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A Greater Perfection?
Scholasticism, Comparativism and
Issues of Sectarian Identity in Early
20th Century Writings on rDzogs-chen

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Abstract

This study concerns the rDzogs-chen tradition and its relationship to other traditions during the early decades of the twentieth century. This was an era of flourishing scholasticism among the non-dGe-lugs schools in Eastern Tibet, especially the rNying-ma and Sa-skya. It was also a period when a supposed non-sectarian (ris med) movement occurred. These two developments—in education and intersectarian relations—are at the heart of this inquiry.

Following a brief introduction, which discusses the notion of tradition in the context of Tibetan Buddhism, Chapter One charts the expansion of scholasticism among the non-dGe-lugs schools. The same chapter also explores the non-sectarian movement. Chapters Two and Three then focus on the writings of the Third rDo-grub-chen, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma (1865–1926). They consider his role as an authority within the tradition and his repeated comparisons of rDzogs-chen to Highest Yoga Tantra. Chapter Four then focuses on a text by g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings-rang-grol (1871–1952), a follower of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma. This short work is of particular interest because it demonstrates the influence of the scholar ’Ju Mi-pham rnam-rgyal rgya-mtsho (1846–1912) on the rDzogs-chen preliminaries. Finally, Chapter Five turns to the writings of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi rgya-mtsho (1903–1957), who advocated a synthesis of rNying-ma and dGe-lugs ideas.

The study offers evidence that rDzogs-chen authors variously ignored, championed or challenged many of Mi-pham’s scholarly innovations during this period. Moreover, I shall argue, these choices reflected differing attitudes towards intersectarian relations.
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“Great Perfection carries a sense of a perfectness we have to strive to attain, a goal that lies at the end of a long and gruelling journey. Nothing could be further from the true meaning of Dzogchen: the *already* self-perfected state of our primordial nature, which needs no ‘perfecting,’ for it has always been perfect from the very beginning…”

*Sogyal Rinpoche*

“Traditions develop because the desire to create something truer and better or more convenient is alive in those who acquire and possess them.”

*Edward Shils*
Introduction

1. The Notion of Tradition

The present study is about traditions. In particular, it examines how followers of one tradition, the Great Perfection (rDzogs-chen), came to view that tradition’s relationship with other traditions and also with its own past. Among the questions that arise as part of this enquiry is whether followers of rDzogs-chen in the early twentieth century regarded their own system of beliefs and practices as greater (more profound, more effective, etc.) than other systems, and, if so, how. Did they regard their tradition as a continuation of long-established ideas and practices, or as constantly evolving and improving?

To address such questions, it is necessary to refer to and take account of several other forms of tradition, beginning with that of the school or order. Modern textbooks generally refer to four main Tibetan Buddhist schools (chos lugs rnam bzhi), i.e., the rNying-ma, Sa-skya, bKa’-brgyud and dGe-lugs. This list reflects

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1 Raymond Williams (2014: 314) reminds us that a tradition in the literal sense of a ‘handing over’ or ‘delivery’ (tradere) of knowledge requires only a single act—and stage—of transmission. The notion of a tradition as something ancient or established over several generations is therefore potentially misleading, to some extent, and could even obscure the innovative elements and subtle changes that tend to occur in the transmission of knowledge. Still, Edward Shils (1981: 15), in perhaps what is the most extensive sociological study of tradition, insists that at least three generations are required for something to qualify as tradition.

2 See Chapter Three for a discussion of the meaning and history of rDzogs-chen. Others have referred to these major dharma traditions (chos lugs chen po) as sects. While retaining that term as part of sectarian[ism]/non-sectarian[ism], I avoid this usage because of its connotation of heresy or deviation from orthodoxy. Similarly, although the term ‘order’ appears as a translation of chos lugs in some secondary sources, I avoid it because of its associations with monasticism. The relationship between the Tibetan schools, especially the rNying-ma, and monasticism is complex.

3 The rNying-ma (or Ancient School) acquired its name retrospectively with the rise of the gSar-ma (New) Schools and the so-called later dissemination (phyi dar) of Buddhism in Tibet, beginning in the late tenth century CE. The school traces its origins to the period of the earlier dissemination (snga dar) during the royal period and especially to the teachings of the mysterious figure known as Padmasambhava, who visited Tibet in the eighth century. On the creation of rNying-ma identity and the legends surrounding Padmasambhava see Hirshberg 2016. On the history of the rNying-ma school see Dudjom Rinpoche 1991.

4 Named after the location of the school’s principal monastery, the Sa-skya (“grey earth”) traces its lineage back to the Indian adept Virūpā. In Tibet, it was members of the ’Khon clan who acquired instructions belonging to Virūpā’s lineage from ’Brog-mi lo-tsā-ba Sākyā ye-shes (992/3–1043/72). ’Brog-mi’s disciple, ’Khon dKon-mchog-rgyal-po, founded Sa-skya monastery in 1073. The
the contemporary religious and political scene among Tibetan Buddhists in exile, where the Jo-nang tradition continues to struggle for official recognition as the fifth school.\textsuperscript{8} The historical picture is, of course, more complex. The bKa’-gdams,\textsuperscript{9} for example, was a school of considerable importance until its disappearance.\textsuperscript{10}

Moreover, even minor traditions such as the Bo-dong\textsuperscript{11} and Zhi-byed\textsuperscript{12} are sometimes classed as schools and listed alongside those mentioned above.\textsuperscript{13} In

monastery later served as the base for school’s political hegemony of Tibet during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. On the history of the Sa-skya school see Dhongthog 2016.

\textsuperscript{6} The various sub-branches of the bKa’-brgyud school all trace their origin to the Tibetan translator Mar-pa Chos-kyi-blo-gros (11th C.) and the teachings he received from India, primarily from the adept Nāropa (956–1040). Mar-pa passed on these teachings to Mi-la-ras-pa (1040–1123), whose biography, especially in the version gTsang-snyon Heruka composed in 1488, became one of Tibet’s favourite works. Mi-la-ras-pa was the teacher of sGam-po-pa bSod-nams rin-chen (1079–1153), who introduced monasticism to a lineage that had been dominated by lay yogis. Traditionally, the bKa’-brgyud school is divided into four major (or senior) and eight minor (or junior) branches, not all of which survive independently. The most important surviving branches are the Karma bKa’-brgyud, ‘Bri-gung bKa’-brgyud and ‘Brug-pa bKa’-brgyud. On the history of the bKa’-brgyud school and its branches see “Golden Rosaries of the Bka’ brgyud pa Schools” in Smith 2001: 39–51. See also Roberts 2011: 1–25.

\textsuperscript{7} The school was originally named Ri-bo dGe-idan-pa, after the hill on which Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang-grags-pa (1357–1419) founded a monastery in 1409. It developed in the early fifteenth century among Tsong-kha-pa’s disciples and soon grew in influence. The dGe-lugs became the de facto rulers of Tibet with the ascension of the dGa’-ldan pho-brang government during the reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1642. On the early history of the school see Ary 2015; on the later dGe-lugs and its political influence see Schwieger 2015.

\textsuperscript{8} The Jo-nang regards Yu-mo Mi-bskyod rdo-rje (11th C.) as its founder. The school produced a number of accomplished scholars, most notably Dol-po-pa Shes-rab-rgyal-mtshan (1292–1361) and Tāranātha (1575–1634), but it came to be regarded as heretical. In 1650 with the political ascendency of the dGe-lugs, Jo-nang monasteries were forcibly converted to the dGe-lugs and the school effectively banned. The tradition survived in secret in outlying areas and is today rebuilding itself. See Ruegg, Recently the school’s followers have campaigned for it be added to the list as a fifth major school. In 2015, a demonstration took place outside the headquarters of the Tibetan parliament-in-exile in Dharamsala, as part of a campaign for official recognition as the fifth Buddhist school. Officially recognized schools and the Bon are each entitled to two representatives in the parliament, elected by their monastic communities. In September 2015, the parliament-in-exile voted to reject the inclusion of the Jo-nang.

\textsuperscript{9} The school began with the Indian master Atiśa’s foremost disciple ‘Brom-ston rGyal-ba’ i byung-gnas (1004/5–1064) and his founding of Rwa-sgrel monastery in 1056.

\textsuperscript{10} Later writers continue to refer to the bKa’-gdams and its major figures in prayers to those responsible for the propagation of Buddhism in Tibet. See, for example, Gangs can bstan pa’i srol ‘byed chen po nyer loga la gsal ‘debs dad pa’i me tog by ‘Jam-dbyangs mkHyen-brtse’i-dbang-po (1820–1892) (JK vol. 1, 280.3–281.5) and Thub bstan ris med rgyas pa’i smon lam drang srong bden pa’i dbyangs snyan by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama (see Bibliography).

\textsuperscript{11} The Bo-dong was founded in 1049 by Mu-dra pa chen-po and rejuvenated by the polynath Bo-dong Phyogs-las-rrnam-rgyal (1376–1451), on whom see Smith 2001: 179–208.

\textsuperscript{12} The “Pacification” tradition was founded by the Indian adept Pha-dam-pa Sangs-rgyas (b. 11th C.). Sometimes the Zhi-byed is referred to in combination with the gCod (“Severance”) system established by Pha-dam pa Sangs-rgyas’s female disciple Ma-geig Lab-sgron (1055–1149).

\textsuperscript{13} Even Bon, which is generally considered to be non-Buddhist, but which clearly owes much of its current form to borrowings from Buddhism, is sometimes included in surveys of Tibetan tenet systems (grub mtha’). See, for example, Grub mtha’ shel gyi me long, 378–390.
addition, one must take account of the important pairing of the Ancient Tradition of Early Translations (snga 'gyur rnying ma), which is equivalent to the rNying-ma school, and the New Tradition, or gSar-ma, which includes all the later schools.

The distinction between a tradition qua school, such as the rNying-ma, and a tradition qua system of thought and practice, such as rDzogs-chen (or Mahāmudrā), is crucial to what follows. rDzogs-chen is chiefly associated with the rNying-ma school in which it first arose. Nevertheless, Tibetan history affords many examples of members of other schools studying and practising rDzogs-chen; indeed, some of these figures even taught and wrote about the system. Such crossing of sectarian boundaries presupposes a certain willingness to share ideas and meditative technologies. Openness of this kind has existed throughout Tibetan history, but has occasionally been countered by outbreaks of intolerance, even persecution. Indeed, Tibetan Buddhism features both exclusivism and inclusivism (and arguably even pluralism too), as I discuss in detail in later chapters.

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14 My remarks here are to be understood purely in the context of the Tibetan Buddhist schools. I am not making any claims as to the origin of rDzogs-chen, which is beyond the scope of this study. Nor am I suggesting that the rNying-ma school was so named, or even necessarily understood as a school, at the time when followers of what came to be known as the rNying-ma school first wrote and taught about rDzogs-chen.


16 The notion of inclusivism (inklusivismus) was first introduced into Indology by the German scholar Paul Hacker (1913–1979) in 1957. Although Hacker first used the term in his 1957 article “Religiöse Toleranz und Intoleranz im Hinduismus” (Saeculum 8: 167–179), his most elaborate discussion of the concept is contained in an article published posthumously (see Hacker 1983). According to Hacker’s own definition:

>Inclusivism is a concept […] to describe data from the area which we term Indian religion and, in particular, Indian religious philosophy. Inclusivism means declaring that a central conception of an alien religious or ideological (weltanschaulich) group is identical with this or that central conception of the group to which one belongs oneself. To inclusivism there mostly belongs, explicitly or implicitly, the assertion that the alien [conception] declared to be identical with one’s own is in some way subordinate or inferior. In addition, no proof is generally furnished for the identity of the alien with one’s own.

(This translation is amended slightly from that provided in Ruegg 2008: 97. The original German appears in Hacker 1983: 12.) For Hacker, then, inclusivism is particular to Indian religion, and is to be compared and contrasted with the approach of non-Indian religions, especially Christianity. Although Hacker’s own focus was on Hindu borrowings from other religions, his definition does permit wider application, and could include intra-religious as well as inter-religious appropriation.
A third aspect of tradition that is relevant here is invention. By this, I do not mean the concept which the historian Eric Hobsbawm made famous (although that too has its uses in a Tibetan Buddhist context). Rather, I refer to the decisive moment when what will become a tradition first emerges—as a movement. Clearly, this involves a degree of interaction: in what one might describe as a dialectical process, the nascent tradition reacts against, and often defines itself (at least partly) in contradistinction to, established tradition(s). Two such movements feature in what follows. The first is the Non-Sectarian (Ris-med) Movement, which began in mid- to late nineteenth century Khams, and which is much discussed in secondary literature. The second, which E. Gene Smith called the dGe-mang movement, was contemporaneous and involved some of the same figures, but has not received as

Hacker’s student Lambert Schmithausen, who is among those to have applied the concept of inclusivism to Buddhism, defines it as “a method of intellectual debate in which the competing doctrine, or essential elements of it, are admitted but relegated to a subordinate position, or given a suitable reinterpretation, and which aims not so much at reconciliation but at prevailing over the other doctrine or its propounders.” (Schmithausen 1981: 223). Still, other scholars have urged caution when applying Hacker’s inclusivism to Buddhism. David Seyfort Ruegg, for example, sees it as “not unproblematic in the form in which he [i.e., Hacker] presented it” (Ruegg 2008: 99). Ruegg objects to Hacker’s reference to the foreign or alien (fremd) since he regards as unproved the proposition that the shared Indian “religious substratum” is alien to Buddhism. Still, there have been attempts to apply a modified version of the concept to Buddhism and even to formulate a “Buddhist Inclusivism”; most recently, for example, in the work of Kristin Beise Kiblinger (see Kiblinger 2005). The latter draws upon comparative theology and the writings of scholars such as George Lindbeck and Paul J. Griffiths. Following Griffiths, Kiblinger distinguishes between “open inclusivism” and “closed inclusivism”; the former signalling an openness that makes it possible to learn new truths from an alien tradition, while the latter denotes an unwillingness to view other traditions on their own terms. (Kiblinger 2005). Alongside inclusivism, Kiblinger and other Buddhist scholars make use of two further categories, taken from comparative theology, to make a triad of inclusivism, exclusivism and pluralism. (See Kiblinger 2005: 1–2, & Burton 2011.) Ferrer (2002: 165) glosses these terms as “dogmatic exclusivism”, “hierarchical inclusivism” and “ecumenical pluralism”. In a recent study of Zhabz-dkar Tshogs-drug-rang-grol (1781–1851), Rachel Pang has argued that these categories “do not enable us to fully and accurately capture Buddhist responses to religious difference” (Pang 2015: 470). Instead, she seeks to understand Zhabz-dkar Tshogs-drug-rang-grol’s attitude to religious diversity on its own terms, while noting some similarity between his openness to other traditions and the concept of pluralism, especially as it is defined in the work of Diana Eck. (Ibid., 466.) It should also be noted that Wangchuk (2004: 191) sees Hacker’s inclusivism (as defined by Schmithausen) as the polar opposite of a “reconciliatory” or “harmonising” approach.

17 On this popular notion of the “invention of tradition” see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983.
18 As the sociologist Randall Collins observes, “The history of philosophy is to a considerable extent the history of groups. Nothing abstract is meant here—nothing but groups of friends, discussion partners, close-knit circles that often have the characteristics of social movements.” (Collins 1998: 3).
19 Two pioneering articles by E. Gene Smith, published in 1969 and 1970 (and republished in Smith 2001: 227-272), first introduced the term “Ris med Movement” and have been much relied upon ever since. Although the notion of such a movement has long been accepted and repeated, it has recently been challenged, as I discuss in Chapter One.
much attention. The dGe-mang teachers, such as rGyal-sras gZhan-phan mtha’-yas (1800–1855) and gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba (1871–1927), helped to strengthen rNying-ma scholasticism. They thus played an important role in the broader shift in monastic education that took place among the non-dGe-lugs schools during this period. Both the Ris-med Movement and the scholastic renaissance (of which the dGe-mang movement was a part) influenced the rDzogs-chen tradition, and the ways in which they did so lie at the heart of this study.

It is a truism to say that all traditions evolve, but the incontrovertible fact of constant, subtle development is occasionally worth emphasising. Innovation often meets resistance, but it is inevitable; true stasis is impossible and even resistance to change requires a certain force. Conservative followers—the ones usually called traditionalists—often resort to rhetorical strategies as part of their struggle against innovation. They might, for example, claim to represent the true, original or authentic doctrine. But such a reaction against the modern—which is by implication false, unoriginal and inauthentic—is, in its own way, innovative. All forms of Tibetan Buddhism present themselves as conservative. Thus, even while initiating changes, proponents of rDzogs-chen (or any other system) strive to demonstrate their loyalty to that system’s (perceived) history and origins. Rarely do they portray innovation as modernisation or improvement.

The comparative term greater (with a question mark) in the title of this thesis refers primarily to the comparative elements in the writings of three authors active in

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20 I discuss the term scholasticism as it applies in the Tibetan context in Chapter One below.
21 See Chapter One below.
22 Shils (1981: 14) notes that traditions might undergo great change while its followers regard it as “significantly unchanged”. What counts most is “a sense of filiation with a lineage of prior possessors of a tradition.”
the early twentieth century: ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma (1865–1926),\(^{23}\) g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol (1871–1952)\(^{24}\) and mDo-sngags Chos-kyi rgya-mtsho (1903–1957).\(^{25}\) Right from its emergence, however, rDzogs-chen was subject to comparison with other systems and traditions. At first, the *chen po* in *rDzogs-pa chen-po* signified superiority over the *mere* perfection stage (*rdzogs rim*).\(^{26}\) Later, doxographical models placed rDzogs-chen (= Atiyoga) at the apex of all Buddhist systems and vehicles (*theg pa*; *yāna*).\(^{27}\) Moreover, as we shall see, even on those occasions when followers of rDzogs-chen seek to highlight its similarity to other systems, they still maintain its *ultimate* superiority.

A further comparative element concerns not so much the relationship of rDzogs-chen to other systems as its connection to its own past. Here, the question posed by the title may be understood as whether the introduction of scholastic ideas and methods brought about improvement. Needless to say, this is not a question that the tradition ever asked (or asks) itself directly, but debates around scholarly innovation did occur. These debates also touched upon sectarian identity and whether rDzogs-chen should accommodate external ideas or focus on what are its own supposedly unique elements.

### 2. Overview of Chapters

The following chapters explore these themes in detail. Chapter One charts the expansion in scholasticism among the non-dGe-lugs schools. It considers how the philosophical writings of ’Ju Mi-pham rNam-rgyal-rgya-mtsho (1846–1912)\(^{28}\)

\(^{23}\) Chapter One discusses the life of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma and introduces his works, which are then discussed in more detail in Chapters Two and Three.

\(^{24}\) Chapter Four briefly discusses his life and some of his writings on rDzogs-chen.

\(^{25}\) Chapter Five examines his life and works.


\(^{27}\) On the nine vehicles see Cabezón 2013.

\(^{28}\) Hereafter referred to simply as Mi-pham. Chapter One discusses the sources for his life and work.
strengthened the scholastic identity of the rNying-ma school in the late nineteenth century. In particular, the chapter considers how scholasticism and sectarianism affected one of Mi-pham’s principal students, the Third rDo-grub-chen, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma.

Chapter Two introduces ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s rDzogs-chen writings. These typically brief works, which date from around the turn of the twentieth century, demonstrate clear signs of scholasticism,\(^{29}\) including the desire to reconcile apparently disparate points. They also include extensive comparisons between rDzogs-chen and Highest Yoga Tantra (\textit{rnal ’byor bla na med pa’i rgyud/*yoganiruttaratantra}),\(^{30}\) based on a comprehensive theory of clear light (\textit{’od gsal: prabhāsvara}), which is itself the focus of Chapter Three.

Chapter Four considers a short rDzogs-chen text by g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings-rang-grol (1871–1952). This work discusses three analytical contemplations that constitute a form of rDzogs-chen preliminary (\textit{sngon ’gro}). The text is unusual insofar as it shows the extent of Mi-pham’s influence on rDzogs-chen, especially in its insistence that Mi-pham’s interpretation of Madhyamaka\(^{31}\) is an essential component of the preliminary meditations.

Finally, Chapter Five examines the rDzogs-chen writings of the dGe-lugs/rNying-ma scholar mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-rtse (1903–1957). He

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\(^{29}\) In defining scholasticism here and elsewhere I rely upon Cabezón 1994: 15, as Chapter One explains.

\(^{30}\) On Highest Yoga Tantra see Cozort 1986. My use of the Sanskrit \textit{*yoganiruttaratantra} here follows Sanderson 2009 (146 n.337), who notes, “I have seen no occurrence in any Indian source of the term \textit{Anuttarayoga}, commonly encountered in secondary sources. It is evidently an incorrect modern translation into Sanskrit of the ambiguous Tibetan rendering of Yoganiruttara (\textit{rnal ’byor bla na med}).” See also Dalton (2005: 152, n. 84), who calls the rendering \textit{anuttarayogatantra}, which appears in many secondary sources, “a time-honoured mistake that needs to be abandoned”. (The rendering persists nonetheless and often without comment; see, for example, PDB: 55). It should be noted that the various tantras which Tibetans classify under the general heading of Highest Yoga are by no means homogeneous.

\(^{31}\) In what follows I use the spelling \textit{Madhyamaka} to refer to the general theory and the school and \textit{Mādhyamika} to refer to that school’s adherents and to the Prāśaṅgika or Svātantrika Mādhyamika as a sub-branch of Madhyamaka.
implicitly rejected Mi-pham’s form of rNying-ma doctrine and instead proposed a merger between rDzogs-chen (and Mahāmudrā) and elements of dGe-lugs thought. Through this syncretism and his claims to represent a form of non-sectarianism, he ultimately brings into question what it means to be truly \textit{ris med}.

3. Major Figures with Dates
1. Scholasticism and Sectarian Identity

“Cultivate mutual accord, devotion, and pure perception, and, while focusing on your own tradition, avoid belittling others.”

"Ju Mi-pham"

1. Introduction

This chapter examines the impact of Buddhist scholasticism in Eastern Tibet from the mid- to late nineteenth century to the early decades of the twentieth century. Scholars have associated this period’s re-shaping of monastic education in the non-dGe-lugs schools with the emergence of the Ris-med Movement. Yet, the very notion of such a movement is in need of re-evaluation following recent critical remarks. While this is not the place for an extensive reassessment, it is at least important to gauge how a changing intellectual climate and shifting notions of scholastic identity might have influenced the subjects of this study, beginning with 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma.

2. The Question of the Ris-med “Movement”

The late nineteenth century witnessed a religious and cultural renaissance in and around sDe-dge (Eastern Tibet). Many believe that this renaissance included, or

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32 MPc. vol. 32, 410.
33 The most extensive study of Tibetan Buddhist scholasticism appears in Dreyfus 2003a, which is especially helpful in its analysis of dGe-lugs education. Cabezón 1994 and Kapstein 2000b also contain many valuable insights into the nature of Tibetan scholasticism. For example, Cabezón (1994: 15) notes some of the general characteristics of scholasticism, many of which are in evidence in what follows: “These include scholasticism’s formal nature, its systematicity, its preoccupation with scriptures and their exegesis in commentaries, its rationalism and its reliance on logic and dialectics in defense of its tenets, its penchant for lists, classification and categorization, and its tendency toward abstraction.” I have previously discussed some aspects of rNying-ma and Sa-skya scholasticism in Pearcey 2015a.
was initiated by, the so-called Ris-med Movement. Several of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s teachers played a prominent role in this movement; some sources even claim that he was himself a participant. The key figures associated with Ris-med all lived in the nineteenth century, but their disciples and followers continued to be active in the early decades of the twentieth century. Moreover, the effects of the movement, it is often said, persist into the present day. Scholars are yet to chart the full history of Ris-med, and there is clearly a need for a diachronic and synchronic analysis of all that has come to be associated with the term. This is clearly not the place for such a vast undertaking, but a brief overview of some key themes will serve as a foundation for subsequent chapters.

Smith’s pioneering articles of 1969 and 1970 were the first English-language sources to use the term “Ris-med Movement” and have been much relied upon in academia ever since. Yet, even though the notion of a movement gained widespread acceptance, some have recently begun to question its accuracy.

Alexander Gardner, in his 2006 thesis on the sacred geography of Khams, was the first to challenge the use of the term:

What seems to have been the case in the late nineteenth century, and perhaps the early twentieth as well, was not a “movement” but simply a sizeable community of scholars who put long-held values of inter-sectarian exploration and respect into a regionally and historically specific practice. Yes, ’Jam mgon Kong sprul was nonsectarian, but so too were those who came before him. He and his colleagues

34 i.e., 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po (1820–1892), rDza dPal-sprul O-rgyan chos-kyi-dbang-po (1808–1887) and 'Ju Mi-pham rNam-rgyal rgya-mtsho (1846–1912).
36 Several sources describe Ris-med as a 19th century phenomenon: for example, Dreyfus 2005: 287 and Deroche 2009: 320.
37 In an oft-quoted statement, Samuel (1993: 537) asserts that Tibetan Buddhism today outside the dGe-lugs is largely a product of the Ris-med Movement.
38 See Smith 2001: 227-272 for reprints as “Mi-pham and the Philosophical Controversies of the Nineteenth Century” (originally published 1969) and “’Jam mgon Kong sprul and the Nonsectarian Movement” (1970). There is no exact equivalent for “Ris-med movement” in Tibetan, but the term Ris-med (as an abbreviation of phyogs ris med pa or ris su ma chad pa) is widely used in Tibetan sources in connection with figures such as Kong-sprul and mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po.
39 Tibetans also use the term; see, for example, Ringu Tulku 2006 passim.
were scholars and practitioners who participated in a religious blossoming that celebrated commonality and intra-sectarian exchanges.\textsuperscript{40}

The 2014 \textit{Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism} echoes Gardner’s concerns:

\ldots the notion that ’Jam mgon kong sprul, ’Jam dbyang [sic] mkhyen brtse, and Dpal sprul Rin po che were at the center of a “nonsectarian movement,” in the sense that there was a widespread institutional reformation in their lifetimes, is not historically accurate. It is perhaps better to speak of the nonsectarian ideal and their lives as models of its expression.\textsuperscript{41}

It is not clear why the term “movement” should imply “widespread institutional reform”. After all, the \textit{Oxford English Dictionary} defines a movement as simply:

A course or series of actions and endeavours on the part of a group of people working towards a shared goal; an organization, coalition, or alliance of people working to advance a shared political, social, or artistic objective.\textsuperscript{42}

Now, the Ris-med figures did not have a \textit{single} “shared goal”—aside, perhaps, from simply furthering the notion of non-sectarianism itself. Smith’s articles describe diverse initiatives, none of which involved \textit{all} the figures he cites in his relevant writings. He launches his article on Kong-sprul with a list of key Ris-med participants:\textsuperscript{43} ’Jam-mgon Kong-sprul blo-gros mtha’-yas (1813–1899/1900),\textsuperscript{44} ’Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po (1820–1892),\textsuperscript{45} mChog-gyur bde-chen gling-pa (1829–1870), ’Ju Mi-pham rNam-rgyal rgya-mtsho (1846–1912), gZhan-

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{40} Gardner 2006: 136.
\item \textsuperscript{41} \textit{Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism} 2014: 716.
\item \textsuperscript{42} \url{http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/123031} [Accessed 28 October 2016] No one would argue that the slow food movement, which began in Italy in the 1980s, required or sought widespread institutional reform. Still, it was a reaction against something—fast food—and thus a product of its time. Thus, while it is true that the term is frequently used by representatives of minority groups seeking increased rights (for example, animal rights, LGBTQ rights, etc.) there are other kinds of movement.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Smith 2001: 235
\item \textsuperscript{44} Smith gives the year of Kong-sprul’s death as 1899, and this is also the date given on the TBRC website [\url{https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=P264} Accessed 28 October 2016]. The Tibetan date of his death was either late on the 27th or early on the 28th day—for it was “around midnight” according to the first-hand account of gNas-gsar Karma bkra-shis chos-‘phel (Barron 2003: 384)—of the eleventh month of the earth-pig year (15th sexagenary cycle). Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein (Dorje & Kapstein 1991 vol. 1, 867) have proposed an equivalent date for this (based on the Tshur-phu system) of 28 December 1899. The same authors (vol. 2, 85, n. 1201) also note, however, that according to the new Phug-pa system this would be 27 January 1900. Richard Barron, in a note to his translation of Kong-sprul’s autobiography, favours the 1900 date, saying the death would have occurred “sometime in January of 1900” (Barron 2003: 403 n.30).
\item \textsuperscript{45} \textit{Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism} consistently misspells the name of ’Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse’i dbang-po as ’Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse dbang po (see, for example, the entry on p.379).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba (1871–1927) and rDza dPal-sprul O-rgyan chos-kyi-dbang-po (1808–1887). Additional lists in the same article provide more names, and scholars have added further figures Smith omitted. All those listed could not possibly have collaborated with one another; for one thing, their dates make this impossible.

To be sure, mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po and Kong-sprul were close allies who worked together on a number of projects, including the compilation of Kong-sprul’s “Five Great Treasuries” (mdzod chen lnga). The pair also spent much time with mChog-gyur bde-chen gling-pa. Still, Smith includes masters who were active in other areas and at other times. The lives of mChog-gyur bde-chen gling-pa and gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba, for example, did not overlap at all. Moreover, gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba was unable to study with dPal-sprul directly, even though the two were alive at the same time; instead he received instruction from dPal-sprul’s disciple O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu (1841–1900).

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46 See, for example, Smith 2001: 250.
47 See Smith 2001: 262–267. The five are Shes bya mdzod, bKa’ brgyud sngags mdzod, Rin chen gter mdzod, gDuns ngag mdzod, and Thun mngon ma yin pa'i mdzod. It should be noted that these compilations did more than simply preserve traditions; they also reshaped them. Decisions surrounding inclusion and/or exclusion were highly consequential and invited criticism. For example, in the case of the Rin chen gter mdzod collection of gter ma, the exclusion of the revelations of Nyima grags-pa (1647–1710) and the inclusion of certain Bon-po texts both proved controversial.
48 Indeed, mKhyen Kong mChog gsum (or mKhyen Kong mChog sde gsum) became a popular phrase for the trio in Eastern Tibet. See Gardner 2006: ix. mKhyen Kong mChog gsum occurs five times in Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse’s biography (rnam thar) of ’Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros. Given the similarity of the final three syllables, the epithet is clearly a play on the phrase dkon mchog gsum, i.e. the triratna: buddha, dharma and saṅgha.
49 Schapiro 2012: 51 notes that there is no evidence in the biographical archive that dPal-sprul had a direct relationship with Kong-sprul. It is indeed true that, as Schapiro points out, there is no mention of Kong-sprul in the various biographies of dPal-sprul, nor is there any mention of dPal-sprul in Kong-sprul’s autobiography. However, both figures are mentioned in the biography of ’Gyur-med nthu-stobs rnam rgyal (1787–1854), a teacher to them both at more or less the same time (c.1830). See Zhe chen dbon sprul ’gyur med nthu stobs rnam rgyal gyi rnam thar: 138–139. Still, regardless of whether or not they met as fellow students of ’Gyur-med nthu-stobs rnam rgyal, it would be naïve to assume that direct contact is required for one person to influence another, especially in a highly literate milieu. It seems likely that in nineteenth century eastern Tibet teachers were often aware of what other teachers were doing, either through indirect oral communication or through exchanging letters and manuscripts, and that this alone could contribute to a zeitgeist.
50 The dates of O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu remain contested. I have discussed issues related to the various suggestions for the years of his birth and death in some detail in two short essays on my blog (adamspearcey.com/blog). The dates given here are those which also appear in the biography I wrote for Treasury of Lives (Pearcey 2015b).
intend to portray a contemporaneous group; his lists demonstrate that, in his view, the movement endured beyond a single generation.  

Many of those who feature in Smith’s article were eminent figures in their own fields. It is not clear though whether all their activities should be grouped together or classified as “non-sectarian”. Gardner argues (with some force) that some later scholars relied too heavily on Smith’s articles and sought to include all the activities and achievements he describes in their definitions of Ris-med. He claims that by distorting Smith’s original message, these scholars rendered the concept of Ris-med virtually meaningless:

…later authors mined Smith’s many illuminating remarks to gradually grind a[n] opaque lens through which events of the nineteenth century in Kham were viewed. Appealing aspects of Jam mgon Kong sprul’s career mentioned by Smith, as well as other random matters he raised, were cobbled into a conceptual grid that grew increasingly larger and eventually came to dominate discussions of the period and its luminaries. Reified, “Rimay” obscured events and made investigation difficult, for it has come to be the case that anything said to have occurred in all of Tibet, much less Kham, in the second half of the nineteenth century or the first half of the twentieth, is part of the “Rimay”—unless, that is, it was in reaction to or conflict with it.  

There is some value in Gardner’s critique here: it is true that the complex events summarised in Smith’s articles have been oversimplified. Yet, it is equally clear that Smith did not invent the notion of Ris-med. The term ris med already featured prominently in Tibetan literature about Kong-sprul, mKhyen-brtse’i dbang-po and their heirs before Smith’s articles. Consider, for example, Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse’s (1910–1991) biography of ‘Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros.  

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51 This point was apparently missed by some scholars, who describe the movement as a nineteenth century phenomenon, as noted above.  
53 As Viehbeck 2012: xiv notes, some of the content of Smith’s article is most likely a reflection of the feelings of his teacher, sDe-gzhang Rin-po-che Kun-dga’ bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma (1906–1987).  
54 i.e., ‘Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse choS kyi blo gros rin po che’i rnam thar. (See bibliography for full publication details).
which was written in the early 1960s.\textsuperscript{55} The author employs \textit{ris med} once in the title and then a further 27 times in the text itself—quite apart from the dozen times he uses the equivalent \textit{ris su ma chad pa}.\textsuperscript{56} Such emphasis likely signifies an attempt to establish the biographical subject as the genuine heir of mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po and his legacy. It is also possible that Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse sought to promote the non-sectarian cause himself. After all, the adoption and promotion of terms, phrases and rhetoric—linguistic change—is often a key objective for those seeking broader social and political change, as is attested even today.\textsuperscript{57}

In the introductory section of the biography, Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse discusses the life of mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po. He portrays him as the key figure of Ris-med who inspired the achievements of all his associates, including Kong-sprul. To him, mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po was responsible for the textual compilations of the Five Treasuries as well as comparable collections, such as the \textit{rGyud sde kun btus}\textsuperscript{58} and \textit{sGrub thabs kun btus}.\textsuperscript{59} Moreover, it was mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po who inspired the scholastic writings of his disciple ’Ju Mi-pham:

\begin{quote}
[mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po] cared for the \textit{mahāpañḍita} Mi-pham ’Jam-dbyangs mam-rgyal by bestowing on him an ocean of profound and vast instructions and opening the door to the wisdom of perfect knowledge. He made Mi-pham the ritual offering of representations of enlightened body, speech and mind, and offered him his own \textit{pañḍita} hat and other articles. He then named him Mi-pham ’Jam-dbyangs mam-rgyal rgya-mtsho—which has fourfold significance\textsuperscript{60}—to create the auspicious
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{55} And even before this, Pha-bong kha-[pa] bDe-chen snying-po (1878–1941) expressed his opposition to the movement’s activities. See below.

\textsuperscript{56} These calculations were made using a computer input version of the Zhe-chen edition of Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse’s collected works.

\textsuperscript{57} Consider the use of \textit{citoyen}/\textit{citoyenne} in post-revolutionary France, or “comrade” (\textit{kamerad}) among Marxist revolutionaries, or the practice of ‘reclaiming’ terms of abuse or oppression, as with “queer” within the gay rights movement, or modern attempts to promote “non-binary” gender pronouns.

\textsuperscript{58} The \textit{rGyud sde kun btus} was compiled by ’Jam-dbyangs blo-gter dbang-po (1847–1914). Its contents are listed in Barron 2003: 544–549.

\textsuperscript{59} The \textit{sGrub thabs kun btus} was compiled by mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po and ’Jam-dbyangs blo-gter dbang-po. Its contents are listed in Barron 2003: 532–543.

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{don gyi rgyu mtshan chen po bzhi}. As Pettit (1999: 472, n. 105) suggests, these four forms of significance are specified in four lines of praise, which mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po is said to have written on the back of a \textit{thang ka} of White Tārā and offered to Mi-pham: \textit{om swasti dza yantu} mi pham mgon po’i dgongs don ji bzhin rgya-mtsho ’jam pa’i dbyangs bzhin shes bya kun la mkhas phyogs las mam rgyal chos kyi grags pa ltar snyan pas rgya mtsho’i gos can khyab gyur cig} (MPc vol. 9: 25
circumstances for his future activities. In this way, mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po empowered Mi-pham as a propagator of the Buddha’s teaching with the three skills of a scholar (mKhas tshul gsum). He authorised Mi-pham to compose a great many fine explanations (legs bshad) of sutra and mantra. And, because of these aspirations and the auspicious circumstances he created, Mi-pham became a scholar whose fame spread in all directions.⁶¹

I revisit the role mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po played in Mi-pham’s scholarly career below. What is important to note here is that even in Tibetan writings that predate Smith’s articles, mKhyen-brtse and Kong-sprul’s activity encompasses the deeds of their disciples and immediate circle. Thus, Mi-pham’s commentarial writings—like the textual compilations of Blo-gter dbang-po—were at least partly attributable, says Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse, to mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po’s magnanimous aspirations (thugs bskyed). Hence, the view that mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po alone, or mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po and Kong-sprul together, instigated these various textual projects aligns well with the notion of a movement, or at least matches the Tibetan interpretation. Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse paints a picture of a group working together towards a shared goal—of literary production, if nothing else. But the recurring emphasis on non-sectarianism also suggests that the promotion of the ris med idea was itself an objective. The extent to which the activity of mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po and his allies was truly non-sectarian is a separate question, but one to which I shall return.

⁶¹ JCLb vol. 1: 370.1: ma hā paṇḍita mi pham ’jam dbyangs mam par rgyal ba la zab rgyas kyi gdam pa rgya mtsho lta bus rjes su bzung zhing mKhyen rab ye shes kyi sgo phyis te sku gsung thugs kyi rten dang rje nyid kyi dbyung dzes gnang ste| mkhas tshul gsum gyis rgyal bstang spal ba ’i phrin las can du mnga’ gsal| mdo sngags kyi legs par bshad pa rabs byams mdzad ’os par bka’ gnang ba lta thugs bskyed dang rten ’brel gyi bden don ji bzhin mngon du gyur te mkhas pa’i grags snyan phyogs kun tu khyab|
3. The Rise of Scholasticism

In his articles that touch upon the Ris-med Movement, Smith notes a significant expansion of scholasticism among the non-dGe-lugs schools, particularly the rNying-ma and Sa-skya, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He even views this as a feature of “the nonsectarian tradition” itself, and describes how the new model of monastic education differed pedagogically from the system favoured in dGe-lugs establishments:

The nonsectarian tradition emphasized a different aspect of religious education: scriptural exposition (bshad pa). The trend was towards simplification. In their exposition seminaries (bshad grwa), monastic educators continued to teach a small number of classical Indian Buddhist śāstras in their Tibetan translations as the curriculum.

Smith thus highlights two parallel developments: 1) the establishment of scriptural colleges—or exposition seminaries, as he calls them—with their unique pedagogical approach; and 2) the increased prominence of Indian treatises in the curricula of these colleges. gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba (1871–1927) played a major role in both developments, which situates them in the early years of the twentieth century.

However, the roots of a scholarly renaissance in Khams can readily be traced at least as far back as the monumental publication of the Tibetan canon at sDe-dge...

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62 See, for example, Samuel 1993: 538 and Viehbeck 2016: 27f. The bKa'-brgyud were not entirely excluded from these advances, and dPal-spungs was undoubtedly a hub of intellectual activity, not least during gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba’s tenure there. Still, the bKa'-brgyud-pa’s general distaste for intellectual pursuits made them a target of Mi-pham’s satire and censure: “Most followers of the bKa’-brgyud school dislike classical exposition and logic, preferring the approach that is based purely on mind and meditation. If they are those in whom realization and liberation are simultaneous, I take refuge! But, in general, this closed-minded attitude is harmful to the bKa’-brgyud teachings and must be abandoned!” (Grogs dang gleng ba’i rkyen las mitshar gnam du byas pa, MPr vol. 7: 231.4: bka’ brgyud pa phal cher bshad pa dang tshad ma la sdamig rgyang chig ded la dga’i rtogs grol dus mnyam manya ni skyabs su mchig spyir ni gti mug ’di bka’ bstan la ’tshe bas spang)

63 Smith 2001: 246. Although the scriptural colleges did not place such great emphasis on debate as did their dGe-lugs equivalents, debate was not necessarily neglected entirely. See Dreyfus 2005: 283. Cabezón 1994: 84 considers that “there is hardly a more curious fact in the history of Tibetan Buddhist scholasticism than this one: that from about the year 1700, once the monastic textbooks (yig cha) had been written, there is virtually no new commentarial literature in the dGe-lugs school of Tibetan Buddhism.” He also notes that from this time, for the dGe-lugs school, “debate came to replace commentary as the prevalent form of scholastic exegesis.” (Ibid.).
printing house. Conducted under the patronage of the ruler bsTan-pa tshe-ring (1678–1738), this project drew upon the editorial expertise of both Si-tu Pa-n-chen Chos-kyi-’byung-gnas (1700–1774) and Zhu-chen Tshul-khrims rin-chen (1697–1774). Of Si-tu, Smith said: “His influence on the following three or four generations was enormous; Kong sprul, Mkhyen brtse, Dpal sprul and Mi-pham were all in some way Si tu’s heirs.” Among the other significant intellectual figures of earlier times were Ka-h-thog Tshe-dbang-nor-bu (1698–1755) and ’Gyur-med mthu-stobs rnam-rgyal (1787–1854) of Zhe-chen. The latter was a Sanskritist and teacher to Kong-sprul, mKhyen-brtse’i dbang-po and dPal-sprul, but the story of his influence on these students is yet to be fully told.

Even if non-dGe lugs scholasticism did not develop ex nihilo in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Khams, it expanded greatly and in new ways. Two major developments are significant in the present context. Firstly, as Smith observed, there were increasing numbers of scriptural colleges, with their unique pedagogy. The second major development was curricular: not so much the emphasis on Indian śāstra, which was undeniably important, but the interpretation of these Indian treatises by Tibetan commentators. For this was a time when monastic educators also turned increasingly to the exegetical writings of iconic figures from their own traditions. For the rNying-ma, this meant Mi-pham, while for the Sa-skya, it meant above all Go-rams-pa bSod-nams seng-ge (1429–1489).

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64 On this project see Scheier-Dolberg 2005: 87–98 and Schaeffer 2009: 90–119.
65 Smith 2001: 90. This point is underscored in Jann Ronis’s recent study of Si-tu Pa-n-chen’s role as a monastic preceptor. See Ronis 2013: 72.
66 On his life see Richardson 1967.
67 Smith 2001: 20. The availability of an extensive biography (Zhe chen dbon sprul ’gyur med mthu stobs rnam rgyal gyi rnam thar, published in 2000) should facilitate this assessment, which is clearly a desideratum for scholars of nineteenth century Khams and its scholasticism.
68 It is equally important to note that rNyin-ma scholasticism did not begin ex nihilo in the nineteenth century. As the present chapter makes clear, writers such as Mi-pham repeatedly call attention to their own indebtedness to past scholars such as Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po and Klong-chen rab’byams. Other notable rNyin-ma authors of previous centuries include mNga’-ris Pan-chen Padma dbang-rgyal (1487–1542), Lo-chen Dharma-sri (1654–1717) and O-rgyan Chos-grags (b. 1676).
Together, these two factors contributed to “sectarian differentiation”—to adopt a phrase from Cabezón—69—or a strengthening of sectarian identity.

3.1. The Establishment of Scriptural Colleges

The first major rNying-ma scriptural college (bshad grwa) to emerge in the sDe-dge region was Śrī Śimha at rDzogs-chen, founded in 1848.70 rGyal-sras gZhan-phan mtha’-yas (1800–1855/1869)71 helped to establish Śrī Śimha, and, it seems, also drew up the curriculum. Although the precise content of that original curriculum is unknown, sources say that it included 'Jigs-med gling-pa’s Yon tan mdzod, mNga’-ris pan-chen’s sDom gsum rnam nges treatise on the three sets of vows, and the *Guhyagarbha Tantra.72 But the same sources do not speak of the “thirteen great texts” (gzhung chen bcu gsum),73 for which gZhan-phan Chos-kiy-snang-ba later

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70 Dreyfus 2005: 289.
71 See Smith 2001: 22–23 and Tulku Thondup 1996: 198–199. Since Thondup wrote this biography, more details on the life of this important figure have become available. See GZT Vol. 1: 1–24. There is some disagreement about the date of the death of gZhan-phan mtha’-yas. gZhan-phan snang-ba was identified as his incarnation, and his own efforts to establish a scriptural college at rDzong-gsar paralleled those of gZhan-phan mtha’-yas at rDzogs-chen more than half a century earlier. gZhan-phan mtha’-yas was clearly an influential figure and a major influence on rDza dpal-sprul among others. It is possible that his role in Kham’s nineteenth century renaissance is insufficiently acknowledged, at least in the secondary sources, but this also reflects a lamentable lack of biographical literature. Among gZhan-phan mtha’-yas’s available writings is a non-sectarian prayer to Tibet’s greatest religious figures, entitled Yul dam pa rnam la gsal ba ‑debs pa ‑i thigs bcad gzhan phan sgra dbyangs, which is similar to later compositions by mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po and Kong-sprul. The text’s identification of Atiśa as an “emanation of Padma[sambhava]” (gzhan phan sgra dbyangs 2a: padma’i rnam ‘phral jo bo a ti shil) echoes Zhabz-dkar Tshogs-drug rang-grol’s claim in O rgyan sprul pa ‑i glegs bsm that both Atiśa and Tsong-kha-pa were Padmasambhava’s emanations. See Ricard 2005: 26. gZhan-phan-mtha’-yas was assisted in the establishment of Śrī Śimha by Seng-phrug Padma bkra-shis (b.1798?), who became its first senior instructor (mkhan po).
73 I.e., 1) Prātimokṣa‑sūtra (so sor thar pa ‑i mdo); 2) Vinaya‑sūtra ( ‑dul ba ‑i mdo); 3) Abhidharmakosā (mngon pa mdzod); 4) Abhidharmasamuccaya (mngon pa kun btsus); 5) Mūlamadhyamaka‑kārikā (dbu ma rtsa ba shes rab); 6) Madhyamakāvatāra (dbu ma la ‑jug pa); 7) Catuhṣātaka (bzhi brgya pa); 8) Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra (byang chub sms pa ‑i spyod pa la ‑jug pa); 9) Abhisamayālāṃkāra (mngon rtags rgyan); 10) Mahāyānasūtra‑ālāṃkāra (mDo sde rgyan); 11) Madhyāntavibhāga (dbus mtha’i rnam ‑byed); 12) Dharmā‑dharmatā‑vibhāga (chos dang chos nyid rnam ‑byed); 13) Mahāyana‑uttaratantra (rgyud bla ma).
As I have pointed out elsewhere (Pearcey 2015a: 459 n.7), Dreyfus misidentifies the thirteen (Dreyfus 2003:130 & 2005:277 n.11) by excluding the Bodhicharyāvatāra and replacing it with the Pramāṇavārttika. It is worth noting that the Pramāṇavārttika does not appear in modern collections of the gzhung chen bcu gsum, nor did Zhan-phan Chos-kiy-snang-ba write a commentary upon it. It is
composed his famous interlinear commentaries (*mchan ’grel*). Dreyfus believes that the original purpose of Śrī Simha was not the study of major Indian treatises, but “the development of Nyingma monasticism in Kham.” While monasticism was undoubtedly a major concern, it obviously did not, in and of itself, preclude the simultaneous development of scholasticism.

More than half a century elapsed between the foundation of Śrī Simha and the period in which college building truly flourished in Khams and beyond. In order to learn what happened in the intervening years, we need to turn to what Smith called the dGe-mang Movement:

Gzhan phan mtha’ yas and his lineage of disciples became closely identified with Dge mang, a retreat in the Rdza chu kha area belonging to Rdzogs chen Monastery. It was here that Gzhan phan mtha’ yas’s reforms continued to prosper. From here they spread throughout Khams.

It is through this dGe-mang connection, then, that the tradition initiated by rGyal-sras gZhan-phan mtha’-yas eventually passed to his grand-nephew, O-rgyan bstan-’dzin nor-bu. The latter also studied extensively with the highly influential rDza dPal-sprul. And it is O-rgyan bstan-’dzin nor-bu who provides the connection between the first generation of teachers at Śrī Simha and gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang ba. Unfortunately, O-rgyan bstan-’dzin nor-bu’s writings are unavailable, so a full assessment of his views and explanatory style is not currently possible. It is thus unclear how Dreyfus could have made this error, as he cites (2005: 278 n. 14) Zur-mang rNam-rgyal’s guide to teaching the thirteen texts, *gZhung chen bcu gsam gvi ’chad thabs dang mtshan don ’grel pa blo gsal ngag gi rgyan* (although giving the title incorrectly), which opens with a list of the thirteen (1.1–1.3).

Unfortunately, I have not been able to consult Bayer 2000, because the author twice refused my request for a copy. As the only major study of gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba’s life and work, it may well answer this question.

Dreyfus 2005: 288.

Or at least college-inaugurating. Whether new buildings were created or existing buildings were put to a new purpose is often unclear, but is not relevant to what follows.

Smith 2001: 23. This movement, as Smith sees it, was characterized by “devotion to education and the sincere practice of monasticism.”

Ibid.

Smith (2001, 26) notes that he was a “grand-nephew” of gZhan-phan mtha’-yas, but some scholars incorrectly refer to him simply as a nephew. According to the biographical accounts, it was O-rgyan bstan-’dzin nor-bu’s father, bSod-nams dar-rgyas, who was the nephew.
difficult to gauge the extent of his influence on gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba.

From what little information is available, however, it does seem likely that gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba at least borrowed pedagogical elements from his teacher(s).\(^{80}\)

gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba was directly or indirectly responsible for the founding of multiple scriptural colleges. After he taught at rDzogs-chen Šrī Simha,\(^ {81}\) he went to dPal-spungs in 1910, where he helped to establish a scriptural college in collaboration with Si-tu Padma dbang-mchog (1886–1952).\(^ {82}\) He was then involved in the launch of Kham-by college at rDzong-gsar in 1918/19 and served as its first senior instructor.\(^ {83}\) Kham-by soon became a major hub of intellectual activity: it produced influential teachers, who, in turn, taught and established colleges elsewhere at other monasteries.\(^ {84}\) gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba himself founded several other bshad grwa, including Nyi-ma lcang-ra at ‘Bri-gung, as well as sKye-d[+/r]gu-mdo

\(^{80}\) See Jackson 1997: 141. The colophon to gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba’s mchan ‘grel on mNgon rtogs rgyan (KZG vol. 11, 273) also makes this indebtedness clear. There is reason to believe that O-rgyan bstan’-dzin nor-bu composed mchan ‘grel of his own. See, for example, mKhun po ngag chung gi rnam thar, 102, which refers to a mchan ‘grel by O-rgyan bstan’-dzin nor-bu on Candrakīrti’s Madhyamakāvatāra.

\(^{81}\) Dreyfus credits gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba with the “transformation” of Šrī Simha and “the creation of the commentarial school as we know it now, with its particular curriculum and pedagogical approach” (2005:289). This revolutionary role is not borne out, however, by the testimony of Ngag-dbang dpal-bzan (1871–1941), who records in his autobiography his experiences of studying at the college from the year 1900 onwards. He describes a vibrant and thriving intellectual scene involving a number of teachers even before gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba’s tenure. See mKhun po ngag chung gi rnam thar 99ff.


\(^{83}\) bsTan’-dzin lung-rtogs nyyi-ma (2004: 310) gives the western date as 1919 but gives the Tibetan date as the earth-horse year, which was 1918–9, so whether it was 1918 or 1919 depends on the month in which the inauguration took place. I have been unable to consult the detailed history of rDzong-gsar bshad-grwa (rDzong gsar kham-byi’ bshad grwa chen mo’i lo rgyus dang mkhan rabs kyi rtogs brjod) written by mKhun-po Kun-dga’ dbang-phug (1921/23–2008) and published in 1987, as it does not appear in the TBRC database. (Contrary to what is written in the entry in Martin 1997: 214, it would seem to be 89 not 600 pages in length.)

\(^{84}\) See Jackson 1997: 143 and Dreyfus 2005: 290.
and Me-nyag—no fewer than eighteen in total, according to the historian sMyoshul 'Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje (1931/2–1999).

Still, gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba was not solely responsible for the surge in college building at the beginning of the twentieth century. Among the major monasteries to open colleges without his assistance was Kah-thog, where the Nor-bu lhun-po bshad grwa opened in 1907 with Kun-bzang dpal-lidan (1872–1943) as its first teacher. dPal-yul college dates from 1922, when the influential rDzogs-chen commentator Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang (1879–1941) began to teach there. Zhe-chen, another of the six major rNying-ma monasteries, was relatively late in establishing its college; although the precise date is unclear, Zhe-chen Kong-sprul Padma drimed (1901–1960) oversaw its inauguration and invited Bod-pa sprul-sku mDo-sngags bstan-pa’i nyi-ma (1898–1959) to teach. These rank among the largest, but they were by no means the only colleges to spring up in Khams during this period. bsTan-’dzin lung-rtogs nyi-ma’s sNga ’gyur rdzogs chen chos ’byung chen mo lists other minor institutions and offers a brief account of their history. Moreover, monk-scholars graduating in Eastern Tibet travelled throughout Tibet and even further afield in the Himalayan region where some established institutions modelled

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85 rDzogs chen chos ’byung vol. 2, 198a.3 (395)
86 Ibid. 198a.4
87 Kun-bzang dpal-lidan is known, above all, for his commentary on Bodhicaryāvatāra, which preserves the teaching style of rDza dPal-sprul, and his biography of Mi-pham. He also wrote a commentary on Mi-pham’s Nges shes sgron me.
88 bsTan-’dzin lung-rtogs nyi-ma 2004: 313. Smith 2001: 13–31 discusses the life and work of Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang as an introduction to his autobiography. See also mKhman po ngag chung gi rnam thar. The biography has also been translated into English in Nevin and Leschly (trans.) 2013.
89 The standard list of six is 1) rDo-rje-brag, 2) sMin-grol-gling, 3) rDzogs-chen, 4) Zhe-chen, 5) Kah-thog, 6) dPal-yul. (See Smith 2001: 17)
90 bsTan-’dzin lung-rtogs nyi-ma 2004: 314
on their almae matres. Khams’s educational reform was thus (quite literally) far-reaching.

3.2 Reliance on Iconic Figures

Changes in monastic education transformed notions of sectarian identity in the non-dGe-lugs schools, especially the rNying-ma. Many colleges drew on the commentarial works of their school’s foremost scholars: Mi-pham’s writings among the rNying-ma and Go-rams-pa bSod-nams seng-ge’s among the Sa-skya. These writers articulated what became orthodox positions, creating a corresponding concept of heterodoxy—or at least unorthodoxy—that encompassed many tenets of dGe-lugs doctrine. Students from non-dGe-lugs schools thus acquired the means to challenge their dGe-lugs opponents, both in writing and in oral debate, and there is evidence that they did so. Before we turn to those debates, however, let us briefly consider the status and influence of these two major thinkers.

3.2.1 rNying-ma and Mi-pham

As a monk-scholar, Mi-pham was not a typical rNying-ma hierarch. The archetypal preceptor of the rNying-ma school was its supposed founder Padmasambhava/Padmākara (padma 'byung gnas). This semi-legendary figure is generally portrayed as a powerful tantric guru, an adept (siddha) and thaumaturge. Iconographically, Padmasambhava resembles a typical Indian siddha but with the addition of royal insignia. His representation thus reflects the traditional rNying-ma focus on tantric ritual performance. Exoteric (i.e., non-tantric) scholasticism of the

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92 One such graduate was dBon-stod ’Jam-dbyangs mkhyen-rab (b. 1889), gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba’s successor at rDzong-gsar. He later founded a college at dBon-stod.

93 Of the eight forms or “names” of Guru Padmasambhava (gu ru mtshan brgyad), only one (known, rather confusingly, as Guru Padmasambhava) is shown in the guise of a paṇḍita.

94 In later traditions, his hat is described as a gift of the king of Zahor. His silken robes and vajra sceptre also betoken regal status. In addition, his seated posture is often described in later gter ma literature as that of “kingly exuberance” (rgyal po rol pa’i stabs).
kind that became increasingly popular in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was not a prominent feature of early rNying-ma identity. There is little evidence of widespread training in debate, for example.\textsuperscript{95} Even textual composition, another of the three normative activities of a scholar (i.e., ‘chad rtsod rtsom gsum), was predominantly concerned with the esoteric or tantric realm. There were exceptions, of course, such as mNga’-ris pañ-chen Padma-dbang-rgyal’s (1487–1542) sDom gsum rnam nges treatise on the three sets of vows, which includes the prātimokṣa and bodhisattva vows in addition to the tantric commitments (samaya).\textsuperscript{96} But the school’s more prominent figures, in particular those who appear in bDud-’joms ’Jigs-bral-ye-shes rdo-rje’s history, tended to be tantric adepts and/or treasure-revealers (gter ston).\textsuperscript{97} Beginning with dPal-sprul, Mi-pham and their contemporaries, however, this began to change: rNying-ma teachers started to compose commentaries on key Indian (and especially Madhyamaka) śāstras for the first time.\textsuperscript{98}

Mi-pham, in particular, was so prolific and influential in his commentarial writing that he almost single-handedly transformed rNying-ma scholasticism. Beginning with his first major commentary—on the Madhyamakālaṃkāra—in 1876,\textsuperscript{99} he introduced what became the distinctive rNying-ma approach to Madhyamaka philosophy. His Nor bu Keṭaka commentary on the ninth chapter of

\textsuperscript{95} Even the scriptural colleges placed less emphasis on debate in their curricula than the dGe-lugs institutes. See Dreyfus 2003a: 132–137.

\textsuperscript{96} The text is now a feature of the curricular at rNying-ma colleges, such as at rNam-grol-gling, for example. See Dreyfus 2005: 278; Pearcey 2015a: 456.

\textsuperscript{97} See Dorje & Kapstein 1991: 743ff.

\textsuperscript{98} Smith 2001: 231 makes this point in relation to Mi-pham. See Viehbeck 2016: 10 for a discussion of how dPal-sprul was the first rNying-ma commentator on the Bodhicaryāvatāra. See also Chapter Four below.

the Bodhicaryāvatāra, followed some two years later. Despite initial controversy (discussed below), the views set out in these and later works came to define rNying-ma orthodoxy. Largely as a result of such works, Mi-pham gained a reputation as a great scholar (mahāpaṇḍita) and emanation of Mañjuśrī. He became known as 'Jam mgon Mi-pham, and was represented iconographically as a monk-scholar holding a volume of Prajñāpāramitā as well as, at least in some images, Mañjuśrī’s sword of wisdom. He thus became—both iconographically and iconically—the rNying-ma-pa equivalent of Tsong-kha-pa for the dGe-lugs and Go-rams-pa bSod-nams seng-ge for the Sa-skya.

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101 The title of mahāpaṇḍita also acknowledges mastery of other branches of learning, specifically the five major and five minor sciences. The former five are often listed as: 1) crafts (śilpa; bzo rig pa); 2) logic (hetu; gtan tshigs); 3) Sanskrit grammar (sabda; sgra); medicine or healing (cikitsā; gso ba); 5) the ‘inner science’ or Dharma (nang don rig pa); and the latter five as: 1) poetic synonyms (abhidhāna; mgon brjod); 2) astrology (jyotisa; skar rtshis); 3) performance or drama (nāṭaka; zlos gar); 4) poetry (kāya; snyan ngag); 5) prosody (chandras; sde bshor).

102 Samuel (1993: 538) sees the prevalence of such epithets among “Rimed masters” and the fact that such masters as ‘Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po, ‘Jam-mgon Kong-sprul, mChog-gyur gling-pa and Mi-pham were considered emanations of Mañjuśrī as implying that Ris-med “involved a renewal of the academic and intellectual tradition within the non-Gelugpa schools.” The mention of mChog-gyur gling-pa here is not without problems; although he was indeed identified with Mañjuśrī, he played little or no role in the revival of scholasticism. Yet even the other figures Samuel mentions were not—with the exception of Mi-pham—directly involved in this development. The increase in popularity of Mañjuśrī during this period is undoubtedly a related phenomenon, but it is also a complex one, which lies beyond the scope of the present study. Nonetheless, I briefly touch on the category of rDzogs-chen literature associated with Mañjuśrī (known as ‘Jam-dpal rdzogs-pa chen-po) in the next chapter.

103 The painting from murals at Zhe-chen monastery in Nepal, reproduced on the cover of Pettit 1999, shows Mi-pham cradling a volume in his left hand while his right hand is in the gesture of blessing/teaching (with the thumb and index finger touching).

104 There is a great similarity between the standard images of these figures in art, as emanations of Mañjuśrī—greater in fact than there is between the three figures labelled the “Three Mañjugho rens of Tibet” (’jam dbyangs rnam gsum), that is Sa-skya Panḍita Kun-dga’-rgyal-mlshan (1182–1251), Klong-chong rab-byams (1308–1364) and Tsong-kha-pa blo-bzang grags-pa. It seems to have been rDza dpal-sprul who first proposed the latter grouping, but others, such as Kun-bzang dpal-ldan and ‘Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-khyi-blo-gros also adopted it. Indeed, mKhyen-brtse Chos-khyi-blo-gros composed a short guru yoga rite focusing on the trio: Gangs can ’jam dbyangs rnam gsum gyi bla ma’i rnal ’byor mKhyen brtse nus mthu’i char ’bebs (JCLb vol. 4: 143–149). Sa-skya Panḍita Kun-dga’-rgyal-mlshan undoubtedly occupies a comparable position to Tsong-kha-pa in his stature as a scholar but the fact that he composed no commentaries on the standard Mahāyāna treatises that feature in the curricula of Sa-skya colleges means that there at least he is less prominent than Go-rams-pa. Moreover, Sa-skya Panḍita is typically depicted in works of art not as an emanation of Mañjuśrī but in the guise of an Indian paṇḍita.
3.2.2. Sa-skya and Go-rams-pa

In Sa-skya colleges even today, the commentaries of Go-rams-pa bSod-nams seng-ge provide the standard interpretations of the most important Indian treatises.\(^{105}\) His writings are now widely available, but were at one time restricted, along with many other texts deemed critical of, or at odds with, dGe-lugs orthodoxy. The government of dGa’-ldan pho-brang effectively banned their printing and distribution, especially in dBus and gTsang, during the reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama. According to Smith, such controls prevented the widespread study of Go-rams-pa’s works and thereby contributed to a decline in Sa-skya scholarship.\(^ {106}\)

When his treatises were eventually printed at sDe-dge in the early twentieth century (1906 to 1910) this inspired an educational revival.\(^ {107}\) David Jackson identifies mKhan-po ’Jam-dbyangs rgyal-mtshan (1870–1940) as the head of the printing project.\(^ {108}\) Another senior Sa-skya figure, Blo-gter dbang-po (1847–1914),\(^ {109}\) assisted. Both responded to an original instruction from gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang ba.\(^ {110}\)

Go-rams-pa’s writings (and other scholarly Sa-skya works) exacerbated anti-dGe-lugs sentiment around sDe-dge. A-mdo dge-bshes ’Jam-dpal rol-ba’i blo-gros (1888–1936) expressed concern about such hostility in the mid-1920s, citing specifically the writings of Go-rams-pa, Shākya mchog-ldan (1428–1507) and sTag-tshang lo-tshā-ba Shes-rab rin-chen (b.1405).\(^ {111}\) In a letter addressed to the monks of

\[^{105}\text{See Cabezón and Dargyay 2007: 41.}\]
\[^{106}\text{Smith 2004: 192.}\]
\[^{107}\text{Jackson 2003: 57–58.}\]
\[^{108}\text{On the life of ’Jam-dbyangs rgyal-mtshan see Jackson 2003: 54–60.}\]
\[^{109}\text{On the life of Blo-gter dbang-po see Dhongthog Rinpoche 2016: 190–201.}\]
\[^{110}\text{Jackson 2003: 58.}\]
\[^{111}\text{The inclusion of Shākya mchog-ldan and sTag-tshang lo-tshā-ba Shes-rab rin-chen in this list (which derives from the colophon to the open letter by A-mdo dge-bshes ’Jam-dpal rol-ba’i blo-gros) is curious. As Smith (2004: 190) makes clear, the works of both figures were restricted even in manuscript form following the decrees of the dGa’-ldan pho-brang. Smith notes that some works by}\]

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sDe-dge dgon-chen,112 ‘Jam-dpal rol-ba’i blo-gros writes: “These days, there are many who are biased against elements of the precious teaching of the Victorious One, and many who refute the precious doctrine of the noble dharma-king, the great Tsong-kha-pa.”113 This he attributes to “people taking as definitive (nges don) the comments in the polemical texts (dgag yig) of Go-[rams-pa], Shākya [mchog-Idan] and sTag-[tshang lo-tshā-ba].”114 In response to requests to intervene, he “sends out this letter inviting debate, in the manner described in the sacred Dharma of the Vinaya.”115 The available histories do not say whether anyone responded to his challenge. In any case, ‘Jam-dpal rol-ba’i blo-gros secured the patronage of the sDe-dge king, A-ja rdo-rje seng-ge (1877–1926), and, with his support, published the collected writings of Tsong-kha-pa at sDe-dge printing house.116

As late as 1940, the dGe-lugs teacher, Pha-bong-kha[-pa] bDe-chen snying-po (1878–1941) criticised the publication of Go-rams-pa’s works. In a message to a Chinese disciple, he refers to Go-rams-pa’s “mass of faulty compositions” (nyes

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sTag-tshang lo-tshā-ba Shes-rab rin-chen were printed in sDe-dge, together with other writings by major Sa-skya figures (ibid., 192). A set of the writings of Shākya mchog-Idan was preserved in Bhutan (from which an edition was published in 1975). The author of the preface to the 1975 edition (SC vol. 1) writes, “The works of Gser-mdog Pan-chen were for many centuries suppressed in Tibet along with the gsung ’bum of Tāranātha and [a] number of other scholars who are no more than names today. The present fame of Tāranātha results from the unsealing of the Rtag-brtan Phun-tshogs-glön printer in the last half of the last century through the efforts of Blo-gsal-bstan-skyoṅ. The writings of Śākya-mchog-Idan, however, had no such reviver in Tibet, and have consequently remained unknown.” They were clearly not entirely unknown when A-mdo dge-bshes ‘Jam-dpal rol-ba’i-blo-gros was writing.

112 i.e., Lugs gnyis kyi mdun sa chen po sde dge lhun grub steng nas phyogs kyi mhxas pa nnams la spring ba rtso pa’i skabs rnams par dbyar ba’i yi ge yang dag rigs pa’i pho nya (AG vol., 1, 119–126). The text is translated in Pearcey 2018. Unfortunately, there is no date in the colophon of ‘Jam-dpal rol-ba’i blo-gros’s letter. The biography by bDe-legs rab-rgyas (AG vol. 1: 7-8) mentions the episode and the printing of Tsong kha pa’s collected works before discussing an event that occurred in the fire-hare year (1927). If A-ja rdo-rje seng-ge was the patron for the printing of Tsong-kha-pa’s works this puts the terminus ante quem for the project at 1926, the year of his death.

113 AG vol. 1, 125f.: deng sang rgyal bstan rin po che ris su gcod pa ches mang zhiṅg khyad par du rje btsun chos kyi rgyal po tsong kha pa chen po’i bstan pa rin chen dag pa’i ’di spring ba yin…

114 AG vol. 1, 126: khyad par du khams gsum chos kyi rgyal po tsong kha pa chen po’i gzhung lugs rams ni nyes bshad kho nar ’dug pa’i gsum ni gsum gyi dag dag yig ltar du nges don la gnas shing!

115 AG vol. 1, 126: dam pa’i chos ’dul ba nas bshad pa ltar rtso pa’i skabs mam par dbyar ba’i zhu yig ’di spring ba yin…

116 AG vol. 1: 7–8.
A lama from sDe-dge called ‘Jam-dbyangs,” he writes, “made efforts to gather a set of original manuscripts (ma dpe) and had them carved on printing blocks.” Rather scornfully, he notes that reading transmissions and teachings were granted without any continuous, uninterrupted lineage. His comments clearly testify to the significance of the publication of Go-rams-pa’s works for Sa-skya scholarship and the challenge they posed to dGe-lugs dominance.

Evidently, then, Sa-skya education received a fillip from both the creation of scriptural colleges and the reprinting of previously banned works. Even though these projects were initiated and supported by figures linked to the Ris-med Movement, most notably gZhan-phan Chos-kyi snang-ba, they may have contributed to inter-sectarian tension. Similar strains on relations sprang from Mi-pham’s writings, so much so that some scholars even question his inclusion within the Ris-med fold.

3.3. Mi-pham & the Ris-med Movement

Mi-pham championed the cause of rNying-ma scholasticism to such a great extent that his identification as a Ris-med figure is difficult to justify. Undoubtedly, he studied with acknowledged Ris-med luminaries including mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po and dPal-sprul. Yet, his own philosophical writings are overwhelmingly concerned with rNying-ma doctrine. As Phuntsho notes:

117 mDo sngags skor gvi dris lan sna tshogs phyogs gcig tu bsgrigs pa vol. 6: 37a
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid.: phyis su sde dge’i bla ma ’jam dbyangs rgyal mshan zhes pas ma dpe rtsol bas bs dus te spar du brk os
120 Ibid.: lung rgyun med bzhin du lung byas| khrid rgyun med bzhin du khrid byas
121 The first to connect Mi-pham with the movement was Gene Smith (2001, 272). He called Mi-pham “the greatest name in the nonsectarian movement at the turn of the [twentieth] century.” Dreyfus (2003b, 317) said that Mi-pham was “influenced by the eclectic or ecumenical (Ris-med) movement in which his work takes place.” There are many other examples.
122 There are several notable exceptions, such as his commentary on lCang-skya Rol-pa’i rdo-rje’s song lTa ba’i gsung mgur zab mo (MPP vol. 4: 826.6–866.3).
Notwithstanding the common assumption that he was an advocate of the ecumenical movement (Ris med pa) which his teachers initiated, Mipham was a staunch proponent of rNying ma doctrine, and repeatedly refuted other schools igniting new doctrinal controversies. It still remains a perplexing question whether Mipham was a Ris med pa in the same way as Kong sprul and dPal sprul.\textsuperscript{123}

Perhaps the question here hinges on how ris-med is defined. For mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po and Kong-sprul, ris-med embraced the principle that all valid means to enlightenment should be preserved. They (but especially mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po) might, therefore, have viewed the creation—or recreation, as Mi-pham presented it\textsuperscript{124}—of an exoteric scholastic tradition within the rNying-ma school as just such a work of preservation. As already noted above, it was mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po who initially encouraged Mi-pham to compose his famous treatises. Pettit writes:

The ostensible reason underlying much of Mipham’s writing on both sūtra and tantra was the command of his teacher ’Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse’i dbang po to write “textbooks for our tradition” (rang lugs kyi yig cha)—the distinctive feature of which is the Great Perfection system.\textsuperscript{125}

The fact that it was mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po who asked Mi-pham to compose his commentaries is also made clear in the colophons to some of the texts themselves.\textsuperscript{126} Evidence also exists in a letter Mi-pham wrote to mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po’s treasurer (phyag mdzod), Tshe-ring bkra-shis, when dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad was printed.\textsuperscript{127} Possibly, mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po believed that

\textsuperscript{123} Phuntsho 2007: 193.

\textsuperscript{124} With typical conservativism, Mi-pham would present this not so much as an innovation, but as the recovery of an earlier tradition. Yet while he did indeed rely on the work of earlier scholars such as Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po (1012–1088) and Klong-chen rab-byams, and even borrowed from Go-rams-pa, Mi-pham was unquestionably innovative too.

\textsuperscript{125} Pettit 1999: 99. The phrase “rang lugs kyi yig cha” is taken from a statement by Mi-pham himself that is included in the biography by Kun-bzang dpal-ldan (ibid, 26).

\textsuperscript{126} E.g. for the dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad, MPc vol. 13: 739.6–740.1 and gSang ’grel phyogs bcu’i mun sel gvi spyi don ‘od gsal snying po, MPc vol. 23: 318.5–319.2. The former says that mKhyen-brtse’i dbang-po provided the “textbooks of the Indian and Tibetan commentaries” (rgya bod kyi ’grel pa’i yig cha rnam) on the Madhyamakālāṃkāra and asked Mi-pham to “study them precisely” (zhib tu ltos) and compose a commentary of his own. This request was followed by another appeal from someone named Padma, belonging to the “great tradition of the EarlyTranslations (snga ’gyur).”

\textsuperscript{127} I.e., dBu ma rgyan ’grel ’bru bcos skabs ’jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse’i phyag mdzod tshe ring bkra shis la springs pa’i yi ge. MPc vol. 2: 687–688. This letter does not specify that the text was written at
rNying-ma monasteries were too reliant on other traditions, especially the dGe-lugs, at least for their exoteric studies. Some monasteries—rDo-grub among them—used dGe-lugs textbooks for their own non-tantric curriculum. Perhaps not coincidentally, rDo-grub’s resident teachers were among the first to criticize Mi-pham’s commentaries.

The controversy surrounding Mi-pham’s literary output makes it difficult to reconcile his role with non-sectarianism—at least insofar as the term is commonly understood. Phuntsho says he finds it “bewildering” that mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po “encouraged and often instigated Mipham to write treatises that provoked his opponents into composing refutations.” Of course, it is possible that neither mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po nor Mi-pham anticipated the level of controversy that the treatises would incite.

Douglas Duckworth characterises Mi-pham’s non-sectarianism as “complex”. He claims that Mi-pham’s critical engagement with dGe-lugs doctrine provides the key to his particular brand of Ris-med. Specifically, Duckworth contrasts Mi-pham’s approach with what he identifies as four alternative responses to dGe-lugs dominance: 1) a hostile attitude, which is characteristic of Go.rams-pa; 2) a more submissive attitude to dGe-lugs authority especially on exoteric matters, which Duckworth considers to be a feature of the tradition at rDo-grub monastery; 3) a more dismissive attitude of focusing exclusively on one’s own tradition, as it is found, for example, in the writings of Padma badzra (c.1807–1884); and 4) willed

mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po’s behest but does attribute the success of the project to “the guru’s kindness alone” (bla ma’i bka’ drin kho na). Of course, the mere fact that Mi-pham wrote such a letter to Tshe-ring bkra-shis is a clue to mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po’s involvement.


Duckworth 2008: xxii.

On the life of mKhan-po Padma badzra see Pearcey 2012b. Confusion over the dates of this important figure, specifically the use of the erroneous dates 1867–1934 (as in Duckworth 2008: 197 n. 54) would appear to stem from conflation with the similarly named sPrul-sku Padma rdo-rje, who was ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s half-brother.
or forced conversion. I discuss the second of these four responses in detail below.

Duckworth argues that Mi-pham engaged with dGe-lugs doctrine in a unique way by challenging its tenets yet avoiding outright hostility.

Markus Viehbeck sees evidence of Mi-pham’s non-sectarianism in a short satirical work playfully addressing the supposed faults of each of the four main Tibetan Buddhist schools. It is true that *Gros dang gtam gleng ba’i rkyen las mtshar gtam* expresses what Viehbeck calls a “general tolerance and equanimity towards the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism.” It includes, for example, an account of what the schools have in common, such as their shared views and tenets.

Mi-pham wrote another short text on the same subject, dated to the fire-monkey year (1896). This second work displays a similar attitude of tolerance, acknowledging, as it does, the ultimate validity of all four schools. In its final verse, Mi-pham calls on the followers of all schools to avoid mutual hostility:

So, like children of the same father and same mother,
Cultivate mutual accord, devotion, and pure perception,
And, while focusing on your own tradition, avoid berating others.
If you act in this way you will also be of service to the teachings.

This advice might well represent Mi-pham’s own approach to non-sectarianism (especially as Duckworth defines it): immersed in his own tradition, he is unafraid to criticise others (within the established bounds of scholarly debate) while avoiding outright hostility. We must bear in mind, however, that he wrote

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132 Viehbeck 2012: 50.
133 MPc vol. 7: 229.1–233.2. For a translation see Pearcey 2018. Kapstein 2013 offers a slightly abridged translation.
134 *Bod yul chos lugs rnam pa bzhis*. MPc. vol. 32: 410.1–410.6. This text is also translated in Pearcey 2018.
135 MPc. vol. 32, 410.5f.: pha gceg ma gceg bu tsha ji bzhin du phan tshun thugs mthun mos gus dag snang sgoms rang lugs gtosor bzun gzhana la gshe ba spong de hbar mdzad na bstan zhabz ‘dir yang legs (The third line is ambiguous and could also be read as: Avoid regarding your own tradition as the foremost and berating others.)
these words after he had already been involved in several high-profile disputes, one of which involved ‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags rgya-mtsho (1824–1902).

3.4 ‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags and the Opposition to Mi-pham

‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags rgya-mtsho is undoubtedly a figure of some importance in the history of nineteenth-century eastern Tibet. Unfortunately, we know little about his life and work. He was a follower of both Zhab-dkar Tshogs-drug rang-grol (1781-1851) and rDza dpal-sprul. Kun-bzang dpal-ldan records, in his biography of Mi-pham, that ‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags criticised Mi-pham’s Nor bu ke ta ka commentary on the ninth chapter of the Bodhicaryāvatāra. This led to a debate, overseen by the pair’s shared teacher, dpal-sprul. It was a contest which, by all accounts, Mi-pham won. In Kun-bzang dpal-ldan’s words:

On one occasion, ‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags, a great scholar of the New Traditions, expressed the opinion that there were some invalid arguments in Mi-pham’s commentary on the prajñā chapter [i.e., ninth] of the Bodhicaryāvatāra. The foremost of learned, disciplined and accomplished masters, dpal-sprul Rin-po-che, was engaged to judge, and the debate continued for several days. Most spectators

136 He is also known as A-lags mDo-sngags or ‘Ja’-pa A-lags. A brief sketch of his life is found in Thub dbang 1991: 142–143. This account, which gives his dates as 1824–1902, was the principal source for the biography I wrote for the Treasury of Lives website (Pearcey 2014a).
137 On the life of Zhab-dkar Tshogs-drug rang-grol see Ricard 1994. His synthesis of dGe-lugs teachings and rDzo-gschen is sometimes described as Ris-med avant la lettre. In his life and writings, he represents another notable exception to Samuel’s dCie-lugs-pa ‘cleric’/Ris-med ‘shaman’ dichotomy. It was apparently ‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags rgya-mtsho who, sometime around 1851, first told dpal-sprul about Zhab-dkar. Although dpal-sprul then made plans to go and meet him, he heard on the way that Zhab-dkar had already died. See Thondup 1996: 203. For a recent assessment of Zhab-dkar Tshogs-drug rang-grol’s work and non-sectarianism see Pang 2014 and 2015. The fact that mDo-sngags rgya-mtsho was a student of Zhab-dkar is confirmed in the prayer for swift rebirth (myur byon gsol ‘debs) that dpal-sprul wrote shortly after Zhab-dkar’s death (see PS vol. 8: 82).
138 MPc vol. 9: 572.2.
139 Although we do not have a date for this debate, it must have taken place between 1878 and 1887—the terminus post quem being the year in which Mi-pham’s commentary to the ninth chapter of the Bodhicaryāvatāra was completed, and the terminus ante quem being the year dpal-sprul died. Schuh (1973: xxxi) dates the debate to between 1878 and 1880.
140 gsar phyogs la mkhas pa. In bDud-’joms Rin-po-che’s rNying machos ’byung (705: 3) he is referred to as “gsar phyogs kyi mkhas pa chen po.” The translators include a note from Tulkhu Thondup specifying that although ‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags was learned in gSar-ma doctrine, he was himself a rNyin-ma-pa. (Dudjom Rinpoche 1991 vol. 2: 86 n.1215.) In a private interview (7 October 2014), Tulkhu Thondup explained that ‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags rgya-mtsho’s tribal group, the dbang-ma, followed the Kah-thog lineage of the rNyin-ma school. In his own study and practice, however, ‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags rgya-mtsho was likely an adherent of both dGe-lugs and rNyin-ma traditions, thus raising the question of what it means in this context to ‘belong to’ or follow a particular school/tradition.
could only say which arguments were in accord with their own opinions; they could not tell who had won and who had lost. When Bla-ma Rig-mchog asked dPal-sprul Rin-po-che which of the pair was the winner, he said, “I don’t know if I can be the one to decide this, or whether I can put an end to it. It is rather like the saying, ‘It is not for a father to praise his son, but for his enemies. It is not for a mother to praise her daughter, but for the community.’” mDo-sngags’s monks told me that early in the debate they clearly saw a ray of light emanate from the heart of Lama Mi-pham’s image of Mahājñāpīghoṣa, the representation of his chosen deity, and connect with thelama’s heart. That really says it all.”

The precise nature of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* disagreement is unknown. None of ‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags’s own writings survive. Aside from this brief account, we have only the comments in Mi-pham’s *gNyug sems skor gsum*. In the first text of that trilogy, Mi-pham refutes what he claims to be ‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags’s position:

> These days, ‘Gya-ba [sic] mDo-sngags clings to others’ claims that the so-called “fundamental mind” (*gnyug sems*), which occurs at the stage of clear light when cultivating mental isolation (*sems dben*) from among the five stages of the *Guhyasamāja* in the dGe-lugs system, is subtle mind (*phra yid*). He asserts that the pure awareness (*rig pa*) that is pointed out in the Great Perfection is also subtle mind. As this subtle mind is conditioned, arising from four conditions, there are those who also claim that the Great Perfection must also be conditioned. Such statements are utterly inappropriate.

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141 ‘Ju Mi-pham gyi rnam thar: 22.16f.: de bzhin du gsar phyogs la mkhas pa chen po ‘ja’ pa ndo sngags kyis spyod ‘jug sher le’i ‘grel pa la mi ’thad pa’i cha brjod pa la’ gangs khrdod mkhas btsun grub pa’i khyu mchog dpal sprul rin po che dpang por bzhag nas zhaṅ du mar bgro gleng gnang ba’i tshe’i phal gyis rang rang gi ‘dod phyogs dang mthun pa’i gtam smra ba tsam las rgyal pham ma ’byed tshe’i bla ma rig mchog nas dpal sprul rin po cher de gnyis gang rgyal rzhul par ni rjes geod mi shes’i tshar geod mi shes’i ’jig rten gyi kha dper bu phas mi bstdod gbras bstod bu mos mas mi bstdod gnas kyi bstod zer ba’i dpe ltar mdo sngags kyi grwa pa mams kyi nga la tshod pa snga ma’i dus bla ma mi pham gyi thugs dam ten ’jam dpal dbyangs kyi sku de’i thugs ka na’i ’od zhig ’byung ste bla ma’i thugs kar’i brel ‘dug pa gsal bar mthong zer bas de’i nang du don’i ’dus ‘dug gsungs|  

142 Kun-bzang dpal-lidan refers to a commentary on rDzogs-chen, which is presumably the same text that some claim was burnt at the end of the debate: At that time, too, dPal-sprul Rin-po-che issued the following instruction, “’Ja’-pa mDo-sngags has written a commentary on [the line]: ‘The Great Perfection, which is characterized by a total embodiment (*spyi gzas*) of wisdom (*ye shes*).’ It seems that some consider it to be refutable and others provable. Therefore, discuss it.” (*Ju mi pham gyi rnam thar*): skabs der yang dpal sprul rin po ches mdo sngags kyis rdzogs pa chen po ye shes spiyi gzas zhès par ’grel pa bris ‘dug pa la la las sgag pa dang la las sgrub par go bas ’di thad nas kyang bgro gleng re mzdod ces bka’ pheds pa bzhin mzdod pas) as noted in Karmay 1988: 141, the phrase “rdzogs pa chen po ye shes spiyi gzas can” occurs in the ‘Jam dpal zhal lung of Buddhaśāriṇīpānapāda’ and was cited by ’Gos lo-tsā-ba gZhon-nu dpal in defence of rDzogs-chen against charges that the term rDzogs-chen was unknown in works of gSar-ma origin. On the correct interpretation of the phrase see Wangchuk 2012: 22.

143 E.g. *gNyug sems* ’od gsal gyi don rgyal ba rig ’dzin brag yud pa’i lung bzhin brjod pa rdo rje snying po (MPc vol. 24: 29). On the trilogy see Mi-pham-gya-tso 2006. These works were not completed during Mi-pham’s lifetime, but compiled by his student, Zhe-chen rgyal-tshab.

