of -mahā.

The three introductory stanzas of the Ratnagotravibhāga show the influence of
the five rules laid out in Maitreya’s upadesa. The first stanza introduces the seven
main topics (vajra points) of the Ratnagotravibhāga. The second stanza justifies
them doctrinally on the basis of the Dhiirajñevinārasasūtra (in the Tibetan tradi-
 tion, the ‘Phags pa de bzhin gshes pa’i snying rje chen po nges par byan pa zhes bya
ba thog pa chen po’i mdo, Peking Kangyur no. 814). The third stanza explains their
sequence.

Tib. Rje btsun gyi man ngag thob pa.

These three first lines are nearly identical with the opening stanza of the
Vyākhyāyukti, which is as follows: / gang dag bdag pas blo chung ba / mdo rnam
‘chad’i dog de dag la / de la phan par bya ba’i phyir / man ngag cung zad byan par
bya / (Peking Tengyur 5562, sens tsam, vol. si, fol. 32a2). Apart from a few minor
variant readings, Ghznu nu dpal's quote differs from this only in that it lacks the third line (de la phan par bya ba'i phyir).

1043 The last three pādas of this quotation are identical with the last three pādas at the beginning of the Vṛṣṇiśvatākṣī (Peking Tengyur 5562, sans tsaṃ, vol. sū, fol. 33b5–6). The corresponding Sanskrit is quoted in Haribhadra's Abhisamayālaṁkārāloka (15.24–25): prayojanaṁ sāpindārtham padārthaḥ śāṇuśaṃbhikāḥ | saccavapariñiyat ca vācyat śūṭrārthavadibhiḥ //.

1044 I.e., the four anubandhas (Tib. agos 'brel, lit. “aim and [its] connection [with the text]”) are discussed at the beginning of Haribhadra's Abhisamayālaṁkārāloka (2.3–5): (1) sambandha (connection); (2) abhidheya (subject matter); (3) prayojana (aim); (4) prayojanaprayojana (aim of the aim, or ultimate aim).

1045 RGVV, 1.2–3: buddhas ca dharmas ca gaṇaś ca dhāturaḥ bodhir guṇaḥ karma ca [bānu] daḥmaḥ anīyamānāḥ.

   a In B (1b1) one aksara has broken away; A is not available. The gap is filled in accordance with Johnston.

   b B (1b1) reads acintyam instead of anīyam (correction according to Johnston); A is not available.

1046 In other words, the aim of the teaching of a buddha nature does not refer to the explanation of the motive of such a teaching, but rather to the realization of one's buddha nature.

1047 RGV I.1cd: “The body of this entire [treatise] is, in short, [all] seven vajra points.”

1048 The Tibetan word dbyes ba can also mean “to divide” or “open,” so that it is possible to compare the meaning of buddha nature to a vajra.

1049 Cf. the explanation of the buddha element further down (DRSM, 23.16–24.5).


1051 RGVV, 7.1–4: buddhādh dharma dharmaśā caṛyasāṅghaḥ | saṅgre garbhō jñānadhatvāpajñīṣṭhā | tajjñānāptiś cāgrabolhīrat balādyair dhmair yuktā sarvasattvārthakṛtāḥ //.

1052 Only the prostitute's direct speech announcing her commitment is a direct quote from the sūtra, the rest being a short summary.

1053 Cf. the Maṇjuśrīvikriṭasūtra in the Peking Kangyur (no. 764, mdo sna tshogs, vol. ku, fol. 247b6) for more details.

1054 Tib. Gser mchog 'od dpal. At the beginning of the sūtra (Ibid., fol. 246b7–8) it is said that she went to a grove with the son of a merchant on a beautifully ornamented chariot pulled by four horses. Maṇjuśrī saw them, and wishing to convert them, waited along the way for the chariot (Ibid., fol. 247a5-b2).

1055 Cf. the sūtra in the Peking Kangyur (Ibid., vol. ku, fol. 248b6) “Sister, generate bodhicitta, and I will give you these clothes” (srin mo khyod byang chub tu sens bsnyed cig dang / ngas khyed la gos 'di sbyin no).

1056 Tib.chos la snaŋ ba, Skt. *dharmacūḍa (LC s.v.); āloka connotes “readiness to meditate on the doctrine” (BHSD, s.v.).

1057 Tib. bchal pa'i gshi, Skt. śikṣāpada (see BHSD, s.v.).

1058 The Tibetan has only sans can for Skt. sattvaḥdhatu.

1059 RGVV, 40.7–8: aśuddho 'uddhaśuddho 'tha swiviṣuddho yathākramam / sattva-dhāturaḥ iti proko bodhisattvas tathāgatabhiḥ //.

   a B (234a) omits 'tha.


1060 RGVV, 20.4–5: jagaccharanam ekāntam (?) buddhaśuddaśuddham / munera dharmārthavinā tannishṭhaviṇā ganasā ca //.

   a Johnston reads ekatra, which does not make sense. Folio 11b of manuscript B is
barely readable, while manuscript A is not available, so that the correct reading could well have been ekāntam (see also Schmithausen 1971:140).

1061 Lit., “has settled in it” (tanniṣṭhatvād...).

1062 RGVV, 18.12–13: tājyatvān moṣadharmatvād abhāvāt sabhāvatvātah / dharmo dvi- dhārāyā śāṅgāh ca nāyantām śaraṇām param il.  

a B (1143) reads vi; A is not available.  
b B (1144) reads yā; A is not available.

1063 RGVV, 35.18: buddhadrāhataḥ sa cen na syān nirvid duḥkhī pē ni bhavet i.  

1064 Eckel (1987:71) translates Tib. rtogs here as “cognition.” He refers to the subcommentary (Satyadvayavibhāga pariṇāmika), which declares that no inferential valid cognition, such as fire deduced from smoke, is considered to be ultimate; what is meant here, rather, are arguments that prove the nonexistence of such things as fire (Eckel 1987:114).

1065 The quote is from Jñānagarbha’s commentary on the first one and a half pādas of the fourth stanza of the Satyadvayavibhāga: “Since it cannot be contradicted, reason is ultimate.” This is the beginning of the paragraph on the expressible ultimate (paryāyaparamārtha). The example “just as a direct perception” is extremely cryptic. Eckel (1987:115) notes, on the basis of the Satyadvayavibhāga pariṇāmika, that the term pratyakṣa, like the term measure, can refer both to the cognition that directly perceives an object and to the object itself. See also Schmithausen (1972:160), who observes that the definition of pratyakṣa given in AS, 105.8f (pratyakṣaṁ svatapraṇaśābhrānto 'rthāḥ) requires that the latter be translated as an “object that is ‘before the eyes’ or directly perceived.”

1066 MMK XV.2ab.  

1067 Skt. -bhavāś...  

1068 According to the Tibetan: “That which is an own-being is not created.”

1069 PP, 260.3–8: svabhāvah kṛtaṁ nāma bhāvīyati punah kathāṁ / (XV.2ab) kṛtakaś ca svabhāvāḥ ceti parparavairuddhātvād asaṅgatārtham eva tāḥ / iha bhī svar bhāvāḥ svabhāvā iti vyutpatter yah kṛtakah padārthah sa loke naiva svabhāva iti vyapādasyate tad yatāḥ apām aūṣṇyam dhātuvaṅgaḥ pratyamanipāditaḥ kārketanādināṁ padmarāgādibhāvā ca / yas tv akyatāḥ ca svabhāvas tad yatāḥ agner aūṣṇyam jātānāṁ padmarāgādināṁ padmarāgādīsvabhāvā ca / sa hi teṣāṁ padārthāntarasaṃpar-kāyanitavāt svabhāva ity ucyate il.  

a La Vallée Poussin reads dhātupiṣāca, which I have corrected to dhātuvādi-in accordace with the Tibetan (see MVY 3754).  

It is a clever move to end the discourse on an intellectually realized emptiness with a quote from Candrakīrti’s commentary on MMK XV.2ab, since this passage-leaves open the possibility of an own-being, as long as the own-being is not created. And this is what Gzhon nu dpal claims the buddha element to be: not created in the sense of having arisen through artificial causes and conditions. Thus the Madhyamaka reasonings of the second dharma-cakra are restricted to what is created, namely the outer adventitious stains, and so do not apply to the buddha element. The fact that a little further down even the “hotness of fire” is not accepted as an own-being is not further discussed. That no such own-being is accepted by Candrakīrti can, however, be indirectly explained by the limited scope of the second dharma-cakra (see the following paragraph).

1070 Tib. snying po'i stong pa nyid. As will become clear in the remaining part of this paragraph, this compound here cannot mean “emptiness of buddha nature,” as if buddha nature were simply empty.

1071 This pada is taken from the second of the nine illustrations of how the buddha element is covered with defilements. In the second example, the buddha element is compared to honey, and the defilements with bees surrounding the honey
(RGV I.105 (J I.103)). The Sanskrit has no equivalent for **rig** in I.106b (J I.104b). Gzhon nu dpal is supported by the Derge edition, which stands over against **rigs** in Narthang and Peking (see Nakamura 1967:119).

1072 See PP, 3.11–12 for a similar definition of the subject matter: ...[a]nirrodhā-

1073 The quoted passage is part of a final summary in the colophon of the **Prajñā-

1074 Cf. Lindtner (1987:202–3), who edited and translated the **Bodhicittavivarāṇa**. He identified the Sanskrit of this stanza in Maitripa’s **Paṭīcākāra** (see PĀ, 132.4–5 and NGMPP reel no. B 22/24, fol. 28a1: guge madhurātā cāgner uṣṭatavatā prayuktiṃ yathā | sūnyatā sarvaḥdharmaṃbrāṇaḥ tathā prayuktiṃ iyate //).

1075 Of particular interest is Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes’ (1453–1524) commentary on the **Bodhicittavivarāṇa**, which he composed on the basis of Gzhon nu dpal’s explanations of Smṛtiḥanakirti’s **Bodhicittavivarāṇaṅka**. The commentary on stanza 57 is as follows: “In the same way as truly all sugar-[based] substances are equivalent in view of their sweetness and the nature/own-being of [all] fire is in partial concordance because of its hotness, the nature/own-being of all phenomena (or entities) is emptiness. It is but proper that all Buddhist tenets should claim this.” (bu ram gyi rdzas mtha’ dag kyang mngar bar mthungs pa dang / mei rang bezin tsha bar cha mthun pa yin pa bezin / de bezin du dangs po’i chos mams thams cad kyi rang bezin stong pa nyid du sangs rgyas pa’i grub mtha’ smra ba thams cad kyi ’dod par rigs so. See “Byang chub sems ’grel gyi rnam par bshad pa tshig don gsal ba zhes bya ba bzhus so,” 99.7–10.)

1076 Read yul gyi rnam pa instead of yul gyis rnam pa?

1077 For the meaning of kṛṣṇāyatana, see BHSD, s.v.

1078 That this is the way Gzhon nu dpal understands the stanza is clear from Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes’s commentary (op. cit., 123.17–21): “In short, in terms of recognition (vijñapti), buddhas have seen neither past nor present, and in the future they will not see either. If one thinks: ‘How is it that the omniscient does not see?’, [the answer is as follows:] Since ultimately [reality] has the own-being of being without an own-being, there is no object to be seen; how [can such an object then] be seen [by the Buddha]? This is the way the teacher himself spoke of nonseeing.” (mdor na / langs rgyas mams kyi ni rnam rig gi ngo bor ’das pa dang da lia ba [na?] gzigs par ma gyur la / ma’ongs pa na gzigs par mi ’gyur ba nyid do / thams cad mkhyen pas ci ste ma gzigs snyam na / don dam par rang bezin med pa’i ngo bo’i rang bezin can yin pas / gzigs pa’i yul med pa de ji lia bur na gzigs par ’gyur zhes ston pa nyid kyi ma gzigs par bk’as stsal to l/, Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: op. cit., 92.15–19.)

1080 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes (op. cit., 92.19–93.5) explains: “If somebody says: ‘As for not contradicting such canonical scriptures [on not seeing], we explain that [when the Buddha taught this he] was thinking of the perfect [nature], the ultimate absence of an own-being (paramārthāṅkhvaḥḥvāta)’; [we reply]: You followers of cittamātra take an entity to be what is called perfect [nature] [or] self-realization, for you claim [this entity] to be, in view of its existence, the defining characteristic of the ultimate. This [is the same as] clinging to the extreme of [taking] the nonconceptual [state] to be something possessing mental fabrications.
Where a fabricated concept has appeared, how can there be a realization of ultimate nonconceptual emptiness, when such a nonconceptual [state] is the emptiness free of mental fabrication?" (de 'dra ba'i lung dang mi 'gal ba ni nged cag yongs su grub pa don dam ngo bo nyid med pa la dgon par 'chad do / zhe na / sens tsam pa khyed kyis yongs grub dang so so rang gi rig pa zhes brjod pa de nyid dngos po zhes bya ste / yod pas don dam pa'i mthshan nyid du 'dod pas so / de ni rnam par mi rtag pa spros pa dang bcos pa'i mthar 'dzin pa yin la / de 'dra'i rnam rtag med pa spros bral stong pa nyid yin pa'i tshe / gang du spros pa'i rnam rtag snang bar gyur pa der ni don dam pa rnam par mi rtag pa'i stong nyid rtags pa ga la yod /).

In the Sarhadhinirmocanasiitra the ultimate absence of an own-being is taken to derive from the fact that everything lacks a true self, which is considered to be an all-pervasive positive quality. A similar notion is associated with the natural emptiness (prakrtiinyyatii) propounded by the Yogacara (see Mathes 2000:215–17).


Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes (op. cit., 93.5–11) explains: “One may ask: ‘If this is the case, does the fruit of enlightenment itself not exist then?’ A mind that manifests the aspects of clinging to the characteristic signs of an enlightenment to be realized, and [to the characteristic signs] of a [subject] seeking to realize [it], is not seen by the tathāgatas and the great bodhisattvas, as they are called on the basis of this term (i.e. enlightenment). Thus they find an enlightenment that has the defining characteristics of space; otherwise—wherever there is an obstinate clinging to characteristic signs such that a bodhisattva [wrongly conceptualizes] realization and object of realization, there is no attainment of enlightenment, because nonconceptual wisdom [and] equanimity are not realized.” (de lta na byang chub kyi 'bras bu yang med dam zhe na / rtogs bya byang chub dang / rtogs byed de don du gnyer ba'i mthshan 'dzin gyi rnam pa'i sens / de bshin gzhags pa dang de'i sgras brjod pa'i byang chub sens dpa' chen po rnam kyi ma gcigs pas / nam mkha'i mthshan nyid can gyi byang chub brnyes kyi / gang na byang chub sens dpa' rtogs bya rtogs byed la mthshan 'dzin mngon zhen du byed pa yod pa der ni / byang chub 'thob pa yod pa ma yin te / rnam par mi rtag pa'i ye shes mnyam pa nyid ma rtags pa' phyir ro //.)


Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes (op. cit., 94.5–14) explains: “[In the Guhyasamājatantra it has been said:] ‘One’s own mind has never arisen since the beginning, [and] it has the nature/own-being of emptiness.’ Even though the meaning-of our own Madhyamaka tradition, which teaches this, has been taught in detail, [it is repeated here]. There are no defining characteristics that define reality. Since [reality] neither exists nor does not exist, it does not arise. It does not [arise], for [in the case of] existence it would have arisen already; and [in the case of] nonexistence it could not in a proper sense arise. Even though it is expressed in words on the path of speech, it is free from [any] defining traits (Lat. definiens). Suitable examples are space, the bodhicitta of nonconceptual wisdom, and enlightenment that perfectly realizes in a nonmistaken way all phenomena. [These three] possess the defining characteristic of nonduality. This means that even though space exists conventionally, it is not apprehended ultimately. Likewise, enlightenment exists on the level of apparent [truth], but it does not do so on the ultimate [level]. Non-conceptual bodhicitta, too, is talked about on a conventional [level of truth], but if analyzed, [it is found to be] without an own-being. Therefore, their defining characteristics are not different.” (rang sens gnod nas ma skyes pa / stong pa nyid kyi rang bzhin no // zhes gsungs pa'i rang lugs kyi dbyu ma'i
don rgya cher bstan pa yang / de kbo na nyid mtshan par byed pa'i mtshan nyid med cing / yod pa dang med pa ma yin pa'i phyir skye ba med de / yod gyur skyes zin pa dang / med pa skyer mi rung bas ma yin la ngagi lam nas tshig brjod kyung mtshan pa dang bral ba de ni / dper 'os pa nam mkha' dang / rnam mi rtog pa ye shes byang chub kyi sems dang ni / chos thams cad phyin ci ma log par mgon par riogs pa'i byang chub rnam gnyis su med pa'i mtshan nyid can te / de'i don ni / nam mkha' ni tha snyad du yod kyung / don du mi dmigs pa tar / byang chub kyung kun rdzob tu yod kyi don dam par med la / rnam par mi rtog pa'i byang chub kyi sems kyung tha snyad du brjod kyi dpad na rang behin med pas / de'i phyir de dag gi mtshan nyid tha dad pa ma yin no //)

1084 Cf. Vasubandhu's commentary (MAVBh, 23.23–24.2): "Because it is the cause of the qualities of the noble ones, it is the dharmadhātu (lit. 'sphere of qualities'). Because[, that is,] the qualities of the noble ones arise having it as their focus. Cause has here the meaning of sphere." āryadharmahetuvād dharmadhātuh / āryadharmānāmā triḍalambanaprabhavatvāt / hetvarho yatra dhātvarthah /.


1086 Tib. yid la byed pa may, in mahāmudrā instructions, have the negative connotation of too much thinking, worrying, or a too intellectual approach to reality (Thrangu Rinpoche).

1087 The use of the imperative is justified by the imperative ltao shig at the end of the pith-instruction.

1088 RGV I.13: "I bow before those who see that, in view of the natural luminosity of this mind, defilements lack an own-being, and, as a consequence, have completely realized the extreme limit of the selflessness of all sentient beings and the world as quescent, who see that buddhahood is all pervading, whose intellect is unobstructed, and whose vision of wisdom embraces the purity and infinitude of sentient beings." (See DRSM, 141.10–14. The Sanskrit in Johnston's edition (RGVV, 14.1–4) is as follows: ye sanvāk pratibidvāya sarvajagato nairāityakojitā śivām taccittapratiprabhāvaratayā kleśāsvabhāvekṣanatā / sarvatrānugataṁ anārutedhīyā pasyanti sambodhātāṁ tebhāvā sattaviśuddhyanantaratiṣayajñānekeśambho namaḥ //)

1089 a B (9a4) reads ba.

1089 Cf. Tattvāvatārākhyasakalasugatavācasankṣiptavyākhyāprakaraṇa (Peking Tengyur no. 4532).

1090 In the Bka' brgyud traditions the mahāmudrā teachings are called the “path of liberation” (grol lam), and the Six Dharma [Practices] of Naropa the “path of skillful means” (thabs lam).

1091 Tib. blo byas stong pa bskal par bsogs gyur kyang (translation according to Thrangu Rinpoche).

1092 This quotation has not been identified.

1093 The translation of this quotation is according to the explanations of Thrangu Rinpoche. The quoted passage has not been identified.

1094 This passage is from the paragraph on the tathāgataagarbha in the third chapter (see Wayman 1974:96). It is also contained in RGVV II.1 (see RGVV, 79.II–13: yo bhagavan sarvaklesaḥkośakojigudhe tathāgataagarbhe niṣkāṃśah sarvaklesaḥkośavi'nirmukte ātathāgataadharmakāye 'pi sa' niṣkāṃśah).
Gzhon nu dpal reads *pramarta*, which could have been, as a wrong spelling of *pramarda* or *pramardana*, translated as *sangs pas na* (awaking from sleep in the sense of crushing it (*pra-mdrd)*). In this case the second *gnyid sangs* would stand for *prabuddha*- (see the *Bod skad dang legs sbyar gi tshig mdo zod chen mo*, s.v., which has for *gnyid sad pa* Skt. *prabuddha*). Ishikawa (1990:5–6) proposes *pramattabuddhadhapuruṣavat* and inserts *buddha* after *mohanidrā*.

See Mishra (1987:200), who reads *buddhaḥ*, *vibuddhapatamavat*.

Ishikawa (1990:5–6) proposes *pramattabuddhadhapuruṣavat* and inserts *buddha* after *mohanidrī*.

See previous footnote.

I.e., the *svabhāvikakāya* (see below).

Tib. *kun tu spyod pa*, Skt. *samudācarā*? (See BHSD s.v.)

Tib. *cho ga*.

A construction parallel with the explanation of the metaphorical Buddha. In the same way as a buddha propounds the Dharma without effort, the statue of the Buddha necessarily conveys some portion of the teaching to the worshipper.

Ārya Vimuktisena explains in his commentary (*Abhisamayālaṁkāravṛtti*) on AA VII.1: “Because the *pāramitā* of giving and so forth are possessed by the *prajñāpāramitā*, [and all undefined dharmas] all the way up to the eighty excellent signs are possessed by it, this nonduval, the one-moment comprehension (*ekakṣamākabhisamaya*) itself includes in its comprehension all virtuous qualities” (see Makransky 1997:189). For Ārya Vimuktisena *ekakṣamākabhisamaya* means that the Buddha comprehends in every moment all phenomena. Haribhadra understood it to refer also to the moment prior to enlightenment (*op. cit.*, 188).

Which happens, according to RGVV I.2, on the eighth level: “...while staying on the eighth bodhisattva level, [the future Buddha] gained control over all phenomena.” (RGVV, 3.21–4.1: ‘...ṣāmyān bodhisattvabhūman vartamānah sarvadharmanātha bhavati /’)

According to B 2b6; Johnston omits the *daṇḍa*.

I.e., the *dharmāyatanā*.

Tib. *tshe*, Skt. *janman* (Negi: *Bod skad dang legs sbyar gyi tshig mdo zod chen mo*, vol. 3, s.v.), that is, the circumstances of existence or life (see BHSD, s.v.).

Tib. *byung ‘gyur*. See VY, 21.3–5. *Chos lugs* is explained in VY, 22.3 as: “laws of the country and the law of the family” (*yul chos dang rigs chos*).

This is a further attempt to prepare the reader for the hermeneutic strategy of explaining why the potential of ordinary persons is only metaphorically called a buddha.

RGVV, 1.4–5: *kṛtsnasya śāstraśya śārīram etat / samāsato vajrapadāṇi sapta /.

Tib. ‘di dag translates Skt. *esāṃ*. The entire stanza is as follows: “These [seven vajra points] should be understood, each together with its own defining characteristics, [as explained] in sequential order in the *Dhāraṇīvarājaśātra*-The [first] three in the introductory chapter and the [remaining] four in the [chapters on] the ‘Distinguishing the Qualities of a Bodhisattva’ and on the ‘[Distinguishing the Qualities of a] Buddha.’” (RGVV, 3.11–14: *svalakṣaṇendrāgataśaṃ yathākramo dhāraṇīrājaśātra / nidānata’s tṛṇi padāṇi vidyāc catvāri dhimajjibhaddharmabhedat /).

This portion of the *Ratnagotravibhāga-vyakhya* is not quoted by Gzhon nu dpal in the usual way, but only partly woven into his running commentary.
Otherwise translated as "vajra point."

RGVV, 1.6–2.3: vajrapamasyadhigamärthasya padaṁ sthānam iti vajrapadam / tatra śrutiācintāmaṇyājanaduspravītāḥbhūvānāḥ pratyānma- 
vedaniyō ‘ṛtho vajravad vedītayaḥ / īāṇy āksaraṁ tam artham anuvadante 
tatprāpāyaṇukālaṃmārgabhidhyotanatas tāḥi tatpratīṣṭhābhibhūtvāt padam ity ucyante / l iśuṣtrapravītāḥ pratiṣṭhārthena ca vajrapadatvam arthavyājanayanor anu-
gantaryam / tatra katamo ‘ṛthab katamad vyājananam / artha ucyate / d saptaapakāro 
dhigamārthaḥ yaṣ uta buddhārthatvāḥ dharmārthaḥ / saṅghārtho dhūtārtho bodhyartho 
guṇārthaḥ karmārthaḥ ca / ayaṃ ucyate ‘ṛthab / yair āksaraṁ eṣa saṭaparapakāro ‘d-
higamārthaḥ / sūcyate prakāśyate / e idam ucyate vyājananam / sa caivaā vajra-
padanirdeih vistareṇa yathāśītram anugantavyaḥ. This part of the vyākhyā is ex-

a Johnston wrongly reads śruti- (cf. B1b2); A is not available.

b In B (1b2) four āksaras are missing; A is not available. The gap is therefore filled 
with the grammatically more correct -dhatvād ana- (Johnston proposes: -dhād ana"). Cf. also Schmithausen 1971:131.

c Johnston wrongly reads abhi- instead of anu- (cf. B1b2). Indeed, anu-vad, "to 
tell," "to say," or "to narrate," fits the context much better here.

d Johnston deletes the daṇḍa that is clearly visible in B (1b4).

e B (1b5) has dharmārthaḥ instead of dharmārthaḥ.

f The visarga is missing in B (1b5).

g Johnston omits the daṇḍa and reads prakāśyata.

h The conjecture is according to Kano; B (1b5) is not clear; Johnston reads, against 
the Tibetan, eṣa.

1117 In the beginning of the next sentence of the vyākhyā.

1118 RGVV, 117.5–8: itidam āptagamayuktisarhfrayad udāhṛtaran 
ḥiṣam atmauddhaye / dhiyadhimuktyā kusālopanānā padā samanviitā yā tadanugrahāya ca /.

1119 The Tibetan has tshig for Skt. vāg-

1120 The Tibetan has yi ge for Skt. vāg-

1121 LAS, 86.14–19: aha khalu mahāmaitr bodhisatvavārthaḥ punar api bhagavān 
etam evārthaṁ adhyeṣate sna / deśayatu me bhagavān punar api vāgvikalpabhivayaktigocaram kuta 
kasmāt kathaṁ kena bhagavan vṛttaṁ "vāgvi-

1122 Peking Tengyur no. 5784, sgwa rgyud, vol. le, fol. 274a2.

1123 The Sanskrit has kāyo näma over against Tib. ming gi tshogs "the accumulation 
that goes to make up words" in the sense of serving as a basis for words.

1124 Here the Tibetan translates Skt. kāya with mang po and not with tshogs.

1125 LAS, 112.10–113.2: punar aparāṇa mahāmaitr nāmapada vyājanakāyaṁ niñām 
lakṣaṇam uddekañām yair nāmapadavayājanakāyaṁ śūpalaśītair bodhisatvavā 
maṇahastārthapadyayājananūsārāṁ kṣipram anuttarāṁ samyakṣambodhim 
abhi-saṃbodhim abhisambudhya tathāva sarvasattvān avabodhayisanti / tatra mahāmaitre kāyo näma yad uta yad vastvā śīrya näma kriyate sa kāyo vastu kāyaḥ 
śārīram ity anarthāntaram / eṣa mahāmaitre nämakāyaḥ / padakāyaḥ punar mahāmaitre yad uta padarthakāya-sadbhavo niścayo niśthopabaldbhir ity anarthānt-
taram / eṣa mahāmaitre padakāyopadesaḥ kṛto maṣa / vyājanakāyaḥ punar mahāmaitre yad uta yena nāmapadayor abhiñyaaktar bhavati vyājananām līngaṁ 
lakṣaṇam upalabdhaḥ prajñāptir ity anarthāntaram /.

a Nanjio omits -abhi. E (632–3): samyaksambudhya instead of samyaksambodhim 
abhisambodhim abhisambudhya.
NOTES TO PAGES 198–201

1126 The Tibetan does not have an equivalent for kārya.
1127 I.e., the subject matter expressed by these phrases.
1128 The Sanskrit has only “syllables.”
1129 The Tibetan analysis of the compound hrusvadirdhaghatavatvājanāṇī (thung ngu dang 'dren pa dang ring du 'dren pa dang yi ge) is difficult to follow.
1130 The Tibetan has only ba lang for -paṅgo-, but phyugs (“cattle”) at the end of the compound.
1131 The Tibetan has no equivalent for aja (“goat”).
1132 The four formless skandhas are usually referred to as “name.”
1133 LAS, II 3.3-12: punar aparāṇi mahāmāte padakāyo yad uta padakāryaniṣṭhā / nāma punar mahāmāte yad uta akṣaraṇaṁ ca nāmasvaḥbhāvabhee kāraṇa yāvad dhākāraḥ / tatra vyañjanaṁ punar mahāmāte yad uta hrusvadirdhaghatavatvājanāṇī / tatra padakāyāḥ punar mahāmāte ye "padavīgāminō" hasthyāvnamaṃrgapāśagomahisajjñādakādyāḥ padakāyasamjñāṁ labhante / nāma ca vyañjanaṁ ca punar mahāmāte caturāra arūpīṇaṁ skandhaṁ nāmābhilapayanta iti kṛtvā nāma svalakṣaṇena vyañjate iti kṛtvā vyañjanaṁ / etan mahāmāte nāmapadavyājanakāryaṁ nāmapadābhidhānalakṣaṇam atva te parisavaṁ karaṇīyaḥ /.
   a C (52a7) reads: yāvāṁ lakṣās.
   b E (63b1) and H (44b6) read padāḥ pṛthivigāmināḥ.
   c C (52b2) and D (42a3) read vyañjanaṁ.
1134 The Tibetan does not have an equivalent for kārya.
1135 Translated according to the Sanskrit of the Lmiṅkāvatāraśītra passage.
1136 Áryalāṅkāvatāraṃ, Peking Tengyur no. 5519.
1137 The Sanskrit according to Lévi’s edition (MSABh, 2.22) differs considerably: dharmadvaṅgayavasthī vyājanato ‘ṛtho na ca jñeyaḥ.
1138 I.e., the seven vajra points of the Ratnagotravibhāga.
1139 MMK, 34.19: dve satye samupāśrītya buddhānāṁ dharmadeśānāṁ /.
1140 In my translation of the pratīkā, I used “called” for Tib. brjod pa, but here I choose a construction with “as” in order to make Gzhon nu dpal’s grammatical point understandable.
1141 Tib. gsal bar byed pa, which can mean “consonant.”
1142 The Manang (2a3) manuscript of the vyākhya glosses sangha as “wisdom of the tenth bodhisattva-level.”
1143 DRSM, 23.14: “It is obvious that here the Three Jewels refer to [that aspect of them—the one relating to] dharmatā.”
1144 RGVV, 2.4–7: anidarṣāno by ānanda tathāgataḥ / saṇaḥ sa śaṅkāḥ caksūṣā draślust / anabhiḥāpyo by ānanda dharmah / saṇaḥ sa śaṅkāḥ karanena śrotum / āsarśīto by ānanda saṅghab / saṇaḥ sa śaṅkāḥ kāyaṇa ca cittena ca paryupāśitum / itimāni trīṇi vajrapadāni dhṛśadhyāsyapariparvātāmsūrēṇūṇāṅgayāvāni /.
   a B (1b6) omits.
1145 This portion of the Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhya (which is a quote from the Dr̥ṣṭādhyāsyapariparta) is not quoted by Gzhon nu dpal in the usual way, but only partly woven into his running commentary.
1146 The Manang manuscript of the vyākhya (fol. 2a4) gives an interesting explanation of “[cognitive] object” (Tib. yul, Skt. viśaya) and “range” (Tib. spyod yul, Skt. gocara): the former is the [cognitive] object of wisdom in meditative equipoise (mnyam bzhag gi ye shes kyi yul), and the latter is the range of wisdom obtained after [meditation] (rjes thob kyi ye shes kyi spyod yul).
1147 For the construction of this sentence see de Jong 1979:567.
1148 Gzhon nu dpal views this equation in the context of RGV I.27, where the fruit, or the dharmakāya, is only metaphorically applied to buddha nature (DRSM, 24.2–5). In RGV I.27 the third reason for the presence of a buddha nature in
sentient beings is that “its (i.e., buddha nature’s) fruit has been metaphorically ap­plied to the buddha potential” (RGVV, 26.3–4: bauddhe gotre tatphalasyopaciirtid-).