144 *gNyug sems* II: 288 and MPc vol. 24: 29.3f.: deng sang ’gya ba [sic] mdo sngags pas dge phyogs pa’i gsal ’dus rim inga’i sems dben sgom pa’i ’od gsal gyis skabs su gnyug sems zhes pa phra yid yin zhes gzhan gyi zer sgros la ’jus nas de las btsam ste rdzogs chen gyi rig pa ngo spro dgyu de phra ba’i yid yin phra ba’i yid de rkyen bzhis las skyes pa’i ’dus byas yin pas rdzogs chen ’dus byas yin no zer ba’i rjes brjod kyang byed mkhan ’dug pa ’di ni shin tu mi ’os pa’i tshig yin ste|
Here, Mi-pham contends that 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags was misled by the dGe-lugs interpretation of the Guhyasamāja Tantra. In his attempt to find parallels between the Guhyasamāja and the Great Perfection, 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags violates one of the fundamental tenets of rDzogs-chen: that pure awareness (rig pa) is unconditioned (’dus ma byas). I examine this stance in more detail later in this study. Let it suffice to say here that comparison of rDzogs-chen and Highest Yoga Tantra did not end with 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags.

'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags’s influence is better documented than the nature of his assertions. Biographical accounts show, for example, that he was a teacher to the four seminary masters of rDo-grub (rdo grub mkhan po rnam bzhi).

1. mGar-ba mkhan-po Thub-bstan rig-'dzin bzang-po (d.1926)

145 Mi-pham considered it especially important to refute any suggestion that the pure awareness (rig pa) of rDzogs-chen could be conditioned. He even claimed that this was a concern shared by his teacher, ‘Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po:

My lama, ‘Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse’i dbang-po, said, “The single statement ‘rDzogs-chen is conditioned’ violates all the crucial points of rDzogs-chen’s ground, path and fruition.” As this illustrates, such statements are displeasing to the minds of the holy ones, but these days there are those who do not apply even the slightest analysis to determine whether what they say accords with the key points of the rNying-ma teachings or not, and whatever comes out of their mouths is taken to be Dharma. This is a sign of having arrived at the end of the period in which there is a mere reflection of the teachings, and the heart teachings of Samantabhadra will not remain for much longer.

146 I borrow this translation of mkhan po from David Jackson (1997: 140) because the common translation of ’abbot’ does not work in the present context. The four were teachers, not necessarily heads of the monastery.

147 Thub-dbang 1991: 143, Klein 2000: 559. In this context the Tibetan mkhan po (Skt. upādhyāya) does not signify an abbot who is the head of a monastery, but both a preceptor who can preside over an ordination ceremony and a senior teacher or professor, roughly equivalent to the title dge bshes in the dGe-lugs.

148 Tulku Thondup (1996: 249–50) notes that mGar-ba mkhan-po was the closest of the four khenpos to ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma and that he died just a few months before him. Note that there is sometimes confusion in the secondary sources between Thub-bstan rig-'dzin bzang-po and his
2. Ser-shul mkhan-po Ngag-dbang kun-dga’ grags-pa\textsuperscript{149}

3. A-myes mkhan-po Dam-chos byams-pa ’od-zer (d.1927?)

4. Klu-shul mkhan-po Blo-bzang kun-khyab, alias dKon-mchog sgron-me, (1859–1936)\textsuperscript{150}

It is unclear what ‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags taught at rDo-grub Monastery. But we know that one of his students, mKhan-po Dam-chos ’od-zer, opposed Mi-pham’s ideas. Dam-chos ’od-zer took issue with Mi-pham’s commentary on the \textit{Madhyamakālāṃkāra}, i.e., ‘Jam dbyangs bla ma dgyes pa’i zhal lung.\textsuperscript{151} Mi-pham’s response, articulated in his \textit{Dam chos dogs sel}, survives.\textsuperscript{152} As Phuntsho notes, this rejoinder is unique among Mi-pham’s polemical writings in that it is addressed to a fellow rNying-ma-pa. Dam-chos ’od-zer apparently requested the text, another feature that makes it atypical. “Strangely,” writes Phuntsho, the author “makes more impolite and sarcastic remarks here than in his two other replies.”\textsuperscript{153} Mi-pham might have found it particularly irksome to account for his ideas to someone within the rNying-ma school.

Although rDo-grub monastery itself was a rNying-ma institution, this affiliation did not apply to its study college. There, the exoteric curriculum was based on the study of dGe-lugs texts—specifically, the debate manuals (\textit{yig cha}) of ’Jam-dbyangs bzhad-pa (1648–1721/22). Furthermore, at least one of the four seminary masters listed above probably had a dGe-lugs association: the name Ser-

\textsuperscript{149} His name suggests that he was originally from the dGe-lugs monastery of Ser-shul (A-lags gZand-kar, private communication, April 2014).

\textsuperscript{150} Tulku Thondup, who was identified as the reincarnation of Klu-shul mkhan-po, gives a detailed account of his life in Tulku Thondup 2006: 230–236.

\textsuperscript{151} For bibliographical details, see note 99 above.

\textsuperscript{152} \textit{rDo grub dam chos zhes pas gzhann gyi zer sgros bsdu nas mkhas su re ba’i khyal ngag de dag mi mkhas mtshang phug du kho rang nas bsuk ba bzhin nyams mtshar du bkod pa} (MPC vol. 13: 747–807). See Phuntsho 2010: 217f.

\textsuperscript{153} Phuntsho 2010: 217.
shul Ngag-dbang kun-dga’ suggests a link with Ser-shul, an important dGe-lugs institution in rDza-chu-kha.154 A-lags gZan-dkar Thub-bstan nyi-ma (who studied at rDo-grub in his youth) reports that rDo-grub Monastery itself was considered a branch monastery (dgon lag) of the dGe-lugs centre of Bla-brang bKra-shis-'khyil.155 ‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags too was connected with Bla-brang: his biography identifies him as an unofficial incarnation of Gung-thang dKon-mchog bstan-pa’i sgron-me (1762–1823), the monastery’s twenty-first throne-holder.156 However, 'Ja’-pa mDo-sngags was not directly affiliated with any monastery. He appears to have spent the last part of his life in retreat, perhaps following his defeat to Mi-pham.157

Even if ‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags’s career ended well before his death in 1902, his legacy likely continued (to some extent) through his students. We also detect signs of influence—or, at least, shared concerns—in the writings of his supposed reincarnation, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-rgyal-mtsho (1903–1957). But now let us turn to the life and work of a figure who was effectively caught in between Mi-pham and 'Ja’-pa mDo-sngags: their shared disciple, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma.

154 The proper name of the monastery is dGa’-ldan theg-chen dar-rgyas-gling. The likely meaning of Ser-shul in this context was confirmed by A-lags gZan-dkar (Private communication, April 2014). Paul Nietupski has written extensively on the history and residents of Bla-brang bKra-shis-'khyil, most notably in Nietupski 1999. Although he makes no mention of rDo-grub-chen being an unofficial branch, he does note (on p.96) how “Labrang was not a strictly sectarian institution. In addition to the prominent Central Tibetan Gelukpa systems, Labrang housed specialists in the older Tibetan Nyingma systems…”

155 Private communication, April 2014. A-lags gZan-dkar said that the same was true of Dar-thang, although it is officially a branch of dPal-yul (albeit a branch that is bigger than its ‘mother’). I can find no confirmation of either claim in written sources.

156 It is striking that the same claim was also made about his student, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma, as noted below. Both claims testify to dKon-mchog bstan-pa’i-sgron-me’s enduring influence.

157 Thub-dbang 1991: 142-143 mentions ‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags’ retreat after discussing the debate with Mi-pham. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that the retreat followed chronologically. Still, this view is supported by the existence of a text by dPal-sprul on retreat, Phyi nang gi dben pa ya ma bral bar bsten tshul sogs ’ja’ ba mdo sngags la gda ms pa (PS vol. 8: 269-275), written for ‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags to “clear away sadness” (skyo ba sangs pa’i ched du), which might conceivably be tied to loss in the debate. I discuss this in the introduction to my translation of the dPal-sprul text in Pearcey 2018.
4. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma

'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s rDzogs-chen writings are the focus of the next two chapters. Here, let us examine his life and literary output more generally.

4.1. His Life

'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s life sheds light on many of the themes of this study, especially scholasticism and its relationship to sectarian identity. He was born in 1865.158 His father was the rNying-ma treasure-revealer (gter ston) bDud-’joms gling-pa, alias lCags-skong gter-ston (1835-1904).159 None of the biographical sources at my disposal lists bDud-’joms gling-pa among 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s teachers, and it would seem that the two had little or no contact in later years.160

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158 This was at the end of the Nyag-rong troubles (1863–1865), which caused rDo-grub-chen monastery (i.e., Padma-bkod rtsa-gsum mkha’-’gro’i-gling) to relocate from Yar-lung padma-bkod to rTsang-chen in the upper rDo-chu valley. The second rDo-grub incarnation, 'Jigs-med phun-tshogs 'byung-gnas (1824–1863), began the move when mGon-po mam-rgyal of Nyag-rong threatened to destroy the monastery at Yar-lung in retaliation for its support of the people of the gSer valley. Yet shortly before the new building at rTsang-chen was complete, 'Jigs-med Phun-tshogs ‘byung-gnas was forced into exile. A powerful local chieftain objected to his choice of consort. He died in Dar-rtsse-mdo (Tachienlu) in 1863 during a smallpox epidemic. Despite the move, both monasteries remained in use for some time. This meant that once 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma had been enthroned at the monastery in Yar-lung Padma-bkod in the Iron Horse year (1870), he then followed a pattern of spending his summers in Yar-lung and his winters at the newer monastery in rTsang-chen. On the Nyag-rong troubles, see Tashi Tsering 1985 and Tsomo 2015. On the life of 'Jigs-med phun-tshogs ‘byung-gnas see Thondup 1996, 211–214 (Note, however, that Thondup’s account leaves some confusion surrounding the precise year of his death: although he gives his dates as 1824-1863, he dates the fatal smallpox epidemic in Dar–rtesy-md to 1864.)

159 On his life see Traktung Dudjom Lingpa 2011. bDud-’joms gling-pa gave his son the name Kun-bzang 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma phrin-las kun-khyab dpal bzang-po, which is usually abbreviated to 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma was the first of eight sons born to bDud-’joms gling-pa, all of whom were recognized as incarnations. For more information on all eight sons, see Gayley 2010 & 2011. A-lags gZan-dkar recalled an oral tradition correlating the eight sons of bDud-’joms gling-pa to the eight bodhisattvas known to Tibetans as the ‘eight close sons’ (nye ba’i sras brybad), with 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma being identified as the emanation of Mañjuśrī (personal communication, April 2014).

160 The same was not true of all his brothers. Gayley (op. cit.) notes that sPrul-sku Dri-med ’od-zer (1881–1924), for example, counted both bDud-’joms gling-pa and ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma as his teachers. A recently published work on the life of bDud-’joms gling-pa refers to an oral tradition according to which 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma challenged his father to a debate. The father won and made “a pithy remark about his son’s paltry knowledge compared to the overwhelming vastness of wisdom mind.” See Traktung Dudjom Lingpa 2011: 291. There appears to be an error in the footnotes of the book, and I take the source of this story to be a personal communication from Lama Tharchin Rinpoche (as mentioned on page 303 n.43) rather than the actual source mentioned in n.44 (i.e.,
The Fourth rDzogs-chen hierarch, Mi-’gyur nam-mkha’i-rdo-rje (1793–1870), recognised ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma as the reincarnation (yang srid) of the Second rDo-grub adept, ’Jigs-med phun-tshogs ’byung-gnas.\textsuperscript{161} There is no record that this recognition was ever contested, even though some accounts refer to an alternative identification. bDe-legs rab-rgyas, for example, notes that mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po believed ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma to be an incarnation of Gung-thang bstan-pa’i sgron-me\textsuperscript{162} of Bla-brang bkra-shis-’khyil. A-skong mkhan-chen Blö-bzang rdo-rje (1893–1983) also refers to this identification in his Nyi ma’i dkyil ’khor:

In the past, [’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma] was with ’Jam-mgon Mi-pham Rin-poche and the two of them, guru and disciple, were in discussion. When they used a mirror to divine his [previous] birth, the mirror showed a lama wearing a yellow cloak with a black fold and a yellow preceptor’s hat. In the sky above his head was the word gung and below his throne was thang. At this, Mi-pham said, “Oh, I thought you were a rebirth of Bla-ma rDo-grub Rin-po-che, but are you an [incarnation] of Gung-thang?” And he stared into his face. Then Mi-pham said, “Well now, whoever you are, while you are in this physical form you must do as much as you can for the teaching and practice of the Ancient Translation School.”\textsuperscript{163}

The story may well be apocryphal. However, the twofold identification—with both Gung-thang bStan-pa’i sgron-me (a major dGe-lugs figure from A-mdo), and the second rDo-grub-chen, ’Jigs-med phun-tshogs-’byung-gnas (a rNying-ma-pa)—indicates genuine tension. It foreshadows later dilemmas, because ’Jigs-med

\textsuperscript{161} bDe-legs rab-rgyas 2002: 11.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid.: 12.
\textsuperscript{163} AK vol. 4: 37: sngar ’jam mgon mi pham rin po che dang khong bla slob mam gnyis zhal ’dzoms su bzhugs nas] khong la skye pra btags pa na] bla ma gos ber ser po sdud nag dang mkhan zhwa ser po mnam pa zhig gi dbu’i steng mkhar gung dang khris ’og tu thang zhes pa’i yi ge ’dug ces pra rten pas zhus pa na] mi pham rin po ches] ’o kha bos khyod bla ma rdo grub rin po che’i skye ba yin chags byas kyang] khyod gung thang gi cig ma yi nam gsungs nas sphyin ha re gang zhal la gzigs] yang] da su yi nyang da la’i rten ’di snga ’gyur ba’i bstan pa la bshad sgrub kyi bya ba ci isam byed ces pa la] (Nyi ma’i dkyil ’khor is a lengthy commentary on the Bodhicaryāvatāra. I am grateful to Tulku Thondup for calling this passage to my attention via email, January 2007.)
bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma was caught between opposing dGe-lugs and rNying-ma teachers in his youth and went on to experience something of a ‘mid-life crisis’ of allegiance.

’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma was enthroned at rDo-grub-chen monastery in Yar-lung Padma-bkod in the iron-horse year (1870). Shortly after his enthronement, in the water-monkey year (1872), he travelled to rDzogs-chen Monastery, where he began his studies with mKhan-po Padma badzra. The biographies report that he initially faced difficulty. According to bSod-nams nyi-ma, he did not understand what Padma badzra taught. He soon overcame this. Only a year later, he delivered the annual winter lecture on the Bodhicaryāvatāra at rDza-rgyal. At the conclusion of the teaching, dPal-sprul declared that for ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma to have given the lecture at such a young age was proof that the doctrine of transmission (lung gi bstan pa/lung gi chos) was still alive and well.

In the following years, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma studied with a number of teachers, including dPal-sprul, the Fourth rDzogs-chen incarnation Mi’gyur nam-mkha’i-rdo-rje, rGya-rong nam-sprul Kun-bzang theg-mchog rdo-rje, mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po, Kong-sprul blo-gros mtha’-yas, gTer-ston bSod-rgyal and Mi-pham. In addition, he received instruction from ’Ja’-pa mDo-sngags on the ‘five

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164 bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 70. Thondup 1996: 238 says 1810, clearly a typographical error for 1870. A-bu dkar-lo says that rDo-grub-chen was enthroned in his sixth year. Thereafter, he generally spent his summers in the older monastery at Yar-lung and his winters at the newer monastery in rTsam-chen.

165 bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 71.

166 bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 71–72. The biography (ibid, 71) specifies that ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s difficulties arose when he received instructions on the preliminary text Dran pa nyer bzhag and was tested on his understanding.

167 bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 72–73. The text says this was during the subject’s ninth year. rDza-rgyal in rDza-chu-kha was the seat of ’Jigs-med rgyal-ba’i myu-gu (1765–1842), who was dPal-sprul’s teacher, and his successors.

168 bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 73 & bDe legs rab rgyas 2002: 13: da dung lung gi bstan pa’i gnas tshad rdzogs ran mi ’dug! In the same statement dPal-sprul refers to the death of Nyag-bla Padma bdud-dul, who supposedly attained the rainbow body (’ja’ las) in 1872, as evidence of the persistence of the doctrine of realization (rtogs pa’i bstan pa/rtogs pa’i chos).

169 This figure’s dates are unknown.

major scriptures’ (bka’ pod lnga) according to the dGe-lugs tradition and the debate manuals (yig cha) of 'Jam-dbyangs bzhad-pa.171

Through this education 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma developed a reputation for great erudition. According to the autobiography of mKhan-po Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang, Mi-pham once praised 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma and gTer-ston bSod-rgyal as the two most learned rNyin-ma scholars after sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs (1829–1901).172 The context suggests that Mi-pham made this statement in or around 1902.

The praise came during a period (lasting approximately from 1900 to 1905) when 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma was contemplating his sectarian allegiance. Earlier, at the age of twenty-two,173 he spent some time with Mi-pham at rDzong-gsar Monastery.174 At the end of the stay, as 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma took his leave, Mi-pham offered him a scroll (shog dril) from his pocket. Later, when 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma read it, he found that it contained thirty-seven verses.175 The
full text is preserved in Mi-pham’s collected writings with the title Kun mkhyen mi pham rin po ches rdo grub sprul sku ’jigs med bstan pa’i nyi mar zhal gdams bslab bya gnang ba.\textsuperscript{176} Halfway through, we meet with the following statement: “If the blazing fire is not blown out by the wind, then at thirty-five you will uphold your own tradition (rang lugs) from the lineage of the past [masters]…etc.”\textsuperscript{177} This puzzled ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma at first, as he felt he was already following “the positions of the Omniscient father and son” (kun mkhyen yab sras kyi phyogs) [i.e., Klong-chen rab’byams and ’Jigs-med gling-pa]. Still, according to bSod-nams nyi-ma, at the predicted age ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma reaffirmed his commitment:

Later, when [’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma] was thirty-four,\textsuperscript{178} one day he spontaneously thought that he must study the bKa’ brgyad bde gshegs ’dus chen and so read it from beginning to end. This acted as a catalyst through which he realized that, in the past, his understanding had been influenced by the New Tradition (gsar phyogs), and not based purely on his own tradition of the Ancient Translations (snga ‘gyur). He saw that there were many crucial distinctions which he had not previously understood and felt a desire—a hundred times stronger than any he had known before—to study the texts of the Old Tradition. Then, from the age of about forty, it was as if New and Old reversed their positions of above and below, and he practised only his own tradition of the rNying-ma.\textsuperscript{179}

bSod-nams nyi-ma reports that Mi-pham eventually grew satisfied with ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s reformation. In a conversation with Dug-tsha sprul-sku of

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\textsuperscript{176} MPp vol. 27: 281–283; MPc vol. 32: 687–689. The text has 74 lines or 37 ślokas. My translation appears in Pearcy 2018.

\textsuperscript{177} bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 81: me ’bar ba de rlung gis ma bskyod na| so lngar gong brgyud pa’i rang lugs ’dzin| zhes sogs… (Cf. MPp, vol. 27: 281.5/MPc vol. 32: 687.5: so lngar gegs grol brgyud pa’i rang lugs ’dzin)

\textsuperscript{178} dgung grangs so Inga’i dus sa literally means “at the age of thirty-five” but this is by the Tibetan reckoning. It is therefore the equivalent of “in his thirty-fifth year” or “at the age of thirty-four” by the Western count.

\textsuperscript{179} bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 81f.: physis su dgung grangs so Inga’i dus su| nyin gcig rgyu rkyen ci yang med par bka’ brgyad bde gshegs ’dus chen de la gcig blta dgos snyam pa byung ste der cha tshang zhig gzigs] des rkyen ’dra mo zhig byas te| sngar rang gi go ba de gsar phyogs dang bsra bsres zhig las| snga ’gyur gyi [82] rang lugs kho na ma yin pa dang| sngar ma go ba’i gnad kyi khyad par mang po yod pa mthong| sngar las brgya ’gyur gyis rnying ma’i dpe cha la blta ’dod byung| de nas dgung grangs bhzi bcu tsam na gsar rnying steng ’og log song ba bzhin| rnying ma’i rang lugs kho na nyams bzhes mdzad pa yin gsungs}
rDi-phug, Mi-pham compares 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s earlier gSar-ma allegiance to the temporary straying of a watchdog (sgo khyi):¹⁸⁰

[Dug-tsha] sprul-sku told Lama Mi-pham that he had thought of going to see rDo-grub sprul-sku, but that because he was said to be a dGe-lugs-pa and his way would therefore differ from their own Sa-skya and rNying-ma traditions, he decided not to go. To this, [Mi-pham] said, “Oh, he is certainly not. Imagine a watchdog that is separated from its master. After some time, it might forget its owner. Yet were they to be reunited, the dog would recognize its owner and never stray again. It is like that: although he was slightly affected by the gSar-ma, now he is a real rNying-ma[-pa], I swear, and it would be good for you to visit him.”¹⁸¹

This exchange indicates that Dug-tsha sprul-sku regarded the Sa-skya and rNying-ma to be closely aligned in their views but considered the dGe-lugs as philosophically distant from both. When Mi-pham suggests that 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma was “slightly affected by the gSar ma” (gsar zhad cung zad re yod) in the past, he appears to use the term “gSar-ma” to refer mainly to the dGe-lugs. Most lists of teachers found in 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s biographies suggest that the major dGe-lugs influence in his early life was 'Ja’-pa mDo-sngags. However, he also studied all traditions with 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse’i-dbhang-po.¹⁸² Mi-pham’s opposition to 'Ja’-pa mDo-sngags is well attested and has been discussed above.¹⁸³ It is possible that Mi-pham simply objected to any influence 'Ja’-pa mDo-sngags had on 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma. Perhaps it is also relevant that 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-

¹⁸⁰ The term sgo khyi signifies a dog that is owned, but not fully domesticated, since Tibetan dogs were almost always kept outside (at the door—hence the name). This analogy is omitted in Tultu Thondup’s account (Tultu Thondup 1996: 242).
¹⁸¹ bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 82f.: sprul skus bla mar zhus pa| khong rdo grub sprul sku’i mdun der gcig ’gro bsam ste| de tshang dge lugs pa red zer ’dug gi| de yin na rang re [83] sa mying gnyis dang lugs tha dad red pas ’gro mi bsam gyi zhus pa’i o de ni min nges pa yin| dper na sgo khyi tsho yin na bdag po dang bral nas yun ring lon song skabs bdag po de brjed ’gro yang| phyis su bdag po dang phrad na bdag po ngos zin nas gstan du mi g.yel ba bzhin| sngon chad gsar zhad cung zad re yod kyang| da ni rnying ma ngo ma lha min na khyod kyang der song na bzang gsungs zhes…
¹⁸² See bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 44.2f. The author gives his name as ‘Gya-ba dge-bshes mDo-sngags. The same text describes ‘Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse’i-dbhang-po as a lord of buddha families (rigs kyi bdag po) and writes (75.1) that he transmitted to 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma “infinite textual traditions from Sa-skya, dGe-lugs, bKa’-bgyud, rNying-ma and so on, without sectarian bias, as well as a stream of empowerments, transmissions and instructions from the eight chariots of the practice lineage.” (sa dge bka’ rnying sogs ris su ma chad pa’i gzhung lugs rab ‘byams dang| sgrub bgyud shing rta brgyad kyi dbang lung man ngag gi rgyun).
¹⁸³ Beginning on page 42.
nyi-ma’s crisis of allegiance (1900–1905) coincided with 'Ja’-pa mDo-sngags’s death (in 1902).

Later in life—but the biographical sources do not specify precisely when—'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma fell seriously ill. bSod-nams nyi-ma attributes this to an evil spirit (rgyal ‘gong) based in the sNyi valley (snyi lung). The same spirit, he says, also troubled bDud-’joms gling-pa:

In the sNyi valley there was a rgyal ‘gong spirit who had been a minister (mi sna bo che) of the Myang clan with perverse aspirations in the past and had been liberated by the great âcâyra [i.e., Padmasambhava]. He had troubled ['Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma]’s father, the great treasure-revealer, and had also shown extreme hostility to his heirs and their lineage. On one occasion, while the Lord [i.e., 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma] was teaching the Dharma, the spirit suddenly unleashed a fierce wind. This affected 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma physically, making him ill and unable to move. His brother, the supreme incarnation Padma rdo-rje, who maintained a perfect lifestyle and was learned and disciplined by character, was then instructed to take responsibility for the monastery, and thereafter maintained the seat accordingly.185

'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma moved into a hermitage, some distance from rDo-grub Monastery.186 Here, he remained until his death in 1926. He continued to teach but became difficult to meet. Prospective disciples went to great lengths to secure an audience with him or receive direct instruction. Tshul-khrims bzang-po (alias sPrul-sku Tshul-lo, 1884–c.1957), for example, became a scribe, copying

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184 Sprul-sku Padma rdo-rje (1867–1934) was considered to be an incarnation of Mar-pa lo-tsā-ba. As noted above, it would appear that this son of bDud-’joms gling-pa has been conflated with the similarly named mKhan-po Padma badzra in some secondary sources.
185 bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 92f.: sngon slob dpon chen pos myang mi sna bo che bsgral ba smon lam log pas snyi lung gi rgyal ’gong du gyur ba des| yab rje gter chen gyi sku dus nas bar chad btsams ’dug pas| khong yab sras brgyud pa dang bcas pa la shin tu gnag pa’i stabs kyi| rje ’dis chos khrid gsung bzhin pa’i skabs shig na rlung gi ’tshubs ma drag po zhig glo bur byung ste| de sku lus la phog pa’i rkyen ’dra ma zhig byas te| sku khamms mi bde ba’i bskyun gzhir song nas| gnas gzhana du phebs bzhud gang yang mdzad ma nus par| rje nyid [93] kyi gcung mchog sprul padma rdo rje zhes mikhas shing btsun pa’i ngang tshul gyi rnam thar mchog la gnas pa zhig mchis pa de la bstan dgon gyi khur bzhes dgos zhes bka’ bab pa bzhin gdan sa bskyangs| 186 According to Tulku Thondup (1996: 242) the hermitage was “about two miles from Dodrupchen Monastery.”
187 Tshul-khrims bzang-po belonged to Shugs-’byung Monastery, which is located in the rDo valley, between 15 and 20 miles from rDo-grub monastery. Tshul-khrims bzang-po’s writings, which include several works based on instructions received from 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma exist in two editions: a xylograph edition (TZa) in eight volumes and a modern edition (TZb) published in 2014 in 16 volumes. Neither version includes a biography. Arguillère 2007 includes some extracts from Tshul-khrims bzang-po’s instruction manual (khrig yig) on the dGongs pa zang thal cycle of rDzogs-chen
texts for 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s personal library.\textsuperscript{188} g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol never met 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma directly, but received instructions indirectly via gTer-ston bSod-rgyal.\textsuperscript{189}

In the later part of his life, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma collaborated on several projects with gTer-ston bSod-rgyal, a prolific treasure-revealer and teacher to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. The pair drafted an explanation of \textit{gter ma},\textsuperscript{190} and gTer-ston bSod-rgyal himself helped to transcribe 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s second *Guhyagarbha commentary. gTer-ston bSod-rgyal also transmitted teachings from 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma to g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol, who often noted

\begin{itemize}
\item[] Sometime later, Bla-ma Nyag-bla persistently requested Rin-po-che saying, “You must compose a commentary on the seventeen tantras (rgyud bcu bdun).” Then [in response] he said that [Nyag-bla] should create the outline (sa bcad) and he would write the commentary. Bla-ma Nyag-bla thought that as he was a regent (rgyal tshab) of Gu-ru Padma\[sambhava], he should be capable of creating the outline, so he agreed. Then Rin-po-che went to gSer-stod rdzong where the two of them discussed the composition of the commentary on the seventeen tantras. Bla-ma g.Yu-khog said that he too arrived at that time, and although Bla-ma Nyag-bla had said that he would be able to meet Rin-po-che, as Rin-po-che’s illness became more serious, he was not able to see him. He was filled with intense regret and said, “The merit of Tibet in general is weak, and how could the rNyin-ma, in particular, have such [mis]fortune? My own karma must be exceedingly feeble!”

(110.3f.: de’i rjes tsam na bla ma nyag blas rin po che la khyed kyis rgyud bcu bdun gyi ‘grel pa zhig brtsam dgos zhes nan tan gyi bskul ma mdzad skabs sa bcad de khyed kyis zhog dang/’grel ba de khong gis bri gowns par| bla ma nyag blas khong gu ru rdzog po ma’i rgyal tshab cig red pas sa bcad cig ‘jog thub dgos rgyu red snyam nas lags so zhus pa yin gowns| de nas rin po che gser stod rdzong gnas su gyan phebs mdzad [111] nas| khong mam gnyis kyis bcu bdun rgyu kyi ‘grel ba rtsom rgyu bka’ bgros gnang| bla ma g.yu khog tshang gis de dus nga yang yar byon nas| bla ma nyag blasph rin po che dang zhal gtuk rgyu byas yod par rin po che’i sku bsnyung tshab je cher song nas byon ma thub| spyir bod bsod nams chung| khyad par mying ma la de ‘dra’i kha rje ga la yod| bdag kyang las skal shin tu dman zhes thugs dra ga [sic] po gnang bar mdzad do|)

\textsuperscript{190} i.e., \textit{gTer gyi rnam bshad}, translated in Tulku Thondup 1986.
them down. More significantly, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s inaccessibility increased the need for written correspondence. Many of his rDzogs-chen works are epistolary responses to questions.

4.2 His Writings

In a recent edition, published in Chengdu in 2003, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s writings fill seven volumes. This collection includes his most famous works, the *Guhyagarbha commentary Rin chen mdzod kyi lde mig and the treatise on dhāraṇī, gZungs kyi rnam bshad. The latter was singled out for praise for its originality. A-skong mkhan-chen Blo-bzang rdo-rje reports A-mdo dge-bshes ‘Jam-dpal rol-ba’i-blo-gros as saying:

These days, those at the [rDo-]grub camp (sgar) say that sGyu ’phrul spyi don mdzod lde is their guru’s special teaching, and it is indeed wonderful. Still, if you compare it with and examine the texts of past commentators on the sGyu ’phrul, although there was none quite like it, many came close. Truly, the work which has unsurpassed features of erudition is rDo-grub Rin-po-che’s gZungs kyi rnam bshad. If you say that this is an excellent composition not produced even by ’Jam-mgon bla-ma [Tsong-kha-pa] and his heirs, then other people will not hear of it. However, it is an unsurpassed wonder, an excellent composition the likes of which even they did not reveal in the past.

Despite such commendation, the text’s innovations worried ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma. According to A-skong mkhan-po, he was reluctant at first to release the

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191 See Chapter Four for a discussion of the reliability of one such teaching.
192 See JTNs in bibliography for full details.
193 dpal gosang ba ’i snying po’i rgyud kyi spyi don nyung ngu’i ngag gis rnam par ’byed pa rin chen mdzod kyi lde mig (JTNg vol. 2: 3–191; JTNs vol. 3: 1–206). This is studied in Garson 2004. An English translation by Lama Chōnam and Sangye Khandro appears in Dodrupchen Jigme Tenpa’i Nyima 2010.
194 On the gZungs kyi rnam bshad see Gyatso 1992. She describes the text as a “brilliant and stimulating study.” (Gyatso 1992: 196).
195 AK vol. 4. 38: deng sang grub sgar ba tshos| sgyu ’phrul spyi don mdzod lde ’di khon tsho’i bla ma’i mkhas pa’i khyad chos yin zer tshod red de| ’di yang ngo mtshar che mod| ’on kyang ’di la sngon gyi sgyu ’phrul pa dag gi yig cha mang po yod pa rnam s gbsrigs te dpyad na ’di tsem ma thon kyang| ’di dang phyogs nye ba re bdag gis kyang thon las che yang| de bas rdo grub rin po che’i mkhas pa’i khyad chos bla na med pa de gzungs kyi rnam bshad ’di yin| ’di ni ’jam mgon bla ma yab sras kyis kyang ma thon pa’i legs bshad zhig yod byas na gzhans gi yin ma bar mi ’gro yang| don la ’di ni sngar de dag gi kyang ma sungs pa’i legs bshad ngo mtshar bla na med pa yin zhes… The principal student of A-mdo dge-bshes, mDo sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho, whose writings are discussed in Chapter Five, also composed a panegyric on the Explanation of Dhāraṇī: gZungs kyi rnam bshad la bstod pa (DC vol.3: 57–58).
text, and withheld it because “no one else in Tibet had explained the topic in such a way before” (sngan chad bod 'dir sus kyang 'di ltar ma bshad pa zhis red pas). A-skong himself regards the text as unprecedented. He describes it as something which “had not been composed by any scholar of the New or Ancient traditions in this Cool Land [of Tibet] in the past, from the great Mañjuśrī ‘father and sons’ [i.e., Tsong-kha-pa and his main disciples] down to Gung-thang bsTan-pa’i-sgron-me.”

bSod-nams nyi-ma claims that 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s shift of allegiance is reflected in the differences between his two *Guhyagarbha commentaries. bSod-nams nyi-ma explains that 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma wrote the second text, Rin chen mdzod kyi ide mig, in 1916 after he became convinced that his earlier commentary, completed in 1886, was tainted by gSar-ma views:

When Bla-ma Gang-rnam was appointed as the instructor (mkhan po) for the Māyājāla (sgyu ’brul), he said, “If I must be the Guhyagarbha instructor, then you must compose a clear and comprehensible commentary.” In response, [’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma] made a promise. He said that as the overview he had written earlier, Legs bshad dga’ ston, had been contaminated by gSar-ma mantra, he would write another, explaining the uncommon, profound points of the Ancient Translations. Then, when the instructor offered a beautiful dharma conch, a fine

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196 AK vol. 4. 38f.: bka’ drin can nyid kyi zhal nas kyang| dgong lo re gnyis par gzugs sku’i mdzad pa bsdus pa’i snga gong lo kha shas na drung yig pa bzhag nas ji ltar thob pa’i tshul bshad pa man ntha’ rdzogs par guang skabs kho bos sngon mo zhig nas ’di bris kyang sngan chad bod ’dir sus kyang ’di ltar ma bshad pa zhig red pas| don la ’byor min brtags pa’i phyir du mujg da la’i bar du bzang ba yin kyang| da ni de las gzhan go rgyu yang mi ’dug mi lo lon gyi bya ba rnamz ntha’ ma rdzogs pa yang srid par bsam nas| da res rang gi mig gis mi nthong bas mujg rdzogs par bri ba’i drung yig pa nyid la las bcol ba yin zhes sngr bod du mi grags pa’i legs bshad yin par gsungs pa de dus kyi drung yig pa’i ngag las rdzun med du thos pa ltar] legs bshad ’di ni sngon chad bsil ljongs ’dir jam mgon bdag nyid chen po yab sras nas gung thang bstan pa’i sgron me’i bar sogs gsar mying gi mkhas pa sus kyang ma mdzad pa’i legs bshad kyi sgo ’phar gsar du phyre pa yin…

197 bSod-nams nyi ma 2002: 107.4f.

198 The fire-dragon (m’brug) year. See JTNs vol. 3: 205.9

199 sGyu ’phrul drwa ba’i rgyud kyi spyi don ngag ’gros su bkod pa legs par bshad pa’i dga’ ston (JTNg vol. 2: 193–301; JTNs vol. 3: 207–319). In both his commentaries ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma chose to follow the Zur lineage in interpreting the tantra, rather than the lineage of Rong-zom and Klong-chen-pa, as Mi-pham had done. It is possible that the Zur interpretation, with its greater emphasis on the practices of the ‘upper and lower gateways’ (steng dang ’og gi sgo), lends itself more readily to comparison with the Highest Yoga Tantras of the gSar-ma schools. Unfortunately, Garson’s recent Ph.D. study covers only the mdzod kyi ide mig, and therefore an assessment of gSar ma-influence on the earlier commentary must await future research.

200 JTNs vol. 3: 317f.: rang lo nyer gcig pa sa skyong shing bya’i lo’i zla ba bcu gnyis pa’i dmar [318] phyogs kyi dga’ ba gsum pa la rdzogs par byas…
horse, and gold and silver as the support of a maṇḍala, he composed the overview entitled mDzod kyi lde mig.\textsuperscript{201}

Tulku Thondup suggests that Mi-pham played a role in encouraging him to revisit the tantra.\textsuperscript{202} Tshul-khrims bzang-po, in contrast, records that gTer-ston bSod-rgyal both requested and transcribed the new composition.\textsuperscript{203} Precisely how the first commentary was “mixed with gSar-ma mantra” is unclear and awaits further investigation. It is similarly uncertain whether “gSar-ma” here is code for dGe-lugs (as it was in Mi-pham’s statement to Dug-tsha sprul-skutra cited above) or refers to a broader doctrinal category.\textsuperscript{204}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[201] bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002:107.2f.: ’di skabs shig na bla ma gang rnam sgsu ’phrul gyi mkhan por bsko bzhag mdzad| de’i tsho khong gis zhus pa| ngas gsal snying mkhan po dgos nai khyed kyis ’grel ba kha gsal la go bde ba zhis gsangs dgos zhes nan tan gyis bskul skabs| sngar khong gis bris pa’i spyi don legs bshad dga’ ston de sngags gsar ma dang ’dres shor ba ’dra bas da lan snga ’gyur thun min gyi zab gnad dkrol ba zhis bris kyang chog ces zhal bzhes gnam| de’i tse mkhan pos| chos dung mdzes ldan [108] dang| rta mchog ’gros ldan| gser dngul bcas maṇḍala gyi rten du phul nas| spyi don mdzod kyi lde mig ces pa mdzad| 200
\item[202] He connects this with the prophetic text in the scroll mentioned above i.e., Kun mkhyen mi pham rin po ches rdo grub sprul sku jigs med bstan pa’i nyi mar zhal gdams bslab bya gngang ba. See Thondup 1996: 241–42.
\item[203] Las rab gling pa’i rnam thar: 538: 3–4: de’i bdyar gyi zla bar rdo grub dbang thams cad mkhyen pa’i drung du phebs te dpal gsal ba snying po’i spyi don rin chen mdzod kyi lde mig gi brtams gnang bar bskul zhus dang yi ge pa mdzad nas phyag bris gngang bar mdzad| The actual colophon to the mDzod kyi lde mig reads:
\item[204] According to Tulku Thondup (oral communication, 7 October 2014) Thub-bstan shes-rab rgya-mtsho alias Bla-chung A-pho (1905–1975), a scholar trained at rDzogs-chen monastery who assisted
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Although 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma enjoyed a reputation for learning and scholarship,205 he composed no commentaries on any major exoteric treatise such as the “thirteen classic works” that gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba popularised.206 Still, one cannot but be struck by the difference between his collected writings and those of the first rDo-grub-chen incarnation. The works of 'Jigs-med phrin-las ’od-zer (1745–1821) deal almost exclusively with ritual practices, especially those that feature in the Klong chen snying thig collection.207 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma, by contrast, displays a much broader range of interests and adopts a scholastic approach to topics not often associated with scholasticism.208 At the same time, he dismisses the dry intellectualism and conceit of some scholar-monks:

> These days there are some who pursue study, and yet the more they learn, the more their arrogance increases. They think: “Now I have studied widely. I know the scriptural approach. I am learned in the various collections.” When they see others, who have not amassed comparable learning, they regard them with contempt, thinking: “These people are fools, dullards, simpletons, befuddled and uneducated.” Even when reading texts by fellow scholars, they lack due reverence and devotion for the sacred dharma, and no sooner have they undone the strings of the book-covering than they look upon [the text] with curiosity and wonder, “What have we here?” and “How is this written?” 209

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205 According to Klein, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama has called 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma “the best scholar of the commentarial literature in any of the Tibetan orders.” (Klein 2000: 559)

206 See note 73 above.

207 See JPZ in the Bibliography for details of the most recently published, ten-volume edition. I discuss the Klong chen snying thig tradition briefly in the next chapter. The major exception to the above, and the most scholarly of 'Jigs-med phrin-las ’od-zer’s writings, is his commentary to 'Jigs-med gling-pa’s Yon tan mdzod, rGya mtsho’i chu thigs, which is divided into two parts: one brief and one in more detail (JPZ vol. 3: 1–576 and vol. 4: 1–822). To my knowledge, there are no surviving writings attributed to the second rDo-grub incarnation, 'Jigs-med phun-’tshogs’byung-gnas.

208 See above for Cabezón’s remarks on the characteristics of scholasticism. I discuss 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s scholastic approach to rDzogs-chen theory in the next chapter. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma did write extensively on ritual, particularly on Klong chen snying thig, but it forms a much smaller proportion of his total literary output than was the case for his predecessor.

209 JTNs vol. 1, 352: deng sang gi slob gnyer mkhan po kha cig ni ci tsam du thos pa mang ba de tsam du khengs pas dregs te| da ni mang du thos pa gzhung lugs shes pai sde snod la mkhas pa’o zhes rtog cing| gang zag gzhan thos pa ma bsags pa dag mthong ba na’ang ’di dag ni blun pa rtul ba bus pa glen pa mi mkhas pa yin no zhes khyad du gsdod la| mkhas pa gzhan dag gi gzhung lugs shig bklag kyang dam pa’i chos la gus shing don du gnyer ba ma bzhin du dang po glegs thag dkrol dus nas ’di’i nang ga ’dra zhig yod| ci ’dra zhig bris ’dug ang snyam nas mtshar ltas kyi ’du shes bzhag ste| This untitled text is fully translated in Pearcey 2018.
Later in the same text, he criticises enthrallment with scholarly debate or pointless argumentation:

Such scholars think: “When others debate with my own system, they will say such-and-such, so I must reply as follows…But then the opponent will counter with such-and-such a response, so what would be the best reply?” Preoccupied with such thoughts, they feel no pleasure during the day, while sleep evades them at night. Even if sleep should come to them, as they are consumed by such matters even in their dreams, their minds will be perturbed from the very moment of waking. Dismissing the works of the profound path, such as the progressive stages of meditation on bodhicitta and compassion, as too easy to understand, they prefer works of sophistry, and when they come across them, think, “Oh, now this I must study!” Opening the volume, they immediately muster all their powers of intellect, and inquire: “What is the meaning of this? Now this is a mere illustration. Is this a refutation? Is this a valid proof? Does this follow logically from the premise? Is there a logical contradiction here?” Scribbling notation about such hair-splitting points, they will pass the best part of the afternoon, their pulse racing and their breath uneven.\(^\text{210}\)

This rebuke is possibly directed at the dGe-lugs style education that 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma received. Reliance upon debate, and especially upon so-called debate manuals (yig cha), is especially prominent in the dGe-lugs system.\(^\text{211}\)

Moreover, the archetype of the scholar or intellectual in Tibetan literature is arguably the figure of the dge-bshes.\(^\text{212}\) Yet, this is not to say that intellectualism is entirely confined to any single school.

’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s text on the perils of scholasticism concludes with the claim that the author has some personal experience in such matters (rnam thar ’di tsho la nyams myong re yod pas). He was certainly trained in the dGe-lugs tradition and lived at a time when scholasticism among the non-dGe-lugs schools

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\(^\text{210}\) Ibid: gzhan zhiṅ dang brtsad na des ’di zer yong| de la ’di zer dgos| des lan ’di ‘debs yong| de la ci drag [353] bsam nas bsad dus nyin blo mi bde| mlaṅs pa gnyid mi yong| gal te gnyid zhiṅ byung yang mī laṁ thshor de ’dra de daṅ kho na rmis nas tho rangs sad ’ong dus kyad yid ni bde sing sing ’gro| lam zab mo byang chub kyi sems dang snying rje’i sgom rim lta bu re ’dug na de go sla a’u tsi snyam nas skyur| rtog gis’i gzhung phran re mthong na ’o ’o de ka la gcig bīta dgos zer nas kha phyès| de ma thag shes pa hur phyung stel| ga re de don ldog red dam| gzhi ldog zhiṅ red| dga’ ba zhiṅ red dam| sgrub zhiṅ red dam| ’di khyab pa grub bami ’gal ba ’du’am zhes dran rtog gi spu ris bris bris nas phyis dro tsa na snying phyod phyod glo ba tig tig por ’gro|.

\(^\text{211}\) Smith (2001, 245) suggested that the codification of these scholastic manuals brought about “a sort of intellectual petrifcation.”

\(^\text{212}\) The trope of the (often jealous or scheming) dge-bshes being outwitted by a simple yogin is best exemplified in Mi-la-ras-pa’s encounters with dGe-bshes rTsag-phu-ba. For further examples involving dPal-sprul see Smith 2001: 246 and Ricard 2017: 125–126.
expanded. He even witnessed two of his own teachers, Mi-pham and 'Ja- pa mDo-
sngags, clash in a high-profile debate. Still, it would not be accurate to describe
'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s stance here as one of anti-intellectualism. His writings
indicate that, like many figures from Tibetan history, he sought to transcend the
intellect rather than reject it.\textsuperscript{213} This point should become clearer in the next chapter,
where I examine his rDzogs-chen writings.

5. Conclusion

'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma lived in a period when attitudes to scholasticism
and sectarian identity transformed. Some of this change was associated with the Ris-
med movement. Mi-pham’s writings and the rise of scriptural colleges in eastern
Tibet redefined what it meant to be a rNying-ma-pa, especially one trained as a
scholar. (This was shortly before the increased availability of Go-rams-pa’s works
contributed to a parallel Sa-skya revival.) As a student of both Mi-pham and one of
his key opponents, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma was more than just a passive witness
to these changes; they affected him directly. Even in his youth, when rival claims
surrounded his recognition as a sprul sku, he was forced to choose between
competing interests. His own monastery of rDo-grub-chen, too, became embroiled in
intersectarian controversy. The monastery may also have had a connection with the
great dGe-lugs centre of Bla-brang bkra-shis-'khyil. Following ’Ja’-pa mDo-
sngags’s defeat and Mi-pham’s response to mKhan-po Dam-chos-’od-zer, rDo-grub
monastery came under pressure to conform to Mi-pham’s orthodoxy. Still, it held out
for several decades. It was not until 1950 that a new scriptural college brought Mi-

\textsuperscript{213} On the need for such a distinction when discussing the increased scholasticism of the Ris-med
pham’s writings into its curriculum. Even after that date, however, dGe-lugs teachers continued to offer instruction.\textsuperscript{214}

The biographies describe a critical moment in ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s life: the point when he reaffirmed his allegiance to the rNying-ma school.\textsuperscript{215} The pressure to commit to a supposedly pure form of rNying-ma came from Mi-pham, who had already reshaped the school’s doxographical identity. Questions remain, however, about the extent of gSar-ma (which here might simply mean dGe-lugs) influence upon his writings, especially the role played by ’Ja’-pa mDo-sngags, whose writings do not survive.

\textsuperscript{214} Information provided by A-lags gZan-dkar (personal communication, 2012), who studied there in his youth.

\textsuperscript{215} Even if he did pledge to serve the rNying-ma cause, it is clear from his surviving writings that he did not simply restate Mi-pham’s own views. Nor did he employ the terminology characteristic of Mi-pham’s system when writing on the two truths and philosophical topics. See for example bDen gnyis kyi rnam par bzhag pa don bzang me tog rgyas pa’i ljon shing (JTN vol. 5: 278.2–284.1; JTNs vol. 7: 343–348), which employs the language of debate and betrays some dGe-lugs influence, such as in its definitions of the truths and its citation from lCang-skya Rol-pa’i rdo-rje’s song lTa ba’i gsung mgur zab mo (CRD vol. 4: 385–390)—although we must recall that Mi-pham also wrote a commentary on that song (MPP vol. 4: 826.6–866.3). Moreover, bDen gnyis kyi rnam par bzhag pa don bzang me tog rgyas pa’i ljon shing makes no mention of union (zung ’jug), which many see as a key characteristic of Mi-pham’s thought. Nevertheless, in the colophon ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma notes that he composed the text on the tenth day (tshes bcu) of the month, which is sacred to “Padmasambhava, the pandita of Oḍḍiyāna” (JTN vol. 5: 284.1; JTNs vol. 7: 348.14).
2. Dzogchen Literature and Expert Exegesis

"In many historical periods, the intellectual community is in a scholasticizing mode, worshipping exalted texts from the past which are regarded as containing the completion of all wisdom. Eminence here goes to those persons who make themselves the most impressive guardians of the classics."


“[He] could discern unerringly the intent of the earlier and later Omniscient Ones.”

*Tshul-khrims bzang-po, describing ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma* 217

1. Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the collected writings of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma more generally; this and the following chapter examine his rDzogs-chens corpus in particular. 218 Before embarking on this analysis, however, I shall briefly outline the history of rDzogs-chens literature from its emergence until ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s own time. Once we possess a clearer sense of what ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma commented upon in his rDzogs-chens writings, we can then investigate how he approached his exegetical task.

1.1. The Origins of rDzogs-chens Literature

The precise origins of rDzogs-chens—generally translated as “Great Perfection” or “Great Completion”—are yet to be established. 219 The term itself

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217 TZb, vol. 5: 299.
218 A full list of the contents of the rDzogs-chens corpus, including a brief synopsis of each text, is provided in Appendix 1.
219 This topic is discussed in Karmay 1988 and van Schaik 2004b.
appears to derive from the *Guhyagarbha Tantra, which is generally dated to the mid-eighth century CE.\textsuperscript{220} At first, it signified a more advanced form of the perfection stage (*rdzogs rim), but later came to denote a third stage beyond both the generation stage (*bskyed rim) and perfection stage.\textsuperscript{221} This is the sense in which the term appears in the *Man ngag lta ba’i phreng ba, traditionally attributed to Padmasambhava.\textsuperscript{222} By the tenth century, when gNubs Sangs-rgyas ye-shes composed *bSam gtan mig sgron, rDzogs-chen had become, in the words of Samten Karmay, “a well-established philosophical doctrine” of its own.\textsuperscript{223} This transformation into a distinct tradition began with gNubs Sangs-rgyas ye-shes and continued with members of the Zur clan and others.\textsuperscript{224}

A strand of early rDzogs-chen thought—representing what David Germano calls the “pristine Great Perfection,” and which later came to be known as the Mind Category (*sems sde)\textsuperscript{225}—emphasised the immediate presence of the already awakened mind (*byang chub kyi sems; bodhicitta).\textsuperscript{226} Germano notes that the followers of this tradition came to adopt a “rhetoric of absence,” through which they effectively denied the validity of the generation and perfection phase structure of Mahāyoga.\textsuperscript{227} Van Schaik points out that this early “pristine” form of rDzogs-chen

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\textsuperscript{220} Germano 1994: 214–215 provides all four instances where the term occurs in the *Guhyagarbha. On the *Guhyagarbha in general see Dorje 1987: 13–127.
\textsuperscript{221} See Germano 1994: 223. Germano also refers (ibid, 224) to two occasions in the writings of Klong-chen rab’byams where *rdzogs-chen is used in the sense of great or greater perfection stage (*rdzogs rim chen po).
\textsuperscript{223} Karmay 1988: 11. Van Schaik (2004b: 202) argues that rDzogs-chen did not exist as a tradition in the ninth and tenth centuries, but “continued right through to the beginning of the eleventh century to be seen as a way of approaching Mahāyoga ritual and meditative practice, rather than a distinct approach.”
\textsuperscript{224} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{225} The threefold classification of *sde gsum, i.e., the three categories of Mind (*sems), Space (*klong) and Pith Instructions (*man ngag), is thought to date from the twelfth century. See Kapstein 2008: 283.
\textsuperscript{226} See van Schaik 2004b: 165.
\textsuperscript{227} Germano 1994: 207. On the rhetoric of absence see ibid, 209. As in Dignāga’s theory of language, Germano says, this absence is “utterly defined by what it has excluded — it is not a simple absence, but rather an absence of precise systems.”
\end{flushleft}
was only ever a strand and never dominated the field. rDzogs-chen always accommodated a ritual element, he contends, “first in the form of Mahāyoga and later in the specialised tantric meditations of the Seminal Heart [i.e., sNying-thig].” In any case, from the fourteenth century onwards, it was the sNying-thig tradition that came to dominate rDzogs-chen literature and practice, largely on the back of the extraordinary career of Klong-chen rab-byams.

1.2. The Heart-Essence (sNying-thig)

The Heart-Essence eclipsed earlier forms of rDzogs-chen and absorbed much of their teaching. It also introduced new elements. This is not the place to discuss early rDzogs-chen history in detail; others have already done so. It will be useful, however, to summarize some key features of Heart-Essence doctrine. Germano notes, for example, that the Heart-Essence differs from previous forms of rDzogs-

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228 van Schaik 2004b: 203.
229 Ibid.
231 Germano 1994: 272–275, for example, identifies three distinct phases in the development of sNying thig as a system of rDzogs-chen thought and practice:

1. An initial period of formation from the early eleventh to twelfth century. This phase was “marked by the longer texts (such as the sGra thal 'gyur and Rig pa rang shar tantras) and two main collections of texts (The Seventeen Tantras and the Bi ma snying thig) gradually taking shape over the course of decades via a number of authors.” Germano suggests that these authors drew upon various sources: “new modernist [i.e. gsar ma] doctrines, indigenous Tibetan religious concepts, innovative strains of the Great Perfection such as in the Space Series [i.e., klong sde] and other unknown influences.”

2. An intermediate period, from the early thirteenth to the early fourteenth century. During this time, Germano says, the tradition began “to take stable form and move into wider patterns of circulation with Me long rdo rje [1243–1303] and Kumārāda [1266–1343].” As evidence of its success, Germano cites the fact that the third Karma-pa, Rang-byung rdo-rje (1284–1339), was deeply involved in the transmission and study of sNying-thig. Germano highlights especially the important role played by the mKha’ ’gro snying thig, which enjoyed “great popularity in the fourteenth century.”

3. The final period, Germano says, occurred during the fourteenth century when Klong-chen Rab-byams “systematized and codified these literary and oral traditions into a complex, yet clear architectonic structure.” This period also coincided with a flourishing of scholasticism more widely in Tibet. Higgins (2013: 32–33) has presented seven arguments in support of the theory that sNying-thig has its origins even earlier, in the royal dynastic period.
through its focus on “the spontaneous dynamics (lhun grub) of the Ground.” He identifies four major points of departure from earlier doctrine: 1) The first point concerns narrative and mythology. The Heart-Essence articulates what he calls “a deeply phenomenological and partially mythic overarching narrative” concerning the origination and ultimate goal (telos) of the human world that serves to structure the tradition. 2) It introduces the “visionary practices” of Thod-rgal (see below) as a form of rDzogs-chen meditation in a way that relates to the evolutionary narrative. 3) It incorporates a wide range of tantric practices as auxiliary or supporting elements, but in a relatively simple form when compared to the gSar-ma traditions. 4) It injects “a far greater range of tantric doctrines into its discourse,” from subtle body theory to the set of hundred peaceful and wrathful deities. Some more conservative followers rejected such innovations. But despite their objections, the newer elements endured.

The twofold division of rDzogs-chen practice (and theory) into Khregs-chod (often translated as Breakthrough) and Thod-rgal (translated as Leap-over or Direct Crossing) also features in later discourse. Khregs-chod is best defined as the direct cutting through (chod pa) of any resistance (khregs) to pure awareness in

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234 Germano 1994: 280. The human world is, in fact, but one part of this narrative.
236 Even after these developments, Germano 1994: 280 notes, sNying thigh remained “relatively desexualized and aestheticized in comparison to the often shockingly crude discourses of the modernists’ tantras and the Nyingma’s own Mahāyoga tradition.” In addition to the four points listed here the Heart Essence’s many innovations necessitated a new technical vocabulary. This new lexicon includes such terms as gzhi snang, gdangs/ mdangs, thod rgal, khregs chod, ru shan, etc. (ibid.) The definition and redefinition of such terms is a constant feature of commentarial literature and even practical instruction manuals (yig cha). mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho, for example, wrote a commentary on some key terms, rDzogs pa chen po’i tha snyad ’ga’i grel ba, to which we will refer in Chapter Five.
237 Ibid., 278.
the form of delusion and ordinary thoughts. Thod-rgal is the visionary practice through which the three buddha-bodies (trikāya; sku gsum) are brought directly into one’s own experience. While Thod-rgal includes most of what is particular to the Heart-Essence, it also shares elements of thought and practice with gSar-ma tantra, as mentioned above. Khregs-chod, which incorporates older elements of rDzogs-chen, has arguably less in common with other forms of tantra.

In recent times, Heart-Essence authors produced many treatises that focus exclusively on Khregs-chod. Thod-rgal writings typically take the form of instruction manuals and present the practice as an advanced technique that is based upon a grounding in Khregs-chod. It is often said that Thod-rgal requires greater effort than Khregs-chod because of its prescribed postures and gazes. We note thus a difference in the rhetoric of the two forms: Khregs-chod is characterised as a method of naturalness and (almost) effortless simplicity, while Thod-rgal is a powerful, esoteric technique requiring greater discipline and skill.

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240 See, for example, the following definition from bsTan pa’i nyi ma’i zhal lung, 4b: khregs chod zer ba’i don man ngag bzhag thabs bzhis lta bu’i sgo nas ka dag gi rang ngo bskyang ba na ’khrul pa thams cad rtsa dres ma’i thag pa mes tshig pa bzhin du gzung ’dzin gyi rtog pa thams cad khregs kyis sam thad kar ram dum bu dum bur geod par byed pas na khregs chod| bsTan pa’i nyi ma’i zhal lung, 4b: thod rgal zer ba’i don gcig char ba ste rang bzhin gshis kyi sku gsum lam snang du gcig char du byed pa’o||

241 Germano 1994: 287. Scholars have speculated about the possible sources of, or inspirations for, Thod rgal. Germano (ibid., 288) believes tantric systems based on “clear light” (’od gsal) had an impact, as well as the Highest Yoga tantra with its emphasis on the body. He also speculates (ibid., 289) that an emphasis on contemplating the sky to evoke a sensation of vast emptiness in early forms of rDzogs-chen might have caused some practitioners to experience “strange lights”.


243 The rDzogs-chen corpus of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma reflects this apparent literary preference for Khregs-chod over Thod-rgal: while the first 11 of the 22 texts in the corpus appear under the heading (in the JTNg edition) of Khregs-chod Advice (khregs chod gdams pa), the next section is not Thod-rgal Advice but rDzogs-chen Advice (rdzogs chen gdams pa) in general, and there is no section (or text) dedicated exclusively to Thod-rgal. Moreover, several of the most popular works on rDzogs-chen in the last two centuries have been Khregs-chod texts, e.g., ’Od gsal rdzogs pa chen po’i khregs chod lta ba’i glu dbyangs sa lam ma lus myur du bgrod pa’i rtsal ldan mkha’ lding gshog rtab by Zhab-drug Tshogs-drug rang-grol and mKhas pa sri’i rgyal po’i khyad chos by rDza dpal-sprul.

244 ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma (JTNs vol. 2: 3) characterizes Khregs-chod as profound (zab pa) and Thod-rgal as vast (rgya che ba). He specifies that both are necessary to attain the ultimate fruition, but that Khregs-chod must precede Thod-rgal (go ’phang de lta bu sgrub pa la zab pa khregs chod dang rgya che ba thod rgal gyi lam gnyis zung ’brel du nyams su blangs nas nyams myong mthar dbyung ba zhis dgos la’i dang gyi dang po khregs chod nas ’jug dgos pas…).
In his historical survey of Heart-Essence, Germano places its final period in the fourteenth century, effectively dismissing later developments. This reflects his view (which, in turn, echoes Samten Karmay) that the eighteenth-century *Klong chen snying thig* revelation of ’Jigs-med gling-pa did little to advance rDzogs-chen theory, but simply placed greater emphasis on tantric, ritualistic elements. Undoubtedly, the *Klong chen snying thig* includes a large amount of ritual material, accounting for most texts in the five ‘root volumes’ (*rtsa pod*) of a recent edition.

Yet, as van Schaik has shown, other cycles, such as the *Bla ma dgongs ’dus* of Sangs-rgyas gling-pa (1340–1396), already introduced Mahāyoga-type ritual elements into the Heart Essence before ’Jigs-med gling-pa. Moreover, as I argue below, recent followers of the *Klong chen snying thig* introduced previously neglected elements of scholasticism into rDzogs-chen theory.

### 1.3. *Klong chen snying thig*

’Jigs-med gling-pa compiled the *Klong chen snying thig* following a series of visions that occurred during two periods of retreat, the first between 1756 and 1759 and the second between 1759 and 1762. From 1764 onwards, he transmitted his

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246 See note 231 above. Higgins also believes that post-14th century treatments of rDzogs-chen philosophy were “strongly indebted to antecedent works, especially the summaries of Klong chen pa.” (Higgins 2013: 55)

247 The term *Klong chen snying thig* is generally translated as “Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse”. Germano (1994: 293) believes the name might have been a “surreptitious and perhaps unconscious” reference to Klong-chen rab-'byams and takes issue with Dorje and Kapstein (in Dudjom 1991 vol.2, 243) for making the implicit explicit in their translation as “Innermost Spirituality of Longcenpa”. Van Schaik (2004a: 10) notes the popularity of the Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse: “In the nineteenth century, after Jigme Lingpa’s death, the *Longchen Nyingtig* became the most popular of the treasure cycles, becoming as close to normative as any set of practices within the heterogeneous Nyingma milieu.”


250 van Schaik 2004a: 41.

revelation to close disciples.252 Foremost among these was the First rDo-grub-chen, 'Jigs-med phrin-las 'od-zer, whom he appointed custodian of the teaching (chos bdag). Together, the two secured the patronage of the queen of sDe-dge, Tshe-dbang lha-mo (d. 1812). Her support led to the successful propagation of the Klong chen snying thig in Eastern Tibet, even after 'Jigs-med gling-pa’s death in 1798.253 Another of 'Jigs-med gling-pa’s principal disciples, 'Jigs-med rgyal-ba’i-myu-gu (1765–1843), transmitted the Klong chen snying thig to rDza dPal-sprul. The latter’s writings, especially Kun bzang bla ma’i zhal lung,254 achieved widespread popularity and contributed to the spread of the tradition.255 dPal-sprul combined the Klong chen snying thig with elements of the dGe-mang reform movement.256 And the resulting blend of rDzogs-chen and scholasticism then continued with such influential figures as sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma (1829–1901/2), A-’dzom ’brug-pa ’Gro-dul dpa’-bo rdo-rje (1842–1924), mKhan-po Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang and g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol (1871–1952). These masters produced exegetical writings on the contents of the Klong chen snying thig collection, but especially its preliminary practices (sngon ’gro).

The rDzogs-chen section of the Klong chen snying thig contains other texts beside these revelations. It also features non-revelatory texts for which 'Jigs-med gling-pa claims authorship, most importantly the guidance manual (khrid yig), Ye shes bla ma.257 Van Schaik, who has studied the corpus in some detail, identifies a

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253 Critical to this was the publishing of 'Jigs-med gling-pa’s collected writings at sDe-dge printing house. On the life of Tshe-dbang lha-mo, including the discrediting of certain statements by earlier scholars, see Ronis 2011.
255 The full lineage of transmission is discussed in Tulku Thondup 1996.
256 Smith 2001: 24: “The results of this convergence were to have a profound influence on ensuing Tibetan intellectual history.”
257 Ye shes bla ma is discussed in van Schaik 2004a: 98–102, and an outline of the text’s contents is given in ibid., 313–317. Germano (1994: 294) is rather dismissive of the text: “My cursory examination of this text indicates that it is a non-innovative and fairly perfunctory summary of older
tension between two types of rhetoric—gradualism and simultaneism—within the different texts. He suggests that 'Jigs-med gling-pa resolves this apparent dialectic in his non-revelatory compositions, which place greater emphasis on gradual progress. As I discuss in Chapter Four, 'Jigs-med gling-pa also introduced elements of scholasticism into his rDzogs-chen writings. Later writers, such as 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma and g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol, then elaborate upon these elements even further.

'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma was among the first to comment on the rDzogs-chen section of the Klong chen snying thig. He did so shortly before Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang,258 g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol259 and others. For these commentators, however, 'Jigs-med gling-pa’s writings command similar status to the writings of Klong-chen rab-'byams and may thus be described as foundational, if not canonical.

1.4. Canonicity and Textual Authority

Scholars have long noted the fact that both the rNying-ma school and the rDzogs-chen tradition possess a complex notion of textual authority or canonicity.260 When the rDzogs-chen tantras emerged in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, those sympathetic to the rNying-ma tradition regarded them as canonical and included them in the Collection of rNying-ma Tantras (rNying ma rgyud 'bum). Treasure

materials offering a simplified presentation that comes to be normative.” The title is ambiguous and therefore difficult—if not impossible—to translate: it can be interpreted both as “the wisdom guru” and as “wisdom unsurpassed”. A translation by Sangye Khandro and Lama Chönam (which rather sensibly leaves the title untranslated) was published in 2008 (revised from an earlier version). See Vidyadhara Jigmed Lingpa 2008.

258 Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang’s commentary on Ye shes bla ma is called rDzogs pa chen po ye shes bla ma’i snyod don snying thug ma bu’i lde mig kun bzang thugs kyi tiki.
259 g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol wrote a commentary on gNas lugs rdo rje’i tshig rkang, which belongs to the rDzogs-chen section of the Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse. See YCRa vol. 2: 241–250. (My English translation of this commentary appears on lotsawahouse.org)
260 For a discussion of the “multiple canons of Tibetan religious literature”, including the rNying-ma tantras and various categories of revelation, see Eimer & Germano 2002, especially 199–376.
revelations enjoy a quasi-canonical status within the school (and even beyond it, to some degree); they may not be buddhavacana if the buddha in question is Śākyamuni, but for the rNying-ma school and its supporters they are the word of the second buddha, Padmasambhava.261

The writings of Klong-chhen rab-'byams, too, carry great authority, especially among the followers of the Klong chen snying thig. This is attested in a short untitled text of Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang. It lists the mDzod bdun of Klong-chhen rab-'byams alongside the Seventeen Tantras and the sNying thig ya bzhi262 as the primary texts of rDzogs-chen.263 Klong-chchen rab-'byams himself is effectively deified (or buddha-ified, one might say) in the Klong chen snying thig tradition, where he appears as an object of meditation.264

Followers of the Klong chen snying thig lineage, including 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, clearly regard the writings of 'Jigs-med gling-pa as similar (if not equal) in status to those of Klong-chchen rab-'byams. As a pair, Klong-chchen rab-'byams and 'Jigs-med gling-pa are known as “the omniscient father and son” (kun mkhyen yab sras)265 or more simply as “the two omniscient ones” (kun mkhyen rnam gnyis).266 Such high status is also documented in ’Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma’s advice to ’Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros. Here, in the conclusion to

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261 Gyatso, 1996: 149: “In the Buddhist case, Treasure revelations are placed explicitly on a par with the sūtras and tantrams of the more conventional Buddhist canon, and are said to be, in one sense or another, the ‘word of the Buddha.’”
262 The sNying thig ya bzhi collection itself contains a great many texts by Klong-chchen rab-'byams, especially in its mKha’ ‘gro yang thig, Bla ma yang thig and Zab mo yang thig sections. On the collection as a whole, see Goodman 1983: 163–233.
263 See KNP vol. 2: 87–91. A translation appears in Nyoshul Khenpo 2005: 253–256. sMyo-shul ’Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje (rDzogs chen chos ‘byung vol.1: 213b.4) refers to the text as 'brel ishad don ldan, which the translator Richard Barron takes to be a title (Bringing Meaning to All Who Have a Connection), although this title does not appear in KNP and might therefore be intended merely as a description.
264 In the sādhana known as Bla sgrub thig le’i rgya can, the full title of which is Yang gsang bla ma’i sgrub pa thig le’i rgya can. Tulku Thondup notes that it is the “ultimate secret” (yang gsang) form of peaceful male vidyādhara practice within the cycle. (Thondup 1996: 45)
265 See, for example, JTNs vol. 2: 209.
a series of answers to questions, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma encourages his young disciple to study Klong-chen rab-’byams’s Lung gi gter mdzod commentary on the Chos dbyings mdzod.267 This text, he says, is “just like [meeting] the Omniscient King of Dharma, Dri-med ’od-zer, in person,”268 and it is to be studied repeatedly, as “consulting it only once or twice will not lead beyond a rough, vague understanding.”269 After prescribing extensive study of the Theg mchog mdzod, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma continues:

I also believe the Shing rta chen po commentary to Sems nyid ngal gso and the root text and commentaries on the Yon tan mdzod to be extremely important, as they are indispensable for gaining an understanding of the general structure of the teachings.270

’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma thus ranks ’Jigs-med gling-pa’s Yon tan mdzod as equally important for the study of rDzogs-chen as a major work by Klong-chen rab-’byams, to which it was, in fact, a supplement.271 ’Jigs-med gling-pa’s works certainly achieved popularity. The manual Ye shes bla ma even began to supplant the longer works of Klong-chen rab-’byams (and perhaps even the author’s own Yon tan mdzod). This, at least, is the view of the rDzogs-chen historian, sMyo-shul ’Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje:

…what we find these days is that there are many people who don’t comprehend the roots of these teachings at all. They may, for example, have studied only one teaching, like the instruction manual Yeshé Lama […] and they conclude, “Well, Yeshé Lama is Dzogchen.” Yes, Yeshé Lama certainly is Dzogchen, but it is only one teaching manual on Dzogchen, one of many. It is not the whole of Dzogchen. For one thing, Yeshé Lama has been around for only two hundred years or more…272

267 JTNg vol. 1: 578; JTNs vol. 2: 134.
268 JTNg vol. 1: 578.6; JTNs vol. 2: 134.8: kun mkhyen chos kyi rgyal po dri med ’od zer zhal dngos su bzhugs pa dang ’dra bar… The point being that reading the text is similar to meeting the master in person and receiving oral instruction from him directly.
269 JTNg vol. 1: 579.2; JTNs vol. 2: 134.13: lan re zung gzigs pa tsam gyis rtsing hrob be ba las mi ‘long.
270 JTNg vol. 1: 579.3; JTNs vol. 2: 134.16: sems nyid ngal gso’i ’grel pa shing rta chen po dang/ yon tan mdzod rtsa ’grel gyi steng nas bstan pa spyi’i sgrom ’tshol ba’ang med mi rung du gal che snyam pa…
271 See Kangyur Rinpoche 2001: 6. Specifically, the text is regarded as a supplement to the Shing rta chen po.
'Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje objects to the reliance on Ye shes bla ma not only because it offers an incomplete account of rDzogs-chen theory and practice, but also because it is recent. Such concerns reflect a conservative tradition that is forever focused on the past and therefore wary of anything contemporary or innovative.

'Jigs-med gling-pa’s rDzogs-chen writings thus occupy an ambiguous position in the canonical hierarchy. Although some regard them as equal to the works of Klong-chen rab-byams, others within the Klong chen snying thig tradition are more hesitant. At the same time, those outside that tradition, such as Mi-pham, ignore the works of 'Jigs-med gling-pa almost entirely.273 Irrespective of these tensions, 'Jigs-med gling-pa’s Yon tan mdzod generated more commentarial literature than any of the mDzod bdun.274 Furthermore, as I shall show in Chapter Four, the introduction of doxography into a practical manual (khrid yig), starting with the Ye shes bla ma, would eventually come to reflect sectarian concerns.

2. The rDzogs-chen Exegesis of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma

The rDzogs-chen corpus of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma contains treatises that vary in length, style and subject matter.275 Three take the form of notes without clear introductory or concluding passages.276 Of the remainder, thirteen are responses to named individuals and three consist entirely of answers to questions (the longest of them 24 answers to 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros).277 Several texts elucidate supposedly difficult or abstruse doctrinal points:278

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273 van Schaik 2004a: 28 notes that Mi-pham “seems to have consciously avoided the work of Jigme Lingpa, preferring to refer directly to the works of Longchenpa.”
274 Tulku Thondup 1996: 364 lists six commentaries, including two by the First rDo-grub-chen.
275 See Appendix 1 for an overview of the corpus.
276 i.e., Tshig gsum gnad brdeg skor (JTNg vol. 1: 511–538; JTNs vol. 2: 67–94); rNam rtog ngo shes pa dang rig pa ngo shes pa’i khyad par (JTNg vol. 1: 581–646.2; JTNs vol. 2: 135–202); and Man ngag zab mo rdo rje’i mtshon cha (JTNg vol. 1: 652.5–676; JTNs. vol. 2: 209–232).
the best example of such elucidation being the Ye shes bla ma‘i dka’ ‘grel. Yet, even in works without such a label, ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma is called upon to offer exegesis. In Dad brton blo idan ‘das shul grags idan ngor gdams pa, for example, he explains the cryptic, rather scholarly final testament (zhal chems) of O-rgyan bstan-’dzin nor-bu.

2.1. Exegetical Strategies

‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma relies upon the works of Klong-chen rab-’byams and ‘Jigs-med gling-pa throughout his rDzogs-chen writings. The Ye shes bla ma commentary clearly belongs to the broader Klong chen snying thig tradition, while two other texts within the corpus derive from statements by Klong-chen rab-’byams and ‘Jigs-med gling-pa. In fact, ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma repeatedly cites these two figures and recommends the study of their writings. Commenting upon the writings of such extraordinarily exalted figures poses at least two hermeneutical challenges: 1) In the first place, it prompts the question of what still remains unsaid or unclear. Omniscient figures must provide all the guidance and information that

278 Outside the rDzogs-chen corpus, the most notable example is his commentary on the difficult points of the Bodhicaryāvatāra: sPyod ‘jug dka’ gnas gsal byed bdurwa dbang po ‘i me long (JTNs vol. 7: 288–298).

279 Ye shes bla ma‘i dka’ gnas zin bris gsal ba‘i sgron me (JTNs vol. 2: 248–270)


281 In this respect, ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma position is comparable to that occupied more recently by sMyo-shul ‘Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje, whose writings include many clarifications on similar topics to those addressed in ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s rDzogs chen skor. Two texts of answers to questions on rDzogs-chen by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama are of interest in this regard (Rig ‘dzin brgyud pa‘i zhal lung 83–126), as they not only confirm the Dalai Lama’s fascination with ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma as a rDzogs-chen thinker, but also indicate that ‘Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje himself was unfamiliar with his writings (Rig ‘dzin brgyud pa‘i zhal lung 111: rdo grub bka’ “bum gus par de tsa mrgyus mi che yang…”)

282 i.e., Dad ldan slob ma ‘gyur med rdo rje ‘i ngor gdams pa (JTN vol. 1: 484–496; JTNs vol. 2: 41–53), which explains a verse from Klong-chen rab-’byams’s Man ngag mdzod, and d Ngos bzhi gnyis su ma bzhi rtsi tshul (JTN vol. 1: 547–554; JTNs vol. 2: 104–110), which elaborates upon comments in ‘Jigs-med gling-pa’s Ye shes bla ma (that, in turn, derive from Theg mchog mdzod).

283 For examples of recommending further study of their writings, see JTNs vol. 2: 21 & 134.

284 Here and in what follows, the fact that I have translated the term kun mkhyen as omniscient should not be taken to mean that I believe the tradition understood this in a literal or naïve sense. Even so, the term was reserved for Klong-chen rab-’byams and ‘Jigs-med gling-pa alone and is clearly a mark of their extraordinarily exalted status.
is necessary for following the path to awakening; to imply otherwise would be tantamount to criticism.  

2) Then there is the issue of legitimacy: what authorizes someone to comment on the words of the omniscient? Must the commentator not also be omniscient? To a degree, such expectation is an inevitable consequence of the reverence accorded prominent masters of the past. It is also a potential obstacle for any would-be commentator on buddhavacana, especially in the Mahāyāna. In such circumstances, the hermeneutical task is less the discovery of original insights than the re-discovery of the original author’s intention (abhiprāya; dgongs pa). 

2.1.1. Legitimation

If commentary is the rediscovery of an author’s intention, this invites the question of how one gains access to that intention. What, in other words, is the source of legitimation for any would-be commentator? Tibetan religious figures generally devote much of their lives to what might be termed a ‘quest for legitimation’: receiving teachings and empowerments, securing permission to teach and so on, both from living teachers and during visionary encounters. Biography and autobiography thus serve as, among other things, records of acquired legitimacy.

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285 Cabezón 1994: 79 makes a similar point about the potential redundancy of the commentarial enterprise more generally when he notes that: “Most scholastics consider scripture to be both complete (nothing essential is left out) and compact (it contains nothing unessential).” See also Collins 1998: 32: “For if the truth is already discovered, there is little or nothing for the intellectuals who come afterwards to do; they can be teachers to the outside world, preservers and interpreters of the truth, but not discoverers in their own right.”

286 In his Kun bzang dgongs rgyan, Tshul-khrims bzang-po introduces his teacher ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma, as one who “could discern unerringly the intent of the earlier and later Omniscient Ones, those great pioneers who commented independently on the meaning of the bka’ ma and gter ma teachings of the Great Perfection.” (TZb, vol. 5: 299f.: rdzogs chen ’di’i bka’ gter zung ’jug gi gsung rab kyi don rang dbang du ’grel ba’i shing rta chen po kun rhbyes snag phyis’i dgongs pa ma nor bar ’byed pa’i...). This clearly puts ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma in a second tier of commentators, one level below the two Omniscient Ones, while at the same time legitimizing his commentary. By invoking his teacher in these terms, Tshul-khrims bzang-po also establishes the validity of his own commentary, as the faithful record of one who had such access to the intent of these omniscient pioneers.

287 For a discussion of the issues surrounding legitimation in the gter ma tradition, see Gyatso 1993. There is a parallel here with the notion of cultural capital, as featured in the writings of Pierre
The commentaries on the *Klong chen snying thig* display some of the means of qualification that the tradition deems acceptable. One such method is the reporting of visionary encounters. It is one of the ways through which 'Jigs-med gling-pa himself acquired the authority to reveal treasures and teach.288 Another method is to emphasize an unbroken lineage of interpretation, perhaps singling out an individual teacher as the source of a given statement or entire text. rDza dPal-sprul follows this approach in the *Kun bzang bla ma’i zhal lung*,289 as does Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang in his notes (*zin bris*) upon that text.290 Some authors declare their own realization, forgoing conventional demonstrations of humility. rDza dPal-sprul adopts this strategy in his *mKhas pa šrī’i rgyal po’i khyad chos*, a text he claims to have “taken as a treasure from the realm of insight” (*shes rab klong nas gter du blangs*).291

‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma does not follow any such method. He does not describe visions. And although he pays homage to an unnamed teacher in several of his rDzogs-chen treatises, nowhere does he present his writings as a record of a teacher’s words or ‘oral transmission’ (*zhal lung*).292 Only a single text—the practice manual called *gNyug ma zang thal gyi sgrub thabschos nyid rang byung gi sgra*  

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290 See Ngawang Pelzang 2004 for a translation of Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang’s notes (*zin bris*) on dPal-sprul’s *Kun bzang bla ma’i zhal lung*, which are based on the oral teachings of sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma. Other notable works by Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang that derives from this same teacher are *gZhi khregs chod skabs kyi zin bris bstan pa’i nyi ma’i zhal lung snyan brgyud chu bo’i bcud dus* and Shin tu gsang ba chen po thod rgal snyan brgyud kyi zin bris kun tu bzang po’i dgongs rgyan yig med u pa de sha mkha’i ’gro’i thugs kyi ti ti ka.
291 PS vol. 5: 207–208. Note that for this and several other of his rDzogs-chen writings rDza dPal-sprul adopts the name *mKhas pa šrī’i rgyal-po*. Most obviously, he does this in *mKhas pa šrī’i rgyal po’i khyad chos*, both the root text and auto-commentary, but in addition, he (or his editors) use the name for his explanation of a visionary testament from ‘Jigs-med rgyal-ba’i-myu-gu to the Fourth rDzogs-chen incarnation, Mi’gyur nam-mkha’i-rdo-rje (PS vol. 5: 161–178).
292 Clearly, he was an acknowledged holder of the *Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse* lineage, and several of his teachers, including mKhan-po Padma badzra, rDza dPal-sprul and ‘Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po, belonged to that line. The biography by bSod-nams nyi-ma identifies mKhyen-brtse’i dbang-po as ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s main teacher and the one from whom he received, *inter alia*, “the ripening empowerments and liberating instructions of the earlier and later Heart-Essence.” (bSod nams nyi ma 2002: 74–75)
Neither here nor elsewhere does he profess realization. He does not claim privileged access to the insights of the exalted masters of the past. On the contrary, he repeatedly disavows such access. Despite his status as a rDo-grub incarnation and student of mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po, dPal-sprul, Mi-pham and others, he declares himself unfit to comment.

In no less than nine of the texts within his rDzogs-chen corpus, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma denies that he possesses the qualifications for the task at hand. In doing so, he deploys a rhetoric of humility that is commonplace throughout Tibetan literature. His comments though exceed the requirements of convention. They suggest a deliberate strategy of self-abasement for the purpose of legitimation.

2.1.2. Critical Authority

Despite his repeated expressions of humility, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s rDzogs-chen texts display remarkable clarity and decisiveness. They contain more cautious statements, too, as shown below, but 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma does not hesitate to criticise what he regards as a poor understanding of rDzogs-chen:

Some so-called great meditators have not so much as glimpsed even the general tendency of this adamantine path. They have no idea that settling without accepting or rejecting thoughts, which generally comes later, brings about the warmth which usually occurs earlier. To such practitioners, even talk of the crucial point of thoughts fading into basic space (dbyings) will seem bizarre, like seeing a white

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293 As indicated by, inter alia, the expression dha thim (“symbols dissolved” where dha is understood as a synonym for brda) at its conclusion, on which see Gyatso 1998: 94.
295 JTNg vol. 1: 442.3; JTNs vol. 2: 2.6; For examples see JTNg vol. 1: 498.5; JTNs vol. 2: 56.1; JTNg vol. 1: 554.1; JTNs vol. 2: 110.7; JTNg vol. 1 577.6; JTNs vol. 2: 133.10; JTNg vol. 1: 653.3; JTNs vol. 2: 209.13.
296 One notable exception appears in his answers to mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi blo-gros. When asked whether the crystal light channel is the ultimate form of avadhūti (dbu ma) and whether it bifurcates as it extends to the two eyes, he replies: “I have the vague impression (‘al ’ol) that it is like that, but as I can’t look at the text myself, I recommend that you consult Theg mchog mdzod.” (JTNg vol. 1: 570.6; JTNs vol. 2: 126.3: de ka ltar yin mchi snyam pa’i ‘al ’ol tsam las dpe cha bta ma thub pas theg mchog mdzod gzigs par zhu)
297 This is also a theme he takes up in sGrub brtson rnal ’byor gyi dbang po padma ma hā su kha’i bzshed skong du gdams pa. See JTNg vol. 1: 462.4f.; JTNs vol. 2: 21.
crow for the very first time. Still, I shall persist, as untroubled as a madman striking a yak on the nose.298

If the explanations he puts forward seem unfamiliar, he says, this is due to the ignorance of the audience rather than the novelty of the interpretation. In other words, some meditators miss the subtleties of rDzogs-chen theory because they are insufficiently familiar with established doctrine, not because what he proposes is new. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s role is to reiterate points contained in established, authoritative works; he does not innovate.

In another text, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma claims that “most great meditators today” (deng sang gi sgom chen phal mo che) mistake blank, thought-free meditation (of the kind propagated by Hwa-shang Mahāyāna/Mo-ho-yen)299 for genuine rDzogs-chen practice. Once again, the error arises because they are insufficiently acquainted with the great texts of the tradition. “To understand what is or is not genuine meditation practice,” he says, one must “consult the mdzod bdun.”300 Thus, in 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s view, textual learning is essential even for non-scholastic meditators.

2.2. Examples of Exegesis

To illustrate 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s approach to exegesis and his role as an authority, let us examine four topics from his rDzogs-chen writings: 1) a commentary on O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu’s final testament (zhal chems); 2)
explanations of the term ‘actual basis’ (dngos gzhi); 3) a discussion of intermediate states (bar do) and stages of dissolution (thim rim) at death; and 4) gnoseology.

2.2.1. The Final Testament of O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu

The writings of the dGe-mang scholar O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu are lost, but biographical accounts contain his purported final words:

I am Guru Padmākara of Oḍḍiyāna,
A buddha free from birth and death.
Awakening mind (bodhicitta) is impartial and unbiased,
Beyond labels of the eight stages, the four pairs.301

'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma discusses these lines in his Dad brtson blo ldan 'das shul grags ldan ngor gdam s pa.302 Interestingly, he begins his explanation by referring to O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu as “our guru” (btag cag gi bla ma).303 This is surprising because O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu does not feature in the standard lists of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s teachers. Still, it is possible that O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu taught him, perhaps when he studied with dPal-sprul. If so, this would connect him directly to the dGe-mang Movement.