1149 RGVV, 2.8–14: tathāgataavisaya hi śāriputra ayam arthas tathāgatagarbhaḥ [i] sar­vaśrāvakapratyekabuddhār api tāvac chāriputra ayam artha na śakyah samyak svapnaśayāya [jñātum va] draśṭum va pratayavekṣitum va vṛ̣g eva bālaprābhajānāṁ anyatra tathāgataśvadhāganamānaḥ / śvadhāgamanīyo hi śāriputra paramārthah / paramārthā ita śāri[putra] sattvadhātār etad adhivacanā / sattvadhātār iti śāriputra tathāgatagarbhasyaśaitad adhivacanā / tathāgataśravāḥ iti śāriputra dharmaśayaśaitad adhivacanā / itidāṁ caturbhām vajrapadām / c anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirodadāparivartātānusārenānugantavyam /.

a Not readable in B (2a2) (several aṣamās are broken away); A is not available. The gap is filled in according to the Tibetan (see also Takasaki 1966:143).

b B (2a2) reads māḥā; A is not available. De Jong (1979:567) suggests reading vā without a following danda.

c According to B (2a4): Johnston omits the danda.

1150 Again, this portion of the Ratnagotrabhāvagavyākhyā (which is a quote from the Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirodā here) is not quoted by Gzhon nu dpal in the usual way, but only partly woven into his running commentary.

1151 Again, this part of the Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirodā is woven into the running commentary.

1152 This sûtra passage is again woven into the running commentary.

1153 A Tibetan play on words, btags and dvags sharing the same etymology.

1154 Gzhon nu dpal’s replacement of “is an expression for the buddha element” by “is an expression for the emptiness” looks much less like an alteration of the meaning in the Tibetan: he skillfully splits the Tibetan term (tshig gi bla dvags) for expression (Skt. adhivacana) into tshig gi and bla dvags and refers the former to “buddha element” and the latter to “emptiness.” In other words, buddha nature and the dharmaśaya are only equated in terms of their respective emptiness.

1155 RGVV, 3.1–3: anuttarā samyaksaṃbdohitāri hī bhagavan nirvāṇadhātār etad adhivacanā / nirvāṇadhātār iti bhagavanāḥ tathāgatadharmaśayaśaitad adhivacanā / itidāṁ pahičāmaṁ vajrapadāṁ āryaśrīrāmātāsārīnaśārenānugantavyam /.

a Corrected according to Takasaki (1966:144).

c B (2a5) has four aṣamās (jaipadārāṃ) between itidāṁ and the following word, which is obviously a scribal error.

1156 RGVV, 56.8–9: sarvākāraśaṃbhiiḥ dvāgsavāṣanamalodhārāḥ / buddhavatvam atha nirvāṇaṁ adovāyaṁ paramārthataḥ /.

1157 Gzhon nu dpal includes the vocative “Illustrious one” in his pratika.

1158 Skt. bodhi is rendered in Tibetan by the two terms byaṅ (“cleansing”) and chub (“achievement”); and buddha by sangs (“awakening”) and rgyas (“blossoming”).

1159 I.e., became manifest.

1160 Seyfort Ruegg (1969:360) regards the compound members avinirbhāga- and avinirmuktajñāna- as qualifications of the dharmaśaya and translates: “...le dharmaśaya...a pour qualité d’être inséparable, et il a la propriété du savoir non séparé—[inséparable] des dharma de tathāgata dépassant [en leur nombre] les sables de la Ganga.” But in the Śrīmālādeviśūtra they are used to mark the buddha­gunāḥ, which is grammatically also possible in the passage here (see Schmithausen 1971:131–32).

1161 RGVV, 3.4–6: yo ‘yam śāriputra tathāgataanidrito dharmaśayāḥ so ‘yam avinirbhāgadharmāḥ / avinirmuktajñānaṃ yo uṣa gānganādi-valakāvayatikrān­tāis tathāgatadharmaḥ / itidāṁ śaṣṭhān vajrapadāṁ / b anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirodśā­nusārenānugantavyam /.
Or -mi (in B (2a6) the aksara is partly disfigured by a stain). But in RGVV I.44, where the same passage is quoted, the reading is -ma (see B 22b4).

a According to B (2b1); Johnston reads -padam without the danḍa.

b B (2bt) reads -nevā instead of -nā.

The vocative “Sāriputra” is not repeated here.

See Gzhon nu dpal’s commentary on this Anūnātavāpūrṇāvatānirdeśa passage in RGVV I.44 (DRSM, 329.12), where ma braḥ bā’i ye shes kyi yon tan can (dharmakāyō... avinirmukta-nānagungu) is glossed as khams dang ‘braḥ mi shes su gnas par bstan pa’i phyir bdag nyid geṅ pa’i ldam pa: “The connection of identity has been taught through this explanation of the connection (ldan pa) of the fruit inasmuch as the buddha qualities... were taught as abiding in such a way as not to be recognized as something disconnected from the [buddha] element.” See also Schmithausen 1971:132.

In other words, for Gzhon nu dpal the equation of the element or buddha nature with the qualities of the Buddha can be valid only in terms of their true nature or dharmatā. Thus the word kāya in dharmakāya points to the level of ultimate truth, on which there is of course no difference with regard to the true nature or emptiness of anything.

Again, this portion of the Ratna-gotra-vibhaṅga-vyākhyā (which is a quote from the Tathāgatagūnānācintya-viśayavatārānirdeśa here) is not quoted by Gzhon nu dpal in the usual way, but only partly woven into his running commentary.

According to the Sanskrit: “It should be known that the [first] three of these [seven vajra points]...”

RGVV, 3.7-10: na maṅjusrīs tathāgataḥ kalpayati na vikalpayati / atha ca syānabhogenākalpayato ’vikalpayata iyam evamārā kriyā pravarvate / itidadī sap-tamaṃ vajrapadāmi / tathāgatagūnānācintya-viśayavatārānirdeśāmnusareṇaṇu-gantavyam / itimāni samāsataḥ sapta vajrapadāni sakalasyācā ā śāstrayo’ddesa-mukhasaṅgarāhārthena śariram iti veditavyam /.

Johnston wrongly reads vā (cf. B (2b1)), which has no satisfying meaning here (see also Schmithausen 1971:132-33).

According to B (2b2); Johnston omits the danḍa.

Again, this portion of the Ratnagotravibhagavyakhyā (which is a quote from the Tathāgatagūnānācintya-viśayavatārānirdeśa here) is not quoted by Gzhon nu dpal in the usual way, but only partly woven into his running commentary.

According to the Sanskrit: “It should be known that the [first] three of these [seven vajra points]...”

RGVV, 3.11-14: svalakṣaṇenānugatāni ca jaśān yathākramam dhārānirājasūtre / nidānata’s trīṇi padāni vidyāc catvāri dhimajjiruddhānabhedat /.

The syllable -jji- is illegible in B (2b4); (A is not available).

The syllable -dād is illegible in B (2b5).
the *vyākhyā* is not quoted by Gzhon nu dpal in the usual way, but only partly woven into his running commentary).

1173 Translated according to the Tibetan. The Sanskrit compound *anantaśīyaganāsuvinitaḥ* must be taken as a *bahuwrihi* (even though a past participle is not common as a final member): -*ganyāḥ suvinītaḥ yena sa bhagavān,* “The illustrious one, by whom the... crowd was perfectly led.”

1174 I.e., the disciple’s enlightenment and so forth.

1175 RGVV, 3.17–21: *iṣṭi / tatra*⁴ yaḥ uktaṃ / bhagavān sarvadharmanamatābbi- sanābuddhaḥ suḥ-pravarta-tadharma-cakro ’nantaśīyaganāsuvinita iti / ebbis tribhir mūlapadair yathākramaniḥ trayāṇāṃ ratnānāṃ anupūrvasamutpādasamudāga-mayavasthānāṃ veditatyam / avaiśātiṇī catvāri padāni triratnopatpānyurū-pa-hetusamudāgamanirdeśo veditavyāḥ /

a B (2b5) is broken; A not available. Johnston suggests reading *tasmaḍ*, but the following *ya* is clear; i.e., it is not a *dyā*. See also Schmithausen 1971:133.

b B (2b6) reads *sa*-; A is not available.

c B (2b6) reads: *yathākramam/.*

1176 RGVV, 3.21–4.2: *tatra yato śaṃyānī bodhisattvabhūmā u... sarvadhar- mavaśīta-prāptaḥ bhavati /† tasmāt sa bodhimaṇḍavara-gataḥ sarvadharmanamatābbi-sanābuddha ity ucyate /.

a According to B (3a1); Johnston omits the *danda*.

1177 The part in brackets is missing in Gzhon nu dpal’s quotation.

1178 Skt. *pramāṇa* has no equivalent in the Tibetan.

1179 DBhS (ed. Rahder), 46.6–7: *sa evam kāyajñānābhīnirhārapṛptō vasavarī / advertitaṃ ca pratilabhate ’nabhilāpyān- abhilāpyakalpaśāyu pramanādhiṣṭhānatayā/.

1180 Gzhon nu dpal does not quote this last sentence, probably because he has already introduced a slight reformulation of this passage.

1181 RGVV, 4.2–4: *yato navamīyāṃ bodhisattvabhūmā u... sarvadhar-mabhāṇakatvasampannaḥ/ sarvadharmanamāpraśnametā- prāptaḥ sarvadharmanaklesa-vāsanānāśamudhātānakaśalo bhavati tasmāt sa ’b-hisamābuddha[bodhi]’⁶ supravarta-tadharma-cakra ity ucyate /.

a Inserted by Johnston on the basis of the Tibetan and the Chinese. Gzhon nu dpal does not quote any such compound, though, and is thus in accordance with the Sanskrit.

b To be deleted?

1182 RGVV, 4.5–7: *yato daśāmyān bhūmāv anuttaranatathāgatadharma-yauvarājya-bhiṣekapṛptyaantarante anābhogabhūdakāryapraśnādbhāva bhavati tasmāt sa supravarta-tadharma-cakra ’nantaśīyaganāsuvinita ity ucyate /.

1183 DhĪRS, 102a6–7.

1184 Ibid., 102b1–2.

1185 “and to those [disciples]...” is supplied according to the Tibetan in the Tengyur (Nakamura 1967:5, ll. 18–19).

1186 Skt. *suvinītavād* must be taken as containing a *bahuwrihi* compound: *sugbu vinītaḥ śiyāḥ yena sa suvinīto bhagavān* /“He by whom we... who has properly led is the illustrious one who has properly led.”

1187 RGVV, 4.7–9: *tāṃ punar anantaśīyaganāsuvinitatāṃ tadaantarane anu- grhena darāyati mahatā bhikṣuṣanghaṇaḥ sādhrāṃ yāvad aprameyena ca bodhi-sattvaṇeṇa sārdham iti / yathākramānī śrāvakabodhaḥ buddhabodhaḥ ca suvinītavād evangunāsamavāgatair iti/.

1188 Tib. ’*grub pa* does not make any sense here. The Sanskrit equivalent *samudāgama- can mean according to MW (s.v.) “to arrive at full knowledge.”

1189 DhĪRS, 102a7–br.
The Peking Kangyur (Ibid., 102b2) has an instrumental instead of a genitive.

Lit., “conduct.”

Ibid., 102b2–103a1.

Skt. samādhiṣṭaḥabhiṣṭā lit. means “the state of somebody possessing supreme samādhi.”

Skt. samāvartana can have also the causative meaning samāvartayati (see BHSD, s.v.).

RGVV, 4.10–12: tataḥ śrāvakabodhisattvaguṇanavarṣaḥ nirdēśāntaram b acintyabuddhasamādhiṣṭabhiṣṭā tāṁ pratiyā vijplapntavīhāramandalamāḍe śrīvyūtātārāgatapariṣatsamāvartanavividhādyadyavartyaḥ pūjāvidhānastutimegabhīshānpravarsaṇaḥ buddharatnagnuṇaḥbhāgavayāvasthānam ādhyātmani vedyatavyam.

a B (3a5–6) has after -varṇa- a cancelled letter and a jña, an aksara used in B to fill blanks.

b B (3a6) reads -rām.

c Johnston would have us read -bha- instead of -bhi-, for no apparent reason. See also Takasaki 1966:148.

d Emended according to the Tibetan, the Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra (Xc 14/34, fol. 9b5) and Schmithausen 1971:133. But based on the way vyūha is written in the same (B3a6) and the next (B3b1) lines, it can be ruled out that B (3a6) reads -māda- or -māla-.

e -dravya- is inserted by Johnston on the basis of the Tibetan.

The corresponding portion of the Dhānaniṣvanarājasūtra is on fol. 103a5–107a1.

The second part of the sentence starting with “the illustrious one” is taken literally from DhĪRS 103b2–3.

DhĪRS, 103b3–5.

Lit., “the Huge Thousand with one thousand [to the faculty of] three [worlds].”

Ibid., 104a6–7.

That is, on seats in accordance with their status as bodhisattvas and great śrāvakas (DhĪRS, 106b4–5).

Ibid., 107a3.

Ibid., 107a8–b1. The Peking Kangyur reads dad pa dad pa ched instead of dad pa dang ba che (DRSM, 27.16).

I.e., monks, nuns, and male and female lay practitioners (DhĪRS, 112a7).

RGVV, 4.13–14: tadanantaram udiiradharmiṣya mahāpariparyāpa-nāmagnuṇaparikirantarathāḥ prabhābhāgavatvāvasthānanī vedyatavyam.

The corresponding portion of the Dhānaniṣvanarājasūtra is on fol. 107a1–113b4.

I have problems figuring out the exact number. The Tibetan number compound consists of (1) bye ba, “a crore” (10 million); (2) khrag khrig, “one million” or “a hundred thousand millions”; and (3) brgya stong phrag brgyad cu, “eighty lakh” (eight million). The obviously high number is followed by tsm (“only”).

DhĪRS, 112b8: ... phang du shing ta la bye ba....

I could not locate the words rgyan thams cad dang ldan pa byung in the sūtra. These are thus Gzhon nu dpal’s own abbreviated formulation of the sūtra’s description of the throne (see Ibid., 112b7–113a2).

Gzhon nu dpal reads ’od kyi bsngags pa in the Ratnagotravibhāgavīkhya (DRSM, 28.5) instead of the mere ’od in the versions of the Tengyur (see Nakamura 1967:7, l. 3).

Gzhon nu dpal thus reads ’od kyi bsngags pa in the Ratnagotravibhāgavīkhya (DRSM, 28.5) instead of the mere ’od in the versions of the Tengyur (see Nakamura 1967:7, l. 3).

DhĪRS, 113b5–6.

Ibid., 114b2–115a7.
1213 Ibid., 116a1-2.
1214 Ibid., 118a3.
1215 RGVV, 4.14-15: tadanantaram anyonyam bodhisattvasamadhidhigocaravisayaprabhavasamandarasanatadvicittarguvanvarmanirdesatah samgharatnagunavibhagayavasthanaam veditavyam /

The corresponding portion of the Dhāraṇīvararājasūtra is on folios. 113b4-118a3.
1216 RGVV, 4.15-5.4: tadanantarariz punar api buddharasmyabhishekaunuttaradharmarājajyesthaputra;paramavaśatadparyupanāthāpanāhāpyajapanāhāpyajapriyaparyuktivalokanayasanatas ca satpratipateḥ paramadharmasvāryaphalapriyaptisamandarasaantas ca yatbhāsanabhyanem eṣām eva trayānām anuttaragunavibhāgavyavasthānām nidānaparivartāvasinagatam eva draṣṭavyam /

a The reading is uncertain in B (3b3), but the last of the uncertain aksaras looks like a ha (see also Johnston 1950:5, fn. 1).
1217 DhiRS, 118a8-118b1: de nas byang chub sems dpa' gzungs gyi dhang phyug gi rgyal pos be bezin gshegs pa'i byin gyis brlabs rig nas stam las langs te /
1218 Ibid., 118b6-8.
1219 Ibid., 118b8-119a1.
1220 Ibid., 119a5.
1221 Ibid., 119a5-6.
1222 Ibid., 119b3.
1223 Ibid., 119b4.
1224 Ibid., 120a2.
1225 Ibid., 120a2-3.
1226 RGVV, 5.5-6: tataḥ sūtranidānaparivartānantararīsvadāhātāḥ saṣṭākārṇatadvisuddhigaṇaparikarmanirdesānā pariṇātītāḥ / visodhye 'rthe guṇavati tadavisuddhiparikarmayogāt /
1227 Tib. mshur nag. Goldstein (2001, s.v.) gives the Latin equivalent “black fibroferritum” (sic). This is also the term (with the same wrong spelling) for nag tshur ser tshur in Dga' ba'i rdo rje's 'Khrungs dpe dri med shel gyi me long (p. 89). However, the correct form, fibroferritum, is listed in the Latin glossary (Ibid., 444). The chemical formula of fibroferrite is given as Fe2O3SO4.10H2O (Ibid., 89), but the correct form is Fe+++ (SO4)(OH)·5H2O (cf. www.webmineral.com). In the DBS (ed. Rahder), 30.8-10 gold is purified with what is called kāśā in Sanskrit (“green sulphate of iron” (MW s.v.)). This latter is rendered as nag tshur in Tibetan (DRSM, 30.15).
1228 Fibroferrite has the ability to make pure gold manifest, if placed in contact with gold ore. Cf. Gzhon nu dpal's example of a mixture of turmeric powder and lime (to illustrate the sixty cleansing factors applied to the buddha element of sentient beings), which manifests the quality of redness.
1229 The numbering follows Steinkellner's (1977) Verse-Index.
1230 The Tibetan has an ablative; according to the Sanskrit the meaning is “through [its] complete cause.”
1231 For Dharmakirti there is no svabhiiva of a cause as such, the term only denoting an “accumulation of causes” (Steinkellner has an Ursachenkomplex). Thus the term svabhiiva is only used metaphorically, to designate such a set of causes (caused themselves by their own causes), which jointly bring forth the effect (see Steinkellner 1971:185-86).
1233 That is, the Śrīhevaśrajnapadoddhāranānāmapāṇīka (Tōhoku 1192).
The sixtyfold factors of the purifying process (i.e., the four ornaments, the eight lamps, the sixteenfold compassion, and the thirty-two acts) are listed in DhiRāj 5b-11b (see Takasaki 1966:152-53).

Gzhon nu dpal inserts brjod byar into the pratika.

Skt. [viśuddhi]parikārman (see further down).

RGVV, 5.6-7: imām cātāhavaśam upādāya dasakus bodhisattvabhūmiṣu punar jātāripāparikārman viśeṣodāharanam utādhriṭam /.

Gzhon nu dpal inserts into his quotation of the vyākhyā two passages from the Daśabhūmikasūtra in which the purification of gold by different means is compared to the bodhisattva levels.

According to the Skt.: “...gold has been cast into fire....”

Gzhon nu dpal inserts into his quotation of the vyākhyā two passages from the Daśabhūmikasūtra in which the purification of gold by different means is compared to the bodhisattva levels.

Sktt. [vifuddhi]parikārman (see further down).

RGVV, 5.6-7: imām cātāhavaśam upādāya dasakus bodhisattvabhūmiṣu punar jātāripāparikārman viśeṣodāharanam utādhriṭam /.

The Tibetan translation does not render the compound viśhūṣānālamkāravidhiṣu.

Plural in the Tibetan.

Neither the edition of Kondo nor the Tibetan has Sktt. daśal Tib. becu.

I.e., the mind purifies itself (ātmanepada).

Skt. bhūyasya mātrayā, which has no equivalent in the Tibetan.

The passage is missing in manuscript B of Matsuda’s facsimile edition (NGMPP A 38/7). In Rahder’s (1926) edition the passage is on p. 20, ll. 14-18 (1st bhāmi, VV) and in Kondo’s (1936) on p. 27, ll. 2-6.

a Rahder and Kondo omit tad evaṁ. The Nepalese manuscript (A) is supported by the Tibetan translation, however.

b Rahder and Kondo omit kālēna ca kālām samaparipākān gacchati (“and after some time it reaches [a state of] ripeness in being in accordance [with its real nature]”). The phrase is also missing in the Tibetan.

c Rahder and Kondo read tathā instead of tathottapya. The Nepalese manuscript is supported by the Tibetan translation, however.

d Rahder and Kondo read -ti. Like the passive prakṣipya, the passive is here called for, since it is still the example of gold being purified, whereas the mind purifies itself (ātmanepada).

e The Nepalese manuscript (A) does not have yathākāmataya. Rahder and Kondo are supported by the Tibetan.

f Rahder: -prayujyata imān.

g Kondo omits daśa-

h Kondo: -nyuttapyaṇite (omits sarvacatāparerinīmitani bhūyasya mātrayo-).

i In the Nepalese manuscript (A) yathākāmataya belongs to the following sentence. It reads after bhavanti: -anantarayāṁ samyakvacīnubodhau / yathākāmataya yena....


a The portions in brackets are not readable (the upper part of the folio has broken
away with parts of the first line). The missing parts are inserted according to Rahder 1926:30, ll. 8–10 (2nd bhūmi, EE) and Kondō 1936:46, ll. 1–2.

The passage is missing in manuscript B of Matsuda’s facsimile edition (NGMPP A 38/7).

1249 RGVV, 5.8 asminn eva sūtre tathāgatakarmanirdsānantaram aviiṣuddhavaiḍāyamaniḍṛṣṭāntah kṛṣṇaḥ । Gzhon nu dpal inserted some glosses into his quote.

1250 Tib. kham, but vaiḍūrya is not really one of the four (or six) classical elements. In the Sanskrit it is called a maṇi.

1251 “With regard to that, Mañjuśrī, the great compassion called ‘playful’ arises [in the tathāgata] for sentient beings (Tib. sems can rnams la), after the tathāgata has fully awakened to all phenomena that have such a nature, and seen the impure, not stainless or blemished dharmadhātu in sentient beings.” (RGVV, 9.17–10.1: tatra mañjuśrīs tathāgatayaivaivaṁ bhiavam sarvadharmān abhisambhādyānā aśrayati dharmadhātu vyavākhyāvāddha avimālam sāgaramaṃ vikriḍitāt nāmaṃ satvēṣu mābhakarunā pravartata ity- ।

a Conjecture according to Kano; Johnston wrongly reads -nam (cf. B 6a6).

b B (6b1) omits ma.

c Johnston reads iti ।.

1252 RGVV, 10.3–4: sattvānām iti niyāyāniyamithyāniyaratvāsvaya vasya svatānaṃ । This explanation is part of a commentary on a passage quoted from the Jñānalokākāraśāstra.

1253 In Tātia’s edition of the Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣya the quoted passage is explained in §§ 82–88 (Tātia 1976:76–84).

1254 Tib. rnam par dgod pa, Skt. vyavasthā(ṇa)? (see LAS, 65.4). Further down Gzhon nu dpal glosses rnam par dgod pa as rnam par bzhag pa, which must be understood in this context as a “state” or “condition” in which one becomes established. The term is used in the same way as bhūmi (“level”).

1255 The quoted passage is in section phal chen, vol. ri, fols. 2b3–3a3 (Peking Kangyur No. 761).

1256 In the context of the Ratnagotravibhāga otherwise translated as “potential.”

1257 This is what is normally the first bodhisattva-level (see DRSM, 36.16–17).

1258 Youthful because free from mistakes; it is the eighth bodhisattva level (DRSM, 36.18–20).

1259 The Peking Kangyur reads rgyal mshan instead of rgyal tshab. Gzhon nu dpal (DRSM, 36.20–22) explains that this is the ninth level and that the bodhisattva knows how to perform the deeds of a buddha, namely the preaching of the Dharma, in the same way as a regent knows how to perform the deeds of a king.

1260 This corresponds to the tenth level (DRSM, 36.22–23).

1261 According to Suzuki (1932:56–58), the following quotation is § XX in the second chapter.

1262 Tib. mgon par rtogs par gyur ba'i rigs. In fact, according to Gzhon nu dpal, there are only three realizations. The last two potentials lead to either one of the first three, and ultimately to the realization of a tathāgata.

1263 LAS, 63.2–5: punar aparānā mahāmaṇe pañcābhisamayagotrāṇi katamānī pañcā yad uta śrīvākāyānabhisamayagotratrāṇi pratyekabuddhayānabhisamayagotratrāṇi tathāgata-yānabhisamayagotratrāṇi anityataikatanagotratrāṇi ca pañcāmaṇām ।

1264 Tib.: bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i 'chi 'pho dang ldan pa. Further down, Gzhon nu dpal explains this passage as meaning that arhats have abandoned transmigration and rebirth following an ordinary death, but are still subject to inconceivable transmigration within a mind-body (DRSM, 34.6–8). If the long a in ’cintyācyutigataḥ is correct (all Nepalese manuscripts have this reading), the Sanskrit would be: “somebody who has reached the inconceivable [state] beyond transmigration.”
This expression may, however, be intended to exclude only a transmigration within saṁsāra, and thus have the same meaning as the Tibetan. Moreover, it is explained further down in the same chapter of the *Lankāvatāra-sūtra*: “Since neither [pratyekebuddhas nor śrāvakas] have obtained the transmigration of inconceivable transformation....” (acintyaparināma-cyuter a-prāptivāc ca.... Cf. LAS, 134.9–10.)

1265 This last sentence is missing in the Sanskrit.

1266 LAS, 63.5–14: *kathāṁ punar mahāmatā śrāvakayānābhisamayagotraṁ pratytetvāyam / yaḥ skandhadhātvāyatanasaṁśāmyalakṣaṇaparipaṁjñāṇādhigame deśyamāne roṣmān-citaṁanur bhavati / lakṣaṇapariparajñāṇe cāya buddhiḥ prakṣendati na pratiṣṭasamaptadāvinirbhāgalakṣaṇapariparacye / idam mahāmatā śrāvakayānābhisamayagotraṁ / yaḥ śrāvakayānābhisamayādṛṣṭyā satpaṇcaṁayanā bhūmau parvuttānakaḷēṣapraḥino vāsanakleṣapraḥino cintyātyutikataḥ samyakseṁhanādaṁ nadati / kṣīna me jātir uṣṭaṁ brahma-caryam ity evam ādi nigadaya pudgala-nairātmakariparicayā yāvan nirvāṇabuddhir bhavati //.

a Emended according to the Tibetan. Nanjio and all Nepalese manuscripts read -samayānā dhṛṣṭvā.

1267 Lit., “do not have.”

1268 The Tibetan (blo can te) takes -buddhiḥ as a bahuvrihi compound. The demonstrative pronoun esa has no equivalent in the Tibetan, which has a personal pronoun instead (‘di ni). This must be understood with a plural meaning, since it refers to the preceding subject, which is in the plural. The corresponding Sanskrit would be: *ete...-buddhayāḥ: “Mahāmati, these are people whose mind (lit. ‘intellect’) entertains the idea of emancipation with regard to nonemancipation* of those with a potential....”

a This would require breaking the compound and reading -aniryaṁe nirñyaṇa-, which is supported (with regard to the case ending) by one Nepalese manuscript (NGMPP reel no. A 112/8, fol. 39b2: -nirvāṇe nirvāṇa-).

1269 Tib. *mu stegs can* has no equivalent in the Sanskrit.

1270 Tib. *khyad kyi*. In the Skt. the personal pronoun is in the dative (te): “For you, Mahāmati, work remains to be done in order to [help] overcome [their] unsound views.”

1271 LAS, 63.15–64.3: *anye punar mahāmatē atmasattvaśvajivapoṣapuṣpadgala-sattvavabodhān nirvāṇam anveṣānte / anye punar mahāmatē kāraṇābhiṁnaṁ sarvadharmaṁ doṣṭvā nirvāṇagati-buddhayo bhavanti / dharmarātmayadarsanābhāvān nāsti mokṣa mahāmatē / esa mahāmatē śrāvakayānābhisamayagotrāyinīrmanaṁyāniryaṁaḥ-buddhiḥ / atra te mahāmatē kudāśītyavāyītāṁ yugaḥ karaṇīyāḥ //.

1272 Lit., “what is satisfied” (Skt. -ḥṛṣṭa-).

1273 LAS, 64.4–10: *tatra mahāmatē pratyeke-buddhayānābhisamayagotrā kho pratyekebhisamaye deśyamāne aśrūryārtoṃmāni-citaṁanur bhavati / asamsargaprayāyad bhūābhinnivesaḥ vividhasvakavyavicāryyadhyayamakapratībhāyadarśane nirṇīsyāmāne 'nuniyate sa pratyeke-buddhayānābhisamayagotrā iti vidītā pratyeke-buddhayānābhisamayamūrāṇā kathā karaṇīyā / etan mahāmatē pratyeke-buddhayānābhisamayagotrāya lakaṇaṁ //.

a Nanjio inserts against B (36b1), C (29a3), D (23b2), E (36a3), G (42b3), H (25b2), I (30a5), and K (23b4) -bahu-. To judge by the Tibetan, *bahuvidha* would indeed be possible instead of *vividha*.

1274 The Tibetan renders the noun audārya with the adjective *yangs pa*: “the vast [buddhafields].”

1275 LAS, 64.11–65.1: *tatra mahāmatē tathāgata-yānābhisamayagotrām trīvidham-ya ∼ uata svabhāvani-kṣvabhāvadharmānābhisamayagotrām adhīgamavaprayātmyābhīsamayagotrāṃ bāhyyabuddhaṃ kṣetraudārya-yānābhisamayagotrām ca / yadā punar
mahāmāte trayāṇām apanī etasam anyatame deśyāmāne svacittadṛṣṭadvayadīrṣṭhaṃkāryavase deśyāmāne nutterasa na santrusata na santrasing apanayata veditavam ayam tathāgatyānābhāsāmamayagotraka iti / etan mahāmāte tathāgatyānābhāsāmamayagotrakasya laksanam //

a According to B (36b4), E (36a5) and G (43a2). Nanjio has, together with A (23b7), C (29a6), D (23b4), F (13b12), H (25b5), I (3ob1), K (23b7–24a1), visaya—.

1276 Tib. di ladar has no equivalent in the Sanskrit.

1277 This is part of a quote from the Avatarānāsakasūtra (see DRSM, 31.8).

1278 MA, 1.13.

1279 Based on a similar stanza in the Abhidharmasūtra, Seyfort Ruegg (1971:169) translates chos here as “ choses” (“ things”), which is obviously not Gzhon nu dpal’s understanding of it.

1280 The next portion of the quote from the Avatarānāsakasūtra (see DRSM, 31.8).

1281 The Tibetan version of RGV I.16a is not quoted by Gzhon nu dpal.

1282 RGVV, 15.9–10: yāvadbhāvikatā jñeyaparyantagatayā dhiyā / sarvasattvaṃ sarvajñadharmatāstityadvisadarśanāt //.

1283 Tib. mgo reg: somebody whose entire head is shaven (Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo, s.v.).

1284 That is, somebody engaged in the practice of the pāramitās.

1285 Tib. 'dra bar byas pa, Skt. *sādṛṣṭaktya.

1286 BBh, 4.16–18: tatredam bodhisattvavaya dānapāramitāyā gotraliṅgaṃ iha bodhisattvāḥ prakṛtyaiva dānarucir bhavati.


1288 That is, of the two Hīnayāna potentials of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas.

1289 For the theory of liberation in the Vaiśeṣika school see Frauwallner 1973: vol. 2, 170.

1290 The quoted passage is part of the commentary on AA II.8: AAV Sphuṭārtha, 54.15–17 in the Tibetan text. In the Sanskrit (reconstructed) it is on p. 29, ll. 21–22.

1291 Tib. bam byug ma. Chos grub’s Tibetan translation (Peking Kangyur No. 776) is from Guṇabhadra’s Chinese translation (see Suzuki 1930:12–14).

1292 In the Sanskrit version of the Lāṅkāvatārasūtra, the first potential is defined as the compound svabhāvanīśvabhāvadharmaḥābhisamayagotram “the potential leading to the realization of phenomena that naturally lack an own-being” (see note 1275 above). The Tibetan translation from the Chinese reads: (de bhīni gshgs pa’i…rigs de ni rnam pa bzhi yod de ’di lta ste / rang bhīni gyi cho s arg mon par rtags par ’gyur ba’i rig / rang bhīni med pa’i cho s arg mon par rtags par ’gyur ba’i rig dang / …(Peking Kangyur, mdo, vol. ngu, fol. 228a8–81). The Sanskrit original of the Chinese translation by Guṇabhadra must have been: *svabhāvadharmaḥābhisamayagotram ca niḥsvabhāvadharmaḥābhisamayagotram.

1293 RGVV, 80.13–14: dvayāvānapraṇavāsesṭhur jñānadvayayāṃ punaḥ / nirvikalpaṃ ca tatprāshhalaḥdhaṃ taj jñānam iṣyate //.

1294 The Tibetan has no equivalent for Skt. sadā.
NOTES TO PAGES 225–28

1300 In the Tibetan, the equivalent of Skt. nimittabhūtāṅ is in RGV II.20b.


1302 RGVV, 82.15–18: vibhūtirāpārthavārāśane sādā nimittabhūtāṅ sukathāsucīśrāve / tathāgatānāṁ śucīślajīghane mahāyasyaddharmanāsāgavindane // samādhihāṃ sparśāsukhānubhūtiṣu.

a A (20b3) reads -ni-.

1303 MSABh, 69.7: śrāvako 'niyato dvidhā dṛṣṭādyāstṛthayanātaḥ // The bhūya (MSABh, 69.9–10) explains: “One should know that there are two types of uncertain śrāvakas: those who go by the Mahāyāna, having seen the meaning of their yāna and [its] truth, and those who go by the Mahāyāna without having seen it.” (śrāvaka punar aniyo dvidhā veditavyāḥ / dṛṣṭāryānāṁ ca yo dṛṣṭasayo mahāyānena nirvāyati adṛṣṭāryānāṁ ca yo na dṛṣṭasayo mahāyānena nirvāyati //)

1304 I.e., the bodhisattva levels (see above).


1306 The quoted passage is part of the introductive sentence to the second paragraph (called “Avavāda”) in the first chapter. It is on p. 17, ll.1–4 in the Tibetan text (Tripathi 1993). In the Sanskrit (reconstructed) it is on p. 10, ll.12–14.

1307 According to the Avatāraśakasūtra, the third point is the “bodhisattva level of yoga practice” (see above).

1308 This must refer to the Sanskrit compound that was translated as ‘gyur geban du skye bar skyes pa (Skt. ‘vikṛtyijātāç).

1309 I.e., heat, the first stage of the path of preparation, on which a lesser, medium, and great heat are distinguished.

1310 AAV Sphuṭārtha, 25.19: alambanaṁ sarvasattvānāṁ uṣmaṇāṁ iba śayate //

1311 Skt. nirvedhabhūṣya, the term used in the Abhisamayālānikāra for the path of preparation.

1312 AAV Sphuṭārtha, 30.9–10: iśvaravijñātavadharmanāṁ pariṣṭir anuttara / aparītyaktasattvārthā nirūdhār ahbijhīṭaye//

1313 PRSG, 66.4: svakabhumikānāṁ savagatāḥ sādā (text: sada) merukalpāḥ //

1314 A Śrāvaka of lower intellectual capacity who is mainly concerned with śamatha meditation and who, upon becoming an Arhat, attains the six extrasensory perceptions of clairvoyance (Rigzin 1993:53).

1315 A Śrāvaka of higher intellectual capacity who is mainly concerned with vipaśyanā meditation and who does not attain the six extrasensory perceptions of clairvoyance (Rigzin 1993:54).

1316 The passage with this summary of content is quoted in RGVV II.1 (see Takasaki 1966:312).

1317 RGVV, 5.9–6.1: tad yathā kula putra kuśala maniḍo maniṣuddhisvibhiṇāḥ sa maniṇḍrad āparyavādāpi tāni maniṇdate niḥśvāya dhītvā tikṣṇena khaṅ rodakenonmālyā kṛṣṇena kṣaṇakambalaparyavādāpanaṁ paryavādāpaya / na ca tāvānmatreṇa viryaṁ pārśrambhayati / tatāt paścāt tikṣṇenaṁśaśrenonmālyā khaṅ ṇdiṇkāparyavādāpanaṁ paryavādāpaya / na ca tāvānmatreṇa viryaṁ pārśrambhayati / tatāt sa paścān mahābhāsiasārjasrenonmālyā siksmaṇavastvaparyavādāpanaṁ paryavādāpaya / ti / paryavādāpi tāṁ cāpagaṭācām abhijātavādīryam ity ucyate //

a Johnston has a daṇḍa after -jñāb, which is not needed and not in the manuscript (cf. B4a1).

b B (442) reads sa instead of khaṅ, which is quite common in Nepalese manuscripts. The quoted passage is not available in A.
c According to B (4a2); Johnston reads -otkṣālya instead of -onmīlya (et passim).
d B (4a2) reads -payavadānena.
e The MUTŚT (4.18) reads ga-.
f B (4a3) reads -pa- or -ya- instead of -va-.
g B (4a3) reads -ya- instead of -va-.
h B (4a4) has an extra -ya-.

The passage is quoted from DhĪRS, 176b4–7.

1318 The example of the vaidūrya illustrates that the dharmakāya and buddha nature only differ in one respect: whether one's adventitious stains have been removed or not. But Gzhon nu dpal wants us to restrict this example to the fortified potential, and compares in the following the purification of the naturally present potential to a magical transformation of grass into riches, a process that involves the application of meditative power to the spatial element of grass, etc. In this way buddha nature can skillfully be referred to as emptiness, while equally importantly, a more substantial difference between buddha nature and the dharmakāya is implied. And in the same way as the spatial element of grass allows for a magical transformation into gold, the emptiness of an ordinary mind (i.e., buddha nature) allows for a transformation into enlightenment.

1319 The quoted passage (PekingTengyur, dbu ma, vol. tsha, fol. 199a4–7) is part of the commentary on MMK XV.8: “If something exists in terms of its own-being, its [later] nonexistence will not be possible. A real change of nature is logically never possible” (yady astitvam prakṛtyā syān na bhaved asya nāstītā / prakṛter anyathābhāvau na hi jātipapadyate; MMK, 19.20–21). The Prajñāpradīpa explains that Nāgārjuna was thinking of the example of the hotness of fire, which by nature can never be coolness. The hotness of hot water, on the contrary, which has been produced by fire, is not the natural property of water. Further down, Bhavyaviveka clarifies, however, that even the hotness of fire, etc., cannot be an own-being (svabhāva). The canonical statement adduced by an opponent that wood possesses various elements by no means entails for Bhavyaviveka that these elements are its own-being.

1320 This is the undesired consequence of the assertion that there is an arising from some other entity (see MA, 89.7).

1321 Peking Tengyur, dbu ma, vol. dza, fol. 43a4. This stanza is missing in the Sanskrit text (see Lindtner 2001:109).

1322 Tib. aṅg du slos gi nas po (see Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo, s.v.).

1323 RGVV, 6.1–3: evam eva kulaputra tathāgato 'py aparāsuddhāṁ sattvadāhūn vidi-tvānityadukhekkhānāṁ subhodvēgakathāyā samsārābhārtāṁ sattvāṁ udvejayati / ārye ca dharmavine ṣvātārayati ?.
a B (4a5) does not have a danda; A is not available.

1324 This quotation has not been identified.

1325 This quotation has not been identified.

1326 The repetition of de'i og tu does not make any sense to me, nor does the reading of the block print (de'i bog tu).

1327 I could not locate this passage further down in the Dhāraṇīvararājasūtra.

1328 That is, the teaching of the śrāvakas which are diverted into the single ultimate vehicle, which is the third dharmacakra, according to the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra.

1329 With regard to their future enlightenment (Tsltrim Gyamtsho and Fuchs 2000:202).

1330 I.e., the nature of the dharmadhātu.

1331 RGVV, 86.7–10: lōkaṇu yaḥ chāntipathāvātānaprapānapānāyākarmoṇe nidānām / bimbam tad apy atra sadāvaruddham [akāśadhatāviva rūpadhatūh] (the last pāda has not been quoted by Gzhon nu dpal).
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1332 RGVV, 88.8–10: saddharmapuṇḍarīkādīdharmatattvapraṇāsanaṁ // pūrvagrabhaṁ
nivartayatāṁ prajñopāyaparigrahe // paripacyottame yāne vyākaroty agrabodhaya //.

1333 In a state without nimmitta one does not have any expectations with regard to anything.

1334 RGVV, 6.3–4: na ca tāvamātreyena tathāgato viryaṁ pārambhāyati / tataḥ paccāc
chūnyānimittāpaniḥtakathāyā tathāgatanetram avabodhayati. With regard to this
second stage, Gzhon nu dpal makes the interesting remark: “But the highest fruit
(‘bras bu’i mtha’) of the levels proper to this [second] dharmacakra is obtained by
a bodhisattva [only] on the seventh level” (DRSM, 40.4–5).

1335 AA, 3.12: sarvākāraṇatāmārgaḥ [śāśtra yo ‘tra deśitāḥ //]. The part of the sentence
in brackets is not quoted by DRSM.

1336 The quoted passage has not been identified. In the Āṣṭasāhasrika Prajñāpāramitā,
the three doors are explained in paragraph 3, chapter 20 (see Conze 1958:146–48).

1337 Tib. mngon par ‘du bya ba med pa. The corresponding term abhisamkara
is normally used in the context of mental fabrication (prapācita) and mental effort
(ābhoga) (see Schmithausen 1969:138–42). Anabhisamkāra can thus be compared
to viprapācita and anābhoga.

1338 Tib. ‘bras bu’i mtha’.

1339 Skt. samānaṁ has no equivalent in the Tibetan. See DhIRS, 177a3, however: “These
sentient beings who have various origins and natures, have entered together....”
(sans can rgyu dang rang bzhin sna sogs pa de dag mnyam du zhubz nas ...)

1340 RGVV, 6.4–8: na ca tāvamātreyena tathāgato viryaṁ pārambhāyati / tataḥ paccāc
avivartyadharma-charakathāyā trimaṇḍalapariśuddhikathāyā ca / tathāgataviśaye
tān sattvān avatārayatiḥ nānāprakṛtyhetukān / avatārayāḥ ca samānaṁ tathāgata-adharmatām
adhyāmyanuttara daksiniyāḥ ity ucyanta....

a B (4a6) omits ca; A is not available.

b B (4a6) has a daṇḍa after avatārayati.

c -ya is missing in B (4b1).

1341 The DRSM reads nyan thos theg pa la s and theg pa chen po la s instead of nyan thes
theg pa la s and theg pa chen po la (see Hahn 1982:146).

1342 RA, 146.17–20: yathā śrāvakayāne ‘ṭav uktāḥ śrāvakābhīmayaḥ / mahāyāne daśa
tathā bodhisattvasya bhūmayaḥ //.

1343 The quoted passage is at the beginning of the fourth chapter (LAS, 211.11–13):
śaśṭiṁ mahāmāte bhūmim upadāya bodhisattvāḥ mahāsattvāḥ sarvāvacaṇapratye-
kabuddhāḥ ca nirodham samāpadyante.

1344 The Sanskrit is slightly different from the Tibetan here: “A bodhisattva who has
obtained this state, becomes equal to a tathāgata on account of having liberated
sentient beings in [various] worlds.” (RGVV, 52.9–10: etam gatim anuprapto
bodhisattvāḥ tathāgataś ca samatam eti lokānām prati //.)

a According to Johnston. B (29a4) reads -sāṁ-. A is not available.

1345 Kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas understands rjes thob in the sense of prṣṭhaladbha,
the technical term for the state obtained after meditation (see Tsultrim Gyamtso and Fuchs 2000:140). The literal Sanskrit equivalent is the past participle
anuprāpta, which is subordinate to bodhisattvāḥ: “a bodhisattva who has obtained
this state (gati),” in an allusion to a bodhisattva’s true engagement in working for
the benefit of others in the preceding stanza.

1346 In the Tibetan translation tām was taken as a demonstrative pronoun modifying
tathatām. “Bodhisattva(s) fully realize this suchness...” See, however, Haribhadra’s
commentary in the next footnote.

1347 The position of Tib. zhes is problematic. Haribhadra comments (quoted according
to Yuyama 1976:50): “Therefore, having thoroughly internalized it (i.e., the
dharmata) as the suchness of everything, they are given the names tathāgata,
buddha, son of the victorious one, and so forth." (de lta bas na de yang thams cad kyi de bzin nyid du thugs su chud pas de'i phyir de bzin ghegs zhes sangs rgyas dang rgyal ba'i sras zhes bya ba la sogs par mshan gsal to.) Tib. zhes could be a misspelling for the instrumental kyiis. In the Sanskrit, tathāgata is in the instrumental, and this, according to Yuyama, is supported by the Chinese. The entire stanza XII.4 reads according to Yuyama (1976:50.3-6): tīṭhanta loka vidunām parinirvṛtānāṁ sthiita eṣa dharmata nīyāmāḥ śīnyā dharmāḥ/tāṁ bodhisattva tathātām anubuddhāyānti/*tasmā hu buddha bṛtw namaṁ tathāgatēbhī/.

a I prefer the 3rd person plural ending attested in Yuyama’s edition. The subject can be bodhisattva, the nominative plural ending -a being possible, particularly in stanzas (see Edgerton BHSG § 8.79).

b Obermiller (1937:49) reads: kṛtanāma.

1348 The Tibetan has no equivalent for -pramukhānī.

1349 NGMPP reel nos. A 38/5 and A 39/13 (the old Nepalese manuscript in Gupta script was in disorder and not identified as one text during the microfilm work (see Matsuda 1996:xv-xvi)), fol. 32b1-2: asiṣyāṁ khalu⁶ punar bhā jinaputra sampamyāṁ bodhisattvabhumāṁ sthitė bodhisattvo bhūyastvena rāgādipramukhānī sarvākālaśānānī samatikrānto bhavati / so śyām sampamyāṁ⁵ [dūrāgamāyāṁ bodhisattvabhumān caṇ bodhisattvo 'samkāleśānīśkleśa iti vaktavyāḥ // tat 'kasmāt // a'śamudācāravatāḥ sarvākālaśānīṃ]⁷ na samkleśa iti vaktavyāḥ / tathāgatajñānābhilaśād aparipūrṇābhīprājatyavac ca na niskleśa iti vaktavyāḥ //

The passage is missing in the manuscript labeled B by Matsuda (NGMPP A 38/7). In Rahder’s (1926) edition the passage is on p. 59, ll.3–8 (7th bhūmi, F) and in Kondo’s (1936) on p. 119, l.15–p. 120, l.4.

a Rahder and Kondō omit khalu.

b Rahder and Kondō read sthito (not readable in the Nepalese manuscript).

c Kondo: -na.

d Rahder and Kondō omit sampamyāṁ. In the Nepalese manuscript the aksara after sapta- is not readable.

e Kondo: kasmāda- instead of kasmāt // a-.

f Rahder: -cārāt.

g The passage in brackets has broken away from the palm-leaf. It has been inserted according to the editions of Rahder and Kondō.

1350 Lit., “purity in terms of three circles.”


a A gap of two syllables was filled by Levi with teyāṁ.

1352 The whole sentence from which this short passage is taken is as follows (translation by Powers 1994:141): “Then the Bhagavan turned a third wheel of doctrine, possessing good differentiations, and exceedingly wonderous, for those genuinely engaged in all vehicles, beginning with the lack of own-being of phenomena, and beginning with their absence of production, absence of cessation, quiescence from the start, and being naturally in a state of nirvāṇa.”

1353 I.e., the previous defining characteristic of omniscience (the fourteenth of altogether sixteen), abbreviated as unmiṃjñādisanājñākanā in the root text (AA, 23.15 (verse IV.16b)). According to the Sphuṭārtha (45.5–6) this is the “knowledge of minds that are active and so forth” (cittonmiṃjñātādijñāna) and the fifteenth the “knowledge of [minds that are] active and so forth in their aspects of suchness” (unmiṃjñātādīṣṭhātākārajñāna).

The Eighth Karmapa Mi bskyod rdo rje glosses in his Abhisamayālaṁkāra commentary (part 2, 161.5) “active and so forth” as “active, withdrawn, scattered, and
contracted” (...g.yo ba dang / la sogs pas ’du ba dang / bkram pa dang bcum pa….) These four mental states are connected with the fourteen issues (whether the Tathāgata exists after death, etc.) that were not determined by the Buddha when he was asked about them (see Mi bskyod rdo rje: Dbu ma la ’jug pa’i rnam bshad, part 2, 161.5–164.6).

1354 AA, 23.17: puns tathatākāraṇa teṣāṁ jñānam atāḥ param ॥ These two pādas are devoted to the fifteenth of sixteen aspects or defining characteristics of omniscience.

1355 AA, 23.18: tathātāyān muner bodhi [tatparākhyānam]... (the part in brackets is not quoted in the DRSM). This is the last of an enumeration of sixteen aspects or defining characteristics of omniscience.

1356 DBhS (ed. Rahder), 71.4-5: [bodhisattva} ... fakrabrahmalokapalapratyudgataḥ... This is the last of an enumeration of sixteen aspects or defining characteristics of omniscience.

1357 The Sanskrit has the locative prthivyān (“on the earth”).

1361 Lit., “as something without concepts,” i.e., without the usual mental activity that produces appearances.

1362 The syntactic position of sans can in the Tibetan translation of the Lāṅkāvatāraśūtra from the Sanskrit (DRSM, 42.14) makes it difficult to construe. The Tibetan translation from the Chinese (Peking Kangyur no. 776, mdo, vol. ngu, fol. 224a4) reads in accordance with the Sanskrit: ... bag chags dang bral ba’i sans can rnam la...
that he based himself on such explanations as well as on 'Jig rten gsum mgon's notes on the Ratnagotravibhāga).

According to the Sanskrit, the subject is still the stream, which arises in various forms of consciousness.

LAS, 46.3–6: tarāṅgāḥ by udadher yadvat pavanapratyayeritāḥ / nṛtyamānāḥ pravartante vyuccedāḥ ca na vidyate // ālayaughas tathā nityaṁ viśayapavaneritāḥ / citrais tarāṅgavijñānair nṛtyamānāḥ pravartate //.

In the Sanskrit, the enumerated objects are in the plural: “Blue phenomena.”

According to the Sanskrit: “neither different nor not different.”

According to Tibetan the rays of the sun and the moon are not the end of the enumeration, but one of the examples, rays being neither different nor not different from the sun and the moon. But Gzhon nu dpal, in accordance with the Sanskrit, takes the sun's rays as being the last member of the enumeration (DRSM, 43.n).

LAS, 46.7–10: nile rakte 'tha lavanē saṅkhe kṣīre ca sārkare / kaśāyaḥ (?) phalapuspādayat (?) kiraṇā yathā bhāskare // na cānanye na cānye ca tarāṅgāḥ hy udadher matāḥ / vijñānāni tathā sapta cītene saha saṁyutāḥ //.

a -tha is short for metrical reasons.

According to the emendation Nanjio proposes in a footnote. The reading of A (17a6), C (20b5), D (17a1) and F (8b9): na cānyna ca nānanyena is not possible for metrical reasons. G (30b3–4) and K (16b8) read na cānye na ca nānanye (which does not make any sense); B (27b3), E (26a5–b1) na cānye na ca nānaye, and H (18b7) na cānaya na ca nānaye, which would mean having the abstract suffix tva in the hybrid nominative plural ending. I (21b6) has na cānyena cānanyena.

c Nanjio reads matā.

Lit., “on account of the sun's rays.”

TŚK, 34.13–14: manoviṣṇuṇasambhūtih sarvadāsaṁjñikād rte / samāpattidvayān mīdāhān mūrchanād apy acittakāt //. My translation follows Gzhon nu dpal's quote, in which one pada with the “two attainments [of cessation]” (snyoms par 'jug pa rnam gnyis dang) is missing.

I.e., eye consciousness, etc.

I could not identify this quotation either in the Trirūṭikabhūṣya or in the Trirūṭikākāśa. In both the bhāṣya and the stīka five states void of active consciousness are explained, not only the three of Gzhon nu dpal's quotation.

LAS, 46.11–14: udadheb pariṇāmo 'sau tarāṅgānāṁ vicīratāḥ / ālayaṁ hi tathā citraṁ vijñānākhyatā pravartate // citraṁ maṇa ca vijñānāṁ lakṣaṇārtham prakalpyate / abhinna-lakṣaṇaṁ hy aṣṭau na lakṣyā ca ca laksanaiḥ //.

a According to G (30b5) and I (22a1). The manuscripts in the Royal Asiatic Society (London), the University Library of Cambridge, the one formerly in the possession of Kawaguchi (according to the Nanjio's edition) and the remaining Nepalese manuscripts read -nāṁ; Nanjio proposes -nām. It is, like lakṣyāḥ, an adjective depending on aṣṭau [vijñānāni], so that the correct reading should be: na lakṣyāni na ca laksanān; in the same way as the correct form of the preceding babuśkīṁ compound is abhinna-lakṣaṇāṁ. But so many long endings in the nominative neutral plural (-āni) would have been insoluble problems for the meter.

For a discussion of pariṇāmaya, etc., see Schmithausen 1969:165f.

LAS, 46.15–16: udadheb ca taraṅgānāṁ yathā nāsti viśeṣanāṁ / vijñānānāṁ tathā citte pariṇāmo na labhyate //.
The quoted stanza is from the “Dohās for the People” (“Do ha mdzod kyi glu bzhugs so,” fol. 148a3).

That is, coemergent wisdom.

The Apabhraṃsa version of this stanza is as follows: jatta bi cittaha bipphurāi tatta bi ṇāha sarūba / aṃṇa taraṅga ki aṃṇa jalu bhabasama khasama sarūba // (Shahidullah 1928:152, stanza 74). Shahidullah (1928:177) translates: “Dans ce qui sort de la pensée, il ya là la nature du maître. La vague et la mer sont-elles choses différentes? L’égalité de l’existence est de la nature de l’égalité du ciel.”

Karma Phrin las pa explains in his Do ha skor gsum gyi ’bring po bzhugs so (103.5–104.3): “Whatever grasping there is, [namely] all the thoughts of mental factors, which emanate from the mind, and however long [these thoughts] move and emanate, their nature will be that of the protector of all sentient beings, [namely] the dharmakāya, which is without origination, and dissolves back [into it]. Therefore it is not different from the true nature of mind (sems nyid) arises from the fundamental state of the mind, [namely] the dharmakāya, which is without origination, and dissolves back [into it]. Since one understands the identity of worldly existence (samsāra) and nirvāṇa, one knows that both are of one taste within the sphere of the true nature of mind (sems nyid), even though they are labeled as [if they were] different—in the same way as space has neither middle nor extreme, having the nature of emptiness.” (de yang ’dzin pa gang ’zhig sems las rnam par ’phros pa’i phros byung gi rnam par rtog pa mtha’ dag ji srid du ’gyu zhung ’phro (text: ’phre) ba de srid du / skye dgu’i mgon po gyur pa sems thon cig skyes pa’i ye shes kyi rang bzhin yin te dper na chu dang rlaus dag gzhan yin nam ste chu rlaus chu yin pa bzhin du sems nyid las sna shogs su ’phro ba de yang sems kyi gzhis skye ba med pa’i chos sku las byung zhung der thim pas na / chos sku dang thag mi dad pa yin no / ...de yang gzhis skye med cho sku’i ngang las mdangs ’gags med p’ai rang rtsal sna shogs shar bas ’khor das gnyis su smang yang de gnyis po ni don la dbyer med de / srid pa’khor ba dang mnya sems nyid myang das shes rtog pas tha dad du btags kyang / de gnyis ha sems nyid kyi ngang du ro gcig pa ni dper na nam mkha la mtha’i dbus med pa stong p’ai rang bzhin can yin pa bzhin no).

This quotation has not been identified.

This refers not only to the fact that the perceiving subject and the perceived object are the same in reality, but also that the subject-object duality is in reality not different from the true nature of mind.

This quotation has not been identified.

The translation of the Sanskrit would be: “Thinking of this element of a tathāgata, which has the potential of purity....”

RGVV, 6.8–10: etat eva viśuddhi gotraṁ tathāgato bhāvahatābhum abhisamādhyoktam / yathā pathaḥ racunamāmi jātāpyāṃ na dīsitā / parikammaṇa tad dīṭham evaṁ loke tathāga tat iti // here the portion of the vyakhyā commented is not quoted en bloc, as is usually done, but embedded in Gzhon nu dpal’s glosses. The translation of it is in bold letters.

According to B (4b1); A is not available. Johnston reads viśuddha-.

In B (4b1) -thā- is not readable (there is an empty space between -pa- and -ra-).

Tib. ’gyur.

RGVV, 71.5–6: prakṛter avikāritaḥ kalyāṇatvāḥ viśuddhitah / hemamandalakau-
pamyāṁ tathātāyāṁ udāhṛtam // Cf. Takasaki 1966:287. This refers to the fourth example of the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra, in which a traveler loses a piece of gold in some mud.

See MSA XII.11, which is quoted and commented upon above (DRSM, 41.7–10).

The DRSM reads mos pa sa yang dag par as against mos pa las yang dag par in the Kangyur. This reading serves well to make his point that one realizes the pure bodhisattva levels only with the teaching of the third dharmacakra.


Tib. glo bur du, otherwise translated as “adventitious,” refers to the fact that the hindrances of defilements are not an indivisible part of the true nature.

The plural particle rnas after btang snyoms marks the end of the enumeration of the four immeasurable qualities, the first three, mnying rje, byams pa, and dga' ba, having been described in the lines before (DRSM, 46.1–2).

The last eight stanzas of the first chapter (RGV I.163–70) explain the five reasons why the existence of the buddha element must be taught after the previous presentations of emptiness in the second dharmacakra: If one does not know that all sentient beings possess buddha nature, (1) one may become discouraged about the possibility of attaining buddhahood, (2) one may feel contempt for persons who have a lesser understanding, (3) one may have misconceptions of the true nature and believe that appearances are real, (4) one may think that sentient beings are simply void and ridicule their nature, and (5) one may think more highly of oneself than others (See Takasaki 1966:306–9; and Tsultrim Gyamtsho and Fuchs 2000:177–81).

The quoted passage constitutes the entire introduction of the Bodhicittavivarata (see Lindtner 1987:184–85, whose translation I mainly follow).