'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma describes the first two lines of the testament as a “lion’s roar” (seng ge’i sgra sgrog). This is an expression of realization, specifically realization acquired through rDzogs-chen practice. The first three lines, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma says, convey the message that O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu has “seized the stronghold” (btsan sa bzung ba) and perfected the ultimate form of ‘transference’ or the ejection of consciousness (’pho ba; samkrānti/utkrānti) according to the rDzogs-chen tradition. The final line, in 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s view, expresses rDzogs-chen’s superiority to the inferior, effort-based vehicles

301 JTNg vol. 1 463.4; JTNs vol. 2: 22.2f.: nga o rgyan gu ru padma ’byung | |skye ’chi bral ba’i sangs rgyas yin| |byang chub sems la phyogs ris med| |zung bzhi ya bryad kyi ming ’dogs bral|
303 JTNg vol. 1 463.2; JTNs vol. 2: 21.
O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu conveys this point with reference to abhidharmic scholasticism, i.e., the four categories of stream-enterer (srotāpanna), once-returner (sakṛḍāgāmin), non-returner (anāgāmin) and worthy one (arhat), each of which can be further divided into the emerging (zhugs pa) and the established (gnas pa) to give eight categories in total. The fourth line indicates that the rDzogs-chen fruition is unlike any of these, since it transcends all.

According to 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma, then, the lesser vehicles and systems view the path as a gradual process of purification. rDzogs-chen, by contrast, involves the recognition of all-pervasive purity and a non-gradual traversal of paths and stages:

Therefore, in this vehicle there is no system of positing the fruition as something separate, as there is for the eight stages of the four pairs. According to that approach, we regard delusory appearances as faults and train in a limited form of yoga, through which it is possible to overcome the “seeing discards” (mthong spang; darśanapraḥātavya) of the three realms, but not the “meditation discards” (sgom spang; bhāvanapraḥātavya) of the desire realm (kāmadhātu); or else, to enter that realm in order to discard them; or to discard most of the desire-realm afflictions; or to discard them all but not totally overcome the afflictions related to the two upper realms, with the result that the sufferings of birth and death are still not entirely overcome, and so on. Here, by contrast, out of the expanse of realization of great, all-pervasive primordial purity, which is self-appearing and unbiased, all grounds and paths are traversed at once.

The explanation here echoes the scholastic orientation of the dGe-mang movement and its heirs. Both O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu’s terse, cryptic testament

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304 JTNg vol. 1 466:6.
305 The Abhidharmakośa and Abhidharmasamuccaya take different views on these two types of ‘discard’ (spang bya; prahātavya) or factors to be discarded. According to the Abhidharmasamuccaya, 112 factors are discarded through the path of seeing (darśanamarga)—40 for the desire realm and 36 each for the form and formless realms—and 414 factors through the path of meditation (bhāvanamarga). The categories of once-returner and non-returner are so named on the basis of whether it is necessary to return to the desire realm in order to relinquish the factors to be discarded in that realm.
306 JTNg 465.5f.: de'i phyir 'khrul snang la skyon du bta ste| nang gi mal 'byor nyi tshe ba la bslab pas khams gsum gyi mthong spang spangs kyang 'dod pa'i sgom spang ma spangs pa dang | de spong phyir du zhus pa dang | 'dod nyon phal cher spangs pa dang | de mtha' dag spangs kyang gong ma'i nyon mongs zad par ma spangs [466] pas skye 'chi'i sdug bsngal lhag med du ma log pa sogs kyi sgo nas 'bras bu tha dad du bzhag pa'i zung bzhi ya brygyad lta bu'i mam bzhag theg pa 'di la brtsir med de| ka dag rang snang ris med gdal ba chen po'i dgongs klong nas sa lam chig chod du bgro spangs pa'i phyir te|
and 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s commentary upon it combine the terminology of exoteric and esoteric forms of Buddhism. In other rDzogs-chhen writings, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma employs similarly scholastic language and makes use of concepts drawn from abhidharmic thought, as well as logic and epistemology.

2.2.2. The Actual Basis (dngos gzhi)

'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s interpretation of the term dngos gzhi attests to his scholarly approach. It also shows how he deals with a topic previously explored by two of his most illustrious predecessors, Klong-chen rab-'byams and 'Jigs-med gling-pa.

The Tibetan dngos gzhi translates the Sanskrit maula, meaning ‘fundamental’. Yet, unlike the Sanskrit, the Tibetan carries the literal sense of ‘actual basis’. In Tibetan literature, dngos gzhi generally signifies the main part (or practice) of something, as in the common triad of preliminary (sngon 'gro), main part (dngos gzhi) and conclusion (mjug). In rDzogs-chhen exegesis, however, the expression takes on additional significance. Here, the two component syllables are separated, so that four possible permutations (mu bzhi) emerge: 1) a basis that is not actual, 2) what is actual but not a basis, 3) what is neither actual nor a basis, 4) what is both actual and a basis.

307 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma (as recorded by his student 'Jam-dbyangs mkhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros) was seemingly aware that the linguistic analysis of the Tibetan term (as detailed in this section) does not apply to the original Sanskrit term. He therefore claims that since the Seventeen Tantras and other key rDzogs-chhen texts were not also translated from various dākinī languages, there is no certainty that the original term in this case is the Sanskrit. See Rang rig ye shes sogs 29.3: rgyud bcu bdun sogs rdo rje mkha’ ‘gro’i skad sna tshogs las bṣgyur ba yin saṃ skri t’i skad yin pa’i nges pa med cing dngos dang gzhi la sgra bying’ sgrub kyi so so’i go ba ji ltar rtal rgyu yod ma nges gsungs]. 308 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma himself notes that the term is used differently in rDzogs-chhen: “This is not an explanation of the term dngos gzhi as it is understood in the general language of the scriptures, but, rather, how it is applied in rDzogs-chhen, when dngos and gzhi are separated, and the permutations counted.” (JTNg vol. 1 553.6; JTNs vol. 2: 110.5: ’di dag gzhung spyi skad la grags pa’i dngos gzhi’i sgra bshad min gyi] rdzogs chen la ’jug tshul de la dngos dang gzhi gnyis phe ye ste de la mu brtis pa’o) On the tendency towards “etymologizing” in rDzogs-chhen and how this can blur the distinction between etymology and definition (or “denotation” as he calls it) see Germano 1992: 827.
David Germano connects the resulting explanation of these four permutations—the earliest example of which appears in *Theg mchog mdzod*—to Klong-ch’en rab-byams’s “creative approach” to scholasticism. More generally, of course, the tetralemma (Skt. *catuskoti*) is a common feature of Buddhist philosophy, especially Madhyamaka. Its deployment here could therefore derive from the scholastic education that Klong-ch’en rab-byams received at gSang-phu ne’u-thog. In any case, Klong-ch’en rab-byams’s analysis of the four permutations in rDzogs-chen generated further commentaries. ’Jigs-med gling-pa offers a slightly longer explanation in his *Ye shes bla ma*. His presentation differs subtly from that of Klong-ch’en rab-byams, and this discrepancy may itself have caused confusion.

For his part, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma discusses dngos gzhi on two occasions in his rDzogs-chen corpus: 1) in the commentary on the difficult points of the *Ye shes bla ma*, and 2) in a short work dedicated entirely to the subject, the *dNgos gzhi gnyis su mu bzhi rtsi tshul*. In both texts, he attempts to reconcile the explanations of Klong-ch’en rab-byams and ’Jigs-med gling-pa.

At the beginning of the *dNgos gzhi gnyis su mu bzhi rtsi tshul*, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma states his aim: “to clarify briefly what has been said concerning the method of counting the four permutations of dngos gzhi in the great guidance manual of sNying-thig”. The manual is the *Ye shes bla ma*, which is therefore his primary focus, but he also attempts to reconcile any apparent discrepancy between

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310 On the history of the *catuskoti* in Buddhist literature and especially in Madhyamaka philosophy see Ruegg 1977 (republished in Ruegg 2010: 37–112).  
311 For a brief discussion of the teachers and condition of this monastery during the time of Klong-ch’en rab-byams see Arguillère 2007: 32–35.  
312 *Ye shes bla ma’i dka’ gnas zin bris gsal ba’i sgron me* (JTNs vol.2: 248–270).  
313 JTNg vol. 1: 547–554; JTNs vol. 2: 104–110. A complete translation appears in Appendix 2 below.  
314 JTNg vol. 1: 547.5; JTNs vol. 2: 104.1: snying thig khrid yig chen mor| dngos gzhi gnyis la mu bzhi brtsi tshul zhig gsungs pa de nyung gsal bshad dgos zhes phebs par|
that text and \textit{Theg mchod mdzod}. Before considering 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma’s
own comments, let us look briefly at his two sources.

\subsection{2.2.2.1. Klong-chen rab-'byams: Theg mchog mdzod}

The \textit{Theg mchog mdzod} introduces the four \textit{dngos gzhi} permutations in
chapter eighteen. The relevant section appears after the preliminaries, before the stages of the main practice:

Of the four permutations of actual and basis, that of ‘being the basis and not the actual’ is like seeing a palace and not seeing the king. This is comparable to those few who leave rDzogs-chen at the basic level, without applying it practically, and simply spout hot air about \textit{dhammad}, so that they die an ordinary death. ‘Being the actual but not the basis’ is like seeing the king but not making out his features. This is compared to some instructions which strike the right chord at the beginning, but, by failing to cut through the limitations of verbalism, stray from the crucial point and turn instead into speculation. ‘Being neither the actual nor the basis’ is like seeing neither the king nor the palace. This compares to those who adopt an approach of intellectual analysis as the view and meditation, basing it on the general terminology that is common to all vehicles; since they do not recognise the true meaning, they do not know their ultimate destination. ‘Being both the actual and the basis’ is like viewing a king repeatedly and knowing his characteristics well. This is compared to directly seeing the awareness that is the key point of the Heart-Essence, with the effect that one no longer relies on vague ideas about the view and meditation. Since the ground is seen, there is no basis for turning back, and one is “an adept who has cut through \textit{samsāra} and \textit{nirvāṇa} simultaneously.”\footnote{KLR vol. 18: 117f.: dngos gzhi zhes pa mu bzhi las| gzhi yin la dngos ma yin pa pho brang mthong nas rgyal po ma mthong ba ltar rdzogs pa chen po kha cig gis chos gzhi la lus nas lag tu blang du med par chos nyid kha 'byams su song bas 'chi khar tha mal du 'chi ba mams so| dngos yin la gzhi ma yin pa ni rgyal po mthong yang de'i mtshan nyid gan la ma phebs pa ltar| man ngag kha cig thog ma gnad thog tu phebs kyang thar ma tshig gis mtha' ma chod pas rjes la de'i thog tu mi gnas pur pra yas pa mams so| dngos dang gzhi gnyis ka ma yin pa ni rgyal po dang pho brang gang yang ma mthong ba ltar| theg pa thun mong ba spysis tshig gi lta sgom yid dpyod kyi lam du byas nas| don ngo ma 'phrod pas tha ma gar 'gro ngo mi shes pa mams so| dngos dang gzhi gnyis ka yin pa ni rgyal po yang yang mthong mtshan nyid kyang legs par shes pa 'dra bar| mgon sum snying tig gi gnad rig pa dngos su [118] mthong bas| lta sgom yin snyam la rag ma la| gzhi mthong bas ldog pa'i sa med par 'khor 'das dus gcig la chod pa'i ma| "byor pa zhes bya'o"}

This portrayal of the \textit{tetralemma} establishes the superiority of the Heart-Essence practice over other systems of instruction. At the same time, it contrasts an incomplete \textit{application} of the rDzogs-chen teachings, as outlined in the first three permutations, with the level of attainment represented by the fourth. This
The example of the king is used to signify ‘the actual’ in each permutation. In two of the four the palace signifies ‘the basis’; in the second and fourth, though, the the basis is the king’s features (mtshan nyid). It is unclear why the text employs these two different examples for the basis, possibly because Klong-chen rab’-byams could not envisage how one could see a king without simultaneously seeing his palace.

2.2.2.2. ’Jigs-med gling-pa: Ye shes bla ma

The explanation in the Ye shes bla ma appears to derive from the Theg mchog mdzod, but it is more extensive than its apparent source and diverges from it in slight but nonetheless significant ways:

‘Being the basis but not the actual’ is like seeing a temple without seeing the three representations [of Buddha’s body, speech and mind] within. This refers to relying upon mere words expressing interconnectedness, such as ‘profound and clear’ (zab gsal) or ‘appearance and emptiness’ (snang stong) and so on, as the view and the meditation. This [i.e., rDzogs-chen snying thig] is not like that.

‘Being the actual but not the basis’ is like seeing the three representations without determining their characteristics. Although there might be some understanding of non-elaboration (spros bral) beyond the four ontological alternatives (mu bzhi) or the eight extremes (mtha’ brgyad) derived from intellectual analysis (rtog dpyod), it is unconnected to experience and therefore speculative (pra yas pa). Again, this is not like that.

Furthermore, this is not a philosophical system (grub mtha’) that is ‘neither the actual nor the basis’, which would be like seeing nothing—neither the ’Phrul-snang [i.e., Jo-khang] temple nor the Śākyamuni image [inside it]. This would involve taking mere intellectual analysis as the path, thinking, “All phenomena are devoid of any inherent nature.” Yet, as the essence that lacks true nature has not been introduced directly, one remains ordinary at the time of death.

By contrast, the view of the Heart-Essence of the Natural Great Perfection is the essence of ‘both the actual and the basis’, like ascertaining the nature of both the supporting [temple] and the supported [representations], just as they are. Without
depending, therefore, on some notion about what the view and meditation might be, self-liberation is shown directly.\textsuperscript{316}

Here, ’Jigs-med gling-pa replaces the secular example of a king and his palace with more numinous imagery, the sacred representations of enlightened body, speech and mind in a temple (see Table 1 below). When he explains the third permutation, he specifies that the temple is the famous ’Phrul-snang (or Jo-khang) in Lhasa, home to the revered Jo-bo statue of Śākyamuni Buddha.\textsuperscript{317} In addition, he elaborates on the faults of the three first permutations and the virtues of the fourth.

\textit{Table 1: Four permutations of dngos gzhi in the Theg mchog mdzod and Ye shes bla ma}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referent</th>
<th>Theg mchog mdzod</th>
<th>Ye shes bla ma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Basis, not actual</td>
<td>Seeing palace, not king</td>
<td>Leaving rDzogs-chen at basic level, not applying it practically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Actual, not basis</td>
<td>Seeing king, not features</td>
<td>Failing to go beyond verbalism, ending with speculation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Neither actual nor basis</td>
<td>Seeing neither king nor palace</td>
<td>Intellectual analysis as view and meditation, based on general terminology common to all vehicles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{316} Ye shes bla ma 327f.: gzhi yin la dngos ma yin pa lha khang mthong yang rten gsum ma mthong ba lta bu zab gsal dangi snang stong la sogs pa gcig la gcig ’brel gyi tshig tsam la lta sgom yin par yid brtan ’cha’ ba’ang ma yin| dngos yin la gzhi ma yin pa rten gsum mthong yang mtshan nyid gn la ma phibs pa [328] nu bzhi’am| mtha’ brgyad spros bral rtoṅ dpyod kyis go yang myong thog tu ma chags pas pra yas pa yang ma yin| dngos dang gzhi gnyis ka ma yin pa ’phrul snang dang shākya mu ne gang yang ma mthong pa lta bu chos thams cad rang bzhin med do zhes yid dpyod tsam gyis lam du byed pa las rang bzhin med pa’i ngo bo bcar phog tu ngo ma ’phrod pas ’chi khar tha mal du lus pa’i grub pa’i mtha’ ma yin par’i di rang bzhin rdzogs pa chen po snying thig gi lta ba dngos dang gzhi gnyis ka yin pa’i ngo bo rten dang brten pa’i gnas tshul ji bzhin pa gn la phebs pa dang ’dra bas lta sgom yin snyam la rug ma lus par rang grol mngon sum par ston pa’o

\textsuperscript{317} i.e., the 1.5-metre-high statue of Buddha Śākyamuni, which is the most revered image in all of Tibet.
The additions in *Ye shes bla ma* were not commentarial; they did not clarify the explanation in the *Theg mchog mdzod*. The *Ye shes bla ma* diverged from the *Theg mchog mdzod*, both in its examples and its explanation (as outlined in Table 1). It thus increased the need for further commentary, partly to show how these two important texts do not contradict one another.

### 2.2.2.3. *Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma*

It is not difficult to see why the two explanations of *dngos gzhi* given above might require further clarification. For one thing, neither Klong-chen rab-'byams nor 'Jigs-med gling-pa specifies what they mean by either ‘actual’ or ‘basis’. This prompts 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma to begin *dNgos gzhi gnyis su mu bzhi rtsi tshul* with the following definitions:

‘Basis’ here refers to the mode of abiding (*bzhugs tshul*) of the ground—a among the trio of ground, path and fruition (*gzhi lam ’bras gsum*)—and ‘actual’ refers to its being actualised. They correspond therefore to that which is to be realised (*rtogs bya*) and the means of realising it (*rtogs tshul*).[^318]

He offers a similar interpretation in the *Ye shes bla ma’i dka’ gnas zin bris*:

‘Basis’ must be understood as a support (*rten*) or causal means (*rgyu’i thabs*). The ‘actual basis’, therefore, must be understood as the method for realising (*rtogs byed kyi thabs*) the actual mode of abiding (*gnas lugs*) of what is to be realized, just as it is.[^319]

This is not the only possible interpretation of *dngos gzhi*, however. As an alternative, consider the following explanation from sMyo-shul 'Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje:

[^318]: JTNg vol. 1: 547.5; JTNs vol. 2: 104.4: *gzhi ni gzhi lam ’bras gsum gyi zlas phye ba’i gzhi’i bzhugs tshul de la byed| dngos ni de mngon du gyur pa la byed pas rtogs bya dang rtogs tshul gyi sgo nas bzhag cing|

[^319]: JTNs vol. 2: 253.5: *gzhi ni rten nam rgyu’i thabs zhes pa’i don du go dgos pas dngos gzhi zhes pa’ang rtogs bya’i gnas lugs dngos de ji bzhin rtogs byed kyi thabs la go dgos pa*
It is convenient to understand ‘basis’ as referring to the natural state (gnas lugs) of alpha-purity (ka dag), while ‘actual’ is the radiance of awareness (rig gdangs) in Thod-rgal, the vajra chains, pure realms (zhing), forms (sku), palaces and so on.

The differences are immediately apparent. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma views the basis as the potential, ground or cause, and the actual as the realization of that potential. In contrast, 'Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje relates the basis to the natural state as it is understood in the practice of Khregs-chod. He interprets the actual as the manifestations of awareness, the visionary forms outlined in the practice of Thod-rgal.

The Theg mchog mdzod changes the imagery slightly for the second and fourth permutations, as noted above. Here, the basis (gzhi) is illustrated not by the palace but by the king’s features. A similar shift occurs in the Ye shes bla ma, but only in the second permutation. Its example for the basis is not the temple but the features (mtshan nyid) of the representations of enlightened body, speech and mind within the temple. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma explains:

The example for basis in the first permutation is a temple, whereas in the second permutation it is the features of the three representations. The referent of these examples, however, is the same, i.e., the basis, in both earlier and later permutations. The basis must be illustrated differently in this way. If it were not, there would be no means of distinguishing ‘being both the actual and the basis’ from ‘being the actual but not the basis’. It is not incongruous to see a temple and its three representations while being unable to determine the features of the three representations. Without the change, therefore, the example could not successfully illustrate the superiority of the yoga of the Heart-Essence.

320 My translation of ka dag as alpha-purity follows the example of Chögyam Trungpa (Chögyam Trungpa 1992: 63), who pointed out that the English (or Greek) equivalent of ka, meaning the beginning or original because of its position as the first letter in the Tibetan alphabet is “alpha”. (Cf. Revelation 22:13: ἐγώ ἐμί τὸ Α καὶ τὸ Ω ἀργή καὶ τέλος ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἐσχάτος) I prefer this to such explanatory translations as “primordial purity,” not least because Tibetan authors themselves occasionally felt the need to gloss the term ka dag, as may be seen elsewhere in the writings of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma (JTNs vol. 2: 69), for example.

321 Rig ’dzin brgyud pa’i zhal lung 78.4: gzhi zhes pa ni ka dag gi gnas lugs dang/ dngos zhes pa thod rgal gyi rig gdangs rdo rje lu gu rgyud dang zhing sku pho brang sogs la go na stabs bde zhing! This text is primarily a clarification of Klong-chen rab’byams’ comments in Theg mchog mdzod.

322 Moreover, the fact that 'Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje himself wrote not one but two short texts on this topic further suggests its perceived complexity. Rig ’dzin brgyud pa’i zhal lung 77–79 & 180–181. Note however that these texts seemingly borrow from the Kun bzang thugs kyi tikka of Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang.

323 JTNg vol. 1: 548.3; JTNs vol. 2: 104.14.: dpe’i skabs su mu dang po’i gzhi lha khang dang/ gnyis pa’i gzhi rten gsum gyi mtshan nyid la sbyar yang/ don gyi tshe ni gzhi gong ’og mams gcig tu bya
In other words, although there is a change of example for the second permutation, the referent is the same as in the other permutations. The features of the three representations signify what the temple signifies in the other permutations. If this were not the case, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma says, the second permutation would be no different from the fourth. He takes it for granted that one cannot see the three representations inside a temple without also seeing the temple itself. Thus, an example that refers explicitly to seeing the three representations implies that the temple is also seen, just as in the fourth permutation. Rather than risk such ambiguity, 'Jigs-med gling-pa proposes that one might see the three supports without being able to determine their features. One can imagine such a scenario, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma says. It is not incongruous in the way that seeing the three supports while being unaware of the temple would be. Thus, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma limits addresses only the implications of the original examples; he does not challenge their validity.

'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma appreciates that the examples constitute a potential source of confusion. He notes, for instance, that although a temple and its internal imagery have a relationship of ‘support and supported’ (*ren dang brten pa*), this does not imply a similar relationship between referents.\(^3^{24}\)

Above all, he seeks to clarify the statements of Klong-chen rab-’byams and 'Jigs-med gling-pa. He thus remains securely within the bounds of established discourse. Exegesis here primarily involves reconciling discrepancies within the sources. As a further example, consider the third permutation: ‘being neither the

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\(^{324}\) JTNg vol. 1: 548.2; JTNs vol. 2: 104.12: lha khang dang rten gsum gnyis ka mthong ba dang/ rten gsum gyi mtshan nyid gtan la ma phebs pa mi ’gal ba bzhiin du/ dngos gzhi gnyis ka yin pa’ang dngos yin la gzhi ma yin pa dang mi ’gal bar ’gyur la/ de’i tshe snying tig gi mral ’byor khyad par du ’phags tshul ston pa la sbyar ba ma ’brel ba ’gyur ba’i phyir ro\|

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basis nor the actual’. In the Ye shes bla ma, ’Jigs-med gling-pa asserts that this might result in an ordinary death. But the comment is markedly similar to a statement Klong-chen rab-byams makes in connection with the first permutation. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma therefore attempts to show that the two statements are not in conflict. ‘Although they are two different ways of remaining ordinary,’” he says, “‘both are similar in that they involve a failure to capture what develops in meditation.”325 The third permutation, he claims, is a situation in which the crucial point of the instructions has not yet been grasped. And even if it has, this permutation refers to a time when the practice is still to be mastered. This applies even to students of the highest capacity, as indicated by the sequence of listening, reflecting and meditating (thos bsam sgom pa). He concludes that this explanation applies equally to the first and third permutations.326

Naturally, this raises the question as to whether there is much difference between these two permutations at all. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma explains that, in the Theg mchog mdzod, the first permutation signifies a failure to comprehend the crucial point of the instruction. The statement that the instruction is not applied practically (lag tu blang du med pa) makes this clear, he says.327 He continues:

This means that when you are training in other perfection stage practices of Highest Yoga Tantra, for example, you might understand the explanations of the clear light or wisdom form (kāya), but unless you also fully understand the practices through which they are accomplished—the yogic practices involving channels, wind-energies and essences—you are just like a boatman without any oars. Similarly, you might understand the explanations of awareness and its radiance (gdangs) or the meaning of the ground and ground-manifestations (gzhi snang), but unless you are also skilled in the definitive points of how to remain and thereby transform your understanding into the essence of the path and fruition, [the result will be just as in

325 JTNg vol. 1: 552.1; JTNs vol. 2: 108.7: de gnyis tha mal du lus lugs mi ’dra yang| sgom byung gi sne ma zin pa la ’dra zhiing| 326 JTNg vol. 1: 552.1; JTNs vol. 2: 108.9: de las mu gsum pas ni gdams pa’i gnad ma rnyed pa shin tu gsal la de tshang bar myed kyang myed pa ltar gyi nyams len ma ’byongs pa’i skabs ni gdul bya mchog la’ang yod tshul thos bsam sgom pa’i go rim gys shes shing| de gong smros’ ltar mu dang pos bsdus par bshad na’ang mi ’thad pa med mod kyi| a JTNg smos. 327 JTNg vol. 1: 552.3; JTNs vol. 2: 108.14: mu dang po theg mchog mdzod kyi sgras zin gtso bo ni| man ngag gi gnad tshang bar ma rnyed pa la byed de| lag tu blang du med par zhes sogs kyis gsal lo|
the saying]: “In the desert of ambiguous treatises, stricken by thirst and left to die.”

This passage suggests that the tetralemma is not simply a means to demonstrate the superiority of the Heart-Essence. Here, the permutations serve to chart the progress of an individual. Thus, the first permutation applies to a practitioner of the Heart-Essence, albeit one who has not progressed beyond an early stage. It is necessary even for inexperienced practitioners of the Heart-Essence to understand such topics as awareness and its radiance, or the ground and what originates from it. But such knowledge of the theory must eventually be combined with practical skill. Whether one dies “an ordinary death” or not is not simply determined by the tradition one follows; it also depends on one’s progress within a certain tradition. In connecting it to individual progress, ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma was possibly seeking to realign the tetralemma and lend it a more practical purpose in an era when the superiority of the sNying-thig had long been accepted.

In summary, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s exegesis serves to clarify the statements of his tradition’s founders, Klong-chen rab-’byams and ’Jigs-med gling-pa, partly by reconciling contradictions in their works. He writes with authority and makes his own original contributions, but his explanation of dngos gzhi is firmly anchored in traditional sources. Let us contrast his approach with that of Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang (1879–1941), the famous rDzogs-chen commentator and abbot of Kadhog. The latter’s account in the Kun bzang thugs kyi ʈikka simplifies the tetralemma and relates each permutation to a different level of teaching (see Table 2):

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328 JTNs vol. 1: 552.3; JTNs vol. 2: 108.16: de’i don yang dpur na bla med kyi rdzogs rim gzhan la slob tshe ’od gsal dang ye shes kyi sku’i ’jog tshul la go ba myed kyang de dag sgrub byed rtsa rlung thig le’i rin ’byor rams legs par ma shes na mnyan pa lag skya med pa lta bur ’gro ba de bzhin du rig pa dang de’i gdangs kyi ’jog tshul lam gzhi dang gzhi snang gi go don sogs shes kyang de dag lam dang ’bras bu’i ngo bor go ’pho ba’i thabs su skyong thabs kyi gnad nges pa gsungs pa’i don rams la ma mkhas na de ni bstan bcos don mang mya ngam gyi| |thang la skom pas gdung ste ’chi bar zad|
In this, the first [permutation] relates to the categories of Mind (sems) and Space (klong); the second to the Outer, Inner and Secret sections of the Pith Instruction category; the third to the Dialectical Vehicle (mtshan nyid theg pa); and the fourth to the main part of the Innermost Unexcelled [section of the Pith Instruction category].

Table 2: Four permutations of dngos gzhi in the Kun bzang thugs kyi ŋikka

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referent per Kun bzang thugs kyi ŋikka</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Basis, not actual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind Category (sems sde), Space Category (klong sde)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Actual, not basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer, Inner &amp; Secret sections of Pith Instruction Category (man ngag sde)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Neither actual nor basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialectical vehicle (mtshan nyid theg pa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Both actual and basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innermost Unexcelled section (yang gsang bla na med pa) of Pith Instruction Category</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These correlations do not appear in either the Theg mchog mdzod or in the Ye shes bla ma. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma himself offers no such radical interpretation. He does not depart from the views of his tradition’s founders but seeks to reconcile them. Any additions that he makes are part of an attempt to achieve harmonization. This itself is a recognised feature of scholasticism.

2.2.3. The Intermediary States & Stages of Dissolution

'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma also seeks to clarify incongruities when he discusses the stages of dissolution (thim rim) at death and the post-mortem intermediary states (bar do). He does so in several places in his rDzogs-chen

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329 Kun bzang thugs kyi ŋikka 251b.1: de la dang po ni sems klong gnyis| gnyis pa man ngag sde’e phyi nang gsang ba’i skor gsum| gsum pa mtshan nyid theg pa bzhi pa yang gsang bla na med pa’i dngos gzhi’o| Cf. sMyo-shul ’Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje’s similar but crucially different interpretation in his Rig ’dzin brgyud pa’i zhal lung, where he suggests that it is the first permutation, rather than the third, that relates to the dialectical vehicle (180.6f.: mu dang po go myong rtogs gsum med pa mtshan nyid theg pa’i gnyis pa gsang sngags thun mong baj mu gsum pa rdzogs chen sems klong thig le skor gsum dang| mu bzhi pa skor tsho bzhi pas don gyi ngo bo gtan la phab pa). The difference is most likely attributable to an error in the text however, as the third permutation, which is neither the actual nor the basis, should always represent the least evolved state or scenario.

330 Cabezón 1994: 55: “Scholastics are systematizers, and as such they seek to bring unity to a tradition. To accomplish this, scholastic philosophers have often considered it necessary to create (or, less charitably, to impose) a monothetic vision on a polysemic textual corpus.”
writings, most notably in the Ye shes bla ma’i dka’ gnas zin bris and in response to some of the questions that ’Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros poses. 331

Throughout these texts, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma relies upon the views of Klong-chen rab-’byams and ’Jigs-med gling-pa. Thus, when he is asked about the stages of dissolution, he directs his correspondent to the Theg mchog mdzod and Ye shes bla ma. 332 Once again, he displays caution when he identifies contradiction or illogicality in these treatises. For example, when asked about an unusual sequence of post-mortem experiences in one of ’Jigs-med gling-pa’s aspiration prayers, he is reluctant to interpret this anomaly as an error:

[Question 16:] What is the significance of the explanation in the intermediate state aspiration prayer of the Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse that the [experience of] redness arises before [the whiteness experience]? 333

[Answer:] There would appear to be some purpose behind the sequence of the three symbolic appearances of redness, whiteness and blackness in sKu gsum zhing khams sb Yong ba’i s mon lam. Still, in other works, such as the dGongs gcig rgya mtsho, the rTsa rlung rig ’dzin ’khrul ’khor and the earlier and later sections of rNam mkhyen shing rta, the omniscient one himself [i.e., ’Jigs-med gling-pa] explains them in the usual sequence of whiteness, redness, and blackness. I wonder, therefore, whether we can be certain that the earlier text is not corrupted by a scribal error. 334

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331 i.e., in rDzogs chen dris lan (JTNg vol. 1: 563–579; JTNs vol. 2: 117–135). The Hor ’od zer gyi ngor gdams pa (JTNg vol. 1: 554.2–561; JTNs vol. 2: 110–117) also briefly discusses the dissolution stages.

332 JTNg vol. 1: 559.2; JTNs vol. 2: 115.9: sa sa la thim pa sogs nas| mam shes nam mkha’| nam mkha’ ’od gsal| ’od gsal zung ’jug| zung ’jug ye shes| ye shes lhun grub la thim pa’i bar dang| mthar lhun grub nang dbyings su s sud pa’i tshul bcas rgya cher theg mchog mdzod dang| gna’ dus khrid yig ye shes bla mar gsal bas der g zig s hig

333 The texts on the process of dying, which ultimately derive from the Guhyasamāja Tantra and associated literature (Germano 2007: 72), refer to an experience of brilliant luminosity which follows the three post-mortem experiences of whiteness, redness and blackness, known as ‘appearance’ (snang ba), ‘increase’ (mched pa) and ‘near-attainment’ (nyer thob). These three stages occur after the outer dissolution of the body’s five elements and are accompanied by the cessation of 80 instinctive forms of conceptualization: 33 forms associated with anger, 40 with desire, and seven with ignorance. The dawning of clear light, which follows immediately upon the experience of near-attainment and the cessation of all these conceptualizations, is likened to a clear, cloudless sky. Thurman (2010) translates snang mched nyer thob gsum as luminance, radiance and imminence, and gives Sanskrit as āloka, ābhāsa, upalabdhi. He calls them the “three intuitions” or “intuitive wisdoms” of the subtle mind and says they are “experienced as moonlit, sunlit and darklit [sic] (or evening twilight or midnight darkened) sky spaces, when the wind-energies have dissolved into the central channel and the 80 instinctual natures have subsided” (628) The subsequent fourth state of clear light is “experienced as a diamond crystal grey predawn twilight transparency or transparency” (ibid.).

334 JTNg vol. 1: 571.3; JTNs vol. 2: 126.14: bcu drug pa| klong snying bar do’i s mon lam las dmar lam sgon du ’char bar bshad pa’i g na d ci lags gsungs par| sku gsum zhing khams sb Yong ba’i s mon lam las s nag bag sum gyi rtags snang dmar dkar nag g sum gyi rim pas sbyar ba de la dgongs par
Although there is no other textual support for this sequence—according to which the redness experience (*dmar lam*) of increase (*mcheda pa*) precedes the whiteness experiences (*dkar lam*) of appearance (*snang ba*)—*Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma allows for some purpose or “intention” (*dgongs pa*) behind it. He then concedes that since *Jigs-med gling-pa* himself makes no reference to this in his other writings, the original text may have been corrupted. The language here, with its use of the double negative “*min pa’i nges pa’ang mi ’dug snyam*” (“I wonder…whether we can be certain that…is not…”), is markedly hesitant.

*Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma refers to this potential anomaly in his response to *Hor ’Od-zer*. After directing his questioner to the *Theg *mchog mdzod* and *Ye shes bla ma*, he writes:

> Various statements have been made about whether it is necessary for the three experiences of appearance, increase and attainment (*snang mched thob gsum*) to arise as is explained in other tantras. In fact, awareness (*rig pa*) in this system is the same as the wisdom of clear light. Therefore, the clear light at the conclusion of appearance, increase and attainment is the actual awareness of the Great Perfection. However, when it comes to how the awareness of the Great Perfection manifests, it is not certain that it will occur in the way the three—i.e., appearance, increase and attainment—are explained. This is because there is variation in how the clear light arises based on the distinctive characteristics of the individual. Accordingly, various stages of dissolution are taught in other hidden tantras (*sbas rgyud*), the *Kālacakra*, and here.335

This explanation may be intended to account for the unexpected statement in the *Klong chen snying thig* aspiration prayer, but it also harmonises rDzogs-chen with the gSar-ma tantras, especially the *Kālacakra*. *Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma proposes*

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335 JTNs yang fo. 1: 559.4; JTNs vol. 2: 115.14f.: ’di dus snang mched thob gsum rgyud gzhan nas bshad tshod tsho ’char dgos mi dgos la sna tshogs smra yang| don gnas ni ’di ’i lugs kyi rig pa dang| ’od gsal gyi ye shes geig yin des na snang mched thob gsum gyi mtsha’i ’od gsal rdzogs chen gyi rig pa ’chi dus mngon du byed tshul la snang mched thob gsum bshad tshod bzhin ’ong ba’i nges pa med de| ’od gsal ’char tshul la gang zag gi khyad par gyis mi ’dra ba sna tshogs shig snang ba’i phyir te| sras rgyud gzhan dang dus ’khor dang| ’di nas gsungs pa’i ’od gsal du thim pa’i rim pa mi ’dra ba bzhin no|| JTNs yang.
that differences in the explanations of the dissolution process reflect differences in the spiritual capacity of individuals.\textsuperscript{336} Such inclusivism is characteristic of his rDzogs-chen writings in other areas too, as will become apparent.\textsuperscript{337}

\subsection*{2.2.4. Gnoseological Precision}

Gnoseology, i.e., the definition and typology of wisdom (\textit{ye shes}; \textit{jñāna}) and/or awareness (\textit{rig pa}), is a recurrent theme in 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s writings on rDzogs-chen. rDzogs-chen asserts that wisdom awareness is the most fundamental facet of what we believe to constitute existence. Ontology is, in this respect, subordinate to gnoseology. The full range of lived experience within saṁsāra, or unenlightened existence, arises through our failure to recognise primordial awareness and the consequence of this failure, delusion.\textsuperscript{338}

\subsection*{2.2.4.1. Gnosis and the Onset of Delusion}

In the \textit{Theg mchog mdzod}, Klong-chen rab-'byams describes in detail the process through which beings either recognise the original ground of reality and become enlightened or fail to perceive it and thereby stray into delusion.\textsuperscript{339} Klong-chen rab-'byams’s writings constitute an authoritative source for later commentators, including 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma. Yet, this remained a complex topic, prompting questions from students seeking to make sense of canonical sources. One such student was 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros. He enquired whether the onset of delusion might not point to a flaw in the ground of reality itself. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma responded as follows:

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{336} Moreover, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma repeats his assertion that the dissolution process varies from one individual to another in his text of answers to questions from 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros. (JTNg vol. 1: 567.3; JTNs vol. 2: 122.11: gang zag gi khyad pa par gis thin rtags de dag la mgon tshan che chung ni sna tshogs shig 'ong ba ’draj)

\textsuperscript{337} See the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{338} Hence the recently coined term “psycho-cosmogony”. See Germano 2004b: 290.

\textsuperscript{339} These topics are covered most extensively in chapters eight, nine and ten of the treatise. See KLR vol. 17: 312–387. See also Germano 1992: 60–76 & 143–213.
The great brahmin [i.e., Saraha] said:

Mind-as-such alone is the seed of all,
Wherein existence and nirvāṇa arise.  

As this indicates, if the genuine mind of clear light ('od gsal gnyug ma'i sens) alone is not recognized, then it is the ground of delusion; whereas if it is recognized and stability [in this recognition] is attained, it becomes the source of liberation. As the former corresponds to the phase of the ground and the latter to the phase of fruition, the great Omniscient [Klong chen pa] refuted claims that these two [i.e., the ground of delusion and ground of liberation] are identical. At the ground stage, every time we die, the clear light dawns in its entirety, but, through a failure to recognize it, we revert to the flow of deluded, dualistic grasping. By contrast, when arriving at the state of liberation, there can be no turning back, because we will have seized the stronghold directly. This is the difference.

Here 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma relies once again on Klong-chen rab-byams. But he also breaks with tradition. To the best of my knowledge, the phrase 'od gsal gnyug ma'i sens does not appear in any of Klong-chen rab-byams’s writings. Moreover, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma cites Saraha rather than one of the rDzogs-chen tantras or a figure from the rNying-ma tradition. While many of his contemporaries draw upon Saraha’s dohās, few do so in their explanations of rDzogs-chen.

'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma argues that while clear light and the deluded mind (‘khrul pa’i sens) are not identical, they possess the same character (bdag nyid), essence (ngo bo) or substance (rdzas). He does not cite any sources in support of his opinion. This perhaps prompts him to adopt a tentative tone:

340 These lines are from Saraha’s Dohākṣoṣagīti (Do ha mdzod kyi glu). Jackson 2004: 73 gives the original as: cittekka saalavāṃ bhavaṇīvāṃ vi jasna viphuranti.
341 JTNg vol. 1: 563.3; JTNs vol. 2: 118.8: bram ze chen pos| sens nyid gcig pu kun gyi sa bon te| |gang la srid dang mya ngan 'das 'phro ba| zhes gsungs pa lta| 'od gsal gnyug ma’i sens gcig pu de ka ngo ma shes na ‘khrul pa’i gzhi dang ngo shes nas btsan pa thob na grol sar 'gyur te snga ma gzhi dang phyi ma ‘bras bu’i gnas skabs yin pas de gnyis gcig tu smra ba kun mkhyen chen pos bkag yod| gzhi’i skabs su ‘chi thengs re bzhin ‘od gsal de yongs rdzogs ‘char yang ngo ma shes pa’i dbang gis slar yang ‘khrul pa’i gzung ‘dzin gyi yo lang du Idog la| grol sar slesbs dus rang thog tu btsan sa zin pas phyir mi Idog pa’i khyad par yod|
342 gnyug sens ‘od gsal does however appear in the title of one of the texts of ’Ju Mi-pham’s gNyug sens skor gsun, while similar phrases, such as gnyug ma’i ‘od gsal and gnyug don gyi ‘od gsal appear in the same author’s rTogs ldan rga’gan mo rnams kyi lugs sens ngo mdzub tshugs kyi gdam pa mun sel sgron me, MPc Vol. 32: 363–368.
343 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i nyi-ma also refers to Saraha elsewhere in the rDzogs-chen corpus, e.g., JTNs vol. 2: 59.
The clear light of the ground never develops into the essence of delusion; it could not possibly do so, which is why it is described as ‘primordially liberated’, ‘utterly pure from the beginning’, ‘alpha pure’ (ka dag), and so on. But then we cannot say that the energetic mind, which has begun to cling to ground-appearances, is undeluded. Therefore, we must say that these two are not identical and are distinct.

Yet, as was said by the awareness-holders of the past, although delusion is not clear light, there can be no delusion in the absence of clear light. In view of this, I wonder if we should not assert that delusion is of the same character or essence as clear light yet differs in substance.  

Clear light cannot be identical to delusion, he explains: the former is pure and undeluded, the latter is impure and deluded. Still, since delusion can only exist because of clear light—as a misuse of its potential, one might say—they must be of the same character, essence or substance. In other words, clear light and delusion are substantially but not functionally identical. And while delusion depends on clear light, the reverse is not true: clear light does not depend on delusion. David Higgins refers to this as “structural asymmetry”: ignorance depends on awareness, but awareness does not depend on ignorance. Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma refers to clear light (’od gsal) here, whereas most other rDzogs-chen authors speak only of pure awareness (rig pa).

2.2.4.2. The Distinction Between Mind and Awareness

The differentiation (shan byed) between the ordinary mind (sems) and pure awareness is a key feature of the Heart-Essence form of rDzogs-chen. It is so important that Higgins, who devoted an entire thesis to the topic, compares it to the two truths theory in Madhyamaka. He identifies several key texts and passages on shan byed in the writings of Klong-chen rab-byams, for whom it was certainly an

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344 JTNg vol. 1: 564.4; JTNs vol. 2: 119.11: gzhi’i ’od gsal ’khrul pa’i ngo bor skyes ma myong zhing mi srid pas ye grol dang ggod nas mam dag dang ka dag sogs su brjod lai gzhi snang la’dzin pa zhugs pa’i rlung sems de ma’khrul zer mi nus pas de gnyis mi gcig cing tha dad du ’jog dgos kyang ’khrul pa ’od gsal min yang’od gsal spangs pa’i ’khrul pa cig med par rig’dzin gong nas gsungs pa ltar de ’dra’i ’khrul pa de’od gsal de’i bdag nyid dang ngo bo nyid du khas blang dgos kyi rdzas tha dad du mi’jog par sems lags

345 Cf. Higgins 2013: 73: “ma rig pa depends on rig pa but rig pa does not depend on ma rig pa.”

346 “It is no exaggeration to claim that the mind/primordial knowing distinction is as important to understanding Klong chen pa’s rDzogs-chen exegesis as the two truths distinction is to understanding Nāgārjuna’s Madhyamaka exegesis.” (Higgins 2013: 22)
important concept. Yet, in spite of Klong-chen rab’byams’s signal contributions on the topic, some still viewed it as a later invention. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma refers to such unnamed critics in his sGron me’i snang ba. There are those, he says, who claim that the distinction between mind and pure awareness was “not known to the translators and scholars of the past,” and that it was “invented by the awareness-keeper (vidyādhara).” ’Jigs-med gling-pa”. Unsurprisingly, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma dismisses such a suggestion; he labels it “devilish talk”. For him, the distinction between the ordinary mind and pure awareness is the key to all rDzogs-chen instructions. He refers to shan ’byed repeatedly. He even makes it the main theme of his dPal seng gi ngor gdam pa, which explains how rDzogs-chen gnoseology differs from general Buddhist epistemology:

There are what we call ‘mind’ (sens) and ‘awareness’ (rig pa). Some common scriptures say that all that is ‘principal mind’ (gtso sens) is mind (sens), while cognition (shes pa) is what is ‘clear and aware’. They thus claim that mind is synonymous with consciousness (rnam shes), while awareness is synonymous with cognition (shes pa). Yet, such explanations are insufficient to identify the mind and pure awareness of rDzogs-chen texts. Here, mind is the root of saṃsāric existence and includes a tendency to cling to things as real; while pure awareness is the wisdom (ye shes) of settling evenly in accordance with reality (dharmatā).

347 Although vidyādhara originally meant something akin to sorcerer (and even refers to a type of supernatural being in some Indian literature), this is not the sense in which rig-[pa]-’dzin-[pa] is used by rDzogs-chen authors in Tibet. To translate the term as sorcerer (or a similar term) would be an example of what some refer to as an etymological fallacy. In a transcript of an undated oral teaching, the rDzogs-chen teacher Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse bKra-shis dpal-’byor (1910–1991) explains the term rig ’dzin as follows: “Vidyā or ‘awareness’ (rig pa) means wisdom that is beyond eternalism and nihilism. The vidyādharas are those who always maintain or ‘hold’ (Skt. dhara) this awareness within the expanse of their compassion, both in meditation and post-meditation.”

348 JTNg vol. 1: 447.2; JTNs vol. 2: 6.8: sens dang rig pa’i shan ’byed kyi ’phyong zer rgyu zhig sngon gyi lo pan mams la ma grags kyang rig ’dzin ’jigs gling gis rang bzo yin zhes zer ba ni...

349 JTNg vol. 1: 447.3; JTNs vol. 2: 6.10: …kha bsdud kyi bskal ba’i smre sngags shig…

350 JTNg vol. 1: 554.4; JTNs vol. 2: 110.16f.: de la spyir rdzogs chen gyi gdam pa’i zab khyad mtha’ yas kyang| rtsa ba’i gnad ni yon tan rin po che’i mzdod las| gang dag sens las ’das pa’i rig pa ni rang bzhin rdzogs pa chen po’i khyad chos yin| zhes gsungs pa ltar sens rig shan ’byed la thug pas…

351 JTNg. vol. 1: 496.1–498.4; JTNs. vol. 2: 53–55.

352 JTNg. vol. 1: 496.2; JTNs vol. 2: 53.8: sens dang rig pa zhes bya ba ’di thun mong gi gzhung kha cig tu gtso sens thams cad sens yin la| gsal zhing rig pa shes pa yin te| sens dang mam shes don gcig shes pa dang rig pa don gcig tu ’dod kyang rdzogs chen gyi gzhung las bshad pa’i sens rig gi ngos ’dzin ni de tams la ni byed de| srid pa’i rtsa ba bden ’dzin cha dang bcas pa ni sens yin la| chos nyid kyi don la mnyam par bzhag pa’i ye shes ni rig pa ste|
The explanation is addressed to a reader who is familiar with concepts from Abhidharma and Pramāṇa, possibly more so than with rDzogs-chen. The terms *sems* and *rig pa* are not unique to rDzogs-chen; they occur in a general epistemological context too. But 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma explains how their interpretation differs in rDzogs-chen. Here *rig pa* assumes a far more exalted, transcendent sense (hence its translation as *pure* or *open* awareness) than it carries in general Buddhist epistemology: that is, a dualistic form of knowledge.

'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma offers a more detailed and unusual typology of awareness elsewhere in his writings. rDzogs-chen authors commonly focus on the threefold wisdom (*ye shes gsum*) that characterises the ground of being (*gzhi*), i.e., the wisdom of the essence (*ngo bo*), nature (*rang bzhin*) and compassionate resonance (*thugs rje*).353 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma offers additional classifications. In his *rNam rtog ngo shes pa dang rig pa ngo shes pa’i khyad par*, for example, he differentiates between essential awareness (*ngo bo’i rig pa*), expressive awareness (*rtsal gyi rig pa*), ground-awareness (*gzhi’i rig pa*), ground-appearance awareness (*gzhi snang gi rig pa*), and awareness of the spontaneously present sphere (*lhun grub sbubs kyi rig pa*).354

If it belongs to the ground—as one of the pair, ground and ground-appearances (*gzhi snang*)—it follows that it is essential awareness (*ngo bo’i rig pa*). If it is the ground, it follows that it is not ground-appearance awareness. Although being expressive awareness (*rtsal gyi rig pa*) does not entail that all the characteristics of ground-appearance awareness are complete, it does follow that it is merely [i.e., on some basic level] ground-appearance awareness. Analyse whether it follows that ground-appearance awareness is also expressive awareness. Although the awareness that dawns amidst present sensory impressions cannot be separated from the essential aspect, it is considered expressive awareness, rather than essential awareness. From what has just been said, the reader will understand how it follows that the ground (as one element of the pair, ground versus ground-appearances) is not the expressive awareness. It does not follow that whatever is expressive awareness is not essential awareness, because the stage of [awareness] reaching full measure (*tshad phebs*)355

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353 On these three wisdoms see Germano 1992: 852–857 & 880; Deroche and Yasuda 2015, *passim*.
354 This term signifies the awareness that is a feature of the spontaneously present sphere—or literally enclosure (*sbubs*)—of wisdom-reality.
355 i.e., the third of the four visions (*saṅg ba bzhi*) in rDzogs-chen.
is ground-appearance and must therefore be expressive awareness and yet the stronghold within the essence has been captured. Nor does it follow that awareness must be either ground or ground-appearance awareness, because awareness of the spontaneously present sphere (lhun grub sbubs kyi rig pa) is not the ground and yet it is a form of awareness in which ground-appearances have dissolved into basic space (dbyings).356

Once again, the explanation here is scholastic in character. For example, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma employs the terminology of logic and debate, especially the notion of ‘pervasion’ or ‘entailment’ (khyab pa; vyāpti),357 to chart the relationships between the various types of pure awareness (as shown in Table 3). This allows him to establish precise distinctions between categories that might otherwise remain ambiguous or confused.358

Table 3: Typology of rig pa according to ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pure awareness (rig pa)</th>
<th>Ground awareness (gzhi’i rig pa)</th>
<th>Ground-appearance awareness (gzhi snang gi rig pa)</th>
<th>Essential awareness (ngo bo’i rig pa)</th>
<th>Awareness of the spontaneously present sphere (lhun grub sbubs kyi rig pa)</th>
<th>Expressive awareness (rtsal gyi rig pa)</th>
<th>Awareness at stage of reaching full measure (rig pa tshad phebs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

356 JTNg. vol. 1: 602-6; JTNs vol. 2: 157.8 f : gzhi dang gzhi snang gi zlas phye ba’i gzhi yin na ngo bo’i rig pas khyab| ngo bo’i rig pa yin na gzhi des ma khyab| gzhi de yin na gzhi snang gi rig pa min pas khyab| rtsal gyi rig pa yin na gzhi snang gi rig pa mtsshan nyid tshang ba yin pas ma khyab kyang gzhi snang gi rig pa tsam yin pas khyab| gzhi snang gi rig pa la rtsal gyi rig pas kyang khyab bam dpyad| da lta yul thog tu ’char dus kyi rig pa la yang ngo bo’i cha ’bral mi shes par yod kyang gtsos che ba’i dbang gis rtsal gyi rig pa yin pas khyab| ngo bo’i rig par ni ’jog gzhi dang gzhi snang gi zlas phye ba’i gzhi la rtsal gyi rig pa min pas khyab pa bshad ma thag pas shes| rtsal gyi rig pa yin na ngo bo’i rig pa min pas ma khyab ste tshad phebs dus gzhi snang yin pas rtsal rig yin dgos shing ngo bo’i steng du btsan sa zin pa yin pas so| rig pa yin na gzhi dang gzhi snang gi rig pa gang rung gis ma khyab ste gröl sa lhun grub sbubs kyi rig pa de gzhi min la gzhi snang dbyings su thim pa’i rig pa yin pa’i phyir |

358 Higgins 2013: 108 refers to the “baroque intricacies” of Dzogs-chen gnoseology.
This typology can also be expressed through four permutations (mu bzhi), as in the discussion of dngos gzhi above.\textsuperscript{359} Thus, the four possible types of rig pa are:

1) rig pa that is expressive but not essential; 2) rig pa that is essential but not expressive; 3) rig pa that is both; and 4) rig pa that is neither. These relationships are captured in Table 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Permutation</th>
<th>Referent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Expressive but not essential</td>
<td>Awareness that dawns amidst present sensory impressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Essential but not expressive</td>
<td>Ground-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Both expressive and essential</td>
<td>Awareness at stage of reaching full measure (rig pa tshad phebs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Neither expressive nor essential</td>
<td>Awareness of the spontaneously present sphere (lhan grub shubs kyi rig pa)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s approach to gnoseology proved influential.

Khang-sar bstan-pa’i-dbang-phyug (1938–2014), for example, cites ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma as a reference on the typology of rig pa:\textsuperscript{360}

As rDo-grub ‘Jigs-med bstan [-pa’i] nyi [-ma] would say: “What we need to cultivate is essential awareness, and the means of cultivating it is the awareness of compassionate resonance. It is through familiarity with the awareness of compassionate resonance, or expressive awareness, that we must arrive at the essential awareness to be cultivated.” Therefore, we can understand that our experience grows gradually clearer, like gold that is melted, cut and polished. Sudden developers, who are of the highest faculties and are ‘liberated upon hearing’,

\textsuperscript{359} The following accords with the Fourteenth Dalai Lama’s oral commentary on the same passage. See Dalai Lama 2000: 183–4.

\textsuperscript{360} However, the statement Khang-sar bsTan-pa’i-dbang-phyug cites does not appear in ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s collected writings and would therefore seem either to belong to an oral tradition or to derive from a lost work.
experience the inseparable merging of the mother and child luminosities merely through the guru’s introduction. All objects arise for them as dharmatā; view and meditation become one; and appearances and mind merge inseparably. This is possible but happens in only a few cases.\textsuperscript{361}

Here, the term ‘awareness of compassionate resonance’ (thugs rje’i rig pa) is a synonym for ‘expressive awareness’ (rtsal gyi rig pa). In this view, rDzogs-chen practitioners cultivate essential awareness through the awareness of either compassionate resonance or expressive awareness. The only exception to this is the sudden developer (cig char ba), who experience perfect essential awareness immediately, simply through the guru’s instruction. However, such individuals are rare. For most, the path is more gradual: once expressive awareness is introduced, the path requires a process of familiarisation through meditation.

Other authors offer slightly different versions of this typology. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-ntsho, whose writings I examine in Chapter Five, distinguishes between ground-awareness and path-awareness (lam rig). This is not a term that 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma uses; nor is it found in the writings of Klong-chen rab-byams.\textsuperscript{362} mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-ntsho claims to be following his teacher:

The awareness of the Great Perfection, my all-knowing guru would assert, is the path-awareness. In the advice of the awareness-keepers (vidyādhara) of old, it is claimed to be the ground-awareness. However, if we examine this carefully, in the tradition of this doctrine, the recognition that comes from experiencing the meaning of how the ground abides, just as it is, is the awareness of the Great Perfection. There can be no path-awareness, therefore, separate from the ground-awareness. And since no one would accept that the mere indeterminate (lung ma bstan) ground-awareness at the time when we stray from the nature of the ground is the awareness

\textsuperscript{361} KTB, vol. 3: 201: rdo grub 'jigs med bstan nyis| bsgom bya ngo bo’i rig pa dang| sgom byed thugs rje’i rig pa gnyis yod pas| sgom byed thugs rje’i rig pa’i am rtsal gyi rig pa’i di nyid gomis pas la brten nas| bsgom bya ngo bo’i rig thog tu skyel dgos par gsungs pas na| bsregs bcad brdar ba’i gser bzhin du je gsal du’ong ba’dis kyang shes| dbang mon thos grol cig char ba yin na bla mas ngo spro dtab pa tsam gyis’od gsal ma bu dbyer med du’dres’gro ba srid kyang de’dra ni re re tsam mo| The image of melting, cutting and polishing (bsregs bcad brdar) gold here evokes the famous statement attributed to the Buddha (but not to be found in any sūtra in the bKa’gyur), which appears in Kamalaśīla’s Tattvasaṃgrahapaññākā (DT vol. 191, 143b.2): dge slong dag dang mkhas mams kyi| [bsreg bcad brdar ba’i gser bzhin du|] [legs par brtag la nga yi bka’] [blang bar bya yi gus phyir min|] \textsuperscript{362} A search of the e-text version of Klong-chen rab-byams’s collected writings on TBRC/BDRC reveals no occurrence of lam gyi rig pa as a phrase. Although “lam rig” occurs, nowhere does it appear as a biphonemic term, only where the syllables occur as part of other terms.
of Great Perfection, either [position] is feasible; it is purely a matter of how precise one is with terminology. 

Here, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi rgya-mtsho uses “path-awareness” as a synonym for what 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma calls “expressive awareness.” Both path-awareness (for mDo-sngags Chos-kyi rgya-mtsho) and expressive awareness (for 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma) are tools to realize the ultimate form of awareness, which mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho calls ground-awareness. Yet, path-awareness is itself an aspect of ground-awareness. The distinction, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho says, is primarily a matter of terminological precision; it does not represent an objective distinction. In other words, it is perfectly acceptable to understand the pure awareness of the Great Perfection as either path-/expressive awareness or ground awareness (which includes path-/expressive awareness). Quite apart from the validity of such gnoseological claims, the rarefied nature of these elucidations once again highlights the emergence of a highly technical form of rDzogs-chen discourse.

3. Conclusion

'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s writings on rDzogs-chen confirm that he was an heir to multiple traditions, including the dGe-mang Movement and the broader scholastic resurgence of which it formed a part. Since he embraced the teachings of the Klong chen snying thig, he regarded both Klong-chen rab-'byams and ‘Jigs-med gling-pa as authoritative, and their writings virtually canonical. Naturally, he is cautious when he spots disagreement between these two “omniscient ones”. He

363 DC vol. 2: 228.3: rdzogs pa chen po’i rig pa ni| bdag gi bla ma thams cad mkhyen pas lam rig la bzhed| rig ’dzin rgan po mams kyi gsung sgros la gzhi rig la bzhed pa lta bu zhig snang yang zhib tu brtags na chos ’di’i lugs la gzhi’i bzhugs tshul ji bzhin pa’i don nyams su myong ba’i tshul gyis ngo ’phrod pa zhig rdozgs pa chen po’i rig pa yin pas gzhi rig las logs su lam rig ’jog rgyu med cing| gzhi’i bzhugs tshul las gol ba’i dus kyi gzhi rig lung ma bstan tsam rdozgs pa chen po’i rig par su yang mi bzhed pas tha snyad rags zhib las gang yang ’thad.
seeks to harmonise, and account for, divergence. This is clearly attested in his explanations of *dngos gzhi* and the post-death *bar do* states. At the same time, as a recipient of scholastic training, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma brings to rDzogs-chen exegesis a desire for terminological precision and doctrinal exactitude. We detect this throughout his rDzogs-chen corpus, but it is especially pronounced in his gnoseological discussions.
3. Comparativism and Clear Light

“Genuine pure awareness and the mind of vajra clear light are synonymous.”

"Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma" 364

1. Introduction: Comparativism in rDzogs-ch'en

rDzogs-ch'en’s relationship with other strands of Buddhist doctrine has been a topic of discussion and debate ever since its tenets were first articulated.365 Some of the earliest Tibetan surveys of the Buddhist path portray rDzogs-ch'en/Atiyoga as the highest of nine successive vehicles (theg pa'i rim pa dgu).366 This model is inclusivist:367 it incorporates other forms of Buddhist theory and practice, while portraying them as subordinate to rDzogs-ch'en/Atiyoga. In fact, the term rDzogs-ch'en itself initially signified the system’s perceived superiority over other methods of perfection stage (rdzogs rim; sampannakrama) practice, the second of the two stages of deity yoga in Highest Yoga Tantra. This association with the perfection stage was never entirely forgotten.368 Indeed, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma

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364 JTNg vol. 1: 554.6; JTNs vol. 2: 111.6.
365 See, for example, the early rDzogs-ch'en text bSam gtan mig sgron, which Pettit (1999: 82) characterizes as “a comparative philosophical study of the Great Perfection, Ch’an, tantric deity meditation, and exoteric Mahāyāna practice.”
366 See Karmay 1988: 146–149. Karmay notes that while the lTa ba’i rim pa bshad pa attributed to sKa-ba dpal-brtsegs does not use the term rim pa dgu, it does use the term a ti yo ga’i theg pa to refer to the highest of the nine stages it describes. While the text might not have been composed by sKa-ba dpal-brtsegs, who lived in the eighth and ninth centuries CE, Karmay believes that it is certainly pre-eleventh century. For a translation and study of a slightly later presentation of the nine vehicles see Cabezón 2013.
367 See note 16 above for a discussion of inclusivism.
368 As noted in the previous chapter, Germano (1994, 223) identifies at least two occasions in the writings of Klong-ch'en rab-byams where rDzogs-ch'en is used in the sense of great or greater perfection stage (rdzogs rim chen po). The belief that rDzogs-ch'en refers to the great perfection stage (here called rdzogs rim chen mo, with a feminine ending) is also to be found in the writings of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-rtse-mtsho discussed in Chapter Five. See DC vol. 2, 228: rdzogs pa chen po zhes pa don du na rdzogs rim chen mo zer bar snang yang| lugs ’di la de ltar mi bshad par…
characterises rDzogs-chen as an uncommon perfection stage practice and contrasts it with the common perfection stage.\textsuperscript{369}

rNying-ma writers put forward different reasons for rDzogs-chen’s superiority. Instructional literature and polemical tracts often argue that rDzogs-chen’s techniques are more effective than those of ‘lower’ vehicles.\textsuperscript{370} The Tibetan schools disagree about the nature of the distinction between the various tantric vehicles (including, for the rNying-ma, rDzogs-chen/Atiyoga); whether it is purely one of method or based on theory (\textit{Ita ba; darśana}).\textsuperscript{371} Tsong-kha-pa and his followers in the dGe-lugs school argue that the distinction between sūtra and tantra hinges on method;\textsuperscript{372} others, especially Mi-pham and his rNying-ma followers, maintain that philosophical views grow more profound as one ascends the hierarchical scale from one vehicle to the next. In addition, rDzogs-chen is sometimes said to bring about a unique result, the attainment of the ‘rainbow body’ (\textit{‘ja’ lus}).\textsuperscript{373} This form of accomplishment is unknown in other Buddhist traditions.\textsuperscript{374} Those who believe that rDzogs-chen is superior doctrinally and practically also claim that it is suitable only for students of the highest capacity.\textsuperscript{375}

\textsuperscript{369} See especially \textit{sPrin gvi sgron ma nas} (JTNs vol. 2: 240–245), which is translated in Appendix 2.

\textsuperscript{370} Indeed, even within the Heart Essence system of rDzogs-chen Thod-rgal is considered superior to the Khregs-chod approach in seven ways. See \textit{Tshig don mdzod} (KLR vol. 19: 231–235) for a list of the seven. (Cf. \textit{Od gsal thod rgal gyi lam khregs chod las khyad par bdun gyis ’phags tshul zin bris ’od gsal niki la} in JGY vol. 1: 178–181.)

\textsuperscript{371} See Pettit 1999: 133f.: “In the fifth topic of the \textit{Beacon} [i.e., \textit{Nges shes sgron me}] Mipham refutes those who differentiate the various levels of tantra in the same way as the Gelugpas, that is, in terms of method and not according to different philosophical views.”

\textsuperscript{372} See, for example, \textit{sNgags rim chen mo} 32.2: khyad par du theg pa chen po la gnyis su phye ba yang zab mo rtags pa’i shes rab khis mi ’byed kyi] thabs khis dbyey degos shing thabs kyi gtsos bo yang gzugs sku sgrub pa’i cha nas yin lai gzugs sku’i sgrub byed kyi thabs ni de dang rnam pa ’dra bar sgom pa’i lha’i mal ’byor nyid theg pa gzhan gyi thabs las mchog yin pa’i phyir ro | |

\textsuperscript{373} On the rainbow body see especially Kapstein 2004.

\textsuperscript{374} It is, of course, a feature of rDzogs-chen in the Bon tradition. Nor is it entirely without parallels in gSar-ma tantra. It is possible, for example, to explain the attainment of celestial realms (\textit{mkha’ spyod; khecara}) as a variety of rainbow body; see Nyoshul Khenpo 2015: 92–93.

\textsuperscript{375} \textit{sKal bzang dga ba’i mgal rgyan don la ri’on pa’i yi ge}, a set of notes on the empowerment ritual of Bla ma yang tig, for example, draws a distinction between those of sharp faculties (\textit{dbang ri’on}) and those the most perfect faculties (\textit{dbang po yang rab}). The former are those whose minds function conceptually (\textit{snang ba yul gyi blo can}), while the latter are those for whom awareness is naturally manifest (\textit{rig pa rang snang gi blo can}). See KLR vol. 10: 314.
Tantra in general is intended only for those of the sharpest faculties; proponents of rDzogs-chen extend this claim: rDzogs-chen is reserved for an elite even among followers of tantra.376

Many rDzogs-chen authors claim that rDzogs-chen is swifter than other systems. This is usually attributed to its superior methods, but some authors also point to the superior insight or philosophical acumen of its followers. In the Phyag rdzogs kyi de kho na nyid rab tu dbye ba’i gtam ke ta ka’i rna rgyan,377 for example, 'Jigs-med gling-pa distinguishes the ultimate insights arrived at through different systems, especially Mahāmudrā and rDzogs-chen. He claims that Mahāmudrā, rDzogs-chen and Madhyamaka are all of a ‘single flavour’ (ro gcig; ekarasa). Yet, they bring about results at different speeds, based on the varying intellectual capacities of their followers. The difference is comparable, 'Jigs-med gling-pa says, to the variation in speed of chariots drawn by horses and oxen, or the ‘orbit’ of the sun and moon.378

At times, rDzogs-chen authors also downplay their own system’s elite claims and emphasize its commonality with other traditions. Zhe-chen rgyal-tshab ’Gyurmed padma rnam-rgyal (1871–1926), for example, strives to show how elements of

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376 The locus classicus for the claim that tantra is for those of higher capacity is the following verse from Tshul gyi sgron ma (*Nayatrayapradipa) of *Tripiṭakamāla D3707 (sDe dge bstan ’gyur, vol. 77 rgyud, tsu 6b–26b) 16b.3: don gcig nyid na’ang ma rmongs dang| thabs mang dka’ ba med phyir dang| dbang po rnon po’i dbang byas pas| sngags kyi bstan bcos khyad par ’phags| The Sanskrit for this verse appears in Shastri 1927: 21: ekārtha’te ’py asaṃmohāt bahūpāyād aduṣkārāt | tīkṣṇendriyāḥdhikāraṇa ca maṃtraśāstraṃ viṣisyaḥ || (In some later Tibetan sources, the final line is changed, so that the quotation becomes a reference to the mantra vehicle—sngags kyi theg pa—rather than its teaching (śāstra). Cf. Kun bzang bla ma’i zhal lung, PS vol. 7:8) Note that rDzogs-chen manuals also identify two levels of rDzogs-chen practitioner: referring to those with the sharpest faculties as rig pa rang snang gi blo can and those of slightly duller faculties as dmigs pa yul gi blo can. See, for example, the citation from the Rin po che’i spungs pa tantra in Tshig don mdzod (KLR vol. 19: 172).

377 JLa vol. 7: 717–727; JLd vol. 4: 859.4–866.5.

378 JLa vol. 7: 717.4–5. The rhetoric of underlying sameness here is a common feature of Tibetan Buddhism. See Chapter Five below.
Thod-rgal resemble features of tantric practice included in gSar-ma texts. More often than not, comparativism of this kind serves as a defence against criticism.\textsuperscript{379}

2. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s Approach

’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma formulated detailed comparisons between the advanced tantric practices of both rNying-ma and gSar-ma traditions. These comparisons are scattered throughout his works on tantra and rDzogs-chen. But when taken together, they constitute one of the most comprehensive examples of comparativism in Tibetan Buddhist literature. Before examining the central themes of this analysis in detail,\textsuperscript{380} let us consider some of the doxographical and hermeneutical categories that underpin it.

2.1. Doxographical Background: A Hierarchy of Vehicles

In common with other rNying-ma authors, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma employs a hierarchical model that distinguishes nine vehicles. And, again like many other rDzogs-chen proponents, he subscribes to a twofold division within this scheme. He contrasts rDzogs-chen/Atiyoga as the sole vehicle that employs wisdom as the path (ye shes lam du byed pa) with the eight lesser, mind-based vehicles (sems lam du byed pa).\textsuperscript{381} The resulting model is as outlined (in Table 5) below.

\textsuperscript{379} This occurs in his commentary on Mi-pham’s prayer for the spread of the rNying-ma tradition, sNga ’gyur bstan pa rgyas pa’i smon lam, entitled Phyogs las rnam par rgyal pa’i rgyal mtshan. The commentary offers a lengthy defence of the rDzogs-chen practice of Thod-rgal, in response to an unspecified gSar-ma critic (or critics), attempting to show that similar practices involving visions of light were also taught in the gSar-ma tantras and commentarial writings. Thus, while Zhe-chen rgyal-tshab uses the technique of comparison to argue for the validity of the Thod-rgal visions, in doing so he is forced to sacrifice, to some extent, the practice’s claims to uniqueness. See Phyogs las rnam par rgyal pa’i rgyal mtshan: 104–121 and the abridged translation in Ringu Tulku 2006: 257–282.

\textsuperscript{380} What follows does not cover every aspect of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s comparison of Highest Yoga Tantra and rDzogs-chen. Among the topics not covered are, for example: a discussion of whether the ground-appearances (gzhi snang) are mentioned in Highest Yoga Tantra (JTNs vol. 2: 210) and an answer to a question on the similarity of ‘empty forms’ (stong gzugs) described in Highest Yoga Tantra to the visionary experiences (snang nyams) spoken of in rDzogs-chen (JTNg vol. 1: 575.1f.; JTNs vol. 2: 130–131).

\textsuperscript{381} These terms also appear in the writings of Klong-chen rab-’byams. See, for example, Zab don rgya mtsho’i sprin KLR vol. 7: 209.12f.
In his *mDzod kyi lde mig*, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma identifies Highest Yoga Tantra with Mahāyoga:

Mahāyoga is divided into three: there are 1) the father tantras, such as *Guhyasamāja*, which teach mainly the perfection stage of empty-clarity and wind-energy; 2) the mother tantras, such as *Cakrasaṃvara*, which teach mainly the perfection stage of bliss-clarity and the essences; and 3) the non-dual tantras, such as *Guhyagarbha*, which teach mainly the perfection stage of the great wisdom of clear light.\(^{382}\)

Thus, all three categories of Highest Yoga Tantra—even the non-dual, which focuses on the great wisdom of clear light—are subdivisions of Mahāyoga. They are mind-based, not wisdom-based. In another text, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma notes a possible objection to this view:

>[You might argue that] it is unreasonable to claim that the eight [lower] vehicles are systems based on mind, because in the father and mother tantras one mainly practices taking clear light as the path. This would not follow logically however,

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\(^{382}\) *JTNs* vol. 3: 91.12f.: ma hā yo ga’i rgyud la gsum du ’byed skabs| gsang ’dus sogs pha rgyud rams su gsal stong rlung gi rdzogs rim dang| bde mchog sogs ma rgyud du bde stong thig le’i rdzogs rim dang| gsang snying sogs gnyis med rgyud las ’od gsal ye shes chen po’i rdzogs rim gtsor bor ston zhes…
because, as it is taught in the rNam mkhyen shing rta,\textsuperscript{383} [in these vehicles] one cannot take wisdom alone as the path without [first] taking mind as the path. Focusing mentally on the channels, wind-energies and essences, blessing the consort (rig ma), ‘sealing’ objects and perceptions with the recollection of great bliss, [cultivating] divine pride, and visualizing the emanation and reabsorption of light-rays during mantra recitation — all these are carried out with energetic mind\textsuperscript{384} (rlung sems).\textsuperscript{385}

The argument here (articulated once again in the scholarly language of debate) is that rDzogs-chens practitioners rely on wisdom from the very outset. This contrasts with practitioners of Highest Yoga Tantra. They begin with techniques of visualization and yoga drawing on the ordinary mind (described here as energetic-mind). Gnosis only arises later, as a result of these practices.\textsuperscript{386} Thus, rDzogs-chen/Atiyoga portrays itself as the vehicle that begins where other paths end. For Saska Paṇḍita, famously, this means that rDzogs-chen is not truly a vehicle:

If you understand this tradition well,
Then the view of Atiyoga too
Is [understood] to be wisdom, but not a vehicle.
To make the inexpressible a topic to be expressed
Is not the intention of the learned, it is said.\textsuperscript{387}

\textsuperscript{383}i.e., the auto-commentary to Yon tan rin po che’i mdzod by ’Jigs-med gling-pa.

\textsuperscript{384}On the term energetic (or pneumatic) mind (rlung sems) in rDzogs-chen see Rig ’dzin brgyud pa’i zhal lung, 164–167.

\textsuperscript{385}JTNg vol. 1: 604.2; JTNs vol. 2: 158.15f.: theg brgyad blo’i grub mtha’ zer ba mi rigs te] pha ma’ai rgyud la’ od gsal lam byed gsuo bor byed pa’i phiy na ma khyab] sens lam byed med par ye shes kho na lam du byed mi nus pa’i don yin par mam mkhyen shing rtar gsungs pa’i phiy te] rtsa rlung thig le’i sens ’dzin] rig ma byin rlab] yul snang gi thog tub de chen dran pa’i rgyas ’debs] lha’i nga rgyal dang’ od zer spro bsdu bzla dmigs sog’ thams cad rlung sems la las bcol ba yin pas so|

\textsuperscript{386}This claim necessarily ignores the rDzogs-chen preliminary practices, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{387}See Rhoton 2002: 309: lugs ’di legs par shes gyur na] a ti yo ga’i lta ba yang] ye shes yin gyi theg pa min] brjod bral brjod byar byas pa ni] mkhas pa’i dgon] pa] min zhes byal] (Note however that the translation given here is my own). This critique of the nine-yāna model is discussed in Karmay 2007: 147–48. Karmay believes Sa-pan to have been the first to criticize the system. Although Sa-skya Paṇḍita’s remarks have usually been interpreted as dismissive of rDzogs-chen, they were sufficiently ambiguous to allow for positive interpretation, and their precise meaning was still being actively debated in the nineteenth century, when, for example, mKhan-po Padma badzra, one of ’Jigs-med bstan’pa’i-nyi-ma’s teachers, wrote the following in his 1849 rejoinder to criticism of rNying-ma doctrine:

The words of the Dharma Lord Sa-skya Paṇḍita,
When he examined the division into the nine vehicles,
Are chattered about by all Sa-skya followers today,
Whether they be learned or foolish,
But the crucial point of understanding them
Is rare within these ranks.
The meaning is that within rDzogs-pa chen-po
There is a division into two aspects:
For proponents of rDzogs-chen, such as ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma, Atiyoga is indeed a vehicle. It takes wisdom as its path, and this ‘wisdom-centricity’ elevates it above the Highest Yoga Tantra practised in the gSar-ma schools. The model of nine vehicles that ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma adopts is not only hierarchical; it is inclusive too. The Highest Yoga tantras do not lie outside this model; they feature at the level of Mahāyoga.

The meaning to be realized (rtogs bya’i don) and the means of realizing (rtogs byed thabs). And the rDzogs-chen that is the meaning to be realized
Is co-emergent wisdom (lhan cig skyes pa’i ye shes),
Without reference and beyond verbal expression.
In its essence, as a ‘self-isolate’ (rang ldog),
It is beyond names, words and letters,
So to posit it as a vehicle of linguistic expression (rjod byed tshig gi theg pa)
Would be unwise, he said.
As a means of realizing it,
There are the stages of the vehicles, he said,
Thus demonstrating indirectly
The nine vehicles which are the means of realization.
Nevertheless, in the New (gsar ma) Secret Mantra
There is no class of tantra
Higher than the level of the Mahāyoga.
As for the focus of meditation too,
There is nothing beyond the level of Mahāyoga, he said.
So by teaching directly this exclusion (rnam bcad)
That is the absence within the new traditions
Of the two highest levels of vehicle,
He indirectly showed the positive inclusion (yongs gcod)
Of these two as special features of the rNying-ma.
The assertion that the rNying-ma tradition has nine vehicles
Is made here, and again and again in Thub [pa] dgongs [pa’i rab gsal] and elsewhere.

(KPB. Vol. 1, 400–401: chos rje sa skya paṅḍi taṣ| rab dbyе theg dgu dpya’ad skabs kyi| tshig de dang sang sa skya paṅ mikhas blun kun gyis cal sгрogs su| byed mod de yì go ba’i gna| shes pa khyod kyi
khrod na ḍkon| de’i don rdzogs pa chen po la| rtogs bya’i don dang rtogs byed thabs| mam pa gnyis su
dbye ba la| rtogs bya don gyi rdzogs chen ni| lhan cig skyes pa’i ye shes te| dṃigs med brjod pa dangral ba| de yì ngö bo’i rang ldog nas| ming tshig yi ge dang bral phyin| rjod byed tshig gi theg pa ru|
bzhaṅ pa mikhas pa min ces gṣungs| de rtogs pa yi thabs la ni| theg pa’i rim pa yod pa yi| ces pasrtogs byed thabs kyi ni| theg rim dgu po shugs kyi sستان| ’on kyang gṣang sнgags gṣar ma la| rnal ’byor chen po’i itag na ni| de bas mṭho ba’i rgyud sde med| sғom pa’i dṃigs pa nyid kyang ni| rnal ’byor chen po’i itag na med| ces pas theg rim gong ma gnyis| gṣar ma pa la med pa yi| nram bcad
dṅogs su bṣtan pa yis| de gnyis rṃying ma’i khyad chos su| yod pa’i rṃgs gṣog su| rnal bcad
rṃying ma’i lḥuṅs la theg pa dgu| yod pa’i zḥal bḥes gzhung ’di dangi thub dḥongs sogs su| yang yang
mṇḍaad| "Read as rtogs"
So, for mKhan-po Padma badzra, rDzogs-chen/Atiyoga is divided into two: 1) the meaning to be realized (rtogs bya’i don) and 2) the means of realizing it (rtogs byed thabs). It is the first of these, which he equates with co-emergent wisdom (lhan cig skyes pa’i ye shes), that cannot be posited as a vehicle. The second form of rDzogs-chen, however, can be a vehicle, but this and the Anuyoga are unique to the rNying-ma tradition, as the highest level of gSar-ma tantra, he says, corresponds only to the level of Mahāyoga.
2.2. Hermeneutics: The Scriptural Basis of Clear Light Theory

All tantras share the same goal: they aim to bring about a realization of the wisdom of clear light. In 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s view, even the sūtras refer to this same clear light, albeit in theoretical terms. In order to explain this fully, we must return to a topic that surfaced in the previous chapter: 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s interpretation of gnoseology. Perhaps more than any other rNying-ma writer, he aligns the clear light (‘od gsal; prabhāsvāra) of Highest Yoga Tantra with the pure awareness (rig pa) of rDzogs-chen. This correspondence is part of a broader hermeneutic, which holds that clear light is first described theoretically in exoteric teachings, then outlined in practical terms in esoteric texts.

‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma discusses this claim in his mDzod kyi lde mig. He links the genuine mind (gnyug sems) or clear light of the Highest Yoga tantras to the buddha-essence (*sugatagarbha; bde gshegs snying po). This he considers to be the focus of the sūtras of the ‘final turning’ of the Wheel of Dharma (dharmacakra), i.e., texts such as the Samdhinirmocanasūtra and Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra. These works make occasional reference to the buddha-

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388 See below.
389 Ruegg (1973: 68) points out that the term sugatagarbha, as a synonym of tathāgatagarbha, has not been found in any Sanskrit sources. For an extensive discussion of the term tathāgatagarbha and the full semantic range of the word garbha, see Zimmermann 2002: 39–50. The various meanings of the word garbha include embryo, womb, middle, interior, calyx, germ, seed and essence. As Zimmermann notes (p.41), the Indo-Tibetan translators chose to render garbha into Tibetan as snying po, which generally denotes a centre, heart, core, essence, etc.
390 JTNs vol. 3: 46. The Three Turnings of the Wheel of Dharma (dharmacakrapravartana) are introduced in the seventh chapter of the Samdhinirmocanasūtra. According to that sūtra, it is the teaching of the final turning, which is generally known as legs par rnam par phye ba’i chos ’khor (the Dharma Wheel of Well-Made Distinctions) in Tibetan, that is definitive (niṭārtha). Tibetan scholars continued to debate whether the sūtras of the final ‘turning’ were truly definitive or merely provisional (neyārtha). For the dGe-lugs, only the sūtras of the intermediate (or second) turning of the dharmacakra, i.e., the alakṣaṇadharmacakra, are definitive; for the Jo-nang, by contrast, it is only the sūtras of the third and final turning that are definitive. Mi-pham avoided such dissension through a hermeneutical model that recognises definitive doctrines within both the intermediate and final turnings; on which see Duckworth 2011: 69–73. The Tibetan tradition identifies a group of ‘essence sūtras’ (snying po’i mdo), all of which belong to the final turning, and which are so-called because they are said to contain references to the tathāgatagarbha. For a list of these sūtras, see Pettit 1999: 474–475 n. 151.
essence, but it is only the Highest Yoga Tantra that reveals the method to bring about its realization:

It is only in the Highest Yoga tantras that one begins by cultivating the conducive circumstances for awakening the clear light of the buddha-essence as the three buddha-bodies (trikāya) through the technique of the vajra master’s bestowal of empowerment. One then makes evident the actual ‘genuine mind’ through the profound secret employment of skilful methods for directly cutting through the present, deluded mind of conceptualization. And then one goes even further to bring about the fruition swiftly and easily. This method and all that accompanies it are not taught elsewhere.391

Thus, for 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma (as for Tsong-kha-pa),392 sūtra and tantra differ in their methods, specifically how best to reveal clear light. “Skilful methods” refers here to the yogic exercises and visualisations to manipulate the body’s subtle channels (rtsa; nāḍī), wind-energies (rlung; vāyu/prāṇa) and essences (thig le; bindu). The sūtras do not discuss these exercises, so the ritual bestowal of empowerment (dbang bskur ba; abhiṣekha) is not a prerequisite for their study. Such empowerment is necessary, however, when one studies and practises the tantras, which offer techniques to reveal the buddha-essence. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma then poses a rhetorical question: “If the sūtra-level descriptions of the buddha-essence are not provided so as to facilitate the immediate practice of the buddha-essence, what is their purpose?”393 The answer, he says, is found in Maitreyanātha’s Uttaratantra/Ratnogotravibhāga. In a section beginning at Chapter One verse 159, Maitreyanātha offers five reasons (rgyu mtshan lnga) for teaching the buddha-essence. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma does not spell out the five, as his audience

391 JTNs vol. 3: 46.11: rdo rje slob dpon gyis dbang bskur ba’i thabs kyis bde gshegs snying po’i ’od gsal de sku gsum du sad pa’i rten ’brel bsgrigs pa sngon du btang bas da lta nas kun rtog ’khrul pa’i sems ’di thad kar geod pa’i thabs mkhas kyi ’phrul gsang zab mos gnyug sems mngon du phyung ste de nyid yar ldan du khyer nas ’bras bu la bde myur du sbyor byed ’khor dang bcas pa ni bla med kyi rgyud las gzhan du bstan pa med cing…
392 See note 371 above and the following chapter.
393 JTNs vol. 3: 47.10: mdo sde’i phyogs nas de ’dra’i gshegs snying bstan pa de da lta nas lam du bya ba’i ched min na dgos pa ci yod ce na|
were presumably familiar with them. The list appears in gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba’s annotational commentary (mchan ’grel):

There are five faults: 1) feeling discouraged and not giving rise to bodhicitta; 2) disparaging lesser beings, 3) grasping at the veil of the inauthentic as if it were real; 4) denying pure, inexhaustible reality, and 5) being excessively attached to oneself. It is taught that the essence of the buddhas exists in order that all those who possess these faults may overcome them.\(^{394}\)

Thus, the purpose of the buddha-essence theory at the sūtrayāna level is the psychological rather than psycho-physical. Overcoming the five faults is beneficial, but this differs from the practical application of the theory through Highest Yoga Tantra. To ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma, the ultimate significance (dgongs don) of the exoteric, sūtra-level presentation is its approach to the esoteric.\(^{395}\)

To modern scholars (i.e., from an “etic” viewpoint) such a claim entails an obvious anachronism: the tantras did not yet exist at the time these sūtras appeared. Even within ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s own tradition (from an “emic” perspective), this claim was potentially controversial. He says as much when he concedes that his ideas are “for the holders of our tradition to investigate further and in detail.”\(^{396}\)

The writings of Bod-pa sprul-sku bsTan-pa’i-nyi-ma (1898–1959) offer a sense of why ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s theory might have been controversial. This scholar is known for his systematization of ’Ju Mi-pham’s philosophical tenets.\(^{397}\) ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma does not mention any qualitative distinction between the buddha-essence described in the sūtras and the clear light of the tantras.

Bod-pa sprul-sku, however, posits differences in: 1) clarity (gsal), 2) extent (rgyas),

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\(^{394}\) KZG vol. 13: 123f.: sems zhum nas byang chub kyi sems mi skye ba dang sems can dman pa rams la brnyas pa dang yang dag min pa’i sgrib pa bden par ’dzin pa dang yang dag pa zag pa med pa’i chos la skur ba ’debs pa dang bdag [124] la chags pa lhag pa’i skyon lnga sems can gan dag la yod pa de dag gi nyes pa de spang ba’i don du sangs rgyas kyi snying po yod par gsungs so// These five reasons for teaching buddha-essence are what we might term psychological, in the sense that they concern the attitude of those who accept the theory, while the theory itself is gnoseological.

\(^{395}\) JTNs vol. 3: 48.

\(^{396}\) JTNs vol. 3: 48.6: rang lugs ’dzin pa rams kyi zhib tu dpyad par bya’o/

\(^{397}\) See Bötrül 2011.
and 3) completeness (rdzogs). To him, the clear light of the tantras is clearer, more extensive and more complete than that of the sūtras. Without such a distinction, he argues, it would be impossible to account for the appearance of divine mandalas and other phenomena described in the mantra vehicle. He accepts, however, that there is no difference in emptiness as it is taught in sūtra and mantra. In other words, distinctions relate to appearance (snang cha), not the aspect of emptiness (stong cha) in the appearance-emptiness (snang stong) dyad. Bod-pa sprul-sku claims that ground-appearances (gzhi snang), at the level of Atiyoga, constitute the most perfect expression of the appearance aspect of the philosophical view. They are the “great spontaneous presence” (lhun grub chen po).

Such focus on demarcation—highlighted even in the very title of Bod-pa sprul-sku’s lTa grub shan ’byed—contrasts with ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s softer, irenic stance. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma himself does not explicitly deny or refute the hierarchy of views that Bod-pa sprul-sku outlines. In fact, he does not mention it at all. His failure to affirm here the orthodox rNying-ma position, as it was then, must have struck many followers of Mi-pham.

In summary, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma regards the doctrine of clear light as a hermeneutical thread that links the exoteric to the esoteric. The tantras provide the practical means to apply what is introduced only as theory in the sūtras. The

399 BP vol. 1: 72–73.
400 BP vol. 1: 76.
401 ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s apparent silence on the form of Madhyamaka popularized by Mi-pham—at least in his collected works as we have them now—is discussed in the next chapter.
402 The extent to which the Fourteenth Dalai Lama agrees with this viewpoint is evident from the following passage: “The substance of all these paths [i.e., Guhyasamāja, Kālacakra and Great Perfection] comes down to the fundamental innate mind of clear light. Even the sūtras serving as the basis for Maitreya’s exposition in his Sublime Continuum of the Great Vehicle [Uttaratantra] have this same fundamental mind as the basis of their thought in their discussion of the Buddha nature, or matrix-of-One-Gone-Thus, although the full mode of its practice is not described as it is in the systems of Highest Yoga Tantra.” (Dalai Lama 2006a: 253)
emphasis in such a hermeneutic approach is clearly on method. This sets ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma apart from other rNying-ma authors who made philosophical differences the basis of their hierarchical model. Let us now examine how he compared the practical methods.

3. Comparative Methods of Highest Yoga Tantra & rDzogs-chen

’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma claims repeatedly that pure awareness (rig pa) corresponds to the clear light of the mind described in Highest Yoga Tantra. His Hor ’od zer gyi ngor gdams pa provides a typical example: “Genuine pure awareness and the mind of vajra clear light are synonymous.” The main difference between the

At this stage, any intellectual speculation or form of analytical meditation on emptiness would prove insufficient by itself. Instead, everything must be brought together and integrated into this, the ultimate of all swift paths for attaining enlightenment. Of course, it is true that there could be no greater object of meditative equipoise than the emptiness in which all things are eliminated — down to their flesh and bones, as it were. Nevertheless, the Highest (Unsurpassed) level of Vajrayāna is vastly superior in its methods for settling. It says in a tantra:

Because of which, through sacred bliss,
You will gain supreme accomplishment in this very life.

As this indicates, once the natural, co-emergent primordial liberation, the very state of the Original Protector, is made manifest, each moment can bring the equivalent of many aeons of ordinary accumulation. It is only the works of the Great Perfection that teach the uncommon aspects of the supreme, unchanging wisdom, as it is universally known in the second (i.e., perfection) phase of Highest Yoga Tantra. And it is only these same texts that teach the means of making this wisdom manifest, treating the practice of pursuing naked awareness — and naked awareness alone — as the most important of practices from the very moment you set out on the path of Unsurpassed Mantra. (JTNg vol. 1: 487.2; JTNs vol. 2: 44.15f.: de la ni rtog ges dp Yad ra dang stong nYid kyi dp Yad sgom rkyang pa tsam zhig gis mi chog pas| sangs rgyas sgrub pa’i lam myur ba’i nang nas mthar thug pa zhig yod pa de nyid kho na la chig sgril bya ba yin no| de’ang mnyam par ’jog sa sha sel rus shel zhig la stong nyid las lhag pa med mod kyi|’jog byed kyi thabs la ni rdo rje thug pa bla med shin tu ’phags te| rgyud las| gang phyir dam pa’i bde bas khyod| tse’ di nyid la rab ’grub ’gyur| zhes gsungs pa Itar rang bzhin lhan cig skyes pa ye grol thog ma’i mgon po nyid mngon du byas pa la brten nas skad cig re res kyang bskal pa mang po’i tshogs kyi dod thub yong bas| spyir snags bla med kyi rim pa gnyis pa nas yongs su grags pa’i mchog tu ’gyur med kyi ye shes nyid zab mo’i phyogs thun mong ma yin pa dang| de mngon du bya lugs kyang dang po bla med kyi snags lam du zhugs nas rig pa rjen ’ded ’ba’ zhig tu gtong ba’i nyams len bstan bya’i gtsos bor mdzad pa ni rdzogs pa chen po’i gzhung gi tshogs kho nar zad pa’i phyir|)

403 Cf. the following from Dad ldan slob ma ’gyur med rdo rje’i ngor gdams pa:

404 Cf. the following from Dad ldan slob ma ’gyur med rdo rje’i ngor gdams pa: At this stage, any intellectual speculation or form of analytical meditation on emptiness would prove insufficient by itself. Instead, everything must be brought together and integrated into this, the ultimate of all swift paths for attaining enlightenment. Of course, it is true that there could be no greater object of meditative equipoise than the emptiness in which all things are eliminated — down to their flesh and bones, as it were. Nevertheless, the Highest (Unsurpassed) level of Vajrayāna is vastly superior in its methods for settling. It says in a tantra:

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Nying-ma and gSar-ma interpretations, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma contends, is the method that yields such pure awareness or clear light.405

3.1. The Methods of Highest Yoga Tantra

In his Tshig gsum gnad brdeg skor, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma summarises his assessment of the methods of Highest Yoga Tantra:

The way in which [clear light] is made manifest according to other Highest Yoga tantras is through penetrative focusing 406 on the channels, essences and wind-energies.407 Without any need for explanations of the features of clear light at the beginning, stimulating the wheels (cakra) of channels at the heart or at the navel will cause the clear light to dawn.408

In the Highest Yoga Tantra system, clear light is revealed through practices associated with the perfection stage. These include visualizing a network of subtle channels within the body that allow for the circulation of subtle wind-energies and seminal essences. The practitioner focuses on the channels at certain points and induces the wind-energies to flow into the central channel (avadhūti; dbu ma). To achieve this, the practitioner needs to prevent energies from flowing through the two lateral channels, i.e., the rkyang ma (Skt. lalanā) to the left and ro ma (Skt. rasanā) to the right, as they would ordinarily. When the wind-energies enter the central channel, all mental processes cease. This allows clear light to dawn. And this, in

rgyas kyi bsgrub gzhi yin pas rig pa zhes gsungs la| rig pa’i steng na mun pa yod ma myong bas na ‘od gsal zer)  
405 See below.
406 I borrow the term ‘penetrative focusing’ as a translation of gnad du bsun pa from Gavin Kilty. See Khedrup Norsang Gyatso 2004: 391f. (The same text provides a detailed description of this perfection stage practice according to the Kālacakra Tantra.)
407 The sequence here is somewhat unusual. Most sources list them as channels, wind-energies, then essences, i.e., rtsa rlung thig le. Nevertheless, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma consistently refers to the sequence as rtsa thig [le] rlung repeatedly throughout the rDzogs-chen corpus.
408 JTNg vol. 1: 511.2; JTNs vol. 2: 67.17: bla med kyi rgyud sde gzhans rtsa thig rlung gsum la gnad du bsun nas sngon du 'gyur tshul ni dang po nas 'od gsal gyi rnam pa bshad mi dgos pa snying ga'am lte ba’i rtsa 'khor sogs la gnad du bsun na 'od gsal shar ’ong]
turn, brings about an experience of ecstasy or great bliss (bde ba chen po; mahāsukha).409

‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma says that this technique of Highest Yoga Tantra is forceful (btsan thabs) or rough (rtsub mo). It might not be considered as such within Highest Yoga Tantra, but it is so when compared with rDzogs-chen.410 The method of Highest Yoga Tantra is very swift at the beginning; in the longer term, though, it can lead to many flaws, including lack of stability.411

‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma believes that there is no need to explain (or understand) the features of clear light in Highest Yoga Tantra; the yogic technique alone is sufficient. Practitioners who master the method may alternate between sessions of meditative equipoise (mnyam bzhag) and periods of post-meditation (rjes thob):

Once the clear light has dawned, those exceptional individuals for whom all appearances arise as great bliss will recollect the clear light of meditative equipoise during the post-meditation phase, thereby re-invoking the clear light. [...] Those who have gained familiarity with the wisdom of great bliss in meditative equipoise will be able to re-invoke the experience later, after meditation, merely by recollecting the features of that wisdom of great bliss, without the need for penetrative focus on the channels, essences and wind-energies.412

409 This description is sufficiently broad to apply to practices found in all classes of Highest Yoga Tantra. On one occasion, however, ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma highlights subtle distinctions in the techniques of father tantra and mother tantra: ‘In the father tantras, clear light is laid bare or mastered through the power of harnessing the wind-energy. To the extent that one has harnessed that energy, the experience of clear light will deepen and stabilize. In the mother tantras, one masters the yoga of clear light through the power of making the essences workable, and to the extent that one’s practice of gtum mo gains strength, the radiant splendour (gzi byin) of the experience of clear light will unfold and become more powerful.’ (JTNg vol. 1: 606.3; JTNs vol. 2: 160.16: pha rgyud du rlung dbang du bs dus stobs kyi ’od gsal dmar ’byin byed pa’am ’od gsal dbang du gyur bar byed de rlung ’du phul ci tsa m che ba tsa m du ’od gsal ’thug cing brrtan no ma rgyud du thig le las su rung stobs kyi ’od gsal gyi ral ’byor dbang du gyur bar byed de] ’bar ’dzags ci tsa m stobs che ba tsa m du ’od gsal gzi byin rgyas nas ’char shugs che’o])

410 JTNg vol. 1: 661.3; JTNs vol. 2: 217.16: bla med rgyud gzhan du gtum mo dang/ dpyid kyi ral ’byor sogs kyi ’od gsal mngon du byed tshul bshad pa rmas] de dag nyid kyi lugs kyi btsan thabs kyi sbyor ba ma yin kyang/ ’di la los na btsan thabs su rig pa mngon du byas par song yod pas…

411 JTNs vol. 2: 86–87.

412 JTNg vol. 1: 511.3; JTNs vol. 2: 68.4: ’od gsal shar ba’i tshe yul snang thams cad bde ba chen por ’chur ba’i gang zang khyad par ba des mnyam bzhag gi ’od gsal de nyid rjes thob tu dran par byed pa’i tsa m stobs kyi kyang ’od gsal drang yong/ […] de ltar mnyam bzhag gi skabs su bde ba chen po’i ye shes la goms ’dris yod pas na phyis rjes thob gyi skabs su rtsha thig rlung la gnad du bsnun mi dgos par bde ba chen po’i ye shes de’i rnam pa dran tsa m gyis de nyid ’dren thub|
Familiarity with clear light can induce further clear light experiences between sessions. Post-meditative experience depends on an earlier application of the full technique of yogic practice and is itself a form of recollection. This recollection is involuntary, as in mundane cases of extreme trauma or ecstasy, such is the power of the clear light experience:

Consider the example of a mother whose only son has died: she will be so overwhelmed by suffering that even going to a delightful place like a pleasure garden would not make her happy. No matter where she goes, she will experience only suffering, never happiness. In a similar way, should a wish-fulfilling jewel fall into the hands of one who craves for wealth, his mind will be so transformed through joy that even if he were to stay in a stable he would know no suffering, only joy.\(^{413}\)

To ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma, the methods of Highest Yoga Tantra are deliberate, effortful and controlled. They are effective at first but unstable later. They require the wind-energies to enter the central channel, causing ordinary thought processes to cease. To practice such methods, one needs only to apply the technique; there is no need to understand the characteristics of clear light itself. Clear light can be recalled during post-meditation, but this is only possible if it has been revealed earlier through the deliberate technique of penetrative focusing.

### 3.2. The Methods of rDzogs-chen

The methods of rDzogs-chen, in contrast, are effortless and spontaneous.\(^ {414}\)

’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma lauds rDzogs-chen/Atiyoga as a superior, wisdom-centric vehicle. Yet, he does not represent rDzogs-chen as entirely effortless or

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\(^{413}\) JTNg vol. 1: 511.4; JTNs vol. 2: 68.8: dper na ma’i bu gcig pu shi na ma de sduṅ bṣngal gyiṣ gdung bas skyed mo’i tshal la sogs pa’i nyams dga’i gnas su phyin na dga’ bar mi ’gyur la gang du phyin kyang sduṅ bṣngal ba’i rnam pa ma gtos bde ba’i rnam pa ni mi ’byung/ de bzhin du mi nor la sred sems can gyi lag tu yid bzhin nor bu myed na mī de’i sams dga’ ba’i tshos mdo gis bsgyar yod pas mi de rta rdzang ngam rta’i ra ba’i nang du ’dug kyang dga’ ba’i rnam pa ma gtos sduṅ bṣngal ba’i rnam pa mi ’byung/\n
\(^{414}\) See below. When referring to rDzogs-chen methods, he focuses mainly on Khregs-chod: its rhetoric of simplicity providing a starker contrast with Highest Yoga Tantra’s “rhetoric of control and manipulation”—the phrase is borrowed from Germano 2007: 61—than would the more deliberate methods of Thod-rgal.
spontaneous. His rhetoric is not triumphalist but accommodating: he is keen to highlight points of commonality as well as difference.

In his *Tshig gsum gnad brdegs skor*, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma explains that rDzogs-chen does not require yogic methods to control the body’s subtle physiology:

On the path of the Great Perfection, there is no need to meditate on the channels, essences, wind-energies and so on in this way [i.e., as in Highest Yoga Tantra]. Instead, the means to sustain pure awareness is to recall pure awareness continuously and uninterruptedly, based on the guru’s initial instructions.  

In rDzogs-chen the guru introduces the disciple to clear light. Thereafter, the practice consists entirely of recollection. When the guru reveals the nature of clear light, he does so by explaining its characteristics. If the student recognizes clear light, s/he then sustains that recognition through continuous recollection. In this sense, rDzogs-chen requires less effort than Highest Yoga Tantra, but it is still not entirely effortless or spontaneous. Mindfulness/recollection (*dran pa; smṛtī*), which is deliberate in the initial stages of the practice, plays an important role. Furthermore, rDzogs-chen does not require the cessation of ordinary conceptualization (*kun rtag*):

There are many systems which describe the recognition and cultivation of clear light as taking place once conceptualization has been halted through instructions on causing the energetic-mind to enter the central channel. Here [however], recognition is brought about directly, and clear light is present even amidst conceptualization, like the oil that pervades a sesame seed. There is also a vast difference in the means of sustaining [the recognition] that is presented, and, therefore, a great disparity in how much effort is required to accomplish supreme wisdom.

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415 JTNg vol. 1: 512.2; JTNs vol. 2: 68.19: rdzogs pa chen po’i lam la de ltar rtsa thig rlung sogs lhag par bsgom mi dgos par dang po bla ma’i man ngag la btren nas rig pa thu re dran pa’i dran pa rgyun chags su bsten pa ni rig pa’i skyong tshul yin

416 This does not mean that the experience does not develop or deepen. In another text, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma makes the point that in rDzogs-chen clear light “is not merely ‘sustained’; by laying bare the clear light’s awareness quality, it deepens as an experience.” (JTNg vol. 1: 607.5; JTNs vol. 2: 162.8: ’od gsal gyi rig cha’am rtsal gyi rig cha dmar ded byas pas ’od gsal gyi gting la je zug tu song ste…) 

417 JTNg vol. 1: 555.1; JTNs vol. 2: 111.9: rlung sms dbu mar ’dzud pa’i man ngag gis kun rtag bcad pa’i skabs su ’od gsal ngos bzung ste sgom pa’i phyogs kho na mang la] lugs ’dir ni kun rtag gi steng na ’od gsal til ’bru snum khyab ltar gnas pa’i dus nyid na bcar phog tu ngos bzung ste skyong tshul ston pa’i khyad che zhing de’i dbang gis ye shes mchog sgrub pa la rtsol ba che chung dang mang nyung yang ches mi ’dra’o|
In Highest Yoga Tantra, ordinary mental processes are first brought to a halt when the wind-energies are brought into the central channel. In rDzogs-chen, mental processes remain (in the early stages) and are pervaded by clear light, just as oil permeates a sesame seed. The key is to recognize the clear light and remain with that recognition. This alone is enough to generate insight (*lha gling; vipaśyanā*). In Highest Yoga Tantra, such insight springs from the application of yogic technique.\(^{418}\)

‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma reiterates this point in another text. In the Dad ldn slob ma ’gyur med rdo rje’i ngor gdams pa, he claims that even if thoughts do not fully disappear straightaway, recognition of clear light suffices to overwhelm them:

> As we settle evenly into an experience of this pure awareness, without fabrication or contrivance, even if all dualistic thoughts do not fade into all-pervading space right away, they will be rendered ineffective. It is rather like someone afflicted with a severe illness—no matter how much you might show them arrays of brightly coloured silk, their mind will be so oppressed by suffering, they will have no thought of looking. Similarly, the mind’s ordinary mode of apprehension will be so overwhelmed by the features of clear light that it will experience only vivid clarity.\(^{419}\)

Again, ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma describes the dawn of clear light as a powerful, overwhelming experience. And, once again, he employs the terms pure awareness (*rig pa*) and clear light almost interchangeably.

To recognise pure awareness in rDzogs-chen requires a knowledge of its characteristics. They are described in rDzogs-chen manuals in great detail. ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma notes that Highest Yoga Tantra treatises contain similar

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\(^{418}\) JTNg vol. 1: 658.6; JTNs vol. 2: 215.6: bla med rgyud gzhan las kyang rig pa’i ram pa ngo spro d phyogs ’di rgyas pa ni gzhan du rtsa rlung thig le la gnad du bsun stobs kyis lhan skyes drangs yong ba| da lta nas bzhugs tshul ngo spro d la ha cang rtsal du ’don ni dgo| ’dir rig pa ngo spro d nas de la bzhag stobs kyis thun mong ma yin pa’i lha mthong ’dren pa nyid man ngag gi snying por byed la…

\(^{419}\) JTNg vol. 1: 488.2; JTNs. vol. 2: 45.13: sngar bla mas ngo spro d pa’i rig pa de nyid nyams len gyi dngos gzhir bzhag ste de ka’i ngang la bzo bcos med par phyam gyis bzhag pas gzung ‘dzin gyi rtog pa thams cad dbyings su nub pa tsam dang po nas ma byung rung| de dag thams cad rtsis med du song nas nad chen pos gzir ba’i mi la za ’og gi lta mo ji tar bstan yang blo’i ’dzin stangs sdug bsngal gyis non pa’i phyir de la bta rtog mi gton ba bzhin du| blo’i ’dzin stangs ’od gsal gyi ram pas ’phrog pa dung dung ba zhig yong rgyu yin|
descriptions. He cites a passage from the *Pañcakrama* literature associated with the *Guhyasamāja* as an example:

> Universally empty, the great wonder,  
> Bright and clear in character.  
> Supreme, like the surface of the sky.  

According to "Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma, these lines describe “the clear light that is the union [of emptiness and clarity]" (*zung ’jug gi ’od gsal*). They thus resemble expressions found throughout rDzogs-chen literature. Still, rDzogs-chen favours standardized expressions, such as “empty essence” (*ngo bo stong pa*), “clear nature” (*rang bzhin gsal ba*), and “compassionate responsiveness” (*thugs rje*), or the “expressive power” (*rtsal*) that “pervades without bias” (*ris med par khyab pa*). Similar descriptions appear in Highest Yoga tantras, but only rarely. They are not as ubiquitous—or, one might add, as formulaic—as they are in rDzogs-chen. This is so because in rDzogs-chen understanding the character of clear light is an essential part of the method. To that end, rDzogs-chen manuals supply many predicates: “profound, subtle clarity” (*ging gsal phra ba*), “primordially unaltered” (*gdod ma nas ma bcos pa*), “primordially free” (*ye grol*), “beyond the intellect” (*blo bral*), “pervasive and expansive” (*khyab gdal*), and “all-penetrating awareness” (*zang thal*

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420 JTNg vol. 1: 658.2; JTNs vol. 2: 214.13: slob dpon klu sgrub zhabs kyis| thams cad stong pa rmad po che| dwangs shing gsal ba’i mtshan nyid can| nam mkha’i ngos ltar mchog gyur pa| The closest match for the first two lines appears as part of a quotation in a text attributed not to Nāgārjuna (as ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma says) but to Nāgabodhi/Nāgabuddhi (klu’i byang chub). See *Rim pa Inga pa’i bshad pa nor bu’i phreng ba (Pañcakramaṭīkā-naṃśiṇī)* in *sDe dge bsTan ’gyur*, vol. 37 (rgyud, chi) 100b.5.: dang zhing gsal ba’i ye shes che| thams cad stong pa rmad po che| The third line does appear in Nāgārjuna’s *Rim pa Inga pa*’a *Pañcakrama*. See *sDe dge bsTan ’gyur*, vol. 35 (rgyud, ngi), 50a.6. For a discussion of the text’s purported author, see van der Kuijp 2007.  
421 JTNg vol. 1: 658.3; JTNs vol. 2: 214.17: chos sku rab dga’ mkha’i mnyam pa| Cf. *sDe dge bsTan ’gyur*, vol. 42 (rgyud, di) 5a.6. This text is also associated with *Guhyasamāja*.  
422 JTNg vol. 1: 658; JTNs vol. 2: 214.  
423 JTNg vol. 1: 658.4f.; JTNs vol. 2: 214–5.
Such terms hold the key to recognizing the character of awareness, or “the way pure awareness abides” (rig pa ’i bzhugs tshul), hence their frequency.

Here again, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma turns to comparison as a means to establish rDzogs-chen’s superiority, to map commonality and to explain differences.

His sPrin gyi sgron ma explains how settling meditation (’jog sgom; *sthāpyabhāvanā) in rDzogs-chen is the equivalent of the perfection stage in Highest Yoga Tantra. Settling meditation does not forcibly direct the wind-energies into the central channel, but it naturally commands a similar effect:

Settling in the direct vision (cer mthong) of the intrinsic nature of one’s own awareness causes the wind-energies to dissolve into the central channel. This brings

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424 JTNg vol. 1: 658; JTNs vol. 2: 215. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma notes that rDzogs-chen texts often refer to rig pa as “the clear and empty cognizance of the present [moment]” (da lta’i shes pa stong gsal), and such descriptions of an apparently quotidian state of mind might seem at odds with the kind of experience described in texts on the process of dying. Accounts of this process refer to an experience of brilliant luminosity which follows the three post-mortem experiences of ‘appearance’, ‘increase’ and ‘near-attainment’. The dawning of clear light, which follows immediately upon the experience of near-attainment and the cessation of all these conceptualizations, is likened to a clear, cloudless sky. It is a moment of pure consciousness untainted by other mental processes and therefore quite unlike ordinary mental experience. Nevertheless, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma believes that any objection to the identification of this post-dead clear light and the form of awareness described in rDzogs-chen is unfounded and can only result from a superficial view. (JTNg vol. 1: 657.2; JTNs vol. 2: 213.14: go ba kha phyir bitas la de ’dra’ char ba bden yang). He argues that “even if the clear state of conscious awareness (shes rig sal le ba), which you (as questioner) and I (as respondent) are both currently experiencing is not entirely and exclusively pure awareness, an aspect of it undoubtedly is.” (JTNg vol. 1: 657.3; JTNs vol. 2: 213.15: da la’i dri ba po khyod dang nga cag smra bzhin pa’i dus kyi rang re gnyis kyi shes rig sal le ba’i hril gyis rig pa kho na min rung’i di nyid kyi cha gcig rig par gdon mi za bar ’dod dgos te). In other words, primordial clear light (galod ma’i ’od gsal) is also present to some extent. It is the fact that this pure awareness is ‘stained’ (bslad) or obscured — except at death — that makes it so difficult for ordinary people to recognise. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma goes on to explain that pure awareness is an aspect of consciousness, dissociated from the ordinary thoughts of past, present or future. And therefore, he says, the texts speak of a “fourth [time], beyond the other three” (bzhis cha gsum bral). Pure awareness transcends the three ordinary times of past, present and future, and could therefore be said to exist in a fourth, transcendental time. Simply knowing this, however, is not sufficient for directly recognising it within the mind. Rather, he says, its features and qualities must be described in detail and it is this that accounts for the elaborate explanations of the characteristics of awareness — often referred to as the way in which awareness ‘dwells’ or abides (rig pa’i bzhugs tshul) — offered in the various manuals.

425 JTNg vol. 1: 657.5; JTNs vol. 2: 214.3: ‘on kyang tha mal pa la ’chi dus ma gtogs par rig pa de bslad yod pas’ da lta’i ngos ’dzin dka’ ba’i phyir bzhi cha gsum bral zhes] dus gsum gyi kun rtog las zur du phyel ba’i cha bzhis pa’am lhag ma de rig pa yin zhes bshad nas] de tsmi gysis’i bzhugs tshul rjen par blo ngor mthson mi nus par ggzigs te de’i rman par ngo spro dshul rgyas bshad mang po mzdaz pa yin no]

426 This term appears several times in the rDzogs-chen corpus. See, for example, JTNg vol. 1: 528.5; JTNs vol. 2: 84.18. Note that the term carries the literal sense of a posture or way of ‘sitting’.

426 JTNs vol. 2: 240.3: rdzogs chen gyis ’jog bsgom ’di rdzogs rim du ji ltar’ gyur| For a discussion of the place of settling meditation (or “transic meditation”) in rDzogs-chen and other systems see Pettit 1999, 170–173. The debate on the balance of analytical versus settling meditation in rDzogs-chen will also be taken up in the next chapter of the present study.
together wind-energy and mind. It is just as in the *Guhyasamāja*, for example, which teaches that simply focusing attention on the indestructible *tilaka* at the heart causes the wind-energies to be brought into the central channel. Settling through resting the mind weakens the movement in the right and left channels, and, as this happens, there is no alternative but for [the wind-energies] to enter, remain and dissolve into the central channel.427

rDzogs-chen practices yield the same results as the yogic techniques of forceful control. By settling and simply leaving things as they are (*cog ger bzhag pa*), “there comes a point when the more turbulent among the wind-energies that stir conceptualization cease by themselves.”428 The subtler wind-energies, meanwhile, are neutralized through training over a longer period. As a result, the mind’s power to generate the “fault” (*nyes pa*) of movement and thought fades, just as mercury may be detoxified.429 In the end, the wind-energies themselves become a support (*grogs*) for wisdom. This comes about without effort (*tshegs med*). Through sustained meditation, the karmic winds become ‘suffused’ with awareness, which transforms them into wisdom-winds.430 There are thus two kinds of wisdom-wind: 1) that which is originally wisdom-wind, and 2) that which became wisdom-wind through the application of method.431 Once again, the comparison here highlights commonality: the similar function of rDzogs-chen and Highest Yoga Tantra methods and the fact that both methods may be classified as perfection stage.

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427 JTNs vol. 2: 240.15f.: rang gi rig pa’i chos nyid la cer mthong du bzhag pas ni rlung dhu tir thim nus te| dper na gsang ’dus las snying ka’i mi shigs pa’i ti la kar sens bzung ba kho nas rlung dhu mar ’jug nus par bshad pa ltar rlung sms ’jug pa gcig yin la| sens babs kyis bzhag pas ro rkyang gi rgyu ba zhan thub cing| de zhan na dbar mar zhugs gnas thim gsum nus pa las ’os med pa’i phyir ro

428 JTNg vol. 1: 660.6; JTNs vol. 2: 217.6: cog bzhag la chig dril yun ring por nus na| ci zhig nas kun rtog g.yo ba’i rlung rags la rgod pa mams rang ’gags| JTNg ’gag.

429 JTNg vol. 1: 660.6; JTNs vol. 2: 217.8: phra ba rnams ’od gsal ngang sgom gyi shyor bas rgyun ring du btul ba’i mthus| dug bsdad pa’i dngul chu ltar ’gyu dran gyi nyes pa skyed pa’i mthu phrogs| Detoxified mercury is a commonly used ingredient in Tibetan medicine.

430 JTNg vol. 1: 661.1; JTNs vol. 2: 217.10: de’i dbang gis rim gis ye shes kyi grogs su ’gro ba la’ang tshegs med pa zhiug tu gyur te| da dung yang sngar ltar skyong nus na las rlung gi rgyun la rig pa’i rtsi thebs nas ye shes kyi rlung du ’gro bar bzhed de|

431 JTNg vol. 1: 661.2; JTNs vol. 2: 217.13: dang po nas ye shes snyug ma’i rlung du gnas pa dang| phyis thabs mkhas kyis ye shes kyi rlung du bsgrub pa ste ye shes rlung gi tshul gnyis yod par bshad do|
'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma adds an important proviso. In Highest Yoga Tantra, the clear light that arises through the dissolution of wind-energies in the central channel is localized. This makes it more “limited” (re ‘ga’ ba) or “fragmentary” (khol bu pa) than the equivalent experience in rDzogs-chen. The experience of clear light in Highest Yoga Tantra is like “the sun of happiness and joy that arises through the power of a mighty dharma-king during an age of strife.” The rDzogs-chen experience, by contrast, pervades the entire body, and is as vast and stable as the bounties of the “age of perfection” (rdzogs ldan). This physically pervasive experience of clear light is also key to the attainment of the ‘rainbow body’. rDzogs-chen’s superiority thus relates not only to its methods, but also to their effects.

The Tshig gsum gnad brdeg gi skor explains that rDzogs-chen and Highest Yoga Tantra ultimately bring about the same results, i.e., the reality body (dharmakāya) and form body (rūpakāya). The means to accomplish these results differ slightly in the two systems. In Highest Yoga Tantra, “the wisdom reality body is accomplished when the wisdom of great bliss (bde ba chen po’i ye shes), like a sky devoid of the three sullying factors, is made manifest through the power of penetrative focussing on channels, essences and wind-energies.” Gnosis manifests when the energetic mind (rlung sems) enters the central channel. The form body then

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432 JTNg vol. 1: 605.4; JTNs vol. 2: 159.19f.: snga ma’i ’od gsal gyi mnyam bzhag re ‘ga’ ba dang khol bu pa yin pas rtsod ldan dus su chos kyi rgyal po mthu chen lta bu’i mthu bde skyid kyi nyt ma khol bu shar ba dang ’dra| 433 JTNg vol. 1: 605.5; JTNs vol. 2: 160.3: phyi ma dus thams cad pa yin cing lus thams cad la khyab […] pas rgya che ba zhes pa ltar yin pas rdzogs ldan gyi phun tshogs ltar rgya che la mthu’ bbrtan pa’o| 434 JTNg vol. 1: 661.5; JTNs vol. 2: 218.5: der ma zad rdzogs rim gyi lam srol gzhon ’dra ba’i rlung gi sdu’d rim ma byas par rig pa mngon du byed lugs ’dil la dhu ti’i gnas khol bu rer’ dmigs rten’ khol bu re’i steng du ’od gsal shar ba dang mi ’dra ba’i ’char tshul thun mong ma yin pa zhig dang| de la brtön nas ’ja’ lus sgrub tshul gyi gnad phra mo zhig kyang yod par sens so|| 435 JTNg rian. 436 The three sullying factors (slong byed kyi rkyen gsum) are haze (rdul, cloud (sprin), mist or fog (na bun). Cf. bsTan pa’i nyt ma’i zhal lung 129.3. 437 JTNg vol. 1: 528.2; JTNs vol. 2: 84.8: bla med kyi rgyud sde gzhon gyi lam rtsa thig rlung sogs la bsten nas gnad du bsun stobs kyi slong byed kyi rkyen gsum dang bral ba’i nam mkha’ lta bu’i bde ba chen po’i ye shes mngon du byas nas…
appears through a slight movement from awareness (rig pa de las cung zad g.yo ba). The features of “the maṇḍala of support and supported deities” (rten dang brten pa lha’i dkyil ’khor) arise through the co-operating condition (lhan cig byed rkyen; sahakāripatrayā) of clear light and the perpetuating cause (nye bar len pa’i rgyu; upadānahetu) of wind-energy and five-coloured light.\(^{437}\) In rDzogs-chen, by contrast, the wisdom reality body is accomplished through meditation on the precise nature of awareness. Ordinarily, this awareness carries the potential to generate impure appearances, thought or consciousness (dran rig). But once the potential for impure appearances is exhausted, it can generate “an inconceivable array of buddha-bodies, light-spheres (thig le), heavenly realms (zhing khams) and so forth.”\(^{438}\)

rDzogs-chen uniquely accomplishes the form body through “ascertaining and growing familiar with” (gtan la phab nas goms pa) clear light by means of Thod-rgal practice.\(^{439}\)

’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma thus explains how the two systems bring about the same result in slightly different ways. He claims that this twofold fruition (of reality body and form body) can even be accomplished through the sūtra path, let alone through tantra.\(^{440}\) Thus, except for his reference to the rainbow body, the difference between Highest Yoga Tantra and rDzogs-chen is methodological, not teleological. Superior methods bring about the results more swiftly, but the results are (mostly) the same.

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437 JTNg vol. 1: 528.3; JTNs vol. 2: 84.11: ye sheschos sku nyid sgrub pa dang| rig pa de las cung zad g.yo bar rtsom pa dang ’od gsal gyi lhan cig byed rkyen dang rlung ’od zer lnga pa’i nyer len gyi rgyu byas nas rten dang brten pa lha’i dkyil ’khor gyi mam par ldang nas sangs rgyas kyi gzugs sku sgrub pa dang!

438 JTNg vol. 1: 529.1; JTNs vol. 2: 85.4: sku dang thig le zhing khams kyi bkod pa sogs bsam gyis mi khyab pa’ cher bas …

439 JTNg vol. 1: 529.2; JTNs vol. 2: 85.7: de ltar thod rgal gyi lam gyis gtan la phab nas goms pa’i mthu| gzugs sku’i mam pa sgrub pa ni lam ’di’i khyad chos yin no|

440 JTNg vol. 1: 528.1; JTNs vol. 2: 84.5: mdo sngags gang yin kyang bsgrub bya chos gzugs kyi sku gnyis la khyad par med kyang|
3.3. The rDzogs-chen Path: Sudden versus Gradual

The rDzogs-chen path charted in Heart-Essence literature combines sudden and gradual elements, or what might be called elements of simultaneism and gradualism. For example, the teacher’s introduction to wisdom (or clear light) is sudden (at least in comparison to other systems), but, in most cases, this is then mitigated through a gradual process of familiarisation. Commentators often emphasize simultaneity over gradualism. For instance, the description of Atiyoga as a vehicle that takes wisdom as the path stresses simultaneism—as does Sa-skya Paṇḍita in his critical remarks. Recent studies have identified some tension between these two forms of rhetoric. Van Schaik, for example, claims that 'Jigs-med gling-pa blurs the distinction between the rDzogs-chen texts within the Klong chen snying thig revelation and his own rDzogs-chen writings. As a result, he gives “his voice in the supporting instructions an authority that it would not otherwise have.” Van Schaik believes this serves to reset the balance towards gradualism.

'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s rDzogs-chen writings, by and large, embrace the language of gradualism. This is attested in his explanation of the development of the clear light experience and the phased cultivation of mindfulness/recollection (dran pa; smṛti). Both draw on the tenets of Highest Yoga Tantra. To him, the

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441 On these terms in a Tibetan Buddhist context see Ruegg 1989: 5–13 and passim. Note that the etic distinction between sudden/simultaneist/subitism and gradual/progressive is roughly equivalent to the emic distinction between eig char ba and rim gyis pa, but these latter terms are often used in traditional sources to distinguish individuals according to their capacity, whereas the etic distinction as employed here is more concerned with methods. Higgins has also noted a comparable distinction between what he terms ‘disclosive’ and transformational paradigms in Buddhist literature. See Higgins 2013 passim, but especially 27–30. Scholars have also referred to these categories or models of soteriology as nature/nurture, revelation/generation, or discovery/development(al). See Wangchuk 2012: 29–30.

442 In exceptional cases, even the process of familiarisation is sudden. The instructions manuals often point to the legendary figure of dGa’-rab rdo-rje (*Prahevajra) as someone who traversed the entire path in a single sitting. See, for example, bsTshan pa’i nyi ma’i zhal lung 8.2. As noted earlier, discussions of simultaneism in rDzogs-chen generally ignore the preliminary practices of analysis and investigation, which are the subject of the next chapter.

443 van Schaik 2004a: 132.

444 Higgins has also noted a comparable distinction between what he terms ‘disclosive’ and transformational paradigms in Buddhist literature. See Higgins 2013 passim, but especially 27–30.
simultaneist elements in rDzogs-chen do not preclude the kind of benefits that spring from a more gradual approach.

3.3.1. The Gradual Development of Clear Light

In his *Hor ’od zer gyi ngor gdam pa*, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma describes how clear light develops in intensity as a practitioner progresses in rDzogs-chen training. Thoughts and emotions may still be present in the path’s early stages, even after the recognition of clear light. Initially, clear light remains relatively weak, yet it is sufficiently powerful to prevent thoughts from binding or constraining (’ching) the mind:

Generally, clear light has many degrees of strength. At the first stage, even though one is not distracted from awareness, various virtuous or non-virtuous thoughts still arise, like waves arising in great numbers. Still, if the fundamental wisdom of awareness does not stray from its own place (rang mal), it makes no difference that conceptualization suddenly arises in the first instant. They will be unable to continue in the second instant and will dissolve directly into the genuine sphere of clear light. Consequently, [such conceptualization] does not constrain the mental continuum.445

The text goes on to compare this application of “the seal of realization” (*dgongs pa’i rgya*) with applying the seal of deity yoga in the generation stage practice.446 The idea that awareness becomes easier to recognise and more stable

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445 JTNg vol. 1: 556.5; JTNs vol. 2: 113.1: spiyi ’od gsal la sras ’thug gi rim pa mang po yod pas dang po’i’ dus su rig thog nas ma yengs kyang| dge sdig gi rtag pa sna tshogs chu rabs ltar ’byung ba mang du yod la de ltar ’byung yang rtsa ba rig pa’i ye shes rang mal nas ma g.yos pa’i dbang gis| kun rtag de mams skad cig dang por thol gyis shar yang| gnyis par de’i rgyun mthud’ mi nus par ’od gsal gnyug ma’i dbyangs su sib kyi thim’ gro bas rgyud mi ’ching zhel gsungs te| *JTNg ba’i; *JTNg *thud.* The text continues: “Yet the reason they do not bind it is not solely because they do not persist in the second instant. Rather, it is through ‘applying the seal’ of the realization of clear light as soon as the thought arises in the very first instant—this is a key point.” (JTNg vol. 1: 557.1; JTNs vol. 2: 113.8: mi ’ching ba’i rgyu mthun nji skad cig gnyis par rgyun ma mthud pa gcig pu de min gyi| mam rtag skad cig dang po skye dus nas ’od gsal gyi dgongs pa’i rgyas thebs pa’i gnad kyi yin te)

446 “After all, even mantra practitioners of the mere generation stage, by applying the seal of deity yoga to all perceptions and activity can transform what would otherwise be neutral actions—such as moving about, walking, sitting and such like—into great opportunities for the twofold accumulations by mean of mantra, madrē and so on. What need, then, is there to mention that this applies here?” (JTNg vol. 1: 557.2; JTNs vol. 2: 113.11: bskyped rim tsm la gnas pa’i snga s pas kyang snang spyod thams cad la’i mal ’byor gyi rgyas thebs pa’i dbang gis bsngul bskyod ’gro’ dug sogs gzhana la lung ma bstan du ’gro ba mams kyang snga s dang phyag rgya la sogs pa tshogs gnyis kyi sgo rabs po cher ’gyur bar gsung naj de la ci smros* pa’i phyir ro| *JTNg smos.* The comparative exercise for ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma is thus not limited to the perfection stage: techniques of generation stage practice also provide analogies for rDzogs-chen.
over time is not new. Oft-repeated accounts of the modes of liberation (grol lugs), for instance, explain how thoughts become gradually weaker and therefore simpler to ‘liberate’ as one progresses in Khregs-chod meditation. There is also a common three-stage process in Khregs-chod: 1) recognition (ngo shes pa), 2) perfecting the strength (rtsal rdzogs pa) and 3) gaining stability (brtan pa thob pa).\footnote{447} What is unusual here is the way 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma refers to the process as a development in the strength or intensity of clear light.

In his Man ngag zab mo rdo rje’i mtshon cha, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma identifies another form of gradual development, which divides the recognition of pure awareness into two phases. He says that for most practitioners the initial recognition based on intellectual understanding (go bas ’phrod pa) gradually turns into recognition through the force of experience (nyams myong stobs kyis ’phrod pa):

For the recognition of pure awareness, you should know that there is a distinction between 1) recognition through understanding and 2) recognition through the force of experience. The former precedes the latter. Although it is possible for some to arrive directly at the second stage in the present lifetime through the blessings of the guru alone and without any prior experience of the first stage, this can only occur to those possessing the right karmic fortune (las ’phro can) [from former lives].\footnote{448}

This phasing is then reflected in two styles of meditation—or, as he puts it, ‘modes of settling upon pure awareness’ (rig pa’i steng du ’jog lugs):

There are two ways of settling upon pure awareness: 1) a mode of settling that is achieved mainly through understanding, and 2) a mode of encountering the face of awareness and sustaining it through the force of experience. These two certainly occur in the sequence presented here, because it is through sustaining the practice in the former way that awareness grows clearer and the ordinary mind grows progressively weaker. As a result, the flow of understanding gradually transforms into experience.\footnote{449}

\footnote{447} For an explanation of these three stages, see, for example, Mi-pham’s Rig ngo skyong thabs ye shes snying po (MPc vol. 32: 357–360), translated in Pearcey 2018.

\footnote{448} JTNg vol. 1: 659.5; JTNs vol. 2: 216.2: rig pa nga ’phrod mtshams la yang| go bas ’phrod pa dang| nyams myong gi stobs kyis ’phrod pa gnyis shes dgos shing| de ’i phyi ma ni snga ma sngon du ’gro ba yin la| tse ’dir snga ma sngon du ma btang bar yang bla ma ’i byin rlabs kho nas phyi ma yong ba ’ga’ zhi g la srid pa ni las ’phro can yin pa’i rgyu mtshan gyis yin no|

\footnote{449} JTNg vol. 1: 659.6; JTNs vol. 2: 216.8: rig pa’i steng du ’jog lugs la’ang| go ba shas che ba’i sgo nas ’jog tshul dang| myong stobs kyis rig pa’i rang zhal mjal nas de skyong tshul gnyis yod la| de
To 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma, clearly, rDzogs-chen involves a gradual path of development, albeit one that is less forceful or strenuous than in Highest Yoga Tantra. There are some rare individuals capable of instantaneous realization, but they must have already gone through the necessary stages in former lives. Thus, rDzogs-chen is for most a gradual path. Despite this, some of its rhetoric, focusing on rare individuals of the very highest capacity, emphasises simultaneism.

Elsewhere, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma even suggests that rDzogs-chen might be slower than Highest Yoga Tantra. This is an unusual claim. Even if it is slower, he maintains, rDzogs-chen offers methods that are more stable and bring about longer-lasting effects than comparable techniques in other systems. Thus, to him, rDzogs-chen constitutes the most powerful form of meditative concentration (ting nge ’dzin) upon clear light despite a potentially slow pace.

### 3.3.2. The Gradual Development of Mindfulness

Mindfulness/recollection/memory (dran pa; smṛti) is a recurrent theme in 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s writings. It assumes centre stage in a celebrated work on the mnemonic powers (gzungs; dhāraṇī) of bodhisattvas, as noted in Chapter One. He also discusses the topic in his rDzogs-chen works. One text in particular, the Dad ldan slob ma ’gyur med rdo rje ’i ngor gdams pa, charts the development of mindfulness from the beginning to the end of the path. In the early stages, mindfulness is relatively coarse and involves a deliberate form of engagement; later,
in its subtlest, most consummate form, it is an innate, natural property of awareness itself. The *Dad ldan slob ma 'gyur med rdo rje'i ngor gdam pa* discusses six stages in the development of mindfulness in rDzogs-chen, based on the following verse from the *Man ngag mdzod*:

> Beginners should achieve non-distraction through deliberate application, Students of meditation and post-meditation should be naturally undistracted, Familiarity should bring non-distraction as perceptions dawn as wisdom, With expansive realization, there is no distraction nor one who is distracted, With ultimate stability, what were objects of distraction are assuredly dharmatā, And, with phenomenal dissolution, illustrations or expressions no longer apply.  

In his analysis of this verse, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma identifies six forms of mindfulness in rDzogs-chen: 1) applied mindfulness (*'du byed kyi dran pa*), 2) natural mindfulness (*chos nyid kyi dran pa*), 3) mindfulness during post-meditative experience (*rjes snang gi dran pa*), 4) the mindfulness of direct realization (*mngon sum gyi dran pa*), 5) mindfulness of the domain of experience (*spyod yul gyi dran pa*), and 6) mindfulness of phenomenal dissolution (*chos zad kyi dran pa*). As is plain even from the names of these categories, the developmental path in rDzogs-chen seeks to extend awareness from the meditative to the post-meditative period. As the recognition of clear light progressively stabilizes in meditation, this brings a

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454 JTNg vol. 1: 484.3; JTNs vol. 2: 42.2: dang po'i las can 'du byed ma yengs bya| mnyam rjes slob rnamchos nyid ma yengs bya| goms pa'i| dran snang ye shes ma yengs bya| klong 'gyur dus su yengs' med yengs mkhan pa mthar phyin yengs yul chos nyid nges| chos zad dus na mtshon brjod yul las 'das| According to *Man ngag mdzod*, KLR vol. 15: 388: pas; b KLR: gyur; c KLR: yeng; d KLR: yeng; KLR: yeng. Cf. the English translation in Longchen Rabjam 2006: 106. In contrast to the examples in the previous chapter, we can see that in his comparative discourse 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma relies less on the works of Klong rab-'byams and 'Jigs-med gling-pa. Sam van Schaik has noted that 'Jigs-med gling-pa was not overly concerned with establishing connections between rDzogs-chen and the tantras of the New Translations. (2004a: 26). He thinks this was because he lived during a period when rNying-ma was under threat, having just recovered from the Dzungar invasion and still under pressure from antagonistic forces. (Ibid.) Still, 'Jigs-med gling-pa did not engage in sectarian debate. (Ibid., 27) van Schaik also notes that attitudes changed in the following century when leading rNying-ma scholars became less preoccupied with the preservation of their own doctrine and more interested in “the common ground” between rNying-ma, bKa’-brigyud, and Sa-skya. (Ibid., 28)

455 The term “mindfulness” may not adequately capture the sense of the term *dran pa* here, especially in the later stages, where recollection is no longer deliberate, but an inherent property of awareness itself. Still, I have chosen to use the term partly to emphasize that, at least in the earlier stages, the term relates to the common Buddhist idea (Skt. *smṛti*, Pāli. *sati*) generally rendered in English as mindfulness.
corresponding transformation of the periods between meditation sessions.

Eventually, when the division between meditation and post-meditation ceases, the experience of clear light is continuous.

’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma links the earlier stages of mindfulness to the three modes of liberation (*grol lugs gsun*): 1) liberation through recognising thought, which he compares to meeting an old friend;\(^\text{456}\) 2) self-liberation (*rang grol*), which he compares to a snake uncoiling its own knots;\(^\text{457}\) and 3) liberation beyond benefit and harm, which he compares to a thief entering an empty house.\(^\text{458}\) These modes chart the development of the ability to free the mind of thoughts; they reveal the gradual nature of rDzogs-chen meditation. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma explains that the three modes manifest at a stage before thoughts cease altogether, i.e., before the karmic wind-energies dissolve within the central channel.\(^\text{459}\) When the karmic winds dissolve and thoughts cease, clear light dawns. This, in turn, corresponds to the stage of direct realization (*mngon sum rtogs pa*), the fourth of the six forms of mindfulness, in rDzogs-chen.\(^\text{460}\) The dissolution of the wind-energies in the central channel also influences the post-meditation period, such is the force of the experience.\(^\text{461}\) Thus, the key difference between the third and fifth forms of

\(^{456}\) JTNg vol. 1: 484.6; JTNs vol. 2: 42.12: dang po rnam rtog ngo shes pas grol ba sngar ’dris kyi mi dang ’phrad pa lta bu… This and the following two metaphors are found in many other rDzogs-chen texts.

\(^{457}\) JTNg vol. 1: 487.1; JTNs vol. 2: 44.13: grol lugs gnyis pa rnam rtog sbrul gyi mdud pa zhig pa lta bu'i man ngag. The text does not use the term “self-liberation” (*rang grol*) but it appears in other sources.

\(^{458}\) i.e., *phan gnod med pa’i grol ba*. The text does not refer to this mode directly; it refers to the three modes while only naming the first two.

\(^{459}\) JTNg vol. 1: 492; JTNs vol. 2: 49.

\(^{460}\) JTNg vol. 1: 492.1; JTNs vol. 2: 49.9: de ltar ’od gsal ’char ba dang rdzogs chen mngon sum rtogs pa don gcig tu gdos shing rlung dbu mar ma zhugs kyi ring la de mi ’ong bar…

\(^{461}\) “So, just as there is a great difference in the power of your practice based on whether the wind-energies have entered the central channel during meditation, in post-meditative experience, too, there is a vast difference in how this power is integrated.” (JTNg vol. 1: 494.1; JTNs vol. 2: 51.7: mnyam bzhag tu rlung dbu mar zhugs ma zhugs kyi steng nas nyams len la ngar che chung gi khyad thang chen po ’ong ba bzhin du’rjes snang du’ang nus pa btre lugs la khyad chen po zhig ’ong ngoi) Cf. the passage cited earlier, in which ’Jigs med bstan pa’i describes the recognition of clear light in Highest
mindfulness is the entrance of the karmic wind-energies to the central channel. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma defines “sustained pure awareness” (rig pa rgyun skyong) as recognition of the point at which the 80 indicative conceptualizations (kun rtog brgyad cu), karmic winds (las rlung) and habitual traces dissolve. This is the “cornerstone” (snying rdo) of all Khregs-chod meditation: to remain with this recognition, and not to forget the character of the experience. Throughout the text, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma adopts the language of Highest Yoga Tantra. He refers again and again to clear light and the dissolution of wind-energies within the central channel. This lends a comparative flavour to the text, even if it is not explicitly comparative.

3.3.3. Reconciling the Sudden and the Gradual

For 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma, rDzogs-chen lacks none of the benefits associated with a gradual, developmental approach. In his sPrin gyi sgron ma nas, for instance, he states that the clear light of rDzogs-chen is not in any way inferior to the wisdom that derives from generosity and the accumulation of merit (bsod nams kyi tshogs; punya-sambhāra) over several aeons. The same clear light also includes qualities associated with method (thabs; upāya). rDzogs-chen might appear as a forceful experience that affects the practitioner even during the post-meditation phase.

The 80 indicative conceptualizations (rang bzhin brgyad bcu’i rnam par rtog pa) are various emotional and cognitive states, divided into three groups: 1) 33 conceptualizations related to anger or hatred (zhe sdang) and indicative of white appearance (snang); 2) 40 conceptualizations related to desire (’dod chags) and indicative of red increase (mched); and 3) seven conceptualizations related to delusion (gti mug) and indicative of black near-attainment (nyer thob).

Of course, the identity of the student 'Gyur-med rdo-rje might be significant here. If, for example, he was a follower of Highest Yoga Tantra, this might have been a factor in 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s approach. It is likely that he was the same individual whom 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma refers to in similar terms in another text of more general advice, specifying additionally that he is “from the land of bSam-sa to the East” (shar phyogs bsam sa’i yul gyi). See JTNs vol. 1: 433–436.
to be focused exclusively on wisdom, at the expense of merit or method, but this is not reflected in its results.\textsuperscript{466} He sets out an inclusivist model: rDzogs-chen is superior to other systems but it also incorporates their qualities.

In the same text, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma notes that rDzogs-chen meditation focuses on the nature of the mind, without the need to meditate on the nature of objects. This does not signal an omission, he says.\textsuperscript{467} rDzogs-chen meditation is similar to the meditative equipoise of exalted beings (\textit{\textit{phags pa}; ārya})—i.e., arhats, pratyekabuddhas and ārya bodhisattvas—spoken of in other Buddhist teachings. When dualistic perception (\textit{gnyis snang}) fades, such beings perceive this dissolution as the nature of their own minds.\textsuperscript{468} He further claims that in rDzogs-chen the usual sequence of the generation and perfection stages is not necessarily observed.\textsuperscript{469} In rDzogs-chen, he says, it is possible to practise the meditative equipoise of the perfection stage without prior visualization or generation. Moreover, this meditative equipoise is not blank or devoid of experiential content; sensory appearances are still present, because the senses remain unblocked even after clear light dawns. For 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma then, to take short-cuts does not mean to miss out on the benefits associated with the stages or practices one has skipped.

\textsuperscript{466} JTNs vol. 2: 241. Concern about how the two forms of accumulation (\textit{tshogs gnyis}) are applied in rDzogs-chen can be found elsewhere in the literature too. One recent example of this is a question from the Fourteenth Dalai Lama to sMyo-shul mkhan-po 'Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje and his lengthy answer contained in \textit{Rig ’dzin brgyud pa’i zhal lung} 83–110.
\textsuperscript{467} JTNs vol. 2: 241.
\textsuperscript{468} JTNs vol. 2: 241.
\textsuperscript{469} JTNs vol. 2: 242. This is a point the author makes elsewhere in his writings, too. See, for example: “Nevertheless, it is not the case that the perfection stage is only ever practiced upon the foundation of the generation stage. After all, it is well known that in this tradition of the king of vehicles clear light is made manifest through the pursuit of naked, primordially pure awareness alone.” (JTNg vol. 1: 485.1; JTNs vol. 2: 42.15: ‘on kyang rnam pa kun tu bskyped rim la ma brten par rdzogs rim sgom tshul gan nas med pa min te| ka dag gi rig pa rjen ded ‘ba’ zhiig pas kyang ‘od gsal mngon du ‘gyur bar theg pa’i rgyal po ‘di’i lugs la grags pa’i phyir ro|)
4. Conclusion

'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma pays close attention to the gradual element of the rDzogs-chen path. He frequently refers to clear light and the dissolution of the wind-energies in the central channel, even in his classification of the various forms of rDzogs-chen mindfulness. These are important themes in Highest Yoga Tantra. He describes rDzogs-chen as a gradual path, and even suggests that rDzogs-chen can be slower than Highest Yoga Tantra. When discussing the differences between the two systems, he does not simply list points of divergence; he provides reasons for them. He also incorporates terminology from Highest Yoga Tantra in his descriptions of rDzogs-chen. For example, he often employs 'od gsal as a synonym for rig pa. Such comparativism is inclusive and irenic, with as much of an emphasis on similarity as on difference. It is thus in sharp contrast to contemporary writings which stress the superior philosophical view of Atiyoga.
4. The Exclusivist Turn: rDzogs-chen and the Middle Way

“It’s fine to combine two things that complement one another and go
together well..., but there’s no need to mix things that don’t.”

Chos-dbyings rang-grol470

1. Introduction

The previous two chapters show 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i nyi-ma largely ignored the ideas of Mi-pham in his rDzogs-chen writings. He sidestepped philosophical discussion entirely when comparing Highest Yoga Tantra with rDzogs-chen. Yet, Mi-pham’s influence is more discernible in the rDzogs-chen writings of g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol, who was 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i nyi-ma’s (indirect) disciple.471 One text in particular, rDzogs pa chen po ‘i lam nyams su len tshul,472 demonstrates that Mi-pham’s interpretation of emptiness even reshaped rDzogs-chen preliminary practice. It is also possible to discern in this work a shift away from the kind of inclusivism we saw in the last chapter towards an exclusivist insistence on the authentic rNying-ma position, unadulterated by the views of other schools.

1.1. Mi-pham’s Philosophical Legacy

Mi-pham’s writings exerted great influence on most rNying-ma positions in the domain of Buddhist philosophy, but especially in Madhyamaka.473 While claiming to represent the views of earlier rNying-ma scholars, most notably Rong-

470 YCRa vol. 2: 404.
471 Hereafter referred to simply as Chos-dbyings rang-grol. It will be recalled from Chapter One that Chos-dbyings rang-grol never met 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma in person but received instruction from him indirectly via gTer-ston bSod-rgyal (alias Las-rab gling-pa). Still, he considered himself 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s disciple and may therefore be referred to as a follower.
472 YCRa vol. 2, 403–414. As discussed below, the title was added by the editors.
zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po and Klong-chen-rab-'byams, Mi-pham also innovated.\textsuperscript{474} He sought to reconcile points of doctrine, such as the relationship between emptiness and buddha-nature, which had long been a source of controversy among Tibetan scholars.\textsuperscript{475} He also broke new ground by commenting extensively upon Indian treatises such as \textit{Madhyamakālaṃkāra}.\textsuperscript{476} His commentaries allowed his successors to compare rNying-ma interpretations of Mahāyāna doctrine with those of other schools, especially the Sa-skya and dGe-lugs.\textsuperscript{477}

David Germano interprets Mi-pham’s exoteric writings as the culmination of a lengthy process of alignment with gSar-ma doctrines.\textsuperscript{478} He connects this with the Ris-med movement, arguing that scholastic literature on Mahāyāna topics had previously been the “traditional stronghold” of the gSar-ma schools.\textsuperscript{479} It is true that the proportion of Mi-pham’s literary output dedicated to Madhyamaka was without precedent for a rNying-ma author.\textsuperscript{480} Before him, Klong-chen rab-'byams wrote only a small number of texts that touched upon Mahāyāna topics. His \textit{mDzod bdun} and other collections refer to Madhyamaka as part of broader doxographies, but these

\textsuperscript{474} See Pettit 1999: 134: “Though Mipham considered Klong chen pa and Rong zom to be the quintessential Nyingma philosophers, both lived and wrote before Tsongkhapa’s writings became influential, so their Madhyamaka works would not have sufficed as primary sources for the argumentative techniques Mipham applies to Gelug Prāṣāntika.” Mi-pham also drew upon the writings of scholars from these other schools, especially Go-rangs-pa bSod-nams seng-ge (1429–1489), in formulating his ideas. See Pettit 1999: 134 for confirmation that Mi-pham draws upon Go-rangs-pa for many of his critical remarks on Tsong-kha-pa (Note that Pettit repeatedly spells the Sa-skya scholar’s name as Go ram pa—Go-rams-pa is, of course, an abbreviation of Go-bo rab-'byams-pa.). This would suggest that key works by Go-rams-pa were in limited circulation in eastern Tibet, despite the general ban imposed by the dGa'-ldan pho-brang, which extended even to the copying of manuscripts.

\textsuperscript{475} He also reconciled the views of Klong-chen rab-'byams and Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po; see Wangchuk 2004: 196.

\textsuperscript{476} Smith 2001: 231 makes the point in relation to Mi-pham. See Viehbeck 2016: 10 for a discussion of how dPal-sprul was the first rNying-ma commentator on the \textit{Bodhicaryāvatāra}.

\textsuperscript{477} This is what Bod-pa sprul sku does in \textit{Ia grub shan 'byed}, which includes sections on “establishing one’s/our own system” (rang lugs bzhag pa) and “refuting others’ systems” (gzhan lugs dgag pa).

\textsuperscript{478} Germano 1994: 294.

\textsuperscript{479} Germano 1994: 296.

\textsuperscript{480} E. Gene Smith was perhaps the first to make this point. See Smith 2001: 231.
discussions amount to a mere fraction of his total literary output.\textsuperscript{481} The works of 'Jigs-med gling-pa, too, include references to Madhyamaka, mostly in connection with the prajñā subsection of the bodhicitta chapter of Yon tan mdzod and its auto-commentaries.\textsuperscript{482} Although 'Jigs-med gling-pa believed he was “elevating” (\textit{srong}s) the tenets of the rNyting-ma school through his works,\textsuperscript{483} his interpretation of Madhyamaka differs from Mi-pham’s and was therefore effectively superseded.\textsuperscript{484}

Mi-pham set out his version of Madhyamaka philosophy in his major commentaries on Indian treatises. However, he never completed a planned overarching introduction to Madhyamaka thought.\textsuperscript{485} He left it to others to systematize his ideas.\textsuperscript{486} Bod-pa sprul-sku, in his \textit{sI}Ta grub shan ‘byed, for example, attempts to codify Mi-pham’s philosophy in the form of a textbook (\textit{yig cha}).\textsuperscript{487} Some of Mi-pham’s writings engendered further commentaries by other scholars.\textsuperscript{488} His ideas

\textsuperscript{481}See Arguillère 2007: 157–175 for the most thorough analysis to date of Klong-chen rab-‘byams’s purported oeuvre. Arguillère’s list, which is based on Chos-grags bzang-po and other lists includes sixteen texts (96–112) on the topic of the “Pāramitāyāna”. Chapter three of Grub mtha’ \textit{mdzod} presents the tenets of non-Buddhist and Buddhist schools including the Cittamātra and Mādhyamika. See Butters 2006.

\textsuperscript{482}See especially \textit{bDen} gnyis shing \textit{rta}, JL vol. 2: 258b.1 (518.1) – 341a (683).

\textsuperscript{483}See, for example, the following lines from his \textit{rDzogs pa chen po rang byung rdo rje’i rnam thar gsol ’debs} (JL vol. 8: 707–710) 708.6: snga’ gyur grub mtha’ chos lugs na tshogs kyis| myog mar gyur la gzhannya sdes gshung ba’i tshod| yon tan rin chen mdzod kyi [709] shing rta ches| rang sde’i grub mtha’ slong la gsol ba’i \textit{debs}. It is worth noting in this connection that among the commentaries on \textit{Yon tan mdzod} is one by the Mongolian dGe-lugs teacher, A-lag-sha Ngag-dbang bstan-dar (1759–1831), alias Sog-po bstan-dar.

\textsuperscript{484}Moreover, as previously noted, Mi-pham almost entirely ignored his writings.


\textsuperscript{486}There was sufficient ambiguity in Mi-pham’s writings for his followers to debate whether he truly embraced ‘intrinsic emptiness’ (rang \textit{stong}) or ‘extrinsic emptiness’ (gzhan stong). See Pettit 1999, 114f. and Kapstein 2009, 63–64. Kapstein states in his introduction to his abridged translation of gZhan stong khas len seng ge’i nga ro that he does not believe Mi-pham was a true proponent of extrinsic emptiness but wrote his text on the subject to convey “the best argument that can be mounted in favour of a position that he considers to be not tenable in the final analysis” (op. cit., 64). For a discussion of how Mi-pham and the rNyting-ma school relegate the notions of rang \textit{stong} and gzhan \textit{stong} to a subordinate position, while also seeking to reconcile them both, see Wangchuk 2004: 196–200.

\textsuperscript{487}See Bötrlü 2011 for an English translation.

\textsuperscript{488}For example, Kun-bzang dpal-ladan wrote a commentary to Ngès shes sgron \textit{me}, entitled \textit{Blo gros snang ba’i sgo ‘byed}. Another commentary to the same text by Khro-shul ‘Jam-rdor [i.e., ‘Jam-dpal rdo-rje] (1920–1960), known as ‘Od zer dri \textit{med}, is translated and discussed in Pettit 1999. mKhan-po Zla[-ba’i] [‘od-zer] (1922–1990) and \textit{mKhan-po dpal-ladan} shes-rab (1942–2010) both composed commentaries on Mi-pham’s Don rnam nges shes rab ral gri. mKhan-po Nus-ladan mKhyen-brtse’i blo-gros (19th–20th C.) wrote an annotational commentary (\textit{mchan ‘grel}) on Mi-pham’s \textit{mKhas ‘jug}
also shaped the content of other commentaries such as mKhan-po Yon-tan rgya-mtsho’s (b. 19th C.) guide to ’Jigs-med gling-pa’s Yon tan mdzod.\textsuperscript{489} His philosophical thinking also spread through teaching, especially in the scriptural colleges where his own commentaries were widely used. Before I examine how these ideas surfaced in a rDzogs-chen instruction manual, let me briefly examine what role logical reasoning and analysis played in earlier rDzogs-chen works.

\section*{1.2. The Role of Analysis in rDzogs-chen}

The meditation practices of Khregs-chod and Thod-rgal do not involve any form of analysis (\textit{dpyad pa; vicāra}). Analytical meditation (\textit{dpyad sgom}) is a feature of some rDzogs-chen preliminary practices (\textit{sngon ’gro}), but not a part of the main practices (\textit{dngos gzhi}).\textsuperscript{490} The relationship between analytical meditation and immersive ‘settling meditation’ (\textit{’jog sgom}) is an important topic for Mi-pham and later rNying-ma scholars. Mi-pham discusses it thoroughly in the fourth chapter of his \textit{Nges shes sgron me}. Here, he concludes that one must apply both forms alternately in order to reach ultimate realization. Analysis, he argues, is especially important at an early stage because it induces certainty (\textit{nges shes}). Once certainty has been attained, however, analysis becomes redundant. As he puts it: once you have seen that there is no snake in a length of rope, that very certainty prevents

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{489} i.e., \textit{Yon tan rin po che’i mdzod kyi ’grel pa bden gnyis gsal byed zla ba’i sgron me}.
\item \textsuperscript{490} The transition between the preliminaries and the main practices is sometimes described as a transition from a speculative analytical view (\textit{yid dpyod kyi lta ba}) to one that is based on the wisdom born of meditative equipoise (\textit{mnyam bzhag ye shes kyi lta ba}). (\textit{Kun bzang bla ma’i zhal lung gi zin bris}, 256)
\end{itemize}
further perception of a snake, and continued investigation is unnecessary. Direct perception, in other words, carries greater weight than inference.

This position prompts several questions: Is analysis the only means to induce certainty? Are the preliminary practices involving analysis essential for all rDzogs-chen practitioners? What level of philosophical sophistication is required for analysis to be effective? The last of these questions, in particular, is apposite here.

Later authors considered the role of analysis in rDzogs-chen and offered arguments to justify its inclusion among the preliminaries. Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang, for example, writes in his *Nyi ma’i snang ba*: “Unless you find conviction in the absence of reality (*bden med*), even the introduction to pure awareness is not particularly significant, because it will not counteract the two types of ignorance [i.e., co-emergent ignorance (*lhan cig skyes pa’i ma rig pa*) and imputational ignorance (*kun brtags kyi ma rig pa*)].” *Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma* puts forward a similar view in *rDo rje’i gtun khung*. He believes that emptiness must be taught before pure awareness can be introduced:

Even without claiming that awareness and emptiness, Are like the ends of a balance—one high, the other low— If a disciple’s stage of realization is considered, It is only after emptiness has been communicated, That pure awareness (*rig pa*) is introduced, say those who know the profound.

This passage advocates a gradual approach, but there are rare exceptions. Students who possess exceptionally sharp faculties can proceed directly to the

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491 *Ngges shes sgron me*, 21: thag par sbrul med rtags pa na| nges shes de gas sbrul ‘dzin ldog| da rung sbrul ni med do zhes| yang yang dpyad zer blun min nam| Cf. Pettit 1999: 211.

492 *Nyi ma’i snang ba*, 130: bden med kyi nges pa zhig ma myed par rig pa ngo sprod byas pa la [131] don cher med de ma rig pa gnyis dang ’gal ba’i khyad par mi thon pa’i phyir ro||

493 *JTNg* vol. 1: 469.6; *JTNs* vol. 2: 28.5: rig dang stong pa srang mda’i mtho dman bzhin| mi ‘dod ‘on kyang gdul bya’i rtags rim la| dgongs te stong pa ngo sprod mjug thog’ tu| rig pa ngo sprod zab mo shes rnam szhed| *JTNg thogs*. *JTNg su.*
introduction to pure awareness, with immediate results. Still, as discussed in Chapter Three, even they would have followed the gradual path in a previous life.

Recognition of pure awareness incorporates the realization of emptiness:

If you can meditate with this recognition [of awareness] then, as a result, you will recognize the clear light that dawns through the power of experience. And if you recognize that, it does not matter whether you call it emptiness, or the natural state (gnas lugs), or intrinsic reality (chos nyid; dharmatā). By remaining with this experience in meditative equipoise, without any need to analyse using the seven-fold reasoning of the chariot, it will qualify as a full experience of the union of rigpa and emptiness.

This passage appears to imply that analysis is unnecessary. In fact, there are some rDzogs-chen authors who expressly criticise the more discursive, analytical approach to emptiness:

Some great meditators believe their mind is empty and then meditate upon that. But that is not a genuine view; it is a fabricated meditation on emptiness. Instead you must settle directly upon the very one who thinks, “It is emptiness.”

Analysis is fabricated, contrived or artificial, the extract suggests, whereas authentic rDzogs-chen meditation is natural, intuitive and immediate. Genuine emptiness meditation arises when the practitioner is attuned to the mind’s own emptiness. As dPal-sprul puts it elsewhere in the same text: given that “mind’s

494 In bsTan pa’i nyyi ma’i zhal lung (8.1f.) Ngag dbang dpal bzang relates this point to the distinction between “those for whom the view leads to meditation” (lta thog nas sgom ’ishol ba) and “those for whom meditation leads to the view” (sgom thog nas lta ba ’ishol ba), terms familiar from the Mahāmudrā tradition. For Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang, the former connotes the sudden, non-gradual approach, while the latter represents the gradualist path. This does not necessarily accord with the earlier rDzogs chen tradition, however. See, for example, rDzogs chen sde’i khrid yig in gDams ngag mdzod, vol. 1: 275–300 by Sog-zlog-pa Blo-gros rgyal-mtshan (1552–1624), which says (281.4): “Meditation leading to the view is a special feature of the Great Perfection” (sgom thog nas lta ba ‘ishol ba zhe bya ba ste| rdzogs chen pa’i khyad chos yin). The text categorizes lower approaches, up to and including Mahāmudrā, as using the view to lead to meditation. rDzogs-chen, by contrast, involves causing the view to arrive from within one’s own being as a result of meditation. 495 mThar thug rdzogs pa chen po sangs rgyas pa’i thabs zab mo bsgom pa rang grol, 325: sgom chen la las snyid ‘di stong pa yin bsam nas sgom pa yang gda’ ste| de ni yang dag pa’i lta ba ma yin| stong pa bzo sgom yin| stong pa nyid yin bsam mikan thog tu zhog|
nature has always been empty” (rang sms ye nas stong pa yin pas), all that is required is to “settle into that empty experience” (stong pa’i ngang du zhog).

Many texts that chart the whole rDzogs-chen path, including the preliminaries, often display a gradualist, inclusivist attitude to analytical meditation. But texts that focus on the main practice draw attention to its potential pitfalls. This aligns well with most inclusivist models: the language it uses to describe lower stages is dismissive and hence closer in tone to exclusivism.

We also encounter rDzogs-chen instructions intended for a different category of practitioner; not those of the highest capacity but those who lack scholarly training. Mi-pham’s rTogs ldan rgan mo rnams kyi lugs sms ngo mdzub tshugs kyi gdam pa mun sel sgron me (hereafter Mun sel sgron me) introduces this very person:

Without having to study, contemplate, or train to any great degree,
By maintaining recognition of the essence of mind according to the approach of pith instructions,
Any ordinary ‘village yogi’ might, without too much difficulty,
Reach the level of an awareness-keeper: such is the power of this profound path.

The phrase ‘village yogi’ (grong sngags, literally village mantrin) is repeated in the colophon. Mi-pham explains that he wrote the text “for village yogis and others, who, while not able to exert themselves too much in study and contemplation, still wish to take the very essence of mind into experience through practice.” The text claims that it is possible to reach a high level of attainment even without scholarly foundation. This contrasts markedly with the advice of Chos-dbyings rang-grol examined below. The Mun sel sgron me even calls into question

497 Ibid., 323.
498 MPc Vol. 32, 363–368. Translated in Pearcey 2018. According to the colophon, the text was written in the fire-horse year (i.e., 1906).
499 MPc Vol. 32, 363: thos bsam sbyangs pa rgya cher mi dgos par| man ngag lugs kyi sms ngo skyongs ba yi| grong sngags phal mo che zhigs chung ngu’i| rig ’dzin sa la gshigs te zab lam mthu| 500 Ibid., 368: thos bsam phal cher mi brtson kyang sms ngo’i nyams len ’dod pa’i grong sngags sos kyi ched du…
the need for rDzogs-chen practitioners to have a correct understanding of the Madhyamaka view of emptiness.

In the *Nges shes sgron me*, Mi pham compares the Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika view of emptiness with the rDzogs-chen vision of primordial purity (*ka dag*):

Both glorious Candra[kīrti] in the noble land [of India],
And Rong-zom Chos-bzang in Tibet,
Established the great emptiness of primordial purity,
With a single intention and in a single voice.⁵⁰¹

This passage does not allow us to establish whether there is a qualitative distinction between the Madhyamaka view of emptiness and the rDzogs-chen view of primordial purity. For rNying-ma doxographers embracing the nine-yāna model, such qualitative difference clearly exists. The *rDzogs pa chen po ’i lam nyams su len tshul* discusses some of the reasons why the rDzogs-chen view is superior. But let us first consider the nature of the rDzogs-chen preliminaries.

1.3. The rDzogs-chen Preliminaries

The *rDzogs pa chen po ’i lam nyams su len tshul* introduces three analytical practices that function as preliminaries to rDzogs chen meditation:⁵⁰² 1) to probe the root [of mind] ([*sems kyi* *rtsad bcad pa*];⁵⁰³ 2) to search for [the mind’s] hidden

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⁵⁰¹ MPv vol. 9: 75.3: ‘phags yul dpal ldan zla ba dang| bod na rong zom chos bzang gnyis| dgongs pa gcig dang dbyangs gcig gis| ka dag stong pa chen po bsgrubs| For an alternative translation see Pettit 1999: 196.

⁵⁰² There is considerable variation in how these uncommon preliminaries are identified. Another text included among Chos-dbyings rang-grol’s rDzogs chen writings but attributed to Nyag-bla bSod-rgyal (*rDzogs pa chen po ’i nyams len gnad bsod nyag bla bsod rgyal gyis gsungs pa*) lists the three preliminaries as: 1) *sems kyi rtsad bcad pa*; 2) *byung gnas ’gro gsum la brtags pa*; and 3) *rig pa ngos bzung thabs*. See YCR vol. 2: 421.

⁵⁰³ Sometimes given as *rtsad gcod pa*, as in the text by ’Jam-dbyangs mkhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros cited below. Although *rtsad bcad pa* means a thorough investigation rDzogs-chen authors also play upon its literal sense of ‘cutting at the root’, as in the following from sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs bstan-pa l-nyi-ma’s *Rang rig la gnang ba*: “…we need to analyse and investigate repeatedly until we decide with absolute certainty that mind is the root of all samsāra and nirvāṇa. Then, when we determine that this mind is without basis or origin, all our self-clinging will be uprooted. For example, it is just like cutting a tree at its roots and destroying the seeds which could be the cause of a new shoot. This is the key point of the investigation in this tradition, so it is crucially important that it really hits home.” (…yang yang brtag dpyad zhīb tu byed beug pas nges par ’khor ’das thams cad kyi rtsa ba sms yin pa’i nges shes ’drongs kho thag chod tshe| de nyid gzhī med rtsa bral du gzhig na bdag ’dzin thams cad rtsa bral du ’gro ba| dper na shing sdong gi rtsa ba chod pa dang myu gu’i rgyu
flaws ([sems kyi] mtshang btsal ba);\textsuperscript{504} and 3) to investigate [mind’s] emergence, presence and departure” ([sems kyi] byung gnas ’gro gsum la brtag pa).\textsuperscript{505} The text does not offer a coherent explanation or definition of the three. Chos-dbyings rang-grol is primarily concerned with correcting existing misunderstandings. It is likely that he composed the text for students already familiar with the practices. ’Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros, in a contemporary treatise, provides useful definitions of the first two meditations:

Probing the root of mind means investigating which of the ‘three doors’ (i.e., body, speech and mind) causes us to wander throughout beginningless time in samsāra, and which it is that carries out virtuous or non-virtuous actions. When investigating, we discover mind to be the most important factor. Searching for hidden flaws means examining whether body, speech and mind are unitary or distinct, and finding that, while on a conventional level they appear to be related, ultimately there is no real entity called mind that could be one with, or distinct from, anything else.\textsuperscript{506}

The same text summarizes the conclusions of the third practice as follows:

When you investigate the essence of this mind, even if you search for its arising you cannot find it. There is no reality to the mind’s apparent presence. Nor is there anywhere that it ceases. It is thus without foundation or origin.\textsuperscript{507}

If there is a progression in these three investigations it is from a general examination of the physical, vocal and mental towards an exclusive focus on the mind. The first practice examines which of the three doors of body, speech or mind is primary, before concluding that it is mind. The second examines the relationship between the three and subjects them to an ontological inquiry; it concludes that there

\textsuperscript{504} The meaning of mtshang as (hidden) fault here is made clear in Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang’s gZhi khregs chod skabs kyi `zin brstan pa’i nyyi zhali lung snyan bryas chus bo’i bcud ’dus (19b.): mtshang zhes pa skyon gyi don yin
\textsuperscript{505} Sometimes known as thun mong ba byung gnas ’gro gsum la brtag pa, i.e., the common investigation of [mind’s] emergence, presence and departure. See below. This form of preliminary is briefly discussed in Germano 1997b 325–326.
\textsuperscript{506} JCLg vol. 2: 461.6f.: rtsad geod pa ni’ thog med nas ’khor bar ’khyams mkhan dge sding byed mkhan ’di sgo gsum gang yin brtags pa [462] gtso bo sems yin par shes nas mtshangs’ btsal ba ni] lus ngag yid gsum gcig tha dad brtags pa] tha snyad du ni de gsum ’brel ba can lar snang yang] don dam gyi rig pas dpjad na gcig tha dad gang du’ang ma grub pa’i sems zhes bya ba med pa gsal snang gya gyu ba ’di yin] * Read as mtshang
\textsuperscript{507} JCLg vol. 2: 462.2: ’di’i ngo bo la brtags pa skye ba btsal bas ma rnyed] gnas pa’i ngo bo ma grub| ’gags pa’i yul med pas gzhi rtsa bral]
is no real independent mind. The third then focuses on the mind and the apparent origination, endurance and cessation of thoughts and perceptions. 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi blo-gros does not refer to Buddhist schools or any key tenets of Buddhist philosophy such as selflessness or emptiness.

Some instructional texts, including 'Jigs-med gling-pa’s Ye shes bla ma, refer only to the third practice, without speaking of the first two. However, as a group, the three are not a recent invention. The triad features in earlier rDzogs-chen instruction texts, such as the Thar lam bgrod byed shing rta bzang po, a guidance manual on the mKha’ ’gro snying thig drafted by the Third rDzogs-chen hierarch, Nges-don bstan-’dzin bzang-po (alias A-ti bstan-pa’i-rgyal-mtshan, 1759–1792).508 That very same text cites the following three lines from bTags grol snying po’i don khrid:

First probe the root of thought,
Then search for mind’s hidden flaws.
Then investigate the trio of emergence, presence and departure.509

These lines belong to the mKha’ ’gro’i snying thig collection. It is a gter ma of Padma las-’brel-rtsal.510 In its current form, it dates to the thirteenth century, even though the text itself claims the legendary dGa’-rab rdo-rje as its author.511 In any case, the grouping together of the three practices may derive from this text.

The third investigation, of mind’s emergence, presence and departure, also appears independently elsewhere. Some treatises describe it as a form of “mental purification” (sems sbyong ba) to be introduced after exercises for physical and

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508 See Thar lam bgrod byed shing rta bzang po in bibliography for details. The text has been translated by Cortland Dahl in Third Dzogchen Rinpoche 2007 & 2008 (the section on the three preliminaries appears in 2008: 138–143).

509 Thar lam bgrod byed shing rta bzang po 293: dang po rtog pa rtsad bcad| de nas sems kyi mtshangs (sic) btsal| de nas byung gnas ’gro gsum la btag|

510 The dates of Padma las-’brel-rtsal are unclear. TBRC gives the birth date as 1248, while a biography on TOL gives his dates as 1291–1315. The latter dates are problematic, because Klong-chen rab-byams, who is considered his reincarnation, was born in 1308.

511 See KLR vol. 5, 56–70. In this edition, the cited text (which appears on p. 59) reads: dang po rtog pa rtsad bcad% de nas sems kyi mtshang btsal% de nas byung sa% gnas sa ’gro sa gsum la btag% The attribution to dGa’-rab rdo-rje appears in the colophon on p. 70.
vocal purification.\textsuperscript{512} This applies to the Ye shes bla ma as well as texts by Klong-chen rab-byams, including the dNgos gzhi 'od gsal snying po'i don khrid.\textsuperscript{513} Both Ye shes bla ma and dNgos gzhi 'od gsal snying po'i don khrid begin their explanations of emergence, presence and departure with the following quotation from the sGra thal 'gyur tantra:\textsuperscript{514}

First where mind originates,  
Then where it stays, and finally where it goes—  
If you examine these three points thoroughly,  
You will come to purify the mind and know its natural state.\textsuperscript{515}

If this tantra dates from the latter half of the eleventh century, as it is sometimes proposed, it is possible that the investigation is the oldest of the three practices. The other two perhaps existed independently for a while, before all three were brought together in some traditions, even as others continued to speak of the investigation of mind’s emergence, presence and departure alone.

Of course, the ideas behind the three practices are older still. The concept of mind’s emptiness and specifically its non-arising and non-ceasing goes back to the apophatic language of the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, as in the following passage from the Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya:

Thus, Śāriputra, all phenomena are emptiness. They have no characteristics. They are unborn and unceasing. There is no purity and no impurity. There is no decrease and no increase. Thus, Śāriputra, in emptiness there is no form, no sensation, no perception, no formations, no consciousness; no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind…\textsuperscript{516}

\textsuperscript{512} In Ye shes bla ma the exercise for bodily purification is to maintain the vajra posture (rdo rje'i 'dug stangs), on which see Germano 1997b: 321–322. The exercises for vocal purification are: 1) sealing (rgyas gdabs pa); 2) strengthening (rtsal sbyang ba); 3) making flexible (mnyen btsal ba); and 4) setting out upon the path (lam du gzug pa); see Germano 1997b: 322–325. *Germano (ibid., 324) notes that there exists an alternative spelling of gnyen btsal ba, interpretable as “seeking an aid”.

\textsuperscript{513} KLR vol. 9: 192–216.

\textsuperscript{514} See Germano 1994: 272.

\textsuperscript{515} Ye shes bla ma, 320: sens ni thog ma byung sa dang| | bar du gnas sa tha ma 'gro| | de lta gsum la brtag dpyad na| | sens sbyangs ssem kyi gnas lugs shes| | Cf. NGB vol. 3: 680.1 *brtags bshyang

\textsuperscript{516} Shes rab snying po 289.6 f.: shā rī'ī bu de lta bas na chos thams cad stong pa nyid de| mtshan nyid med pa| ma skyes pa| ma 'gags pa| dri ma med pa| dri ma dang bral ba med pa| bri ba med pa| gang ba med pa'o| shā rī'ī bu de lta bas na stong pa nyid la gzugs med| tshor ba med| 'du shes med| 'du byed rams med| mam par shes pa med| mig med| rna ba med| sna med| lce med| lus med| yid med…
Indian commentarial literature presents the contemplation of such points as a means to cultivate insight (vipaśyānā; lhag mthong). In the section on insight in his intermediate Bhāvanākrama, for example, Kamalaśīla speaks of mind’s lack of real origin or destination: “When mind arises, it comes from nowhere, and when it ceases, it goes nowhere.”\textsuperscript{517} The rDzogs-chen texts thus contain elaborations on, and systematized contemplations of, established ideas.