The following pādās correspond to a nonmetrical passage in the second chapter of the Guhyasāmājatantra (which is on bodhicitta): sarvabhāvavivatālaksāndha-dhātūvāyatana-grāhāyagbhakavajitām dharmanaivāpyasamatayā svacittam āhyānuttam-paṇnāmi tāṇyatāt[sualbhāvam / (GST, 12.3–5).

In the Sanskrit, the first three lines are two compounds depending on svacittam (“your own mind”). According to Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes (who wrote his commentary on the basis of Gzhon nu dpal’s explanations), the first three pādās are directed against the views of systems that postulate the existence of external, nonmental entities, so that it would be better to add “reality” in brackets for “your own mind.” For a follower of Yogācāra-Madhyamaka, there is in any case no difference.

The DRSM reads...skye mched dang (which is also supported by Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes’s commentary) against skye mched kyi (see Lindtner 1987:183).

Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes explains in his Byang chub sems ’grel gyi rnam par bshad pa tshig don gsal ba (64.10–4): “The first of [these] six pādās (kārikās) disproves the bad views put forth by heretics; the second and third pādās refute the views of the Vaibhāsikas and Sautrāntikas [from among] our own Buddhist tradition; and the fourth pāda makes one abandon the cittamātra view. The fifth and sixth pādās present and establish the Madhyamaka view” (tshigs su bead pa rkang pa drug gi rkang pa dang pos mu ste gshe bhed kyi lta ba ba ngan pa sun ’byin la l rkang pa gnyis pa dang guom pas nang sde bye brag tu smra ba dang mdo sde pa'i lta ba 'gog cing / rkang pa bzhi pas sems tsa'i gyi lta ba spong bar mzas nas / rkang pa lnga pa dang drug pas dbu ma'i lta ba bsgrub cing rnam par 'jog go l).

This second quote follows the first one. The reason for two quotes is to omit the qualified subject “bodhisattvas whose conduct is the way of secret mantras” (byang chub sems dpa' gsal sngags kyi gser spya' pa spyod pa rnas kyi; see Lindtner.
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1987:184). Thus Gzhon nu dpal creates the impression that ultimate bodhicitta is also generated by Mahāyāna practitioners in general and not only by followers of Vajrayāna.

1400 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes (op. cit., 68.10–6) explains: “Having generated [bodhi]citta as someone possessing the nature of boundless great compassion, [bodhisattvas] must generate in [their own mind]-stream the supramundane ultimate bodhicitta that is the object of the wisdom of the noble ones—in the same way as [this ultimate] is realized through the accumulation of wisdom, [that is, by] the power of meditation in which one familiarizes oneself with a mind in equipose [resting] in dharmatā.” (de yang mi dmigs pa’i snying rje chen po’i rang bzhin can du sens bskyed nas /’phags pa’i ye shes kyi yul du ’gyur ba’i don dam pa’i byang chub kyi sens ‘jig rten las ’dai pa de ni /’chos nyid la mnyam par bszag pa la sens gams par byed pa’i bsgom pa’i stobs ye shes kyi tshogs kyi rtogs pa ji la tsa bzhin rgyud la bskyed par bya ba yin te.)

1401 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes (op. cit., 105.1–8) remarks: “Whoever has attained certainty with respect to the nature of ultimate bodhicitta should also know that it has been taught by [the use of] synonyms. [Ultimate bodhicitta] is suchness, which is nothing other than the true nature of all phenomena. In view of its unmistakable meaning, [ultimate bodhicitta] is [also] the limit of reality. In view of being free from all characteristic signs of apprehension, it is signlessness. In view of its being the object of the wisdom of the noble ones, it is ultimate. Since bodhicitta with the previously mentioned defining characteristics is the nature of excellent wisdom, it is supreme. [Ultimate bodhicitta] is reality, the dharmatā of all phenomena, and [finally] it is emptiness, the pacification of all mental fabrication. In many sūtras and tantras, too, it has been explained as having these defining characteristics.” (gang yang don dam byang chub sms kyi rang bzhin nges par gyur nas / de ming gi rnam gsangs kyis bstan pa yang shes par bya ste /’chos thams cad kyi gnas bugs las gshen du ma yin pa’i de bzhin nyid dang / phyin ci ma log pa’i don dang ldan pas yang dag pa’i mtha’ dang / dmigs pa’i mshan ma kun dang bral bas mshan ma med pa dang /’phags pa ye shes kyi yul du gyur pas don dam pa nyid dang / snagar smos pa’i mshan nyid dang ldan pa’i byang chub kyi sens ye shes phul du byung bai nge bo yin pas mchog dang /’chos thams cad kyi chos nyid de kho na nyid dang / spros pa thams cad zhi ba stong pa nyid ces bya bai mshan nyid du’ang mdo rgyud rang po las bshad pa yin no ii.)

1402 The corresponding passage in the Peking Tengyur (no. 2010, bstod tshogs, vol. ka, 74b8–75a4) differs considerably from Gzhon nu dpal’s version.

1403 Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje (Dbu ma chos dbyings bstod pa’i rnam par bshad pa, 22a8–bt and 22b5–6 and 22b7–8) explains that this refers to the recognition of the first nonconceptual moment of the eye consciousness that resembles a yogic direct valid cognition: “That which has not entered the conceptual realm of super-imposition with regard to any appearance of form is, by its very nature, appearance as well as emptiness. In this [state, appearances] neither arise nor cease as [something possessing] an own-being, they are mere perceptions. This is also called direct valid cognition of the eye-faculties .... Those who follow the [noble ones] have correct perceptions focused on appearances that seem to be outside [of consciousness]. These are valid cognitions, since they resemble yogic direct [cognitions] ...Given that outside objects made up of subtle atoms and so forth, and which are different from that which merely appears outside, do not truly exist, you realize that self-luminous appearances neither arise nor cease, and ascertain that they are the dharmadātu itself.” (gang gzugs snang la sgyo btags pa’i rtog pa ma zbrug pa ni / rang gi ngo zros snang ba yin / stong pa yang yin / de la ni rang gi ngo zros skye ba med cing ’gag pa med pa rnam par rig pa tsam ste /’di ni mig
gi dbang po'i mngon sum tshad ma zhes kyang bya ste / ...de'i rjes su 'bren ba rnams ni / phyi rol ltar snang ba dmigs pa'i rnam rig ma 'khrul ba ni tshad ma yin te / rnal byor mngon sum dang 'dra ba'i phyir ro ... phyi ltar snang ba tsam las gzhan pa'i phyi rol gyi don rdul phna rab la sogs par bden pa med pas / rang gsal bar snang ba la skye 'gag med par rtogs shingchos kyi dbyings nyid du nges par 'gyur ro l.)

1404 The Peking Tengyur (op. cit., 75a1) reads: "three [forms of] pure knowledge." Given that the thrust of this passage is that the eighteen dhātus are realized as the dharmadhatu, and thus luminosity, "three forms of consciousness" must refer to the mental forms (similar to the viśṇaptis in the Yogācāra) of sound, ears, and the corresponding consciousness.

1405 Ibid., 75a2: "rtog pa dang bcas pas thos par 'gyur, "they become hearing when accompanied by thought." Rang byung rdo rje (Dbu ma chos dbyings bstod pa'i rnam par bshad pa, 23a2-4) has the reading of the Peking Tengyur but explains: "...a pure [ear] consciousness free from thoughts and confusion has arisen. It is, by its very nature, without defining characteristics, [and] must be realized as the dharmadhatu itself, free from the three [processes of] arising, ceasing, and abiding. As for [the state] marked by clinging to sound as a characteristic sign, it becomes hearing owing to a state of consciousness marked by confusion and thought." (...rnam par shes pa dag pa rtog pa dang bral zhing ma 'khrul pa skyes te / de yang rang gi ngo bos mtshan nyid med pa / skye 'gag gnas gsum dang bral bai cho kyi dbyings nyid du rtogs pa bya'o / sgra la mtshan mar 'dzin pa dang bcas pa ni 'khrul pa rtog pa dang bcas pa'i shes pas thos par 'gyur te l.)

1406 The Peking Tengyur (op. cit., 75a2) reads: "Based on the nose and odor, one smells. This is an example of formlessness. Similarly, the olfactory consciousness makes one realize the dharmadhatu" (sna dang dri la brten nas snom / de ni gzugs su med pa'i dpe / de bzhin sna yi rnam shes kyis / chos kyi dbyings la rtog par byed l). Here, too, Rang byung rdo rje (op. cit., 23a4-5) follows the reading of the Peking Tengyur.

1407 Tib. dben pa, Skt. vivikta, a term referring to reality in the sense of the ultimate mode of existence (see Seyfort Ruegg 1971:467).

1408 Gser mdog pa' chen Śākya mchog ldan ("Chos kyi dbyings su bstod pa zhes bya ba'i bstan bcos kyi rnam par bshad pa," 318.6-7) explains: "Given the dharmadhatu-nature of both, they do not abide as the cause of the consciousness of taste, ..." (gnyis ka chos kyi dbyings kyi ngo bo yis le'i rnam par shes pa'i rgyur gnas pa med l)...)

1409 The Peking Tengyur (op. cit., 75a3-4) reads: dag pa'i las kyi ngo bo dang / reg bya'i rkyen gyi mtshan nyid dag / rkyen dag las ni grol gyer pa / chos kyi dbyings zhes brjod par bya l, "The nature of the pure body, the pure defining characteristics of the conditions of tangible objects, and [their respective consciousness, which is] free from conditions—these must be called dharmadhatu."

1410 Read btags or btags instead of btag (Cf. Rang byung rdo rje: Dbu ma chos dbyings bstod pa'i rnam par bshad pa, 25a1-3.)

1411 Śākya mchog ldan (op. cit., 319.1) explains: "On the level of apparent truth it is on the basis of the mental faculty and phenomena, that [mind] has mainly become mental consciousness" (kun rdzob tu yid dang chos la brten nas yid kyi rnam par shes pa gso bor gyer pa ste).

1412 The Peking Tengyur (Ibid., fol. 75a4) reads pa nyid instead of nyid las.

1413 Tib. nye ba rgyu ba, Skt. upavīcāra (see Index to the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya, s.v.), i.e., the mental movement that occurs when the eighteen dhātus interact.

1414 Tib. gnas rigs. Further down they are referred to as "worlds" (jig rten).

1415 Strictly speaking, there are no forms in the formless realms, and in this context it is only their luminosity that is seen.
In contrast to the “eyes of flesh” further up, here the Tibetan honorific term for eyes (spyan) is used.

In the Peking Tengyur (no. 2010) the quoted passage is in bstod tshogs, vol. ka, fol. 74b3–5. There, however, one pada in the last stanza of the quotation is missing.

The Peking Tengyur (op. cit., 74b3) reads btags instead of brtags.

Ibid., 74b4: phra rab rdul gyi ngo bo yis / glang gi rva yang rigs ma yin: “Even the horn of an ox is logically not justified in terms of an own-being of minute atoms.”

Rang byung rdo rje (Dbu machos dbyings bstod pa'i rnam par bshad pa, 19a5–6) explains: “All phenomena that are free from the three [processes of] arising, ceasing, and abiding, remain, by nature, inseparable appearance and emptiness. Anything imagined as arising and ceasing does not exist” (skyê'gag gnas gsum dang bral ba'i chos thams cad / rang gi ngo bos snang ba dang stong pa dbnyer med pa zhugs pa la / skyê ba dang 'gag par brtags (text: rtag) pa ni'ga'yang yod par ma yin no).

Peking Tengyur, op. cit., 74b5: gcig kyang yod pa ma yin no, “a single [independent thing] does not exist.”

This pada is missing in the Tengyur editions and the commentaries of Rang byung rdo rje and Sakya mchog ldan.

Ibid., 74b5: ri bong ba lang rva yi dpes / ji ltar bde gshogs chos rnams nyid / dbu ma nyid du sgrub par byed //. Cf. Seyfort Ruegg’s (1971:467) paraphrase: “Par l’exemple des cornes du lièvre et du bœuf on établit que les qualités du tathāgata (sugata dharma) ne sont autres que le Milieu (madhyama).” In a footnote he further explains: “Les buddhadharma, qui sont asanskrta ‘incomposées,’ ne sont ni inexistants et purement nominaux comme la corne du lièvre, ni des entités existantes et, partant, sanskrta comme la corne du bœuf.”

Sakya mchog ldan (op. cit., 315.1–3) comments: “The Sugata has proven that all phenomena of sārama and nirvāṇa [conform to] the middle way of abandoning duality. If one asks how, it is on the basis of the examples of the horn of a rabbit and an ox. Even the horn of a rabbit can at least be imputed in mind and speech; and even the horn of an ox does not have an own-being” (bde bar gshogs pas khor 'das kyi chos thams cad gnyis spang pa dbu ma nyid du sgrub par byed do / ji ltar zhe na / ri bong gi rva dang ba glang gi rva yi dpe las so // de yang shes brjod kyi btags pa tsam ni ri bong gi rva la yang yod la / rang gi ngo bo ni glang gi rva la yang med pa'o !). Rang byung rdo rje (op. cit., 20a3) notes: “Those, who propound in accordance with the Dharma taught by the Sugata, have abandoned the clinging to extremes and proven that [all phenomena conform to] the middle way” (bde bar gshogs pas (text: pa'i) bstan pa'i chos dang mthan par smra ba rnams ni mthar 'dzin pa dor nas / dbu ma nyid du bsgrub par byed !).

In the Peking Tengyur (no. 2010) the quoted passage is in bstod tshogs, vol. ka, fol. 74a3–6. As in the preceding quotations from the Dharmadhatustotra, the number of differences between the versions in the Derge and the Peking Tengyurs and Gzhon nu dpal is unusually high. But in this case, the Sanskrit original (stanzas 18–22) has survived as a quote in Nāropa’s Sekoddefapikii (see Seyfort Ruegg 1971:466), and Gzhon nu dpal’s reading is closer to the Sanskrit in all instances.

Pāda 18b: P: du ba khug rna, DRSM: khug rna du ba, Skt. - nibhāradhāmena; pada 18d and 19d: DRSM renders the past participles avrtau and avrtam with the auxiliary verb gyur in the past tense, whereas P has in both cases ‘gyur; pada 21b: Skt. malināṁ rāgajāir malaṁ is accurately translated in DRSM as: chags skyes dri mas dri ma can, over against DP (Derge and Peking Tengyur) ‘dod chags la sogs dri ma can; pada 21c: DRSM turns the past participle dagdhan into the past form brregs, whereas P has sreg; pada 21d: na dagdhanā tat prabhāsvatāni is precisely rendered
in DRSM as 'od gsal de ni bsregs ma yin, while DP have: de nyid 'od gsal ma yin no.

1426 Lit., “the mouth of rāhu.”


1429 Ibid.: agniśaucamī yathā vastrāṇaḥ malaīnaḥ vividhāraḥ malaīḥ / agnidadhye yathākṣiptāṇaḥ malaīḥ dagdhaḥ na vastrātā // (20).

a Seyfort Ruegg (Ibid.) has agniḥ śaucamī and translates: “Le feu étant purifié…,” which is syntactically problematic.

1430 Ibid.: evam prabhiisvaram cittam malaīnaḥ rāga-jairaḥ malaīḥ / jñānāgnīnaḥ malaīḥ dagdhaḥ na dagdhaḥ tat prabhāsvaram // (21).

1431 Ibid.: funyataḥ kṣitii sutraḥ ye kecid bhiifitii jinaḥ / sarvais taik jlesavyāvītīr naiva dhātuvināanānam // (22).

1432 Tib. tha mal gyi shes pa.

1433 The quoted passage is from the first part of the first chapter on the view in the Phyag rgya chen po lam zab mthar thugs zhang gi man ngag, 51–55. For another translation of this passage see Martin 1992:255–58.

1434 I follow Jackson (1990:74) and read na as against nas in both the block print and the manuscript of Gzhon nu dpal’s Ratnagotravibhāga commentary.

1435 Here, too, Jackson’s (1990:74) reading kun is to be preferred as against nyid in both versions of Gzhon nu dpal’s commentary.

1436 The last nine lines have also been translated in Jackson 1990:28.

1437 According to Sorensen 1999:175.

1438 The “Rin chen rgyan ‘dra” is contained in the Collected Works of Phag mo gru pa, edited by Kun dga’ rin chen chos kyi rgyal mtshan, in vol. II (kha), 216b6–225a4. The quoted passage occurs on fol. 217a3f.

1439 The Rin chen rgyan ‘dra as edited by Kun dga’ rin chen chos kyi rgyal mtshan (Ibid.) has ‘dod instead of ‘jug: “As for the way to maintain pure luminosity…”

1440 The manuscript copy produced by Kun dga’ rin chen chos kyi rgyal mtshan (Ibid.) has pa instead of pas, so that no causal relation is indicated between the third and fourth pāda.

1441 In his commentary on Saraha’s Dohākoṣa Karma Phrin las pa glosses sems nyid as gnas lugs (“true nature”) (Do ha skor gsum cya tshak ‘bring po bzhugs so, 64.4).

1442 In the edition of Kun dga’ rin chen chos kyi rgyal mtshan in vol. II (kha), 220b4f.

1443 See Gzhon nu dpal’s commentary below (DRSM, 51.10).

1444 Tib. ’dezin in the third line and ’gzung in the fourth and fifth lines are technical terms for the “perceiving subject” (’dezin) and the “perceived object” (’gzung) (Skt. ābāha and ābhaya). Here the intention is to equate the misperception of mind’s clarity as one’s self with the perceiving subject. The perceived objects are thus the misperceptions engendered by self-awareness and object appearances, respectively the I and other.

1445 The manuscript copy produced by Kun dga’ rin chen chos kyi rgyal mtshan has nyon mongs can gyi yid instead of nyon mongs can yid kyis, so that the third pāda loses its relation to the first two.

1446 Tib. kun gebi. If kun gebi is not an abbreviation for “basic consciousness” (kun gebi rnam shes), we have an early occurrence of the gzhan stong term kun gebi ye shes here.

1447 According to Thrangu Rinpoche, the two types of ignorance do not arise, strictly speaking, from wisdom, but from accidental stains that are simultaneously present with coemergent wisdom (lhan cig skyes pa’i ye shes).
Both the block print and the manuscript of Gzhon nu dpal's *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary read kun gezi nyid yid du gyur pa. I suggest to read nyon yid instead of nyid yid, since it has been explained above that the basic consciousness is the defiled mind appearing as a self. Moreover, the basic consciousness in the form of mental consciousness or the mental faculty can hardly be the substantial cause of the consciousness of the five doors and the mental consciousness.

The quoted stanza is from the “Dohās for the People” (“Do ha mdzod kyi glu bzhus so,” *Nges don phyag chen mdzod*, vol. om, 301.1–2). It is not found in Shahidullah’s edition.

Karma Phrin las pa explains in his *Do ha skor gsum gyi tīkā ’bring po bzhus so*, 154.1–3: “The seed of both saṁsāra and nirvāṇa is the same true nature of mind (*sems nyid*). Even though the two trunks of worldly existence and quiescence [grown] from this true nature of mind (*sems nyid*), appear to be temporarily separate, the two have the same root. For this reason, their ultimate fruit is the same dharmakāya. Whoever thinks of both worldly existence and quiescence as being undivided [and] equal is liberated from the extremes of saṁsāra and nirvāṇa. Since one does not abide [onesidedly] either in worldly existence or in quiescence, all phenomena must be experienced in such a way that [both of their aspects, namely appearance and emptiness] are united into a pair.” (*khor ba’ das gnyis ba’i sa bon ni sems nyid gceg (text: cig) su yin la [I] sems nyid de las gnas skabs su srid pa dang zhi ba’i idong po gnyis tha dam pa litar snang yang de gnyis rtsa ba gceg yin pa’i rgyu mthshan de las mthar thug gi ‘bras bu ni chos kyi sku gceg pa’o / srid zhi gnyis po de yang dbey med mnyam pa nyid du gang sems pa de ni ‘khor ba dang mña_ ngan las ‘das pa’i mtha’ las rnam par grol zhing srid zhi la mi gnas pa ns chos thams cad zung ‘jug gi tshul du spytad par bya’o.)

The quoted stanza is from the “Dohās for the People” (“Do ha mdzod kyi glu bzhus so,” *Phyag chen mdzod*, vol. om, 289.5).

My translation follows Karma Phrin las pa who explains in his *Do ha skor gsum gyi tīkā ’bring po bzhus so* (64.4–65.2): “This true nature of mind (*sems nyid*), is like the seed of all saṁsāra and nirvāṇa, because all phenomena of saṁsāra and nirvāṇa appear from it. The true nature of mind (*sems nyid*), in which existence [or] saṁsāra evolves in the form of appearances of a perceived object and a perceiving subject, and in which nirvāṇa spreads in the form of the realization that [mind] is without this duality, is like a wish-fulfilling jewel, in that it bestows whatever fruit one desires, such as the fruits of higher existence or the three yānas. Realizing that the mind is the entire origin of qualities, Saraha prostrates [to it].” (*sems nyid dam gnas lugs gceg pu ’di ’khor ’das kun gyi sa bon la bu yin te / ’khor ’das kyi chos thams cad ’di las snang ba’i phyir ro / sems nyid gang la gzung ’dezin du snang bas srid pa ’khor ba dang gzung ’dezin gnyis med du rtogs pas mya ngan ’das pa ’phro zhing mtho ris dang theg pa gsum gyi ’bras bu la sogs pa gang ’dod pa’i ’bras bu sre bar byed pa’i don gyi na yid bzhin gnyir bu dang ’dra ba ste...sems yon tan kun ’byung de rtogs nas sa ra has phyag tshal ba’o.)

*Both* sems nyid and *sems kyi gnyas lugs* are translated as “true nature of mind.”

A cycle of teachings transmitted by the Sa skya school and going back to the mahāsiddha Virūpa.

In the context of “inferior” (*tha ma*) and “average” (*’bring*), *bla ma* must be first of all understood as “superior”; it is obvious, however, that Gzhon nu dpal wants us to understand *bla ma* in the sense of *guru*.

I.e., those of Dam pa Sangs rgyas and Rje Sgam po pa (see above).


Tib. *Bir va pa*; see Dowman 1985;52.
According to oral information from Lama Sonam Jorphel: “pure aspects of emptiness.”

According to Lama Sonam Jorphel \textit{bla ma rin chen} is here a general term for one’s own root lama. Thus Nye gnas Grags pa rin chen glossed the term as Dpal ldan Phag mo gru pa (see \textit{Skyob pa'i gsun grub chos tshinta ma ni rin po che 'bar ba'i phreng ba'i grel pa, 126.9–10}).

I.e., their \textit{rtsa ba' bla ma}.

According to Lama Sonam Jorphel.

See Ibid., 127.6–7. Tib. \textit{rin chen dbang sngon} means \textit{indranila} (\textit{Tshig mdzod chen mo}, s.v.), sapphire.

According to Lama Sonam Jorphel.

I.e., \textit{rtsa ba'i bla ma}.

According to Lama Sonam Jorphel, \textit{chos rje mgon po} is a general term for one’s root lama, in this case Phag mo gru pa.

My translation of this quotation is based on the commentary by Nye gnas Grags pa rin chen (Ibid., 125.6–130.ii).


Lit., “branch.”

Tib. \textit{sems dang ba}, *Skt. \textit{cetasah prasādah} (see LC, s.v., and BHSD, s.v.).

The quotation in Sgam po pa’s \textit{Lam rim snying po} (\textit{Ngos don phyag chen mdzod}, vol. \textit{ka}, 321.4) reads \textit{'byi 'byi legs kyang} (“even though perfectly round”) instead of \textit{byi 'byi}.

Small images of buddhas or tantric deities, or else conical figures, molded of clay and used at sacrifices. (see Jäschke 1985: s.v.).


Lit., “[mind]stream.”

In the Tibetan -\textit{duḥkhaḥ} is only translated once.

\textit{RGVV}, 106.12–15: \textit{devesu cyutiduḥkham ity avagamāt paryēśtiduḥkhanaḥ nṛṣu prājñā nābibilānti devamanūjesuv aśivāryam apy uttamaṃ/ prājñāyād ca tathāgatapravacanāśraddhānusūrādā iti dūḥkhaḥ hetur ayam nirodha iti ca jñānena sampreṣānato.}

According to B (51b1) and also de Jong (1979:578); A is not available. Johnston wrongly reads -\textit{mānyād} instead of -\textit{sārād}.

Tib. \textit{gnas pa'i don}, i.e., the \textit{alayavijñāna}.

Peking Kangyur (no. 11), \textit{rgyud}, vol. \textit{ka}, fol. 278a2–5. The quoted passage is on fol. 44aa4–6. Ghzon nu dpal’s quotation differs often from the Peking Kangyur, but this does not affect the overall meaning.

The text in the Peking Tengyur (TDṬ, 188a7) reads \textit{sa phyogs su} instead of \textit{phyogs su}.

Tib. \textit{gnas pa'i don} is missing in DRSM.

Tib. \textit{dpyad nas kyang} is difficult to construe, but in the Peking Tengyur (TDṬ, 188b3) we have the reading \textit{dpyad nas slar}.

The Peking Tengyur (TDṬ, 188b6) reads: “In keeping with the words: Insight in accordance with meditative equipoise” (\textit{ji bzhin mnyam gshag gyur pa'i shes rab ces bya ba'i tshig gis so}). Sahajavajra’s commentary in the Peking Tengyur (TDṬ, 188b4–5) has two more lines before this sentence that are not quoted by Ghzon.
nu dpal: “In this connection, its hindrances are abandoned, just as [in the example of] darkness and appearance. In virtue of this [fact], right wisdom arises in the same way as appearances with the help of the eyes, since they (i.e., calm abiding and insight) are actual on account of their mutually separate qualities. They do not contradict each other in the same way darkness and appearance do.” (de la mun pa dang [text: la] snang ba bzhin du ste / de yi sgrib pa rnam spang bar ‘gyur ro / de nyid kyi phyir mig gi snang ba bzhin du [text: no /] yang dag pai ye shes skye ste / phan tshun so so i yon ian giys nges par gnas pai phyir ro / snang ba dang mun pa bzhin du phan tshun ‘gal ba dag ni ma yin no /)

The corresponding passage in the Peking Tengyur (TDT, 189a2) reads: “Here one must meditate before nonanalytical [bodhi]titta (dir dpyad pa med pa’i sems kyi ingon du bsgom bya ba nyid do); the version in the Phyag rgya chen po’i rgya gzhung (vol. a, fol. 20a1) is as follows: “Here, too, one needs to meditate directly without an analytical mind” (dir yang dpyad pa med pa’i sems kyi is mngon du bsgom par bya ba nyid do). According to Thrangu Rinpoche it is possible to ascertain phenomena (such as mental events) by investigating their color, shape, etc., with the help of direct cognitions within your introverted mental consciousness during vipaśyanā.


HT, 95.6: sarvadharmapariśītarh bhiivānā naiva bhāvānā //.

MV, 76.11-12: dharmaṁ kandhasahasraṁ bu ‘dbyataṁ nāma śūnyatā / bu’ddhā nāsaṁ parāmaśādā vināśārthaṁ bhaved guruh //.

a According to the manuscript (NGMPP reel no. B 22/24, fol. 34b5); the Japanese edition has bu-.

b The manuscript (NGMPP reel no. B 22/24, fol. 34b5) and the Japanese edition have bu-.

DRSM, 55.15: gang giis bum sogś deiin pa na / rtag tu sbyor bas bsam gsan te /.

MV, 78.9-10: ghaṭāder graham yaśya dhyānāsatatayogatāh / bhaved asau mahābuddhah sarvākāraikavigrahab //

a The manuscript (NGMPP reel no. B 22/24, fol. 35a2) and the Japanese edition read: grahanair.

Not quoted by Sahajavajra.

1490 TD, 94.1-2: yathābhūtasamādhiṁ ca bhavet prsthānacittatathā / ajasrarh jñayate tattvam yam māt mādavadāvinām //.

In the Mahāyānasūtraśākāra, stanza XIX.45, the four yuktis respectively correlate to (a) correct mental engagement, (b) the right view accompanied by its fruit, (c) analysis based on valid cognition, and (d) the inconceivable. (See MSA, 167.24-25: yoniṣṭa ca manaskārah samyogdṛstiḥ phalānviśa / pramāṇair vicayo ‘cintyam jñeyam yuktatattvastayam //.)

Lamotte (1935:158, l. 30) readschos nyid dbyings instead ofchos dbyings, but this does not change the meaning.


Tib. sbyor ba and thabs are here used as synonyms of rigs (Skt. yuktis); see DRSM, 431.23-432.1.

This is the understanding of Gzhon nu dpal (see below).

DRSM rten, D rtogs, NP rtog. Given Skt. pratissaraṇa, the reading must bertong [pa], which is, moreover, the lectio difficilior.

The quoted passage introduces the explanation of stanzas I.156-58 (J 1.153-55), dedicated to the defining characteristics of buddha nature. The corresponding Sanskrit is as follows (RGVV, 73.9-16): sa khali esa tathāgatagarbho dharmaṁ yaj vai pulas ta ‘tathāsāṁbhinnalakṣaṇo niyagotrasvabhāvah sarvadā ca
sarvatra ca niravafiya
dharmatvi pramānikya
yatihoktam esā kulāputra dharmāni dharmaṇa ātmapādā
vā tathāgatanām anātmapādā vā saīdāvaitē sa tvās
tathāgatagarbhī iti yaiva cāsau dharmatā
saivātra yuktir yoga upāyahya yaiivavām evavāh
itibhyār dharmatī jānāmit parāsa (text:ūc) añām
dharmaṇa viyukti ca cittani dhārayapāna āyā
cittasaṁjñāpanāya sā na cintayati tā na vikalpayati
tā jñāṇa dharmatī jānāmit parāsa
yathoktam kulaputra dharmāni dharmatī
utpiiddi viit ātimā
tathāgatagarbhi iti yaiva
saivātra yuktir yoga upāyahya
yayaivam evaí iti
anyathā naivaitat syād iti sarvatra
dharmaṇa viyukti ca pratisa (text:ūc) añām
dharmaṇa viyukti ca
sadaivaśe satvām
tathāgatagarbhi iti
yayaivam evaí iti
yayaivm evaí iti. a

The quotation could not be identified.