Early rDzogs-chen manuals—and even a work as late as the \textit{Zab lam gsal byed}\textsuperscript{518} by ’Gyur-med rdo-rje (1646–1714)—present the investigation of byung gnas ’gro gsum without reference to doxography. They offer only a meditative technique to help the practitioner to affirm the mind’s emptiness. ’Jigs-med gling-pa’s \textit{Ye shes bla ma}, by contrast, links the investigation to various philosophical tenets.\textsuperscript{519} It follows a hierarchical model and warns of the danger of ‘falling’ (lhung ba) into lesser views, such as a hypostasised origin of mind:

\begin{quote}
If you say that mind comes from some real entity (dngos po), you are falling into the view of the Auditor (śrāvaka) schools of philosophy. So, investigate, and break down this clinging to the reality of appearances, even as far as the tiniest particle. When you investigate like this, and examine partless particles, you will not find where mind comes from.\textsuperscript{520}
\end{quote}

Here, ’Jigs-med gling-pa attributes the idea that mind has a real, substantial basis—that it arises, in other words, from an existent cause—to the Auditor schools, i.e., the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika. In Tibetan doxographical accounts, these schools hold the view that matter is ultimately composed of indivisible particles

\begin{footnotes}
\item[517] \textit{sDe dge bstan ’gyur} vol. 110: 97.5: sems skye ba’i tshe gang nas kyang mi ’ong| ’gag pa’i tshe yang gang du yang mi ’gro ste| (There is no extant Sanskrit for the intermediate Bhāvanākrama, only for the first and final texts).
\item[518] i.e., \textit{rDzogs pa chen po mkha’ ’gro snying thig gi khrid yig, zab lam gsal byed}, KLR vol. 6: 215–286 (section on emergence, presence and departure: 245–6).
\item[519] There are also references to the philosophical schools elsewhere in \textit{Ye shes bla ma}. For example, in discussing the outer practice of ‘separating the ranks of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa’ (’khor ’das ra shan), ’Jigs med gling pa instructs the practitioner to: “Undertake analysis and go over the logical arguments of the Prāśāṅgika.” (\textit{Ye shes bla ma}, 313: yid dpnyod kyi tshig dang ’thal ’gyur gyi dgag bzhag)
\item[520] \textit{Ye shes bla ma}, 321: yod pa dngos po’i phyogs nas byung zer na grub ntha’ smra ba nyan thos pa’i phyogs su lhung ba| snang ba’i bden zhen rdul phra rab kyi cha shas tsam du’ang bshig ste rtogs shig| de ltar brtags shing rdul phran cha med kyi khong du btsal bas sems kyi byung sa ma rnyed par|\
\end{footnotes}
(rdul phran cha med) or atoms. From the Mahāyāna perspective such atomist realism is unsuitable as a view of ultimate truth. ’Jigs-med gling-pa continues:

You may recognize that mind is like a dream, unreal and without any inherent existence. Still, if you do not uproot the mind that arises, it will continue to appear, whirring (sha ra ra) indistinctly (’ol le ba) as mind (sems) and mental factors (sems byung). Then you will drift into the position of expecting to arrive at the natural state (gnas lugs) through non-affirmative negation (med dgag) and affirmative negation (ma yin dgag), just like the Mādhyamikas and Cittamātrins. Look within, therefore, and examine the mind of the one who is searching.

Here, the text attributes a second type of misunderstanding to the Mādhyamikas and Cittamātrins. More specifically, it attributes this mistaken position to logicians within these schools who rely on non-affirmative negation (med dgag) or affirmative negation (ma yin dgag) to establish their point of view. Instead of using the mind discursively and preoccupying themselves with questions of logic, practitioners should turn the mind within and ‘sever’ (chod pa) it at its root. His comments here raise questions about the relationship of rDzogs-chen to logical reason. ’Jigs-med gling-pa insists that rDzogs-chen is superior to Cittamātra and Madhyamaka, at least insofar as these schools are interpreted by logicians. But, later on, he equates the correct rDzogs-chen view with Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika, as shown below.

In the Ye shes bla ma ’Jigs-med gling-pa also introduces a further type of misunderstanding connected with the Mind Category (sems sde) and Expanse Category (klong sde) of rDzogs-chen:

When you look, there is an instant in which mind is mere self-illumination (rang gsal), or in which it gives rise to various stirrings and thoughts. If you believe this to

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521 See, for example, Grub mtha’ shel gyi me long, 32–33.
522 The Tibetan expression is onomatopoeic.
523 Ye shes bla ma, 321: rmi lam ltar rang bzhin ma grub par shes kyang| byung mkhan gyi shes pa sha ra pa [= ’ol] le ba sms dang sms byung ltar shar ba’i rtsa ba ma chod na ni dbu ma sms tsam pa ltar med dgag dang ma yin dgag la gnas lugs re ba’i phyogs la ’phyan du yod pas| ’tshol mkhan gyi sms la tshur llos shig| 524 It is unclear from the text, but if he means the Mādhyamikas are associated with non-affirmative negation and the Cittamātrins with affirmative negation, this would contradict the view of Mi-pham, who criticized the dGe-lugs presentation emptiness as a non-affirming negation. See below.
be the ultimate nature that is like putting all your confidence in baseless talk as in the Mind and Expanse [Categories]; you still do not see pure awareness directly.525

By including these two categories of rDzogs-chen, 'Jigs-med gling-pa affirms the superiority of the Pith Instruction Category (man ngag sde). He groups the Mind and Expanse categories together, associating them both with a failure to see pure awareness directly.526 Direct realization or “vision” (mngon sum du mthong ba) of pure awareness, he suggests, is unique to the Pith Instruction Category.527

Finally, 'Jigs-med gling-pa identifies the correct, unmistaken perspective with the view of emptiness (śūnyatā):

Now, you might say mind comes from emptiness. If so, then examine the one who claims this. It must have a form, colour, characteristics, size, sides, and so on, so examine its nature. When you investigate in this way, you cannot find any basis (yul) or support (rten) for duality, object or subject, which might appear as something to search for or someone who is searching. You are left in a state of astonished wonder (ha phya d de), devoid of any assertion, inexpressible, inconceivable, beyond words. Now you have realized deeply the true meaning of the unborn, the reality body (dharmakāya), which has no basis and is free of origin. As the Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikas say:

Since I have no assertions,
I am entirely without fault.528

This is the point you must reach. However, the way to reach it is not, as is believed by those people these days who stubbornly claim to uphold this very viewpoint, through suppositions made with the intellectual mind. It is only when you directly see the truth of reality (dharmatā), of the Great Perfection, the nature of everything, that you arrive. So I say.529

525 Ye shes bla ma, 321: bltas pas kyang sms dar cig rang gsal tsam du ’dug pa’am| ’gyu dran sna tshogs su shar ba mthar thug tu ’dod na| sms klong kha ’byams gzhi bral la gdeng ’cha’ ba dang ’dra bas da dung rig pa mngon sum du ma mthong|
526 The fact that 'Jigs-med gling-pa does not treat the Mind and Expanse Categories separately may reflect their diminished importance following their eclipse by the Heart Essence.
527 Nor is there any distinction made between these two categories in the commentarial notes on this section by 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma. See JTNs vol. 2: 251.
528 The quotation is from Nāgarjuna’s Vigrhaññavartanī verse 29b: nāsti ca mama pratijñātasmā nāvāsti me doṣah]||
529 Ye shes bla ma, 321f.: yang stong pa’i phyogs nas byung zer na| mkhan po mthong bas [322| dbyib dang| kha dog rtags mtshan| che chung phyogs cha la sog sas pa’ang nges par yod dgos pas de’i rang bzhin brtag dgos te| de ltar brtags pas ’tshol sa dang ’tshol mkhan du snang ba’i gzung ’dzin yul med rten bral smra bsam brjod med khas len thams cad dang bral ba’i ngang du ha phyad de lus na| gzhi med rtsa bralchos sku skye ba med pa’i don khong du chud pa ni| dbu ma thal ’gyur las| nga la khas len| med pas na| nga ni skyon med kho na yin|] zhes pa’i thog tu slob cing| slob tshul yang ding sang grub pa’i mtha’ ’di nyid ’dzin par rnom pa mams ltar yid dpnyod kyi blos bzhag pa ma yin par rang bzhin rdzogs pa chen po’i chos nyid kyi don mthong bas slob pa yin zhes bdag nyid smra’o]| ‘DT dam bca’
Once again, the discussion here carries implications for the role of logical reason in rDzogs-chen. The passage advises the practitioner to search for mind’s “form, colour, characteristics, size, sides, and so on.” But this investigation leads to an experience of non-finding. Instead of making “suppositions with the intellectual mind” (yid dpyod kyi blo bzhag pa), the practitioner must let go of all assertions and remain in a state of “astonished wonder” (ha phyad de). Through a citation of Nāgārjuna, ′Jigs-med gling-pa associates this experience with the Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika, the pinnacle of exoteric Buddhist thought according to Klong-chen rab-'byams— and indeed most Tibetan Buddhist thinkers.

The Ye shes bla ma contains further doxographical reference in the following section, which concerns mind’s presence (gnas), here divided into 1) its location (gnas sa) and 2) the type of mind that remains (gnas mkhan). The text identifies the pitfall of taking mind to be the “mere self-illumination of the all-ground consciousness” (kun gzhi’i rnam shes rang gsal tsam) with the False Aspectarian (rnam rdzun pa) branch of Cittamātra. The final section, on mind’s destination (’gro sa) and the mind that departs (’gro mkhan), makes no mention of philosophical tenets.

Finally, ′Jigs-med gling-pa connects the three stages of the investigation with the three buddha-bodies (trikāya). The reality body (dharmakāya), to him, consists of a true understanding of mind’s unarisen quality. The unceasing enjoyment body or

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531 Ye shes bla ma, 323: gnas mkhan gyi theg tu dpyad pa’i tshe kun gzhi’i rnam shes rang gsal tsam bden grub tu shar na’ang sms tsam rnam rdzun par nye la… The False Aspectarians (*nirākāravādin/*āṭīkākāravādin; rnam rdzun pa) maintain that sensory data (i.e., sensa) or mental impressions are false, unlike the True Aspectarians (*sātyākāravādin; rnam bden pa) who hold that they are veridical. The division of the Cittamātra school into these two sub-branches is a common feature in Tibetan doxographical literature. References to the sākārajñānāvādin and nirākāravādi-yogācāra are also to be found in Advayavajra’s Tattvaratnāvali. Go-rams-pa believed the rnam rdzun pa branch to superior to the rnam bden pa; see Dreyfus 1997: 557 n. 14. Mi-pham considered the arguments refuting the False Aspectarian position to be the most important feature of Śāntarakṣita’s Madhyamakālamkāra and the key to uniting Cittamātra and Madhyamaka; see MPc vol. 13: 575.5.
sambhogakāya (long sku 'gag pa med pa) is to ascertain the absence of an identifiable mind that remains.\textsuperscript{532} Finally, the emanation body (nirmānakāya) is to understand the absence of a destination or mind that departs; it is to recognise awareness and emptiness, which neither comes nor goes (rig stong 'gro 'ong med pa sprul pa'i sku).\textsuperscript{533} The investigation of emergence, presence and departure incorporates all instructions to “demolish the house of the ordinary mind” (sems kyi khang bu rdiḥ pa). It is an especially exalted, swift path (khyad par 'phags pa'i myur lam).\textsuperscript{534}

To summarise, the Ye shes bla ma introduces doxography into the preliminary investigation of emergence, presence and departure. It characterises lesser views, including those of the Cittamātrins, Mādhyamikas, and followers of the Mind and Expanse Categories of rDzogs-chen, as potential traps on the way to correct understanding. By citing Nāgārjuna, the author associates a correct understanding (or experience) of mind’s emptiness with Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika. Although the text refers extensively to Indian systems—or, more accurately, to their Tibetan versions\textsuperscript{535}—it does not speak of Tibetan schools and only briefly refers to Tibetan developments (i.e., the three categories of rDzogs-chen). Moreover, it entirely ignores Tibetan intersectarian polemics. Finally, 'Jigs-med gling-pa also claims that this preliminary practice leads to a realization of the three buddha-bodies, a result that is usually associated with the main rDzogs-chen practice.\textsuperscript{536}

\textsuperscript{532} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{533} Ibid., 324.
\textsuperscript{534} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{535} It has long been recognised that the Tibetan presentation of Indian schools in doxographical literature is a simplification for pedagogical purposes rather than a historical description. Cf. Sopa & Hopkins, 1989, 119: “The very format of the four schools and their subdivisions does not represent an historical account of self-asserted identities but is the result of centuries of classification of systems in India and Tibet in order to get a handle on the vast scope of positions found in Indian Buddhism.”
\textsuperscript{536} This apparent discrepancy led one recent rDzogs-chen teacher (sMyo-shul mkhan-po 'Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje in an undated audio recording) to posit two distinct sets of three Buddha-bodies, one to be realized through the preliminary and one to be realized through the main practice.
'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma includes the emergence, presence and departure section of *Ye shes bla ma* in his notes on that text’s difficult points. He does not stray far from his source,\(^{537}\) nor does he question its validity. Like 'Jigs-med gling-pa, he ignores Tibetan polemics. And at no point does he refer to the rNying-ma interpretation of selflessness and emptiness as Mi-pham articulated them.

2. Chos-dbyings rang-grol on the rDzogs-chen Preliminaries

Chos-dbyings rang-grol discusses the rDzogs-chen preliminaries in several texts. However, it is *rDzogs pa chen po’i lam nyams su len tshul* that most clearly demonstrates the impact of Mi-pham’s philosophy on these practices. This is evident not only in its references to Mi-pham’s interpretation of Madhyamaka, but also in its attitude towards other traditions.

2.1. The Text

The *rDzogs pa chen po’i lam nyams su len tshul* constitutes a set of notes on the three rDzogs-chen preliminaries introduced above.\(^{538}\) It was probably compiled by an unidentified student of Chos-dbyings rang-grol, presumably from lecture notes.\(^{539}\) The editors decided on the title, derived from a phrase that appears in the text.\(^{540}\) Still, the title is arguably misleading, because the treatise discusses only the preliminaries, not the whole path. In the section on the mind’s emergence, presence and departure, Chos-dbyings rang-grol purports to follow the explanations 'Jigs-med

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\(^{537}\) He expands on the source somewhat, of course. For example, when explaining the possibility of falling into the view of the Auditors, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma introduces a further distinction between earlier (*snga rabs*) and later (*phyi rabs*) scholars. See JTNs vol. 2: 248f.

\(^{538}\) YCRa vol. 2: 403–414. The text is translated in Appendix 2 and Pearcey 2018.

\(^{539}\) The expression “[he] said/would say” (*gsungs*), referring to Chos-dbyings rang-grol, appears throughout the text.

\(^{540}\) The fact that the editors chose the title was confirmed by A-lags gZan-dkar, who was involved in the publication of the collected works in which the text appears. (Private communication, 21 February 2016). A-lags gZan-dkar contributed a foreword to the collection in which he credits mKhan-po Shes-bya kun-gzigs with the editing and publication of the works. The line from which the title derives is the very first line of the text (op. cit. 403) beginning: spyir ’od gsal rdzogs pa chen po’i lam nyams su len pa la…
bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma gave to gTer-ston bSod-rgyal.\textsuperscript{541} He also refers to gTer-ston bSod-rgyal and sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma, but no other sources. It is clear, however, that the text closely follows Mi-pham’s interpretation of Madhyamaka philosophy.

2.1.1. Probing the Mind

The text begins with a section that discusses probing the mind. Here, Chos-dbyings rang-grol expresses concern that some teachers of the preliminary practice lack intellectual rigour. Such concern was perhaps more keenly felt in the new, post-Mipham era of rNying-ma scholasticism:

This is the point at which most teachers these days tell their students: “Analyse your body, speech and mind. Determine which is most important.” The students then contemplate all manner of chatter and hearsay, before concluding that mind is most important because it is what originally became deluded, and so on. Then the teacher will say such things as: “Investigate whether your mind has features like colour or shape. Analyse its emergence, presence and departure.” Then when the students say, “There is nothing to it at all,” the teacher will say they have understood. Then the teacher will continue: “Now settle the mind without altering…. Now direct your awareness…etc.”\textsuperscript{542} Yet for such explanations, it would hardly be necessary to shut the outer door from the outside, to lock the inner door from the inside, or to apply the seal of strictest secrecy! For this does not correspond to any tradition of Mahāmudrā, rDzogs-chen, or the Middle Way. And as it is perfectly intelligible even to an old nun, Vajradhara would hardly have needed to appear in order to reveal it. We must bring an end to such terrible traditions from now on.\textsuperscript{543}

Chos-dbyings rang-grol directs his criticism here at teachers who introduce the preliminaries without reference to Mi-pham’s interpretation of selflessness and emptiness. This is clear from what follows in the text. Still, it is unclear whether this

\textsuperscript{541} YCRa vol. 2, 408: skabs ’dir rdo grub rin po che’i zhal nas nyag bla rin po che la gsungs pa ltar ’chad pa la...

\textsuperscript{542} Reading a gtad as ar gtad here.

\textsuperscript{543} YCRa vol. 2: 403: 'di'i skabs su deng sang gi khrid mkhan phal cher gyis slob bu rams la khyod kyi lus ngag yid gsun gtsa gang che dpyod kyi sers kyi kyis des kyang kha kha rgyug mchu mchu rgyug tsam gyis khos cig bsam’ dug gi thog mar ’khrul mkhan sogs sogs yin pas sogs gtsa che zer| yang de la khyod kyi sogs la kha dog dang dbyibs gzugs sogs yod med dang byung gnas ’gro gsum la rtog dpyod gyis dang zer| des kyang ci yang med gi zer ba tsam na khyod shes yod gi da ma bcos par zhog la a’ gtad sogs su llos nas bsgom zer na’ang de ’dra ’chad pa la phyi sgo phyi nas bsdam| nang sgo nang nas bsdam| te gsang sphyi dam por byed mi dgos| de phyag rdzogs dbu gsum gang gi yang lug ma re| de lta bu zhig jo rgan ma zhig gli kyang shes nus pas de tsam ston pa’i ched rdo rje ’chang byon yang mi dgos pas srol ngan de phyin chad snub thub dgos gsungs| * Read as ar.
critique applies also to previous rDzogs-chen authors. At least one of Mi-pham’s contemporaries, sMyo-shul Lung-rto gs tool pa’i-nyi-ma, ignored Mi-pham’s ideas in his explanations of the preliminary practice. Chos-dbyings rang-grol himself acknowledges as much later in the text.

For Chos-dbyings rang-grol, to probe the mind is to recognise the source of saṃsāric wandering. In his view, it is crucial to follow Mi-pham’s interpretation that this source is the mistaken notion of the individual self (*pudgalātman; gang zag gi bdag*). He thus rejects the dGe-lugs assertion that the root of saṃsāra is clinging to phenomenal identity (*chos kyi bdag; dharmaśmya*). Previous authors on the rDzogs-chen preliminaries avoided such matters entirely. For them, probing the mind simply involved determining that the mind is more important than the body and speech. For Chos-dbyings rang-grol, however, this practice demands greater philosophical rigour. It is also an opportunity for him to highlight sectarian differences. Chos-dbyings rang-grol believes that dGe-lugs and rNying-ma views about the source of saṃsāra are incompatible. Any attempt to combine them would be inappropriate. As he puts it: “It is fine to mix two things that complement one another well, like sweet potato (*gro ma*) and melted butter, but there is no need to mix what does not.” He does not deny the validity of the other schools, though. There are “six and a fraction” (*nyi tshe zhig dang bdun*) philosophical traditions in Tibet, all of which are valid in their own way. Since each can lead its followers to the goal of enlightenment, there is no need to combine them.

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544 He compares the recognition of this point to the discovery of a thief (YCRa vol. 2: 403: rkun po ngo’dzin lta bu’i man ngag…)  
545 YCRa vol. 2: 403.  
546 Cabezón writes of the fine line between what he calls “sectarian differentiation” and sectarianism (Cabezón and Dargyay 2007: 7). This is a topic to which we will return later in the present study.  
547 YCRa vol. 2: 404: dper na gro ma dang mar khu bsres ba lta bu’i gce gis phan thog pa gce ggrogs gce gis byed pa zhig yin na bsre chog pa la de min pas bsre mi dgos|  
548 YCRa vol. 2: 404f. In other words, six major schools plus some minor traditions. The figure is unusual, and I have been unable to identify exactly which major schools are meant, although the four
2.1.2. Searching for Mind’s Hidden Flaws

Chos-dbyings rang-grol follows a more established model in his discussion of the mind’s hidden flaws (mtshang). He identifies them as the perception of certain features in the individual self, i.e., wholeness (ril po), singularity (gcig) and realness (bden). He briefly describes the remedies to such mistaken ideas but does not use this section to discuss rNying-ma philosophy or its relation to other systems.

2.1.3. Mind’s Emergence, Presence and Departure

The full extent of Mi-pham’s influence becomes apparent in the third section. Chos-dbyings rang-grol claims that some of his comments follow ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma, but this is problematic for reasons I discuss below. Primarily, though, the section follows Mi-pham’s interpretation of the Madhyamaka view. It shows how Mi-pham’s ideas led to a re-evaluation of this particular preliminary practice as well as its place in the hierarchy of philosophical views.

The section begins with an instruction on how to investigate mind’s origin. It suggests that the practitioner should analyse the perception of a given object, such as a pillar:

When, in the first instant of perceiving the pillar through the visual consciousness, you have the thought “This is a pillar”, ask yourself: does this consciousness arise from the pillar or not? At that time, without analysing the subjective mind, consider only the object, the pillar, and how, while empty of its own essence, it still appears—its aspect of appearance being unobstructed. While appearing, the pillar is primordially empty in essence, with the character of being free from complexity.

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549 YCRa vol. 2: 405. Other manuals describe the features of permanence (rtag), singularity (gcig) and independence (rang dbang). See, for example, bsTan pa’i nyi ma’i zhal lung 34.2.
550 YCRa vol. 2: 405. This section also includes a lengthy discussion of the importance of body and speech on the Buddhist path as a means of encouraging a thorough investigation before concluding that mind is the most important factor. In other texts an exploration of the relative importance of body, speech and mind is part of the first investigation. It is therefore possible that the inclusion of these comments in the second section is a mistake.
551 i.e., his explanation to Nyag-bla bSod-rgyal (i.e., gTer-ston bSod-rgyal Las-rab gling-pa) YCRa vol. 2: 408.
Without losing its apparent basis, it is empty; and without losing its empty basis, it appears. We must be certain, therefore, that its identity is the union of appearance and emptiness.\textsuperscript{553}

The last sentence, which speaks of the union of emptiness and appearance (\textit{snang stong zung 'jug}), connects this extract to Mi-pham’s interpretation of Madhyamaka.\textsuperscript{554} It also stands in marked contrast to the explanation in the \textit{Ye shes bla ma}, where the discussion of the object (as one half of the subject-object dyad) is taken as an opportunity to refute the supposedly Hīnayāna view of indivisible atoms. Chos-dbyings rang-grol first sets out what is essentially an orthodox, Mi-pham-inspired rNying-ma view of Madhyamaka, then criticizes the dGe-lugs position. He does not identify his opponents but, as is common in Tibetan polemical literature, refers to them simply as “others”:\textsuperscript{555}

Others assert that a pillar is not empty of its own essence but is empty of true existence (\textit{bden grub; satyasiddhi}). Therefore, as true existence is not found in knowable phenomena, and phenomena themselves, such as vases, are not empty from the perspective of ultimate analysis, appearance and emptiness are not a unity, and there is no relationship of method and outcome, or of the nature-of-things (\textit{chos nyid; dharmatā}) and things themselves (\textit{chos can; dharmin}). As true existence is not found in knowable phenomena, the emptiness that is its absence is also impossible: it would be tantamount to saying a horse is empty of a cow.\textsuperscript{556}

This criticism of the dGe-lugs interpretation of emptiness appears repeatedly in the writings of Mi-pham and Bod-pa sprul-sku.\textsuperscript{557} They hold that the dGe-lugs

\textsuperscript{553} YCRa vol. 2: 408: ka ’dzin mig shes kyis skad cig dang po ka ba’o snyam pa’i tshe nga’i shes pa ’di ka ba las byung ba yin nam min snyam nas de’i tshe yul can la mi dpyod par yul la dpyad nas ka ba rang gi ngo bo ye nas stong bzhin du snang cha ma ’gags par snang ba dang| snang bzhin du ngo bo ye stong spros pa dang bral ba’i bdag nyid du gnas pa yin te| snang ba’i snang tshugs ma shor bzhin du stong| stong pa’i stong tshugs ma shor bzhin snang ba’i snang stong zung ’jug gi bdag nyid du nges dgos|  

\textsuperscript{554} On the importance of the concept of union (or coalescence) in Mi-pham’s philosophy see Duckworth 2011, 134 and passim, and Wangchuk 2012. Duckworth describes Mi-pham’s philosophy as ‘dialectical monism’, but this has been challenged by Dorji Wangchuk, who proposes the neo-Sanskritism \textit{Yuganaddhavāda} instead. See Wangchuk 2012: 30–36.  

\textsuperscript{555} Cabezón notes that this rhetorical strategy denies an opponent power and intellectual plausibility. (Cabezón and Dargyay 2007, 8)  

\textsuperscript{556} YCRa vol. 2: 408: gzhan gyis ka ba rang gi ngo bos mi stong ka ba bden grub kyis stong par ’dod| des na bden grub shes bya la mi srid pa dang| don dam dpyod pa’i nor mi stong ba gnyis snang stong zung ’jug dang| thabs thabs byung dang|chos nyid chos can du ’brel ba med do| bden grub shes bya la mi srid pas| des stong pa’i stong nyid kyang mi srid de| rta ba lang gis stong zer ba lta bu yin|  

\textsuperscript{557} See, for example, Bötrül 2011: 162.
position amounts to a form of extrinsic emptiness (gzhan stong).\textsuperscript{558} Chos-dbyings rang-grol argues that something that was never present in the first place cannot be said to be absent.\textsuperscript{559} He calls this a trivial (tha shal ba) absence; it corresponds to a form of emptiness described in the \textit{Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra} as “emptiness of one thing in another” (gcig gis gcig stong pa nyid),\textsuperscript{560} such as a barren woman’s child or a pauper’s wealth. Such superficial forms of emptiness as these are unsuitable as objects of meditation for someone who truly longs for liberation.\textsuperscript{561}

If a pillar is not itself empty of its own essence, but only of some extraneous feature, Chos-dbyings rang-grol claims—again echoing Mi-pham—it must be hypostatic (bden grub), permanent (rtag), stable (brtan) and unchanging (ther zug).\textsuperscript{562} The text then quotes an opponent, a certain Bla-ma rGya-sde-ba,\textsuperscript{563} who raises the following objection:

Even if you assert that a pillar is empty of its own essence, you accept that emptiness is freedom from conceptual elaboration. And it is meaningless to suggest that the emptiness resulting from the negation of a thing’s apparent aspect (snang cha) is freedom from conceptual elaboration.\textsuperscript{564}

Bla-ma rGya-sde-ba contends that the emptiness of an entity’s own essence, understood through the negation of that entity’s appearance, cannot qualify as the

\textsuperscript{558} On this point see Pettit 1999: 135f. and Duckworth 2011: 98. Pettit points out that, for Mi-pham, the dGe-lugs position amounts to “verbal extrinsic emptiness” (tshig gi gzhan stong) rather than ontological extrinsic emptiness (don gyi gzhan stong).

\textsuperscript{559} As in the example of a horse’s emptiness of cows. The same example occurs in \textit{Nges shes sgron me} (MPp vol. 9: 77.1; English translation in Pettit 1999: 197f.), but ultimately derives from the \textit{Mahāparinirvānasūtra}.

\textsuperscript{560} YCRa vol. 2: 409. The seven forms of emptiness mentioned in the \textit{Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra} are: 1) emptiness of characteristics (mtshan nyid stong pa nyid); 2) emptiness of the nature of entities (dgos po ’i rang bzhin stong pa nyid); 3) emptiness of becoming (srid pa ’i stong pa nyid); 4) emptiness of non-becoming (mi srid pa stong pa nyid); 5) inexpresible emptiness (brjod du med pa ’i stong pa nyid); 6) emptiness of the ultimate great wisdom of the noble ones (don dam pa ’phags pa’i ye shes chen po stong pa nyid); 7) emptiness of one thing in another (gcig gis gcig stong pa nyid). (Chos rnam kun btus, vol. 2, 1649–50.)

\textsuperscript{561} YCRa vol. 2: 409.

\textsuperscript{562} YCRa vol. 2: 409.

\textsuperscript{563} Neither A-lags gZan-dkar nor Tulku Thondup could identify this person. The name is also unknown to the TBRC database. Note that another text in g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol’s gsung ’bum (YCRa vol. 3: 479–482) also mentions rGya-sde twice (p.479).

\textsuperscript{564} YCRa vol. 2: 409: ka ba rang gi ngsos mi stong par bzhes kyang stong nyid spros bral yin par bzhes pas snang cha spangs pa’i stong cha de spros bral yin par go rgyu med}
absence of conceptual proliferation (prapañca; spros pa). It is itself a form of conceptual proliferation. Chos-dbyings rang-grol does not rebut this objection head on. He implies that, for followers of Mi-pham, appearance and emptiness are not incompatible; on the contrary, they are inseparably united. Therefore, emptiness is not a means to refute appearance alone. Bla-ma rGya-sde-ba then raises a further objection: If appearance and emptiness are always present as a unity, would this not mean that exalted (ārya) beings (i.e., those who have attained the bhūmis) would still perceive features of ordinary entities, such as wooden pillars, even in the wisdom that arises during meditative equipoise (mnyam bzhag gi ye shes)? Chos-dbyings rang-grol simply says that Mi-pham might not have addressed this objection directly, but his system certainly refutes it. Aside from this comment, he offers no clear answer to the objection, which makes it a curious interpolation, perhaps because the text is in note-format. Responses to objections (dgag lan) are a common feature of polemical literature, but they are rare in practical instructions.

Thus far, Chos-dbyings rang-grol has discussed the mind’s source or origin. Next, he considers the subject, that is, the mind which emerges. Even ordinary consciousness possesses traits or qualities which reveal that its underlying nature is wisdom or clear light. For example, the fact that mind cognizes and is aware of objects is a sign that its nature consists of the wisdom of clear light (’od gsal gnyug ma’i ye shes). Moreover, consciousness is originally empty and without conceptual proliferation. This is a sign of great, empty and unelaborate basic space (dbyings spros bral stong chen). Finally, he argues that the indivisibility of consciousness and its emptiness itself is a sign of the union of basic space and

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565 YCRa vol. 2: 409.
566 YCRa vol. 2: 409.
567 There are no separate sections for the endurance and cessation of mind.
568 YCRa vol. 2: 409.
wisdom (dbyings ye zung 'jug). Although Chos-dbyings rang-grol does not say so explicitly, it is possible that this explanation, fuels his claim (made later in the text) that this rDzogs-chen preliminary (of mind’s emergence, presence and departure) is superior to the Mādhyamika Prāśāngika viewpoint.

Chos-dbyings rang-grol then cites several statements which he attributes to 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma. The first is about the union of basic space (dbyings) and wisdom. This lies at the centre (dbus) of all phenomena as their vital force (srog) or is like a seal with which they are stamped (phyag rgyas btab yod). The second statement refers to the soteriological efficacy of this investigation more generally. According to Chos-dbyings rang-grol, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma considers three years of thorough meditation on mind’s emergence, presence and departure sufficient to bring liberation after death. This is true, he says, even for those who have not even begun the main practice of Khregs-chod. This is an unusual claim, Chos-dbyings rang-grol says, but a sound one. The timescale—a mere three years—suggests a close alignment with the esoteric path.

Next, Chos-dbyings rang-grol reports a discussion between gTer-ston bSod-rgyal and ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i nyi-ma, in which they examined the preliminary practices within a broader hierarchy of philosophical views:

Lama Nyag bla once asked rDo-grub Rin-po-che whether there is a hierarchical distinction between the view of emergence, presence and departure in this context and the Middle Way view. Rin-po-che replied that there is a difference. “The Middle

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569 YCRa vol. 2: 409.
570 YCRa vol. 2: 409.
571 Since Chos-dbyings rang-grol never met ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma in person any statements attributed to him in this text must have been received via gTer-ston bSod-rgyal. I discuss this in more detail below.
572 YCRa vol. 2: 410.
573 YCRa vol. 2: 410. There is no such statement to be found in the rDzogs-chen corpus within his collected works.
574 One of the key differences between the exoteric path of the Sūtra-āna and the esoteric Mantrayāna is the duration of the path to full awakening. Śākyamuni is often said to have required three incalculable aeons to attain enlightenment. This is contrasted with the swifter tantric path that can lead to enlightenment in as few as thirteen, seven or five lifetimes. rDzogs-chen takes such claims even further, with some texts promising Buddhahood in years or even months.
Way,” he said, “corresponds to the sūtras, above which are the three tantra classes of the mantra vehicle, and beyond those, the three inner tantra classes of mantra. It is among these final three classes that we find the very pinnacle of all nine vehicles, the Great Perfection or Atiyoga. So, there is a difference.”

This passage raises many interesting issues. For the time being, let us assume that Chos-dbyings rang-grol reliably records this conversation. (I shall address this question below.) This would mean that ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma did indeed identify the view arrived at through investigating mind’s emergence, presence and departure with rDzogs-chen/Atiyoga. It would also mean that he claimed this view to be vastly superior to that of Madhyamaka. Such assertions bear on the themes of the previous chapter. They suggest a view-based (as opposed to method-based) distinction between the vehicles. This is hard to reconcile with the contents of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s rDzogs-chen corpus.

In another work, Nyi ma’i dkyil ’khor, Chos-dbyings rang-grol takes up the same theme of the hierarchical distinction between the view of this rDzogs-chen preliminary and Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika. He writes:

Then, you might ask: Which is superior: the view of Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika or the view of emergence, presence and departure in the Great Perfection? The answer is that the view of emergence, presence and departure is superior. In Mādhyamika, certainty must be like taut metal wire. For emergence, presence and departure in the Great Perfection, the manifestations from the radiance of the essence [of mind] must be unceasing. This is the distinction in features (khyad chos) on top of the basis for distinction (khyad gzhi).

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575 YCRa vol. 2: 411: bla ma nyag blas rdo grub rin po che la skabs ’di’i byung gnas ’gro gsum gyi lta ba dang/ dbu ma’l lta ba gnyis la mtho dman yod dam med zhus tshe/ mtho dman los yod/ dbu ma mdo red/ de yan chad na sngags kyi rgyud sde gsum yod/ de yan na yang sngags nang rgyud sde gsum de’i nang nas kyang theg dgu’i yang rīse rdzogs pa chen po a ti yo ga yin pas khyaḍ los yod/
576 YCRa vol. 2: 146–162. Its full title is ‘Od gsal rdzogs pa chen po bla ma rin po che’i khrid rgyun ltar gnad ’gag gsal bar bstan pa nyi ma’i dkyil ’khor. Unlike rDzogs pa chen po’i lam nyams su len tshul, this text was clearly written by Chos-dbyings rang-grol himself.
577 The analogy of taut metal wire (lcags skud sgrim ma) is unclear and the translation is tentative, but the image might be intended to signify that in Madhyamaka certainty (nges shes) must be deliberately cultivated and maintained.
578 YCRa vol. 2: 151: de’i tshe dbu ma thal ’gyur ba’i lta ba dang/ rdzogs chen pa’i byung gnas ’gro gsum lta ba gang mtho zhes na byung gnas ’gro gsum lta bas mtho/ dbu mas nges shes lcags skud sgrim ma lta bu dgos pa yin/ rdzogs chen byung gnas ’gro gsum skabs ngo bo’i gdangs las shar cha ’gag med yod dgos pa de khyaḍ gzhi’i steng nas khyaḍ chos de red gsungs|
Without naming ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma as his source this time, Chos-dbyings rang-grol flatly asserts the superiority of the rDzogs-chen preliminary practice over Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika. He portrays rDzogs-chen as an unceasing spontaneous manifestation of the radiance of awareness. The rhetoric follows ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma (as examined in the previous chapter), but it is applied to a preliminary rather than the main practice.

The term “basis for distinction” (khyad gzhi) suggests that Chos-dbyings rang-grol considers the preliminary practice to belong to the Atiyoga vehicle. This is, of course, itself superior to the Mahāyāna. There must also be a difference in attributes (khyad chos) to establish the superiority of the investigation of emergence, presence and departure. In his rDzogs pa chen po ‘i lam nyams su len tshul, Chos-dbyings rang-grol says that gTer-ston bSod-rgyal made this point. He then introduces the concept of a “philosophical standpoint” (’dzin stangs) without first stating the differences. This expression, which Pettit and others translate as “modal apprehension,” is the deliberate focus on a concept in meditation. Mi-pham examined the viability of such conceptual focus in meditation upon ultimate truth in his Nges shes sgron me. It is one of the points through which he and his followers seek to distinguish themselves from the dGe-lugs.

579 It is possible that the entire text is intended to record the words of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma. Nowhere does Chos-dbyings rang-grol specify the identity of the “precious guru” (bla ma rin po che) of the title whose “tradition of instruction” (khrid rgyun) is here recorded.

580 On this term, see Pettit 1999, 157–167. (Note that Pettit consistently spells the Tibetan as ’dzin stang without the post-suffix s).

581 This is the translation adopted in Pettit 1999, Jinpa 2002, and Duckworth 2008, for example. Viehbeck 2012 translates the term variously as “modes of cognition” (154), “modes of grasping” (178) and “cognitive modes” (222). Ruegg (2002: 131) uses “cognitive mode.”

582 See also Pettit 1999: 157.

583 See Bötrül 2011: 238. In addition, Pettit 1999, 160–167 includes a discussion of the differences between the views of Tsong-kha-pa and the rNying-ma scholar Yon-tan rgya-mtsho (b. 19th C.) on this point. Mi-pham and dPa’-ris Rab-gsal (1840–1912) clashed over this point when debating the ninth chapter of the Bodhicaryāvatāra. See Viehbeck 2012: 147–156 for an analysis of dPa’-ris Rab-gsal’s criticism and Mi-pham’s response.
rDzogs pa chen po’i lam nyams su len tshul discusses whether a practitioner should maintain such a philosophical standpoint in meditation on the mind’s emergence, presence and departure. The text calls on sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma in support of the view that there should indeed be such a standpoint. It then turns to gTer-ston bSod-rgyal and Chos-dbyings rang-grol,584 who argue the opposite:

When he [gTer-ston bSod-rgyal] was asked, “Well then, must there be a philosophical standpoint or not?” he replied, “If there were, this would not be breaking down the house of the mind so much as constructing it.” When told that Lama Lung-rtogs says there must be a philosophical standpoint, he said, “Oh yes, he does say that.” So, while Lama Nyag-bla says there should be no standpoint, Lama Lung-rtogs said there must be. When Lama Tshang [Chos-dbyings rang-grol] was asked, “How do you believe it is?” he said he too didn’t think there should be a standpoint.585

We are not in a position to verify these statements, since corroborating sources are unavailable. sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma does not discuss ’dzin stangs in Rang rig la gnang ba, which is his only extant work that covers the rDzogs-chen preliminaries,586 nor is there any reference to ’dzin stangs in gTer-ston bSod-rgyal’s only relevant text.587 It is possible that the differing views reflect the gradual spread of Mi-pham’s ideas. This would explain why the older sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma holds a different view to his younger student gTer-ston

584 The fact that Chos-dbyings rang-grol is cited in his own text underscores the point that these are notes compiled by an anonymous editor/student.
585 YCRa vol. 2: 411: ‘o na ’dzin stangs yod dgos sam mi dgos zhus tshe de dgos na sngon ’gro sms kyis khang bu bshig pa ma red brtsigs pa red gsungs| bla ma lung rtogs tshang gis ni ’dzin stangs yod dgos gsungs ni yin zhus tshe| ’o gsungs pa yin gsungs| bla ma nyag blas rin po ches ’dzin stangs med gsungs pa yin| bla ma lung rtogs tshang gis yod dgos gsungs ni yin| bla ma tshang khyed kyis gang ltar bzhed pa yin gsungs pas| khong gi ’dzin stangs ni min zhus| The construction here is rather difficult, and the translation of one line (bla ma nyag blas rin po ches ’dzin stangs med gsungs pa yin) in particular is tentative. The use of the verb zhu/zhus here might indicate that the question was put to Chos-dbyings rang-grol by another lama rather than a student. (A-lags gZan-dkar, personal communication, 25 January 2016)
586 In addition, Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang’s bsTan pa’i nyi ma’i zhal lung purports to be a record of sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s instructions on Khregs-chod, including the preliminaries, but it too makes no mention of ’dzin stangs.
587 rDzogs pa chen po’i nyams len gnad bs dus nyag bla bsod rgyal gvis gsungs pa, which is preserved in Chos-dbyings rang-grol’s collected works (YCRa vol. 2: 421–428) makes no mention of ’dzin stangs.
bSod-rgyal and the much younger Chos-dbyings rang-grol, both of whom had greater exposure to Mi-pham’s ideas.

Chos-dbyings rang-grol then uses the concept of philosophical standpoint to explain why this rDzogs-chen preliminary is superior to exoteric Madhyamaka philosophy:

Then, when asked what are the distinctive features over and above the difference in the basis itself, the Lama [i.e., Chos-dbyings rang-grol] said that here, when settling with ease in meditative equipoise (mnyam bzhag), based on a lamp-like certainty (nges shes) that determines the union of appearance and emptiness, there is no philosophical standpoint whatsoever related to the four extremes. The sign of this is that whatever arises within the basic space (dbyings) of the essence of mind can do so without obstruction—and this is a special feature not to be found in the Middle Way.

Here, the text introduces Mi-pham’s interpretation of Madhyamaka; in this, meditation on emptiness does not require any philosophical standpoint connected to the four extremes (catuskoti). Yet, this presentation is combined with terminology associated with Khregs-chod. It refers to the unobstructed (’gags med) arising of thoughts and mental states within the basic space (dbyings) of the essence (ngo bo) of mind, and to the liberation (grol ba) of thoughts:

Generally, on the path of Khregs-chod, the arising and liberation of thoughts occur simultaneously (shar grol dus mnyam). So, at that stage, as a sign that the view of emergence, presence and departure has pervaded the mind stream, self-liberation (rang grol) is effected without the need for any other antidote. This is another special feature not to be found in the Middle Way.

The text then clarifies the second claim:

Although the path of Khregs-chod generally involves the simultaneous arising and liberation of thoughts, this practice (of the investigation of emergence, presence and departure) does not feature the genuine (mtshan nyid pa) form of liberation upon arising, as that belongs only to the main practice (dngos gzhi). Still, it does mark the

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588 YCRa vol. 2: 411: de na khyad gzhi’i steng gi khyad chos ji ltar yod lags zhus tset sngang stong zung ’jug nges pa’i nges shes mar me lta bu’i steng nas mnyam bzhag la lhod se bzhag pa’i dus der mtha’ bzhis’i dzin stangs gang yang med pas de’i ’bras rtags la ngo bo’i dbyings la shar cha ’gags med du ’char thub pa’i di dbu ma la med pa’i khyad chos yin

589 YCRa vol. 2: 411f.: spyir khregs chod kyi lam shar grol dus mnyam yin pas de dus shes rgyud la byung gnas ’gro gsum gyi lta bas khyab yod pa’i ’bras rtags su gnyen po gzhed [412] bsten mi dgos par rang grol du ’gro ba’i di dbu ma la med pa’i khyad chos yin
point at which such liberation upon arising begins, and that is why it serves as a preliminary to Khregs-chod.\footnote{YCRa vol. 2: 412: spyir khregs chod kyi lam shar grol dus mnyam yin pas ’di dngos gzhi’i shar grol ntshan nyid pa min yang shar grol gyi mgo ’di nas rtson pa yin pa’i gnad kyis ’di khregs chod kyi sngon ’gor ’gro ba’i rgyu ntshan de ltar yin gsungs|}

The superiority of this investigation over mainstream Madhyamaka philosophy rests on its close similarity to aspects of the main practice. This is not readily classifiable as a distinction in view or in method, although perhaps it is closer to the latter. The text’s assertion allows for a useful compromise. Chos-dbyings rang-grol can assert that the rDzogs-chen preliminaries are superior to the most exalted of exoteric philosophical systems; at the same time, he can affirm the absolute supremacy of, and necessity for, the main practice.

*rDzogs pa chen po ’i lam nyams su len tshul* then draws a parallel between personal, psychological experience and the broader nature of “adventitious, delusory appearances” (*glo bur ’khrul ba’i snang ba*). Just like the mind and mental states, appearances too are beyond emergence, presence and departure. They are not present in the original ground; they do not truly remain anywhere thereafter; and they are absent at the stage of the ultimate fruition.\footnote{YCRa vol. 2: 412.}

The text then introduces two categories of valid cognition that Mi-pham employs repeatedly in his writings, i.e., the conventional valid cognition of narrow, limited vision (*tha snyad tshur mthong gi tshad ma*) and the conventional valid cognition of pure vision (*tha snyad dag gzigs tshad ma*).\footnote{Ibid.} Once again, the inclusion of such terms—indeed the reference to valid cognition (*pramāṇa*) at all—is unusual in a rDzogs-chen instruction manual. Indeed, it is probably additional evidence of the expansion of rNying-ma scholasticism.

\footnote{YCRa vol. 2: 412.}
2.2. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma as a Source

Chos-dbyings rang-grol refers to ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma several times in his rDzogs pa chen po’i lam nyams su len tshul. Above all, he cites him as the source for his account of the investigation of emergence, presence and departure.

This section, which follows Mi-pham’s interpretation of Madhyamaka, is supposedly based on comments ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma made to gTer-ston bSod-rgyal. As Chos-dbyings rang-grol did not compose the text himself, it contains three distinct stages of reported speech: 1) the text’s actual author reporting the words of Chos-dbyings rang-grol; 2) Chos-dbyings rang-grol reporting the words of gTer-ston bSod-rgyal; and 3) gTer-ston bSod-rgyal reporting the words of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma. This tripartite chain thus offers three discrete occasions for inaccuracy or misrepresentation.

The content of the emergence, presence and departure section does not accord with ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s own writings. Chos-dbyings rang-grol’s version closely follows Mi-pham’s interpretation of Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika. On the few occasions when ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma refers to emptiness in his rDzogs-chen writings, he shows little interest in Mi-pham’s favoured terminology or doctrine. For example, rNam rtog ngo shes pa dang rig pa ngo shes pa’i khyad par contains the following passage:

In such texts as the commentary to Chos dbyings mdzod, there is praise for the tradition of Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika alone. It is certainly necessary, therefore, to follow the Prāsaṅgika approach in delimiting the object of negation (dgag bya’i mtshams ’dzin), and so on. Nevertheless, [Prāsaṅgika involves] the separation of the conceptually isolatable factors of appearance and emptiness, referred to as the fine distinction of appearance and emptiness or the ‘exclusion of emptiness’. Following which, there is exclusively an apprehension of emptiness that is a non-affirming negation (med dgag); this is a concept-based method. There is also the assertion that if, having made such a distinction conceptually, one then trains in meditation, experience develops as in the saying, “Having, as its result, the mind of bliss, clarity and no-thought.” In our own system, the Great Perfection, we use awareness as the path from the outset. In other words, we apply awareness alone. We do not attempt
to employ concepts, as concepts are mind. And here we practise meditation after distinguishing mind and awareness.\textsuperscript{593}

The discussion of emptiness here, with its emphasis on delimiting the object of negation and on non-affirming negation, accords with the dGe-lugs system. It has more in common with the attempted rDzogs-chen–dGe-lugs synthesis that I examine in the Chapter Five than with Chos-dbyings rang-grol’s interpretations in his \textit{rDzogs pa chen po ’i lam nyams su len tshul}. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma equates emptiness with “mere non-finding” (\textit{ma rnyed pa tsam}) and cautions against affirming negation:

Instructions on the Madhyama\textsuperscript{ka view} [state that] the basis of emptiness (\textit{stong gzhi}) and the object of negation (\textit{dgag bya}) do not arise within the state of certainty in which one ascertains emptiness as a non-affirming negation. Nevertheless, to prevent a diminishing of the form of certainty in which the object of negation is merely excluded, one must repeatedly cultivate further analysis to some degree. It is only the non-finding of a nature within that state of certainty that is called ‘finding emptiness’. It is only this; there is no additional emptiness to be discovered. Unless one nurtures this kind of [analysis] periodically at the beginning, there is a risk of slipping into an affirming negation (\textit{ma yin dgag}).\textsuperscript{594}

This extract proposes another reason to practise the preliminary investigations and cultivate certainty: to avoid straying into affirming negations.

However, Mi-pham and Chos-dbyings rang-grol are just as concerned with the danger of slipping into a non-affirming negation. There is thus a discrepancy between what ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma says in his collected writings and the

\textsuperscript{593} JTNs vol. 2: 146.10: chos dbyings mdzod ’grel sogs thams cad na lta ba dbu ma thal ’gyur ba’i lugs kho na la bsngags yod pas| dgag bya’i mtshams ’dzin sogs thal ’gyur lugs ltar nges par dgos kyang| snang stong gi spu ris ’byed pa’am| stong pa gud du bcad pa zhes snang stong gi ldog cha so sor phye ste med dgag gi stong pa kha na ’dzin pa ni rtog pas skyong tshul gzhir bzhag gi ’gro lugs yin la’ dang po rtog ngor de ltar phye ba’i steng nas bsgom pa goms na| de \textsuperscript{sic} gsal mi rtog blo ’bras can| zhes pa ltar ’ong ba’ang ’dod mod kyi| dang po nas rig pa lam byed dam rig pa rkyang ’ded byed pa’i rdzogs chen rang lugs la rtog pa la las ka mi ’tshol te| rtog pa de sems yin la’ dir sems rig phye nas sgom pa’i phyir ro| This section is also translated in Tulku Thondup 2002: 104–5.

\textsuperscript{594} JTNs vol. 2: 147.7: dbu ma’i lta khrid dus| stong nyid med dgag nges pa’i nges ngor stong gzhi dang dgag bya mi ’char yang |dgag bya bcad ldog tSAM nges pa’i nges shes shugs je zhan du ’gror mi ster bar yang yang dpyad pa phra mo’i zur gSos gtong dgos| nges ngo der rang bzhin btsal bas ma rnyed pa tSAM la stong nyid myed zer ba ma gtos| myed rgyu’i stong nyid zur pa med| dang po zur gSos ’phral ’phral ma byas na ma yin dgag tu ’chor yen so gs yod|
citation in *rDzogs pa chen po ’i lam nyams su len tshul*. We can account for this in (at least) three different ways:

1) *Evolution of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa ’i-nyi-ma’s views.* It is possible that ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s interpretation of Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika evolved over the course of his life. His early education included a training in the dGe-lugs system of exoteric philosophy. Perhaps his views changed, possibly once he read the scroll-letter from Mi-pham urging him to uphold the authentic rNying-ma doctrine. The extracts from his rDzogs-chen corpus, cited above, would then correspond to an earlier phase; the views cited in Chos-dbyings rang-grol’s treatise, which are aligned with Mi-pham’s, would belong to a later period.

2) *Editorial control of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa ’i-nyi-ma’s writings.* As is commonplace in Tibetan literary culture, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s collected writings were compiled and published after his death. The version that exists today might therefore reflect the views of those who put together his *gsung ’bum* at rDo-grub monastery, an establishment with a history of known opposition to Mi-pham’s work. More of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s corpus has come to light since 2003, when the current edition of his *gsung ’bum* was published. It is possible that

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595 The collected writings of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma owe much to the work of anonymous editors. Consider, for example, the following publisher’s note (*shing par gyi mchan*) appended to a text in the rDzogs-chen corpus:

This text is derived from notes taken when the Lord Guru, while still young, was teaching a group of several students. It does not accord with the modern way of teaching and I have not been able to find a supporting text. Nevertheless, having corrected my notes as well as I could, in accordance with what I received from the Lord Guru, I had the printing blocks carved. (JTNs vol. 2: 94.15: ’di ni rje bla ma nyid sku na gzhon dus ’ga’ zhig la gsung rim bzhin zin thor btab pa yin kyang deng dus kyi gsung sgros dang mi mthun zhiṅ dpe yang dag mo zhig gtan ma rnyed kyang rje bla ma nyid la zhus pa ltar gang shes kyiṣ zhu dag byas nas spar la btab pa’o]

596 In recent years, texts attributed to ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma have appeared among the collected writings of other authors, most notably ’Jam-dbyangs mkhyen-brtse’i Chos-kyi-blo-gros and the ‘four great seminary-masters (mkhan po)’ of rDo-grub Monastery. See, for example, the untitled notes (*zin bris*) on Ye shes bla ma included in a recent edition of the collected writings of ’Jam-dbyangs
future research could bring to light any editorial interventions and thus reveal corruptions within the texts.

3) Unreliability of Chos-dbyings rang-grol’s text. We noted three stages of communication from ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma to the author of rDzogs pa chen po ’i lam nyams su len tshul. At any one of these, the words could have been distorted. We also note that Chos-dbyings rang-grol was heavily influenced by Mi-pham’s writings. His views may also have been shaped by Bod-pa sprul-sku, whom he met directly. The resident monks and yogis at Chos-dbyings rang-grol’s encampment, the most likely site of the compilation of his rDzogs pa chen po ’i lam nyams su len tshul, would have been more amenable to Mi-pham’s rNyung-ma scholasticism than those at rDo-grub-chen Monastery. It is even conceivable that Chos-dbyings rang-grol, as a teacher of the Fourth rDo-grub-chen incarnation, Thub-bstan phrin-las dpal-bzang (b.1927), contributed to the eventual decision to adopt Mi-pham’s works as part of the curriculum at rDo-grub-chen.

mKhyen-brtse’i Chos-kyi-blo-gros (JCLb vol. 8: 23–61), the colophon to which reads: ye shes bla ma’i zin bris rdo grub sprul sku bstan pa’i nyi ma’i gsung rgyun ’jam mgon rdo rje ’chang blo gros rgya mtsho’i phyag bris dngos mkhan chen mkyhen brtse’i blo gros la gnam ba’i dpe las zhal bshus pa’i mkhan po’i phyag dpe las slar yang bshus pa’o| A commentary by ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma on the Man ngag lta phreng (commonly attributed to Padmasambhava) is included in the collected words of the Four great khenpos of rDo-grub (DKh vol. 3: 1–77). Its colophon (p. 77) notes that it was discovered in the library of dPal-spungs monastery. I have recently seen copies of unpublished manuscripts attributed to ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma, which await further research. According to his biography by mKhan-po Shes-bya kun-gzigs (YCRa vol. 1: 1–45), Chos-dbyings rang-grol once had an opportunity to see Mi-pham, but his teacher, A’dzoms ’brug-pa (1842–1924) refused to grant him permission to leave their encampment and make the journey (pp. 28–29). Later, however, he met Mi-pham many times in visions (p.29). The biography also notes (ibid.) that he often taught from Mi pham’s works, especially Nges shes sgron me, the ’Od gsal snying po ’overview’ (spyi don) of *Guhyagarbha, and the gNyug sems skor gsum, and claimed that they hold the key to understanding the writings of Klong-chen rab’byams.

See Bötrül 2011: 7. Chos-dbyings rang-grol was a teacher of the fourth rDo-grub-chen incarnation, Thub-bstan phrin-las dpal-bzang (b.1927), during whose tenure the change in curriculum occurred. See Tulku Thondup 1996: 320.
3. Conclusion

*rDzogs pa chen po ’i lam nyams su len tshul*, which is attributed to Chos-dbyings rang-grol, contains elements of Mi-pham’s interpretation of Madhyamaka philosophy. It discusses the analytical meditations belonging to the rDzogs-chen preliminaries and argues that rDzogs-chen practitioners must follow Mi-pham’s explanation of selflessness and emptiness. It thus continues a trend for the inclusion of doxography within the rDzogs-chen preliminaries that appears already in the *Ye shes bla ma*. Nevertheless, the *rDzogs pa chen po ’i lam nyams su len tshul* adds an additional sectarian element, since it rejects syncretism and repeats Mi-pham’s refutation of dGe-lugs interpretations of Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika. Moreover, it posits that the view underlying the investigation of mind’s emergence, presence and departure is superior to that of Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika. The explanation draws upon Mi-pham’s theory of Madhyamaka—and, in so doing, highlights apparent disagreement among later rNying-ma authors—but it also seeks to align the preliminary with elements of the main practice. Chos-dbyings rang-grol, drawing upon Mi-pham, thus takes rDzogs-chen—or, at least, its preliminaries—in a more exclusivistic direction. Even though the authenticity of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i nyi-ma’s views in this source remains to be established, we can be confident that rDzogs-chen preliminary practices evolved to accommodate Mi-pham’s philosophical innovations.
5. The Syncretism of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho

“Like a herdsman playing a flute in an empty valley...”

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho

1. Introduction

The writings of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho (1903–1957) are notable primarily for their syncretism, combining elements of dGe-lugs and rNying-ma doctrine. To identify the place that these writings occupy in the history of Tibetan literature, I begin this chapter with a brief overview of earlier forms of syncretistic rhetoric. This will make it easier to assess the most likely influences on his work. I then turn to mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho’s works themselves in order to assess his approach to intersectarian relations.

2. Precedents

There are at least two important precursors to mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho’s syncretic doctrinal stance. The first is what I shall call the “rhetoric of underlying sameness.” This is the assertion that doctrinal systems are fundamentally identical, or lead to similar results, despite any superficial differences. Such rhetorical claims are to be found in the works of several earlier dGe-lugs authors. However, this conciliatory tendency does not align with the exclusivism that dominated dGe-lugs thought in the early twentieth century. The most extreme form of such exclusivism features in the writings of Pha-bong-kha bDe-chen snying-po.

600 DC vol. 2: 3.
601 As defined in the OED: “Attempted union or reconciliation of diverse or opposite tenets or practices, esp. in philosophy or religion...”
602 Although I do not include the writings of Tsong-kha-pa here as a likely source of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho’s rhetoric (as distinct from his doctrinal substance, for which he was obviously and explicitly one of the principal sources), it is worth recalling that Tsong-kha-pa was himself a syncretist, as Roger Jackson (2001: 186 n. 24) has noted.
mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho clearly reacted against a conservative strand of dGe-lugs thought, even though he never identifies any particular individuals. He also disapproved of rNying-ma exclusivism.

2.1. The Rhetoric of Underlying Sameness

The writings of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho posit points of commonality between rDzogs-chen and dGe-lugs thought. While detailed syncretism of this kind is rare, proclamations of the underlying unity of the views of different systems is a common theme in Tibetan Buddhist literature. A well-known example appears in a work of Blo-bzang chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan (1570–1662) called dGe ldan bka’ brgyud rin po che’i phyag chen rtsa ba rgyal ba’i gzhung lam:

Although many individual names are ascribed, such as Union with the Co-emergent (lhan cig skyes sbyor), the Amulet Box (ga’u ma), the Fivefold (inga ldan), the [Six Spheres of] Equal Taste (ro snyoms [skor drug]), the Four Syllables (yi ge bzhi), Pacification (zhi byed), Severance (gcod yul), Great Perfection, Instructions on the Madhyamaka View (dbu ma’i lta khrig), and so on, nevertheless, when a yogi, who is learned in scripture and logic and experienced, investigates their definitive meaning (nges don), they all boil down to a single intention (dgongs pa gcig).

In this famous passage, Blo-bzang chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan seeks to validate various systems through their underlying sameness—that is, their teleological sameness. Clearly, this assertion still leaves room for methodological difference and does not, therefore, preclude hierarchical claims or inclusivist models.

I.Cang-skya Rol-pa’i-rdo-rje (1717–1786) was another dGe-lugs-pa author who employed the rhetoric of underlying sameness. In his ITa ba’i gsung mgur

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[603] In certain letters specifically, as will become clear below. To my knowledge, the extreme rhetoric found in these texts is not to be found elsewhere in his writings. For a discussion of his literary output and controversial legacy, see Repo 2015.

[604] BCG vol. 4, 83.5f.: lhan cig skyes sbyor ga’u ma| Inga ldan ro snyoms yi ge bzhi| zhi byed gcod [84] yul rdzogs chen dang| dbu ma’i lta khrig la sogs pa| so sor ming ’dogs mang na yang| nges don lung rigs la mkhas shing| nyams myong can gyi rnal ’byor pa|s dpayad na dgongs pa gcig tu ’bab| The full text is translat... The full text is translated in Dalai Lama and Berzin 1997: 97–102; it is also discussed in Jackson 2001 passim.

zab mo, he claims that the “scholars and siddhas” of the different Tibetan schools use variant names to refer to the same ultimate state:

Many Sa-skya, nYing-ma, [b]Kal[”]-bryud and 'Brug-pa scholars and siddhas, 
Speak of clear and empty reflexive awareness that is without grasping, 
Or the very face of Samantabhadra, which is primordially pure and spontaneously present, 
Or the Great Seal (Mahāmudrā) that is uncontrived and connotate, 
Or that which is beyond any assertion such as “it is” or “it is not”. 
Although they make such proclamations of various terms, 
If they mean the single essence of the basic nature, that is excellent. 
But I wonder what it is they are pointing towards.

This might be described as conditional inclusivism. The author allows for the possibility that the followers of the other schools may be referring to the same natural state which dGe-lugs teachings identify. Despite the hypothetical tone of the passage, Mi-pham regarded this as an example of the rhetoric of underlying sameness: when he discusses this section of ITa ba’i gsung mgur zab mo in his commentary on the text, he even cites Blo-bzang chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan.

Another advocate of the rhetoric of underlying sameness was Zhabz-drug rang-grol (1781–1851). He, it will be recalled, was a teacher of ’Ja’-pa mDo-sngags (1824–1902). Tshogs-drug rang-grol’s writings demonstrate an exceptionally accommodating attitude towards other traditions, not only towards the different Tibetan Buddhist schools, but also to Bon and other non-Buddhist religions. Rachel Pang describes him as a pluralist. She contrasts his form of non-sectarianism with that of ’Jam-mgon Kong-sprul:

607 CRD vol. 4: 388.4: sa rnying kar ’brug gi mkhas grub mang po| gsal stong ’dzin med kyi rang gi rig pa| ka dag lhan grub kyi kun bzang rang zhal| ma bcos lhan skyes kyi phyag rgya chen po| yod min med min kyi blang bral sogs| sna tshogs tha snyad kyi zhal pho sgrogs kyang| gshis lugs thigs po yin na legs te| mdzub mo ’dzugs sa de ci zhih yin a|
608 MPP vol. 4: 853.4.
610 E.g., Pang 2015: 466. More precisely, Pang says, Tshogs-drug rang-grol’s “interest in learning from multiple Buddhist traditions is in some ways reminiscent of the version of religious pluralism that Diana Eck advocates in the contemporary American context.” On the concept of religious pluralism in general see Griffiths 2001: 142–150. Griffiths defines the term as the belief that “belonging to the home religion bears the same relation to the attainment of salvation as does
...contemporary scholarship understands Jamgön Kongtrul’s main non-sectarian legacy to be his formidable encyclopedic compilations of the religious texts from a variety of Buddhist lineages in Tibet. In contrast, Shabkar’s non-sectarian activities were focused less on the gathering, compilation and practice of a variety of lineages, than on the cultivation and promotion of an attitude of non-sectarianism through literary and oral media easily accessible to the mass populace.\(^611\)

Despite the differences that Pang highlights here, there were similarities between the two figures. For example, Kong-sprul accepted the validity of Bon (the tradition into which he was born),\(^612\) just as Zhabs-dkar did, and he also adopts the rhetoric of underlying sameness. The following extract from his \(lTa\, ba\, i\, gtam,\)\(^613\) for example, aligns rDzogs-chen with the writings of Tsong-kha-pa:

The fundamental point (\(mthil\)) of rJe [Tsong-kha-pa]’s views
Accords with the tenets of rDzogs-chen—this is incontestable!
As is clear from The Supreme Medicinal Nectar: Questions and Answers.\(^614\)

Such a respectful attitude towards Tsong-kha-pa was common among Ris-med figures and features also in Mi-pham’s writings.\(^615\) In his \(Nges\, shes\, sgron\, me,\) Mi-pham proposes that all advanced systems of Tibetan Buddhist thought express essentially the same transcendent wisdom:

The Mahāmudrā, Path with its Result (\(lam\, ‘bras\)), Pacification (\(zhi\, byed\)),
Great Madhyamaka of Union, and so on,
Are all known individually by various names,
But, in reality, since they are all wisdom
Beyond the ordinary mind, they are all equal.\(^616\)

belonging to any alien religion” (142). Note that whereas the term pluralism generally carries an inter-religious sense, when speaking of Tshogs-drug rang-grol here it is used primarily in an intra-religious sense.

\(^611\) Pang 2014: 29.
\(^612\) See Smith 2001: 247. Kong-sprul’s inclusion of Bon texts within the Rin chen gter mdzod was controversial. rGyal-rong bSton-dzin grags-pa, a student of rDza dPal-sprul and Padma badzra renowned for his mastery of pramāṇa (tshad ma), expressed his vehement opposition to this inclusiveness in several texts that are currently included in the Potala library. One source claims that rGyal-rong bSton-dzin grags-pa was also a disciple of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma. See Po ta lar bzhugs pa’i rnying ma’i gsung ’bhum dkar chag vol. 1: 61.
\(^614\) MPp vol. 9: 93.4f.: phyag chen lam ’bras zhi byed dang| zung ’jug dbu ma chen po sogs| mtshan gyi mam grungs so sor grags| don la sens las ‘das pa yi| ye shes yin phyir kun kyang mnyam| Cf. Pettit 1999, 213.
Mi-pham adds that the learned all agree on this: they univocally proclaim this “single intention” (dgongs pa gcig)—he uses the same expression as Blo-bzang chos-kyi rgyal-mtshan—of all the buddhas and adepts. Mi-pham does not differentiate these various systems at this level. One cannot say, for example, that rdzogs-chen is greater than Mahāmudrā, since, in their ultimate sense, they both represent the highest wisdom. He continues, though, by pointing out that there are special features (khyad chos) of rdzogs-chen, such as the Space, Mind and Pith Instruction categories, which are absent from other systems. Thus, Mi-pham holds a position of hierarchical inclusivism. It matches ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s view but gives greater emphasis to the “special features” of rnying-ma and rdzogs-chen. In other words, he stresses difference over sameness.

2.2. The Exclusivism of Pha-bong-kha[-pa] bDe-chen snying-po

Not all Tibetan Buddhist authors accept the principle of underlying sameness. One of the clearest expressions of dGe-lugs exclusivism in recent times appears in the letters of Pha-bong-kha[-pa] bDe-chen snying-po. Excerpts from these letters already featured in Chapter One. Here, I draw on them to highlight their dismissal of all non-dGe-lugs traditions.

In a letter dating from 1938, bDe-chen snying-po asserts that only pure dGe-lugs doctrine can lead to enlightenment. All other systems are inferior in theory, meditation and conduct:

Although this teaching has generated four philosophical systems (grub mtha’ smra ba), the only one which realizes precisely and unerringly, the ultimate intent of the

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617 MPp vol. 9: 93.5
618 MPp vol. 9: 93.5f.
619 MPp vol. 9: 93.6f.
620 mDo snyags skor gyi dris lan sna tshogs phyogs gcig tu bsgrigs pa 32a. It is addressed to the great official (spyi khyab dpon chen) Lu’u kun krang. I have been unable to find further information about where he served as an official.
Victorious Buddha, which is emptiness beyond the pitfalls of eternalism or nihilism, is Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika. Here in Tibet there are many different tenet systems such as the rNying-ma, bKa’-bgyud, Sa-skya, dGe-lugs, and others. However, the only one that ascertains the Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika view of emptiness unerringly and according to the intention of the glorious protector Nāgārjuna, is the glorious, peerless Ri-bo dGe-lugs. [Its superiority] lies not just in its philosophical views; its meditation too is utterly pure, free from laxity (bying) and dullness (rmugs); and its conduct is utterly pure, practiced according to the Vinaya. We alone have this triad of theory, meditation and conduct, and a means of combining all the excellent teachings of Buddha into a single graduated path (lam rim) and thereby putting them into practice. Therefore, this doctrine of the glorious and peerless Ri-bo dGe-lugs, the tradition of ’Jam-mgon Tsong-kha-pa, is the essence of all the teachings of Buddha, akin to the pinnacle of a victory-banner.621

Here, bDe-chen snying-po posits dGe-lugs supremacy on three levels. First, he claims that the other schools are philosophically inferior because they incorrectly interpret Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika and slip into the extremes of eternalism and nihilism. Second, their meditation, too, is of a lower standard: it succumbs to the pitfalls of laxity and dullness. And third, their conduct is at fault, because it is an impure form of Vinaya. He picks up on all three themes elsewhere in his writings.622

In another letter to a Chinese disciple, bDe-chen snying-po argues that the other schools (including Bon) offer invalid paths to enlightenment. He goes so far as to claim that their followers deserve infernal retribution:

> These days, all teachings except those of ’Jam-dbyangs Tsong-kha-pa, such as those of the Sa-skya, bKa’-bgyud, rNying-ma and so on, are mistaken philosophically. Never mind the view of the Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika, they lack even the insight of the Svātantrika or Cittamātra! Instead, they cultivate only the nihilistic doctrine of the non-Buddhists (tīrthika),623 or of Hwa-shang Mahāyāna.624 Since they adopt such
a nihilistic position, their followers do not deserve to go anywhere but the hell of Ultimate Torment (avici).

The rhetoric here is trenchant even by the standards of Tibetan polemics. Perhaps it is significant that it is articulated in a letter, rather than a treatise intended for wider circulation—although the letter is included among his collected writings.

bDe-chen snying-po charts the standard doxographical hierarchy in Tibetan Buddhism: Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka occupies the highest position, superior to Svātantra-Madhyamaka (dbu ma rang rgyud pa). Svātantra-Madhyamaka, in turn, exceeds Cittamātra, below which lie the Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣīka. It is unclear whether bDe-chen snying-po holds the non-dGe-lugs schools to be of the same status as the Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣīka; or whether he believes them to be heterodox traditions, as indicated by his reference to tīrthika. He criticizes not only their theory, but also their practice:

Since they fail to recognize subtle laxity of mind, their meditation too is faulty. Although they boast thunderously of the profundity of secret mantra, they do not even partially understand the crucial points of bliss-emptiness (bde stong), clear light (‘od gsal), illusory body (sgyu lus), union (zung ‘jug) and the like. Since these [schools] possess no unerring path to liberation and omniscience, even millennia of practice bring no realization; it is as pointless as churning water in hope of gaining butter. Therefore, in theory, meditation and conduct, in sūtra and in mantra, the excellent tradition of ’Jam-mgon Tsong-kha-pa alone is utterly unerring.
bDe-chen snying-po concludes with a stern admonition against syncretism:

“It is thus of crucial importance that you uphold our own stainless dGe-l丹-pa tradition of view and meditation, without mixing it with other systems.”

This injunction throws into sharp relief the difference between bDe-chen snying-po and mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho. The latter advocates precisely what the former prohibits: to combine dGe-lugs doctrines with rDzogs-chen and rNying-ma thought.

As rare as such explicit avowal of dGe-lugs exclusivism is in Tibetan literature, the attitude itself was quite common. So much so that most scholars today associate the dGe-lugs school with such exclusivism. Whether mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho knew of bDe-chen snying-po’s hard-line stance is hard to say; he does not refer to him directly. He speaks only of dGe-lugs-pa teachers who deny the validity of rNying-ma and bKa’-bgyud doctrine, especially rDzogs-chen and Mahāmudrā.

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628 Ibid. 30b.3f.:

629 Georges Dreyfus and David Kay have shown how such views continue to be represented even today, standing in contrast to the more tolerant, pluralist form of dGe-lugs espoused by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. See Dreyfus 1998 passim. Kay 2004: 89 notes that the extreme exclusivism of dGe-bshes bkra-stbang rgya-mtsho (b. 1931), who is at the centre of recent controversy and opposition to the Fourteenth Dalai Lama over the issue of rDo-rje shugs-I丹, is “firmly rooted within the exclusively oriented strand of the Gelug tradition, particularly as it was represented by Phabongkha Rinpoche.” Of course, the controversial cult of rDo-rje shugs-I丹 complicates the issue.

630 See, for example, Duckworth (2013: 340), who speaks of the “overt exclusivism” of the dGe-lugs. Note that this view is not unanimous. Roger Jackson (2001: 182) observes that “dGe-lugs pas have continued until the present day to differ among themselves about the exclusivity of their tradition.”

631 Tulku Thondup says that the views of bDe-chen snying-po had not reached his region of mGo-log before he left for India in 1956 (private interview, 7 October 2014). Still, bDe-chen snying-po made several visits to Eastern Tibet, especially to Chab-mdo, where he taught extensively in 1935. These were proselytizing trips, during which he gained a number of followers. The letters to Chinese disciples suggest that he was trying to gain additional followers in China, or at least in the border regions. It is therefore notable that A-mdo dge-bshes ’Jam-dpal rol-ba’i-blo-gros, the teacher of mDo-snags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho, also attracted prominent Chinese disciples such as Master Fazun (1902–1980), on which see Tuttle 2005: 111.

632 See, for example, DC vol. 2: 269.
2.3. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho’s Teachers

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho was not the first dGe-lugs-pa author to write about rDzogs-chen. Two of his own teachers, Brag-dkar sprul-sku Blo-bzang dpal-lDan bstan-'dzin snyan-grags (1866–1928) and A-mdo dge-bshes 'Jam-dpal rol-ba’i-blo-gros (1888–1936), wrote rDzogs-chen treatises of their own. Yet, such texts were rare. A recently published anthology of rDzogs-chen works by dGe-lugs-pa scholars includes the treatises of the two together with the writings of only three other authors.

But the flow of influence is difficult to pinpoint. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho refers to his dGe-lugs-pa teachers in his own rDzogs-chen writings. He pays homage to them (as well as to his rNying-ma guru, gTer-ston bSod-rgyal); he also occasionally follows their interpretations. Yet, his rDzogs-chen writings differ from theirs in both form and content.

2.3.1. Blo-bzang dpal-lDan bstan-'dzin snyan-grags

Blo-bzang dpal-lDan bstan-'dzin snyan-grags’s key rDzogs-chen treatise is the ‘Od gsal rdzogs pa chen po’i gzhi lam 'bras gsum gyi rnam bzhag kun tu bzang po’i thugs bcud (hereafter Kun tu bzang po’i thugs bcud). It is a short work (27 pages in the compendium edition) written in verse and divided into eleven

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633 As did his controversial “pre-incarnation”, ‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags, at least according to some accounts. The same sources say that he was made to burn it after losing to 'Ju Mi-pham in debate.
634 dGe ldan mkhas grub dag gi rdzogs skor phyogs bsgrigs (Larung Gar: gser ljongs bla ma rung Inga rigs nang bstan slob grwa chen mo, 2006).
635 The other authors are Tsong-kha-pa Blo bzang grags pa (1357–1419), the Fifth Dalai Lama Blo-bzang rgya-mtsho (1617–1682) and A-lag-sa Ngag-dbang bstan-dar (1759–1831). The latter was a Mongolian from the A-lag-sa region and is sometimes referred to as Sog-po bstan-dar; he wrote a commentary on the Yon tan mdzod of Jigs-med gling-pa entitled Yon tan rin po che’i mdzod kyi dka’ gnad rdo rje’i rgya mdud ’gro byed legs bshad gser gyi thur ma.
636 We also cannot discount the possibility of influence through oral teaching, of which—obviously—no record remains.
637 dGe ldan mkhas grub dag gi rdzogs skor phyogs bsgrigs 150–177
chapters.\textsuperscript{638} Although its title refers to the trio of ground, path and fruition, it is overwhelmingly concerned with the ground; its natural state and “ground awareness” (\textit{gzhi \ yi \ rig \ pa})—a term mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho uses repeatedly in his own writings.

In the colophon, Blo-bzang dpal-ldan bstan-'dzin snyan-grags claims that his work is free from the hair-splitting language of treatises, and that it does not rely exclusively on mental analysis but derives from true insight. Nor does he merely repeat what others say.\textsuperscript{639} Instead, he offers a revelation, a record in ‘vajra verses’ that sprang effortlessly and spontaneously from the casket of his heart—which he calls the “maroon treasure of space” (\textit{klong mdzod smug po}).\textsuperscript{640} The text is not polemical, nor does it make any reference to previous rDzogs-chen commentators. The following extract, taken from the ninth chapter, discusses the nature of delusion (\textit{'khrul \ pa; bhrānti}). It conveys something of the text’s rhetorical style:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item How the natural state of the ground is unaltered (\textit{gzhi yi gnas lugs bcos su med pa bstan pa'i le'u});
\item How the natural state of the ground is undeluded (\textit{gzhi yi gnas lugs 'khrul ba med par bstan pa'i le'u});
\item Non-arising through ascertaining the natural state of the ground (\textit{gzhi yi gnas lugs 'bebs pa las skye ba med pa bstan pa'i le'u});
\item The unobservable great unceasing evenness that is the natural state of the ground (\textit{gzhi yi gnas lugs bar med phyal ba chen po mi dmigs pa bstan pa'i le'u});
\item The inconceivable, great unceasing evenness that is the natural state of the ground (\textit{gzhi yi gnas lugs bar med phyal ba chen po bsam du med par bstan pa'i le'u});
\item The inexpressible great unceasing evenness that is the natural state of the ground (\textit{gzhi yi gnas lugs bar med phyal ba chen po bjod du med par bstan pa'i le'u});
\item The meaning of the primordial, spontaneously present pure awareness of the ground (\textit{gzhi yi rig pa ye nas lhun grub kyi don bstan pa'i le'u});
\item The self-arising nature of the spontaneously present pure awareness of the ground (\textit{gzhi yi rig pa lhun grub rang byung du bstan pa'i le'u});
\item The self-liberating, spontaneously present, unaltered pure awareness of the ground (\textit{gzhi yi rig pa lhun grub rang byung du bstan pa'i le'u});
\item The singular perfection of all dharmas within the expanse of the one pure awareness of the ground (\textit{chos thams cad gzhi rig gcig gi klong du rdzogs pa gcig pu'i don bstan pa'i le'u});
\item The condensed practice encapsulating the categories of ground, path and fruition in the clear light Great Perfection (\textit{od gsal rdzogs pa chen po'i gzhi lam 'bras bu gsum gi rnam bzhag nyams len snying por dril ba'i le'u}).
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}

\begin{footnotesize}\textsuperscript{638} The chapters are as follows:
\item How the natural state of the ground is unaltered (\textit{gzhi yi gnas lugs bcos su med pa bstan pa'i le'u});
\item How the natural state of the ground is undeluded (\textit{gzhi yi gnas lugs 'khrul ba med par bstan pa'i le'u});
\item Non-arising through ascertaining the natural state of the ground (\textit{gzhi yi gnas lugs 'bebs pa las skye ba med pa bstan pa'i le'u});
\item The unobservable great unceasing evenness that is the natural state of the ground (\textit{gzhi yi gnas lugs bar med phyal ba chen po mi dmigs pa bstan pa'i le'u});
\item The inconceivable, great unceasing evenness that is the natural state of the ground (\textit{gzhi yi gnas lugs bar med phyal ba chen po bsam du med par bstan pa'i le'u});
\item The inexpressible great unceasing evenness that is the natural state of the ground (\textit{gzhi yi gnas lugs bar med phyal ba chen po bjod du med par bstan pa'i le'u});
\item The meaning of the primordial, spontaneously present pure awareness of the ground (\textit{gzhi yi rig pa ye nas lhun grub kyi don bstan pa'i le'u});
\item The self-arising nature of the spontaneously present pure awareness of the ground (\textit{gzhi yi rig pa lhun grub rang byung du bstan pa'i le'u});
\item The self-liberating, spontaneously present, unaltered pure awareness of the ground (\textit{gzhi yi rig pa lhun grub rang byung du bstan pa'i le'u});
\item The singular perfection of all dharmas within the expanse of the one pure awareness of the ground (\textit{chos thams cad gzhi rig gcig gi klong du rdzogs pa gcig pu'i don bstan pa'i le'u});
\item The condensed practice encapsulating the categories of ground, path and fruition in the clear light Great Perfection (\textit{od gsal rdzogs pa chen po'i gzhi lam 'bras bu gsum gi rnam bzhag nyams len snying por dril ba'i le'u}).
\end{footnotesize}
Within the basic space of pure awareness, the experience of infernal burning iron
And the sufferings of beings within the hells can arise.
It is a delusory appearance arising in the way it does, and yet,
Since it is non-delusion manifesting as delusion,
The delusory appearances are none other than basic space.
Since this delusion can be purified in its own place, delusion can be overcome.
If delusion were truly delusion,
Who would be able to rectify it? Who would have such capacity?
As there could only ever be delusion,
Buddhahood, which is the overcoming of delusion, would be impossible.
Delusion is not actually delusion, it is non-delusion.
Within non-delusion there is indeed the appearance of delusion,
But this is not delusion: it is, in fact, non-delusion.
Since the delusion of hell-realms, sufferings and so on
Is actually non-delusion, so called impure realms
Are nominally impure but not truly impure.
What is [called] impure is not truly impure.
What is [called] impure is truly pure, because it is purifiable.
There can be no purification of what is impurely impure.641

This passage shows that the text seeks to elucidate rDzogs-chen doctrine on
its own terms. It is not a comparative work. Nor is it scholastic in its style and
format: it lacks definitions, subdivisions, assertions, refutations, and so on. It is more
of a poetic exploration of rDzogs-chen metaphysics. In both style and content, it thus
resembles the Chos dbyings mdzod of Klong-chen rab-'byams. That too touches on
the paradoxical nature of delusion:

Clinging to the unreal as if it were real, it seems truly real.
Clinging to the undeluded as if it were deluded, it seems truly deluded.
Grasping at the indeterminate as if it were determinate, it seems truly determinate.
Grasping at what is not so as if it were so, it seems truly so.
Grasping at what is untenable as if it were tenable, it seems truly tenable.642

641 dGe ldan mkhas grub dag gi rdzogs skor phyogs bsgrigs 160f.: rig pa’i dbyings la dmyal bar lcags sreg dang| dmyal ba ’i sems can sdug bsngal myong ba ’char| ’char ba ji bzhin ‘khrul snang yin mod kyang| ma ’khrul ba zhig ‘khrul bar snang ba’i phyir| ’khrul snang dbyings las mi gzhain ‘khrul ba nyid| rang sar dag phyir ’khrul bas pang bar ’thad| ci ste ’khrul ba ‘khrul ba nyid yin na’ ’khrul ba [161] nyid las su yis bcos su nus| mam pa kun tu ’khrul ba ’ba’ zhig phyir| ’khrul bas pangs pa’i sangs rgyas mi srid ’gyur| ’khrul ba ‘khrul ba nyid min ma ’khrul nyid| ma ’khrul ba la ‘khrul ba snang mod kyang| ’khrul ba ma yin ma ’khrul ba nyid yin| ’khrul ba dmyal ba ’i gnas dang sdug bsngal sogs| ma ’khrul nyid phyir ma dag gnas zhes bya| ma dag pa’ang ma dag pa nyid min| ma dag dag pa nyid yin dag tu rung| ma dag ma dag pa la dag tu med

642 KLR vol. 16: 17: mi bden bden par zhen pas bden bden ’dra| ma ’khrul ’khrul par zhen pas ’khrul ’khrul ’dra| nges med nges par bzung bas nges nges ’dra| yin min yin par bzung bas yin yin ’dra| mi ’thad ’thad par bzung bas ’thad ’thad ’dra|
Such reasoning resembles descriptions evocative found in tantras, in particular the *Guhyasamāja* and *Guhyagarbha*. The *Guhyagarbha*, for example, says the following about reality:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Emaho!} & \text{ This amazing, wondrous doctrine!} \\
\text{The mystery of all the perfect buddhas:} & \\
\text{Out of non-arising everything arises.} & \\
\text{In this arising there is no arising.} & \\
\text{Emaho!} & \text{ This amazing, wondrous doctrine} \\
\text{The mystery of all the perfect buddhas:} & \\
\text{Out of non-cessation everything ceases.} & \\
\text{In this cessation there is no ceasing.} & \\
\text{Emaho!} & \text{ This amazing, wondrous doctrine} \\
\text{The mystery of all the perfect buddhas:} & \\
\text{Out of non-abiding everything abides.} & \\
\text{In this abiding there is no abiding.}
\end{align*}
\]

The tone of this extract is, in turn, as Nathaniel DeWitt Garson notes, reminiscent of Madhyamaka treatises. Visionary works often adopt such a pseudo-canonical style of verse. But this is not the preferred style of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho, who generally favours simple scholastic prose. Nor does he claim that his writings are revelations. Stylistically, then, his works differ from the Kun tu bzang po’i thugs bcud. But they also differ in content. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho does more than simply present (or rather re-present) rDzogs-chen thought on its own terms; he argues for a synthesis of the rDzogs-chen and dGe-lugs systems. In

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643 See Bentor 2010 for an analysis of a verse from the second chapter of the *Guhyasamāja* (abhāve bhāvanābhāvo bhāvanā naiva bhāvanāḥ iti bhāvo na bhāvaḥ syād bhāvanā nopalabhyate) which, like the passage from *Guhyagarbha* cited here, appears in practical rites associated with the tantra and involves apparent paradox. Bentor notes that the interpretation of the verse evolved over time in keeping with shifting philosophical orientations, specifically commentators’ notions of the ultimate form of Madhyamaka view.