MA, 408.12-17.

HT, 91.3-4: nānyena kathyate sahajanā na kasmīn api labhayate ātmanā jñāyate
punyād guruparvopāya aśeyaya ī. Ma pham explains in his Dbu ma rgyan rtsa 'grel,
dngos rnam kyi dngos poas:
dngos po rnam kyi dngos poam ngo bo yin lungs.

MAL, 244.10-13. Ichigō (1985:244) introduces this and the following two stanzas (MAL 73-75) in the following way: “By whom and how is the absence of intrinsic nature in all dharmaṣ understood?” MAL 73-74 are given the subtitle: “Emptiness (śūnyata) and unwise people.”

MAL, 246.9-12.

The numbering follows Steinkellner’s (1977) Verse-Index.

The text in the Tengyur reads sgrīb byed des instead of kun rdzob des.

Even though concrete entities are completely different from each other, certain entities can cause a perception whose image is the same. Such an image is usually mistaken for the concrete entity itself (see Frauwallner (1932:264-65) for a discussion of these stanzas).
NOTES TO PAGES 273–77

1507 PV I.68–70 (ed. Gnoli 1960:38.11–16): parārūpaṁ svarūpaṇa yañā samviryate dhiyaṁ\n\n/ ekārtanaprabhāsīnaḥ bhāvaṁ arūtya bhedināḥ // tāyaḥ samviryānārthāḥ saṁvitryā
\n\n\nhedinaḥ svayam / abhedina ivābhānti bhāva rūpeṇa kenacī // tasya abhiprayavaśāt
\n\nsāmānyāṁ sarvakramī sat prakṛtitam / tad asat paramārthena yathā saṅkalpitām tāya //.
\n\n1508 Manorathandin reads -nātaviyā, which is supported by the Tibetan tha dad pa nyid (see Miyasaka 1972:124–25 and DRSM, 57.18). My translation is based on
\n\nGnoli’s edition.

1509 The quotation could not be identified.

1510 Peking Tengyur (no. 5245), dbu ma, vol. tsha, fols. 24b8–25a5.

1511 The Peking Tengyur reads rtag pa yod ces bya ’gyur pa instead of rtag pa yod ces bya ’gyur na (DRSM, 58.13–14).

1512 The Peking Tengyur omits the negation particle in front of ’phrīgs (DRSM, 58.18).

1515 I.e., the objects of direct valid cognition in the pramāṇa tradition.

1516 It seems that Gzhon nu dpal still accepts svālakṣanās, like Śāntarakṣita or Kamalāśila, on the level of apparent truth. For a discussion of the synthesis of the logician’s Yogācāra ontology with Madhyamaka, see Tillemans 2003:98f.

1517 See BHSD s.v., “mind talk,” “imagination.”


1519 In the Tibetan that is followed here, the order of the two immediately preceding points is reversed.

1520 Skt. ānudarśanāṁ, Tib. rjes su mthong ba. The prefix ānu refers either to a consequent seeing (i.e., the seeing that results from having turned back the conditions of ignorance, etc.) or to a “repeated” and thus thorough seeing.

1521 According to the Tibetan I take yun du gnas pa (kālavasthitām) as referring to the preceding dngos po (dravyāṇā). The Sanskrit is difficult to construe here.

1522 According to the Tibetan, Skt. bhūtvā ca vyayam ought to be included in the preceding construction.

1523 Not in the Tibetan.

1524 LAS, 40.11–41.2: punar aparāṁ mahāmāte vikalpabhavatrayadūkhhaṅvavartanam
\n\nañjānātśṛṅkārakarmapratyayavinīrttiṁ svacittadṛṣṭvāyāśyavānudarsanānāṁ bhāṣyayā
\nye kecin mahāmāte śramaṇā và bhṛmaṇā vābhāṣyati sattvāṁ hetuḥpala-\n\nhitaḥ bhistakīt[īn] dravyāṇā ca kāṭ āvasthitāṁ pratyayeu ca skandhadhātvāyātanānāṁ
\nupādāṇāṁ sthitam ca cecchānti [] bhūtvā ca vyayam / te mahāmāte saṁsatīkriyot-\npādabhaṅgabhavānirvātanāṁgakarmaphalasyavānapoṭvedayāvino bhavanti / tat kasya-betor yad idam pratyakṣāṅyutaḥpatīdir ādyādārśanābhaṅgāt /.
\n1525 According to Tibetan “all the [buddha] elements of the sentient beings,” but in the Skt. the corresponding word dhiyu is missing.

1526 A stage in highest yoga tantra on which the yogin is isolated (i.e., protected) from ordinary appearances.

1527 According to Tibetan “all the [buddha] elements of the sentient beings,” but in the Skt. the corresponding word dhiyu is missing.

1528 LAS, 42.8–10: mahākārnopāya kaśalāyāṁnābboṣogatena mahāmāte pretyogenā sarvāsattvāṁ jaṁpaṁbhavāyārāma-\n\nsamatāprāptā bhavanti /.

1529 The repetition of the abstract suffix in the instrumental in the Skt. (not rendered by the Tibetan) suggests that this and all following compounds depend
on *prayogena*, i.e., the practice by which one gains conviction of the fact that the triple world is one's own mind (see below).

1530 My translation follows the Tibetan. The Skt. reads: "through [the practice of seeing the] state in which conditions have not started," which rather refers to a mindstream in time.

1531 LAS, 42.10: *-anārabdhparyayatayadhyātmabāhyavisayavimuktatāyā.*

1532 LAS, 42.10-13: *cittabāhyādyāsānyāyānīmītadhiśhānānugata anupūrvena bhūmi-kramamasādhivīyānugamanatāyā trividhātukasvacittamāya dhimuktitāḥ prativi-bhāvayamānā māyopamasādhiḥ pratilabhante.*

a According to B (254a–5), E (24a3), H (172a7), and the Tibetan. Nanjio and the remaining Nepalese manuscripts read *-taya* instead of *-maya-.*

1533 LAS, 42.14–15: *svacittanirābhāsamātrāvatāreya prajñāpāramitāvihārānuprāptā.*

1534 The Tibetan does not render *-yoga-, which could have been inserted in the Skt. later to exclude the understanding "action of origination."

1535 The Tib. connects the two compounds with a genitive.

1536 My translation follows the Tib. (*rim gyis gnas 'phos pa'i*) here. Skt. *para-vṛtyāsānyānupūrvakam* could be tentatively rendered as "for whom the sequence [of the levels of realization is determined through] the basis in as much as [it has undergone a] transformation."

1537 LAS, 42.15-43.2: *utpadakriyayogavirahita samādhivajrabimbo pamaṇaṁ tathāgata-kāyaṁ nattaiṁ tathātāmināmnānugataṁ balābhijñāvāsākāryakṣaraṇopayaṇānditaṁ sarvabuddhaścetatrātirihyāyanatanopagataṁ cittanāmaṇopanīyānānabahitaṁ parāvṛtyā-sānyānupūrvakam tathāgatākāyam mahāmate te bodhisattvāḥ pratilapsyante/.

a Nanjio and all Nepalese manuscripts read *-vṛtyānu-, which is probably a reading mistake caused by the following *-ānu-.*

1538 I could not find this sentence in the *Lāṅkāvatārāsūtra.*

1539 The image is used in RGV IV.45a (J IV.43a).

1540 This *Lāṅkāvatārāsūtra* quote is interpreted as teaching the stage isolation of body: "... the effortless [accomplishment] of great compassion and skillful means...." (DRSM, 60.9).

1541 The *gdul bya'i* in the quoted *pāda* (*gdul bya'i thabs mang gang gis*) has no equivalent in the Sanskrit. Obviously the translators wanted *vineyasya* to refer not only to the preceding *yasya dhātor*, but also to the following *yenopāyena bhūrinā*. The stanzas RGV IV.3–4 read as follows:

The wise one[s] are always without effort,
Since thoughts about what guidance [should be undertaken],
[And] for whom, by which [means], where
And when, do not arise [in them]. (IV.3)

For whom, [that is,] for [which] element (i.e., type of) [of sentient being] guidance is required,
By which, [that is,] by [which of the] numerous skillful means,
What, [that is, what] guidance,
Where and when, [that is, in this or] that place and at [this or that] time. (IV.4)
(RGVV, 98.13–17: *yasya yena ca "yā yatra" yadā ca vinayakriyā / tadvikalpodayābhāvād anābhogah saddā muneh // yasya dhātor vineyasya yenopāyena bhūrinā / yā viniścakriyā yatra yadā taddeśakālayoh il/)

a According to B (50at); A is not available. See also Schmithansen (1971:170). Johnston reads *yāvac ca.*

1542 See DRSM, 60.8–9.

1543 Skt. *bhūtabhautika* (see Hirakawa 1978, s.v.).

1544 I.e., the fourth *dhyāna.*
In the “Phyag chen lam zab mthar thug” (p. 91) and in Gzhon nu dpal’s second quote of the same passage (DRSM, 65.22) we have the reading lam rgya instead of sgyu lus (see Jackson 1990:76 and Martin 1992:278). With the reading sgyu lus the sentence would mean: “From a single illusory body arises [what it needed] to benefit others.” (sgyu lus zhiig nas gzhon don ’char (DRSM, 62.14–15).) This is very unlikely, because the following zhig would have to be understood as an indefinite particle and thus emended to shig after final s.

According to Thrangu Rinpoche, the qualities of the kāyas would normally unfold within the body during this same final stage. But since the mahāmudrā path is comparatively fast, the body still has traces of defilements from earlier parts of its life (a good example being that of Milarepa), so that the full Buddha activity unfolds only after the constraining “seal of the body” has been left behind. See also Sgam po pa’s “Zhal gyi bdud rtsi thun mong rna yin pa,” 132.5–133.1, in which he quotes the following instruction: “Although one [may] have realized gradually, [along the stages] of the fourfold yoga, that one’s own mind is the coemergent dharmakāya, sickness and suffering [still] occur. They are experienced because one is not [yet] free from the constraining seal of one’s ordinary body. It is like the cubs of lions and garudas…Even though the young garuda has already fully grown wings, they are still covered by the eggshell. Likewise, even though one has realized that one’s mind is the dharmakāya, the conditions of undesired suffering [still] occur, because one is not [yet] free from the constraining seal of the body, which was set by former deeds. So there is no contradiction. So it was said.” (de yang ma! ’byor rnam pa bezi’i rim gyis rang gi sman tham cig skyes pa’ichos skur rtogs kyang/ na tsha dang sde! bsngal ’ong ba ni sha mal pa’i lus rgya dang ma bral has len pa yin te / seng ge dang khyung gi(s) phru gu lta bu / …khyung phru gu gshog phrugs rgyas kyang sgo nga lpags kyis ’thums pa dang ’dra ste / nang du sman chos skur rtogs kyang sngar gyi las kyi bskyed pa’i lus rgya dang ma bral has / bde sde! dang mi ’dod pa’i rkyen byung ba la ’gal ba med pa yin gnungs.) See also Jackson 1992:95–114.

In the sense of yogas. Two of the Nepalese manuscripts (B 36a6; and G 32a1) read kāraṇaṅaḥ instead of dharmāṅaḥ: the four dharmas as “causes” of yogic realization.

Skt. vibhāvāna; the Tibetan translation from the Chinese has rnam par ’byed pa.

Tib. rab tu rtog pa; Skt. upalakṣaṇa “the act of observing.”

The Tibetan supports the reading abhilāṣaṇa (cf. also LAS, 82.4–5, where abhilāṣ is again used in connection with the wisdom of the noble ones).

My translation of ’phags pa so so rang gi ye shes is based on the explanation of the Sanskrit equivalent svapratyāmāryajñāna in LAS II.202 and Gzhon nu dpal’s explanation of it (see DRSM, 66.2–4).

According to the Sanskrit (pratyavekṣate). The Tibetan has rab tu rtog pa, which is the translation of Skt. -upalakṣaṇa- in the paragraph above.

It is somewhat difficult to understand how you can adhere to mere mental
imprints. But further down Gzhon nu dpal explains that the vāsanās in daunṣṭhayavāsanābhiniveśa also refer to the appearances caused by them: “And also the appearances in their various forms, such as mountains and houses, are called—using the name of the cause for the fruit—imprints. It is like saying ‘this is poison’ when seeing the [already manifest] disease [caused by it]” (DRSM, 65.3–7).

The translation from the Chinese (Peking Kangyur no. 776, mdo, vol. ngu, fol. 236a6) does not have the problematic mngon par zhen pa and reads: bag chags kyis yongs su bgos pa.

Skt. -upanibaddham.

Tib. snang ba, rendering Skt. khyāyate (see also Bod skad dang legs sbyar gyi tshig mdo chen mo, vol. 7, s.v.). Indeed, Skt. khyāti has the old meaning of “appearance.” The preceding Sanskrit vikalpyate was probably first a gloss but included later when copying the text. It has no equivalent in the Tibetan. It explains the way phenomena of saṁsāra appear; they are imagined or mentally fabricated.

Skt. gati at the end of the enumeration dehabhogapratiftha is rendered as dang ‘gro ba. It is thus understood in the sense of a “state of existence into which rebirth is possible” (see BHSD s.v.). Gati (‘gro ba) is missing in some of the Sanskrit manuscripts (A 30a2, D 29b7, H 32a4) and has no equivalent in the Tibetan translation of the Lankāvatāra Sūtra from the Chinese.

According to G (53b1–2); Nanjio omits.

According to H (32a2), which drops the following na, however. B (46a2) reads -lāsa-, and E (453a) -lāṣa-. Nanjio reads with most of the Nepalese manuscripts -lakṣanā- (A 29b7, D 29b5, I 37b4). The latter, however, have -abhinna- before lakṣana.

My numbering is in accordance with Steinkellner’s (1977) Verse-Index, and in the latter the third chapter is on pratyakeṣa.

The Sanskrit differs a little: “Because they see the nonexistence of external phenomena—in accordance [with the fact that they are] only appearances of their own mind....”

The final sentence of the second explanation is missing in the Sanskrit and the Tibetan translation from the Sanskrit (Peking Kangyur 775). A similar sentence

1560 Skt. -upanibaddham.

1561 Tib. snang ba, rendering Skt. khyāyate (see also Bod skad dang legs sbyar gyi tshig mdo chen mo, vol. 7, s.v.). Indeed, Skt. khyāti has the old meaning of “appearance.” The preceding Sanskrit vikalpyate was probably first a gloss but included later when copying the text. It has no equivalent in the Tibetan. It explains the way phenomena of saṁsāra appear; they are imagined or mentally fabricated.

1562 Skt. gati at the end of the enumeration dehabhogapratiftha is rendered as dang ‘gro ba. It is thus understood in the sense of a “state of existence into which rebirth is possible” (see BHSD s.v.). Gati (‘gro ba) is missing in some of the Sanskrit manuscripts (A 30a2, D 29b7, H 32a4) and has no equivalent in the Tibetan translation of the Lankāvatāra Sūtra from the Chinese.

1563 LAS, 79.16–80.11: bhagavān āha / caturbhir mahāmāte dharmaṁ samanvāgata bodhisattvaḥ mahābuddho bhavanti / katamais caturbhir yad uta svacittadṛṣṭyāvibhāvanatātāya copādaśṭhisibhangadṛṣṭivivarjanatātayā ca bhāyyabābhāvopalakṣanatātayā ca svapratyāmrāyaṁāndīgambhārāsanajayaṁtayā ca / ebhir mahāmāte caturbhir dharmaṁ samanvāgata bodhisattvāḥ mahābuddho bhavanti / tatra kathāṁ mahāmāte bodhisattvo mahāsattvaḥ svatītadṛṣṭyāvibhāvanākūsalo bhavati / yad uta sa evam pratyaveṣate svacittātmānām idam tvaibhūtakam ātmātmayaṁahātaṁ nirham āyūhāni yuvāqugatam anādikala-paṁcadaunṣṭhayāvāsanābhiniveśavāstānaṁ tvaibhūtakaviciśritāupacāroprapātanibaddham dehabhogapratifṭhāgaṁcibhāvanākūsalo bhavati / yad uta sa evam pratyaveṣate svacittātmānām idam tvaibhūtakam ātmātmayaṁahātaṁ nirham āyūhāni yuvāqugatam anādikala-paṁcadaunṣṭhayāvāsanābhiniveśavāstānaṁ tvaibhūtakaviciśritāupacāroprapātanibaddham dehabhogapratifṭhāgaṁcibhāvanākūsalo bhavati / yad uta sa evam pratyaveṣate svacittātmānām idam tvaibhūtakam ātmātmayaṁahātaṁ nirham āyūhāni yuvāqugatam anādikala-paṁcadaunṣṭhayāvāsanābhiniveśavāstānaṁ tvaibhūtakaviciśritāupacāroprapātanibaddham dehabhogapratifṭhāgaṁcibhāvanākūsalo bhavati / yad uta sa evam pratyaveṣate svacittātmānām idam tvaibhūtakam ātmātmayaṁahātaṁ nirham āyūhāni yuvāqugatam anādikala-paṁcadaunṣṭhayāvāsanābhiniveśavāstānaṁ tvaibhūtakaviciśritāupacāroprapātanibaddham dehabhogapratifṭhāgaṁcibhāvanākūsalo bhavati / yad uta sa evam pratyaveṣate svacittātmānām idam tvaibhūtakam ātmātmayaṁahātaṁ nirham āyūhāni yuvāqugatam anādikala-paṁcadaunṣṭhayāvāsanābhiniveśavāstānaṁ tvaibhūtakaviciśritāupacāroprapātanibaddham dehabhogapratifṭhāgaṁcibhāvanākūsalo bhavati / yad uta sa evam pratyaveṣate svacittātmānām idam tvaibhūtakam ātmātmayaṁahātaṁ nirham āyūhāni yuvāqugatam anādikala-paṁcadaunṣṭhayāvāsanābhiniveśavāstānaṁ tvaibhūtakaviciśritāupacāroprapātanibaddham dehabhogapratifṭhāgaṁcibhāvanākūsalo bhavati / yad uta sa evam pratyaveṣate svacittātmānām idam tvaibhūtakam ātmātmayaṁahātaṁ nirham āyūhāni yuvāqugatam anādikala-paṁcadaunṣṭhayāvāsanābhiniveśavāstānaṁ tvaibhūtakaviciśritāupacāroprapātanibaddham dehabhogapratifṭhāgaṁcibhāvanākūsalo bhavati /

1564 My numbering is in accordance with Steinkellner’s (1977) Verse-Index, and in the latter the third chapter is on pratyakeṣa.


1566 Miyasaka reads tajjñānam (in compound).

1567 The Sanskrit differs a little: “Because they see the nonexistence of external phenomena—in accordance [with the fact that they are] only appearances of their own mind....”

1568 The final sentence of the second explanation is missing in the Sanskrit and the Tibetan translation from the Sanskrit (Peking Kangyur 775). A similar sentence
(with the same meaning but different wording) is found in the Tibetan translation from the Chinese (Peking Kangyur 776). Based on the latter, Gzhon nu dpal probably restored the sentence in the wording of the translation from the Sanskrit.

1569 LAS, 80.13–81.5: kathaṃ punar mahāmāte bodhisattvo mahāsattvau utpādāsthitibhaṅgadrṣṭativarjito bhavati / yad uta māyāsvapnapurājanmasadrṣṭāḥ sarvabhāvāḥ svaparabhāyabhāvān notpadyan te / svacittadvaiśmatrānuśāritvād bāhyyabhāvabhāvādanāṁ viyānānāṁ apravṛttiṁ dṛṣṭvā pratayaṇāṁ akūta-rāṣṭīvaṁ ca vitalapratyatodbhavāni trayidhatukani paśyanto 'dhyātmabhāyasaśarva-dharmānupalabdhibhibbhiḥ niḥsvabhāvādanānād utpādādṛṣṭativirṛttau māyādaḥ dharmasvabhāvanu gamānud anuṭaptikadharmakāṇḍāṁ pratiłabhaṁ ī / ...LAS, 81.15–16: ekam hi mahāmāte bodhisattvau mahāsattvau utpādāsthitibhaṅgadrṣṭativarjito bhavati ī.

a Dṛṣṭva inserted according to E (45b2), K (30b2), and in view of Tib. snang ba.

b D (30a3) reads manomayakaya[m] instead of dharmasvabhāvanugamānān anuṭaptikadharmakāṇḍāṁ.

Gzhon nu dpal follows the Tibetan translation from the Chinese, which does not include what corresponds to lines 3–15 in Nanjio’s (1923:81) edition (i.e., the passage from aṣṭamānyāṁ bhūmāu to sattvaparipākārtham). The first part (Peking Kangyur no. 775, mdo, vol. ngu, fol. 96a2–6) of this excluded passage (what corresponds to the text from aṣṭamānyāṁ bhūmāu to manomayakāyam pratiłabhan) contains the explanation of the fourth dharma in the Tibetan translation from the Chinese. This fourth explanation is missing in the available Nepalese manuscripts and the Tibetan translation from the Sanskrit. It is thus reasonable to assume that it was wrongly inserted in the explanation of the second dharma. On the other hand, Gzhon nu dpal does not follow the different sequence of the second and third dharmas in the Tibetan translation from the Chinese (Peking Kangyur 776, mdo, vol. ngu, fol. 236a8–b7). The second insertion on the “mental body” is not quoted by Gzhon nu dpal in any of the four explanations.

c Nanjio reads against all manuscripts -gamānut-, which is probably a reading mistake.

1570 Gzhon nu dpal here quotes again some of Zhang’s stanzas on the yoga freedom from mental fabrication (DRSM, 63.24–26 [61.26–62.2]).

1571 Tib. rtoṅ in the sense of kun rtoṅ.

1572 Not identified.

1573 Skt. ghoṣāṇugatā kṣāntī.

1574 The last sentence of the explanation of the second yoga in the Lāṅkāvatārīsaṅgā is repeated here.

1575 Further down (66.7ff.) Gzhon nu dpal explains that the fact that phenomena do not arise can begin to be endured well below the eighth bodhisattva level. Thinking that this endurance applies only to the eighth level, though, could have been the reason that the sequence of the second and third dharmas in the Tibetan translation of the Lāṅkāvatārī from the Chinese was changed, especially since the explanation of the fourth dharma starts: “Having obtained the [ability to] endure the fact that phenomena do not arise, one abides on the eighth level.”

1576 The first dngos po thams cad has no correspondence in the Sanskrit.

1577 The corresponding Sanskrit (i.e., the compound ending in -prakṛtyāḥ) is an upamāsamāsa compound depending on sarvabhāvāḥ, and thus the comparative term ita bu is used in the Tibetan translation.

1578 The compound sarvabhāvasvabhāvāḥ[ḥ] is problematic (the “own-being of all phenomena” cannot be in the plural, and as an adjectival compound it would have
to depend on a noun in the nominative plural, which in this case could only be “entities,” but this would not make sense). The Tibetan translators must have read sarvabhaavavakhavati, which is, in fact, supported by one Nepalese manuscript (F 15a2–3), and assumed that a double *sandhi* was applied. In other words they must have read *sandhi* rules not applied: sarvabhaavavakhabhaavati. The Tibetan translation from the Chinese (Peking Kangyur no. 776, mdo, vol. ngu, fol. 236b1–2), however, supports a reading with a short a: ... bag chags kyi rgyu las byung bao zhes dngos po thams cad kyi rang bzhin la rab rtog pa ste.

1579 Strictly speaking, the adhering is to what is produced by the mental imprints. Further down, Gzhon nu dpal explains that the term vāsana in daśṭhulyavāsanaṁbhinnivēsa also refers to the appearances caused by them: “Also the appearances in various forms, such as mountains and houses, are called, using the name of the cause for the fruit, imprints. It is like saying ‘This is poison’ when seeing the [already manifest] disease [caused by it]” (DRSM, 65.3–7). The Sanskrit compound -vāsanaṁbhinnivēsa-, for its part, can be analyzed as a genitive tatpurusa: “adhering of the imprints” in the sense of adhering caused by the imprints.

1580 In the Tibetan it is bag chags that is qualified by rnam pa sna tshogs, not gnas ngan len.

1582 The remaining two sentences of the third explanation are missing in the Sanskrit and the Tibetan translation from the Sanskrit, sampāṣayān being followed by the final part of the fourth explanation, pratyaṃbāyajñānāgatīvīśayam abhilaṣate (LAS, 82.4–5). Gzhon nu dpal’s wording of these last two sentences follows exactly the Tibetan translation from the Chinese (op. cit., 236b2–3), which is remarkable, since Gzhon nu dpal otherwise strictly follows the direct translation from the Sanskrit.

1583 LAS, 81.17–82.4: tatra katham mahāmāte bodhisattvo mahāsattvo bāhyabhāvābhāvopalakṣaṇakṣaṇalo bhavati / yad uta maricisvāpanaḥdakṣaṇakṛtyā mahāmāte sarvabhāvā anādikāla-prapaṇaḥ daśṭhulyavicitraviṇākvalpa vāsanānābhinniveśaḥetukāḥ ‘sarvabhāvāsvaḥbhāvā iti sampāṣayān. The remaining part of Gzhon nu dpal’s quote is missing in the Sanskrit. The immediately following sentence pratyaṃbāyajñānāgatīvīśayam abhilaṣate already belongs to the end of the explanation of the fourth dharma, so that the end of the third and the main part of the fourth explanations are missing. According to the Tibetan translation of the *Lāṅkāvatāraśutra* from the Chinese the fourth explanation has been wrongly inserted into the second explanation (Peking Kangyur 776, mdo, vol. ngu, 236a8–b3). a According to F (15a2–3): sarvabhāvāsva-.

1584 Gzhon nu dpal repeats Zhang’s stanzas on the yoga of one taste (see DRSM, 62.3–7). The following *pādas* are quoted three times in Gzhon nu dpal’s running commentary (DRSM, 119.20–21, 208.26, 453.13–14), and one time in the form of a *pratika* of the *Ratnagotravidhyāvākyāh* on I.155 (J I.152). In the Tibetan translation of the vyākhyā quotation, however, khams is used instead of dbyings (which presents no problem since both dbyings and khams are translations of Skt. *dhātu*).

1586 Cf. RGVV, 72.13: anādikālīko dhātuḥ sarvadārthamasmāṇyāḥ /. Even though the Mahāyānābhiddharmanāṣṭa is not available, this stanza from it has been quoted in the Mahāyānamārgabhāṣya and the *Trinquikābhāṣya*. In the latter, dhātuḥ is translated as dbyings (cf. Takasaki 1966:290).

1587 Skt. pāravṛtti. Together with pārīvṛtti it is the common term for “transformation.” But the Tibetan translation has rab tu gyur ba instead of yongs su gyur pa.

1588 Skt. gati. Tib. rtogs pa.

1589 Cf. LAS VI.5, where these topics are taught as the general points of the entire
Mahāyāna. The five categories are listed in the following stanza: “Names, characteristic signs, and thoughts are the defining characteristics of the [first] two natures; right wisdom and suchness those of the perfect [nature].” (nāmanimit-tasavākalpāḥ svabhāvadvayalakṣaṇam / samyagjñānāṁ tathāvām ca parinispan-nalakṣaṇam, LAS, 229.8–9.)

The fourth explanation is missing in the Sanskrit and the direct Tibetan translation from the Sanskrit (Peking Kangyur no. 775). The quoted passage is contained in the explanation of the second dharma (the realization that phenomena do not arise, abide, and pass out of existence). The lengthy paragraph on the mental body (starting with mahāmatir āha in line 6 and ending with sattvapaśīyattham in line 15 (LAS, 81)), which is part of the explanation of the second dharma in Nanjio’s edition, and the explanation of the fourth dharma in the Tibetan translation of the Lankāvatārasūtra from the Chinese, is not quoted by Gzhon nu dpal at all. The Sanskrit corresponding to what is, according to Gzhon nu dpal, the explanation of the fourth dharma is as follows (LAS, 81.3–5): [anutt-pattikadharmaśāntiṃ pratīlabhyā]aṣṭāmyāṁ bhūmau sīhitā cittanamanovijñānapanacdhammasvabhāvanārāmyadvayatīparāvyuttadhiṣṭhānānannomaya-kāyāṁ pratīlabhante // In the translation from the Chinese, the fourth explanation starts with this sentence, and is followed by a long passage on the mental body, and then the long passage is repeated in what seems to be a ditto-raphy (Peking Kangyur no. 776, mdo, vol. ngu, fols. 236b8–237b1).

a Restored from the Tibetan.

1590 See DRSM, 62.9–17.
1591 The Sanskrit has a causative form.
1592 LAS, 133.9–13: pramānātpadesavākalpābhūvān mahāmāte bodhitattvo mahāsatrva ekiśa rahogataḥ svapratyātmabuddhyā vicānayat apanaprtyayo dṛṣṭivikalpa-vivarjita uttarastaratahāgatabhūnumipraveṣanatayā vyāyamaḥ etan mahāmāte svapratyātmāmayājñānagatilakṣaṇam //
1593 The terms used in the explanation of the fourth yoga in the Lankāvatārasūtra do not match. A translation of a commentary with the same words as in the quote would be: [The expression] “[acquire] the strong wish” in [the phrase] “[acquire] the strong wish to internalize the wisdom of the noble ones by himself” (Skt. pratyātmājñāṇa; see the explanation of LAS II.202 above).
1594 In other words, the ability to endure the nonorigination of phenomena was already cultivated on lower levels, and does not ripen from the realization of non-origination on the eighth level alone.
1595 See the last quotation from the Lankāvatārasūtra (DRSM, 65.15–16).
1596 The mental body is explained in RGVV I.36 and I.134 (J I.131), but in neither case is the Lankāvatārasūtra directly referred to.
1597 The shorter translation is the one by Chos grub from the Chinese translation of the Lankāvatārasūtra by Guṇabhadra (see Suzuki 1930:13–14), in which the first chapter, featuring the lord of Lanka, is missing (Peking Kangyur no. 776). The larger version is the direct translation from the Sanskrit (Peking Kangyur no. 775).
1598 See Peking Kangyur no. 776, mdo, vol. ngu, fols. 236a2–237b1.
1599 Aryanākaṇḍarāvṛtti, Peking Tengyur no. 5519, mdo tshogs ’grel pa, vol. ni, fols. 131b6–132b2.
1600 I.e., the branches of the ten levels of the fruit.
1601 In the Peking Tengyur (no. 3486) the quoted passage is in rgyud ’grel, vol. ngu, fols. 7b6–8b6.
1602 Tib. ’jug pa.
1603 The Peking Tengyur (op. cit., 7b7) reads ‘jig rten pa’i lam ’ba’ zhig pa’i lam instead of ‘jig rten pa’i ’ba’ zhig pa’i lam (DRSM, 67.13).
The Peking Tengyur (op. cit., 8a6) reads 'du shes instead of sems (DRSM, 67.24).

A circle of light produced by whirling a firebrand.

I.e., a selflessness that implies the ultimate existence of a mind empty of duality (the Cittamātra view).

The Peking Tengyur (op. cit.) reads spangs la instead of spangs pa (DRSM, 68.7).

Skt. upapatti. For a list of the sixty kinds of mind see Wayman 1992:42–43.

Taking each of the sixty kinds of mind alone makes sixty; taking the same sixty in pairs makes thirty; taking them in groups of three makes twenty; in groups of four makes fifteen; in groups of five makes twelve; in groups of six makes ten; in groups of eight makes seven; and finally in groups of ten makes six. Thus there are altogether one hundred sixty sets with either one, two, three, four, five, six, eight, or ten kinds of mind. For a slightly different calculation see Wayman 1992:42.

With a remainder of four, which obviously must be neglected in this calculation.

DRSM, 67.25–68.8.

On each of the four levels stream-entered, once-to-come, not-to-come, and arhat-ship, there is an enterer and an abider (see Rigzin 1993:230).

Each of the four noble truths has four attributes, those of the first one being “im-permanence, suffering, emptiness, and selflessness.”

LAS, 65.9–10: srotāpatipalahā caiva sakṛdāgāminas tathā / anāgāmiṃphalahā caiva arhatvāṃ cittavibhramabhi II.

According to Nanjio -mam.

In the Peking Tengyur (no. 3486) the quoted passage is in rgyud 'grel, vol. ngu, fols. 11b5–13b6.

These are the three stages of mind explained in the kriyayogatantra: (1) “To enter” means “to realize that no phenomena arise”; (2) “To abide” means “to actualize nonconceptuality”; (3) “To awaken” means “to enter into great compassion toward sentient beings” (see Tsepak Rigzin 1993:88).

The Peking Tengyur (Ibid., fol. 11a8) reads rjes su 'dzin pas instead of rjes su 'dzin pa na (DRSM, 69.19).

In other words, even though they have not yet attained the qualities of the actual bodhisattva levels.

This means that the preliminary levels they enter upon appear to them as if they were the actual levels.

The Peking Tengyur (Ibid., fol. 12a5) reads mkhyen pa yis instead of mkhyen pa'i sa, which would mean: “through omniscience, they are explained as [levels of conviction].”

Chap. 13 is: “Gsang ba'i dkyil 'khor rim par phyde ba rgyas pa”; chap. 14: “Gsang ba'i dkyil 'khor du 'jug pa rim par phyde ba”; chap. 15: “Gsang ba'i phyag rgya bgyad rim par phyde ba”; chap. 16: “Gsang ba'i dkyil 'khor du gzud pa la 'jug rim par phyde rgyas pa” (see Wayman 1992:242). The final chapter of the “attached tantra” (chap. 36) on the empowerment of the mandala can be seen as a continuation of chapters 13–16 on the secret mandala (Wayman 1992:24).

The Tibetan version of the Vairocanābhisambodhitāntra has an appendix of seven chapters called the “attached tantra” (see Wayman 1992:22).

According to Wayman, the three kinds of mind correspond to the three manomayakāyas of the Lankāvatārasūtra. The first of the three minds (i.e., the unequalled one) would then be the means of the first five perfections; the second mind (i.e., the immeasurable one) would be the sixth and the seventh perfections, i.e., prajñāpāramitā and upāyapāramitā; and the third mind (i.e., the inconceivable one) would correspond to the last three bodhisattva levels (Wayman 1992:75).
According to the Peking Tengyur (op. cit., fol. 12b6) there is no *sems* before *'od gsal.

It is not clear whether the plural particle *dag* after *yan lag* is a mere scribal error.

The exact meaning of *nges par sems* here is obscure.

The *Peking Tengyur* (op. cit., 13a5) has *rnam par spyod par byed pa* instead of *rnam par dpuyod par byed pa* (DRSM, 70.26).

In DRSM, 70.16–24 the words *'byor ba* and *'grub pa* are in reverse order.

At the end of the quoted passage the *pinḍārtha* explains that “the detailed explanation according to the ‘attached tantra’ will be analyzed in the chapters on the secret [mandalas]” (Peking Tengyur, op. cit., 13b6).

The passage referred to is DRSM, 69.15.

Not identified.

I.e., the path of preparation.

The passage referred to is DRSM, 70.6.

RGVV, 14.3: *sarvatrāṇagatām anāvṛttadhiyāḥ paśyanti saṃbuddhatām.*

The four *dyānas* are described in II.159 and the preceding prose (LAS, 96–98).

I.e., all ten perfections and levels of engagement based on conviction.

The following ten stanzas from the *Dharmadātustotra* in the *Peking Tengyur* (no. 2010) are on fols. 76b5–77a5 (*bstdog tshogs*, vol. ka).

Rang byung rdo rje (Dbu machos dbyings bstod pa'i rnam par bshad pa, 38a8) reads *dri ma med par* instead of *dri ma med pas*.

The *Derge* and *Peking Tengyur* read *ni* instead of *byar* (DRSM, 72.6).

Rang byung rdo rje (op. cit., 38b2) has *dang* instead of the plural particle (?) *dag* and explains (*ibid., 38b3)*: “since the wisdom light of not grasping dispels the darkness of the mind of countless sentient beings....” (*yongs su 'dein pa med pa'i ye shes kyi 'od kyi sems can dpag tu med pa'i blo'i mun pa sel bar byed pas....*)

Lit., “taken to be” (*et passim*).

The *Derge* and *Peking Tengyur* read *nyid* instead of *kun* (DRSM, 72.13).

The *Derge* and *Peking Tengyur* read *gsum po dang* instead of *gsum po yi* (DRSM, 72.14).

Rang byung rdo rje (op. cit., 39a8) reads *las* in place of *la*.

Rang byung rdo rje (op. cit., fol. 39a8) explains: “After it has become directly manifest that worldly existence and nirvāṇa are not different, one realizes the extremely profound arising and passing out of existence.” (*srid zhi ba khyad med du mngon du gyur nas sbe ba dang 'gag pa rab tu zab pa rtags pa ste.)*

Rang byung rdo rje explains (op. cit., 39b4–5): “...here it is the design of a wheel, as a sign of having entered the secret place of the Buddha. A web of light like the *maṇḍala* of the Buddha plays about everywhere, and since one also enters, in a single moment the state of cessation, one realizes equanimity and has gone far. Therefore one has crossed the swamp [of samsāra]” (*...'di laangs rgyas kyi gsang ba'i gnas la shugs pa'i rtags su 'khor loi bkod pa ste / sangs rgyas kyi dkyil 'khor dang 'dra ba'i 'od kyi dra bas rse zhin skad cig la 'gags pa la yang snyoms par 'jug pas mnyam pa nyid rtags nas ring du song ba'i phyir na 'dam las rgal ba yin no.*

The secret place of the Buddha does not refer to a part of the body, but to the activity of the Buddha’s body, speech, and mind (oral explanation of Thrangu Rinpoche).

Lit., “in all aspects.”

The *Derge* and *Peking Tengyur* read *'bad med lhung gyis grub gyur pas / bdud kyi 'khor gyis mi g.yo pa'o* instead of *lhung gyis grub par dbang shob pas / bdud kyi pho rnas mi g.yos pa'o* (DRSM, 72.19).

Lit., “the limit.”

The *Derge* and *Peking Tengyurs* read *sangs rgyas rnam kyi* instead of *sangs rgyas rnam kyi* (DRSM, 72.23).
I could not identify this stanza.

My translation of this quote follows Martin (1992:287); see also Jackson 1990:52–53.

The usage of “extremely joyful” instead of the usual “joyful” reflects the distinction between the “real” first bodhisattva level and the preliminary one on the path of preparation (i.e., of engagement based on conviction).

This sentence differs in the edition of La Vallée Poussin (MA 12.7–8): ‘di la rang gi ngo bo'i khyad par gyis byas pa'i dbye ba ni yod pa ma yin no // ji skad du //. The subsequent quotation of a stanza is identical with Gzhon nu dpal’s reading, though.

MA 12.7–12. The two stanzas are in the first chapter of the Daśabhūmikasūtra; see NGMPP reel nos. A 38/5 and A 39/13 (the 49 folios of the old Nepalese manuscript in Gupta script were in disorder and not identified as one text during the microfilm work (see Matsuda 1996:xx-xvii)), fol. 6b3–4: yathāntarīkṣe śakuneḥ padaṁ budhair / vaktun na śakyam na ca darśanopagam // tathaiva sarvā jina-prabhūmayo / vaktun na śakyāḥ [kuta eva]śrotum //.

The aksaras in brackets are not readable, and given according to Rahder 1926:10.17–20.

See above.

DRSM, 73.18 …dang po de las dang por… must be corrected to …dang po de la sa dang por….

This reasoning is not conclusive, given that 112 qualities, as shown in the following quotation from the Daśabhūmikasūtra, are attained only after the first real bodhisattva level. In other words, an instantaneous experience of mahāmudrā when the mind is for the first time free from mental fabrication on the level of conviction through engagement does not entail that the buddha qualities have matured on this early level.

Gzhon nu dpal marks the ellipsis within his quote with zhes bya ba nas.

The Sanskrit repeats the phrase tathārupam viryam… in the instrumental, while the Tibetan puts the correlative construction at the end of the sentence.

Skt. ekakṣanālamavahūrtena. Technically speaking, ekakṣaṇa is the shortest possible moment; lāva, too, is a term for a short moment, while mūhūrta designates a period of time that can last a little longer. Given the nonphilosophical context, the compound simply stands for a short period of time.

Matsuda 1996: ms. A, fol. 12a3–4 and 12b1–2: [yo]‘yāṁ pratiṣṭhito bodhisattvāṁ bhūyastvena jambudvīpēśvaro bhavati āṁ mahaśāvaryādhipatyapratilabho… ākāṅkaśāṁ ca tathārūpam viryam ārabbhate āṁ yathārūpeṇa viryārambhenaś sarvaghrāḥ kalatrabhogān utsṛṣṭya tathāgataśāsane pravrajati / pravrajitai ca sann ekakṣaṇālamavahūrtāna samādhiśataṁ ca pratilabhate śamāpadayate caḥ buddhaśataṁ ca paśyati caḥ teṣāṁ cādāhiśbānāṁ saṃjñānte / lokadāhātūṣṭānaṁ ca kaśmpayati / kṛṣṇātānaṁ ca cākramati / lokadāhātūṣṭānaṁ cāvābbhāsataye / sattvaśataṁ ca paripāca-yati / kalpaśataṁ ca tiṣṭhate / kalpaśataṁ ca pūrvaśānaṁ saṃśārayati / dharma-mukhāṣṭhānaṁ ca praviṇīṇote / kāyaśataṁ ca praviṇīṇote / kāyaṁ kaśyāṁ ca bodhisattvāṁ sarāpravīraṁ ādārataye /.

The passage is missing in manuscript B of Matsuda’s facsimile edition (NGMPP A 38/7). In Rahder’s (1926) edition the passage is on p. 21.31–p. 22.19 (ist bhūmi, XX), and in Kondo’s (1936) edition it is on p. 29.10–p. 30.7.

a The aksaras in brackets are not readable in the old Nepalese manuscript. The gaps have been filled in with the help of Rahder and Kondo.

b Rahder: -satvo (et passim).

c Rahder: omits the danda.

d Kondo: -he-.
This last sentence is missing in the Sanskrit.

I have problems construing gsungs pa de. The demonstrative pronoun probably refers to the qualities taught, and is thus taken up again by yon tan de dag in line 4.

Lit., "wife."

In other words, the instantaneous realization of mahamudrā does not entail that all the qualities are complete from the first moment.

The founder of the Lha pa Bka' bryyud pas (see Smith 2001:43).

This sentence of the vyākhya is not quoted in the form of a pratīkā here.

The causative [yongs su] sbyong byed, Skt. paryavadāpayati is used in the description of the threefold process of polishing the vaiśuddhi gem (see RGVV, 5.9-14), which illustrates the spiritual purification by means of the three dharmacakras.

This clause is a paraphrase of buddhadhiitob and -vifuddhiparikaraṇa.

RGVV, 6.11-13: tad yathā caturākāro bodhisattvālaṃkāraḥ / aśākāro bodhi-sattvāvabhāsah / sādākāraḥ bodhisattvamahākaraṇaḥ / dvaitinīsadākāram bodhisattvakarma /. According to B (4b4); A is missing. Johnston reads -rī.

Tib. de nyid has no equivalent in the Sanskrit.

The Sanskrit equivalents of the sixty factors within the cleansing process are taken from Vairocanarakṣita's Mahāyānottaratantraśāstraṭippāṇī (MUTŚṬ) (Nakamura 1983:4-6).

MUTŚṬ, 4.26-27.

Tib. rtogs. The tippāṇī (MUTŚṬ, 5.2) has gati, which is glossed: "[the bodhisattva] understands all dharmas and intentions of sentient beings" (gacchati sarvadharmesu svagatayaṣu).

Tib. shes pa; the tippāṇī (MUTŚṬ, 5.3) has aśānāvabhāsa, qualified by the compound śrūtāpanmiṣaṇayantarajñānalakṣaṇaḥ: "whose defining characteristic is the knowledge of a stream-enterer and so forth (up to the victorious one)."

The four pratisaraṇas are (1) relying on the teaching, not the teacher, (2) relying on the meaning, not the letter, (3) relying on the definitive meaning, not the provisional meaning, and (4) relying on wisdom, not on normal consciousness (see Lamotte 1949:341-61).

Read zhes pa'o instead of shes pa'o.

Vairocanarakṣita's tippāṇī (MUTŚṬ, 5.10) has ahaṅkāramakāra-, "the notion of an I and my."

The tippāṇī (MUTŚṬ, 5.14) lists "the demon of thirst" (tyānādāsa-) instead.

MUTŚṬ, 5.16: "overcome by greed" (lobbābhībhūta-).

Ibid.: "having ineffective views" (akarmadārī-).

Ibid., 5.17: "rejoicing in saṃsāra" (saṃśtrābhīrabhī-).

I could not locate this precise sentence in the Dhāranisvanarājasūtra, but a similar sentence occurs at the end of the presentation of sixteenfold compassion: kham gsum thams cad las 'byung ba'i phyir de dag lachos bstan par bya snyam du... (Peking Kangyur 813, mdo, vol. nu, fol. 132b6).

The paragraph on the thirty-twofold activity in the tippāṇī (MUTŚṬ, 5.20) is
introduced in the following way: "The special thirty-twofold activity of a bodhi-
sattva" (bodhisattvasyayenikam dvatrimśadakāraṁ karma).

1686 MUTŚṬ, 5.20–21: mohaprasuptan sattvan prajñayā prabodhayati. The remaining
dirty-one points are each introduced by a compound referring to sattvān, whose
case ending (acc., pl., masc.) they share.

1687 Tib. yongs su 'dzin pa; I follow the Sanskrit samādāpayati here.

1688 The Tibetan (theg pa dman pa las) has probably mistaken hinādhimuktikān
(MUTŚṬ, 5.21) for an ablative.

1689 Lit., "connects."

1690 MUTŚṬ, 5.23: kudaiṣṭapravṛttān samajagṛṣṭau. The previous verb yojayati refers to
this point as well, but the Tibetan has 'god pa.

1691 Cf. the tippanī (MUTŚṬ, 25–26): vyāpādababulān kṣāntimaitriviharitāyām.

1692 MUTŚṬ, 5.26: kusidān viryārambhī.

1693 The tippanī (MUTŚṬ, 5.27) has smṛtisamprajñāne ("...in recollection and all-
inclusive knowledge") against Tib. bsam gtan.

1694 Lit., "connects."

1695 Blo Idan shes rab has chu bo bezhir in his Theg chen rgyud bla'i don bs dus pa, 17b6.
The Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo (s.v.) explains these four currents as being ig-
norance, [wrong] view, existence, and thirst; or, alternatively, birth, old age, sickness,
and death.

1696 Lit., "connects."

1697 Lit., "connects."

1698 Lit., "connects."

1699 Tib. rjes su dran pa drug, i.e., the recollection of the teacher, the Buddha, the
Dharma, the Saṅgha, discipline, abandoning, and the deity (see MVY § 1149–54).

1700 The tippanī (MUTŚṬ, 6.11) has sāśyratnadūnasthitān ("...those who are far from
the teacher and the jewels") against Tib. rjes dran drug dang ba.

1701 The tippanī (MUTŚṬ, 6.12) has tatprabhāne ("...in [the practice of] abandoning
those") against Tib. dge ba'i chos yongs su rdzogs pa.

1702 RGVV, 6.14: tannirdeśāntaram buddhabodhib jhodaśākaraṁ mahābodhikarunā-
nirdeśena paridīpita ī. 

a According to B (4b3); A is not available. Johnston reads -ākāra- (in compound).

This sentence from the vyākhya is not quoted in the form of a pratika here.


1704 Ibid., fol. 136a2–3.

1705 In this enumeration the Tibetan text has numbers after each point.


1707 Takasaki (1966:153) lists these sixteen points on the basis of the Chinese transla-
tion of the Dhāraṇīvarājāsūtra.

1708 RGVV, 6.15–16: tannirdeśāntaram buddhaṁ daśabalačaturvaiśārudyā-
śāśāśāvenikabuddhabhadhanirdeśena paridīpita ī.

1709 Peking Kangyur 813, mdo, vol. nu, fol. 145a7–8. This is the beginning of the first
of the ten strengths, i.e., the strength of knowing right from wrong (lit. "...of

1710 RGVV, 6.16–17: tannirdeśāntaram buddhakarma dvatrimśadākāraṁ niru-
taratathāgatakarunarunā nirdeśena parideśita ī. This sentence of the vyākhya is not
quoted in the form of a pratika here.

a According to B (4b4); A is not available. Johnston reads -ākāra- (in compound).

See also Schmithausen 1971:133.

1711 RGVV, 6.17–18: evam imāni sapta vajrapadāni svalakṣaṇanirdeśaṁ vistareṇa
yathāśūtram anugantavyāṇi ī. 

1712 RGVV, 6.18: kah punar esām anusleṣaḥ ī.
This sentence of the *vyākhyā* is not quoted in the form of a *pratika* here.

RGVV, 7.1–4: *buddhād dharmo dharmatas cāryasaṅghab / saṅghe garbho jñānadhanāpitinisthāb / tajjñānapīti cāgrobodhir balādyair dharmair yuktā sarvasattvārthakerdhīḥ*.

In accordance with the Sanskrit (*saṅghe*) the ablative *las* (DRSM 79.2) should be changed into a locative.

Tib. *mthar*, which is a technical translation of *niṣṭhā*, is difficult to construe and thus taken over to the next sentence.

See VY, 21.8.

I could locate this quote neither in the *Āryasubhārupa-pariprachchāna-matantrapīṇā-dārtha* nor its *vṛtti*.

See Rngog Blo ldan shes rab: *Theg chen rgyud bla ma’i bsdu’s don*, 2b2.

RGVV, 21.6–7: *gotraṇī rnatratvayāya viṣayā satvadarśinām*.


In terms of enlightenment, Gzhon nu dpal (DRSM, 14.19–20) accepts only the svābhāvikakāya as a fit candidate for the ultimate truth, but here the dharmakāya, too, is taken as the support of the qualities (DRSM, 508.12).

For a translation of RGV III.1–3 see above, section 3 in the introduction of this work.

The *pratika* of the Tibetan *Ratnagotravibhāga-vyākhyā* on p. 508, l.12 *de la brten pa* refers to the preceding *pratika* in line 6 on the same page (*dri ma med pa’i de bzhin nyid bshad zin nas*), but is glossed as *chos sku* (DRSM, 508.12). To go by RGVV l.24, where stainless suchness is explained as dharmakāya, and suchness with stains as buddha nature, this is not impossible, but it gives RGV III.1 a different connotation (in that the dharmakāya and buddha nature do not only differ in terms of the presence or absence of adventitious stains).

In the sense of being provided with a place to exist.

DRSM, 508.21–22.

The simile of the painters is explained in RGV I.88–92 (see Takasaki 1966: 263–64).

In a base the ochre of a turmeric plant turns red.

DRSM, 98.7–9 and 75.2–4.

The Sanskrit equivalent *yoga* does not rule out such an understanding. The term *yoga* is used in RGV I.42–44 to define the relation between buddha nature and the cause and result of its purification (see Takasaki 1966:225–29).

DRSM, 29.18–21 and 323.19–23.

This is the way Rngog Blo Idan shes rab explains it in his *Theg chen rgyud bla ma’i don bsdu’s pa* (see fol. 33b1–3 and also DRSM, 5.4–10).

Not identified.

DRSM, 239.17–21.

Ibid., 119.26–120.10.

Ibid., 448.25–449.1.

Ibid., 33.21–24.

Mi bskyod rdo rje: “Rje Yid bzang rtse ba’i Rgyud gsum gsang ba...,” 1003.3–5: *khyod kyi sems can thams cad la sangs rgyas kyi snying po gnas pa’i tshes / sangs rgyas de gnas pa min / sangs rgyas de’i rigs dang’dra ba zhig gnas pa yin / ’dra ba de la skye mchod drug gi khyud par ba yin pas ’di lta bu zhig sems can la yod pa yin zer nas / dpal karmapa rang byung rdo rje gi lung drangs mod / ’di mi ’thad pa la /...*

DRSM, 239.15–17.

RGVV, 5.5–6: *tataḥ sūtra-iddhāparivarvāntaraṇā buddhadhātūḥ saṃyakaratadvīṣuddhigunaparikarmānirdeśena pariṣṭipāt / visodhye ’rthe guṇavat tadvisuddhbhiparikarmāyogāt*.

Fibroferrite has the ability to make pure gold manifest, if placed in contact with gold ore. Cf. Gzhon nu dpal’s example of a mixture of turmeric powder and lime
(to illustrate the sixty cleansing factors applied to the buddha element of sentient beings), which manifests the quality “redness.”

The numbering follows Steinkellner’s (1977) Verse-Index.

The Tibetan has an ablative; according to the Sanskrit the meaning is “through [its] complete cause.”

For Dharmakirti the svabhāva of the cause does not really exist as such, the term only referring to an “accumulation of causes” (Steinkellner has Ursachenkomplex). Thus the term svabhāva is only used metaphorically to designate a set of causes (caused themselves by their own respective causes) which jointly bring forth the effect (see Steinkellner 1971:85–86).


See DRSM, 37.13–23.

Tib. ye shes de dag.

This is probably the example of a huge painting of the universe inside an atom quoted from the Avataṃsakasūtra in RGVV I.25 to illustrate the third inconceivable point that buddha qualities are contained in ordinary people (see Takasaki 1966:189–92).


The Tibetan translation rnam par smin pa bzhin would then be a misunderstanding of the Sanskrit construction. See de Jong 1979:574.

RGVV, 69.11–12: garbhaṇosamlapakṛtyāb saptaḥūmigata malāḥ / vikoṣa-garbhavaj jānānam avikalparān vipākavat //

According to B (36a4); fol. 27b of A is not readable. Johnston reads malā. See also Schmithausen 1971:156.

That is, the sixth example, that of a seed inside bark that develops into a tree (see Takasaki 1966:273–75).

Cf. the explanations of the buddha qualities nos. 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 above.

Cf. the explanations of the buddha qualities nos. 2, 3 and 10.

In a recent study of the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra, Zimmermann (2002:63–64) argues that the main focus of the example of the tree lies not on the growing tree, but on the imperishability of its seed and the fact that the result (kārya), namely the tree, is already contained in the seed; while in the eighth example the fact that the cakravartin is still an embryo does not seem to be crucial for an understanding of it. His cakravartin-like nature will not change, inasmuch as his future role is already preprogrammed, and his poor mother already protected.

The dharmakāya is the nature of the qualities constituting a buddha. It thus stands for fully developed qualities.

Cf. Gzhon nu dpal’s explanation of the illustration based on the vaidūrya stone and the mud in the Sāgaramati paripṛcchā, which is quoted in RGVV I.68: “Since here in this example it was taught that a polished and stainless jewel was thrown into the mud, the example of the jewel illustrated the dharmakāya of the buddhas. Here it was taught as something illustrable by the example of the vaidūrya, sentient beings’ nature of mind and the dharmakāya being so similar in type.” (DRSM, 362.18–20)

Commenting on a passage of the Anūnatavipuṇarṇavārṇidesāsūtra in RGVV I.48, which states that the dharmakāya is called the buddha element when covered with stains (see Takasaki 1966:231–32), Gzhon nu dpal says: “Here, as to [the expression] ‘the very (eva) dharmakāya’ as [used] in the context of an impure state, the element of the state of sentient beings has in turn been given the name of the fruit, [namely] the level of a buddha, it having been said: ‘Because its (i.e., buddha nature’s) fruit has been metaphorically applied to the buddha potential.’ And pre-
cisely such a dharma-kāya is called samsāra, the inner essence having been given the name of that which covers [it]." (DRSM, 335.17–20.)

1759 There is no doubt, however, that RGV I.27 belongs to the root text, since it is also contained in the Chinese kārikā version.

1760 In fact, the stanza belongs to one of the oldest building blocks of the Ratnagotravibhāga. See Takasaki 1966:14 and Schmithausen 1971:126–29.

1761 Skt. upacāra. Gzhon nu dpal explains this term by use of the example of a Brahmin boy who is called a lion because he is a hero and fearless (DRSM, 150.10–12). Whereas a real lion is an animal, here the word lion is only metaphorically applied to the brave boy.

1762 RGVV, 26.1–4: buddhajñānā[ntargam]āt sattvarās tannairmalayādavayatvāt prakṛtyā / bauddhe gotre trot bhutah sarve dehino buddhagarbhāḥ //

a Not readable in B (15a4); A is not available.

1763 This is in keeping with explanation no. 1 (see above).

1764 Rngog Blo ldan shes rab: They chen rgyud bla’i don bs dus pa, 29b1–2.

1765 DRSM, 268.2–3.

1766 RGVV, 76.1–2: nāpanyam atah kīmciid apaneyam na kīmcanā / drāṣṭavyāṁ bhūtato bhūtaṁ bhūtādarśī vimucyate //

1767 RGVV, 76.3–4: sīnya āgantukār dhātuḥ savinībhhāgalakṣaṇaḥ / sīnyo 'nuttaraḥ dharmār savinībhhāgalakṣaṇaḥ //

For a list of texts in which it occurs, see Takasaki 1966:300.

1768 In DRSM’s quote the equivalent for evaṁ is missing.

1770 According to the Sanskrit: “Somebody possessing a vision of reality....”

1771 AAV Sphuṭārthā, 72.1–4: yasmāt evam bhāvabhiriniveśena mukter anupapattir ato apaṇādāsamaṇāroparaṇām apanayānapakrāṣṭeṇa kasyacīd dharmasyāyātrī usm idam eva pratītyasamutpannaṁ samvyā ṭathāyāraṇāṁ rūpādi niḥsvabhāvādirūpato nirūpaṇiyan evai ca māyājaṇe aparāmāyājaparājaya yad viparyāsanivṛtyyā tat tvadārśī vimucyati iti //

1772 See DRSM, 441.1–3.

1773 See my translation of DRSM, 5.4–10.

1774 One could argue in favor of Gzhon nu dpal, though, that “door of wisdom” can also mean “cause of wisdom.”

1775 RGVV, 77.2: ... ekāṇyaḥdharmaḥdāvāvasesambhagajñānāmukham āgamya...

1776 Skt. nimittā can mean both; the Tibetan translation rgyu mthshan suggests the meaning “cause.”

1777 RGVV, 76.5–6: kim anena paridipitaṁ / yato na kīmciid apaneyam astī atah prakṛtiparivārddhāt tathāgataddrātoḥ samkleśānimittam āgantukamalaśīnyatāprakṛtitvād /

a See A 19a4 and B 39b3. Johnston omits for no reason tā; probably this is only an oversight.

1778 In view of the following quotation of the Srimāladevisūtra, the reading of the Narthang and Peking editions (chos dag nyid) is preferred, with the compound avinībhhāgasmuddhadharmatā prakṛtitvāt //

1779 See RGV I.154 (J I.151). For a translation of this stanza see above, p. 12.

1780 RGVV, 76.6–7: nāpy atra kīmciid apaneyam astī vyavādānimittam avinībhhāga- smuddhadharmatā prakṛtitvāt //

a See A 19a4 and B 39b3. Johnston omits for no reason tā; probably this is only an oversight.

1781 This reading is also recorded in the Derge Tengyur (Nakamura 1967:149, l.7).

1782 Rngog Blo ldan shes rab: They chen rgyud bla’i don bs dus pa, 33a6–b3.

1783 Lit., “properties.”

1784 RGVV, 76.8–9: sīnyaḥ tathāgatagarbhāḥ smuddhadhāgair muktajñāḥ sarvakleśakośaḥ / arṣīnyo gāngānādivālikāvāyātvīrtaṁ avinībhhāgair amuktajñair acintyair buddha-
The quoted passage is partially unreadable in B (39b3–4); but available from A (1944–5).

There are ten aspects of wisdom, which differ only with regard to various objects. This involves denying the dharmatā or suchness the status of a substantial cause, the qualities being merely produced by the fortified potential. For a presentation of such an interpretation, see Seyfort Ruegg 1969:293–96.

Cf. RGVV, 8.1: anādīmadhyānidanapraṇātītvād asamskṛtam (RGV 1.6ab).