644 NGB vol. 9: 6.4f.: e ma ho ngo mtshar rmad kyi chos| rdzogs pa’i sangs rgyas kun gyi gsang| skye ba med las thams cad skyes| skyes pa nyid na skye ba med| e ma ho ngo mtshar rmad kyi chos| rdzogs pa’i sangs rgyas kun gyi gsang| ‘gag pa med las thams cad ‘gag| ‘gag pa med| e ma ho ngo mtshar rmad kyi chos| rdzogs pa’i sangs rgyas kun gyi gsang| gnas pa med las thams cad gnas| gnas pa nyid na gnas pa med| The passage continues with additional verses on observation (dmigs pa) and coming-and-going (’gro’ong).

645 Garson 2004: 306. There are numerous passages in the writings of Nāgārjuna which demonstrate the resolution of apparent (or pseudo-) paradoxes. One of the most famous examples is *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* XIII, 7: yady aśūnyam bhavet kiṃ cit syāc chūnyaṃ iti api kiṃ cna| na kiṃ cid aśūnyam ca kutāḥ sūnyam bhaviṣyatī| For a discussion of the nature and role of paradoxes in Nāgārjuna’s thought see Tillemans 2016: 67–94.
In this respect, his approach differs also from that of his other main dGe-lugs teacher, 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros.

2.3.2. 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros

'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros wrote a thirteen-chapter treatise on rDzogs-chen entitled 'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po thugs tig. It too is in verse. The text’s colophon dates it to the earth-horse year (1918). Its purpose was to “clarify the intention” (dgongs don gsal phyir) of Klong-chen rab-'byams, so that “this tradition”—by which he appears to mean rDzogs-chen as Klong-chen rab-'byams taught it—might endure. The text’s title, with its reference to Mañjuśrī/Mañjughoṣa, is not indicative of its content. The only other references to Mañjuśrī occur in the opening verses:

Mind-as-such, pure in essence, is the reality-body (dharmakāya),
Its nature, clear and unobstructed, is the enjoyment-body (sambhogakāya),
Its responsiveness, unobstructed and varied, is the emanation-body (nirmāṇakāya).

[AG vol. 1: 129–185. The chapters are as follows:]

1. How the ground of samsāra and nirvāṇa is not beyond dharmatā (‘khor ’das gzhi chos nyid las ma’ das par bstan pa’i le’u) (129–131)
2. How the phenomena of the ground are primordially self-arising (gzhi yi chos rnams ye nas rang shar du bstan pa’i le’u) (131–133)
3. Revealing the nature of the ground dharmatā by means of several metaphors (gzhi chos nyid kyi rang bzhin dpe don du mas bstan pa’i le’u) (133–135)
4. How the ground is included within bodhicitta (gzhi byang chub smsu ’dus par bstan pa’i le’u) (135–139)
5. On the nature of the spontaneously perfect ground (gzhi lhun grub kyi rang bzhin bstan pa’i le’u) (139–141)
6. How the six classes [of beings] stray from the ground into delusion (gzhi las rigs drag ’khrul pa’i tshul bstan pa’i le’u) (141–148)
7. Explaining the categories of vehicle for overcoming confusion regarding the ground and the natural condition of the vajra body (gzhi ’khrul pa’i tshul byed kyi theg pa’i rnam grangs dang rdo rje’i las kyi gnas tshul bshad pa’i le’u) (148–155)
8. Determining the non-dual view (gnyis med kyi ltu ba thag bcad pa’i le’u) (155–159)
9. Resolving meditation in the expanse of dharmatā (sgom pa chos nyid kyi klong du la bzla ba’i le’u) (159–168)
10. Resolving in the non-moving of all phenomena from dharmatā realization (chos thams cad dgon gs pa’i nyal las mi g.yo ba la la bzla ba’i le’u) (168–176)
11. Resolving in the conduct through self-liberation of apparent conditions (rkyen snang rang grol gyis spyan pa’i la la bzla ba’i le’u) (176–178)
12. Resolution in the fruition, the great self-liberation (’bras bu rang grol chen po la la bzla bstan pa’i le’u) (178–182)
13. On the pure-lands of universal insight, the spontaneously perfect fruition (’bras bu lhun grub kun tu gzigs pa’i zhung kham bstan pa’i le’u) (182–184)
Unsought from the beginning, it is spontaneously present Mañjughoṣa.648

The correlation of the mind-as-such (sems nyid) with the trikāya here is characteristic of the Heart-Essence.649 The rest of the work is a straightforward account of rDzogs-chen doctrine and practice. It is organised around the trio of ground, path and fruition. These three are more evenly represented than in Blo-bzang dpal-mdan bstan-dzin snyan-grags’s treatise. But just like that text, 'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po thugs tig does not compare rDzogs-chen with other systems. It is not polemical, not even dialogical.

The open letter, referred to in Chapter One, provides a clearer precedent for mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho’s rDzogs-chen writings. The letter is comparative and employs the rhetoric of underlying sameness:

The ultimate Secret Mantra path, the Great Perfection;
The essence of Highest Yoga tantra, Mahāmudrā;
The Indivisibility of Samsāra and Nirvāṇa, the path of clarity and emptiness without grasping;
And the profound path of Vajra Yoga—these ultimate practices
Are the union of the Profound View and great secret Vajrayāna.
This is the fundamental point of the teachings in 'Jam-mgon [Tsong-kha-pa]’s lineage,
Bliss and emptiness indivisible, a single taste in essence—
This is my thesis, indelibly inscribed.650

648 AG vol. 1: 129.10 (or dGe ldan mkhas grub dag gi rdzogs skor phyogs bsgrigs 250): sems nyid ngor bo dag pa chos kyi sku] rang bzhin gsal la ma 'gags longs sphyod rdzogs| thugs rje ma 'gags sna tshogs sprul pa’i sku| ye nas ma btsal lhun grub ]jam dpal dbyangs|
649 The identification of mind-as-such with Mañjuśrī suggests the influence of an increasingly popular trend for associating rDzogs-chen (and the ultimate nature of consciousness) with Mañjuśrī/Mañjughoṣa. Mi-pham wrote a popular aspiration prayer, 'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po'i smon lam rig stong rdo rje'i rang g dangs, in 1886. This has inspired commentaries by ’Jam-dbyangs mkHyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros (’Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po'i smon lam gyi bs dus don rin chen nor bu'i lde'u mig, JCLb vol. 9: 123–128) and, more recently, mKhan-po 'Jigs-med phun-tshogs (rDzogs-chen smon lam rig stong rdo rje'i rang g dangs gsal byed kun khyab rlung 'phrin JPB vol. 1: 312–316). A similarly titled prayer, ‘Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po'i smon lam mi shigs na da'i rol mo, is also to be found among the writings of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma (JTNs vol. 1: 466–468). The phrase ‘jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po also appears in the revelations of the Fifth Dalai Lama. See, for example, ‘Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po'i 'phrin las dang smin byed kyi chog bsgrigs snang stong od in ga'i rgya can (NBLG, vol. 23: 523–566). Further research is needed to determine the precise origin of the concept and what relation there is, if any, between these various texts (and others like them).
650 AG vol. 1: 124.8: gsang sngags lam gyi mthar thug rdzogs pa che] bla med snying bo' phyag rgya chen po'i don] 'khor 'das dbyer med gsal stong 'dzin med lam] zab lam rdo rje mal 'byor mthar thug rma| zab mo'i lta dang gsang chen rdo rje theg| zung 'brel 'jam mgon rgyud pa’i bka’ yi nthat] bde stong dbyer med ngo bo ro geig ces| kho bo’i dam bca’ rdo rje’i ri mo byed] ' Read as po.
Here, ’Jam-dpal rol-ba’i-blo-gros offers his “thesis” (dam bca’) drawing attention to similarities between the meditative systems of the different schools. rDzogs-chen, Mahāmudrā, the Sa-skya doctrine of the Indivisibility of Samsāra and Nirvāṇa (’khor ’das dbyer med), and the Vajra Yoga of the Kālacakra all combine Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika with Vajrayāna methods. They thus accord, he says, with the fundamental point (mthil) of the teachings transmitted through Tsong-kha-pa. This conciliatory stance is visible throughout the letter. The colophon, for example, states: “It is well-known and established here, in Tibet, the Land of Snowy Mountains, that none of the precious teachings of the Buddhas contradict each other.”  

’Jam-dpal rol-ba’i-blo-gros says that he has received “maturing [empowerments] and liberating instructions from both the Ancient and New schools of Secret Mantra [Vajrayāna].” He calls for a thorough investigation of the various forms of Buddhist teaching in Tibet, and claims:

The outcome of such investigation will be that, without slipping into sectarian bias or prejudice, one will realize how all forms of Buddhist teaching are equally effective as means of attaining omniscience. Moreover, any difference in terminology between earlier and later traditions of explanation will be seen simply as a reflection of variations in practice, while ultimately pointing toward the same destination.

This passage displays the rhetoric of underlying sameness but also a concern for reconciliation. It seeks to account for the differences between the various systems. Moreover, just as mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-ntsho does after him, ’Jam-

651 AG vol. 1: 125.12: bod gangs can gyi ljongs ’dir rgyal bstan rin po che mtha’ dag dongs pa ’gal med du grags shing…
652 AG vol. 1: 125.14: gsang sngags gsar rnying gi smin grol gyi gdams pa du mas ’tshos shing| His teachers included gTer-ston bSod-rgyal and Blo-bzang dpal-ldan bstan-'dzin snyan-grags, both of whom were also teachers to mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-ntsho, so the motivation to reconcile rNying-ma and gSar ma for personal reasons may have applied equally to both ’Jam-dpal rol-ba’i-blo-gros and his disciple.
653 AG vol. 1: 125.18: legs par brtags pa’i grub don rgyal bstan thams cad phyogs dang ris su ma chad par kun mkhyen sgrub pa’i thabs su ro geig rtogs shing gzhung gi bshad srol la snga phyi’i tshig zin mthun min ci rigs pa snang ba thams cad kyang spydod tshul gyi mam grangs mi ’dra ba tsam las don gyis babs so geig tu ’dug snyam pa’i dad pas…
dpal rol-ba’i-blo-gros acknowledges the danger of sectarian bias. The letter is thus comparative and conciliatory, but it does not advocate syncretism.

In summary, both dGe-lugs teachers of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-Mtsho embrace rDzogs-chen, but they make no attempt to combine it with the doctrine of Tsong-kha-pa. Like many prominent scholars before them, they posit only a shared result.

3. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho does more than simply highlight the underlying similarity of dGe-lugs and rNying-ma doctrine; he combines the two systems in unprecedented ways. Already the titles of two of his most significant works hint at this syncretism: 

gSang sngags gsar rnying gi lta ba gcig tu sgrub pa dag snang nor bu’i me long (hereafter Dag snang nor bu’i me long) and gSar rnying mkhas pa’i dgongs bzhed gcig tu sgrub pa rigs lam bdud rtsi’i mchod sprin (hereafter Rigs lam bdud rtsi’i mchod sprin).

The titles speak of the gSar-ma in general, but the texts themselves reveal that, in fact, this is a reference to the dGe-lugs.

3.1. Dag snang nor bu’i me long

The Dag snang nor bu’i me long is a prose text covering twenty points. It sets out to prove that dGe-lugs doctrine is compatible with a strand of rNying-ma thought that predates Mi-pham’s philosophical innovation. The Rigs lam bdud rtsi’i

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654 As noted in Chapter One above.
655 Kapstein 2000: 121 notes that there were “numerous figures” in Tibetan history, both dGe-lugs pa and rNying-ma pa, who saw no contradiction between the dGe-lugs version of Prāśāntika and rDzogs-chen. Nevertheless, it would seem that the writings of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho explain this perceived compatibility of the two views/systems in an unprecedented way.
656 I have included an annotated critical edition of the text Appendix Two. It is translated in Wallace 2018, but at the time of writing this book is not yet released, so I have not had the opportunity to study it.
657 Translated in Wallace 2018.
658 Cf. Mi-pham’s comments to Dug-tsha sprul-sku of rDi-phug referred to in Chapter One.
mchod sprin is a verse summary of Dag snang nor bu’i me long, undated but clearly written later and arranged into the same twenty points. According to its colophon, ’Jigs-med dkon-mchog (1876–1958), a “Vinaya holder” (’dul ba ’dzin pa)—that is, a monk—of Dar-thang Monastery, felt the first text was insufficient by itself and needed a summary.660

The introduction to the Dag snang nor bu’i me long explains that the text was drafted to “dispel the darkness of sectarian division” (phyogs ris kyi mun pa sangs pa).661 mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-rtsho believes that the traditions of the earlier and later translations only appear to differ; ultimately, they share a common viewpoint (dgongs pa’i gnad gcig).662 His intention is to use both scripture and reasoning to elucidate difficult points. He accepts that he is unlikely to please those who seek to sow dissension, but he will continue regardless, as a lone voice—or, in his words, “like a herdsman playing a flute in an empty valley.”663

The text focuses on the “two great traditions” (bka’ srol chen po) of the rNying-ma and the Ri-bo dGe-lugs-pa (i.e., dGe-lugs).664 In the current age, it says, philosophical views have degenerated so that there is rarely any proper assessment based on scripture and reasoning. As a result, some view these two traditions as contradictory (’gal ’dur mthong). This has led to extensive sectarian division (ris

659 i.e., TBRC P6337.
660 DC vol. 2: 61.2: nye char dpal yul dar thang gi slob dpod ’dul ba ’dzin pa ‘jigs med dkon mchog nas sngar gyi lung sbyor de tsam gyis mi ‘grub pa’i gsung phebs par brten| The fact that ’Jigs-med dkon-mchog was from Dar-thang in mGo-log might be significant. It is further evidence of a greater openness to dGe-lugs teachings in the monastery. See Pearcey 2014b for a biography of ’Jam-dpal dgyes-pa’i rdo-rje (1894–1958/9) of Dar-thang who is said to have composed a commentary on Tsong-kha-pa’s Legs bshad gsers phreng.
661 DC vol. 2: 4.
662 DC vol. 2: 3.
663 DC vol. 2: 3: gsang sngags snga phyi’i ’gyur gyis phye ba yi’i bka’ srol so so’i ’grub mtha’i gsung sgruos ’ga’ | ’dra min snang yang dgongs pa’i gnad gcig tshul| cung zad mthong nas rang blo goms pa’i slad| lung rigs ’phru gyis dka’ gnad bkrol ba la| rgyal bstan dbyen la sbyor mams mi dgyes mod| lung stong phyugs rdzis gling bu ’bud bzhin sgruos|
664 DC vol. 2: 4.
god byed pa), which has, in turn, weakened the teachings. The text offers no detail about these cases of sectarianism. Still, this standpoint echoes a line from the open letter of 'Jam-dpal rol-ba’i-blo-gros:

These days, there are many who cause sectarian division in the precious teachings of the Victorious One, and many who refute the precious teachings of the noble Dharma king, the great Tsong-kha-pa, in particular.

Later in the introduction, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho returns to the non-sectarian purpose of his text. His hope is that it will help others to avoid “the act of abandoning the Dharma” (chos spong gi las). His teachers helped him to realize that the rNying-ma and dGe-lugs are “wholly compatible” (shin tu gcig pa). The introduction ends with an appeal to learned scholars to assist him in his non-sectarian project.

3.1.1. Dag snang nor bu’i me long: A Summary

The main part of Dag snang nor bu’i me long begins with a quotation from the Padma dkar po, Klong-chen rab’byams’ commentary to his own Yid bzhin mdzod:

Now, the tradition of Madhyamaka Prāsaṅgika is the pinnacle of the great dialectical vehicle for Buddhist Insiders. The Prāsaṅgika tradition brings all conceptual elaboration to a halt. It shows how all phenomena are interdependent, empty and without nature. Through the two truths, illusory and beyond extremes, it perfects all the qualities of the path and fruition. It reveals unerringly the intent of the Sage, the Transcendent Lord. Such is the Madhyamika Prāsaṅgika. The pioneer who first established this tradition was the protector Nāgārjuna, whom the Buddha prophesied in the Mahābherihārākaparivarta Sūtra as the pure sun of noble wisdom who would

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666 AG vol. 1: 125f.: dang sang rgyal bstan rin po che ris su gcod pa ches mang zhing khyad par du rje btsun cho kyi rgyal po Tsong-kha-pa chen po’i bstan pa rin chen la dgag pa’i…
667 DC vol. 2: 4. It is a common feature of ris med discourse that a sectarian or partisan attitude is said to entail the sin of rejecting the dharma. See, for example, the well-known statement from the autobiography of 'Jam-mgon Kong-sprul Blo-gros mtha’-yas: rgyal bstan kun la dag snang sbyangs chos spangs khur du ci snyam med (Kong sprul rnam thar 42b, translated in Barron 2003: 53).
668 DC vol. 2: 4. Nevertheless, he does not quote from his teachers directly at any point in the text itself. In the conclusion (p.47), he simply names his three main gurus, identifying each with a different bodhisattva: 'Jam-dpal rol-ba’i-blo-gros with Mañjuśrī, Blo-bzang dpal-ldan bstan-'dzin snyan-grags with Avalokiteśvara, and gTer-ston bSod-rgyal with Vajrapāni. The opening verse of homage at the beginning of the text refers to 'Jam-dpal rol-ba’i-blo-gros alone; see Appendix Two.
669 DC vol. 2: 5.
banish the clouds of wrong views. Among those who commented upon the meaning of his works contained in the Sixfold Collection of Reasoning were Āryadeva, Buddhapālita, Bhāvaviveka, and Candrakīrti. Of these, noble Candrakīrti, who possessed unassailable intelligence and compassion, unerringly comprehended the master’s intent. He then composed a commentary on the meaning of Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, i.e., Madhyamakāvatāra, and a commentary on its words, Prasannapada. Thus, by causing the sun of the Madhyamika Prāsaṅga, which is the ultimate intent of the Buddha, to dawn here in Jambudvīpa, he dispelled the clouds of wrong views.  

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho cites this passage to demonstrate that Klong-chen rab-'byams—whom he calls “the earlier omniscient king of dharma” (kun mkhyen chos kyi rgyal po snga ma)—concurs with the orthodox dGe-lugs position. Klong-chen rab-'byams recognises Nāgārjuna as the source of the Madhyamaka doctrine and Candrakīrti as his foremost interpreter, just as in the dGe-lugs system. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho then cites three lines from an experiential song (nyams mgur) composed by ’Jigs-med gling-pa:

By embracing the great mother Prajñāpāramitā,  
The glorious protector Nāgārjuna gained experience.  
The fount of explanation passed to Candrakīrti.  

These lines suggest that ’Jigs-med gling-pa, too, acknowledges the importance of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti, whom the dGe-lugs school holds as the ultimate authority on all philosophical matters. The fact that mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho draws on ’Jigs-med gling-pa here tells us that he followed—or was at least sympathetic to—the Klong-chen snying-thig lineage. Mi-pham hardly cites

670 The correct Sanskrit spelling of this master’s name is a topic of debate. He is also referred to as Bhavya and Bhāvaviveka. See Ruegg 1981: 61. Here I follow the spelling favoured by Malcolm David Eckel, as explained in Eckel 2008: 88 n.1.  
672 DC vol. 2: 6.  
673 DC vol. 2: 7.3: yum chen shes rab phar phyin dang ’khyud rgyig byas pas| dpal mgon ’phags pa klu sgrub kyi nyams shig shar byung| bshad pa’i chu mgo de zla ba grags pa la zhu|’o| These lines appear in ’Jigs-med gling-pa’s autobiography. See ’Jigs gling ram thar 44; JLa vol. 14 34a.1, where the lines are given as: yum chen shes rab kyi pha rol phyin pa khong la ’khyud rgyig byas pas| dpal mgon ’phags pa klu sgrub kyi nyams shig shar byung ngo| a ho ye bshad pa’i chu’ go de zla ba grags pa la zhu ba no| mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho was apparently rather fond of this verse. He cites the final line on at least two other occasions in his rDzogs-chen writings (DC vol. 2: 83.6 & 121.5). The language used to refer to ’Jigs-med gling-pa here (as “the later omniscient one”) is typical of a follower of the Klong-chen snying-thig tradition, as noted in Chapter Two above.
’Jigs-med gling-pa at all, so the reference distinguishes mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho’s position from that of Mi-pham.

Next, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho introduces his twenty points. Each follows a similar pattern. The text cites a tenet that is characteristic of the dGe-lugs interpretation of Madhyamaka, then it refers to works of Klong-chen rab'-byams, Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po and others to support this. A few examples will suffice to illustrate the approach. I have selected those where mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho proposes a view that is markedly at odds with Mi-pham’s position. Several of these topics feature in both Mi-pham’s Nges shes sgron me and among the “eight great difficult points” (dka’ gnad chen po brgyad) of Tsong-kha-pa’s doctrine set out by rGyal-tshab Dar-ma rin-chen.674

The first point concerns the distinction between the Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho quotes two extracts from Klong-chen rab'-byams’s Yid bzhin mdzod as well as the Phyogs bcu mun sel to show that Klong-chen rab'-byams and Tsong-kha-pa hold a similar view on the Svātantrika/Prāsaṅgika distinction. Klong-chen rab'-byams’s view, the text says, hinges on the acceptance or denial of specifically characterised entities (rang mtshan gyi dngos po khas len mi len).675 This would, of course, imply that Mi-pham and the later rNying-ma tradition took up a position in conflict with that of Klong-chen rab'-byams.

For Mi-pham, the Svātantrika/Prāsaṅgika distinction centres on the concept of ultimate truth. In his view, the Svātantrika emphasise the nominal ultimate (rnam grangs pa’i don dam),676 while the Prāsaṅgika emphasise the actual ultimate (rnam

674 On these eight points see especially Ruegg 2002.
675 DC vol. 2: 9.
676 Various translations have been proposed for this term and its correlate, rnam grangs ma yin pa’i don dam. Kapstein 2001: 328 gives “absolute-qua-denotable”; Dreyfus 2003b: 323 uses “figurative
Over time, Mi-pham’s view on the distinction became the orthodox rNying-ma position. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho does not refute Mi-pham directly; he proposes an alternative.

The text also addresses the two types of negation: implicative negation (ma yin dgag) and non-implicative negation (med dgag). For Tsong-kha-pa, who relies on Candrakīrti’s Prasannapadā and Bhāviveka’s Prajñāpradīpa, enquiries into ultimate truth require a non-implicative negation. Tsong-kha-pa offers many definitions of the two types of negation, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho says, and most are similar to those found in rNying-ma works such as Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po’s Theg chen tshul ’jug. He then refers to a section in the Theg mchog mdzod where Klong-chen rab-’byams illustrates the “insubstantiality and characterlessness” (dngos po dang mtshan mar ma grub pa) of ‘alpha-purity’ (ka dag), citing the bKra shis mdzes ldan chen po tantra. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho argues that the treatises of the Indian scholars agree with this explanation, as do, in Tibet, the works of Rong-zom, Klong-chen rab-’byams and Tsong-kha-pa. They all assert that to recognise the natural state of phenomena is simply a matter of negating the imputations of the deluded mind; it does not call for establishing anything. Any positive affirmation would entail failure to cut through hypostasising concepts. Thus, all agree that emptiness is a non-affirming negation. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho however knows of many “readers” (klog pa ba) of Sa-skya and rNying-ma works who regard non-implicative negations as problematic, simply

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677 See Dreyfus 2003b. A modern textbook for rNying-ma students thus defines Svātantrika as “dbu ma pa gang zhig mam grangs pa’i don dam khas len dang bcas pa rtsal du bton nas ’chad pa rang rgyud pa’i mtshan nyid” and a Prāsaṅgika as: as “dbu ma pa gang zhig mam grangs ma yin pa’i don dam khas len kun bral rtsal du bton nas ’chad pa thal ’gyur ba’i mtshan nyid”. See Tshad ma rigs pa’i them skas, 240.

678 This is point thirteen.
because they do not understand them.\textsuperscript{679} This statement might be understood as a veiled reference to Mi-pham among others.\textsuperscript{680} Yet, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-\textsuperscript{680}mtsho claims that in the \textit{Nges shes sgron me}, Mi-pham—whom he here calls “a lord of scholars” \textit{(mkhas pa’i dbang phyug)}—describes \textit{dharmatā} as a non-implicative negation \textit{(chos nyid med dgag tu gsungs)}.\textsuperscript{681} In fact, Mi-pham says that \textit{dharmatā} is beyond any form of negation or affirmation:

\begin{quote}
In the great primordial emptiness of union, 
What are the remnants of negation—
Either the pure absence that follows absolute negation
Or what remains after saying “It is not that”?
Both are merely mental imputations,
And, in reality, neither is acceptable.
That is the original \textit{dharmatā} beyond the mind,
Free from both negation and affirmation.\textsuperscript{682}
\end{quote}

Mi-pham adds that the mode of emptiness alone is a non-implicative negation.\textsuperscript{683} Kun-bzang dpal-ldan, in his commentary on this passage, interprets this to mean that \textit{the way to establish} emptiness \textit{(stong pa nyid gtan la ’beb tshul)} is through non-implicative negation.\textsuperscript{684} This is clearly not the same as equating \textit{dharmatā} with non-implicative negation. Moreover, Mi-pham goes on to criticise the dGe-lugs position of distinguishing the basis of emptiness \textit{(stong gzhi)} from some

\begin{footnotes}
\item[679] DC vol. 2: 33.
\item[680] The reference to Sa-skya texts here is most likely aimed at Go-rams-pa. He argued that non-affirming negation does not qualify as the definitive ultimate, since it represents the elimination of only one position of the tetralemma \textit{(catuṣkoṭi)}. The definitive ultimate, in Go-rams-pa’s view, requires the elimination of all four positions or extremes. For a discussion of the difference between Go-rams-pa’s viewpoint and that of Tsong-kha-pa on this point see Pettit 1999: 137–139.
\item[681] DC vol. 2: 33. The two types of negation are covered in the first of the seven topics in \textit{Nges shes sgron me}. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho also refers to “the sMin-gling brothers” \textit{(i.e., ’Gyur-med rdo-rje (1646–1714) and Lo-chen Dharmaśrī (1654–1717/8)} who, he says, identify the ultimate as an impllicative negation. Still, this is not a statement about emptiness in and of itself \textit{(stong nyid rang ldog)}. Thus far, I have been unable to locate a text by either brother which makes this assertion.
\item[682] Nges shes sgron me 5: zung ’jug ye shes chen po’i ngor| med ces dgag bya bkag shul gyi| med rkyang dang ni ma yin zhes| bkag shul chos gzhani ci zhig ’phen| de gnyis blo yis brtag pa tsam| don la gnyis kar khas mi len| dgag sgrub gnyis dang bral ba yi| blo ’das gsod ma’i chos nyid yin| (Translated in Pettit 1999: 196)
\item[683] MPp vol. 9: 75.3: stong tshul kho nar bsams nas ni| dri na med dgag nyid yin te|
\item[684] Nges shes sgron me 72.
\end{footnotes}
other entity or property of which it is empty. Mi-pham regards this as a form of extrinsic emptiness (gzhon stong).

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho then cuts short his discussion of the two forms of negation. His claim that Mi-pham defines dharmatā as a non-implicative negation suggests that Mi-pham agrees with—or could at least be brought into line with—Tsong-kha-pa. However, this is to ignore the places where Mi-pham is critical of the dGe-lugs position. For Mi-pham, non-implicative negation is no more than a stepping stone. It is an example of the nominal ultimate. It counters only one of the four positions of the tetralemma (i.e., existence) and thus constitutes only a partial understanding.

The Dāg snang nor bu’i me long also examines whether śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize the “insubstantiality of phenomena” (dharmanairātmya; chos kyi bdag med). This is another point on which Mi-pham departs from the dGe-lugs interpretation. It corresponds to the second of the seven topics of Mi-pham’s Nges shes sgron me and the sixth of the “eight great difficult points” of Tsong-kha-pa’s doctrine. Tsong-kha-pa and his followers argue that both śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize dharmatā. They base this on comments in Candrakīrti’s auto-commentary on the Madhyamakāvatāra. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho concedes that rNying-ma followers take a different position. To him, though, Tsong-

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685 MPp vol. 9: 75.6; Cf. Pettit 1999: 196.
687 DC vol. 2, 34
688 See, for example, dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad (MPc vol. 13: 46b). See also Pettit 1999: 176–177.
689 See, for example, Mi-pham’s dBu ma la ’jug pa’i ’grel ba zla ba’i zhal lung dri med shel phreng. (MPc vol. 13: 1–277), especially 68–72. This critique is also used by Go-rams-pa bSod-nams seng-ge.
690 Point fourteen.
691 The comments are in relation to Madhyamakāvatāra I.8. After citing a passage from the Daśabhūmika-sūtra, Candrakīrti writes: lung ’di las ni nyan thos dang rang sangs rgyas mams la yang chos thams cad rang bzhin med par shes pa yang yod do zhes bya bar gsal bar nges te| (DT vol. 102: 452.5).
kha-pa’s view is still compatible with what he calls the “definitive meaning that is the uncommon view of the three inner tantras” (thun min nang rgyud sde gsum gyi nges don gyi lta ba). According to him, Klong-chan rab-’byams believes the inner tantras to conform with the Prāsaṅgika. This means that Klong-chan rab-’byams accepts the Prāsaṅgika position which has śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas partially realize the insubstantiality of phenomena. Both Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po and Klong-chan rab-’byams assert that it is not possible to overcome the affictions (kleśa; nyon mongs) without the view of the absence of inherent existence. Both also claim that it is the presence or absence of realization that distinguishes saṃsāra from nirvāṇa. For mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho, all this points to an “uncommon tradition of explanation” (thun min gyi bshad srol) within the rNyingma school, which accepts that the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize emptiness.

Once again, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho ignores Mi-pham’s position. In his Nges shes sgron me, Mi-pham agrees that śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize the insubstantiality of phenomena to an extent, because the selflessness of the individual (gang zag gi bdag med) is itself a variety of the insubstantiality of phenomena. But this does not mean that the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize emptiness. Drinking a mouthful of seawater, Mi-pham says, is not equivalent to drinking the (whole) sea. In a similar way, realising the emptiness of the aggregates is not the same as realising the emptiness of (all) phenomena. When he

692 DC vol. 2: 34.
693 DC vol. 2: 34.
694 DC vol. 2: 34.
695 DC vol. 2: 34.
696 DC vol. 2: 34.
697 See MPp vol. 9: 78.1–82.6; Phuntsho 2005: 27.
698 MPp vol. 9: 80.1.
699 MPp vol. 9: 80.1.
says that some in the rNying-ma hold an “uncommon” view about śrāvaka and
pratyekabuddha insight, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho appears to imply that Mi-
pham’s is the ‘common’ position. Once again, he does not refute Mi-pham’s
arguments, but attempts to reconcile Klong-chen rab-'byams and others with
orthodox dGe-lugs interpretations.

The *Dag snang nor bu'i me long* also claims that the rNying-ma and dGe-
lugs are closely aligned in their belief that there is not a single, universally applicable
path. In other words, both allow for multiple approaches tailored to the varied
capacities of practitioners. This is posited in the *Yid bzhin mdzod*, mDo-sngags
Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho says. He cites a passage from its commentary, the *Padma dkar
po*, where Klong-chen rab-'byams discusses pure awareness:

> These days there are many who claim that it is sufficient to recognise “the pure
awareness of the present moment” (*da ltar gyi rig pa*) and there is no point in
extensive teaching. If this were sufficient it would have been unnecessary for the
Buddha to teach anything else. And if you claim that this is the only teaching
needed, then because even for the pure awareness of the present moment one must
still study and practise guru yoga, your own words undermine themselves!  

Extreme simultaneism is at odds with the gradualist path and the scholastic
approach favoured in the dGe-lugs tradition. Yet there is still room for the
simultaneist elements of rDzogs-chen (and Mahāmudrā) in mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-
rgya-mtsho’s syncretism. He seeks to reconcile mainstream dGe-lugs gradualism
with these very elements.

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700 Point nineteen.
701 DC vol. 2, 43.6: deng sang ni da ltar gyi rig pa ngos zin pas cho mang po bstan pa la don med ces zer ba mang ste| des chog na sangs rgyas kyi gzh an bstan mi dgos la| gcig tu da ltar gyi rig pa de yang thos pa dang| bla ma’i rnal ’byor tsam la brten dgos pas| rang tshig bsal ba la zhugs pa yin no||
3.1.2. Dag snang nor bu’i me long: Conclusions

The Dag snang nor bu’i me long draws on older rNying-ma sources, especially on Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po and Klong-chen rab-’byams. The text itself is undated, but it must have appeared in a period when Mi-pham’s writings had come to define rNying-ma doctrine. The text mentions Mi-pham only once—in favourable terms—but many of its interpretations contradict his views. Furthermore, the Dag snang nor bu’i me long explicitly aims to eliminate sectarian division. This contrasts with the objectives of Mi-pham’s own philosophical texts, which were composed to create a unique, distinctive rNying-ma system—to increase sectarian difference, in other words. For Mi-pham this meant formulating a distinctive doctrinal position, particularly vis-à-vis the dominant dGe-lugs. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho, in contrast, stresses commonality.

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho’s reliance upon the writings of Klong-chen rab-’byams and Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po effectively annuls Mi-pham’s doctrinal innovation. Where he engages with Mi-pham (Points 8, 13, 14 & 16), he does so only indirectly, and when he refers to Mi-pham explicitly (Point 13), he finds a way to agree with him. Such obliqueness and deference do not entirely disguise the points of controversy and disagreement, however. Moreover, because the Dag snang nor bu’i me long and Mi-pham’s Nges shes sgron me cover such

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702 The most cited text in Dag snang nor bu’i me long is Yid bzhin mdzod, which Matthew Kapstein suggests might be little more than a synopsis of the training Klong-chen rab-’byams received at gSang-phu ne’u thog (see Pettit 99: 489 n.359). In any case, regardless of whether the text is simply a record of his training, the text was surely influenced by it. Klong-chen rab-’byams’s discussion of Madhyamaka topics predates the writings of Tsong-kha-pa, and yet mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho frequently detects commonality, even if he must at times admit that this conflicts with later rNying-ma thought. See Arguillère 2007: 155–156 for a discussion of the philosophical sophistication of Yid bzhin mdzod and the maturity required to write it. Arguillère (ibid., p.157) proposes 1348–1349 as the date of composition for Yid bzhin mdzod and its commentary Padma dkar po.

703 This was already true by the time mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho reached maturity—if not when he was born.

704 Once again, I borrow the term from Cabezón and Dargyay 2007: 7.
similar ground but reach vastly different conclusions, their differences are plain for all to see.

There is little to suggest that the *Dag snang nor bu’i me long* had much impact. Still, the fact that its author was asked to compose a verse summary shows that it did not go entirely unnoticed. It is unlikely that it received support for its proposed rNying-ma–dGe-lugs synthesis beyond mGo-log. In rDza-chu-kha and around sDe-dge, where the dGe-lugs school was less dominant, Mi-pham had a strong following and his writings featured in the curricula of major monastic colleges. But there was greater openness to rNying-ma–dGe-lugs collaboration, it seems, in mGo-log and A-mdo.

### 3.2. Pedagogical Specificity

The *Dag snang nor bu’i me long* is not the only text by mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-ndshi that combines rNying-ma and dGe-lugs doctrine. The *Phyag rdzogs gdam pa’i skor gyi brjed tho*, for example, promotes a merging of the esoteric doctrine of rDzogs-chen (and/or Mahāmudrā) with the gradualist approach of *lam rim* literature. The text distinguishes between “the general approach of the teachings” (bstan pa spyi btsan) and “the specific approach of individuals” (gang zag sgos btsan). Echoing Point 19 of the *Dag snang nor bu’i me long*, it says that the most advanced instructions of rDzogs-chen and Mahāmudrā are suitable for

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705 Mi-pham is primarily associated with Zhe-chen, because ’Ju-mo-hor is a branch of Zhe-chen. Nevertheless, he is also associated with rDzogs-chen and his biography appears as the twelfth in a list of successive scholars (mkhan rabs) in bsTan’-dzin lung-rtogs nyi-ma’s history of the monastery (See bsTan’-dzin lung-rtogs nyi-ma 2004, 425–439). For an indication of the popularity of Mi-pham’s writings in the period around 1900 at rDzogs-chen’s Śrī Śrīma college, see mKhan po ngag chung gi rnam thar 100–103.

706 Some of this openness might be due to Zhabs-dkar’s influence in these regions. However, any conclusions must await an extensive study of the relevant religious institutions and political developments during the period.


708 The Fourteenth Dalai Lama cites this distinction with approval in Dalai Lama 2007: 75–76.
those of exceptional capacity (dbang po’i khyad par dmigs bsal can). In fact, they would pose something of a risk if taught indiscriminately. “Even though [these instructions] are extremely powerful,” mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho writes, “their application is dependent on the level of one’s faculties, and it is crucial that they are not misused, as in the story where Devadatta ate medicinal butter.”709 The followers of rDzogs-chEN often fail to recognize this and mistakenly believe that their own teachings can be given to anyone at all, even to those at the beginning of the path:

These days, if you consult followers of Mahāmudrā, rDzogs-chEN and the like, they will not make even the slightest mention of a teaching that is tailored to an individual’s capacity, such as the way to progress in tranquillity (zhi gnas; samatha) and insight (lhag mthong; vipaśyanā) according to the scriptural approach of the great pioneers. Instead, they will suggest that everyone should follow the path of Mahāmudrā or rDzogs-chEN right from the beginning, and they will declare that anything else is not even Dharma. This only goes to show that the general approach to the teachings has become as inaccessible and remote as flesh-eating spirits (sha za; piśāca).710

This assessment then allows him to extol the virtues of dGe-lugs gradualism. Such gradualism provides a useful foundation for students of all capacities, without risk of hindrance or going astray (gegs dang gol sa med pa). Still, he is critical of those among the dGe-lugs-pa who fail even to acknowledge the existence of a swifter path:

709 DC vol. 2: 268.12: ’di shin tu chod che yang dbang po’i khyad par la ltos pas ’tsho byed kyi sman mar lhas byin gyis zos pa ltar ma song ba gal che’o| The story of Devadatta eating medicinal butter appears in the Karma-sataka (Las brgya tham pa). See sDe dge bKa’ ’gyur vol. 74 (mdo sde, a): 92a.1f. The story is also recounted in dMar-ston Chos-kyi-rgyal-po’s commentary to verse 169 of Sa-skya Panḍita’s Sa skya legs bshad. The details of the story vary slightly between these sources. On one occasion, when the Buddha and his monks fell sick in Śrāvasti, he was advised by the doctor, Kumārā Jivaka, to take 32 (or twelve in some accounts) measures of powerful medicinal butter, while all the other monks were instructed to take no more than a single measure. Devadatta, claiming that he was of the same family as the Buddha, also insisted on taking 32 (two in some sources) measures, but nearly died as a result, and was only saved through the Buddha’s miraculous intervention. See Legs par bshad pa rin po che’i gter dang ’grel pa, 156–157. Cf. Desi Sangye Gyatso 2010: 120.
710 DC vol. 2: 269.5: deng sang phyag rdzogs pa sogs la dris na shing rta chen po’i gzhung lugs kyi zhi lhag gi bgrod lugs sogs gang zag so’i rang tshod kyi chos shig yod pa’i gtam zur tsam yang med par kun kyang phyag rdzogs kyi lam der dang po nyid nas e tshud blta zhegd de tsam min pa thams cad chos min du bsgrigs nas bstan pa spyi btsan gyi tshul ’di bskal don sha za ltar gyur| The use of ‘flesh-eating spirits’ or ghosts (piśāca) as an example for the imperceptible (adṛśya) goes back to post-Dharmakirti texts on Pramāṇa; see Kellner 1999: 193.
Furthermore, among the learned followers of the great scriptural approach [i.e., the dGe-lugs], those with the greatest knowledge of Dharma deny the possibility of any distinction between the general and particular approaches and refute it. At the same time, those of lesser learning simply believe Mahāmudrā, rDzogs-chen and the like to be unacceptable, viewing the bKa’-brgyud, rNying-ma and so on as evil. And with the existence of an approach tailored to individuals as unapparent as invisible flesh-eating spirits, serious dissensions have emerged.\footnote{DC vol.2: 269.10: de la gzhung lugs chen po’i rjes ’brang mkhas pa chos rgyus che ba rnam khong tshos spyi sgos kyi mam dbyi mi shes dgongs nas ’gog| chos rgyus chung ba rnam spyir na phyag rdzogs sog s rtsa ba nas mi ’grig snyam nas bka’ rmying sog s la than ltar brtsi zhing| gang zag dgos btsan gyi tshul ’di ltar yod pa bskal don sha zar song nas rgyal ba’i bstan pa la nang sel tshabs chen byung bar gda’}  

As a dGe-lugs-pa who endorses the rDzogs-chen teachings, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho advocates an intermediate course. He steers between the two poles of a generalized (or over-applied) rDzogs-chen (or Mahāmudrā) simultaneism on the one hand, and a generalized (or over-applied) dGe-lugs gradualism on the other. He recommends an approach that is tailored specifically to the needs of individuals (Table 6). Some might proceed gradually, beginning with the scriptural approach, including śamatha and vipaśyanā as taught by the dGe-lugs. But others should proceed directly to the higher doctrines of Mahāmudrā and rDzogs-chen.

Table 6: Three Models identified by mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho

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<tr>
<td>Missing (ignored)</td>
<td>Scriptural Approach</td>
<td>i. Gradual</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(śamatha, vipaśyanā, etc.)</td>
<td>i. Direct</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mahāmudrā/ rDzogs-chen</td>
<td>Missing (denied)</td>
<td>Mahāmudrā/ rDzogs-chen</td>
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The customised path that caters for all types of practitioner: those who proceed in stages as well as rare individuals who proceed directly to the advanced
forms of training. This syncretism challenges what the author evidently sees as bias in contemporary rNying-ma, bKa’-brgyud and dGe-lugs teaching.

3.3. Other Points on rDzogs-chen

In the Rig ’dzin bla ma’i zhal lung, one of his longer works on rDzogs-chen, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho offers his own interpretation of the rDzogs-chen system. Here, he is more concerned with doctrinal than practical matters. In fact, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho suggests that anyone seeking practical instruction should consult guidance manuals (khrid yig) such as the Ye shes bla ma of ’Jigs-med gling-pa. His own role, he says, is to offer “a complete presentation of this vehicle [i.e., Atiyoga] by mapping its ground, path and fruition”. After a brief discussion of the path, he introduces some background (rgyab chos). He explains that rDzogs-chen is “not in conflict with the general teachings of sūtra and mantra, yet is a special, uncommon path.” rDzogs-chen sets out to make manifest the same “clear light awareness” (’od gsal gyi rig pa) that is revealed in Highest Yoga Tantra. This corresponds to “the actual clear light” (don gyi ’od gsal) of the fourth phase (rim pa bzhi pa) of the perfection stage practice. This clear light, he says, manifests in rDzogs-chen without the deity visualisation of Mahāyoga or the Anuyoga’s “penetrative focus” on channels, wind-energies and essences. rDzogs-chen suits those who favour extreme simplicity (shin tu spros med kyi rigs). It does not require the same effort as the lower vehicles.

712 i.e., Rang bzhin rdzogs pa chen po’i lam gyi rnam bzhag sngon ’gro dang bcas pa rig ’dzin bla ma’i zhal lung (DC vol. 2: 92–131). This text is translated in Wallace 2018.

713 DC vol. 2: 109. Once again, this is evidence of his connection with the Klong-chen snying-thig lineage.

714 DC vol. 2: 109.14: gzhi lam ’bras gsum gyi sgo nas theg pa ’di’i rnam bzhag dpyis phyin pa’i go don…

715 DC vol. 2: 116.5: mdo sngags spyi dang ’gal ba med cing thun mong min pa’i khyad par gyi lam yod tshul…

716 DC vol. 2: 117.
3.3.1. Gnoseology

The Rig ‘dzin bla ma’i zhal lung\(^717\) discusses at length the mind (sems) as well as the pure awareness (rig pa) that is the essence of the mind. It uses the analogy of ice and water to explain how the essence retains its purity. Karmic winds (las rlung) stir conceptual thought; this causes the mind to ‘freeze’ into a state of conceptualisation featuring clinging and fixation. The awareness though is not transformed into solidity; it remains latently present as ‘liquidity’ (rlan gshe\(\)r).\(^718\) This analogy is suitable, the text says, to explain “ground awareness” (gzhi rig) but not the awareness of the Great Perfection (rdzogs pa chen po’i rig pa). The latter is the ‘youthful body in a vase’ (ghzon nu bum sku).\(^719\) The youthful body in a vase has six special features, one of which is that it is “superior to the ground” (gzhi las ’phags).\(^720\) It cannot be related, therefore, to the awareness that belongs to the ground.

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-\(\underline{\text{m}}\)tsho examines the distinction between path-awareness (lam rig) and ground-awareness in another text, the rDzogs pa chen po’i tha snyad ’ga’i ’grel ba.\(^721\)

My all-knowing guru asserted that the awareness of the Great Perfection is the ‘path awareness’. In the advice of the awareness-holders of old, they apparently claim that it is the ‘ground awareness.’ However, if we examine this carefully, in the tradition of this doctrine, the recognition that comes from experiencing how the ground really abides, just as it is, is the awareness of the Great Perfection. There can be no path-awareness, therefore, separate from ground-awareness. And since no one would

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\(^717\) Rang bzhin rdzogs pa chen po’i lam gyi rnam bzhag sngon ’gro dang bcas pa rig ’dzin bla ma’i zhal lung (DC vol. 2: 92-131).

\(^718\) DC vol. 2: 119.

\(^719\) In rDzogs-chen literature this term generally signifies the fully developed qualities of form (skur, kāya) and wisdom (ye shes) that are sealed within the ground until the emergence of ground appearances. In the present context, it refers to the luminosity that all beings possess within their hearts; it is thus an extension of tathāgatagarbha theory and imagery. For a detailed discussion of the term and its imagery see Germano 1992: 963–964 and Gyatso 1998: 203–204.

\(^720\) The six special features (khyad chos drug) are: 1) appearing to itself (rang ngor snang ba), 2) being more exalted than the ground (gzhi las ’phags pa), 3) distinguishing itself (bye brag phyed pa), 4) being freed in that distinguishing (phyed thog tu grol ba), 5) not developing from anything external (gzhan las ma byung ba), and 6) abiding in its own place (rang sar gnas pa).

accept that the mere indeterminate (lung ma bstan) ground-awareness at the time of straying from the nature of the ground is the awareness of Great Perfection, either [position] is feasible according to how precise one is with terminology.722

This passage is of interest for its gnoseological content, but it is also notable as one of the rare occasions on which mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho explicitly draws on the insight of his teachers. It is unclear which of his gurus mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho is citing here. 'Jam-dpal rol-ba’i-blo-gros is the most likely choice, since he was his root guru. But the phrase “ground awareness” appears also in Kun tu bzang po ’i thugs bcud by Blo-bzang dpal-ldan bstan-’dzin snyan-grags. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho seeks precision in his gnoseological terminology here to help him determine the relationship between elements of rDzogs-chen and their counterparts in Highest Yoga tantra. For example, the Rig ’dzin bla ma ’i zhal lung considers ground awareness to be synonymous with the “extremely subtle mind” (shin tu phra ba ’i sems) described in Highest Yoga Tantra.723 The rDzogs pa chen po ’i tha snyad ’ga’i ’grel ba defines rig pa as the wisdom of clear light:

Rig pa is the wisdom of clear light that is latentely present in ordinary thought processes. Here it is not called “great bliss” (mahāsukha; bde ba chen po) or anything similar, as it is in the general language of Highest Yoga Tantra. This is because there is no need to rely on an approach in which taking bliss as the path is emphasised as the means for making wisdom manifest. On the contrary, it is through the method of settling naturally and effortlessly in the nature of the ground, just as it abides, that the wisdom of awareness is made manifest directly, and that is why it is called “awareness” (rig pa). It would appear, therefore, that it is because of differences in method (as employed in the various paths associated with the perfection stage) that different names are used.724

722 DC vol. 2: 228.3: rdzogs pa chen po ’i rig pa ni bdag gi bla ma thams cad mkhyen pas lam rig la bzhed| rig ’dzin rgan po nams kyi gsung sgrons la gszi rig la bzhed pa lta bu zhig snang yang zhub tu btags na chos ’di’i lugs la gszi’i bzhugs tshul ji bzhi pa ’i don nyams su myong ba ’i tshul gyis ngo ’phrod pa zhiug rdzogs pa chen po ’i rig pa yi pas gszi rig las logs su lam rig ’jog rgyu med cing| gszi’i bzhugs tshul las gol ba’i dus kyi gszi rig lung ma bstan tsam rdzogs pa chen po ’i rig par su yang ni bzhed pas tha snyad rags zhub las gang yang ’thad.
723 DC vol. 2: 119–120.
724 DC vol. 2: 229.2: rig pa zhes pa don du kun rtog bag la bsnyal ba ’i ’od gsal ba ’i ye shes yin pa la| bla med kyi rgyud sde spyi skad gyi bde ba chen po sogs mi zer ba ni mngon du byed pa ’i thabs kyi khyad par gtso bor ’don pa’i bde ba lam byed la ma brten par| gszi sems nyid kyi bzhugs tshul ji bzhi pa ’i don la thabs mkhas kyi khyad par rtso med rang bzhag gis mngon sum du rig pa’i ye shes yin pas rig pa ze te| rdzogs rim so so’i rang lam gyi thabs mkhas kyi khyad par mi ’dra bas na so sor mtshan btags par snang|
mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho places methodological difference at the centre of what distinguishes rDzogs-chen from Highest Yoga Tantra. Here, he equates pure awareness with great bliss, rather than clear light, but this is perhaps not very significant. Still, the wisdom realized in Highest Yoga Tantra is the same as the wisdom realized in rDzogs-chen. The detail of the gnoseological intricacy here appears to owe much to 'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma, even though he introduces some minor terminological variants.

3.3.2. The Distinction Between Tantric Vehicles

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho admonishes his readers to distinguish between the three higher tantras—or three yogas (yo ga gsum) as he calls them—based on their respective methods. Each employs different methods to realize clear light. The key differences between the three therefore relate to the path (rather than ground or fruition). Most “biased rNying-ma-pa” (phyogs lhung can gyi rnying ma) fail to see this and distinguish between them according to the subtlety in their realization of the ground (gzhi’i ngos ’dzin phra rags). When scholars familiar with the scriptural tradition (gzhung lugs) assess such claims, they find that they “do not bear scrutiny” (brtag mi bzod).725

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho does not reveal the identity of these “biased rNying-ma-pa”. Once again, he appears to target Mi-pham and/or his followers. When Mi-pham discusses the differences between the tantric vehicles in his Nges shes sgron me, he criticizes those who distinguish the various levels of tantra by method rather than philosophical view.726 Similarly, Bod-pa sprul-sku

725 DC vol. 2: 120.
mDo-sngags bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s lTa grub shan ’byed puts forward view-based distinctions.727

The method-based distinction of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho emulates the standard dGe-lugs position and accords with ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma. Even so, he goes further than ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma, since he criticises those who maintain a view-based distinction. This also sets him apart from his two dGe-lugs teachers, who do not embark on criticism of this kind.

4. Ris-med

Let us now briefly consider the references to sectarianism that occur throughout mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho’s rDzogs-chen treatises. Some reflect his position on underlying sameness that I discussed at the beginning of this chapter. But mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho responds here to a particular set of circumstances. In his words, he seeks to banish “the darkness of sectarian division” of his time and prove the “exceptional compatibility” of rNying-ma and dGe-lugs doctrine. He sets out to provide an alternative to the philosophy that Mi-pham promoted. Despite the deferential tone towards Mi-pham, it is he and his followers who are targeted in the Dag snang nor bu me long. They even appear to be the referent in the “biased rNying-ma-pa” remark. To mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho, sectarian differentiation cannot but engender sectarian bias. The growth of rNying-ma scholasticism led to differentiation which became itself a source of conflict. The solution is syncretism.

727 Bötrül 2011: 99: “Likewise, there is an extremely great distinction between the views of the higher and lower tantras among the views of the four tantras of Secret Mantra—the quality of luminous clarity which is the aspect of appearance—from the Kriyātantra view of the relative, which is potentially established to be the great maṇḍala, to the full completion of the spontaneously perfect ground-appearance in Atiyoga.”
mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho’s relationship to the Ris-med Movement is thus complex. When he calls for the elimination of sectarianism (phyogs rts) or sectarian division (ris gcod byed pa),\textsuperscript{728} he seems, on a superficial level, to echo the movement’s key message. Yet, he was born after the Ris-med pioneers had died and studied only with their disciples.\textsuperscript{729} Moreover, he was based in mGo-log,\textsuperscript{730} away from Ris-med’s heartland in and around sDe-dge. Doctrinally too, his form of rNying-ma / dGe-lugs synthesis is unlike anything found in the writings of the movement’s key figures—and some would claim it even runs contrary to the very definition of Ris-med.\textsuperscript{731}

Scholars generally agree that the Ris-med renaissance in mid-nineteenth century Khams excluded the dGe-lugs and/or developed in response to their political and religious hegemony.\textsuperscript{732} Alexander Gardner, who argues against the use of the term “movement,” believes that ’Jam-mgon Kong-sprul targeted not sectarianism per se, but Lha-sa and its support for dGe-lugs dominance.\textsuperscript{733} Geoffrey Samuel goes so far as to portray the Ris-med and dGe-lugs as opposing forces during this period. He characterises Ris-med lamas as “more shamanic” than the “more clerical” dGe-

\textsuperscript{728} E.g., DC vol. 2: 4.
\textsuperscript{729} A-mdo dge-bshes ’Jam-dpal rol-ba’i-blo-gros studied with both mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po and dPal-sprul, as did gTer-ston bSod-rgyal.
\textsuperscript{730} dPal sNyans-mo Monastery, which ’Jam-dpal rol-ba’i-blo-gros established in 1919, is in Dar-lag in mGo-log.
\textsuperscript{731} Ringu Tulku (2006: 3), for example, claims that Ris-med “is not a way of uniting different schools and lineages by emphasizing their similarities.” Rather, it involves “an appreciation of their differences and an acknowledgement of the importance of variety to benefit practitioners with different needs.” In their introduction to a recent translation of Mi-pham’s Nor bu ke ta ka (Jamgön Mipham 2017), Wulstan Fletcher and Helena Blankleder of the Padmakara Translation Group suggest that the movement was not a form of ecumenism but “a celebration of diversity” (p.6). It was, they say, “an attempt to encourage each tradition to rediscover and preserve its individual voice” (ibid.). Such a description inevitably prompts the question of whether Mi-pham was truly “rediscovering” an earlier rNying-ma tradition, or simply reinventing it.
\textsuperscript{732} Douglas Duckworth, for example, writes: “…we can understand what came to be known as the “nonsectarian movement” as a broad set of traditions, stemming from eastern Tibet in the nineteenth century, which developed a common interest in preserving a variety of Buddhist traditions as a response to the singular dominance of the Geluk school.” (Bötrül 2011: 2)
\textsuperscript{733} Gardner 2006: 154.
lugs-pa.\textsuperscript{734} Even if such polarising stereotypes hold some truth, they plainly fail to reflect the full complexity of intersectarian (and even \textit{intrasectarian}) developments at the time.

\textit{dGe}-lugs-pa lamas are conspicuously absent from Smith’s early lists of Ris-med participants,\textsuperscript{735} but this does not mean that they played no role. rDza dPal-sprul, for instance, sought to extend Ris-med to include even the \textit{dGe}-lugspas.\textsuperscript{736} The following extract drawn from his biography by ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma supports this:

Travelling to several major monasteries of the Ri-bo \textit{dGe}-Idan-pa tradition, such as \textit{dGe}-rtse ser-shul, Lab khris-'du, and Chu-hor, [dPal-sprul] granted elaborate explanations of the \textit{Bodhicaryāvatāra} and other texts. At those times, he did not do anything inappropriate, such as clinging, with partiality, to the tenets of rNying-ma or gSar-ma, chattering (\textit{zer mchu}) about refutation and proof (\textit{dgag bzlag}), or indulging in praise for himself and condemnation of others. [Instead,] he spoke clearly and in the proper measure, adhering purely to the assertions and explanations found in whichever commentary he was using. He refrained from including even the slightest remark, which, owing to the intensity of the times, could have become a cause of attachment or aversion.\textsuperscript{737}

This passage—which perhaps describes the period around 1851—points to considerable tension between the \textit{dGe}-lugs and rNying-ma at the time. This prevented dPal-sprul from doing “anything inappropriate” and thereby causing offence. He was keen to heal any divisions. And his efforts bore fruit: he gained several \textit{dGe}-lugs-pa students, including Thub-bstan rgyal-mtshan, a \textit{dge-bshes} from

\begin{flushright}
\textit{dPal sprul rtogs brjod: 114.6-115.3: dge rtse ser shul dgon dang| lab khris 'du dgon| chu hor dgon sogs rib o dge ldan pa'i dgon chen mang por byon nas spyod 'jug sogs kyi bshad pa rgya cher stsal| de dag gi tshe yang gsar rnying gi grub mtha'i phyogs 'dzin dang| dgag bzlag gi zur mchu rang bstod gzhlan smod sogs skabs su ma babs pa dang| dus kyi dbang las chags sdang gi rgyu 'gro ba'i gtam mams cha shas tsam yang ma 'dres par 'grel ba mkhan su'i lugs ltar bshad pa de dang de'i rang bzhed kha gtsang| gsal zhih dag la zur phyin pa}\\
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{734} Samuel 2003: 722-723. It is legitimate to ask what Samuel means by “shamanic” (and even “clerical”) here. For a discussion of the appropriateness of these terms in this context see Ray 1995: \textit{passim}. Ray identifies several senses in which Samuel uses the term “shamanism” and notes that on occasion “not much more is being said than Buddhism has a meditative dimension.” (Ray 1995: 97).

\textsuperscript{735} As noted earlier in this study, Smith (2001: 235) lists the following figures on the first page of his article on Kong-sprul (besides Kong-sprul himself who was mainly a follower of the bKa'-bgyud school): ‘Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po (Sa-skya/rNying-ma), mChog-gyur gling-pa (rNying-ma), ’Ju Mi-pham rNam-rgyal rgya-mtsho (rNying-ma), gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba (rNying-ma/Sa-skya) and rDza dPal-sprul O-rgyan chos-kyi-dbang po (rNying-ma). Another list later appears in the same article (Smith 2001: 250) but it too features no \textit{dGe}-lugs-pa figures.

\textsuperscript{736} See, for example, PDB 716.

\textsuperscript{737} dPal sprul rtogs brjod: 114.6-115.3: dge rtse ser shul dgon dang| lab khris 'du dgon| chu hor dgon sogs rib o dge ldan pa'i dgon chen mang por byon nas spyod 'jug sogs kyi bshad pa rgya cher stsal| de dag gi tshe yang gsar rnying gi grub mtha'i phyogs 'dzin dang| dgag bzlag gi zur mchu rang bstod gzhlan smod sogs skabs su ma babs pa dang| dus kyi dbang las chags sdang gi rgyu 'gro ba'i gtam mams cha shas tsam yang ma 'dres par 'grel ba mkhan su'i lugs ltar bshad pa de dang de'i rang bzhed kha gtsang| gsal zhih dag la zur phyin pa}
Another disciple was Thub-bstan chos-kyi-grags-pa (alias Mi-nyag [or Go-shul] Kun-bzang bsod-nams, 1823–1905), who reportedly held a dge-bshes degree in the dGe-lugs system. Thub-bstan chos-kyi-grags-pa composed a renowned commentary on the Bodhicaryāvatāra, entitled rGyal sras yon tan bum bzang, based on dPal-sprul’s teachings. Sometimes he is even referred to as a Ris-med figure in his own right. If he was, he was an exception. Most figures associated with the movement belonged to non-dGe-lugs schools and most Ris-med projects excluded the dGe-lugs. The growth of scholasticism took place among the non-dGe-lugs schools. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho himself rejected this change in the rNying-ma tradition. His teacher, ’Jam-dpal rol-ba’i-blo-gros, in turn, had criticized elements of Sa-skya scholasticism in an open letter. The question then

738 TBRC P8008.

739 The question of whether Thub-bstan chos-kyi-grags-pa belonged to the rNying-ma or dGe-lugs school is not straightforward. He is often described as a dGe-lugs-pa disciple—or even the foremost dGe-lugs-pa disciple—of rDza dPal-sprul (see, for example, Ricard 2017: 214). However, Matthew Kapstein states in his review of Paul Williams’ The Reflexive Nature of Awareness (Kapstein 2000: 121) that this is mistaken and that he was in fact a rNying-ma-pa. Certainly, this is how he is described in several recent biographies. The brief biography by sMyo-shul ’Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje (which is later borrowed and adapted by bsTan’-dzin lung-rtogs nyi-ma) says simply that “He stayed at a monastery of the Ri-bo dGe-lugs pa system, mastered scriptural learning on a vast, oceanic scale, and attained the name of dge bshes.” (rDzogs chen chos ’byung, vol. 2, ri bo dge lugs pa’i grwa sar bzhugs pas gzhung lugs rgya mtshor mkhas pa’i phul du phyin z ding dge bshes kyi mtshan rtags bzhes). There are no further details about where this monastery was, or when or from whom he received this dGe-lugs education. According to these same accounts Thub-bstan chos-kyi-grags-pa was ordained by a rNying-ma lama, Gling-sprul Thub-bstan rgyal-mtshan (d.u.) and spent time teaching at such rNying-ma institutions as Be-ri hermitage in Mi-nyag later in life. A recent biography by sNgags’-chang Padma rdo-rje (2008) offers more information about Thub-bstan chos-kyi-grags-pa’s early studies (I made extensive use of this source in the biography I wrote for the Treasury of Lives online encyclopaedia, Pearcey 2017). Still, questions remain about his ‘conversion’ following his early studies at Se-ra and ‘Bras-spungs and at Ser-shul—although precisely when he studied at the latter monastery is uncertain. It is possible that a meeting with dPal-sprul, who taught at Ser-shul, inspired his ‘conversion’ to rNying-ma. Nonetheless, he maintained a connection with figures from other schools, notably ’Jam-dbyangs blo-gter dbang-po, who was involved in the publication of his collected writings. These writings demonstrate great familiarity with, and expertise in, dGe-lugs doctrine. Yet, it is also noteworthy that several of these texts were requested by prominent rNying-ma figures, such as sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma (see the following note).

740 rGyal sras yon tan bum bzang 876–878. According to the colophon (879), Thub-bstan chos-kyi-grags-pa first received a request from Bla-ma Lung-rtogs to write a commentary on only the ninth chapter. He did so, but this was followed by requests from several holy personages (bshes gnyen dam pa ‘ga’ zhig) to write something detailed on the remainder of the text, particularly pleas from Blo-gter dbang-po, Padma rgyal-mtshan of Nyag-rong and “keeper of a treasury of profound gter” Bla-ma bSod-rgyal.

741 The TBRC database, for example, describes him as an “important ris med teacher of the 19th century” (http://tbrc.org/#!rid=P4069 accessed 16 March 2015)
arises: should we classify mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho and ’Jam-dpal rol-ba’hui-blo-gros as participants in a broader Ris-med movement? Both were *ris med* in the sense that they sought to tackle what they perceived to be sectarianism or sectarian conflict, and both appealed for wider support. But they were also dGe-lugs-pa.

Perhaps it is more appropriate to regard mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho and ’Jam-dpal rol-ba’hui-blo-gros as heirs of a different form of non-sectarianism; one that predates the Ris-med Movement of Kong-sprul and mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po and was rooted in the A-mdo and mGo-log regions. This tradition includes within its ranks both Zhabs-dkar Tshogs-drug rang-grol and his student, ’Ja’-pa mDo-sngags. Its proponents first encountered (and clashed with) the advocates of the better-known Ris-med during the era of ’Ja’-pa mDo-sngags. This tension continued with mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho, who sought not only to promote non-sectarianism, but to redefine its parameters.

5. Conclusion

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho followed a long-established tradition that asserts the underlying similarity of Tibetan religious traditions, but, in his syncretism, he went further than his precursors and had a contemporary target. In his attempts to combine the dGe-lugs and rNying-ma systems, he rejects both narrow-minded dGe-lugs exclusivism (of the type Pha-bong-kha[-pa] represents) and the over-application of rDzogs-chen/Mahāmudrā simultaneism. He is also critical of Mi-pham’s philosophical innovations, but only indirectly.

Ultimately, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho’s rNying-ma / dGe-lugs synthesis may have had little direct impact on followers of either school. Many of his writings take the form of personal notes and memoranda, and there is little evidence that they were influential during his lifetime. But the syncretism he articulates is of
historical interest not merely because of what it proposes, but also because of what it reacts against. For example, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho clearly regards the combination of scholasticism and sectarian differentiation as a threat to intersectarian harmony. His writings thus prompt questions about the nature of non-sectarianism: whether sectarian differentiation necessarily resulted in sectarianism. And, if so, whether it is truly consistent with the aims of a non-sectarianism movement—whether syncretism, in fact, is more in keeping with the ris-med ideal.

There was little time to debate such questions, however. Soon after mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho composed his works, Tibet was torn apart. The preservation of the very traditions he discussed in his treatises became the most pressing concern. This generated an inward focus that generally accompanies any process of preservation and restoration. Sectarian differentiation thus persisted. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho’s writings are now more accessible than ever before; they have even been cited by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. As a result, a broader debate around these questions may finally take place—if it has not already begun.
6. Conclusion

When Mi-pham set out to strengthen the philosophical basis for the rNying-ma school at the behest of ’Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po, he redefined its interpretation of many aspects of Buddhist philosophy. Like his teacher, dPal-sprul, he composed commentaries on major Indian treatises; but, unlike dPal-sprul, he quickly became embroiled in controversy. Mi-pham’s commentaries essentially promote a form of sectarian differentiation, in Cabezón’s phrase, as they accentuate doctrinal distinctions between the rNying-ma and the other schools. The works provoked a hostile reaction from scholars within and outside his own tradition, but later, with their widespread acceptance, came to redefine rNying-ma philosophy.

Scriptural colleges proliferated throughout Eastern Tibet in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Teachers and students within these colleges turned to works by iconic authors such as ’Ju Mi-pham and Go-rams-pa bSod-nams seng-ge to define their schools’ positions. This shift in monastic education brought intellectual self-confidence to the non-dGe-lugs schools, and, in turn, helped to inspire a new wave of commentarial writing. It also impacted on literature more broadly, as educated authors made use of scholarly categories drawn from Abhidharma, Pramāṇa and so on even when addressing esoteric topics.

There is a clear connection between scholasticism, comparativism and sectarian identity. Even ordinarily, we often define ourselves in relation to others by emphasising what we have in common, or what we do not share and therefore makes us special or unique. Scholasticism often entails comparison. Exegetes formulate doctrines partly through disagreement with the ideas of others. Comparison also features in monastic education when students debate with real or imagined
opponents—’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma eloquently described the latter in his essay on the pitfalls of intellectualism. It should not therefore be surprising that the expansion of scholasticism influenced notions of sectarian identity.

Efforts to improve non-dGe-lugs education, through the establishment of colleges and the composition and publication of treatises, might have been initially inspired by non-sectarian ideals. Yet, these developments eventually contributed to sectarian divisions, perhaps even conflict. Should we conclude from this that Ris-med figures, such as Mi-pham (and, indirectly, mKhyen-brtse’i dbang-po) or those involved in the publishing of Go-rams-pa’s works, were, in a sense, sectarian? Surely any attempt to promote distinctiveness runs the risk of encouraging divisiveness. However, this does not mean that the latter was necessarily intended or inevitable.

The authors featured in this study adopted different positions on intersectarian relations. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma was an inclusivist. His comparisons of rDzogs-chen and Highest Yoga Tantra are hierarchical but reconciliatory. g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings-rang-grol was also an inclusivist, but he stressed the importance of maintaining the correct rNying-ma view almost to the point of exclusivism. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho was, above all, a syncretist. These same authors also reacted in markedly different ways to Mi-pham’s scholarly innovations: ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma ignored them; Chos-dbyings-rang-grol embraced them; while mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho rejected them.742

Mi-pham encouraged ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma to support his efforts in strengthening the rNying-ma school. However, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma was

742 These three contrasting responses might be said to illustrate three stages in the reception of new ideas more generally: 1) (initial) opposition, 2) (gradual) acceptance, and/or 3) the generation of alternative views. In his sociology of philosophies, Randall Collins asserts that “the history of philosophy is the history not so much of problems solved as of the discovery of exploitable lines of opposition.” (Collins 1998: 6).
caught between rival allegiances and never espoused Mi-pham’s form of rNying-ma identity. In his rDzogs-chen corpus, he addresses difficult topics, systematizes elements of gnoseology, and, more significantly, compares rDzogs-chen with Highest Yoga Tantra. But nowhere does he employ Mi-pham’s key interpretations or favoured terminology. He considers rDzogs-chen to be superior to Highest Yoga Tantra only in its methods; he does not follow Mi-pham and many later rNying-ma scholars by insisting that its philosophical view is also greater. Moreover, even though he accepts the ultimate superiority of rDzogs-chen, he emphasizes its gradualism rather than its more distinctive simultaneist aspects.

Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol’s rDzogs-chen writings are as sophisticated as those of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma (on which they often draw), but they betray clear signs of Mi-pham’s influence. In rDzogs pa chen po’i lam nyams su len tshul, Chos-dbyings rang-grol criticises what he regards as unorthodox interpretations of Madhyamaka and introduces doxography into a practical instruction. This move continues a trend that began with ’Jigs-med gling-pa’s Ye shes bla ma, but it adds a sectarian element. Chos-dbyings rang-grol speaks out against the integration of ideas from different traditions and stresses adherence to an unadulterated rNying-ma perspective. Still, he falls short of outright exclusivism: he does not deny the validity of other doctrines, only the appropriateness of combining them with rNying-ma thought and practice.

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho sought a solution to sectarian division. He regarded differentiation as a source of conflict and therefore proposed a combination of rNying-ma and dGe-lugs doctrine. Unlike some earlier authors, who refer to the underlying similarity of all Tibetan Buddhist views, he outlines a form of syncretism that makes points of doctrinal commonality explicit. His writings contain oblique,
critical references to Mi-pham’s innovations, which he even associates with bias and sectarianism. In a sense, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho’s rNying-ma–dGe-lugs synthesis stemmed from the popularity of Mi-pham’s ideas. He sought to return to an earlier form of rNying-ma that was philosophically closer to the dGe-lugs system. He also found fault with some dGe-lugs teachers who denied the validity of rDzogs-chen. He thus represents his ideas as a middle way between two dogmatic extremes.

For all these authors, disagreements concern more than just philosophical ideas; they also touch upon issues of authority. In Tibetan Buddhism, the source of an assertion is often just as important as, or even more important than, the claim itself. Thus, for ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i nyi-ma, both Klong-chen rab-’byams and ’Jigs-med gling-pa were omniscient, infallible masters whose writings were pseudo-canonical. Later, in the writings of Chos-dbyings rang-grol, Mi-pham emerges as a figure of almost comparable authority and stature—a trend that has continued in recent years. In rDzogs pa chen po’i lam nyams su len tshul, the discussion of controversial topics, such as ’dzin stangs, revolves around the views of the most senior contemporary figures within the tradition. Moreover, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho does not simply refute Mi-pham’s key ideas; he tries to show how they contradict the interpretations of earlier rNying-ma hierarchs, primarily Klong-chen rab-’byams and Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po. The debate is thus a contest of fidelity to the past as much as it is an argument over the present; or, in other words, it is a disagreement in the present that seeks validation from the past.

743 Mi-pham’s reputation and status has continued to rise in recent decades. The renowned mKhan-po ’Jigs-med phun-tshogs ’byung-gnas (1933–2004) was among those who contributed to this process by, for example, composing devotional works centred on Kun-mkhyen Mi-pham, here identified with Manjusri. See, for example, JPB vol. 1: 16–59. The current Dalai Lama, bsTan-’dzin rgya-mtsho (b. 1935), offers a counterbalance to this aggrandisement, however. He has said that ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s writings are “possibly even greater” than those of Mi-pham (Dalai Lama 2007: 73). Yet, it should be noted that even here the Dalai Lama refers to Mi-pham as “the omniscient Mipham” (i.e., kun mkhyen mi pham).
Perhaps the differing approaches considered here illustrate a fundamental choice that exists in other forms of human interaction too: that is, whether to highlight difference or commonality. Why is it that some strive to distinguish themselves (as individuals or as groups), while others seek what the philosopher John Gray has called “the lure of harmony”?\(^{744}\) In answering this question and explaining why the writers considered here chose one approach over another, we must take account not simply of philosophical ideas, but also of a broad array of (potentially competing) loyalties—to gurus, associates, previous incarnations, and monastic and regional affiliations—which are not always obvious.

Several topics that I have touched on here suggest avenues for future research. There is a clear need, for example, for fuller histories of both the Ris-med and dGe-mang movements, as I stated in Chapter One. The study of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s life and work, to which I have contributed here, would be further enhanced through a detailed analysis of his earlier *Guhyagarbha commentary and exoteric writings. It would also be beneficial to examine the works of his close associates, such as the four great *mkhan-pos of rDo-grub-chen, in more detail. Another desideratum is a comprehensive investigation of the work of Pha-bong-kha[-pa] bDe-chen snying-po, especially his exclusivism and views on sectarian relations.\(^{745}\) In addition, a thorough history of the rDzogs-chen preliminary exercises considered in Chapter Four might shed light on intersectarian influence by, for example, comparing these exercises with similar techniques described in some Mahāmudrā manuals. Finally, the rDzogs-chen treatises of Brag-dkar Blo-bzang


\(^{745}\) Such a study would necessarily include the views of his controversial disciple, Brag-g.yab rtogs-ldan ’Jam-dbyangs blo-gros (1888–1941).
dpal-ladan bstan-’dzin snyan-grags and A-mdo dge-bshes ’Jam-dpal rol-ba’i blo-gros, which I briefly introduced in Chapter Five, deserve to be fully translated and assessed.

Even without these additional insights, however, the writings examined here attest to the rDzogs-chen tradition’s rich diversity and intellectual fecundity in the early decades of the twentieth century. Popular authors often portray rDzogs-chen (and indeed other esoteric Buddhist systems too) as a time-honoured repository of the timeless and recondite. Yet, as this study shows, rDzogs-chen continued to evolve, even at a time when some it represented itself as a continuation of past tradition. Moreover, innovation engendered further responses and creativity and contributed, albeit indirectly, to a reassessment of sectarian attitudes and positions.
Appendix 1: The rDzogs-chen Writings of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma

1. Introduction

The rDzogs-chen corpus of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma comprises 22 separate texts in the most recent edition of his collected works. Several of these texts are in verse, and many were written as responses to individuals, both named and unnamed, even though not all are labelled as answers to questions (dris lan). Most texts are undated. At least three were clearly compiled from notes only after ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s death.

Pages numbers are provided for all available editions of a given text. The sequence here follows the JTNs edition.

2. Khregs chod gdams pa:746

1. rDzogs chen khregs chod kyi gdams pa nyung bsdus sgron me’i snang ba (Light of the Lamp: Brief Advice on the Breakthrough Practice of the Great Perfection)

*JTNs* vol. 2: 2–13; *JTNg* vol. 1: 441–454

An introduction to the practice of Khregs-chod, including a definition of the term itself. The text explains the guru’s introduction (ngo sprod) of the nature of mind to disciple and the distinction between ordinary mind (sems) and pure awareness (rig pa). According to the colophon, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i nyi-ma wrote the text in response to a request from his tutor Blo-gros bzang-po747 and the monk rTa-mgrin.

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746 This subheading and the one which follows are found only in JTNg.
747 Possibly the same tutor referred to as A-khu blo-gros in Thondup 1996, 239. According to Thondup (ibid., 241), A-khu blo-gros died when ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma was 35, i.e., around 1900.
2. sGrub brtson rnal ’byor gyi dbang po padma ma hā su kha’i bzhed skong du gdams pa (Advice to Fulfil the Request of the Diligent Practitioner and Lord Among Yogis Padma Mahāsukha)

_JTNs vol. 2: 13–21; JTNg vol. 1: 454–463.2_

This short text explains the distinction between _sems_ and _rig pa_, as well as the three points of introduction, reaching a decision and finding confidence (i.e., the three major themes of _Tshig gsum gnad brdegs_). It also refers to the relinquishing of nine forms of activity (_bya ba dgu phrugs su gtong ba_) and concludes with a criticism of modern so-called great meditators (_sgom chen_). The text cites two lines from a work by Koṭāli/Kuddāla (_Tog rtse ba_), but these lines do not appear in his most famous work, _bSam mi khyab pa’i rim pa’i man ngag._

3. Dad brtson blo ldan ’das shul grags ldan ngor gdams pa (Advice for the Faithful, Diligent and Intelligent ’Das-shul grags-ldan)\(^{749}\)

_JTNs vol. 2: 21–25; JTNg vol. 1: 463.2–467.3_

This is a commentary on the final testament of Ö-rgyan bstan-’dzin nor-bu (1851–1900):\(^{750}\)

> I am Guru Padmākara,  
> The Buddha free from birth and death.  
> Awakening mind (_bodhicitta_) is unbiased,  
> Free from the labels of the eight stages of the four pairs (_zung bzhi ya brgyad_).

The colophon gives the date of composition as the “third excellent day of the waning phase” (i.e., 27\(^{\text{th}}\)) of the Phālguna month (_dbo zla_) in the earth-bird year (1909).

4. gDams ngag rdo rje’i gtun khung (Advice: The Vajra Mortar)

\(^{748}\) i.e., _Acintyakramaopadeśa_, Toh 2228.  
\(^{749}\) Translated in Appendix 2 and Pearcey 2018.  
\(^{750}\) The dates of Ö-rgyan bstan-’dzin nor-bu are contested, but these dates seem the most likely on the basis of current evidence for reasons I set out in Pearcey 2015b and elsewhere. Indeed, the date of this very text is significant in providing a clear _terminus ante quem_ for the life of Ö-rgyan bstan-’dzin nor-bu and calling into question the dates of 1851 proposed recently by Matthieu Ricard (on the basis of a biography by gZhan-phan snang ba to which I do not currently have access).
This text is written in verse. Its themes include the distinction between ordinary mind and pure awareness, and the stages of progress in the practices of Khregs-chod and Thod-rgal. The colophon lists the names of four suppliants: Blo-gsal che-mchog, the supreme incarnation (mchog sprul) 'Gyur-med padma bstan-'phel, Bod-chung lung-rtogs and gSung-mchog pad-rdor. The author refers to himself as “the madman of rDo valley” (rdo rong gi smyon pa) and “one who is sustained by the kindness of the glorious guru 'Od gsal sprul pa’i rdo rje [i.e., 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse’i dbang-po], the noble lord Wheel of Stability [i.e., Mañjuśrī] in human flesh.”

5. rTogs ldan rkang ring la gdams pa (Advice for the Realized rKang-ring)

A short work in prose on the uniqueness of rDzogs-chen and its superiority over lesser approaches, including other Highest Yoga tantras. The colophon is in the name of “the old monk of the north, 'Ba'-la-ma,” which might be a reference to 'Ba’, a valley in Khams.

6. Bla ma ye shes rgya mtsho’i ngor gdams pa (Advice for Lama Ye-shes rgya-mtsho)

A lengthy introduction in verse, followed by advice in prose. The text concludes with seven points summarizing the whole of rDzogs-chen.

7. Dad ldan slob ma ’gyur med rdo rje’i ngor gdams pa (Advice for the Faithful Student ’Gyur-med rdo-rje)\textsuperscript{751}

\textsuperscript{751} Translated in Pearcey 2018.
Structured around six forms of mindfulness (dran pa) relate to a verse in Klong-chen rab-'byams’s Man ngag mdzod.752

1. applied mindfulness (’du byed kyi dran pa)
2. natural mindfulness (chos nyid kyi dran pa)
3. mindfulness during post-meditative experience (rjes snang gi dran pa)
4. mindfulness of direct realization (mngon sum yi dran pa)
5. mindfulness encompassing experience (spyod yul gyi dran pa)
6. mindfulness of phenomenal dissolution (chos zad kyi dran pa)

8. dPal seng gi ngor gdams pa (Advice for dPal-seng)753

JTNs vol. 2: 53–55; JTNg vol. 1: 496.1–498.4

A short text of advice preceded by a homage to Dri-med ’od-zer [i.e., Klong-chen rab-'byams]. The text briefly explains the difference between mind (sems) and pure awareness (rig pa), then describes the superiority of rDzogs chen to the common Madhyamaka view (dbu ma’i lta ba thun mong ba) and the various tantric vehicles. It concludes by referring the reader to the explanations of equalness (mnyam pa) and purity (dag pa) in the writings of Rong-zom Chos-kyi bzang-po and Klong-chen rab-'byams.

9. sPrul pa’i sku ’jigs med rab brtan ngor gdams pa (Advice for the Tulku ’Jigs-med rab-brtan)

JTNs vol. 2: 55–62; JTNg vol. 1: 498.4–505.2

A commentary on a verse from a song on the view (lta mgur) of rDzogs-chen attributed to “the venerable and noble guru Sumandra” (rje btsun bla ma dam pa su

752 KLR vol. 15: 388.
753 Translation appears on LH.
The text explains how the verse is arranged in themes (chings su beings lugs), as well as the importance of bodhicitta, and the definition of ka dag and rtsal. Citations include a verse from Saraha.

10. gNyug ma zang thal gyi sgrub thabs chos nyid byung gi sgra dbyangs (The Self-Arisen Sound of Dharmatā: A Means of Accomplishment for the All-Penetrating Natural State)

An accomplishment manual (śādhana) in verse. It is in the form of a revelation ending with the phrase dha thim. The text describes itself as “a song of wonder” (nyams mtshar glu). Its colophon reads: “Writing this down I placed it in a volume of (/belonging to) Blo-gros bzang-po755 and gave it to ’Jam-dbyangs. Do not leave it as words on the page. Practise it!”

11. Tshig gsum gnad brdeg skor (On the Three Statements that Strike the Crucial Point)

Notes on the subject of the “three statements that strike the crucial point” (tshig gsum gnad brdeg) attributed to dGa’-rab rdo-rje. The colophon says that the notes were compiled and published by an anonymous editor.

3. rDzogs chen skor:

12. ’Jam dpal ye shes sems dpa’i mtshan don (The Meaning of the Name of the Jñānasattva Mañjuśrī)756

Translated in Klein 2000.
An essay relating the ground, path and fruition (gzhi lam 'bras gsum) of rDzogs-chen to the syllables of the name 'Jam-dpal gzhon-nu, an epithet of Mañjuśrī.

13. dNgos gzhi gnyis su mu bzhi rtsi tshul (How to Count the Tetralemma of Actual and Basis)757

JTNs vol. 2: 104–110; JTNg vol. 1: 547.5–554.2; JTNd vol. 5 187.4–193.5

An explanation of the tetralemma or four permutations of the 'actual basis’ (dngos gzhi), elaborating upon comments in the Theg mchog mdzod of Klong-chen rab-'byams and Ye shes bla ma of 'Jigs-med gling-pa.

14. Hor 'od zer gyi ngor gdams pa (Advice for 'Od-zer of Hor)758

JTNs vol. 2: 110–117; JTNg vol. 1: 554.2–561; JTNd vol. 5: 193.5–200

Answers to questions on the distinction between ordinary mind and pure awareness, the dissolution of dualistic perception (gnyis snang), mindfulness (dran pa; smṛti), the phases of dissolution (thim rim) at death, and the practice of meditation.