According to B (5a4). See also Schmithausen 1971:134. Johnston wrongly reads -prakṛta-.

See DRSM, 83.16–21.

Cf. Makransky (1997:289ff) who discusses Tsong kha pa’s and Go ram pa’s views on the distinction between three and four kāyas. According to Tsong kha pa, Haribhadra accepts three kāyas when the first kāya is dharmakāya and jñāna is included. But when the first is svabhāvikakāya, the second must be the jñānātmiko dharmakāya.


According to B (9a2); A is not available. Johnston wrongly reads pravartate. See also Schmithausen 1971:137.

A problem that leads Rgyal tshab rje to take merely the fortified potential as the substantial cause of the qualities (see Seyfort Ruegg 1969:295).

Space being compared to buddha nature.

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written commentary (text A) reads gnas yongs su brtag pa yin no and the block print (text B) gnas yongs su brtag pa yin no, a mistake that conveniently gets rid of the (for Gzhon nu dpal) problematic “permanent.” (See DRSM, 121.3.)

1810 RGVV, 41.15–17: tasmāc chāriputra nānyāḥ sattvadhātur nānyo dharmakāyaḥ / sattvadhātur eva dharmakāyaḥ / dharmakāya eva sattvadhātur / advayam etad arthena / vyātijana evaiḥ āhārābhedā iti /

a B (2442) reads -mātran nāneti; emended according to Johnston.

1811 RGVV, 41.20–21: doṣāgantukatāyogād guṇapракṛtiyogataḥ / yathā pūrvaṁ tathā pāścād avikāritvadāharmatā /

In other words, former and later moments of buddha nature are connected in terms of having an identical nature. The blossoming of buddha nature into buddhahood does not involve a change in quality but only in quantity.

1813 Tib. tha mal gyi shes pa. Gzhon nu dpal explains that the word tha mal does not mean “ordinary” here, but “unfabricated” (DRSM, 340.2).

1814 See also Mi bskyod rdo rje (“Rje Yid bzang rtse ba Rgyud gsum gsang ba...,” 1003.3–5), who criticizes Gzhon nu dpal for first distinguishing a buddha nature that abides as the six āyatanas from an actual Buddha, and then citing Rang byung rdo rje as a support for such a stance.


The example is quoted in the Ratnagotravibhāgaśākhyā’s explanation of the third inconceivable point (the buddha qualities also exist inside ordinary people) in RGV I.25 (see DRSM, 239.13–14).

1816 DRSM, 122.2–3.

1817 Ibid., 236.6–8.

1818 Ibid., 121.22–25.

1819 Ibid., 74.26–75.3.

1820 In support, Gzhon nu dpal adduces PV I.7 (see above).

1821 In RGVV I.1.

1822 RGVV, 2.10–13: śraddhāgamaniyo hi śāriputra paramārthaḥ / paramārtha iti śāriputra sattvadhātur etad advivacanam / sattvadhātur iti śāri[putra] tathāgata- garbhasyaitad advivacanam / tathāgatagarbha iti śāriputra dharmakāyaśyaitad advivacanam.

a Missing in B (243); A is not available.

1823 RGVV, 20.4–5: jagaccharanam ekāntām (?) buddhatvam pāramārthikam / muner dharmāsārīratvāt tanniśṭhautvād ganasya ca /

a Johnston reads ekatra, which does not fit the context. Folio 11b of manuscript B is hardly readable and manuscript A is not available, so that the correct reading could well have been ekāntām (see also Schmithausen 1971:140).

1824 RGVV, 84.3–4: yad uktam ākāśalakṣaṇo buddha iti tat pāramārthikam āveṇikām tathāgatānām buddhalakṣaṇam abhisārādbhāyoktam /

1825 DRSM, 24.4–5.

1826 Ibid., 14.20–21.


1829 Tib. ldan pa, Skt. yoga.

1830 Ibid., 509.9–12.

1831 Ibid., 84.23.

1832 Ibid., 338.23–339.1.


1834 Ibid., 16.17–18.

1835 In a way it would be better to translate “awareness and emptiness,” but “awareness-emptiness” does have this meaning also.
According to Thrangu Rinpoche one has to distinguish two types of “self-awareness.” One is the epistemological self-awareness of the Yogācāras, and the other one the realization of one’s own true nature of mind, or soteriological “self-awareness,” or rather “self-realization” (for a recent discussion of a similar distinction see also Yao 2005:126–27). In the context of the Ratnagotravibhāga, “self-awareness” must be taken in its soteriological sense, namely as described by the term so so rang gis rig par bya ba (Skt. pratyātmavedānīya) in RGVV, 1.7. In the vyākhyā on RGV I.1 the content of self-realization is taken to be the seven vajra points. These seven are further explained by Gzhon nu dpal as “the meaning and object of comprehension that have the nature of self-realization (so so rang gis rig pa), [that is,] a direct [perception] arisen from meditation” (see DRSM, 20.26–21.1). In other words, self-awareness does not refer to a mental factor of a perceiving consciousness, but to an experience beyond the ordinary duality of a perceiving subject and perceived object. It is a realization that is not different from its realized object anymore.

In the process of self-awareness, or self-realization, I take it that the experience of luminosity is nothing else than a luminous experience.

See also my translation of DRSM, 102.4–9 on p. 356.

See also TD, 48.23–24.

1840 TD, 92.10–11: “Thus [all] phenomena that are of one taste are unobstructed and without an abode. They are all luminous—as [experienced] in the samādhi [of realizing] reality as it is” (evam ekarasa dharmā nirāsāgā nirvāpadaḥ / prabhāsarvār ami sarve yathābhūtasaṃādānī). This manner of self-awareness is well-known from the Ratnagotravibhāga. See also Gzhon nu dpal’s translation of DRSM, 15.2–8, which could give the impression that Candrakīrti accepts the hotness of fire as being the firee’s own-being. In his Prasannapadā, however, Candrakīrti continues: “Even though the worldly convention has been established that it is an uncreated own-being, we claim in this case, too, that this heat must not be understood to be the own-being of fire, given that it is created. In this case the dependence of fire on causes and conditions is perceived when a lens, kindling, and the sun conjoin or when sticks are rubbed together or the like,
heat not occurring separately from fire. Therefore heat, too, is born of causes and conditions” (PP, 260.9–12: "tad evam akṛtakaḥ svabhāva iti lokayavahāre vyavasīhīta vasyam idāniṁ brūmo yad etad aṣṭuṣyaṁ tad āpy agneḥ svabhāvō na bhavaṁ ity ucyate / iha maṇindhanādityasamāgmaṁ arunīṛgirhasanādeśe cognēr hetuprayaṣayasaṃkṣeṣaṇaṇaupalādhyaṁ / na cāṅvīṇyati rīkṣam aṣṭuṣyaṁ saṃbhavaṁ / tasmād aṣṭuṣyaṁ api hetuprayaṣayatanāṁ /

1849 In his commentary on MMK V.1 Candrākīrti explains: “In this respect six elements have been taught: they are known as earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness” (PP, 129.8: *tatra saḍ dhātava uktāḥ prthivyapetovāyākāsātvāni śāṅkhyāheḥ /)

1850 In his commentary on MMK V.7ab Candrākīrti explains: “The five remaining elements—earth and the others—should be known, like space, to be, in terms of their own nature, free from the concepts of entity, nonentity, object to be characterized, and defining characteristic.” (PP, 134.10–11: *prthivyādiddhātavo ye pariṇāpāre vaśīyante / te ṣu akāśavaḥ bhavābhavāvalaksanaprakāṣipasvarūpa-rabhiḥ pariṇeyā...)

1851 This is particularly clear in MMK XVIII.7, which says: “When the realm of mind has ceased, that which is to be expressed also ceases. This is because the true nature of phenomena is, like nirvāṇa, without production and destruction.” (MMK, 25.1–2: *nīrṇātam abhidhātavyoṃ nīrṛte cittagarocare / anutpamānimurodhāḥ hi nīrṇāṇam eva dharmatā ē /) Candrākīrti explains: “If there was some realm of the mind, then speech would function after some characteristic sign has been imputed. When, however, an object has not occurred to the mind, where is then the characteristic sign by which speech would function?” (PP, 364.8–10: *yadi cittasya kāśic gocaral; syāt tatra kīmciṁ nīrmitam adhyātmyaḥ svād vācāṃ pravṛttih / yadā tu cittasya viśaya evaṃupapannas tadā kva nīrmitādhyātmyaḥ yena vācāṃ pravṛttih syā∥ /...) This means that the imputation of characteristic signs is necessary for something to be expressive in the concepts of language. But once reality is no longer subjected to one’s false imagining, nothing remains to be expressed by speech.

1852 Perception (*upalabdha) is here explained from the side of the object.

1853 PP, 265.3–5: *avidyātimitraprabhāvopalabdhaḥ bhavajātaṃ yenaṃtmanā vigatāvidyātitirinānānāryanān adarsanayogena viśayatvam upayāyī tad eva svarūpaṃ eṣāṃ svabhāva iti vyavasthiḥyātye / tasya cedāṁ laksanam /.

1854 “If it is indeed claimed by you that it [only] exists in dependence on labelling, what kind of thing is it, [then, in reality]? It is the true nature of phenomena; it is their true form. And what is the true nature of phenomena? It is the own-being of phenomena. And what is the own-being? It is the natural state. And what is the natural state? It is emptiness. And what is emptiness? It is lack of essence. And what is this lack of essence? Suchness. And what is suchness? It is existence as it is, a state without change, and permanent abiding. The continuous nonarising of fire, etc., is called own-being because it does not depend on anything else and is nonartificial.” (PP, 264.11ff.: *yadi khalu tad adhyātmyor advaḥvīdīr kṣetraṃ ucyate kṣetraṃ tar∥ yā śa dhammaṁ dhammaṁ dhammaṁ nāma saiva tattvārūpaṃ / atha keśāṃ dharmānām dharmatā / dharmānām svabhāvāḥ / ko yāṃ svabhāvāḥ / prakṛtiḥ / kā cēṣāṃ prakṛtiḥ / yeyat śūnyatā / keśāṃ śūnyatā / naśvabhāvāḥ / ko ime ṣaṃ svabhāvāḥ / /

1855 PP, 265.7–8: *sa caīṣa ṣvāavaşāṃ anupādātmakāḥ svabhāvo kṁcit śvāyvābhāva-vāṁtavād asvabhāva eveti kṛtvā nāstī bhavasvabhāva iti viśnayaṃ /

1856 Even though there are a number of differences between the two, they agree that
the second dharmacakra is surpassed by the third, and that the reasoning of the analytical Madhyamaka works only apply to what is defined as adventitious stains in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.

1857 I.e., to the process of labeling, which involves the alteration of one's subjective reality by mental fabrications.

1858 Cf. MMK XVIII.9: “Not dependent on other, peaceful, not artificially created by thoughts, nonconceptual, without many—these are the defining characteristics of reality” (MMK, 25.5–6: aparāpratītyayam sāntam prapañčair aprapañcitam / nirvikalpam anānārtham etat tatvāsya laksanam //.)

1859 DRSM, 15.16–17.

1860 Gzhon nu dpal quotes BV 57 in order to reinforce his point (DRSM, 15.18–20).

1861 I.e., in being neither artificially created nor dependent on anything else (see above).

1862 DRSM, 15.8–20.

1863 Ibid., 84.23.

1864 Ibid., 239.18–20.

1865 See Ibid., 449.1. In other words, when Gzhon nu dpal speaks of subtle qualities he is thinking of qualities such as the five qualities of the svabhāvikakāya explained in RGV II.47: “The svabhāvikakāya is endowed with qualities that are immeasurable, innumerable, inconceivable, incomparable, and that have reached the [state of] final purity” (RGVV, 87.2–4: aprameyair asaṁkhyeyair acintyair asamair gūṇaḥ / visuddhipārami'praptair yuktam svabhāvikam vāpaḥ //).

1866 See above, in chapter 5 in the section “The Blossoming of Subtle Qualities.”

1867 See DRSM, 83.11, for example.


1870 See the following chapter on mahāmudrā (chapter 7).

1871 The first of the four inconceivable points explained in RGV I.25.

1872 See DRSM, 216.12–15.

1873 Lit., “mother” (Tib. yum).  

1874 Gzhon nu dpal does not distinguish, as his commentary on the four inconceivable points shows, between an own-being and a substantial own-being: “The mere [fact that the buddha] nature is ‘not artificial, implies that it is not something that possesses an own-being. Even the final buddha wisdom lacks a substantial own-being.” (DRSM, 226.90–91.)

1875 I.e., generate bodhicitta.

1876 Tib. cung zad.

1877 MMKXIII.7cd: na kriyācid asyāasti śūnyam ca kutāḥ śūnyam bhaviṣyati // (MMK, 18.6).

1878 Candrakīrti explains: “If there was any kind of emptiness, then it would be, as the own-being of entities, their basis. But this is not the case. Since one realizes here that emptiness is the general characteristic of all phenomena, and since phenomena that are not empty do not exist [neither].” (PP, 246.1–3: yadi śūnyataṁ nāma kā cit syāt tad aśrayo bhāvavabhāvah syāt / na tv evān / iha hi śūnyataṁ nāmeti sarvadharmanāṁ sāmānyalaksanam ity abhyupagamād aṣṭauyadhamābhāvād śūnyataiva nāsti //.) In other words, Candrakīrti does not say directly that, starting from the premise of emptiness, no support of phenomena can be established in terms of specific characteristics. This follows, however, from the fact that emptiness is taken to be the general characteristic of phenomena.

1879 Sthiramati explains: “Now is the truth of the path conditioned or unconditioned? It is conditioned, since it has to be brought forth. It would not be a fault [, however,] if one said that it is unconditioned, in that it is not being fabricated by kar·ma·kleśa [defilements] and is constituted by the unconditioned” (MAVT on
III.22b-d (MAVT, 163.7-9): mārgasayation puṇah kim sanśkṛtam asanśkṛtam / sanśkṛtam* utpādātव / yadi [karmakleśāhāyaṃ abhisaṃskṛtād asanśkṛtena ca prabhāvita- / vā (Yamaguchi: prabhāvita) a]śanśkṛtam iti bhūyān na doṣaḥ / syād...).

a The manuscript (NGMPP reel no. A 38/10, 50a7) repeats sanśkṛtam, but this is not supported by the Tibetan (see also Yamaguchi 1934:163, fn. 2).

b Cf. Tib. gal te las dang nyon mong pas mngon par 'dus ma byas pa dang / 'dus ma byas kyis rab tu phye bai phiyi 'dus ma byas zhes brjod na nyes pa med do. Peking Tengyur, sems tsam, tshi, m3b4-5.

1880 Tib. tha mal shes pa, see DRSM, 339.26-340.1.
1881 Read btags instead of btags (DRSM, 441.15). It should be noted that investigations can be carried out on the basis of direct cognition.

1882 See DRSM, 44.5-13.
1883 It is inconceivable that buddha nature is pure and defiled at one and the same time (see RGV 1.25).

1884 See the section “The Blossoming of Subtle Qualities” in chapter 5.


1886 DRSM, 264ff.

1887 Ibid., 135.6.

1888 See p. 17 in the introduction of this work.

1889 See Mathes 1996:122.


1891 Cf. MSA XIII.19: “The mind is taken to be natural luminosity at any time; it is [only] tainted by adventitious faults. A natural luminosity of (i.e., consisting of) another, [dependent] mind (cetas),4 different from the mind as true nature (dhar­matā), is not taught.” (MSABh, 88.9-10: mataṁ ca ciittaṁ prakṛtiprabhāsvaran taddā tadāgantukadosādūṣitam / na dharmatācittam rte 'nyacetasaḥ prabhāsvaratvam prakṛtavā vidhīyate it.)

a Vasubandhu explains (MSABh, 88.17): “of another mind whose defining charac­teristic is the dependent [nature]” (‘nyasya cetasaḥ paratantralakṣaṇasya).

b According to Bagchi (1970:86.8). Lévi reads: prabhāsvaram prakṛtam (“the [nat­ural] luminosity under discussion here”). This reading not only violates the meter but is also against the Tibetan, which has rang bzhin (and thus supports praktavā).

1892 DRSM, 456.18-23.

1893 What Gzhon nu dpal had in mind here were probably Yogācāra works such as Asaṅga’s Mahāyānasamgraha, where a dear line is drawn between an impure aśayasamānāna and a pure supramundane mind, or pure dharmadhātu (see Lam­otte 1938: vol. 1, 19-20).

1894 This can also be said of the other two Yogācāra works ascribed to Maitreya.


1896 RGVV, 79.10-11: yo 'sau dhātūr avinirmuktalesaśaḥ tathāgatagarbhā ity ukto bhagavātā tadvīdūdbhir ārāyapariyurthe svabhāvo veditavyāyāḥ. For a discussion of the parallels between the Ratnagotravibhāga and the Dharmadharmanāvibhāga, see Mathes 1996:19-23.

a In B (413a) -rba is missing. A is not available.

1897 Dam pa sogs rgyas transmitted the mahāmudrā teachings called “The Right Dharma That Calms Suffering” (dam chos sde bzhag zhi byed). See also Karmapa Mi bskyod rdo rje’s introduction to his commentary on the Madhyamakāvātāna, paraphrased by Seyfort Ruegg (1988a:1,261-62).

1898 See DRSM, 2,7-10.

1899 See Ibid., 5.10-11.
1900 For a detailed analysis of these works see chapter 1 above.


1902 I do not take dag in 'di dag as a plural particle, but as a marker denoting the entire corpus of this tradition. See Hahn 1978:137–47.

1903 For Hookham (1991:271) lugs 'di refers to Dol po pa's gzhan stong tradition: "Shon-upal...made a commentary...in accordance with this extraordinary system introduced by...Dol po pa; he also commented on it." This is not only grammatically impossible, but also historically so: in his Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho (340–43), Dol po pa distinguishes an ordinary presentation of the contents of the Ratnagotravibhāga from his own extraordinary Vajrayāna explanation, which nevertheless accords with the ordinary explanation (it is this ordinary explanation that would then correspond to the meditation school and Gzhon nu dpal, according to Kong sprul).

1904 Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas: Rgyud bla ma'i bshad srol, fol. 9b1–10a1: gzu (text: gzu) dga' bai rdo rje rgyud bla ma la sajja nai' gung dang mthun par bgyun tika (text: tika) mdzad cing chos nyid rnam 'byed rtsa 'grel yang bsgyur / 'di la byams chos sgom lugs pa'ang grags shing thun mong ma yin pa'i bshad pa dang nyams len gyi khyad par 'phags pa yin la / lugs srol de dag las bgyung ye shes kyi geigs pas ma pham pa'i dangs pa ji bzhin du (text: tu) rtags pa thams cad mkhyen pa rang byung rdo rjes rgyud bla ma'i sa bcad bdus don mdzad pa la / Karma dkon gzhon sogs kyis rgyas par bkral zhung / Karma Phrin las pa chen pos sbyor dag bkod pa'i 'grel ba mdzad / 'gos lo chen po gzhon nu dpal gyis kyang thogs med zhabz kyis 'grel pa la 'grel bshad shin tu rgyas par mdzad pa lugs 'di dang mthun pa / kun mkhyen dol po pa chen pos thun mong ma yin pa'i srol phyis (text: phyes) te 'grel pa'i rjes 'brangs nas slob bgyung spyi dang bye brag thams cad mkhyen pa taranatha sogs gyis bshad pa dang nyams len gyis gzhung btsugs pa'i 'grel pa'i lung rgyun da ltar bar bzhugs pa dang /

1905 'Jig rten gsum mgon: "chos 'khor 'ong ges zhus pa'i gzhung gi rtsa ba;" 15.12–14 and "chos 'khor 'ong ges zhus pa'i gzhung gi 'grel pa;" 317.9–11. See "The Mahāmudrā Interpretation of the Ratnagotravibhāga" in chapter 1.


1907 Ibid., 10.17.

1908 'Jig rten gsum mgon: "Dam chos dgongs pa gcig pa'i gzhung;" 11.11–13 and Rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa: "Dam pa'i chos dgongs pa gcig pa'i rnam bshad lung don gsal byed nyi ma'i snang ba," 43.8–52.14. See "The Mahāmudrā Interpretation of the Ratnagotravibhāga" in chapter 1.

1909 'Jig rten gsum mgon: "chos 'khor 'ong ges zhus pa'i gzhung gi 'grel pa;" 347.1–6.

1910 See my translation of DRSM, 37.8–40.8.


1914 DRSM, 44.20–74.26.


1916 Gzhon nu dpal quotes MSA XII.11 to elucidate the threefold purity of the irreversible dharmacakra.

1917 DRSM, 40.5–41.10.

1918 See Tsultrim Gyamtsho and Fuchs 2000:283–85.

1919 DRSM, 45.7–22.

1920 Gzhon nu dpal justifies this with reference RGV L.163–70, the last eight stanzas of the first chapter, which give five reasons why the existence of the buddha element must be taught after the previous presentations of emptiness in the second dharmacakra (see my translation of DRSM, 45.22–46.5).

1921 DRSM, 46.5–17.
1922 DRSM, 47.12–19.
1923 DRSM, 48.4–10.
1924 DRSM, 447.14–17.
1925 Ibid., 74.25–26.

1926 ‘Jig rten gsum mgon: “Chos ’khor ’ong ges zhus pa’i gzhung gi ’grel pa,” 338.12–17: bdag cag gi ston pa sangs rgyas bcom ldan ’das ’di nyid kyang / ... dang po bla na med pa’i byang chub tu sems bskyed nas / sa dang po man chad bskal pa grangs med gcig ’khor lo dang po’i tshul gyis lam bgrod / sa bdun man chad du grangs med gcig ’khor lo gyis pa’i tshul gyis lam bgrod / dag pa’i sa gsum gyi grangs med gcig ’khor lo gsum pa’i tshul gyis lam bgrod pa yin....

1927 DRSM, 41.24–42.25.
1928 Ibid., 74.18–25.

1931 According to oral explanations of Lama Jorphel.
1932 DRSM, 74.14–18.
1933 Ibid., 73.3–5. See also Martin 1992:287; and Jackson 1990:52–53.
1934 DRSM, 41.24–43.2.
1935 See DRSM, 339.26–340.2; the lines quoted by Gzhon nu dpal are from Rang byung rdo rje’s Snying po bstan pa: “The [unfabricated] natural mind is called dharma-dhatu [or] buddha nature. It is neither improved by the noble ones nor demolished by sentient beings” (Rang byung rdo rje: Snyingpo bstan pa, fol. 364a–5).

1936 According to Gzhon nu dpal’s reading, awareness, or the element of awareness, is compared in RGV l.106b to honey in the simile of the honey and the bees, and thus to buddha nature (J l.104b).
1937 See DRSM, 15.8–12.
1938 See DRSM, 6.16–23.
1939 See DRSM, 15.8–10.
1940 RGV l.151 (J l.148).
1941 According to an oral explanation by Thrangu Rinpoche.
1942 See my translation of DRSM, 59.7–9.
1943 Technically speaking, this nonconceptual observation of or gazing at one’s mind is a yogic direct valid cognition (Tib. rnal ’byor gyi mgon sum tshad ma). It is like the mind directed outside, which simply watches, for example, a bird leaving its nest looking for a worm, eating it, and so forth (according to oral explanations by Thrangu Rinpoche).

1944 See DRSM, 16.18–17.4.
1945 See also Pettit 1999:180–81.
1946 See DRSM, 58.26–59.4.
1947 See DRSM, 61.26–62.3 and DRSM, 63.24–64.2.
1948 Otherwise translated as “mental engagement.”
1949 See DRSM, 59.12–22.
1950 According to oral explanations by Thrangu Rinpoche.
1951 DRSM, 40.5–8.
1952 Ibid., 40.11–19.
1953 Ibid., 43.2–44.5
1954 See the section “The Blossoming of Subtle Qualities” in chapter 5.
1955 DRSM, 135.6.
1956 See p. 17 in the introduction of this work.
1957 That is, coemergent wisdom.
1958 See DRSM, 44.5–7.
1960 For Gzhon nu dpal’s description of these five stages on the basis of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra, see DRSM, 59.24–61.18.
1962 LAS, 42.8–10: mahākāraṇopāyakasyalāyānābhogagatena mahāmāte prayogena sarvasattvanīyapratibimbabamatayā.
1963 PK III, introduction (31.3–7): utpattikramānuśarena pṛāptābhisekhaḥ...vajragurum samyag ārādhya / ...tadanantarant guruvaktrāt āptasvādhīṣṭhānakramopadesaḥ.
1964 PK III 14: svādhiṣṭhānąnapūrṇaḥ pṛāpyate hi prabhāsaram / tasmād vajraguruḥ pūrvarvi svādhiṣṭhānāni pradarśayer //.
1965 LAS, 42.10–13: citrabhāyādarsanatayahōvittābhīṣṭhāṇānugataḥ anupūrṇaḥ bhūmi-kramasamādhīviṣayānugamanatayā traidhātukavacitamāyā dhimuktaḥ tthābhīvaaya māyopamasamādhiḥ pratilabhante.

a According to E (24a3), H (17a7), and the Tibetan. Nanjio and the remaining Nepalese manuscripts read -tayii instead of -miiyii-.
1966 TDT, 194a3–4: rang byin brlabs pas rnam brgyan pao’o zhes bya ba ni rang nyid gnyug ma’i de kho na nyid kyi bdag nyid du ’byor paa’i sens kyi rgyan de’i bdag nyid du byin gyis brlabs pao’o / de bzhin nyid kyi rang bzhin las ’phro ba rang bzhin gyis rgyan pa.
1967 See “The Mahāmudrā Interpretation of the Ratnagotravibhāga” in chapter r.
1968 RGVV, 98.13–17: yasya yena ca "yā yatra" yadā ca vinayākritāḥ / tadvikalpoda-yabhāvād anābhobhag sadā muneḥ / yasya dhātore vinayasa yenopāyena bhūriṇā / yā vinitikriyā yatra yadā taddeśakālayoh //.

a According to B (50a1); A is not available. See also Schmithausen (1971:170). Johnston reads yāvac ca.
1969 DRSM, 60.20–25.
1970 Ibid., 61.18–22.
1971 LAS, 298.18: nirābhāsāsthito yogi mahāyānam sa pañjati // These pādes mark the end of a traditional description of the fourfold Mahāyāna meditation in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra.
1972 Cf. TA, 718–72a1: ...teg pa chen po zhes bya ba la / mtsan gyi rnam pa gzhan du na phyag rgya chen po zhes bya ba ste / de mthong bar ’gyur ro zhes gsungs pa ni / snang med gnas pa’i rnal ’byor pa / de yis (text: yi) ’teg pa chen po mthong.
1976 Gzhon nu dpal’s commentary on the second chapter of the Ratnagotravibhāga- vyākhya begins with a detailed explanation of the dharmāt chapter in the Dharma dharmatāvibhāgakārikās. For a detailed analysis of Gzhon nu dpal’s Dharma dharmatāvibhāga commentary, see Mathes 2005:3–39.
1977 See DRSM, 468.18–21: “Second, as to such an apprehension, one apprehends that false imagining lacks an own-being, even though it appears. Thus it is called the apprehension that [everything] is only an image (vijñātī). From this results a consciousness that does not apprehend outer objects, [that is, that apprehends them] as lacking an own-being. From such a consciousness results the knowledge that even the perceiving subject called ‘only images’ lacks an own-being.”
1978 DRSM, 63.17–24.
1979 Ibid., 64.2–9.
Even though the second dharma explains that the world arises through thought, mind-only is established by a kind of Madhyamaka reasoning to the effect that entities neither exist in terms of self, nor other, nor a combination of the two (see DRSM, 64.15–21).

Cf. RGVV, 72.13: anādikāliko dhātuḥ sarvadhaṃsāṃśrayah.

DRSM, 17.4–6 and 142.23–24.

RGVV, 14.1–4: ye samyak pratīdhyā sarvajagato nirātmayakotin śivāṃ taccittānaprakṛtirābhavatāya klesāvabhāvekṣāνāt / sarvataṃnagatām anāvṛtadhiyāḥ paśyanti saṃbuddhatām tebhāyāḥ sattvaviśuddhyāntaviśayajñānekaṃbhavantam νamah //.

RGVV, 14.6–7: yathāvadyāvadhyātmajñānanadārāṇāsuddhitah / dhīmatām avivṛtyānām anuttaravagunā ganāḥ //.

a B has something unreadable after na (A is not available). Johnston has -naĩḥ, which cannot be construed in a meaningful way (see also Schmithausen 1971:137).

RGVV, 14.11–12: yathāvattvamā jagachchāntadharmaṃvagamāt sa ca / prakṛte pariśuddhatvāt klesāyādī[ksaye]ṃ kṣānāt //.

a According to B (9a6); A is not available. Johnston reads taj- instead of -tvam. But as in the similar construction of stanza RGV 1.16, the Tib. ji lta ba nyid requires the abstract suffix (see also Schmithausen 1971:137).

b Missing in B (9a6); A is not available.

RGVV, 14.13–14: tatra yathāvadbhāvānākātā kṛṣṇasya pūdgaladharmaṃkhyayā ca jagato yathāvān nirātmayakoṭer avaṃgamīd veditavyā /.

a Johnston read -kāṣya and emended into -khyāya, but B (9b1) may well have read -khyayā (A is not available).

b B (9b1) has -koṭer arava-, and not -koṭer anava- (as Johnston remarks in a footnote). It is thus only a case of haplography and not a negation.


a B omits, A is not available.

b B reads -dārānacītta- (in compound). The context requires, however, following Johnston's conjecture (which he did not report at such); A is not available.

RGVV, 14.16–15.7: tatra yā cittasya prakṛtiprabhāvārātī yā ca tādopakleśe ity etad dvaṃvāvamo anāsrave dhātuḥ kūsālakūsaḥavāḥ cīttaḥ ekacaravatā dvītyaśāntaṃbhavānśayogena samāsāto dvābhavyāṃ kārāṇabhavyāṃ upadyaye / prakṛte prakṛte pārakloṣṭabārīdārīnaṃdhaṃ ca cittabāsyāṇayoḥ[da]ṃ dārānāc ca taduपāklesāya /.

a B (9b2) reads -kāṣṭa; A is not available (not reported by Johnston).

b B (9b3) reads -klinte instead of -klyātyate; A is not available.

c Johnston omitted the sentence nāpi cittamaṃ klesāṃ /, which is in B (9b4). A is not available.

d According to B (9b5); A is not available. Johnston has atha instead of evanī.

RGVV, 14.16–15.7: tatra yā cittasya prakṛtiprabhāvārātī yā ca tādopakleśa ity etad dvaṃvāvamo anāsrave dhātuḥ kūsālakūsaḥavāḥ cīttaḥ ekacaravatā dvītyaśāntaṃbhavānśayogena samāsāto dvābhavyāṃ kārāṇabhavyāṃ upadyaye / prakṛte prakṛte pārakloṣṭabārīdārīnaṃdhaṃ ca cittabāsyāṇayoḥ[da]ṃ dārānāc ca taduपāklesāya /.

RGVV, 14.15–18.

In other words, if a thought of viewing a self arises during the yoga of one-pointedness, a second thought is not needed to analyze and give up this thought of viewing a self. One-pointed gazing at one's mind ensures that the fact that one's mind lacks a self will directly be perceived again, once the thought of a self has dissolved by itself (oral explanation by Thrangu Rinpoche).
NOTES TO PAGES 393–400

1993 See DRSM, 59.23ff., where the five stages of the Pañcakrama are identified in LAS II.98.


1995 In the colophon of the prose version, the Dharmadhammatāvibhāga is called a sūtra (see Mathes 1996:67).

1996 I.e., the yathābhūtaasamādhi (see TD, 94.1).

1997 The text in the Peking Tengyur (TDṬ, 190a5) has gnyen po'i phyogs, not snying po, and Gzhon nu dpal, too, has in his commentary on this quotation (DRSM, 464.1) the syllable gnyen.


1999 DRSM rten, D rtogs, NP rtog. In accordance with Skt. pratīsāraṇa the reading must be rton [pa], which is also the lectio difficilior.

2000 The quoted passage introduces the explanation of stanzas I.156–58 (J I.153–55), dedicated to the defining characteristics of buddha nature. The corresponding Sanskrit is as follows (RGVV, 73.14–16): sarvatra dharmatāviva pratīsāraṇam / dharmatāva yuktī citānīdhyāpanāya citāsanīdhyāpanāya / sā na cintāyatavyā na vikalpāyatavyā / adhimoktayati /.

2001 See DRSM, 56.5ff.

2002 RGVV, 27.2–3: prabhāvānanyathābhāvaśnigdhabhavasvabhāvataḥ / cintāmaṇinabhovārīgūrjasādhabhāmyam esū hi //.

a B (15b4) has a space between -va and the following aksara. At one point there probably had been a visarga that was later omitted. A is not available. Here one may follow Johnston (who did not report the gap), since svabhāvataḥ must govern all three nouns preceding it.

b B (15b4) omits -dha-.

2003 RGVV, 73.2–3: tasmād bhagavānś tathāgatagarbho niśraya ādhārāḥ pratiśthā saṁbhaddhānām avinītābhāganām anuśākṣatānām dharmānām //.

2004 DRSM, 430.4–5.

2005 RGVV, 73.9–11: sa khalv eṣa tathāgatagarbho dharmakāya-viśvāsādhaḥ/tataḥsaṁbheṣāmalaśaṇo niyatagotrasvabhāvah sarvām ca sarvata ca niwāraśaṃyogena bsaṃvidyāta iti bṛāvaśvāyam dharmatām pramaṇīkṛtya. “Now, this buddha nature, which is as extensive as the dharmakāya, whose defining characteristics are not different from [those of] suchness and which has the nature of a definite potential, exists always and everywhere without difference. And this has to be seen in the light of having taken the true nature as a measure.”

a B (38a2) probably reads -pulastastata- (containing as case of dittography); the quoted passage is not available in A. See also Schmithausen (1971:158). Johnston reads -pralambhas ta-.

b De Jong (1979:575) rejects Johnston’s conjecture emending saṁsvadāyatanañatiṣṭa into sattvadvādhiśa viti and proposes, based on the Tibetan (yod dō // zhes bya ba’i bar ni), reading saṁvidyata iti yāvat. Gzhon nu dpal, however, has zhes bya ba ni instead of zhes bya ba’i bar ni, so that I do not translate the yāvat here.

2006 Lit., “extensively.”

2007 See DRSM, 73.3–8.

2008 This is also in line with ‘Bri gung ’Jig rten gsum mgon, who says in Dgongs gcig VI.10 that meditation is the cultivation of realization, the possession of the latter being the supreme view (VI.7) (see above).

2009 See DRSM, 73.8–14.

2010 See DRSM, 67.8–72.4.

2011 See DRSM, 73.14–19.

2012 The yoga of one-pointedness is equivalent to the penetration of “heat,” the yoga
of freedom from mental fabrication to “peak,” one taste to “forbearance,” and nonmeditation to “supreme mundane qualities” (DRSM, 74.5-14).

2013 DRSM, 74.19-22.

2014 Buddaguhya wrote two works on the Mahāvairocanaśūtra; see Nakamura 1987:337.

2015 See my translation of DRSM, 61.22-62.17, in which LAS, 55.3-56.6 is quoted.

2016 This is related to the question whether the buddha qualities are already fully ripe before the actual path of seeing. Gzhon nu dpal compares the stains of the impure levels to the womb’s confines, and nonconceptual wisdom experienced on these levels to the not yet activated sense faculties of the embryo. In the same way as these sense faculties are activated after birth, nonconceptual wisdom ripens upon one’s going beyond the seventh level, when the buddha bodies fully ripen and become perfect. (DRSM, 418.18-22).

2017 DRSM, 73.7-8.

2018 Ibid., 446.5-21.


2020 Cf. DRSM, 222.12-14, where Gzhon nu dpal remarks that “the direct [perception] of realizing the lack of an own-being by looking is conventionally designated as ‘to look at one’s own nature’ by the followers of mahāmudrā.”

2021 See also the abovequoted argument that it takes a bodhisattva much longer to reach the actual eighth level than it takes a follower of the Śrāvakayāna to attain arhatship, and that as a consequence, an arhat does not enter the Mahāyāna on the actual eighth level (DRSM, 500.8–11).

2022 DRSM, 73.8-14.

2023 Ibid., 74.5-7.

2024 Ibid., 73.19-74.2.

2025 A polemic in which one accuses an opponent of neglecting the first pāramitās and thus the gradual character of the path.

2026 BCA, 199.9–10: klesājñeyaḥāryatamahāpratipakṣo bhīṣyataḥ/śīghrāṃ sarvajñatākāmo na bhāvyatāṁ tāṁ katham/.

2027 Gzhon nu dpal’s reading of this stanza (/de ltar rnal ’byor pa rnam s kyis // stong pa nyid ni bsogs byas na // blo ni gzhan don la dga’ bar // ’gyur ba ’di la the tshom med/) differs from Lindtner’s edition (1987:206.7–8): / de ltar stong pa nyid ’di ni // rnal ’byor pa yis bsoms byas na / gzhan gyi don la chags pa’i blo / ’byung bar ’gyur ba the tshom med /.

2028 BCA, 160.15: mayāyadukkhamān hantavyam duḥkhhatvād ātmadukkhatvāt/.

2029 See DRSM, 222.12–14.

2030 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Byang chub sems ’grel gyi rnam par bshad pa tshig don gsal ba, 96.19–97.1: de ltar ’phags pa klu grub kyis binggags pa’i bsogs ’di / bod snga phyi kha cig rgya nag hva shang gi sgom yin par srog kyang / bstan bcos ’dir byang chub sems chen po rnam s kyis lugs su mdzad do/.

2031 Here it is important to remember that for Gzhon nu dpal qualities exist only in a subtle form in sentient being. Otherwise one would attain the complete enlightenment of a buddha in one instant.

2032 RGVV, 30.4–8: śubhātmaksukhaḥ śreyasvāgavapramītāpahalāḥ/ duḥkhāṅvinirvācchapramāṇāntikāḥdhikārakāḥ / tatra pūrveda lokārdhena kiṁ darśitaṁ / phalam esāṁ samāsa dharmakāye viparyayat / caturvīdhahiparyāsapatīpaksaprabhāvitaṁ/.

2033 a Johnston reads -phalam; B (17b1) phala: A is not available.

2034 RGVV, 69.3–4: pratitāṁ yathāmedhyam evan kāmāvirāgīnām / kāmasevānimittatvāvam paryutthānānī amedhyavat/ // The additions to my translation are in accordance with Gzhon nu dpal’s commentary on p. 418.6-22. The stanza describes
the defilements in the fourth example from the *Tathāgataagarbhasūtra* (that is, a piece of gold fallen in mud).

This occurs in some mahāmudrā explanations on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* Gzhon nu dpal used, such as the “notes” (zur) of Chos rje 'Bri gung pa (see DRSM, 574.9–10).

Dol po pa criticizes this view as being at odds with the *Ratnagotravibhāga*; the two truths are rather “different in that their identity is negated” (ngo bo gcig pa bkag pa'i tha dad). See Stearns 1999:162 and Mathes 2002:91.

See DRSM, 51.16–17 and 122.8–9.


See DRSM, 340.18–25.

According to B (12a6), A is not available. Johnston reads -sargako instead of -sambhavo without giving any reason.

See DRSM, 51.16–7: gotraṁ ratnaratrayāsya viṣayāḥ sarvadārśinām / caturvīdhāḥ sa cacintyas caturbhij kāraṇāḥ kramāt /.

According to B (12a6), A is not available. Johnston reads -sargako instead of -sambhavo without giving any reason.

RGVV, 21.6–7: gotraṁ ratnaratrayāsya viṣayāḥ sarvadārśinām / caturvīdhāḥ sa cacintyas caturbhij kāraṇāḥ kramāt /.

RGVV, 21.15–16: śuddhyupaṭāṭātyogāt niḥsamkleśaviṣuddhitāḥ / avinirbhāgadharmatvād anābhogāvikalpastāḥ /.

RGVV, 21.17–18: tatra samālā tathātāḥ yugapad ekakālāṃ viṣuddhā ca saṃkliśṭa cety acintyam etat sthānam gambhiradharmanayādhamuktānām api pratyekabuddhānām agocaraviṣayatvāt /.

RGVV, 22.5: tatra nirmālā tathātāḥ pūrvaṁ malāsaṃkliśṭā paścād viṣuddhety acintyam etat sthānam /.

RGVV, 22.5: tatra nirmālā tathātāḥ pūrvaṁ malāsaṃkliśṭā paścād viṣuddhety acintyam etat sthānam /.

RGVV, 22.8–10: tatra viṃḍalā buddhagunāḥ paurvāparyenaikāntasaṃkliśṭāyām api prthagjanabhūmāvaviniṅbhāgadharmatāvād nirviśṣṭā vidyanta ity acintyam etat sthānam /.

RGVV, 24.9–10: tatra jinakriyā yugapat sarvata sarvakālāṃ anābhogāvikalpato yathāsāyeṣu yathāvaineyiśeṣu satteṣu aksūṇam anugunāṁ pravartata ity acintyam etat sthānam /.

Cf. Gzhon nu dpal’s commentary on the first inconceivable point: “Likewise, the mind too is turned into defilements by the fire of [mental] imprints. When the imprints are reversed, there are no [more] defilements. Thus, even though the mind is thereby known to be associated with defilements, it is not the case that at the time of defilement both the pure mind and the defiled one mix as two separate substances; rather, they are simply not differentiated by the mind.” (DRSM, 218.10–12.)

See for example Lama Zhang’s *Phyag rgya chen po lam zab mthar thug zhang gi man ngag*, quoted by DRSM, 48.24–25.


See DRSM, 421.12–14.

Cf. the discussion of the four perfections of qualities in the preceding section.


See DRSM, 443.18–20.

See DRSM, 509.7–12.

Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: *Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar*, 10b1–2.
2055 Mi bskyod rdo rje: “Rje Yid bzang rtse ba'i Rgyud gsum gsang ba...,”
1007.6–1008.2.
2056 Ibid., 1003.3–5.
2057 DRSM, 239.15–17.
2059 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 30b5–31a5.
2060 Dreyfus (2003:27) observes that in the second half of the fifteenth century the
sectarian rift between the Dga' ldan pas (i.e., Dge lugs pas) and other schools
acquired particular force after Mkhas grub rje, who was preoccupied with a pure
interpretation of Tsong kha pa, became the leader of the Dga’ ldan pas.
2061 Klong chen pa: Grub mtha' mdzod, 170.5–6.
2062 DRSM, 238.5–8.
2063 Ibid., 239.12–14.
2064 Ibid., 362.18–20.
2065 In support Gzhon nu dpal (DRSM, 80.1–8) adduces RGV I.24ab: “The potential
of [these] Three Jewels is an experiential object of those who see everything”
(RGVV, 21.6: gotram ratnatrayasya viśayah sarvadarśinām āh).
2066 For a translation of this passage see above, Introduction, p 17.
2068 Mi bskyod rdo rje: “Rje yid bzang rtse ba'i Rgyud gsum gsang ba...,” 976.3–6.
2069 Rngog Blo ldan Idan shes rab: Theg chen rgyud bla'i don drep pa, 41a6–br.
2067 It is not clear, though, if Rngog Blo ldan shes rab’s above-mentioned explanation of
wisdom excludes the possibility that the emptiness of one’s mind includes some
aspect of clarity that is not the enlightened mind of a buddha.
2071 In reaction with a base, the ochre of turmeric powder turns red.
2072 DRSM, 339.26–340.5.
2073 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: Gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam thar, 54a3–4 (see chap­
ter 3).
2074 Stearns 1999:44.
2075 Mi bskyod rdo rje: “Rje Yid bzang rtse ba'i Rgyud gsum gsang ba...,” 1003.3–5:
khrod kyi sens can thams cad la sngas rgyas kyi snying po gnas pa'i tshe / sngas rgyas
de gnas pa min / sngas rgyas de'i rigs dang 'dra ba zhig gnas pa yin / 'dra ba de la skye
mchab drug gi khrod par ba yin pas /'di lla bu zhig sens can la yod pa yin zer nas /
dpal karmapa rang byung rdo rje gi lung drangs mod / 'di mi 'tshad pa la l./
2076 Ibid., 984.2–3: 'on kyang sngas rgyas kyi snying po la rigs su btags pa don ni / dbatu
(text: dhatu) 'i skad las drangs pas shes bya ches mang ba la 'jug rung ba / 'dir rigs su
bsgyur ba ste / don ni / chos kyi dbyings la 'chad dgos pa yin te / chos kyi dbyings kyi
ye shes de ni l./
2077 Ibid., 984.5–6; see above, chapter 2.
2078 Ibid., 978.1–3: khrod kyi sens can la bde gshegs snying po yod tshul sens can shun pa
med la /... 'o na ri bong gi rva'i snying po bum pa 'jog rigs te /.
2079 'Ba' ra ba: “Chos rje rnam gnyis kyi dgongs bshad nyi ma'i od zer,” 509.2–3.
2081 Mi bskyod rdo rje: “Rje Yid bzang rtse ba'i Rgyud gsum gsang ba...,”
999.2–1000.1: sngas rgyas kyi snying po chos can / sens can yin te / des sdu bsgang
myong ba'i phyir zhes bked na ma grub cing ... sngas rgyas kyi snying po bde ba dam
par bshad pa ma tshogs / sdu bsgang tha shal du grub na / spyi rgyas sdu bsgang dbang bde
ba myong ba'idag khas len bzhin du / chos thams cad bdag med do ces smra ba zu
zhig gi dbang med du bslabs l / bcom Idan 'das kyi sams dam po dag rjes su bsang
ba'i phyir / kun gzi'i rnam shes la snying po'i sngas bstan pa zhig yod pa la dgos pa
yin gyi / de ltar gyi tshe sdu bsgang myong ba'i kun gzi'i rnam shes ni / rnam smin
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gyi cha dgongs pa yin gyi / sa bon sogs kyi cha la dgongs pa min pas / khyod kyö log bshad la ni kho bo cag mgo bo 'khor ba'i skabs mi srid do /

2082 DRSM, 178.2–3.
2083 Rngog Blo ldan shes rab: _Theg chen rgyud bla'i don bsdus pa_, 42a4–6.
2084 See DRSM, 44.5–13.
2085 See Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: _Gzhen nu dpal gyi rnam thar_, 54a5–6 (see chapter 3).
2086 DRSM, 471.24–472.2.
2087 Ibid., 470.15–16.
2088 Ibid., 456.13–18.
2089 Ibid., 470.12–15.
2091 See above, chapter 3.
2093 Klong chen pa: _Grub mtha' mdzod_, 170.5–6.
2094 Ibid., 327.2. Tib. _lhun grub_ (Skt. _anābhoga_, “without effort”) is translated as “spontaneously present” in a rdzogs chen context.
2095 DRSM, 509.7–9.
2096 Ibid., 83.11–16.
2097 Ibid., 509.9–12.
2098 Ibid., 16.2–12.
2099 i.e., as propounded by Rang byung rdo rje (if one chooses to follow Kong sgrul and see in him a proponent of gzhan stong).
2100 Zhva dmar Chos grags ye shes: _Gzhen nu dpal gyi rnam thar_, 54a5–6 (see chapter 3).
2101 Seyfort Ruegg (1989:119–20) notes that also Mo ho yen often used the _Lañkā-vatārasūtra_ in support of Ch'an.
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Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśa
   As quoted in the RGVV

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AS Bh: *Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣya*

AA: *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*
   Ed. by Ramshankar Tripathi (together with the *Abhisamayālaṃkāravṛttiḥ Sphuṭārthā*). Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1993.

AAŚV: *Abhisamayālaṃkārārikāsāstravṛtti*

AAV Sphuṭārthā: *Abhisamayālaṃkāravṛttiḥ Sphuṭārthā*
   See AA

AAA: *Abhisamayālaṃkārāloka*

*Avatāṃsakasūtra* (Tibetan translation)
   Peking Kangyur no. 761

*Kālacakratantra*
   See VPT

KDN: *Kudrśtinirghātana*

GST: *Guhyasamājatantra*
Ghanavyūhasūtra (Tibetan translation)
Peking Kangyur no. 778

CS: Catuhṣātaka

CS: Cūlasuññatasutta

JNA: Jñānaśrimitranibandhāvali

Ḍākinīvajrapañjarātantra (Tibetan translation)
Peking Kangyur no. 11

TD: Tattvadāsaka
   —See also NGMPP reel no. B 22/24

TDṬ: Tattvadāsakaṭikā (Tibetan translation)
Peking Tengyur no. 3099

TRĀ: Tattvaratnāvālī
   —See also NGMPP reel no. B 22/24

TA: Tattvāvatāra (Tibetan translation)
Peking Tengyur no. 4532

Tathāgatagarbhasūtra
   —As quoted in the RGVV
   —See also Zimmermann 2002

Tathāgatunācīntiyaviśayāvatārāṇīrdeśa (Tibetan translation)
Peking Kangyur no. 832

TŚK: Trīṃśikākārikā
   See VMS

DBhS: Daśabhūmikasūtra

_Dvadhādyāśayāparivarta_

As quoted in the RGVV

_Devātiṣṭhāyastotra_ (Tibetan translation)
   Peking Tengyur no. 2004

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   Peking Tengyur no. 2005

DKG: _Dohākośāgīti_
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DhDhVK: _Dharmadharmatāvibhāgakārikā_ (Tibetan translation)

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DhĪRS: _Dhāraṇīśvararājasūtra_ (Tibetan translation)
   Peking Kangyur no. 814 (listed under *Āryatathāgatamahākaruṇā nirdeśanāma- mahāyānasūtra*, the title given in the beginning of the Tibetan translation).

PK: _Pañcakrama_

PĀ: _Pañcākāra_
   — In: _Advayavajrasaṅgraha_. Ed. by Haraprasad Shastri (Gaekwad’s Oriental Series 40), 40–43. Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1927.
   — See also NGMPP reel no. B 22/24

PRGSG: _Prajñāpāramitāratnaguṇasaṅcayaagāthā_

_Prajñāpradīpa_ (Tibetan translation)
   Peking Tengyur no. 5253

PV: _Pramāṇavārttika_
   — Ed. by Yūshō Miyasaka (Sanskrit and Tibetan), in _Acta Indologica_ 2 (1972), 2–206.

PVSV: Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛtī (on the first chapter)
See Gnoli's edition of the first chapter of the PV

PP: Prasannapadā

BCA: Bodhicaryāvatāra

BV: Bodhicittavivarana (Tibetan translation)

BPP: Bodhipathaprādipa
—See Eimer 1978

BBh: Bodhisattvabhūmi

BYĆŚṬ: Bodhisattvavācārācaturhsātakaṭikā
—See also Peking Tengyur no. 5266

Mañjuśrīvikrīditasūtra (Tibetan translation)
Peking Kangyur no. 764

MŚ: Madhyamakaśāstra

MH: Madhyamakahrdaya

Madhyamakahrdayavṛtī Tarkājvālā (Tibetan translation)
Peking Tengyur no. 5256

MAL: Madhyamakālaṅkāra

MA: Madhyamakāvatāra (Tibetan translation)

MAṬ: Madhyamakāvatāraṭikā (Tibetan translation)
Peking Tengyur no. 5271
Madhyamakopadesa (Tibetan translation)
Peking Tengyur no. 5324

MAV: Madhyantavibhāga

MAVT: Madhyantavibhāgaṭikā
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MAVBh: Madhyantavibhāgabhāṣya
   See MAV

Mahāparinirvānasūtra (Tibetan translation)
   As quoted in Mati pañ chen: “Nges don rab gsal”

MV: Mahāyānavimśikā

MS: Mahāyānasāṅgraha

MSA: Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra

MSABh: Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkārabhāṣya
   See MSA

Mahāyānābhidharmasūtra
   As quoted in the RGVV

MUTŚT: Mahāyānottaraśatrasātippāni

MMK: Mūlamadhyamakakārikā

RGV: Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyānottaratantarāstra

RGVV: Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā
—See RGV
[The manuscripts A and B on which Johnston’s edition is based are described in Johnston 1950:vi–vii. See also Bandurski et al. 1994:12–13.] For an edition of the Tibetan translations of the Tengyur see Nakamura, Zuiho 1967
—Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma’i bstan bcos [rnam par bshad pa]: (unpublished manuscript from Nawal (Manang), with glosses)

RĀ: Ratnāvali

Laṅkāvatāranvṛtti (Tibetan translation)
Peking Tengyur no. 5519

LAS: Laṅkāvatārasūtra
—See also NGMPP reel nos. A 112/9, A 112/10, C 13/7, D 52/5, D 58/6, D 73/8, E 625/14, E 1200/8, E 1725/5, and H 45/6.
—See also Peking Kangyur nos. 775 and 776

Vacanamukhāyuḍhopama (Tibetan translation)
Peking Tengyur no. 5784

Vajraśīkharamahāguhyatantra (Tibetan translation)
Peking Kangyur no. 113

VMS: Vījnāpatimārataśiddhi

VS: Viṃśatikā
See VMS

VPṬ: Vimalaprabhāṭikā

Viśeṣastava (Tibetan translation)

Viśeṣastavatīkā (Tibetan translation)

Vairocanābhisambodhitantra (Tibetan translation)
Peking Kangyur no. 126

Vairocanābhisambodhitantrapiṇḍārtha (Tibetan translation)
Peking Tengyur no. 3486

Vairocanābhisambodhivikurvitādhiṣṭhānamahātantrarvṛtti (Tibetan translation)
Peking Tengyur no. 3490
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VY:Vyākhyaṭṭikī (Tibetan translation)

Vyākhyaṭṭikī (Tibetan translation)
Peking Tengyur no. 5570

ŚBh:Śrāvakabhūmi

Śrīmālādevīśiśtra
As quoted in the RGVV.
See also Peking Kangyur no. 24

Śrīlaghukālacakrantānāṇāja
See VPT.

Satyadvaṣṭavibhāgavṛtti (Tibetan translation)

SNS: Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra (Tibetan translation from the Kangyur)
Ed. by Étienne Lamotte. Louvain (Belgium): Bureaux du Recueil, 1935.

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Peking Kangyur no. 26

Sākāraśaṅgraha
See JNA

Sākārasiddhiśāstra
See JNA

SS: Saṃtrasamucaya (Tibetan translation)

SN: Sekanirdeśa

Hastaṭavārṇī (Tibetan translation)
Peking Tengyur no. 5245

HT:Hevajraśānti
HP: *Hevajrapañjikā*  
See HT

*Ldog pa bsdus pa* (Sanskrit title uncertain)  
Peking Tengyur no. 5782

*Ldog pa bsdus pa bstan pa'i rnam 'grel* (Sanskrit title uncertain)  
Peking Tengyur no. 5783

**Tibetan Works**

Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje (the Eighth Karmapa)

—“Rje yid bzang rtse ba'i rgyud gsum gsang ba dang pa'n chen shākya mchog ldan yyi bde mchog rnam bshad gnyis kyi mthar thug gi 'bras bu gzhi dus kyi gnas lugs / lam dus kyi rnal 'byor rnam s la dpyad pa bdud rtsi'i dri mchog zhes bya ba bzhugs so.”  


—_Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa’i lungchos mtha’ dag gi bdud rtsi’i snying por gyur pa gang la ldan pa’i gzhung ti dgyes par nyal go bai yongs ’dus brrol gyi ljon pa rgyas pa zhes bya ba bzhugs so*. A reproduction of the Dpal spungs (?) block prints by Zhva dmar Chos kyi blo gros. Rumtek Monastery: no date.

Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje (the Third Karmapa)

—_Snying po bstan pa*. Bde bzhin bshegs pa’i snying po bstan pa. See Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje:  
_Zab mo nang gi don zhes bya ba’i gzhung bzhugs*, fols. 35a5-39a3.

—*Dbu ma chos dbyings bstd pa’i rnam par bshad pa bzhugs so*. 52 fols., _dbu med*, unpublished.

—_Zab mo nang gi don zhes bya ba’i gzhung bzhugs* (block print). Published together with the Rnam shes ye shes ’byed pa and the bDe bar bshegs pa’i snying po bstan pa. Rumtek Monastery: 1970.

—_Rang ’grel*. Zab mo nang gi don gsal bar byed pa’i ’grel pa bzhugs so* (block print). No place, no date. (The work was composed at the ō rgyan kyi mkhan po padma ’byung gnas kyi sgrub gnas in 1325 (fol. 92b6).)


Karma ’Phrin las pa

—_Do ba skor gsum gyi tika ’bring po bzhugs so* (_dbu med* text). No place, no date.
—“Dris lan yid kyi mun sel zhes bya ba lcags mo’i dris lan bzhugs.” The Songs of Esoteric Practice (mGur) and Replies to Doctrinal Questions (Dris lan) of Karma Phrin las pa, 88–92. Reproduced from prints of the 1539 Rin chen ri bo blocks. New Delhi: Ngawang Topgay, 1975.

Kun dga’ grol mchog
—Also in: Jo nang kun dga’ grol mchog gi khrid brgya’i skor, 81–125. Dehra Dun: Sa skya Centre, 1984.

Ko zhul Grags pa ‘byung gnas and Rgyal ba Blo bzang mkhas grub

Kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas
—Rgyud bla ma’i bshad srol: Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma’i bstan bcos snying po’i don mgon sum lam gyi bshad srol dang sbyar ba’i rnam par ‘grel pa phyir mi ldog pa seng ge’i nga ro zhes bya ba bzhugs so. Rumtek Monastery: no date.
—Rnam par shes pa dang ye shes ‘byed pa’i bstan bcos kyi ishig don go gsal du ‘grel pa rang byung dgongs pa’i rgyan ces bya ba bzhugs so. Rumtek Monastery: no date.

Klong chen rab ‘byams pa

Bka’ gyur and Bstan ’gyur

Glag bla Chos’ grub and Chos grags bzang po:

‘Gos Lo tsä ba Gzhon nu dpal
Sgam po pa Bsdon nams rin chen
—“Tshogs chos yon tan phun tshogs.” Ibid., vol. ka, 505–75.
—“Lam rim snying po.” Ibid., 320–27.

Sgra tshad pa Rin chen rnam rgyal

Dga’ ba’i rdo rje

Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa

Rngog Blo ldan shes rab
Theg pa chen po rgyud bla’i don bsdus pa rngog lo chen pos mdozad pa bzhugs so. NGMPP reel no. L 519/4, 66 fols. See also Jackson 1993

’Jig rten gsum mgon
See ’Bri gung Skyob pa ’Jig rten gsum mgon

’Ju Mi pham rgya mtsho

Nye gnas Grags pa rin chen
See ’Bri gung Skyob pa ’Jig rten gsum mgon: Bstan bcos tsin dha ma nii phreng ba zhes bya ba bzhugs so

Taranatha
—“Zab mo gzhan stong dbu ma’i brgyud ’debs.” Ibid., 483–490.
—“Gzhan stong snying po ces bya ba bzhugs so.” Ibid., 491–514.
Gter bdag gling pa ‘Gyur med rdo rje

Dus gsum rgyal ba thams cad kyi mkhyen brtse nus gsum gcig tu byodus pa’i bdag nyid kun mkhyen chos kyi rgyal po’i mtshan gyi rnam grangs la mchog tu dad pa’i dbyangs kyis bstod pa yon tan rgya mtsho’i rlabs phreng zhes bya ba bzhugs so. No place, no date.

Bstan ‘dzin phun tshogs et al.


DRSM

See ‘Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal, DRSM

Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan


Phag mo gru pa


Bu ston rin chen grub


Blo gros mtshungs med


’Ba’ ra ba Rgyal mtshan dpal bzang


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—“Dus ’khor rdo rje snying po la dri ba yi ger bskur.” Ibid., 557–602.

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—“Chos ’khor ’ong ges zhus pa’i gzhung gi rtsa ba.” Chos kyi ’khor lo legs par
gran la phab pa theg pa chen po’i tshul ’ong ges zhus pa zhes bya ba bzhugs
so (’Bri gung Bka’ brgyud 5), 1–24. Dehra Dun: Drikung Kagyu Institute,
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