15. rDzogs chen dris lan (Answers to Questions on the Great Perfection)759

JTNs vol. 2: 117–135; JTNg vol. 1: 563–579; JTNd vol. 1: 493–513

Answers to 24 questions on the theme of rDzogs-chen. Although the interrogator is not identified explicitly, tradition holds that it was 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros (1893–1959).760

16. rNam rtog ngo shes pa dang rig pa ngo shes pa’i khyad par (On the Differences Between Recognising Thoughts and Recognising Awareness)

JTNs vol. 2: 135–202; JTNg vol. 1: 581–646.2

757 Translated in Appendix 2.
758 Translated in Appendix 2.
759 Translated in Appendix 2 & Pearcey 2018.
760 Translated in Appendix 2 & Pearcey 2018.
This is the longest text in the rDzogs-chen corpus. It is a series of notes on various topics related to rDzogs-chen, especially gnoseology.

17. mKhas pa mi bzhi’i thugs beud rdzong ’phrang gi brjed byang rtogs dka’i ’phrang sgrol (The Heart-Essence of the Four Wise Men: Memoranda on the Fortresses and Defiles, Bringing Liberation from the Defile of the Difficult to Realize)

*JT*Ns vol. 2: 202–208; *JT*Ng vol. 1: 646–652; *JT*Nd vol. 5: 280.3–287.6

This short work describes “three fortresses” (rdzong gsum) and “three ravines/defiles” (’phrang gsum). The three fortresses are: 1) summary of the crucial points on the ālaya (kun gzhi gnad kyi stong thun), 2) ascertainment of the fruition, the three buddha-bodies (’bras bu sku gsum gtan bebs), 3) opening of the enclosure of ignorance (ma rig sbubs ’byed); and the three ravines/defiles are: 1) instruction on meditation, the singular concentration (bsam gtan gcig pa sgom gyi man ngag), 2) notes on experience in concentration (bsam gtan nyams kyi yig chung), 3) refining the extremes/limits of training (bslab mtha’ sbyong ba). The colophon says that one named rDo-rje composed the text in the form of a list.

18. Man ngag zab mo rdo rje’i mtshon cha (The Vajra Weapon: A Profound Pith Instruction)

*JT*Ns vol. 2: 209–232; *JT*Ng vol. 1: 652.5–676; *JT*Nd vol. 5: 287.6–314

Written in prose, this text includes a number of comparative sections on the differences between rDzogs-chen and Highest Yoga Tantra. According to the

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761 The relationship of this text to Bon teachings which refer to the “four learned men” (mkhas pa mi bzhi) or to the bKa’-brgyad texts such as mKhas pa mi bzhi’i thugs beud bka’ brgyad bka’ ma’i bskyed rim gvi phrin las chog khrigs he ru ka’i dgongs pa’i rgyan (NyKs vol. 29: 429–459) is a topic for further investigation. According to the rDzong ’phrang srog gsum gyi chings kyi man ngag (NyKs vol. 29: 15–425), the four learned men of India and Tibet (rgya bod kyi mkhas pa mi bzhi) are 1) Ācārya Padmasambhava, an emanation of Vajrapāṇi; 2) Ācārya Vimalamitra, an emanation of Vajrasattva; 3) Ācārya Bairotsana, an emanation of Vairocana; and 4) Ācārya Nam-mkha’i snying-po, an emanation of Vajradhara (ibid., 16–17).
colophon, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i nyi-ma wrote the text in the eighth month (khamsung zla) of the wood-sheep year (1895) when he was 31 years old. A further colophon states that some students later gathered the notes and, fearing that they might be lost, arranged for printing blocks to be carved.

The following three texts only appear in JTNs:

19. Na mo gu ru ye shes chen po… (Homage to the Great Gnosis Guru…)\(^{762}\)

*JTNs* vol. 1: 232–236

Written at the request of a yogin named Chags-med rang-grol, this short text in verse has three chapters on the original ground (gdod ma gzhi), path that makes this manifest (mngon byed lam) and fruition once it is made manifest (mngon gyur ’bras bu). The scribe is named as the monk Matibhadr (i.e., Blo-gros bzang-po).

20. Bla ma rje btsun… (Reverend Guru…)

*JTNs* vol. 2: 236–240

A short text in prose written as a response to a request from “a noble holder of the teachings of the practice lineage of Karma Kam Tshang,” who sought “instructions on how a beginner practises rDzogs-chen in gradual stages.”

21. sPrin gyi sgron ma… ([A Reply to Questions] from Light of the Clouds)\(^{763}\)

*JTNs* vol. 2: 240–245

Answers to two questions—equal in number to hands (or arms), as the author puts it:

1) how settling meditation (’jog sgom) in rDzogs-chen differs from other perfection stage (rdzogs rim) practices, and 2) whether even the visions of buddha-forms (sku; kāya) and light-spheres (thig le) disappear at the stage known as “the exhaustion into dharmatā” (chos nyid zad pa) in Thod-rgal practice.

\(^{762}\) The final three texts do not appear in JTNg.

\(^{763}\) Translated in Appendix 2.
22. Ye shes bla ma’i dka’ gnas zin bris gsal ba’i sgron me (The Brilliant Lamp:
Notes on the Difficult Points of the Ye shes bla ma)

JTNs vol. 2: 248–270

This commentary on the difficult points (dka’ gnas) of 'Jigs-med gling-pa’s
guidance manual (khrid yig) Ye shes bla ma includes sections on the investigation of
mind’s emergence, presence and departure (’byung gnas ’gro gsum); the four
permutations (mu bzhi) of the ‘actual basis’ (dngos gzhi); and an etymological
definition of bar do (which the author regards as an abbreviation of bar ma do).

'Jigs-med bstan-pa’i nyi-ma notes at the end that his comments are based on the oral
tradition of the guru, as well as Theg mchog mdzod, Tshig don mdzod, and other
instructions.
Appendix 2: Critical Editions & Annotated Translations

I. Selected Texts by ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i nyi-ma

For the following selections page numbers are provided according to the Gangtok edition (JTNg) where it exists, and according to the Chengdu edition (JTNs) where that is the only version available. All text titles are italicized.

1. Dad brtson blo ldan ’das shul grags ldan ngor gdams pa

JTNg 463.2–467.3; JTNs 21–25

bla ma la phyag ’tshal lo |

’dir bdag cag gi bla ma dam pa shes bya rig pa’i gnas lnga la sbyangs shing | rdzogs pa chen po’i snying thig gi lam nas grol ba brnyes pa o rgyan bstan ’dzin nor bu’i zhal snga nas kyis ’da’ khar zhal chems su stsol ba’i tshigs bcad|

nga o rgyan gu ru padma ’byung |

skye ’chi bral ba’i sangs rgyas yin |

byang chub sems la phyogs ris med |

zung bzhi ya brgyad kyi ming ’dogs bral |

zhes pa ’di’i don rags pa tsam zhig bkral na |

spyir bcom ldan ’das kyischos kyi ’khor lo bskor ba thams cad ’dul bya skye shi bar do’i ’khrul ’khor gyis nyam thag pa las skyob pa’i ched du gsungs pa kho na yin zhing | de dag gi nang nas mthar thug pa snying thig rdo rje rtse mo’i lugs la| thog ma’i gzhis ka dag chen po’i gshis la ’khrul pa med kyang| de ngo ma shes par rig rtsal ’khrul pa’i snang char te| bdag [464] byid gcig pa dang | lhan cig skyes pa dang | kun tu btags pa ste ma rig pa gsum gyi rim pas gzung ’dzin gyi rtog pa lu gu rgyud kyi phreng ba mu med du mchek| de’i rjes su zhen nas las nyon sdug bsngal gyi ’khor lo bar mshams med par ’jug pa yin pas| ngo bo’i bzhugs tshul ’khrul pa’i dri mas ma gos pa bzhin du ngo ’phrod nas bsgoms pa nyid kyis skyes ’chi’i ’khrul pa

764 The title is omitted in JTNg.
765 This text is not included in JTNd.
rang log tu ’gro bar bzhed pa yin la| ngo bo’i bzhugs tshul de’ang rtog ge dang bcos ma’i sms ’dzin gyis mi mthong gi| don brgyud kyi pha phog\textsuperscript{766} thob pa’i bla ma mtshan nyid dang ldan pa las smin groi gyi bdud rtsi blangs te| de ’dra’i bla ma de nyid o rgyan rdo rje ’chang dang dbyer med du mthong ba’i mos gus rnal ’byor du byas pas rgyud byin gyis brlabs te thugs yid dbyer mi phyed par ’dres nas rang sms gdod ma’i gnas lugs bcos slad dang bral ba ’di kun bzang don gyi ’chi med padma ’byung gnas su ngo shes| thag chod| brtan pa thob| de nyid glo bur rgyu rkyen gyis ma bskyed pas skye ba dang bral| bri gang ’pho ’gyur mi dmigs pas ’chi ba dang bral te| skye ’chi med pa’i dngos grub kyi pham phab rang mal nas rnyed cing| sangs rgyas gzhan du mi ’tshol ba’i gdeng chen thob pa na|

nga o rgyan [465] gu ru padma ’byung ||
skye ’chi bral ba’i sangs rgyas yin| zhes seng ge’i sgra sgrog go| |
de lta bu’i rig pa byang chub sms kyi bzhugs tshul mgon du gyur pa na| skye ’chi’i yul snang phyir spangs| der zhen gyi ’dzin sms nang du bcad| spros pa’i ’khor ba rgyab tu bor| spros med myang ’das la dmigs gtad bcol ba’i spang blang re dogs mang pos rten med kyi rig pa khod bur ’don du med kyi| ji ltar snang yang rang snang| gang ltar shar yang rang rtsal| ’khor ’das gzung ’dzin du btags pa thams cad phyogs dang ris med par rig pa’i yo lang du shar te| rtsal gzhì thog tu thim| gzhì rang mal du btsan sa zin nas| dang po’i gzhì las ’phags te| rgya chad phyogs lhung dang bral ba’i ’od gsal gzhon nu bum pa sku’i dbyings su mgon par byang chub par ’gyur ba la|

byang chub sms la phyogs ris med| ces bya’o| |
de’i phyir ’khrul snang la skyon du bIa ste| nang gi nal ’byor nyi tshe ba la bslab pas khams gsum gyi mthong spang spangs kyang ’dod pa’i sgom spang ma spangs pa dang| de spong phyir du zhugs pa dang| ’dod nyon phal cher spangs pa dang| de mtha’ dag spangs kyang gong ma’i nyon mongs zad par ma spangs [466] pas skye ’chi’i sdug bsngal lhag med du ma log pa sogs kyi sgo nas ’bras bu tha dad du bzhag pa’i zung bzhì ya brgyad lta bu’i rnam bzhag theg pa’i di la brtsir med de| ka dag rang

\textsuperscript{766} JTNs phogs
snang ris med gdal ba chen po’i dgongs klong nas sa lam chig chod du bgrod pa’i phyir te| 'di la zhib cha dgos so| |
don ’di’i phyir|

zung bzhi ya brgyad kyi ming ’dogs bral| | zhes gsungs te| |

‘dis ni theg pa ’og ma gzhan nams las ’phags pa yang mtshon no| |
don hril gyis dril na| bla ma dang rang sms gnyis med du bsres te rig stong gnyug ma’i klong du bsal767 bzhag dang bral bar mnyam par bzhag la| ’chi ka dang por bar do’i ’jigs skrag ’khrul snang gang gis kyang rig pa rang mal nas mi g.yo bar btsan sa bzung ba ni rkang pa dang po gsum gyi snying po’i don te| phyogs ’di’i ’chi ka ma’i man ngag mthar thug pa yin zhiing | ’di la rab chos sku lta ba rgyas ’debs kyi ’pho ba zhes kyang grags so| |
de’ang da lta nas skyong tshul dang | ’chi dus su las la sbyar tshul sogs shes par bya’o| |
rkang pa tha mas ni lam ’di rtsol bcas kyi theg pa gzhan las ’phags pa’i che ba ston te| rang gi lam la nges pa brtan par bya ba’i don to| |
yang na rkang pa dang po gnyis kyis| lam ’di’i ’chi med [467] Sgrub tshul bstan pa na| de tsam gyis theg pa’i rtse mor mi ’gyur te| nyan rang la’ang skye ’chi’i sdu bsngal rgyun chad pa’i lam yod pa’i phyir ro snyam pa la| lan rkang pa tha ma dang | de’i rgyu mtshan sgrub pa la rkang pa gsum pa sbyar na’ang rung ngo| |
zhes pa’ang dad brtson blo ldan ’das shul grags ldan nas nan gyis bskul ba’i ngor| bstan pa’i nyi mas sa bya dbo zla ba’i dmar phyogs kyi bzang po gsum par gang dran myur por bris pa dge bar gyur cig| |
Advice for the Faithful, Diligent and Intelligent ’Das-shul grags-Idan

Homage to the guru!

Our noble teacher, O-rgyan bstan-’dzin nor-bu, trained in the five sciences and gained liberation through the Great Perfection’s path of the Heart Essence. At the time of his passing, he spoke the following verse as his final testament (zhal chems):

I am Guru Padmākara of Oḍḍiyāna,
A buddha free from birth and death.
Awakening mind (bodhicitta) is impartial and unbiased,
Beyond labels of the eight stages, the four pairs.\(^{768}\)

I shall elaborate a little on the meaning of this.

Generally, all the various turnings of the wheel of Dharma by the Lord Buddha were offered purely to protect disciples from the miserable routine of birth, death, and the intermediate state. Among these teachings, for the ultimate tradition of the Heart Essence, which is the vajra pinnacle, there is no delusion in the condition of great primordial purity, the original ground. And yet, because we do not recognize this, appearances of delusion, which are the creative energy (rtsal) of pure awareness, arise. Through the three types of ignorance\(^{769}\)—seeming \(^{[464]}\) identity (bdag nyid gcig pa/u), co-emergent (lhan cig skyes pa), and imputational (kun tu btags pa)—thoughts involving dualistic grasping develop, one after another, in an endless chain. Then, through grasping, we are drawn into the endless cycle of suffering caused by karma and mental afflictions.

Recognizing and becoming familiar with the actual nature of the essence, which is untainted by confusion, naturally averts the delusions of birth and death. Yet we cannot see the nature of this essence through intellectual speculation (rtog ge) or through a mind that is contrived. Instead, we must receive the nectar of ripening [empowerments] and liberating [instructions] from an authentic guru who

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\(^{768}\) These lines also appear in the biography of O-rgyan bstan-’dzin nor-bu included within rDzogs chen chos ’byung (vol. 2, 185b). Cf. the English translation in Nyoshul Khenpo 2005: 486, but note that the translator, Richard Barron, appears to have misunderstood the fourth line.

\(^{769}\) As noted in Higgins 2013: 70 rDzogs-chen introduces a third kind of ignorance, expanding on a pre-existing Indian model of twofold ignorance/nescience. Higgins also notes that these three are mentioned in a passage in the sGra thal ’gyur, where the ignorance of seeming identity is described as the root or foundation of error or delusion. It thus corresponds to the stage of the original ground, what Higgins (ibid., 71) calls “human reality in its most ontologically primitive condition”. (Note, however, that from an emic perspective this ground is not unique to human beings but is common to all six forms of unenlightened beings).
has inherited the actual transmission. Then, by cultivating the devotion of seeing the
guru as inseparable from the Vajradhara of Oḍḍiyāna, our mind will be inspired with
blessings, and the guru’s wisdom mind will merge inseparably with our own mind.
Though this, we will recognize the mind’s primordial state (gdod ma’i gnas lugs),
without contrivance or contamination, as the all-perfect, deathless Padmākara
himself. We must then firmly decide that this is so and gain stability. As this
recognition is not generated through temporary causes and conditions, it is free from
birth. And as it is not seen to increase or decrease or undergo transition or change, it
is free from death. Thus, the attainment of birthlessness and deathlessness is
bestowed naturally, there and then. And when we gain the confidence of not seeking
buddhahood elsewhere, there can be the lion’s roar proclaiming:

I am [465] Guru Padmākara of Oḍḍiyāna,
A buddha free from birth and death.

When the nature of this awareness or awakening mind (byang chub sems; bodhicitta)
manifests, appearances of birth and death are cast aside, the mind of fixated clinging
is cut from within, and the cycle of conceptualization is left behind.

Hopes and fears, or notions of adopting and avoiding, focused on a nirvāṇa
that is beyond conceptual elaboration, do not bring about any fragmentation of pure
awareness, which is itself unsupported. Rather, whatever appears is its natural self-
appearance (rang snang), and whatever arises does so as its self-expression (rang
rtsal). All that might be labelled as subjective or objective throughout saṃsāra and
nirvāṇa simply arises as the evolving manifestation (yo lang) of this pure awareness
that is itself beyond partiality and bias. And these expressions dissolve within the
ground. Once the stronghold of the ground is seized in its own place, this is superior
to the original ground, as there is awakening within the sphere of the reality-body
(dharmakāya), the youthful vase body, clear light beyond confinement and
restriction. Thus, the testament says:

Awakening mind is impartial and unbiased.
Therefore, in this vehicle there is no system of positing the fruition as something separate, as there is for the eight stages of the four pairs. According to that approach, we regard delusory appearances as faults and train in a limited form of yoga, through which it is possible to overcome the “seeing discards” (mthong spang: darṣanaprahātavya) of the three realms, but not the “meditation discards” (sgom spang: bhāvanaprahātavya) of the desire realm; or else, to enter that realm in order to discard them; or to discard most of the desire-realm afflictions; or to discard them all but not totally overcome the afflictions related to the [two] upper realms, with the result that the sufferings of birth and death are still not entirely overcome, and so on. Here, by contrast, out of the expanse of realization of great, all-pervasive primordial purity, which is self-appearing and unbiased, all grounds and paths are traversed at once. This point must be spelled out in detail, so the testament says:

Beyond labels of the eight stages, the four pairs.

This also shows how rDzogs-chen is superior to the lower vehicles.

The meaning in a nutshell, then, is as follows. Merging your own mind inseparably with the guru’s wisdom, settle evenly—without trying to settle or eliminate anything—in the genuine expanse of aware-emptiness. Then, at death, none of the terrifying delusory appearances of the intermediate state will cause awareness to stray from its own place. This “seizing of the stronghold” (btsan sa bzung ba) is the essential message of the first three lines. It is the ultimate instruction for the moment of death within this tradition and is also known as the ultimate

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770 I.e., the four categories of stream-enterer (rgyun du zhugs pa; śrōtāpanna), once-returner (lan gcig phyir ’ong ba; sakrāgamin), non-returner (phyir mi ’ong ba; anāgamin) and worthy one (dgra bcom pa; arhat), each of which can be further divided into the emerging (zhugs pa; pratipannaka) and the established (gnas pa; stha) to give eight categories in total. See “skye bu zung bzhī’am gang zag ya bgyad” in Nor-brang o-rgyan 2008 vol.1, 493.

771 The Abhidharmakosa and Abhidharmasamuccaya take different views on these two types of ‘discard’ (spang bya; prahātavya) or factors to be discarded. According to the Abhidharmasamuccaya, 112 factors are discarded through the path of seeing (darṣanamarga)—40 for the desire realm and 36 each for the form and formless realms—and 414 factors through the path of meditation (bhāvanamarga). The categories of once-returner and non-returner are so named on the basis of whether it is necessary to return to the desire realm in order to relinquish the factors to be discarded in that realm. a The OED recognizes discard as a noun meaning “Anything discarded, rejected, or unwanted.”
dharmakāya transference through sealing with the view (rab chos sku lta ba rgyas 'debs kyi 'pho ba). For this, there is much to understand, such as the way to sustain it right now, as well as the way to apply it at the time of death.

The final line shows how this path is superior to the other vehicles, all of which require effort; it means that certainty in one’s own path must be stable.

To put it another way: The first two lines show the means of achieving deathlessness through this path. Still, some might object that this alone would not make this the pinnacle of vehicles, because even the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas have a path that puts a stop to the sufferings of birth and death. In that case, it would suffice to offer the final line as a response and the third line as the reason.

In response to persistent requests from the faithful, diligent, and intelligent 'Das-shul grags-ldan, bsTan-pa'i nyi-ma quickly wrote down whatever came to mind on the third excellent day of the waning phase [i.e., the twenty-seventh] of the Phālguna month in the Earth Bird Year (1909).

2. rDzogs chen dris lan

JTNd vol. 1: 493–513; JTNg vol. 1: 563–579; JTNs vol. 2: 117–135

[1] dri ba dang por| rdzogs chen gyi gzhung du gzhi la 'khrul grol gyi gzhi gnyis su dbye ba’i grol gzhi phyogs tsam go rung| 'khrul gzhi grol gzhir lhun grub tu ’dod pa ni gzhi skyon can gyi khas blangs lags na| 'khrul gzhi ’di glo bur ba zhig yin nam min zhes ’di la|

On this form of transference or ejection (’pho ba; saṃkrānti/atkrānti) of consciousness see Kun bzang bla ma’i zhal lung gi zin bris 336–337.

Title appears in JTNs. In JTNg it is given in the left margin of recto folios. In JTNd the left margin reads simply dris lan.
bream ze chen pos|

sems nyid gcig pu kun gyi sa bon te| |
gang la srid dang mya ngan ’das ’phro ba774| | zhes gsungs pa ltar|

’od gsal gnyug ma’i sems gcig pu de ka ngo ma shes na ’khrul pa’i gzhi dang| ngo shes nas brtan pa thob na grol sar ’gyur te snga ma gzhi dang phyi ma ’bras bu’i gnas skabs yin pas de gnyis gcig tu smra ba kun mkhyen chen pos bkag yod| gzhi’i skabs su ’chi thengs re bzhin ’od gsal de yongs rdzogs ’char yang ngo ma shes pa’i dbang gis slar yang ’khrul pa’i gzung ’dzin gyi yo lang du ldog la| grol sar slebs775 dus rang thog tu btshan sa zin pas phyir mi ldog pa’i khyad par yod| gzhi’i dus su rang ngo ma shes pas rang rtsal ’khrul par shar ba ’di la dpyad pa nyid kyis [564] ’khrul pa’i gzhi byed pa de ’od gsal kho rang gi gnyug ma’i rang gshis min par rtogs nus te| de ltar ma yin na de’i rang ngo ji ltar shes shing ji ltar rtsal rdzogs pa de lta de ltar srid pa’i ’khrul snang mchog rigs par thal ba’i phyir ro| |
de’i phyir ’khrul gzhi dang grol sa gcig tu mi ’dod cing ’khrul gzhir ’dod pa’i gzhi’i ’od gsal glo bur ba’i chos su’ang khas mi len pas ka dag lhun grub gnyis phyogs rer bcad pa’i ’dod tshul nams dang mi ’dra snyam pa lags|

[2] bka’ dri gnyis pa| gzhi la ’khrul pa ma grub kyang gzhi snang gi rtsal la bzang ngan du ’dzin pas ’khrul pa de| de ltar ’khrul mkhan gyi rlung sems tha dad cig yod pa yin nam zhes gsungs pa la|

gzhi’i ’od gsal ’khrul pa’i ngo bor skyes ma myong zhing mi srid pas ye grol dang gdod nas nram dag dang ka dag sogz su brjod la| gzhi snang la ’dzin pa zhugs pa’i rlung sems de ma ’khrul zer mi nus pas de gnyis mi gcig cing tha dad du ’jog dgos kyang| ’khrul pa ’od gsal min yang ’od gsal spangs pa’i ’khrul pa cig med par rig ’dzin gong mas gsungs pa ltar de ’dra’i ’khrul pa de’i ’od gsal de’i bdag nyid dang ngo bo nyid du khas blang dgos kyi rdzas tha dad du mi ’jog par sems lags|

774 These lines are from Saraha’s Dohākoṣaṅgīti (Do ha mdzod kyi glu). Jackson 2004: 73 gives the original as: cittekka saalavāṃ bhavanīvāṇo vi jasma viphuranti.
775 JTNd sleb
[3] gsum pa| chos sku ye shes rig pa rnams la 'khrul nas kun gzhi rnam [565] Shes sems su log pa 'di gsum snga ma gsum bcings grol las 'das shing rgya chad phyogs llhung bral ba’i gshis ci yang ma yin pa la ci yang 'byung rung me long du gzugs brnyan sna tshogs 'char ba sogs kyi dpes bstan rung 'khor bar snang tsam min pa zhen 'khrul gyis bcings pa’i sems can rnams byung ba’i gnad 'di ji ltar yin zhes par| gzhi las gzhi snang du g.yos zhes pa’i gzhi snang ni sku dang 'od dang thig le sogs yul snang gi rnam pa can kho nar mi bya’i thugs rje’i rig cha phyir gsal du mched pa’ang der 'jog dgos la| de’i rtsal lam shugs las gser g.ya’ dang chu’i nya lcibs\[776\] ltar yul shes so sor snang ba’i shes pa glo bur ba’i char gyur pa phra mo dang por mched pa la kun gzhi zhes bya| de’i rlung sems je rags su song ba las tshogs drug nyon yid dang bcas par song lugs rdzogs chen gyi gzhung chen po rnams su|\[777\] ma rtogs sems can gyi 'khrul tshul bstan pa’i skabs nas rgya cher bshad pa de lags| de ltar na rig pa dngos ka dag yin pas zhen ‘dzin gyi mam par mi 'byung yang de las shar ba’i sems rags pa rnams tha mal pa’i zhen ‘dzin du 'char la| de’i dbang gis 'du byed kyi las dang sems can dang sems can gyi gnas rnams 'byung tshul mkhyen sla ba lags|\[778\] JTNd lcib

[4] bzhi par| 'chi kha’i [566] bar do dang po nam mkha’ sum phrug gi nyams len dang grong\[778\] 'pho stobs su gyur pa la snang mched thob pa’i thim rim 'byung ngam mi 'byung zhes par| de dag gang la’ang thim rim de 'byung dgos par sems te| 'od gsal sbubs 'jug gis grol ba ni 'chi ba’i 'od gsal gyi dus su brtan pa thob pa yin la| 'od gsal de’i sngon du thin rim de 'byung dgos pa’i phyir dang| grong 'pho grong 'jug gis grol na rnam shes lus las 'thon pa’i tshe dag pa’i gnas su 'pho ba yin pa gang zhiig| rnam shes lus las 'thon pa ni thin rim gyis drangs pa’i 'chi ba ’od gsal gyi mthar yin pa’i phyir ro| |

[5] Inga pa| rnam shes snang ba la thim sogs kyi 'gros dang| rnam shes nam mkha’ la thim pa’i 'gros gnyis kyi khyad par gang yin zhes par| JTNd omits | JTNd sgra
rnam shes nam mkha’ la thim tshul nyid rgyas par phyé na rnam shes snang ba dang
snang ba mched pa la thim pa sogs su ’gyur bas gnad gcig pa lags

[6] drug pa| khu rdul rlung gsum gyi thim rim ’di btsan thabs su bcad pa’i sbas don
man ngag e yod gsungs par

snang mched thob pa’i thim rim ’di dag rlung thin pa’i thim rim kho nar bshad pa
dang| khu rdul rlung gsum gyi thim rim du bzhag pa’i bshad sgros mi ’dra tsam yod
par snang| gang ltar yang tshé [567] ’dir ’tshang rgya ba rnams ni mthong ba’i chos
nyid la khu khrag rlung gsum gtso bor gyur pa’i phung khams kyi spros pa mtha’
dag ’od gsal gzhon nu bum pa sku’i dbyings su rang dengs[779] la song ba’i thim rim
gyis mtshon pa’i skye ’chi bar do’i rnam bzhag thams cad las ring du brgal ba yin la|
de las gzhan pa rnams ni tshe ’di’i phung khams phra rags ’od gsal gyi dbyings su
lhag ma med par ma bs dus par bar do ’grub tshul med la| dkar dmar nag gsum gyi
snang ba sogs kyang khams phra mo bs dus pa’i rtags snang yin pas man ngag zur pa
cang med dam snyam mod| gang zag gi kh Yad par gyis thim rtags de dag la mngon
tshan che chung ni sna tshogs shig ’ong ba ’dra

[7] bdun pa| ’chi kha’i bar dor grol ba la ’char lugs brgyad dang thin lugs brgyad[780]
’byung ngam mi ’byung gsungs par

’char tshul de dag ni ’chi kha’i bar do’i pha rol lam bar do de rdzogs rjes kyi chos
nyid bar do’i ’char tshul yin pas mi ’byung bar sems lags

[8] brgyad pa| chos nyid kyi bar dor zhi skus gzhan don dngos su mi byed| khro skus
byed ces pa ’di ci lags gsungs par

mched gzhi snying ga’i rig gdangs zhi skur shar dus nas rang ngo shes na gzhan don
dngos su byed long med par dbyings thog tu thim pa [568] yin la de las mched pa dung
khang gi khro bo’i rtags snang khro skur shar tshe gzhan don byed pa’i skad cig ma
mang po’i ring la gnas pa’i don yin| skabs ’di’i gzhan don byed mi byed ces pa’i

[779] JTNs dwangs
[780] Following JTNd and JTNs. JTNg omits dang| thin lugs brgyad
gzhan ni rang las rgyud tha dad pa’i gdul bya la mi byed kyi stong gzugs lhun grub kyi snang char ’gro drug rmi lam ltar ’char ba la bzhag par gsungs te| rgyas par theg mchog mdzod kyi bar do’i rim khang na gsal lags| 

[9] dgu par| sems can sum stong la rig pa bcug pas grol zhés pa ’di bar srid dang rang bzhin bar do’i sems can gang lags| rdzogs chen la sbyang ba yod med thams cad lags sam| grangs sum stong ’di la gab sbas yod dam med ces par| 

dbang gnyis kyi ’jug pa la dbang thob pa’i skabs su sems can sum stong rig pa gtad pas grol bar mdzad ces gsungs pa ’di’i thad nas dris par snang ste| de ni kha cig tu bar do’i sems can zhes bshad pa rang bzhin bar do la dgongs zhes gsungs yod snang shar| de dag rdzogs chen la sbyangs pa’i sems can yin mi gsal yang sngon gyi ’brel ba yod pa re dgos sam snyam| sum stong gi grangs la gab don med pa ’dra| ’di rigs gzhung nas gsungs pa de ka’i rjes su ’brangs pa ma gtogs grangs de ltar nges pa’i rgyu [569] mtshan sogs bshad mi nus pa ’dra ste| rgyal sras sa dang po pa’i yon tan brgya phrag bcu gnyis thob par gsungs pa sogs kyang tshul de ’dra red lags| 

[10] bcu par| bar dor gnad gsum gyis grol ba rnams la thim lugs brgyad kyis cig char du thim pa dang| ngo ma shes nas ’khrul pa la thim lugs brgyad kas nang dbyings su gzhi snang thim rung ’khor ba ltar thim pa la bag chags goms shugs che bas ’khrul pa lags sam zhes par| 

gzhi snang grol stobs kyis thim pa dang ’khrul stobs kyi thim pa gnyis las phyi ma’i skabs ’dir sems can tha mal pa rnams lachos nyid bar do’i gzhi snang skar mda’ rgyug pa’i yun tsam las mi ’char zhing shar ba dang thim pa gnyis ka ngos mi zin mod| ’on kyang thog med nas bag chags goms shugs kyis ma dag ’khor ba’i sgo ltar shar ba’i lag rjes stobs su gyur nas bar do dang skye ba’i ’khor ba mched pa ni los yin snyam| 

[11] bcu gcig par| ye shes bzhi sbyor skabs ye shes gsum po’i lam snang la grol ba de phrin las rtsal ma rdzogs pas yon tan la mchog dman ’byung ngam| ye shes lhun grub rin po che’i sbubs la thim pa’i lam snang la phrin las kyi rtsal rdzogs pa e yin gsungs par|
chos dbyings me long mnyam nyid sor rtog ste ye [570] shes bzhi sbyor gyi snang ba zhes zer dgos pas ye shes gsum zhes pa ni yi ge cung ma dag| bya grub ye shes kyi rtsal rdzogs pa ni ka dag tu grol dus kho na yin par gsungs te| de’i dus su rtsal rdzogs zin pas yon tan la mchog dman ‘byung don ma mchis pa lags

[12] bcu gnyis pa| bsam gzugs kyi ting ‘dzin ’grub phyir a bzhi brtsegs sogs sgom par gsungs pa ’di’i sgom tshul ji lta bu yin zhes par

thod rgal gyi gzigs stangs dang bstun| ’jam rlung cung zad bzung ste a’i don skye med dang| skye med ces pa rang sms kyi dbyings gdal khyab chen por shes pa’i ngang nas nam mkha’ la mig gtad pa’i sar a dmar po lnga brtsegs bsgoms nas rig pa ma yeng bar781 gtad pas dmigs med du cham gyis ’gro bas de’i ngang la mnyam par bzhag| a dkar po bzhi brtsegs sogs lhag ma rnas la’ang de ka rigs782 ’gre sbyar bas ’grub

[13] bcu gsum pa| ye shes kyi ’od rtsa shel sbubs can ’di rdzogs chen lugs kyi dbu ma mthar thug lags sam| mig gnyis la zug pa ’di rtsa de gnyis su gyes pa lags sam sogs gsungs par

de ka ltar yin mchi snyam pa’i ’al ’ol tsam las dpe cha blta ma thub pas theg mchog mdzod gzigs par zhu

[14] bcu bzhi pa| ’chi dus srog rtsa nas khrag thigs gsum snying khar [571] brgyab pas sms rig ’brel thag chad nas rig pa mig nas thon ces pa’i mig ’di dbang rten rags pa la byed dam zhes par

de dbang rten rags pa tsam la mi byed kyi der zug pa’i ’od rtsa rgyang zhags chu’i sgron ma la byed pa yin te| ’di’i rten ’brel gyis chos nyid bar do’i snang ba ’char ba lags

[15] bco lnga pa| snga ’gyur gyi man ngag las rtsa ro ma dkar rkyang ma dmar zhes par| g.yas gzung ba’i rlab| g.yon ’dzin pa’i rlab ces sbyor chog gam gsungs par chog

781 JTNd par
782 Added based on JTNd and JTNs. JTNg omits de ka rigs
pa ’dra snyam|

[16] bcu drug pa| klong snying bar do’i smon lam las dmar lam sngon du ’char bar bshad pa’i gnad ci lags gsungs par|

sku gsum zhing khams shbyong ba’i smon lam las snang ba gsum gyi rtags snang dmar dkar nag gsum gyi rim pas sbyar ba de la dgongs par mngon mod| bar do’i smon lam dgongs gcig rgya mtsho dang| rtsa rlung rig ’dzin ’khrul ’khor| rnam mkhyen shing rta’i gong ’ong sosgs kun tu dkar dmar nag gsum gyi rim pa spyi ’gros ltar kun mkhyen nyid kyis bshad ’dug pas snga ma’i de yi ge ’khrugs pa’i dpe skyon min pa’i nges pa’ang mi ’dug snyam|

[17] bcu bdun pa| thig le stong sgron gyi ra bar rig pa lug rgyud tshud thabs khregs chod la brtan pa thob nas rig pa rlung sms kyis mi [572] spur ba dang| gnad gsum gzigs stangs sogs kyis gcun nas brtson ’grus kyis sbyangs pa las gzhan pa’i man ngag cang e bzhugs gsungs par|

stong sgron gyi phyi rol du lu gu rgyud shar ba de blta stangs kyis stong sgron de ka’i dbus su rim gyis khrid nas de nyid las rig pa gzhan du mi g.yo bar mdung tshugs su gtad de sgom pa kho na gnad kyi gtso bo yin la| lus ngag gi gnad gcun pa sogs de’i yan tu dgos pa lags|

[18] bco brgyad pa| gnyug ma’am tha mal gyi shes pa zer ba ’di sms kyis rang bzhin dus gsum gyi rtog pas ma bslad pa’i rang byung gi ye shes de lags sam| ’on kyang tha mal dang shes pa zer don ci lags gsungs par|

gnyug sms mdzu gu btsug sa phyag bris ’dir ’khod de ka ltar yin pa gzhir bcas kyang don ’di ni rnal ’byor bla ma kyi rgyud sde rgya mtsho’i brjod bya ’gang che shos yin pas rgya mtsho ltar zab cing rgya che ba’i gtam gyi gzhir783 nges| de la sms kyi rdo rje dang ’od gsal dang rang bzhin lhan skyes sogs kyi tha snyad ni bla med spyi la grags shing| tha mal gyi shes pa zhes pa ni sgos su rdzogs chen pa la grags par snang| de’ang gso rig ’grel pa zla zer du glal ba dang sbrid pa sogs kyi shugs mi

783 JTNd bzhir
dgag pa la sogs pa’i kun spyod bshad skabs| tha mal par gnas pa la [573] nad mi
 ’byung ba’i phyr zhes rang babs fu gnas pa la tha mal par gnas pa’i tha snyad brjod
 pa ltar gnyug ma’i rang ’gros la spangs blang dgag sgrub sogs kyi bzo bcos ma song
 ba’i rang babs de la tha mal pa zhes brjod pa lags| rdzogs chen skor nas ’di mang du
 smos784 pa’i rgyu mtshan yang rdzogs rim gzhgan ltar rtsa rlung thig le’i sms ’dzin
 sogs785 kyis gnyug sms la bde nyams dang mi rtog pa’i nyams sogs dbyung thabs
 mi ’dra ba mang po byas nas ye shes ’char tshul dang mi ’dra bar da lta kun rtog rang
 dga786 ma’i steng na ye grol bsal bzhag las ’das pa’i rig pa zang thal rjen par bzhugs
 pa de ka sor bzhag byas787 nas ngo sprod pa dang sgom pa la dgongs te| rtsol bral gyi
 theg pa zhes rgya cher bsngags pa’i gnad kyang ’di la yod pa lags|

shes pa zer don ni de ’dra’i rig pa de’i ngo bo bem chos dang bem stong sogs yin pa
bead nas shes rig gi char gyur pa yin par go ched tha snyad sbyar ba ste go sla| [19] bcu dgu pa| mtshan med rig stong zung ’jug gi nyams len skyong dus rtog pa ci
shar yang shar grol ris med dang| de yang grol lugs gsum gang rung lags kyang ’og
 ’gyu shin tu phra mo grangs med pa yeng ba mi tshor ba zhig ’byung ’dug pa| de la
ngang gnas chos nyams rang ’byung gi dran pa’i rgyun yang brten pa de kas
 ’khrul rtog rgya ’byams [574] chod dam mi chod ces par|

rig thog tu mnyam par bzhag rtsis byas rung ci zhig nas kun gzhi lung ma bstan gyis
mgo bskor nas sms gnas lteng po had de ba dang thom me ba’i ngang la lus te ’og
 ’gyu shar ba mi tshor ba zhig ’byung ba ni mnyam bzhag rang sa ma zin pa yin pas
ci tsam goms yang ’khrul rtog gi bag chags bzlog mi nus la| de lta min par rnam rtog
 gi ’char sgo bzung ngan thams cad la bdag gnyer mi sprod par ’char gzhi’i rig pa
zang thal gyi ngo bo kho na’i steng du rang sa bzung| yang dang yang du rig cha de
nyid hur bton| rjen la phyungs te| chig chod du bskyangs pas rtog pa phra rags ci
tsam zur du shar yang byung tshor gyi rtsis gdab mi ’byung ba ni yengs788 nas mi
tshor ba min gyi rtsal gyi rtog pas mi ’phrog pa’am mi g.yeng tshul yin pas grol lugs
 gsum pa khang stong du rkun ma zhugs pa’i dpes bstan pa’ang de ka yin| de’i ngang

784 JTNs smros
785 JTNg omits ’dzin sogs. Added based on JTNd and JTNs.
786 JTNs ’ga’
787 JTNs byos
788 JTNd yeng
la ji ltar goms pa de ltar rnam rtog tha mal pa’i rtsal lam shugs chad cing rnam par mi rtog pa’i rig pa rtsal je rdzogs la song nas stong pa’i dbyings su rig pa’i mdung skor byed pa de ’byung| chos nyid rang byung gi dran pa dngos ni gnyug nums rang gi char gyur pa’i ye babs kyi dran pa kho na yin la| smos789 ma thag pa ltar rig pa rtsal thog na gnas dus yeng ma yeng gi so mtshams ’dzin pa’i shes rab ’dren byed kyi [575] dran pa de yang chos nyid kyi dran pa rjes mthun tsam du ’gyur bar mngon lags]

[20] nyi shu pa| shes nyams dang mthar ’gyur gyi nyams gnyis gcig yin nam min| brtan mi btrtan gyis snang shes nyams so sor ’byed pa lags sam| de ltar na bla med rgyud790 sde gzhan gyi stong gzugs kyang btrtan pa srid na rdzogs chen gyi snang nyams dang khyad par ci lags zhes791 gsungs par|

shes nyams dang snang nyams dang mthar ’gyur gyi nyams gsum las dang po ni bde gsal mi rtog sogs| gnyis pa ni dbyings sgron rma bya’i mdongs lta bu dang stong sgron ko mo’i chu la rdo bor la bta bu sogs| gsum pa ni rig mdangs792 las gzhan pa’i zla nyi ’ja’ tshon ’dra ba sog srlung rtags kyi snang ba rnam te de rnam gcig tu ’dod mi btub| rgyud sde gzhan nas bshad pa’i stong gzugs dang rdzogs chen thod rgal ba’i snang nyams gnyis stong gzugs yin pa tsam du ’dra zhing goms ’dris song rim bzhin gsal btrtan793 je cher ’gro ba tsam du’ang ’dra mod kyi slung gdangs dang rig gadgs kyi khyad par las dwangs cha| gsal cha| btrtan cha sog s la phan tshun mi ’dra ba’i khyad che bar theg mchog mdzod las gsungs te| bu ram ’o ma sha kha ra rnam kyi ro mngar ba tsam du ’dra yang phan tshun khyad par che mod de dag gi khyad par ’di lta bu zhes [576] lces myang na shes pa ma gtogs dbyangs can mas kyang brjod mi nus zhes slob dpon da’qdis gsungs pa ltar ro| |

[21] nyer gcig pa| sems kyi gsal stong zung ’jug dang| de las byung ba’i nyams bde gsal mi rtog dang| sems las ’das pa’i rig pa gsal stong zung ’jug dang de’i bde gsal mi rtog gi khyad par ’di rdzogs chen man ngag sde dang ’og ma’i khyad par phye zer na rung ngam gsungs par|

789 JTNs smros
790 JTNs rgyu
791 JTNd ces
792 JTNd, JTNs gdangs
793 JTNd brten
sems gsal stong zung 'jug dang| de'i char gyur pa’i bde gsal mi rtog tsam gyis phyi
nang thun mong gi zhi gnas las kyang ‘phags mi nus la| rdzogs chen sens klong man
ngag gi sde gsum gang yang spyir theg chen de las gsang sngags| de’i nang nas rnal
’byor bla med| de las kyang rdzogs rim gyi rnal ’byor ches zab pa yin pas de ltar
bzhag mi rung bar go lags|

[22] nyer gnyis pa| rdzogs chen la gsum du dbye skabs ma hā yo ga sens sde| a nu
klong sde| a ti man ngag sde lhes bzhag e rung zhes par|

de ltar bzhag kyang ’gal tshab ha cang che ba ma mthong rung rgyud ’grel phyogs
bcu mun sel las gsungs pa’i babs la brtags na sgyu ’phrul gsang snying gi lam rim
dang rdzogs chen khregs chod dang thod rgal dang gsum po a ti’i ma hā sogs gsum
du mdzad pa ’dra ba cig snang ste ’di la da dung shin tu brtags dgos par [577] ’dug
lags|

[23] nyer gsum pa| rdzogs chen sgom pa’i rnal ’byor pa bar do snga ma gsum gang
rung la grol na de’i dus nyid du gdod ma’i dbyings su mgon par byang chub pa
dang| srid pa bar dor grol na rang bzhin sprul pa’i zhing du skyes nas gzod ’tshang
rgya ba lags sam zhes pa ni| ji ltar phyag bris su gnang ba de kho na ltar lags|

[24] nyer bzhi pa| gsang ba sgyu ’phrul pa’i lhag pa’i bden gnyis dbyer med skabs|
kun rdzob tu yang bden gnyis dbyer med pa’i bsam spyod khyad par can gyis zin pas
dag pa rdo rje dbyings kyi dkyil ’khor du blta ba dang| don dam dkor bdun ye nas
llun gys grub pa’i bzhugs tshul de la thun mong gi mnyam gnyis las lhag pa’i bden
gnyis dbyer med chos sku chen po zhes go ba de ’dra zhih e red ces bka’ stsal bar794|

de los yin yang lhag pa kun rdzob bden pa ’di’i ’jog lugs zhib tu snang ba lhar sgrub
tshul gyi skor rnam las rgyas par mkhyen dgos shing| don dam dkor bdun gyi go
don rtsa ba gnyug sens rgyas par gtan la phab795 pa la rag las kyang rgyud ’grel
rnam la gzigs pas khyab kyi yi ge ha cang mang bas ’jigs pas spros pa bskyungs pa
lags|

794 JTNd par
795 JTNd phebs
de dag gis ni ji ltar bka’ ’dris gnang ba rnams kyi lan796 ha lam tsam re zhus zin to| |

spyir [578] deng sang bsal pa snyigs ma’i mthar sles shing797| thub pa’i bstan pa mar ’grib pas skye bo rnams dam pa’i chos la mos pa chung zhing| lhag par theg mchog rdo rje rtse mo’i bshad sgrub bsod nams dang skal pas ’chun pa srid mtha’ ma khegs tsam du song ba’i dus ’dir| ’di tsam zhig gleng ba’i go skabs rnyed pa’ang skal pa bzang bar shes nas byis pas mi rgan gyi lad mo ltar bzlas pa ma gtogs rdo rje’i gnas zab mo rnams bdag ’dra bas bshad par ga la nus| bka’ ’di ’di dag la bglas na de kar rdzogs chen snying thig gi phyogs la gzigs rtog mang du mdzad kyi798 yod ’dra snyam nas kha tsam min par yi rang chen po skyes shing da dungs yang| sems rig rmam ’byed spyi’i go don dang| rig pa bcar phog tu ngos ’dzin tshul| de kho nas shor gol nor gsum gyi ’phrang thams cad chig chod byed tshul| rig pa rkyang ’ded byas nas gdams ngag gzan gyi shan ma zhugs par skyon tshul| de la mdo rgyud ’og ma rnams nas bshad pa’i lam gyi gnad mtha’ dag yar ldan du rdzogs tshul| der ma zad theg pa ’og ma gang dang yang mi ’dra ba’i khyad par ’phagschos nges ’drong rgya cher yod tshul sogs gsal zhing rno la mtha’ chod pa kun mkhyen gsems kyi rgyal po dri med ’od zer zhal dngos su bzhugs pa dang ’dra bar [579] ston pa chos dbyings mdzod ’grel lung gi gter mdzod yin pas de nyid la yang yang gzigs dgos| yang yang gzigs na je zhib je nges| tshim pa med par blta snying ’dod pa ’byung| lan re zung gzigs pa tsam gyis rtsing hrobs be ba las mi ’ong| de nas khregs chod thod rgal gnyis ka’i mtha’ gcod rgya che zhing ’byams klas par gtan la ’bebs pa theg mchog mdzod yin pas de yang yang799 gzigs pa gnad che| sems nyid nga’i gter mdzod rtsa ’grel gyi steng nas bstan pa spyi’i sgrom ’tshol ba’ang med mi rung du gal che snyam pa bcas mdzes lam du ma song ba’i nang bcar gyi zhu ba lags| 

zhes ’jam dbyangs rdo rje ’chang chen po’i bran gyi tha shal du gtogs pa sprang rgan bstan pa’i nyi mas gsal ba dge bar gyur cig]| ||

796 JTNd, JTNs lan; JTNg len.
797 JTNd cing
798 JTNd gi
799 JTNs omits yang

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Questions and Answers on the Great Perfection

Namo guru!

Although it is difficult for the likes of me, so deficient in intellect, to respond accurately to the several questions on the Great Perfection that you, noble lord, recently wrote and passed on to me, still I offer the following hasty, partial answers.

1. We can understand from the works of the Great Perfection that there is a ground of liberation—one of two aspects of the ground itself, which is divided into a ground of delusion ('khrul gzhi) and a ground of liberation (grol gzhi). To claim that the ground of delusion is spontaneously present in the ground of liberation would be tantamount to asserting that the ground is flawed. So, is the ground of delusion temporary or not?

The great Brahmin [i.e., Saraha] said:

Mind-as-such alone is the seed of all,
Wherein conditioned existence and nirvāṇa arise.

As this indicates, if the genuine mind of clear light alone is not recognized, then it is the ground of delusion; whereas if it is recognized and stability is attained, it becomes the source of liberation. As the former corresponds to the phase of the ground and the latter to the phase of fruition, the great omniscient one [i.e. Klong-chen rab-'byams] refuted claims that these two are identical. At the ground stage, every time we die, the clear light dawns in its entirety, but, through our failure to recognize it, we revert to the flow of deluded, dualistic grasping. By contrast, when we arrive at the state of liberation, there can be no turning back, because the stronghold has been seized directly. This is the difference.

At the ground stage, we do not recognize our own essence, [564] so the ground of delusion is set in place through speculation about the spontaneous expressions arising through confusion. We can see that this is not the inherent condition of the genuine nature of clear light itself. If it were, then the more we recognized the essence or perfected its strength, the more the deluded experiences of saṃsāric existence would increase. We do not assert, therefore, that the basis of delusion and the ground of liberation are the same, nor do we accept that the clear light of the
ground, which is believed to be the basis for delusion, is a temporary phenomenon. It seems to me that such views would be like attempts to draw a sharp distinction between primordial purity and spontaneous presence.

2. If delusion is not present in the ground itself but involves clinging to its expressions—the manifestations of the ground—as good or bad, does the combination of wind energy and mind, which is the one who is deluded, exist separately?

The clear light of the ground never develops into the essence of delusion; it could not possibly do so, which is why it is described as primordially liberated (ye grol), utterly pure from the beginning (gdod nas rnam dag), alpha pure (ka dag), and so on. But then we cannot say that the wind energy and mind, which has begun to cling to ground appearances, is undeluded. Therefore, we must say that these two are not identical and are distinct. Still, as was said by the awareness holders of the past, although delusion is not clear light, there would be no delusion were it not for clear light. In view of this, I wonder if we should not assert that delusion is of the same nature or essence as clear light but differs in substance.

3. When there is delusion about dharmakāya, wisdom, and pure awareness, they turn into the ground-of-all, ordinary consciousness, and ordinary mind. The former three are said to be beyond bondage and liberation and lacking in any concrete identity—being limitless and free from partiality or bias—yet capable of taking on any form, as shown through the analogy of a mirror in which various reflections can arise. So, what is the key to the arising of sentient beings for whom samsāra does not merely appear, but who are bound through deluded attachment?

When we speak of “the stirring of ground appearance from the ground” (gzhi las gzhi snang du g.yos), ground appearance does not refer only to visionary appearances such as buddha forms (sku), lights (’od), and light spheres (thig le). It also refers to all that unfolds through the outward radiance of compassionate energy’s awareness. Through this expression or force, just as tarnish (g.ya’) appears on gold or algae (nya lcibs) develops in water, an adventitious form of consciousness develops in which objects appear to be distinct from the perceiving subject. When
this first develops in a subtle form, it is termed ground-of-all (*kun gzhi*). Then, as wind energy and mind become coarser, the six senses and the defiled mind emerge. The major works of the Great Perfection discuss this process in detail when describing how sentient beings fail to realize the ground and become deluded.

Therefore, since actual pure awareness is primordially pure, it does not develop the features of reifying attachment. Rather, it is the coarser states of mind, which arise out of this pure awareness, that develop into the reifying attachment of ordinary beings. From this, it is easy to understand the subsequent stages of the process and the development of compositional karma (*‘du byed kyi las*), sentient beings, and the various realms of sentient beings.

4. Do the dissolution phases of appearance, increase, and attainment arise during the first bardo[^800] of dying [566] for those who are strong in the practices of “blending the three spaces” and transference?

I think the phases of dissolution must arise in any such instance. Liberation through entering the sphere of clear light is for those who attain stability during the clear light of death, and that clear light must be preceded by the occurrence of the dissolution phase. Then there are those who are liberated through the ejection and transference of consciousness and who are transported to a pure realm once consciousness has left the body. In such cases, the departure of consciousness occurs only after the clear light of death, which itself occurs after the dissolution process.

5. What is the difference between the phase of consciousness dissolving into appearance (and the rest) and the phase of consciousness dissolving into space? If the dissolution of consciousness into space is further subdivided, it consists of the dissolution of consciousness into appearance, then of appearance (*snang*) into increase (*mched*), and so on, so they are essentially the same.

[^800]: I have left the Tibetan term *bar do* untranslated here, because, although it is not yet included in the OED, it is widely understood. This is partly due to the popularity of the *Bar do thos grol*, but also, more recently, through the 2017 Booker-prize winning novel *Lincoln in the Bardo* by George Saunders (London & New York, Bloomsbury, 2017). I occasionally adopt the translation “intermediate state”, although this is far from satisfactory and obviously lacks the religio-cultural specificity of *bardo*. 
6. Is there any instruction on the hidden significance of forcefully interrupting the phase of the dissolution of sperm, egg, and wind energy?

The dissolution phases of appearance, increase, and attainment all relate exclusively to the phase of the dissolution of wind energy. Apparently, there are different explanations for the phases of dissolution relating to sperm, egg, and wind energy. In any case, [567] those who attain enlightenment in this lifetime are far beyond the conventions of birth, death, and the bardo state. This is indicated by the way in which all the ordinary aggregates and elements—of which sperm, egg, and wind energy are most important—dissolve into the natural radiance of the sphere of clear light, the youthful vase body. For others, there is no bardo unless the aggregates and elements of this life, whether gross or subtle, dissolve entirely within the sphere of clear light. The visions of whiteness, redness, and blackness and so on are also signs of the dissolution of the subtle elements. We might indeed wonder then whether there is not a separate instruction. There is seemingly a variation in the degree to which the signs of dissolution are apparent based on differences in the individual.

7. Do the eight modes of arising and eight modes of dissolution occur for those liberated during the bardo of dying?

No, they do not. These modes of arising occur after the bardo of dying: they are modes of arising during the bardo of dharmatā and take place only after the earlier state has concluded.

8. Why is it said that in the bardo of dharmatā the peaceful forms do not act directly for the welfare of others, while the wrathful forms do?

This means that if we recognize the radiance of awareness when it arises as the peaceful forms from its base in our hearts, then, without any opportunity for acting directly to benefit others, they are absorbed directly into all-pervading space. [568] Then, when the wrathful ones appear from the skull palace, they remain for several instants, acting for the welfare of others. Here, the “others” (gzhan) referred to in the phrase “acting (or not acting) for the welfare of others” (gzhan don byed) does not signify separate beings to be trained, distinct from our own continuum. Rather, it
means that these forms act on behalf of the dreamlike beings of the six classes who
are spontaneously present, empty forms. This is explained in more detail in the
section on the bardos in *Theg mchog mdzod*.

9. It is said that “directing awareness toward three thousand sentient beings causes
them to be liberated.” Does this refer to beings in the intermediate state or those in
the natural bardo of this life? Would they all have previously trained in the Great
Perfection? And is there any hidden significance to the figure of three thousand?

This question seems to be a reference to the following statement about the attainment
of power over animation (’jug pa la dbang), which is one of the two forms of power:
“Directing pure awareness causes three thousand beings to be liberated.”\(^{801}\) Some
say that sentient beings of the bardo can mean beings of the natural bardo of this life.
Although it is not clear whether they are sentient beings who have trained previously
in the Great Perfection, I think they must have some past connection. There appears
to be no hidden significance to the figure of three thousand. Although such
statements appear in the texts, we can only take them literally;\(^{[569]}\) we cannot explain
the reason behind the numbers that are given—just as with statements about the
bodhisattvas gaining twelve sets of one hundred qualities upon reaching the first
bodhisattva stage (*bhūmi*),\(^{802}\) and so on.

10. Is it true that for those who are liberated in the bardo through the three crucial
points, the eight modes of dissolution occur all at once, whereas for those who are
deluded through lack of recognition, delusion continues because although the
ground appearances could dissolve into inner space through the eight modes of

\(^{801}\) In *Thod rgal gyi rgyab yig nyo zla gza skar*, Klong-chen rab-’byams explains the two powers as follows: “‘Power over creation’ (skyé ba la dbang) refers to the instantaneous display of emanations to guide beings in appropriate ways. It is the capacity to liberate three thousand beings in an instant by directing one’s pure awareness at them. ‘Power over animation’ is the capacity to move material objects and cause them to speak by directing pure awareness toward them. One thereby guides beings by producing the sound of the Dharma from lotuses, wish-granting trees, and so on, and through miracles and emanating light.” (KLR vol. 9: 275.2f.).

\(^{802}\) According to rDza dPal-sprul the twelve sets of one hundred qualities (yon tan brgya phrag bcu gniyis) attained during the first *bhūmi* are: 1) enter into and arise from one hundred samādhi meditations in a single instant, 2) see one hundred buddhas face to face, and receive their blessings, 3) travel to one hundred buddha realms, 4) cause one hundred world systems to shake, 5) illuminate one hundred world systems, 6) bring one hundred beings to complete maturity, 7) manifest in one hundred aeons in a single instant, 8) know one hundred aeons in the past and 9) one hundred aeons in the future, 10) open one hundred doors to the Dharma, 11) manifest one hundred emanations, and 12) for each of these bodies, manifest one hundred attendants. See PS vol. 4: 180.
dissolution (thim lugs brgyad), the habitual tendency for dissolution into saṃsāra is much stronger?

Dissolution can occur either through the strength of the liberation of the ground appearances or on the strength of delusion. Taking the second option, ordinary sentient beings will experience the arising of the ground appearances during the bardo of dharmatā for no longer than the duration of a shooting star. They will not recognize either their arising or their dissolution. Nevertheless, it is still true that through their habitual tendencies, the “arising as the impure saṃsāric gateway” (ma dag 'khor ba’i sgo ltar shar ba) has left the strongest impression, as a result of which saṃsāra continues to unfold with the bardos and with taking birth.

11. When there is fourfold wisdom, is there a disparity in enlightened qualities because liberation in the path experience of threefold wisdom does not perfect the strength of activity? Or is the strength of activity perfected in the path experience of the dissolution within the precious sphere of spontaneously present wisdom?

In fact, we must refer to an experience of fourfold wisdom (meaning [the wisdom of] dharmadhātu, mirror-like [wisdom], [wisdom of] equality, and [wisdom of] discernment), [570] so it is slightly incorrect to refer to threefold wisdom. The perfection of the strength of all-accomplishing wisdom is said to occur only at the occasion of liberation into primordial purity. When this happens, the strength is already perfected, so it is meaningless to speak of this bringing about an emergence of greater or lesser qualities.

12. It is said that to accomplish the concentrations and formless absorptions we should meditate on the four tiered A syllables and so on, but how is the meditation done?

The gaze should be as in Thod-rgal practice. Hold some gentle breathing for a while. Then, since A signifies the unborn, recognize that the unborn is the great all-pervading sphere of your own mind, and direct your gaze into space. There, visualize five red A syllables, one on top of another. And, by focusing your awareness undistractedly, allow it to transcend any referential focus, then settle evenly into that
experience. The same applies for the remaining practices: the one with a stack of four white A syllables, and so on.

13. *Is the hollow crystal light channel of wisdom the ultimate form of the central channel (avadhūti) in the rDzogs-chen tradition? Is it split in two as it extends to the two eyes?*

I have the impression that it is just like that, but I recommend that you consult *Theg mchog mdzod*, as I cannot look at the text myself.

14. *It is said that at death three drops of blood from the vital channel gather in the heart, [571] causing a separation of mind and pure awareness, after which awareness departs through the eyes. Is this referring to the coarse visual faculty?*

This refers not to the coarse faculty support but to the light channel—the far-reaching lasso of the water lamp (*rgyang zhags chu’i sgron ma*)—which is connected to the eyes. It is this interdependent circumstance that allows the visions of the bardo of dharmaṭā to arise.

15. *In the pith instructions of the Ancient Translations, it is said that the right channel (rasanā) is white and the left channel (lalanā) is red. Can we say that the right is the potential for the grasped (or perceived) and the left is the potential for the grasper (or perceiver)?*

Yes, I think that would be fine.

16. *What is the significance of the explanation in the bardo aspiration prayer of the Klong chen snying thig that the experience of redness (dmar lam) arises earlier [i.e., before the experience of whiteness (dkar lam)]?*

It does indeed appear as if the sequence of the three symbolic experiences as redness, whiteness, and blackness is the vision of sKu gsum zhing khams sbyong ba’i smon

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803 The translation of *rlab* as “potential” here is tentative. Both A-lags gZan-dkar and Tulku Thondup Rinpoche supported this reading while also expressing uncertainty as to the precise meaning.
lam. Still, in other works, such as the bardo aspiration prayer *dGongs gcig rgya mtsho,* rTsa rlung rig ’dzin ’khrul ’khor, and the earlier and later sections of *rNam mkhyen shing rta,* the omniscient ’Jigs-med gling-pa describes the usual sequence of whiteness, redness, and blackness. I wonder, therefore, whether we can be certain that the earlier text is not corrupted by scribal error.

17. **In the method for bringing the chains of awareness within the enclosure of the lamp of empty spheres,** [572] are there any other instructions besides training with diligence and applying the three crucial points, the gazes and so on, having gained stability in Khregs-chod, so that awareness is not disrupted by wind energy and mind?

The most crucial point for meditation is to gradually bring the chains of awareness that arise outside the empty lamps into the centre of those empty lamps by means of the gaze, and then not to allow that awareness to stray elsewhere but to plant it like a spear. As a support for this, you also need to apply the crucial points of body and speech, and so on.

18. **Is what we call genuine (gnyug ma) or ordinary consciousness (tha mal gyi shes pa) the nature of the mind, the self-arising wisdom that is untainted by thoughts associated with the past, present, and future? In any case, what is meant by “ordinary” (tha mal) and “consciousness” (shes pa) here?**

The term genuine mind (gnyug sens) refers to exactly what you have written. Yet, as this is the most important point among all the ocean-like statements in Highest Yoga Tantra, it is, like the ocean itself, decidedly vast and profound. Terms such as vajra of the mind (sems kyi rdo rje), clear light (’od gsal), and natural and co-emergent (rang bzhin lhan skyes) are more common in the Highest Yoga class, while ordinary consciousness appears to be particularly prevalent in rDzogs-chen.

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804 KNT vol. 2: 463–468.
805 KNT vol. 2: 469–479.
806 Rig ’dzin ’khrul ’khor sbas don gsal ba. KNT vol. 3: 37–52.
807 Yon tan rin po che’i mdzod las ’bras bu’i theg pa’i rgya cher ’grel rnam mkhyen shing rta. JLd vol. 2: 1–879.
The section on general conduct in the Zla zer commentary on medicine states that the force of a yawn, a sneeze, and so on, should not be blocked, and that to remain ordinary, in this way, prevents ill health. The text uses the expression “remain ordinary” (tha mal par gnas pa) in the sense of remaining naturally (rang babs su gnas pa). In a similar way, the word ordinary can refer to the genuine state, left naturally as it is, without any contrivance or adjustment through abandoning or adopting, elimination or cultivation. The reason the term is used so frequently in a rDzogs-chen context is that this differs from other means of bringing about the dawn of wisdom. Other perfection-stage systems employ various methods to generate a feeling of bliss or an experience of non-conceptuality, such as focusing the mind on the channels, wind energies, and drops. But here, by contrast, the introduction and meditation are effected directly upon our everyday state of conceptualization, by leaving the mind as it is, in a state of naked, all-penetrating awareness, primordially free and beyond any notion of anything to be eliminated or preserved. This is also the key to why this approach is praised so extensively as the effortless vehicle.

The sense of consciousness here is that the essence of awareness is unlike inanimate matter (bem chos) or some lifeless vacuity (bem stong), insofar as it has a quality of cognizance or awareness (shes rig). This is easy to understand.

19. When we sustain the non-conceptual practice of the union of awareness and emptiness, any rising thoughts are freed upon arising, impartially. And yet, with all three modes of liberation, distraction can still occur, undetected, through our innumerable extremely subtle “undercurrent” (’og ’gyu) thoughts. Can we put a stop to this diffuse form of delusive thought through continual reliance upon the flow of natural, self-arisen mindfulness as we abide in an experience of the natural state?

Even though we might settle evenly in what we take to be a state of awareness, at some point we will be deceived by the indeterminate ground-of-all. When this happens, we will find ourselves in a stagnant state of mental stillness, a blankness.

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808 Padārthacandrikāprabhāsānasāṅgāgahṛdayavivṛtti (Yan lag bṛgyad pa’i snying po’i rnam par ’grel pa iṣhig gi don gyi zla zer) by Candranandana is a major commentary on Aṣṭāṅgahrdaya (Yan lag bṛgyad pa’i snying po). sDe dge bstan ’gyur vol. 200: 1–591.
(had de ba) or oblivion (thom me ba), in which we do not notice the undercurrent of thoughts. At this stage, meditative equipoise is not yet secure, so no matter how familiar we are with the practice, we are unable to counteract the habitual tendencies of delusive thought. Rather than trying to control all the various good and bad thoughts as they arise, we should hold to the very essence of unimpeded awareness, which is the basis of such arising. We must sharpen and intensify this quality of awareness, again and again. By laying bare this awareness and sustaining it and it alone, we will not be tempted to evaluate any subtle or coarse thoughts that may arise. This does not mean that we are distracted and fail to notice what arises, but that we are no longer captivated by or distracted by expressive thoughts. This corresponds to the third mode of liberation, which is compared to a thief entering an empty house. The more familiar we become with this experience, the more the expressive power or strength of ordinary conceptual thoughts will be cut through and the strength of non-conceptual awareness perfected. And with this, as it is said, the spear of awareness will circle within the sphere of emptiness. Actual self-arising, natural mindfulness is nothing other than the capacity for remembrance that is a timeless quality of genuine mind itself. It should be clear from what has just been said that the mindfulness that maintains a boundary between distraction and non-distraaction while remaining in the expressive power of awareness is merely an approximation of true, natural mindfulness.

20. Are cognitive experiences the same as “complete experiences”? Is the distinction between visionary and cognitive experiences a matter of whether there is stability? If so, then if the empty forms described in other Highest Yoga tantras were stable, how would they differ from the visionary experiences spoken of in rDzogs-chen?

When we speak of the three types of experience—cognitive experiences (shes nyams), visionary experiences (snang nyams), and complete (mthar ’gyur gyi nyams)—the first refers to experiences of bliss, clarity, and absence of thought and so on. The second type includes the lamp of absolute space (dbyings sgron), which is compared to the fan of a peacock’s feathers, and the lamp of empty spheres (stong sgron), which are like the rippling circles from a stone cast into a pond. The third type includes experiences that are signs of wind energy, such as those compared to
the sun, the moon, and a rainbow, which appear to be distinct from the radiance of awareness. Therefore, we cannot claim that these various experiences are the same.

The empty forms described in other classes of tantra are like the visionary experiences of the rDzogs-chen practice of Thod-rgal only in the sense that both are empty forms. It is true, however, that they are also similar in that both grow progressively clearer and more stable with increased familiarity. But, as *Theg mchog mdzod* explains, there is a great difference in their aspects of brightness or their aspects of clarity and stability. While one is a manifestation of wind energy, the other is a manifestation of awareness. Molasses, milk, and sugarcane are similar in having a sweet taste, but there is still a great difference among them. [576] And although we can experience this difference with our tongue, even Sarasvatī herself is unable to express it in words, as the master Daṇḍin observed.809

21. There is a union of clarity and emptiness in the ordinary mind, and there are meditative experiences of bliss, clarity, and absence of thought, which derive from this union. Then there is the union of clarity and emptiness in the pure awareness beyond mind, together with its bliss, clarity, and absence of thought. Can we say that the difference between these two sets is a difference between the Pith Instruction category of the Great Perfection and what lies below it?

The union of clarity and emptiness in the ordinary mind, and the bliss, clarity, and absence of thought that are its qualities, cannot be classified above even the calm abiding that is common to both non-Buddhist outsiders and Buddhist insiders. Any of the three rDzogs-chen categories, whether Mind, Expanse, or Pith Instructions, is generally more profound than even the perfection phase of Highest Yoga Tantra, which in turn belongs to the Secret Mantra that is superior to the general Mahāyāna. I think that to make such an assertion is therefore inappropriate.

22. When dividing the Great Perfection into three categories, can we relate the Mind category to Mahāyoga, the Expanse category to Anuyoga, and the Pith Instruction category to Atiyoga?

809 A reference to *Kāvyādāraśa* I, 102: īkṣuक्ष्रशुढ़दीदिनान् माधुर्यस्यान्तराम् महत / तथा पि तद एक्ष्यातुम सरस्वत्यापि शक्यते // (Great is the difference in the sweetness of sugar-cane, milk and molasses; yet even Sarasvatī herself cannot describe it.)
I do not see anything too inappropriate about such a proposition. It even resembles what the Phyogs bcu mun sel commentary says about how the gradual path of the sGyu 'phrul gsang snying and the rDzogs-chod and Thodrgal relate to the three of Ati[yoga], Mahā[yoga], and so on. Still, the matter requires further investigation. [577]

23. Is it correct to say that when yogis who meditate on the Great Perfection are liberated in any of the three earlier bardoś, they awaken at that very moment in the primordial sphere; whereas if they are liberated in the bardo of becoming, they are reborn in a natural nirmāṇakāya pure realm and awakened there?

Yes, it is just as you have written.

24. When speaking of the indivisibility of the two higher truths, can we say that the relative is embraced by a special motivation and conduct of the indivisible two truths, so that we view everything as the pure maṇḍala of the vajra sphere, while recognizing that the seven riches of the absolute are always spontaneously present? And that the indivisibility of these two truths, which are greater than the two common forms of equality, is great dharmakāya?

It is indeed so. Still, you must understand higher relative truth in more detail from the explanations of how appearances are established as divine. Although the fundamental point of the seven riches of the absolute depends on fully ascertaining the genuine nature of mind, it is also worth consulting the tantra commentaries. Yet for fear that this might become too verbose, I shall not elaborate further here.

This concludes my rough answers to your questions.

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810 I have so far been unable to locate this section of Phyogs bcu mun sel.
811 The seven riches of the absolute (don dam dkor bdun) are enlightened form (sku), speech (gsung), mind (thugs), qualities (yon tan), and activity (phrin las), plus the dharmadhātu (chos dbyings) and wisdom (ye shes).
812 In his mDzod kyi lde mig commentary on the *Guhyagarbha, 'Jig-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma explains, “The two common forms are that all phenomena are equal in being unborn on an absolute level and illusory on a relative level.”
Generally speaking, these days, we have reached the end of a degenerate age, in which the teachings of Buddha are on the wane and people have little faith in the sacred Dharma. The teaching and practice of the supreme vehicle, the vajra pinnacle, are barely alive, and what remains is due to merit and fortune. At such a time, knowing that even finding the opportunity for discussion is a sign of good fortune, I am like a mere child imitating an adult. For how could I ever explain such profound adamantine topics? To judge from your questions, you are studying and contemplating the Heart Essence of the Great Perfection a great deal—in this, I greatly and sincerely rejoice.

The following topics are clearly and incisively resolved in *Lung gi gter mdzod*, the commentary to *Chos dbyings mdzod*, which is just like the omniscient king of Dharma, Dri-med 'Od-zer, in person:

- the general understanding of the distinction between mind and pure awareness
- the means of directly recognizing pure awareness
- how this alone eliminates all the potential dangers of side-tracks (*shor*), pitfalls (*gol*), and errors (*nor*)
- how to pursue pure awareness alone, without spoiling it through superfluous instructions
- how all the crucial points of the path taught in the sūtras and lower tantras are included within this approach, and not only that, how it is unlike any lower vehicle and superior to them

You should therefore consult the text repeatedly. If you read it again and again, your understanding will grow in precision and certainty, and you will develop an insatiable, heartfelt wish to study further. But consulting it only once or twice will not take you beyond a vague, superficial understanding.

*Theg mchog mdzod* brings about a vast, decisive understanding of both Khregs-chod and Thod-rgal, so it is vital that you study that too. I also believe that the *Shing rta chen po* commentary to *Sems nyid ngal gso* and the root text and commentaries
of *Yon tan mdzod* are extremely important, as they are indispensable for gaining an understanding of the general structure of the teachings.

I respectfully submit this direct and familiar, if perhaps inelegant, response.

This was offered by the old beggar bsTan-pa’i-nyi-ma, the lowest servant of the 'Jam-dbyangs Guru, the great Vajradhara. May virtue abound!

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813 'Jigs-med gling-pa’s *Yon tan mdzod* to which 'Jigs-med gling-pa himself wrote two commentaries: *bDen gnyis shing rta* and *rNam mkhyen shing rta*. 
3. dNgos bzhi gnyis la mu bzhi rtsi tshul\textsuperscript{814}

JTNd vol. 5: 187.4–193.5; JTNg vol. 1: 547.5–554.2; JTNs vol. 2: 104–110;

bla ma la phyag ’tshal lo| |

snying thig khrid yig chen mor| dngos gzhi gnyis la mu bzhi brtsi tshul zhig gsungs pa de nyung gsal bshad dgos zhes phebs par|

gzhi ni gzhi lam ’bras gsum gyi zlas phye ba’i gzhi’i bzhugs tshul de la byed| dngos ni de mngon du gyur pa la byed pas rtogs bya dang rtogs tshul gyi sgo nas bzhag cing| gzhi la ngo bo rang bzhin thugs\textsuperscript{548} rje gsum gsungs pa’i thugs rje ni gzhi byed tshul dang| groi lugs kyi ’gang shes pa’i phyir du gsungs pa las gzhi dngos ma yin la| ngo bo dang rang bzhin stong gsal gnyis su\textsuperscript{815} bshad pa’i dbyings rig gnyis po de gzhi la cha phye ba yin pas| ’di’i gzhi ni rig pa kho na la mi gzung ngo| |

lha khang dang rten gsum dper mdzad pa’ang rten dang brten pa’i dpe tsam du mdzad pa las| de gnyis rten brten pa’i ’jog tshul ’dra bar bzhed pa min la| dpe’i skabs su mu dang po’i gzhi lha khang dang| gnyis pa’i gzhi rten gsum gyi mtshan nyid la sbyar yang| don gyi tshe ni gzhi gong ’og rnam gsig tu bya dgos te| de ’dra ma yin na lha khang dang rten gsum gnyis ka mthong ba dang| rten gsum gyi mtshan nyid gtan la ma phebs pa mi ’gal ba bzhin du| dngos gzhi gnyis ka yin pa’ang dngos yin la gzhi ma yin pa dang mi ’gal bar ’gyur la| de’i tshe snying thig\textsuperscript{816} gi rnal ’byor khyad par du ’phags tshul ston pa la sbyar ba ma ’brel bar ’gyur ba’i phyir ro| |
de’ang rtogs bya gzhi rgyud rtogs pa yin kyang| rtogs tshul dngos su ste mngon sum du rtogs pa ma yin sosgs la bar gyi tshig mi mngon par mdzad nas gzhi yin la| dngos ma yin sosgs su gsung bar mngon no| |
mngon sum\textsuperscript{549} du rtogs pa la dngos su rtogs par gsungs pa’ang don spyi brgyud mi dgos par rtogs pa’i rgyu mtshan gyis btags pa ’dra ba| dngos shugs gnyis kyi zlas drangs pa’i dngos min zhing| chos gcig bden med du rtogs na brgyud nas chos gzhan

\textsuperscript{814} Title omitted in JTNd and JTNg.
\textsuperscript{815} JTNs, omits su
\textsuperscript{816} JTNs tig
yang de ltar rtogs zhes pa lta bu’ang min no| |

so so’i ngos ’dzin la bla ma’i man ngag gi drin gyis sems dang rig pa shan ’byed kyi khog shog pa’i go ba khyad par can rnyed de| phar phyin theg pa dang| rgyud sde ’og ma’i lam mthon po rnams dang| lam ’di nas rtogs pa’i rtsal chen rdzogs pa gnyis la bsgrub gzhi’i dbang gis khyad chen po yod tshul shes nas mtha’ bral gyi de kho na nyid kyang de’i steng du go bas gtan la phebs pa byung rung| de’i steng nas myong stobs kyis sgro ’dogs chod nus pa’i nyams len ma ’byongs pa ni mu dang po lha khang mthong yang rten gsum ma mthong ba lta bu ste| dpe ’di lhag bsam bskul ba las|

de la shun pa ji bzhi smra ba ste817| |

sogs dang tshul mtshungs| de ltar yin pa’ang theg mchog mdzod las|

rdzogs chen pa kha cig gis chos gzhi la lus nas lag tu blang du med par chos nyid kha ’byams su song bas ’chi kha tha mal du ’chi ba rnams so818| |

zhes so| |

man ngag thos pa’i dus su| [550] dang por dkyus ston pa na dbyings ngo ’phrod cing| rgyug byed thad kar ston pa na kun rtog gi rdul dang bral ba’i dwangs gsal| bcos ma’i ’jur mdud ma song ba’i tha mal| yul snang khol bu bas ma bcing ba’i khyab gdal819 sogz kyi rnam can khyad par ba zhig brda ’al ’ol ’phrod de| dbyings rig de gnyis sbyar na rdzogs chen yin mdog kha bo dang| rig pa’i mam cha de spu ris cung zad re zin nas skyong skabs gzhi’i rang mdangs bag tsam gsal du song ba ’dra mo yod cing| de nas sgom skyon bying ba bsang820 pa dang| theg pa thun mong gi zhi gnas skyong ba’i dus kyi dwangs821 gsal sogz mang po zhig la bskor nas slar yang rig pa ngos ’dzin ma nor ba zhig mtha’ bcad pa na| sngar shan ’byed kyi go ba brtan pos rgyud ma smin pa’i dbang gis nyams myong ’chal te| gang la’ang rig pa zhes gnad thog me btsa’ bya sa med par ’gro zhing| de nas dbyings kyi cha’ang thun mong ma

817 D vol. 43 (dkon brtsegs, ca): 291.4: ji ltar shun pa de bzhi smra ba ste|
818 KLR vol. 18: 117.
819 JTNd bdal
820 Following a suggestion from A-lags gZan-dkar, I am reading bsags which appears in all three editions as bsang.
821 JTNd dangs
yin pa'i ka dag gi cha shas su 'jog mi thub par song ba ni dngos yin la gzhi ma yin pa rten gsum mthong yang de’i khyad par ma nges pa lta bu ste| _theg mchog mdzod_ du 'di 'chad skabs|

man ngag kha cig thog ma gnad thog tu phebs kyang tha ma tshig gi mtha’ ma chod pas rjes la de’i thog tu mi gnas par pra yas pa rnams so 822| zhes [551] gsung pa’i phyir ro||

de’ang nyams myong 'chal rjes su der 'jog pa min gyi| de’i sngon la nyams rtogs rtsa ba mi brling bas de ltar bshad do| |

chos thams cad stong pa zhes chad mtha’ la dbyings su 'khrul pa dang de ma 'khrul yang theg pa 'dir gnas lugs de nyid gzhi ji 'dra zhig dang sbyar te sgom pa’i gnad ma go ba dang| kha cig de tsam gyis dbu ma’i lta ba rnyed pa dang rdzogs chen gyi ngo sprod thebs pa gnyis mi phyed cing| de gnyis don geig tu bya bar yang mi rung ba lung tsam las shes te} dpyad 'jog gi tshul mi 'dra bas de gnyis khyad che zer ba dang| sens kyi ngo bo sal le hrig ge ba tsam la thim la ma rmugs pa’i ye shes nang gsal sogs ming gang gzang 'dogs pa dang| de dang phyi rol pa’i bde gsal rtog med kyi ting nge 'dzin la khyad ci yod byas tshe| nyams la zhen mi zhen yod zer ba soqs phongs chos mang po smra ba ni gzhi dang dngos gnyis ka ma yin pa lha khang dang rten gsum gang yang ma mthong ba lta bu ste| snga ma las|

_theg pa thun mong ba spyi’i823 tshig gi lta sgom yid dpyod kyi lam du byas nas| don ngo ma 'phrod pas tha ma gar 'gro ngo ma824 shes pa rnams so825| zhes so| |

'di la 'chi kha tha mal du lus pa zhes khrid yig chan mor gsungs shing| _theg mchog mdzod_ du [552] mu dang po la de ltar gsungs te} de gnyis tha mal du lus lugs mi 'dra yang| sgom byung gi sne ma zin pa la 'dra zhing| de las mu gsum pas ni gdamgs pa’i gnad ma rnyed pa shin tu gsal la de tshang bar rnyed kyang rnyed pa lta gyi nyams len ma 'byongs pa’i skabs ni gdul bya mchog la’ang yod tshul thos bsam sgom pa’i

822 KLR vol. 18: 117.
823 KLR spyis
824 KLR mi
825 KLR vol. 18: 117
de’i don yang dper na bla med kyi rdzogs rim gzhan la slob tshe ’od gsal dang ye shes kyi sku’i ’jog tshul la go ba ngyed kyang de dag sgrub byed rtsa rlung thig le’i rnal ’byor rnams legs par ma shes na mnyan pa lag skya med pa lta bur ’gro ba de bzhin du| rig pa dang de’i gdangs kyi ’jog tshul lam gzhi dang gshi snang gi go don sog shes kyi sbya de dag lam dang ’bras bu’i ngo bor go ’pho ba’i thabs su skyong thabs kyi gnad nges pa gsungs pa’i don rnams la ma mkas na| de ni bstan bcos don mang mya ngam gyi|]thang la skom pas gdung ste ’chi bar zad|]ces pa lta bur ’gyur ba’o|]

del tar byas na rdzogs chen [553] gyi lam gyi cha rnams ma tshang ma med par lus su bsgrigs pa’i gzhung la nyan bsam rdzogs par byas pa tsam nas ma dang po gsum phal cher las ’da’ zhih| nyan bsam sgom gsum legs par byas na mtha’ dag las ’da’ bar nus so zhes par gsal te|]lam gyi dngos gzhi dang|]dngos gzhi’i gdams pa gnyis kyi khyad chos so so nas bstan to|]
gal te khrid yig tu ma gnyis pa ston skabs|

rtog dpyod kyi gom yang myong thog tu ma chags827|] zhes gsungs shing|
dang po’i tshe tshig tsam la lta sgom yin par yid brrtan ’cha’ ba zhes gsungs pas ’dir bshad pa rnams ci lta rung zhe na| skyon med de| snga ma ni myong ba brrtan po ma chags pas dman pa la dgag sgra sbyar ba yin par gong du drangs pa’i lung gis shes pa’i phyir dang|] phyi ma’ang bsam byung thos byung dang phyogs geig tu bsdu nas bstan pa yin pa’i phyir ro|]
brjod par bya ba gzhan yang yod de tho tsam mo|]

826 JTNd, JTNg smos
827 Ye shes bla ma 328
de nas mu bzhi pa ni| *theg mchog mdzod* las|

rig pa dngos su mthong bas lta sgom yin snyam la rag ma lus\(^{828}\) gzhi mthong bas ldog pa’i sa med pa\(^{829}\) zhes gsungs te|

gong ma rnams dang sbyar na shin tu sla’o| |

‘di dag gzhung spyi skad la grags pa’i dngos gzhi’i [554] sgra bshad min gyi| rdzogs chen la ‘jug tshul de la dngos dang gzhi gnyis phye ste de la mu brtsis pa’o| |

bdag ’dra bas kun mkhyen bla ma’i dgongs pa shod mi thub kyang| ’phral du yid la shar tshul cung zad cig bkod par zad de nyid lta bu’i mkhyen rab can gyisrgya cher dpyad par mdzod cig| [dge zhing bkra shis]| |

**How to Count the Four Permutations of Actual and Basis**

*Homage to the guru!*

[Introduction]*

What follows is in response to a request to clarify briefly what has been said on the method of counting the four permutations (*mu bzhi*) of ‘actual basis’ (*dngos gzhi*) in the great guidance manual of the Heart-Essence.\(^{830}\)

‘Basis’ here means the nature of the ground — as one of the triad of ground, path and fruition (*gzhi lam ’bras gsum*). ‘Actual’ means that it is made evident (*mngon du gyur pa*). These two refer, therefore, to what must be realized (*rtogs bya*) and the means of realization (*rtogs tshul*).

The ground is said to include the three qualities of essence (*ngo bo*), nature (*rang bzhin*) and compassionate resonance (*thugs rje*).\(^{[548]}\) Of these, compassionate resonance is taught so that one might understand how the ground functions and so that one might know the main point of the mode of liberation (*grol lugs*); it is not however the actual ground. Essence and nature, which are explained as emptiness and clarity, correspond to the two qualities of space (*dbyings*) and awareness (*rig*.

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\(^{828}\) KLR *las*

\(^{829}\) KLR *vol. 18: 117f.*

\(^{830}\) i.e., in ‘Jigs-med gling-pa’s *Ye shes bla ma.*
into which the ground is divided. And this means that the ground here should not be taken to mean awareness alone.

Although the text uses the example of a temple and its representations\textsuperscript{831} of enlightened body, speech and mind, which are related in the manner of support and supported (\textit{rten dang brten pa}), this only applies to the examples; it is not an assertion that what they refer to are similarly related as support and supported. The example for basis in the first permutation is a temple, whereas in the second permutation it is the features (\textit{mtshan nyid}) of the three representations. The referent (\textit{don}) of these examples, however, is the same, i.e., the basis, in both earlier and later permutations. If the basis were not illustrated differently like this, then because there is no contradiction between seeing a temple and its three representations and yet not being able to determine the features of the three representations, there would be no means of distinguishing being both the actual and the basis from being the actual but not the basis. This would then mean that the example could not successfully illustrate the superiority of the yoga of the Heart-Essence.\textsuperscript{832}

Even if the ground continuum that is to be realized has been realized, if it is not realized directly, meaning in actual direct experience, then it is said to be the basis but not the actual. It is evident that this is what is meant, even if some of the words are not spelled out explicitly. When we say, “realized in actual direct experience” (\textit{mngon sum du rtogs pa}), \textsuperscript{549} it means realized directly (\textit{dngos su}), as when, for example, there is no need for the intermediary of an object-universal (\textit{don spyi}; *\textit{arthasaṃānya}).\textsuperscript{833} Direct is thus not the opposite of implicit (\textit{shugs}); nor does it imply that realizing the lack of true reality in a single phenomenon leads \textit{indirectly} to such realization concerning other phenomena.

Now let us consider how each permutation is identified.

\textsuperscript{831} Literally supports (\textit{rten})

\textsuperscript{832} In other words, if the example did not change, then given that seeing the three representations necessarily involves seeing the temple in which they are housed, there would be no distinction between this example (seeing only the representations) and the fourth example (seeing both the temple and its representations).

\textsuperscript{833} This term is a \textit{karmadhāraya} compound, so, strictly speaking, translations such as “generic object” are incorrect. On the use of this term in Indian and Tibetan writings on logic and epistemology see Tillemans 1999: 234.
[1. Basis but not Actual]

Let us say that through the guru’s kindness in granting instructions, you gain a special understanding of the procedure for distinguishing the ordinary mind (sems) and pure awareness. Then you understand that there is a great difference in the basis of accomplishment separating the higher paths of the vehicle of transcendent perfections (pāramitā) and the lower classes of tantra from the full strength of realization on this path. Even if, in addition, you then gain some certainty through an understanding of the actuality (de kho na nyid) beyond extremes, if you have not mastered the practice for eliminating projections through the force of experience, you are still at the level of the first permutation—that of seeing the temple, but not seeing the three representations. The analogy here is equivalent to the statement in the Adhyāśayasaṃcudanāstra that, “In this, talk is like the outer layer…etc.” And about this the Theg mchod mdzod says: “This is comparable to those few who leave Dzogchen at the basic level, without applying it practically, and simply spout hot air about dharmatā, so that they die an ordinary death.”

[2. Actual but not Basis]

When receiving pith instructions, at first when the ‘course’ (dkyus) is revealed, you recognize it as basic space (dbyings). Then, when the ‘runner’ (rgyug byed) is shown directly, it is lucidly clear, free from the dust of conceptualization; ordinary without the tight knots of contrivance; and all-pervasive, unconfined by fragmentary appearances. You recognize somewhat vaguely what has these distinctive features. When you apply this to basic space and awareness it seems to be rDzogs-chen, and when you identify and sustain that trace of what has the features of pure awareness, the self-radiance (rang mdangs) of the ground appears to grow clearer. Then you clear away faults in meditation such as sinking dullness and you cultivate the tranquillity (śamathā) that is common to all vehicles. You might decide again that your recognition of pure awareness is unerring, but as your mind was not

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834 On the importance of this distinction (shan ‘byed) see Higgins 2013 passim.
835 D vol. 43: 262–306.
836 The sūtra compares talk or words to the outer layer or ‘bark’ of sugar cane which gives no flavour. The sweet taste, which is inside the cane, is likened to the actual meaning of what is said. Understanding the meaning is like tasting the sugar.
837 Reading bsags here as bsang.
previously matured through a stable understanding of the distinction [between mind and awareness], your experience has become confused. There can be no identification of pure awareness. It is as if there is no vital point at which to apply moxibustion (me btsa’). You can no longer identify the aspect of basic space as a feature of extraordinary primordial purity. This is the actual but not the basis, which is likened to seeing the three representations but not determining their features. As it says in Theg mchog mdzod: “Some instructions strike the right chord at the beginning, but, by failing to cut through the limitations of verbalism, do not remain with the crucial point and turn instead into speculation.” Thus, [551] this does not mean simply that experience becomes confused and you settle into that confusion, but that even before that the root of all experience and realization is unstable.

[3. Neither Actual nor Basis]

You might think, “All phenomena are empty,” confusing a nihilistic extreme (chad mtha’) for basic space. Or, even if you manage to avoid such confusion, you might fail to understand the key point of meditation, which is how to relate to this natural state (gnas lugs), the ground, in this vehicle. There are some who cannot distinguish between discovering the view of the Middle Way and receiving the introduction in rDzogs-chen. You can understand from the texts just how inappropriate it is to treat these two as equivalent: as their approach to analysis and settling is so dissimilar, there is said to be a great difference between them.

You might describe a mere penetrating clarity (sal le hrig ge ba) of the essence of mind in lofty terms, such as “wisdom that is inward and not dull” (thim la ma rmugs pa’i ye shes) or “inner luminosity” (nang gsal) and so on. And when asked how this differs from the meditative absorption of non-Buddhist outsiders, you might say that it comes down to whether there is attachment to experience. But professing such impoverished Dharmas (phongs chos) is to have neither basis nor the actual, a situation likened to failing to see the temple and the three representations. As the earlier [commentary, i.e., Theg mchog mdzod] says, “Those who adopt an approach of speculative view and meditation based on the general terminology common to all vehicles are not introduced to the true meaning, and therefore fail to recognize where they must go in the end.”

Here, the great guidance manual (Ye shes bla ma) says, “You will remain ordinary at the time of death.” Yet the Theg mchog mdzod [552] says something
similar about the first permutation. Although these are two different ways of remaining ordinary (*tha mal*), both are similar in that they involve a failure to capture what develops in meditation. The third permutation obviously denotes an inability to discover the key point of the instructions. It could also mean receiving the instructions in their entirety, but then failing to apply successfully in practice what has been received. This might affect even supreme students, as can be understood from the sequence of listening, reflecting and meditating. There would therefore be no logical fault in including such a situation within the first permutation, as explained above. Nevertheless, the *Theg mchog mdzod* explains the first permutation as, above all, a failure to discover entirely the key points of the instructions, as is clear from the phrase “without taking to hand” (*lag tu blang du med par*).

The meaning of this is that when you are training in other perfection stage practices of Highest Yoga Tantra, for example, you might understand the explanations of the clear light or wisdom form (*ye shes kyi sku; jñānakāya*), but unless you also fully understand the practices through which they are accomplished—the yogas of channels, wind-energies and essences—you are just like a boatman without any oars. Similarly, you might understand the explanations of awareness and its radiance or the meaning of the ground and ground-manifestations, but unless you are also skilled in the definitive points of how to remain and thereby transform your understanding into the essence of the path and fruition, it will be just as in the saying: “In the desert of ambiguous treatises, stricken by thirst and left to die.”

All of this means [553] that even thoroughly studying and reflecting upon works in which the various aspects of the rDzogs-chen path are clearly and comprehensively set out will enable you to go beyond the first three permutations to some degree; whereas if you undertake all three—study, reflection and meditation—well, you will be able to transcend them all completely. That is clear.

The ‘actual basis’ of the path is to be distinguished from the instructions on the actual basis.

You might wonder why the guidance manual (*Ye shes bla ma*) explains the second permutation by saying, “There is some understanding derived from conceptual analysis, but it is unconnected to experience…” and explains the first permutation by saying, “This refers to relying upon mere words… as the view and
meditation.” How, you might ask, are such statements to be reconciled with what is explained here? There is no fault. In the earlier case, experience is not yet stable, so the negation is used for what is meagre (rather than absent entirely), as can be understood from the quotation given above. And in the second case, what is born of reflection and what is born of listening\textsuperscript{838} are taken together as one.

Although there are further points that might be added, this should suffice for a simple list.

[4. Both Actual and Basis]

The \textit{Theg mchog mdzod} explains the fourth permutation by saying: “Since you see pure awareness directly seeing, you no longer rely on ideas about what view and meditation might be. As the ground is seen, there is no basis for turning back.” If you relate this to what has been said above, it is extremely simple.

[Conclusion]

This was not an explanation of the term actual basis (or main part) as understood in the general language of the scriptures, \textsuperscript{[554]} but how it is applied in rDzogs-chen, which separates the two words actual and basis and counts the permutations.

\textit{Even though it is not possible for the likes of me to explain the intent of the omniscient Guru, I have quickly set down a few ideas as they occurred to me. May the wise such as you examine it with a broad mind. May there be virtue and auspiciousness!}

4. Hor ’od zer gyi ngor gdams pa\textsuperscript{839}

\textsuperscript{838} i.e., the insight born of reflection (bsam pa las byung ba’i shes rab; cintamayāprajñā) and insight born of listening (thos pa las byung ba’i shes rab; śrutamayāprajñā).

\textsuperscript{839} Title appears only in JTNs.
dpal ldan bla ma’i ngo bor shes pas ’dud|

theg mchog rdo rje snying po’i chos tshul la|
mos pa’i blo ldan khyed kyis gang dris pa|
de ’dra bdag blo’i rtsal gyis shod dka’ yang|
bla ma’i lung la brten nas cha tsam dbye|

de la spyir rdzogs chen gyi gdams pa’i zab khyad mtha’ yas kyang| rtsa ba’i gnad ni
yon tan rin po che’i mdzod las|

   gang dag sms la’ das pa’i rig pa ni |
   rang bzhin rdzogs pa chen po’i khyad chos yin840 |

zhes gsungs pa ltar sms rig shan ’byed la thug pas| de nyid gnad du bzung tshul bris
’dug pa ni dam pa’i gsung sgrgos ma nor bar zin pa ste rjes su yi rang lags| gnyug
ma’i rig pa dang| ’od gsal rdo rje’i sms gnyis don geig la| de [555] nyid sngags bla
med kyi rgyud sde thams cad du rtsal ’don mdzad nas ma bshad pa med kyang| rlung
sms dbu mar ’dzud pa’i man ngag gis kun rtog bcad pa’i skabs su ’od gsal ngos
bzung ste sgor ma’i phyogs kha na mang la| lugs ’dir ni kun rtog gi steng na ’od gsal
til ’bru snum khyab ltar gnas pa’i dus nyid na bcar phog tu ngos bzung ste skyong
tshul ston pa’i khyad che zhing| de’i dbang gis ye shes mchog sgrub pa la rtsol ba
che chung dang mang nyung yang ches mi ’dra’o|

de’i dbang du byas nas da lta’i shes pa tha mal pa’am| da lta’i rig pa ma bcos pa ngo
sprad lugs la chos dbyings mdzod ’grel du tshul bdun gsungs pa sogs rnam grangs
mang yang| re zhig stong nyid kyi lta ba’i steng nas ngo spro tshul tsam brjod na|
phyogs gzhan du rang sms skye ’gag841 gnas gsum dang bral bar gtan la phab842 nas|
de lta phab843 pa’i stong cha de las yid gzhan du ma yeng844 par byas te845 sgor pa
yin yang| ’dir de lta mi byed kyi byung gnas ’gro gsum btsal nas yul dang yul can

840 These lines occur in chapter twelve of the Yon tan mdzod. See JLc vol. 1: 138.1–2.
841 JTNs ’gags
842 JTNd, JTNs phabs
843 JTNd, JTNs phabs
844 JTNs g.yengs
845 JTNd om. |
gyi dmigs gtad bshigs\(^{846}\) pa’i dus su ’di’o zhes bzung\(^{847}\) du ci yang ma myed pa’i ngang der bzo med rang babs\(^{848}\) kyi shes pa stong gsal spro bsdu dang bral ba zhig ’char te\(^{849}\) bzhi cha [556] gsum bral gyi rig pa zhes bya ba yin| de nyid la bcos slad kyi dri mas ma phog par lhod kyis glod de ’jog pa ni| rig pa rten med du zhog dang rnal ’byor pa| zhes gsungs pa’i don ma nor ba yin no| |

de’ang sngon ’gro’i dus su sems kyi mtshang btsal ba dang| dngos gzhi’i tshe de ltar btsal ba’i steng nas rig pa ngo spro pa gnyis ma ’dzing ba dgos te| kun mkhyen chos rje dang gter bdag gling pa sogz kyis gzhung na gsal lo| |

sems kyi cha thams cad rig par thag bead ces ’bris ’dug pa ’di la zhu dag byas na| sems kyi cha thams cad rig pa’i rang rtsal du shar ba yin gyi| rig pa dngos min zer dgos te| gzhan du na sems rig shan ’byed ces pa’ang rig pa dang rig pa shan ’byed ces par ’gyur ba’i phyir ro| |

yul sems thams cad rig pa’i rtsal du thag chod kyang| nyon mongs pa dang rnam rtog kha ma bri na ’ching e nus| zhes sogz ’dri ba la spyar ’od gsal la sраб ’thug gi rim pa mang po yod pas| dang po’i\(^{850}\) dus su rig thog nas ma yengs kyang| dge sdig gi rtog pa sna tshogs chu rlabs ltar ’byung ba mang du yod la| de ltar ’byung yang rtsa ba rig pa’i ye shes rang mal nas ma g.yos pa’i dbang gis| kun rtog de rnamz skad cig dang [557] por thol gyis shar yang| gnyis par de’i rgyun mthud\(^{851}\) mi nus par ’od gsal gnyug ma’i dbyings su sib kyis thim ’gro bas rgyun mi ’ching zhes gsungs te| mi ’ching ba’i rgyu mtshan ni| skad cig gnyis par rgyun ma mthud pa gcig pu de min gyi| rnam rtog skad cig dang po skye dus nas ’od gsal gyi dgongs pa’i rgyas thebs pa’i gnad kyis yin te| bskyed rim tsam la gnas pa’i sngags pas kyang snang spyod thams cad lha’i rnal ’byor gyi rgyas thebs pa’i dbang gis bsgul bskyod ’gro ’dug sogs gzhans la lung ma bstan du ’gro ba rnamz kyang sngags dang phyag rgya la sogz pa tshogs gnyis kyi sgo rlabs po cher ’gyur bar gsunz na| de lta ci smos\(^{852}\) pa’i phyir ro| |

\(^{846}\) JTNd illegible; JTNg gshegs
\(^{847}\) JTNg zung
\(^{848}\) JTNg bab
\(^{849}\) JTNs ste
\(^{850}\) JTNg ba ’i
\(^{851}\) JTNd ’thud
\(^{852}\) JTNs smros
'on kyang rig thog tu mnyam par mi 'jog par| gang shar thams cad rig pa'i rang rtsal du shes pa'i go yul yod pa tsam gyis ni rang grol gyi gdengs853 tshad rjes mthun tsam yang mi rnyed pas| 'jig rten phal pa ltar las nyon gyi 'khrul pa'i gzhana dbang du 'gro bar zad do| |

'di'i mnyam bzhag tu gnyis snang nub e dgos| gnyis snang ma nub par rdzogs chen gyi rig pa ngo ma 'phrod854 pa e yod| ces par| snang bzhi'i rtoogs pa mthon por slebs dus mnyam bzhag tu [558] gnyis snang gi spros pa mtha' dag zhi ba 'byung yang| rdzogs chen gyi rig pa la mnyam par bzhag tshad de ltar 'ong ba min te| gong du 'od gsal srb 'thug gi rim pa mang po yod par bshad pa des shes so| |

dran pa'i rgyun bskyangs nas bsgoms855 pas nam zhig rig pa nyid kyi steng nas dran pa zhig sad 'ongs zhes zhal rgyun las thos kyang zhib tu rtsad gcod pa ma byung bas de ji ltar yin| zhes par|

thun mong sems gnyis kyi bsam gtan la gnas cha yod kyang glo bur ba'i rten can yin phyir rlabs chung la| rig pa rang gnas kyi bsam gtan ni gnyis ma'i rang gshis yin pas chos nyid kyi rlun dang mi 'bral bar theg mchog mdzod dang rnam mkhyen shing rta las gungs pa ltar| rig thog na 'du byed kyi dran pa zhes grags pa dmigs gtad can gyi dran 'dzin med kyang| rtsol med rang bzhag gi dran pa'am| chos nyid ma bcos pa'i dran pa zhes 'od gsal rang sa zin cing| rtsal thog tu mi ' chor bar byed pa'i gnyug ma'i dran pa yod ces pa yin no| |

de ni sgom stobs kyis rig pa mngon du gyur pa dang mnyam du gser dang de'i rang 'od ltar shugs 'byung la 'ong ba yin gyi| ched du gnyer nas dran pa brten dgos phan chad sens kyi phyogs las mi 'da'o| |

'on kyang gnyug ma'i dran pa de mngon du bya ba'i thabs su [559] dang por 'du byed kyi dran pa brten nas rig ngo skyong ba ni mi 'gog ste| man ngag mdzod las|

dang po'i las can 'du byed ma yengs bya| | zhes sogs gsungs pa bzhin no| |

853 JTNs gdeng
854 JTNd, JTNg phrod
855 JTNd, JTNs bsgom
'di’i rnal ’byor pa ’chi dus thim rim ji ltar ’ong| de dus ’phen pa gtong e dgos| zhes par|

sa sa la thim pa sogs nas| namin shes nam mkha’| nam mkha’ ’od gsal| ’od gsal zung ’jug| zung ’jug ye shes| ye shes lhun grub la thim pa’i bar dang| mthar lhun grub nang dbayings su sdud pa’i tshul bcas rgya cher theg mchod mdzod dang| gnad ’dus khrīd yig ye shes bla mar gsal bas der gzigs shig| ’di dus snang mched thob gsum rgyud gzhan nas bshad tshod ltar ’char dgos mi dgos la sna tshogs smra yang| don gnas ni ’di’i lugs kyi rig pa dang| ’od gsal gyi ye shes gcig yin| des na snang mched thob gsum gyi mtha’i ’od gsal rdzogs chen gyi rig pa dngos yin kyang856 rdzogs chen gyi rig pa ’chi dus mngon du byed tshul la snang mched thob gsum bshad tshod bzhin ’ong ba’i nges pa med de| ’od gsal ’char tshul la gang zag ki khyad par gyis mi ’dra ba sna tshogs shig snang ba’i phyir te| sbas rgyud gzhan dang dus ’khor [560] dang| ’di nas gsungs pa’i ’od gsal du thim pa’i rim pa mi ’dra ba bzhin no| |

chos ’di’i khyad par gyi gdul bya rnam s ’chi ba’i dus kyi thim rim ni gong du smos857 pa ltar yin la| de’i tshe ’phen pa sngon du gtong ba ni gal che ste| mgron po la brgal ba tshang sprugs su gdab pa zhes bla ma’am rdo rje’i spun gyis bar do’i gdams pa phog nas gsal legs par btba ste| ’di bzhin du bar dor mi brjed par skyong dgos snyam du nges par byas nas ’chi ba yang de yin no| |

slar yang mnyam bzhag gi sngon dang| dngos gzhi’i skabs dang| rjes la ji ltar bya ba go sla ba zhig shod ces par|

lar dge sbyor ci byed kyang ’jig rten gyi g.yeng ba bcad nas skyong ba gal che la| lhag par rdzogs chen sgom na chos dang chos min gyi bya ba bzhag lang long mang po cam gyis bzhag ste las rlung dal zhing zhi ba’i thabs la ’bad dgos| mnyam bzhag dngos kyi tshe| dang po rig pa rjen la bton nas| de nyid bcos bsgyur spang blang gi lhad ma zhugs par rang babs su bzhag cing| rnam rtog ’phro na phar rnam rtog gi rjes su mi ’brang bar| rig thog tu tshur rang so bzung ba gnad yin| bde gsal mi rtog pa’i nyams sogs bzang ngan gyi rnam pa gang byung yang| de la rtsis gdab kyi rjes gcod

856 JTNd, JTNs yang
857 JTNs smros
Advice for Hor 'Od-zer

Your nature is not indicated by conceptual elaboration;
It is the genuine nature of all that is inanimate and animate,
The single essential meaning of an ocean of tantras—
In recognition of the essence of the glorious guru, I bow.

These questions, which you who have devotion for the Dharma tradition
Of the Vajra Essence, the Supreme Vehicle, have asked
Are difficult for someone with such mental skill as I possess,
Yet I shall elaborate a little based on the words of my guru.

Generally speaking, the profound features of the rDzogs-chen instructions are
without limit, but the fundamental key point is as said in the Yon tan rin po che’i mdzod:

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858 This occurs in mKhas pa šrī’i rgyal po’i khyad chos. See PS vol. 5: 206–207.
859 JTNd add. | i.e., ‘Od-zer of Hor. The meaning of the toponym Hor here is uncertain: often the term signifies
Mongolia, but the Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo (BGT vol. 3: 3072) notes that hor-pa also refers to
someone from the principality of Tre-hor in Khams.
The pure awareness (rig pa) that is beyond the ordinary mind (sems) is the special feature of the natural Great Perfection.

As this says, [the key point] comes down to the distinction between ordinary mind and pure awareness. As what you have written upholds this key point, it unerringly adheres to the speech of [past] saints and in this I rejoice.

Genuine awareness (gnyug ma’i rig pa) and the mind of vajra clear light (’od gsal rdo rje’i sems) are synonyms (don gcig). [555] This is emphasised in all the tantras of the Unsurpassed Mantra class and there is nothing that is not explained there. There are many systems of meditation wherein one recognises clear light only at the point at which conceptualisation (kun rtog) ceases based on the instruction (man ngag) for bringing prāṇa-mind into the central channel. In this tradition, recognition occurs directly in the midst of conceptualisation, [on the principle that] clear light is present, just as oil pervades a sesame seed. There is also a great difference in the means of sustaining [that recognition]. On this basis, there is a great difference too in the degree and duration of effort required to accomplish the supreme wisdom (ye shes mchog).

Thus, there are many ways of introducing the ordinary awareness of the present moment (da lta’i shes pa tha mal pa) or the uncontrived pure awareness of the present (da lta’i rig pa ma bcos pa), such as the seven ways featured in the commentary to Chos dbyings mdzod. For now, however, I shall describe only the method of introduction based on the view of emptiness.

In other approaches, having determined that one’s own mind is free from arising, ceasing and remaining, one focuses on that emptiness (stong cha), without allowing the mind to become distracted from what has been ascertained. To practise in such a way is meditation. Nonetheless, here we do not practice like that, but instead we investigate [mind’s] emergence, presence and departure, through which the focus upon object and subject is destroyed. Then, in that experience of not finding anything at all to hold onto with the thought “This is it!” there arises an unfabricated, naturally present state of awareness that is clear and empty, free from the proliferation and absorption (spro bsdu) [of thought]. This is known as “the pure awareness of the fourth part [556] without the three” (bzhi cha gsum bral gyi rig)

861 I.e., Lung gi gter mdzod. Chapter Twelve cites the Ngo sprod spras pa’i rgyud, which identifies three sets of seven methods of introduction, twenty-one in total. See KLR vol. 16: 299f. For an English translation see Longchen Rabjam 2001: 337.
To settle in this very [experience], in a relaxed way, unsullied by the stains of contrivance, is certainly what is meant by: “Settle in awareness without support, O yogi!”

Furthermore, the search for mind’s hidden flaws (sems kyi mtshang btsal ba) at the stage of the preliminaries and the introduction to awareness on the basis of such a search must not be in conflict. This is clear from the works of the omniscient Lord of Dharma [i.e., Klong-chen rab’byams], gTer-bdag gling-pa and others.

I must correct your statement, “All aspects of mind are determined to be awareness.” All aspects of mind arise as the self-expression (rang rtsal) of awareness, but they are not awareness itself. Otherwise, what we call the distinction between ordinary mind and pure awareness (sems rig shan ’byed) would become a distinction between pure awareness and pure awareness!

You asked: “Once we have determined that all objects (yul) and states of mind are the expression (rtsal) of pure awareness, if mental afflictions (nyon mongs) and thoughts do not diminish, can they still bind us?”

To such questions, we can reply that generally clear light has many degrees of strength. Therefore, at the first stage, even if one is not distracted from pure awareness, various virtuous and non-virtuous thoughts still arise like waves in great number. Even though they do arise in this way, the force of remaining unmoved from the natural resting place (rang mal) of the wisdom of pure awareness will ensure that although these conceptualisations suddenly arise in the first instant, they do not continue in the second. Rather, they will dissolve directly in the genuine sphere of clear light (’od gsal gnyug ma’i dbyings), and consequently not bind the mental continuum.

The reason that they do not bind it is as follows. It is not simply that [thoughts] do not continue in the second instant; rather, it is due to the key point of applying the seal of the realization of clear light as soon as a thought arises in the first instant.

862 I.e., belonging to the fourth time beyond the three times of past, present and future.
863 This line (rig pa rten med du zhog dang rnal ’byor pa) appears in the history of Sukhāsiddhi (bDe ba’i dangos grub kyi lo rgyus) included in the Shangs-pa bKa’-brgyud section of gDams ngag mdzod (DND vol. 12: 285.2).
864 See Chapter Five above.
After all, it is taught that even mantra practitioners who remain at the mere generation stage (bskyed rim; utpattikrama) apply the seal of deity yoga to all perceptions and activity and thereby transform what would be neutral actions such as moving about, walking, sitting and so on. They create great opportunities for the twofold accumulations with mantra and mudrā and so on. What need is there, then, to mention that the same applies here?

Nevertheless, without settling directly in pure awareness, merely to entertain the idea that all that arises is the self-expression of awareness will not bring about even so much as a semblance of genuine confidence in self-liberation (rang grol). One will only end up under the sway of delusion as a result of karma and mental afflictions like an ordinary worldly person.

You asked: Must dualistic perceptions fade in such meditative equipoise? And: Is there no recognition of the pure awareness of the Great Perfection until dualistic perception fades?

When one arrives at the higher realization of the four visions (snang bzhi), the pacification of all elaborations of dualistic perception during equipoise does occur. Nonetheless, this does not occur in all forms of meditative equipoise on the pure awareness of the Great Perfection. This can be understood from what I explained earlier about clear light having many degrees of strength.

You said: I have heard from an oral tradition (zhal rgyun) that by meditating while sustaining the continuity of mindfulness (dran pa; smrtempt), at some point a form of mindfulness arises as a feature of pure awareness itself. However, I have not investigated this thoroughly. So, how is it?

The common concentration (bsam gtan) of resting the mind has an aspect of stillness (gnas cha), but it involves a temporary support and is therefore weak (rlabs chung). [By contrast,] the concentration of self-abiding pure awareness (rig pa rang gnas kyi bsam gtan) is an innate property of the genuine nature, so it is not separate from the

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865 The four visions are: 1) the direct realisation of dharmatā (chos nyid mngon sum); 2) the increase of experience (nyams gong 'phel); 3) reaching the full measure of pure awareness (rig pa tshad phebs); and 4) exhaustion into dharmatā (chos nyid zad sa).
‘fluidity’ of dharmatā, as is taught in Theg mchog mdzod and rNam mkhyen shing rta.866 This means that there is no deliberate recollection of an object of focus (dmigs gtrad), which is what we call ‘conditioned mindfulness’, within pure awareness itself. Instead, there is effortless, naturally present mindfulness (chos nyid rang bzhag gi dran pa) or intrinsic, unconstrained mindfulness (chos nyid ma bcos pa’i dran pa). That is to say, clear light is maintained and there is what we call ‘genuine mindfulness that prevents straying into the expressions of awareness’ (rtsal thog tu mi ’chor bar byed pa’i gnyug ma’i dran pa). This [form of mindfulness] comes about once pure awareness is made manifest through the strength of meditation, and occurs spontaneously like the radiance that accompanies gold. As long as you still need to rely upon deliberately cultivated mindfulness, you have not transcended the dimension of mind. Still, this does not preclude sustaining the essence of awareness through conditioned mindfulness as a means of bringing about this genuine mindfulness. [559] This point is explained in Man ngag mdzod, which says that “beginners achieve non-distraction through deliberate application”867 and so forth.

You asked: When someone who practises this dies how do the stages of dissolution occur? At that time is it necessary to impel oneself?

The various stages from the dissolution of the earth [element] into the earth [element] until consciousness dissolves into space, space into clear light, clear light into union, union into wisdom, and wisdom into spontaneous presence, as well as ultimately how spontaneous presence is absorbed into the inner sphere (nang dbyings) are taught clearly and in detail in Theg mchod mdzod and in summary in Ye shes bla ma, so consult these. Various statements have been made about whether or not it is necessary for the three experiences of appearance, increase and attainment (snang mched thob gsum) to arise in the way that other tantras describe. In fact, the pure awareness of this system is identical to the wisdom of clear light. Therefore, the clear light that manifests at the conclusion of appearance, increase and attainment is the actual pure awareness of the Great Perfection. Still, it is uncertain that the pure

866 ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i nnyi-ma cites the relevant line from rNam mkhyen shing rta in rNam rtog ngo shes pa dang rig pa ngo shes pa’i khyad par. See JTNs vol. 2: 180.6.
867 ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i nnyi-ma discusses the verse that begins with this line in Dad ldan slob ma ‘gyur med rdo rje’i ngor gdams pa (JTNg vol. 1: 484–496.1; JTNs vol. 2: 41–53; translated in Pearcey 2018).
awareness of the Great Perfection will manifest in precisely the same way that the three stages of appearance, increase and attainment are explained. This is because it would appear that there is some variation in how clear light arises based on an individual’s distinct characteristics. And, accordingly, various stages of dissolution are taught in other hidden (or obscure) tantras (sbras rgyud), in the Kalacakra,\(^{868}\) and here.

For followers of this dharma tradition, the stages of dissolution at the time of death are as outlined above. At that time, prior orientation (’phen pa)\(^{869}\) is important. ‘Comprehensive transmission as if for a traveller about to cross a mountain pass’ (mgron po la brgal ba tshangs sprugs su gdab pa) means that one receives instructions on the intermediate state (bar do) from one’s teacher or a vajra sibling, and [these instructions] are made clear. Similarly, it also means to die having becomes certain that one must safeguard [these instructions] without forgetting them during the intermediate state.

You asked me to explain, in a simple manner, how to act before meditative equipoise, during the main practice and afterwards.

No matter what virtuous activity one might be engaged in, it is important to carry it out having eliminated worldly distractions. This is especially true when practising the Great Perfection. Here one must let go of dharmaic and non-dharmaic activity, completely set aside all forms of restlessness, and exert oneself in the methods for slowing down and pacifying the karmic wind-energy (las rlung).

During actual meditative equipoise, first lay bare pure awareness, then settle naturally without making any attempt to adjust, transform, reject or adopt anything. Should thoughts develop, do not indulge them, but maintain your ground within awareness—this is a crucial point. No matter what positive or negative meditative experiences might arise, including bliss, clarity and absence of thought, as soon as you follow them with a judgement,\(^{[561]}\) you have strayed from the natural resting place of pure awareness and become lost in its expressions. As stated earlier, therefore, you must understand how it is key that you simply allow awareness to

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\(^{868}\) Kalacakra is referred to as a clear tantra (gsal rgyud), in contradistinction to the hidden or obscure tantras.

\(^{869}\) In the sense of direction, momentum, impetus, etc.
settle without any support.

There is a difference in pure awareness during meditative equipoise and post-meditation, just as a mirror may be stained or unstained, but there is no difference in the way that pure awareness is sustained. Thus, dPal-sprul Rin-po-che said: “With no separation between meditative equipoise and post-meditation.”

When the delusion of clinging to reality in objective appearances arises continuously consciousness falls under the power of appearances, and then the enemies, which include karma and such afflictions as attachment and aversion, are victorious. If one does not lose the ongoing experience (*ngang*) of pure awareness, then the whole domain of one’s experience (*spyod yul*) will arise as its self-radiance, and gradually one will attain the ‘warmth’ of yogic discipline (*brtul zhugs*).

*bS* Tan-pa’i nyi-ma wrote this straight away for Hor ‘Od-zer, who possesses the qualities of faith, devotion and diligence. May it be virtuous!

5. *sPrin gyi sgron ma*…

*JTNs* vol. 2: 240–245

sprin gyi sgron ma nas dri ba phebs don la| rdzogs chen gyi ’jog bsgom ’di rdzogs rim du ji ltar ’gyur| zhes pa la|

’di ’jog bsgom gzhan dang mi ’dra ste| bya ba dgu phrugs su btang| rang gi sms kyi chos nyid kyi steng du ma bcos par bzhag pas ro rkyang gi rlung gi rgyu ba gnas las rlung rang ’gags su ’gro zhing dbu mar rlung zhugs gnas thim gsum byas stobs kyi drangs pa’i ’od gsal rang byung gi ye shes de nyid mngon tu byas nas tha mal gyi gzhi las ’phags pa’o| |

sems kyi rtsol rtog dang lus ngag gi bya ba thams cad rang bzhag tu ’bad pas ni ’od gsal ’char te| ’od gsal sgrib byed kyi kun rtog ’gags dgos shing| de la de’i zhon pa’i rlung ’gags871 dgos la de ni bya ba btang ba’i lag rjes su ’byung par ’thad pa’i phyir ro||

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870 The text is untitled in *JTNs*, the only collection in which it appears.
871 JTNS *dgag sa*
rang gi rig pa’i chos nyid la cer mthong du bzhag pas ni rlung dhu tir thim nus te| dper na gsang ’dus las snying ka’i mi shigs pa’i ti la kar sems bzung ba kho nas rlung dhu mar ’jug nus par bshad pa ltar rlung sems ’jug pa gcig yin la| sems babs kyis bzhag pas ro rkyang gi rgyu ba zhan thub cing| de [241] zhan na dhu mar zhugs gnas thin gsum nus pa las ’os med pa’i phyir ro | |

’di’i dus su ’od gsal gyi rig pa shar ba de nyid tha mal gyi gzhi las ’phags pa ni gzhi’i ’od gsal gzhan rnam s ni chos nyid rto gs pa’i ye shes ma yin la| ’di sngar snang ba’i rdzun phug gtib pa’i tshe| chos nyid kyi don nges shes kyis rto gs pa’i don de nyid dang| da lta ’od gsal gyi dgongs pa shar ba gnyis ro gcig tu bsres pa’i gnad kyis srid rtsa rmang nus gzhig nus pa yin no| |

de bsre lugs kyang| sngar nga’i go rgyu de ’di’o snyam nas de’i steng du phar glan pa lta bu ma yin par| rang gi sems la kha nang du bbla nas ’od gsal kho rang gi ngo bo la bzhag pas ye stong rtsa bral gyi de kho na nyid la bsgom bya sgom byed med par ’jog nus te| ’di ni yul rang sems kyi chos nyid dang yul can gnyug ma’i dran pa yin pas| de la ni bskal chen grangs med par bsags pa’i sbyin sog kyi dod tshang ba ste| thabs khyad par can lhan skyes rang byung gi ye shes yin pa’i phyir ro | |
yul gyi chos nyid la mnyam par bzhag mi dgos par sems kyi chos nyid ’ba’ zhid la ’jog dgos pa’i gnad gang yin zhe na| lar ’phags pa’i mnyam bzhag gi skabs su’ang gnyis snang nub pa’i gtso bo ni rang sems kyi chos nyid yin par snang ste| ’gog [242] pa mngon tu byas zhes pa’i don la dpyad pa ’jug dgos pa’i phyir ro | |
de’i phyir ’di la bskeyed rim sngon song mi dgos pa dang| ’od gsal ’char dus dbang pos nub mi dgos par mnyam bzhag snang bcas yin pa rdzogs chen gyi khyad chos su snang ste| phyi ma ’di la da dung dpyad bya mang bar snang ngo| |

’khor ’das ru shan phy ye ba dang mal dbab sog s ’od gsal ma shar ba ’char byed dang hūṃ sbyang dang sems tshol sog s har zin chos nyid dang bsre ba’i nyer bsdog yin par snang bas ’di ni theg pa ’di’i dka’ gnad ’gangs che bar mngon no| |

mdor na rdzogs rim ni rlung dhu mar zhugs gnas thin gsum byas pa las byung ba’i ye shes yin pas ’di la’ang de’i mtshan nyid rdzogs par tshang ba lags|
yang thod rgal gyi snang ba bzhi las chos nyid zad pa zhes pa 'di'i skabs su sku dang thig le’i snang ba’ang 'dzad par bshad pas de gang yin zhes gsungs pa la| 'di la deng sang ni sku dang thig le’ang mar 'grib pa’i don tu 'chad pa mang ste| de ni ha cang thal te| dag ma dag gi snang ba thams cad ’gags rgyu yin na sangs rgyas la ji snyed mkhyen pa med ces smra bar 'gyur ba’i phyir ro| |

des na kun mkhyen sangs rgyas gnyis pa’i yid bzhin rin po che’i mdzod dang thod rgal gyi rgyab yig nyi zla gza’ skar gnyis ka las [243] chos nyid du ye shes zad pa dang ye shes 'khyil ba don gcig tu gnam stong gi zla ba’i dpes bsgrub pa ltar| rang byung gi ye shes dang de’i rtsal sgron ma bzhi’i snang cha thams cad bsam gyis mi khyab pa’i chos nyid du 'khyil ba’am thim pa’am phyir mi ldog pa la bshad dgos so| |
de ji ltar yin na| spyir snang ba bzhi’i lam thams cad slob pa’i lam kho na ste| tshogs lam chos nyid mngon sum| sbyor lam nyams gong ’phel| mthong lam rig pa tshad phebs| bsgom lam chos nyid zad pa| mi slob lam 'bras bu lhun grub rin po che’i sbubs zhes nam mkha’ klong yangs sogs mngon par shad do| |
kun mkhyen gyi bshad pa la lar tshad phebs ma dag sa bdun dang| chos nyid zad pa dag sar bshad pa ni| dpal ldan zla ba’i rigs pa drug cu pa’i ti kar| mthong lam gcig la skad cig bco lnga cha shas kyis phye tshul bshad pa ltar| ’dir rang ma dag sa bdun ka mthong lam gcig la ldog chas dbye ba mdzad par mngon te| rgyud sde gzhan mang por872 mthong lam don gyi ’od gsal thun gcig gis nyon sgrib skor bdun ka spong par bshad pa dang 'dra bas de ’dra la dgongs snyam| cig shos kyang de dang ’dra’o| |
des na chos zad kyi dus su ma rig pa sa bon dang bcas pa spangs pa yin pas nyon sgrib gtan zad du song ba dang gcig| [244] rjes thob rgya yan pa med pa’i ’phags chen de’i ngor dag pa’i snod bcud kyi snang ba ’ba’ zhib tu brtan g.yo thams cad ’char ba ste| de gnyis kyi ldog cha kho na nas de yan la bogs dbyung du med pa’i rgyu mtshan gyis ye shes de dbyings su zad cing phyir mi ldog tshul khyad par can du snang zhing ’di ni snang ba’i ’phel zad pa’i skabs su’ang sbyor| ’o na gong gi tshad
A Reply to Questions

[Question] How does the settling meditation (′jog sgom) of the Great Perfection function as the perfection stage (rdzogs rim)?

[Answer] It is unlike other forms of settling meditation. Here, you abandon the nine forms of activity, and settle, without contrivance, within the intrinsic nature (chos nyid) of your own mind. As a result, wind-energies (rlung) are naturally brought to a

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873 As noted above, the text is untitled in the original.
874 This line is puzzling. ‘Light of the Clouds’ (sprin gyi sgron ma) could be a poetic synonym for “star” (skar ma), and thus a reference to sKar-ma’i ge-sar, the name which appears in the text’s colophon. However, as it stands, the colophon names “the young monk sKar-ma’i ge-sar” (btsun phrug skar ma’i ge sar) as the text’s author. This name is not attested in any other work by ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i niki-ma that I have seen.
875 bya ba dgu phrugs. That is, outer, inner and secret forms of physical action, vocal action mental action. See YCRa vol. 2: 329.
halt from the place where they are active\(^\text{876}\) in the right channel (\textit{ro ma}; \textit{rasanā}) and left channel (\textit{khyung ma}; \textit{lalanā}); and, through the force of their entering, remaining and dissolving in the central channel (\textit{dbu ma}; \textit{avadhūti}), the clear light, self-arisen wisdom is made manifest. This means that [the basis of the practice here] is superior to the ordinary basis.

It is through the effort of letting go of the mind’s deliberate thinking (\textit{rtsol rtog}) and all physical and vocal activity that the clear light dawns. It is necessary to put a stop to the conceptualisation (\textit{kun rtog}) that obscures the clear light. There must be a stage at which the wind-energies that convey this [conceptualisation] cease, and it follows that this must occur as a sign of having abandoned activity.

By settling in a direct vision (\textit{cer mthong}) of the intrinsic nature of one’s own awareness, you can cause the wind-energies to dissolve into the [\textit{ava}dhūti] [i.e., the central channel]. This is one of form of entrance for wind-energy and mind as is explained in the \textit{Guhyasamāja}, for example, which teaches that simply through focusing attention on the indestructible \textit{tilaka} at the heart, the wind-energies can be brought into the central channel. By settling with the mind at rest, one can reduce movement in the right and left channels.\(^\text{241}\) And, as that happens, there is no other option but for [the wind-energies] to enter, remain and dissolve in the central channel. The dawning of the pure awareness of clear light that occurs at that time is superior to ordinary processes, because other forms of clear light are not wisdom in which there is realization of the intrinsic nature (\textit{dharmatā}). The meaning of the intrinsic nature, which was realized with certainty earlier, when the false cave of appearances collapsed (\textit{snang ba’i rdzun phug gtib pa}), and the arising of the realization (\textit{dgongs pa}) of clear light that takes place here in this moment blend together as a 'single taste' (\textit{ro gcig}). Through this crucial point, you can tear down conditioned existence from its very foundations.

The way this blending takes place is not through thinking, “This is like what I understood earlier;” as if applying a patch. Rather, through turning your attention within, and then settling in the essence of clear light itself, you can rest in the very nature of primordial emptiness without origin, beyond [notions of] ‘meditation’ and ‘meditator’. In this, the object is mind’s intrinsic nature and the subject is innate mindfulness (\textit{gnyug ma’i dran pa}). This means that the meditation contains within it

\(^{876}\) JTNs vol. 3, 240: \textit{rgyu ba’i gnas} for \textit{rgyu ba gnas}.
all the comparable factors that are present when generosity and so on are accumulated for an immeasurable great aeon, because this co-emergent, self-arising wisdom incorporates special means.

You might ask, “What is the crucial point that makes it unnecessary to meditate on the intrinsic nature of objects, but necessary only to settle in the intrinsic nature of mind?” Well, even in the meditation of noble (ārya) beings, the most important factor, which is the subsiding of dualistic perception (gnyis snang) is experienced in the intrinsic nature of one’s own mind. [242] So, for this it is important to enquire into the meaning of what we call “actualising cessation” (’gog pa mngon tu byas).

Here, therefore, the special feature of the Great Perfection is that the meditative equipoise involves appearances (snang bcas). There is no need for the generation phase beforehand, nor for the faculties to diminish when clear light dawns. And it appears that there is still a lot to investigate concerning this latter point. Practices such as separating the flanks of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa (’khor ‘das ru shan phye ba) and settling in naturalness (rnal dbab) are preparatory stages for causing clear light to arise when it has not arisen, whereas practices such as training with hūṃ and searching for the mind (sems tshol) are for blending [clear light] with the intrinsic nature (chos nyid) once it has arisen. They are therefore very important key points of this vehicle.

In short, as the perfection stage refers to the wisdom that arises from the wind-energies having entered, remained in, and dissolved in the central channel, its characteristics are perfectly complete here in this [system] too.

[Question] It is taught that at the stage of the so-called ‘dissolution into intrinsic reality’ (chos nyid zad pa) among the four visions of Thod-rgal even the visions of buddha-forms and light-spheres (thig le) disappear. What is meant by that?

[Answer] These days there are many who explain this as meaning that the buddha-forms (sku) and light-spheres must also diminish, but that is overstating things (ha cang thal). If all appearances, both pure and impure, were to cease, then we would have to say that the buddhas lack the wisdom that knows all things (ji snyed mkhyen pa).

Therefore, the second Omniscient Buddha in both Yid bzhin mdzod and Thod
rgal gyi rgyab yig nyi zla gza’ skar [243] establishes by means of the example of the new moon that the dissolution of wisdom in the intrinsic nature is equivalent to the melding (‘khyil ba) of wisdom. Just so, we must explain that self-arisen wisdom and its expressive power, all the visions of the four lamps, meld, dissolve into, or do not return from, the inconceivable intrinsic nature. How is that? Generally, all the paths of the four visions belong only to the paths of training (slob pa’i lam): the direct realization of the intrinsic nature to the path of accumulation, the increase of experience to the path of joining, awareness reaching full measure to the path of seeing, dissolution into intrinsic reality to the path of meditation, whereas the fruition, the precious sphere of spontaneous presence (lhun grub rin po che’i shubs) corresponds to the path of no-more-training. This is clearly explained in the Nam mkha’ klong yangs and elsewhere.

In some of his writings, the omniscient one [i.e., Klong-chen rab’byams] explains that [awareness] reaching full measure corresponds to the seven impure stages (ma dag sa bdun) and the dissolution into intrinsic reality to the pure stages. I think that as in glorious Candrakīrti’s commentary (ṭīka) on [Nāgārjuna’s] Yuktisāṭṭikā, where the single path of seeing is divided into fifteen moments, here the seven impure stages are divisions of aspects in the path of seeing alone. This is thus like the explanation given in many other tantras that a single session of actual clear light on the path of seeing can eradicate the seven afflictive obscurations (nyon sgrib skor bdun). The other part [of the assertion] is also similar.

Therefore, as ignorance and its seeds are overcome at the time of the dissolution into intrinsic reality, afflictive obscurations have completely dissolved. [244] Thus, from the perspective of the great noble ones whose post-meditation is not dispersed, all animate and inanimate phenomena arise exclusively as the appearance of a pure environment and its inhabitants. Beyond that, from only the reverse-characteristics (ldog cha) of these two, there is no further enhancement, and therefore, wisdom has dissolved into absolute space (dbyings) and appears, in a special sense, irreversible. This also applies at the stages of the increase and dissolution of the visions.

Well then, you might ask, “How are the factors to be abandoned overcome at the earlier stages and [at stage of] dissolution into intrinsic reality?” At [the stages of] directly realising awareness and the increase of experience and visions, the power of the afflictions is weakened. Then, at the stage of [awareness] reaching full
measure the original meditation overcomes all afflictive obscurations (nyon sgrib; kleśāvaraṇa) without remainder. Then, at the stage of dissolution into intrinsic reality, cognitive obscurations (shes sgrib; jñeyāvaraṇa) are gradually brought to a permanent end. At all these [stages] meditative equipoise is non-conceptual. Nonetheless, they involve taking as the path wisdom in which there is no clinging and in which the apparent aspect of the pure self-manifestations of clear light has not yet faded.

You might say that it is unreasonable to claim that this is how the mode of dissolution into intrinsic reality occur, because it contradicts the explanation concerning the sign of gaining power over animation (jug pa la dbang ba), one of the two types of power.⁸⁷⁷ There it is said that when appearances gradually dissolve, once a finger’s worth appears clearly as five-coloured light, then, by settling without directing pure awareness, one disappears spontaneously (rang yal) and enters basic space.⁸⁷⁸

There is no fault however, because the victorious Klong-chen-pa explained that that mode of the dissolution of appearances concerns dissolution of the appearances of the ordinary animate and inanimate world when they appear as five-coloured light. [245] Thus, the fading of appearances at the stage of power over animation applies to the five-coloured lights of the material continuum of the features of one’s body, and so on.

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⁸⁷⁷ Klong-chen rab’byams explains the two powers in Thod rgal gyi rgyab yig nyi zla gza’ skar as follows: “The two powers are over creation (skye ba) and animation (jug pa). ‘Power over creation’ refers to the instantaneous display of emanations to guide [beings] in appropriate ways. It is the capacity to liberate three thousand beings in an instant by directing one’s pure awareness at them. ‘Power over animation’ is the capacity to move material objects and cause them to speak by directing pure awareness towards them. One thereby guides beings by producing the sound of the Dharma from lotuses, wish-granting trees and so on, and through miracles and emanating light.” (KLR vol. 9, 275:

³⁸⁷⁸ In Thod rgal gyi rgyab yig nyi zla gza’ skar Klong-chen rab’byams discusses this in the section on the fourth vision: “At that time, even a finger appears vividly in the form of light. And if you wish to use the support of your physical form to fact for the welfare of sentient beings, then by directing your pure awareness to your finger, your body and outer appearances naturally ‘dissipate’ (rang log), lacking in essence, appearing like the moon in water. And you remain for as long as the aeon’s gathering of sentient beings is not exhausted, carrying out the activity of liberating beings into basic space by means of the two powers.” (KLR vol. 9, 274: de’i tse sor mo tsa’om de’i tse sor mo tsam ‘od kyi mam par bbra lam me ba snang ste’ lus kyi mam pa’i rten des sens cam giy don byed par ’dod na’ sor mo la rig pa gtad pas lus dang phyi’i snang ba thams cad chu’i zla ba lutar snang ba la ngo bo med par rang log nas bskal pa’i sens cam giy tshogs ma zad kyi bar du bzhugs nas dbang mam par gnyis kyis ‘gro ba dbhyings su grol ba’i phrin las mdzad pa)
As a reply to questions numbering as many as arms, this was offered by the young monk sKar-ma’i ge-sar. May it be virtuous and auspicious!

II. Text by g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol

1. rDzogs pa chen po’i lam nyam su len tshul

YCRa vol. 2: 403–414; YCRb vol. 2: 370–379;

Following YCRb – it is slightly different and more reliable

spyir ’od gsal rdzogs pa chen po’i lam nyams su len pa la| sngon ’gro dngos gzhi rjes gsum yod pa las| dang po sngon ’gro sms kyi khang bu bshig pa’i man ngag| de la rtsad bcad pa| mtshang btsal ba| byung gnas ’gro gsum la brtag pa dang gsum yod pa las|

dang po rtsad bcad pa| ni| rkun po ngos ’dzin lta bu’i man ngag khamgs gsum ’khor ba’i ’khor rtsa ngos zin dgos pa yin| ’di’i skabs su deng sang gi khrid mkhan phal cher gyis slob bu nrams la khyod kyi lus ngag yid gsum gtso gang che dpyod kyis zer| des kyang kha kha rgyug mchu mchu rgyug tsam gyis khos cig bsam ’dug gi| thog mar ’khrul mkhan sogs sms yin pas sms gtso che zer| yang de la khyod kyi sms la kha dog dang dbyibs gzugs sms yod med dang byung gnas ’gro gsum la rtog dpyod gyis dang zer| des kyang ci yang med gi zer ba tsam na khyod shes yod gi da ma bcos par zhog la ar879 gtad sms su ltos nas bsogsom zer na’ang| de ’dra ’chad pa la phyi sgo phyi nas bsdam| nang sgo nang nas bsdams te gsang rgya dam por byed mi dgos| de phyag rdzogs dbu gsum gang gi yang lugs ma re| de lta bu zhig jo rgan ma zhig gis kyang shes nus pas de tsam ston pa’i ched rdo rje ’chang byon yang mi dgos pas srol ngan de phyin chad snub thub dgos gsungs| rang lugs la gang zag gi bdag ’dzin ’khor rtsar bzhed pas blo phyin ci log gi ngor phung po lnga’am lus ngag yid gsum la bdag gam nga snang ngo| |

de la bdag tu ’dzin pa’am nga’r ’dzin par byed pas de nyid dgag bya’i snang tshul nges pa [371] zer ba yin pas gang zag gi bdag ’dzin ’khor rtsar bzhed pa yin| chos kyi bdag ’dzin shes sgrib yin par ’dod do| |

879 YCRa YCRb a
rgyal tshab byams pas|

'khor gsum nram par rtog pa gang| |
de ni shes bya’i sgrib par ’dod880 | |
ces gsungs pa de mdo nas snags kyi bar du de ltar khas len pa las| gzhan du sgyur mi dgos| gzhan gyi lhan po rgyab mi dgos gzhan dang bsre mi dgos bsre na mi ’grigs| ji ltar mi ’grigs na| phyi rabs pa dag gis dgag bya la bden grub sbyar nas de nyid dgag bya nges par bzhed pas bden ’dzin nyon sgrib tu ’dod pas chos kyi bdag ’dzin yang ’khor rtsar bzhed pas gang zag gcig gis blo ngor ’khor rtsar ’dod tshul mi ’dra ba gnyis bzung mi bde bas mi ’grigs| gzhan yang rang lugs la nyan rang gis chos kyi bdag med yongs su rdzogs par ma rtogs par ’dod pa dang| gzhan gysis nyan rang gis chos kyi bdag med rdzogs par rtogs par ’dod pa sog pa dgos yin pas de gnyis bsre na mi ’grigs pa| dper na gro ma dang mar khu bsres ba lta bu’i gcig la gcig gis phan thog pa gcig grogs gcig gis byed pa zhig yin na bsre chog pa la de min pas bsre mi dgos| dper na rang lugs la nges shes gting nas skye| phu thag nang nas chod par byed pa gal che| gzhan lugs la yang deng nas byang chub snying po’i bar du dad pa dag snang byed pa gal che bas de ni skye bo ya rabs kyi lugs yin gsungs|

spyir bod ’dir grub mtha’ nyi tshe zhig dang bdun yod pas de dag thams cad la rang rang gi lam nas rnam grol byang chub sgrub pa’i lam tshang la ma nor ba re yod pa yin pas de rnam phan tshun bsre mi dgos gsungs|

**gnyis pa mtshang btsal ba** ni| bdag ’dzin des ji ltar ’dzin na ril po gcig bden du ’dzin| de nyid ldog byed gcig gi gnyen po du ma yin pas phung po lnga dang| de [372] yang gzugs kyi phung po lta bu la mtshon na rdul phran cha med du bshig na gcig yin pa dang ’gal la| bden pa’i gnyen po rdzun pa dang mi rtag pa yin pas skad cig skad cig gis ’gyur ba’i bdag nyid can de phra bachos nyid kyi mi rtag pa dang| rags pa rgyun gyi mi rtag pa yin pas rgyu rkyen rten ’brel tsam las bden par grub pa med pa’i phyir na de ltar rtogs tshe bdag ’dzin rang log tu ’gro bas gang zag gi bdag med rtogs pa red|

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880 *Ratnagotravibhāga (Uttaratantra) 14a (Tib 14cd)*: trimanḍalavikalpo yas taj jñeyāvaraṇaṃ matam
lus ngag yid gsum gtso gang che brtags pa’i skabs ’dir sems gtso che bar ’dod kyang| zhib par brtags na lus kyang gtso che ste| sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa’i sgor ’jug pa la sor byang sngags gsum min pa’i sgor ’jug tshul med pas des na dang por so sor thar pa’i sdom pa rgyud la skye la ba la gling gsum gi skyes pa bud med dang| de’i nang nas kyang ’dzam bu’i gling gi lus rten khyar par can dgos te| gzhan lha dang| klu dang| nam mkha’ lding sogs la mi skye| sangs rgyas dngos su byon kyang phan pa’i thabs med| lha dang klu la sogs pa la byang errs kyi sdom pa tsam skye ba yod kyang kyi sems kho nas mi yong| lus ngag yid gsum tshogs dgos| sngags bla med kyi sgor ’jug pa la khams drug ldan gyi mi’i lus rten zhig min na dbang bzh‘i i snod du mi rung ste mtshungs ldan gyi rgyu med pa’i phyir| de bzhin du881 dal ’byor bco brgyad tshang ba la yang lus gtso che ste dper na byis pa btsas ma thag pa zhig la mig dang rna ba gnyis ka med na mthong thos gang yang med pas chos dang ’jig rten gnyis kyi bya ba cung zad tsam yang bsgrub mi shes pas lus kyang gtso che ste| de bzhin du ngag kyang gtso che bar gsungs te spang blang gi gnas ston pa la ngag mtshan nyid tshang ba smra shes shing brda ’phrod pa zhig nges par dgos te| de med na dud ’gro’i sgra skad tsam gyis mi phan| lus ngag yid gsum la brten nas ’byung ste| lus kyi brang dang mid pa [373] Ice dang so rkan sogs la brten te sams kyis kun nas bslang te rlung gi rta la ngag yi ge phreng ba la brten pa tshig don thams cad ’byung bas ngag gtso che| sams rnam shes tshogs brgyad dang ’khor sams byung Inga bcu dang bcas pa de med na ro red| thog mar ’khor bar skye ba po sams red| lus ngag yid gnyis ’dor len byed ’gro ni red| bdag ’dzin ma rig ’khrul ba’i dbang gis snang| snang ba ltar du zhen|882 zhen pa ltar du a ’thas bden ’dzin gyis bdag dang bdag gir ’dzin pa’am nga dang nga yi bar ’dzin pa sogs ’byung ba yin pas phyugs dang phyugs rdzi lta bu’i tshul gyis bdag gir ’dzin pa’am nga yi bar ’dzin ni red| spyir ’khor ba ya mtha’ thug med| skye ba ya mtha’ thug med| ’khrul ba ya mtha’ thug med nas tha ma de ring883 da lta la ma thug gi bar du srid pa ’khor ba ’dir ’khyam ni red| de’i skabs na’ang ’khyams pa po’i gang zag de la ma dag ’khor ba’i gnas na lus ngag yid gsum mi tshang ba’i sams zhig med| gang du ’khyams pa’i gnas de la rigs drug ’khor ba’i gnas ris drug yod pas lus kyang tha dad do| |

881 Corr. from YCRa and YCRb tu.
882 YCRa omits | 
883 YCRa rang
’dod kham kyi lus ni gdos bcas sha khrag gi lus| gzugs kham rnam su dwangs ma
’od kyi lus| gzugs med na ting nge’dzin yid gi lus yod par theg chen pa’i bzhed
pa ltar lus ngag yid gsum tshogs pa la brten nas las bsags| las kyi dbang gis kham
s gsum ’khor bar skye ni red ma gtogs las ma bsags par sams rkyang ba ’khor bar skye
ba mi srid do|

dper na las ma bsags par sams kho na sngun nas nya lcags kyus ’dren pa lta bu khrid
’ong mkhan zhig dang| rjes nas sha ba khyis ded pa lta bu’i ded ’ong mkhan gtan nas
yod pa min| las ’ba’ zhig gis byed pa yin te|

’jig rten las kyi byas shing las kyi sprul|
las ni kun byed ri mo mkhan dang [374] mtshungs|

zhes zag bcas kyi las de la dge mi dge mi g.yo ba’i las dang gsum yod| de gang
bsgrub kyang lus ngag yid gsum tshogs pa la brten dgos| sams rkyang bas mi ’grub|
dag pa sungs rgyas kyi zhi ng na sku gsung thugs gsum mi tshang ba’i thugs rkyang
ba zhig mi srid pas de ltar lus ngag yid gsum sgyed pu sum thugs lta bu yin pas gtso
gang che ngos zin dka’ na’ang mdo nas sngags kyi bar du sams ’di gtso che bar
gsungs yod pas dpyad sgo tsam zhig btod nas da rang rang gis brtags shing dpyad
nas lung rigs man ngag rnam dang mi ’gal ba zhig nges shes gting nas ’drong ba
zhig ma skyes na rnam pa mi dag ni red gsungs|

gsum pa byung gnas ’gro gsum la brtags pa ni| khregs chod ye bab sor bzhag
dang ’de’i yang yig sogs sngon byon gyi rig ’dzin brgyud pa’i gsung srol mang po
yod kyang| skabs ’dir rdo grub rin po che’i zhal nas nyag bla rin po che la gsungs pa
ltar ’chad pa la| chos thams cad yul dang yul can gnyis su bsdu ni red| dper na shes
bya’i chos thams cad bden pa gnyis su bsdu nas bstan pa ltar yul thams cad byung
sa gnas sa ’gro sa gsum du bsdu| yul884 can thams cad byung mkhan gnas mkhan
’gro mkhan gsum du bsdu pa yin la| dang po byung sa brtags pa’i tshe gzhi zhig la
sbyar dgos pas| dper na mdun gyi ka ba lta bu dmigs tshe| ka ’dzin mig shes kyiis
skad cig dang po ka ba’o snyam pa’i tshe nga’i shes pa ’di ka ba las byung ba yin
nam min snyam nas| de’i tshe yul can la mi dpyod par yul la dpyad nas ka ba rang gi

884 Corr. from YCRa YCRb yum
ngo bo ye nas stong bzhin du snang cha ma 'gags par snang ba dang| snang bzhin du ngo bo ye stong spros pa dang bral ba’i bdag nyid du gnas pa yin te| snang ba’i snang tshugs ma shor bzhin du stong| stong pa’i [375] stong tshugs ma shor bzhin snang ba’i snang stong zung 'jug gi bdag nyid du nges dgos| gzhan gyis ka ba rang gi ngo bos mi stong ka ba bden grub kyis stong par 'dod| des na bden grub shes bya la mi srid pa dang| don dam dpyod pa’i nor mi stong ba gnyis snang stong zung 'jug dang| thabs thabs byung dang| chos nyid chos can du 'brel ba med do| bden grub shes bya la mi srid pas| des stong pa’i stong nyid kyang mi srid de| rta ba lang gis stong zer ba lta bu yin| gal te srid na yang snang stong zung 'jug mi rung ste| ngo bo tha dad 'dod pa’i snang stong zung 'jug skud pa dkar nag sbrel ba bzhin du mi srid pa’i phyir ro| spyir mdo langkar gshegs pa na| stong nyid tha shal ba zhig dang bdun gsungs yod pas gcig gcig gis stong pa dang| mo gsham bus stong pa dang| ri bong rwas stong| dbul bo nor gyis stong ba sogs stong nyid tha shal ba yin pas| 'di lta bu ni thar 'dod kyi skyes bus nyams su len bya’am bsgom bya min no| ka ba don dpyod kyi nor mi stong par bden grub kyis stong par 'dod pas ni| bden grub sogs zhig snang skye yod kyang ma stong bar ka ba bden grub rtag brtan ther zug gi nam par yod gi gsungs so| bla ma rgya sde bas| ka ba rang gi ngo bos stong par bzhed kyang stong nyid spros bral yin par bzhed pas snang cha spangs pa’i stong cha de spros bral yin par go rgyu med| des rjes 'brang rmams kyis mi pham la snang stong zung 'jug nam du yang yod dgos na 'phags pa’i mnyam bzhag ye shes kyi nga nor mi ka skya shing gi rnam par yod dgos so zer na yang| dngos su de la lan gsungs med kyang rang lugs 'dod tshul gyis khegs pa yin gsungs| yul can la dpyad tshe mig shes lta bu la mtshon na yul gsal zhing rig pa’i cha de 'od gsal gnyug ma’i ye shes kyi 'bras rtags phyi la shar ba yin pas| gsal zhing rig pa shes pa’i mtshang nyid [376] gsungs pa yin te| ma go ba go| ma shes pa shes| ma rtogs pa rtogs par byed pa zer ni red ma gtogs (mar me lta bu) gsal dkar bzhag ni 'dra 'dra zhig yod ni ma red| dbyings spros bral stong chen gyi 'bras rtags phyi la shar bas ngo bo ye stong spros pa dang bral ba| dbyings ye zung 'jug gi cha nas shar ba’i 'bras rtags su de gnyis zung 'jug dbyer med kyi bdag nyid can yin

285
pas ’di ni seng ge dkar mo’i bu rgyud lta bu yin gsungs| des na rdo grub rin po ches dbyings ye zung ’jug ’di chos thams cad kyi dbus na gnas yod| srog tu zhugs yod| phyag rgyas btab yod gsungs pas na da lta’i snang ba ’di dag thams cad bde885 gshegs snying po ’am gnyug ma’i ’od gsal gyi bar na gcig gis kyang chod yod ni ma red (phyag gi mdzub mo bsgrengs te) ’di’i ’ba’ ri ’bu ra ka si ko se ’di cig yin ni red gsungs te bzhad song gsungs so| |

rdo grub rin po ches sbyor dngos rjes gsum zhig tshang dgos| de tshang nas lo gsum bar tu byung gnas ’gro gsum gyi lta ba ’di bsgom nus na dngos gzhi khregs chod sogs bsgom rgyu ma byung bar shi song na bar dor grol thub gsungs ni red| ’di ni shin tu yag ste| ’di ’dra go rgyu zhig yod ni ma red| gang zag des bar do’i snang cha thams cad snang stong zung ’jug la sogs par nges pas mnyam bzhag gi rang886 dus der mtha’ bzhi’i ’dzin pa dang| rtag chad du ’dzin pa dang|chos dang bdag ’dzin sogs gang yang mi ’dzin| ’di ni lam zhugs kyang yin| rdzogs pa chen po yang yin| mdor na ’khor ’das lam gsum gyis bs dus pa’i chos thams cad dbyings ye zung ’jug gam snang stong zung ’jug min pa gcig kyang med| ma dag ’khor ba’i gnas na gang snang gi chos thams cad snang stong zung ’jug min pa gcig kyang med| mthar thug ’bras bu’i dus na gdod ma’i stong chen gyi [377] dbyings las shar ba’i snang cha zhing sku sogs ye shes rang snang gi bkod pa mtha’ yas par snang ba yin gsungs| rnal ’byor lam pa’i gnas skabs na chos thams cad kyi gnas lugs dbyings ye zung ’jug mngon sum du rtops nas rjes thob du gang snang snang stong zung ’jug du bun bun shig shig tu shar thub pa yin gsung|

bla ma nyag blas rdo grub rin po che la skabs ’di’i byung gnas ’gro gsum gyi lta ba dang| dbus ma’i lta ba gnyis la mtho dman yod dam med zhus tshe| mtho dman los yod| dbus ma mdo red| de yan chad na sngags kyi rgyud sde gsum yod| de yan na yang sngags nang rgyud sde gsum de’i nang nas kyang theg dgu’i yang rtse rdzogs pa chen po a ti yo ga yin pas khyad los yod| gter ston tshang khyad gzh’i steng nas khyad chos chen po zhig ’jug rgyu yod ni red gsungs|

’o na ’dzin stangs yod dgos sam mi dgos zhus tshe de dgos na sngon ’gro sems kyi khang bu bshig pa ma red brtsigs pa red gsungs| bla ma lung rtops tshang gis ni ’dzin

885 YCRa bdes
886 YCRa ring
stangs yod dgos gsungs ni yin zhus tshe\'| 'o gsungs pa yin gsungs| bla ma nyag blas
rin po ches 'dzin stangs med gsungs pa yin| bla ma lung rtags tshang gis yod dgos
gsungs ni yin| bla ma tshang khyed kyis gang ltar bzhed pa yin gsungs pas| khong gi
'dzin stangs 'jog ni min zhus|

de na khyad gzhi\'i steng gi khyadchos ji ltar yod lugs zhus tshe| snang stong zung
'jug nges pa\'i nges shes mar me lta bu\'i steng nas mnyam bzhag la lhod se bzhag
pa\'i dus der mtha\' bzhi\'i 'dzin stangs gang yang med pas de\'i 'bras rtags la ngo bo\'i
dbyings la shar cha 'gags med du 'char thub pa 'di dbu ma la ma med pa\'i khyadchos
yin| spyir khrregs chod kyi lam shar grol dus mnyam yin pas| de dus shes rgyud la
byung gnas 'gro gsum gyi lta bas khyab yod pa\'i 'bras rtags su [378] gnyen po gzhan
bsten mi dgos par rang grol du 'gro ba 'di dbu ma la ma med pa\'i khyadchos yin| spyir
khrregs chod kyi lam shar grol dus mnyam yin pas 'di dngos gzhi\'i shar grol mtshan
nyid pa min yang shar grol gyi mga 'di nas rtsom pa yin pa\'i gnad kyis 'di khrregs
chod kyi sngon 'gror 'gro ba\'i rgyu mtshan de ltar yin gsungs|
gzhan yang byung gnas 'gro gsum btags tshul ni| glo bur 'khrul ba\'i snang ba 'di
thog ma\'i gzhi dus na med pas byung sa\'i gnas kyis stong| bar du gnas sa yang med
de glo bur gyi mgron po lta bu nyag gcig yin te| dper na mig nad can gyis nam mkhar
skra shad mthong ba dang| mkhris nad can gyis dung ser por snang ba dang| chu
chab rom gyis bsdams pa bzhin du glo bur gsar byung gi bdag nyid yin pas gnas pa\'i
ngo bo stong| mthar phyin 'bras dus na med pas 'gro sa\'i yul gyis stong ba yin no| |
rong klong mi pham soggs kyis bzhed pa ltar| snang ba lhar bsgrub pa dang| yul can
ye shes su bsgrub pa\'i skabs| tha snyad tshad ma de la tshu\[887] rol mthong ba la brten
pa\'i kun tu tha snyad pa\'i tshad ma dang| dag pa\'i gzigs pa la brten pa kun tu tha
snyad pa\'i tshad ma gnyis las| dang po de la mngon sum tshad ma dang rjes dpag
tshad ma soggs kyi ngor ma dag pa\'i snang ba las dag par snang mi nus la| gnyis pa ni|
'phags pa\'i mnyam bzhag ye shes ngor gnyis snang mtha\' dag nub pa\'i tshul gyis yul
yul can du 'dzin pa\'i gzung 'dzin sogsgtan log tu song ba dang| rjes thob kyi skabs
na\'ang snang ba bden med du 'char ba dang| sa brgyad pa\'i gnas skabs na rjes thob
tu snang srid dag pa rab 'byams shar thub pa\'ang yod| khyad par sangs rgyas kyis

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887 YCRa tshur
dag pa’i gzigs nor chu’i rdul phra rab gcig gi steng na rdul snyed kyi zhihng kham
ston ’khor dang bcas pa bsam gyis mi khyab par gzigs pa ni gnas lugs mthar thug gi
gzigs pa tshad ma yin pas na da lta’i so skyes ’khrul ba’i snang ba ’di dag thams
cad tshad ma yang dag min par rdzun pa bslu ba’i chos can yin par mthar thug gis
tshad ma de dag gis rtogs thub par gsungs pa’o]

rig pa yin pa’i rtags su rtog pa rang rgyud pa gcig ’char ni ma red gsungs|
gol sa thams cad dang sens kyi dri ma tsam yod rung ni ma red gsungs| rnam rtog
thams cad rig pa’i rnam ldan du ’char dgos gsungs| dper na nyi ma shar na mun pa
’thib long med pa bzhin du rig pa kho rang shar dus rnam rtog thams cad rig pa’i
rnam ldan du shar ’gro ni red gsungs|
dran shes bsten tshul ni| dran pa rnyed na sgom rnyed| dran pa stor na bsgom stor|
dran shes zhes pa ni go bzhin shes bzhin pa de’i ngang nas dran shes bsten gyi red
gsungs|
mnyam bzhag la lhod yod dgos| de’i ngang nas rtsal gang shar bag chags gsog long
med par grol bas rjes thob zer| spyod lam gyi skabs rig pa bsgrim dgos gsungs pas
so| |

mi pham pas|

man ngag byis pa’i rtsed mo ’dra| |
sgom pa ri rgyal rgya mtsho bzhin| | zhes gsungs|

ye gzh’i ’pho ’gyur med pa gdod ma’i ngang% 888
blo ’das spros bral ka dag bla ma la%
’khrul med rang rig ngang nas gsol ba ’debs%
tshe ’dir sangs rgyas ’grub par byin gyis rlob% zhes so%

ye nas ’khrul med rig pa ston mdzad pa’i%

888 The punctuation here suggests that this and the following two verses belong to a gter ma
revelation, but I have so far been unable to identify the source.
gdod ma’i mgon po ye sangs rgyas de la%
bka’ drin dran pa’i ngang nas gsol ba ’debs %
snod bcud chos skur grol bar byin gyis rlobs%

rig stong chos sku’i bla ma yis%
rig pa’i bu yi bzhed ngor889 bris%
sngags kyi srung mas bya ra gyis%
dam nyams lag tu ma shor byos%

sa ma yā:
grya rgya rgya:

889 YCRa don
How to Practise the Path of the Great Perfection

Generally, there are three parts to practicing the path of the clear light Great Perfection: preliminaries, main part, and conclusion.

The preliminary, which is the instruction on demolishing the house of the ordinary mind, itself includes three sections: (1) probing [the mind], (2) searching for hidden flaws, and (3) an investigation of emergence, presence and departure.

1. Probing [the Mind]

In this instruction, which is likened to identifying a thief, we must recognize the source of our circling in samsāra. This is the point at which most teachers these days tell their students, “Analyse your body, speech, and mind. Determine which is most important.” The students then contemplate all manner of chatter and hearsay before concluding that mind is most important because it is the one that originally became deluded, and so on. Then the teacher will say such things as “Investigate whether your mind has features like colour or shape. Analyse its emergence, presence and departure.” Then when the students say, “There is nothing to it at all,” the teacher will say they have understood. Then the teacher will continue: “Now settle the mind without altering. . . . Now direct your awareness . . . and so on.” Yet for such explanations, it would hardly be necessary to shut the outer door from the outside, lock the inner door from the inside, or apply the seal of strictest secrecy! For this does not correspond to any tradition of Mahāmudrā, Great Perfection, or the Middle Way. And as it is perfectly intelligible even to an old nun, there would have been no need for Vajradhara to appear in order to reveal it. We must bring an end to such terrible traditions from now on.

In our own tradition, we assert that it is clinging to the self of the individual that is at the root of samsāra. By this, we mean a mistaken mind that perceives a self or an “I” in the five psychophysical aggregates, or the body, speech, and mind. This is what brings clinging to an “I” or a self, and therefore we say that it is certainly how the object of refutation appears. Clinging to an individual self, then, is the root of samsāra, whereas clinging to a phenomenal self (or identity) is considered a cognitive obscuration. For, as the regent Maitreya states,

890 As noted above, I have emended a gtad to ar gtad here.
Any thought involving the three spheres
Is a cognitive obscurasion, it is claimed.

This assertion applies both in the sūtras and in mantra. And there is no need to transform it into something else, to patch it up with something else, or to mix it with something else. Syncretism, in other words, is inappropriate. Why so? Adherents of the later tradition apply the term truly existent to the object of negation and claim that this is certainly what is to be negated. They believe that clinging to things as truly existent is an emotional obscurasion, and they therefore contend that it is clinging to phenomenal identity that lies at the root of saṃsāra. And since it is rather uncomfortable for a single person to hold in the mind two contradictory beliefs concerning the root of saṃsāra at the same time, such syncretism is out of place.

Moreover, in our own tradition we make further assertions, such as that the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas do not realize the selflessness of phenomena completely, while others claim that they do. It would not be right, therefore, to combine these two systems. Of course, it is fine to mix two things that complement each other and go together well, like sweet potato and melted butter, but there is no need to mix things that do not. In our tradition, for example, it is important to develop a deep certainty from within and to resolve things decisively. In other traditions, it is important to maintain faith and pure perception until reaching the essence of enlightenment, so they are known as systems for honourable beings.

Generally, there are said to be more than six\textsuperscript{891} major philosophical systems here in Tibet, each with its own complete path to liberation and enlightenment, and therefore there is no need to combine them.

2. Searching for Hidden Flaws

You might wonder how self-clinging functions. It involves clinging to the self as something whole, singular, and real. When it comes to overturning such clinging, the antidote to singularity is multiplicity. Breaking down the self into five aggregates and then \textsuperscript{[372]} (to take form alone) to the level of the partless particle thus counteracts the notion of the self as singular. As the antidote to the idea that the self is real, we

\textsuperscript{891} Literally, “six and a fraction” (nyi tshe zhig dang bdun), meaning six major plus some minor traditions. The figure is unusual, and I have not been able to identify exactly which schools are meant, although the four major schools of rNying-ma, Sa-skya, bKa’-brgyud, and dGe-lugs are almost certainly included, possibly with the addition of the Jo-nang and Zhi-byed.
can consider how it is false and impermanent, meaning that it has the character of changing with each passing moment. This corresponds to the subtle impermanence of its nature. The self is also impermanent at the coarser level of its continuum. It is therefore merely the interdependent connection of causes and conditions, and there is nothing more to it than this—no true existence. When we realize this, it naturally dispels any clinging to self, so this is the realization of individual selflessness.

At the stage of analysing whether body, speech, or mind is most important, the assertion is that mind is the most important factor. Still, when you examine the matter closely, you find that the body is also of great significance. For instance, when entering the door of the Buddhist teachings, there can be no entrance other than by means of the *prātimokṣa*, bodhisattva, and mantra precepts. And for the *prātimokṣa* vows to arise initially in your continuum you must be either a man or a woman and not just from any of the three continents, but specifically someone with the special physical support that is unique to this continent of Jambudvīpa. The vows will not arise in anyone else, not in *devas, nāgas, garudas*, or any other such being. And even if the Buddha were to appear in person before these other beings, even he could not help to change this. And even though the bodhisattva vows can arise in such beings as *devas, nāgas*, and the like, they do not come about through mind alone; they require the combination of body, speech, and mind. In entering the door of Unsurpassed Mantra, only the physical support of a human form complete with its six elements is suitable as a vessel for the four empowerments, because without it there is no associated cause. Similarly, even if all eighteen freedoms and advantages are complete, the body is most important. For example, a new-born baby without sight or hearing will be incapable of learning even the slightest dharmic or worldly action. The body is therefore of great importance.

In a similar way, speech too is said to be very important. Revealing what must be avoided or adopted, for example, requires all the qualities of speech, as you must be able to speak and understand. Merely making sounds like an animal is of no benefit. Communication involves the body, speech, and mind. It is by means of the chest, throat, tongue, teeth, palate, and so on, as well as through mental

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892 In most versions of these preliminaries, this question of whether body, speech or mind is most important belongs to the first investigation, as g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol makes clear in his opening remarks. It might therefore be best to understand the discussion at this point in the text as something akin to a footnote.
motivation, that all words and their corresponding meanings are produced, in
dependence on the garlands of syllables, the speech that rides on the horse of wind
energy. Speech too is therefore of great importance.

Without the mind, which includes the eight collections of consciousness and
fifty accompanying mental states, we would be no more than a corpse. It is mind that
first arises in saṃsāra. Body and speech are continually acquired and left behind.

Self-clinging appears through the force of ignorance and delusion. It is
through attachment to how things appear, and through solidifying that attachment
and clinging to it as real, that we cling to a self and what belongs to that self—in
other words, “I” and “mine.” This is how, like a herdsman with his herd, we cling to
what we take to be ours, or what we imagine belongs to the self.

Generally, there is no beginning to saṃsāra, no beginning to birth, and no
beginning to delusion. We wander in saṃsāric existence, therefore, until we put an
end to it. And throughout this time spent in the impure realms of saṃsāra, the
individual wanderer does not have a mind in isolation but the three factors of body,
speech, and mind together. The realms we wander through are of six types—the
abodes of the six classes of beings in saṃsāra. Correspondingly, therefore, there are
various types of body. The body of the desire realms is material and made of flesh
and blood. In the form realms, there is a subtle body of light. And in the formless
realms, beings have a mental “meditation” body. From the Mahāyāna viewpoint, we
accumulate karma based on body, speech, and mind. And it is only through
accumulating karma that we are reborn in the three realms of saṃsāra. It would be
impossible for the mind alone, without accumulating karma, to be reborn in saṃsāra.
There is no such thing as a solitary mind, with no accumulated karma, being pulled
along like a fish caught on a hook or pursued like deer chased by dogs. It is through
karma alone that rebirth takes place. As it is said, “The world is created through
carma; it is through karma that it appears. Karma is what creates it all, like an artist.”

Tainted karma is of three kinds: virtuous, unvirtuous, and unalterable. Yet
whichever of these is accumulated, it is based on body, speech, and mind together.
The mind cannot function in isolation.

It is also impossible for there to be only enlightened mind—rather than
enlightened body, speech, and mind together—in a pure buddha realm. Body,
speech, and mind work in combination, therefore, like the legs of a tripod. And it is
difficult to identify which of them is most important. Nevertheless, from sūtra to
mantra, it is said that mind is the most important. So, having been introduced to this analysis, you must investigate and analyse the matter for yourself. But anything other than deep certainty, based on an understanding that does not contradict scripture, reasoning, or the pith instructions, is not entirely pure.

3. Emergence, Presence, and Departure

There are many traditions of explanation from the lineage of past vidyādhara masters, such as *Khregs chod ye babs sor bzhag* and its supplements. Nevertheless, on this occasion, I shall follow rDo-grub-chen Rin-po-che’s explanation to Nyag-bla Rin-po-che [i.e., gTer-ston bSod-rgyal).

All phenomena are included within the two categories of object and subject. Just as all knowable phenomena are said to be included within the two truths, all objects are included within the three categories of origin, location, and destination, and all subjects within the three categories of that which arises, that which remains, and that which departs.

First, when examining the origin, you should relate the analysis to a particular basis, by focusing, for example, on a pillar in front of you. When, in the first instant of perceiving the pillar by means of the visual consciousness, you have the thought “It is a pillar,” ask yourself: Does this consciousness arise from the pillar or not? At that time, without analysing the subjective mind, consider only the object pillar and how, while empty in its own essence, it still appears—its aspect of appearance being unobstructed. While appearing, the pillar is primordially empty in essence, with the character of being free from complexity. Without losing its apparent basis, it is empty, and [375] without losing its empty basis, it appears. We must be certain, therefore, that its identity is the union of appearance and emptiness.

Others assert that the pillar is not empty of its own essence but is empty of true existence. Therefore, as true existence does not exist in knowable phenomena, and phenomena themselves, such as vases, are not empty from the perspective of ultimate analysis, appearance and emptiness are not a unity, and there is no relationship of method and outcome, or of the nature of things and things

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893 A manual written by Klong-chèn rab-'byams.
894 This would seem to be a reference to *Nam mkha’ klong yangs*, a supplement on Khregs-chod, and *Nam mkha’ klong chen*, a supplement on both Khregs-chod and Thod-rgal. All these texts, including *Khregs chod ye babs sor bzhag*, are from the *Bla ma yang tig* collection, which is in turn part of the *sNying thig ya bzhi*. 

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themselves. As true existence does not exist in knowable phenomena, the emptiness that is its absence is also impossible: it is like saying a horse is empty of a cow. Even if such emptiness did exist, there could be no union of appearance and emptiness—they would differ in essence, and it would be like twisting together white and black thread. Of the seven kinds of emptiness, including the trivial, mentioned in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, one thing being empty of another—as in the absence of the child of a barren woman, or of a rabbit’s horn, or when a pauper is devoid of wealth—is the trivial kind of emptiness. It is not the kind of emptiness that someone desirous of liberation should cultivate or meditate upon.

There are those who claim that while a pillar itself is not empty from the perspective of ultimate analysis, it is empty of true existence. Even if there were an impression of true existence and the like, unless the pillar itself was empty, it would have the character of being truly existent, permanent, stable, and unchanging. Bla-ma rGya-sde said, “Even if you assert that a pillar is empty of its own essence, you accept that emptiness is freedom from conceptual elaboration. And it is meaningless to suggest that the emptiness resulting from the negation of a thing’s apparent aspect is freedom from conceptual elaboration.” The followers of this tradition might say to Mi-pham: If it is necessary for the union of appearance and emptiness to be present all the time, the features of a pale wooden pillar must also be present even during the noble ones’ wisdom of meditative equipoise. Even if Mi-pham did not address such an objection directly, it is refuted by this system’s assertions.

When investigating the subject, if we take visual consciousness as an example, the quality of cognizing and being aware of an object is itself an outward sign of the genuine wisdom of clear light. The definition of consciousness is, after all, “that which cognizes and is aware.” Consciousness is what makes the unknown known, what cognizes the uncognized, what realizes the unrealized. Of course, this does not mean it literally illuminates in the way a lamp does. As an outward sign of great empty basic space, free from conceptual elaboration, consciousness is, in essence, originally empty and free from conceptual elaboration.

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895 The seven forms of emptiness mentioned in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* are: (1) emptiness of characteristics (*mtshan nyid stong pa nyid*); (2) emptiness of the nature of entities (*dingos po’i rang bzhin stong pa nyid*); (3) emptiness of becoming (*srid pa’i stong pa nyid*); (4) emptiness of non-becoming (*mi srid pa stong pa nyid*); (5) inexpressible emptiness (*brjod du med pa’i stong pa nyid*); (6) emptiness of the ultimate great wisdom of the noble ones (*don dam pa’i ye shes chen po stong pa nyid*); and (7) emptiness of one thing in another (*gcig gis gcig stong pa nyid*).

896 The final phrase (*mar me lta bu*) is added as an editor’s note in the Tibetan.
And as the outward sign of the union of space and wisdom, these two—consciousness and its emptiness—have the character of being inseparably united. Thus, like the cubs of a white snow lioness, we possess signs of a pure heritage.

rDo-grub Rin-po-che used to say that this inseparable union of space and wisdom lies at the heart of all phenomena: it is, in a sense, their vital force, or hallmark. And all that can be perceived right now, therefore, is included within this buddha nature or genuine clear light. Nothing whatsoever is excluded. Pointing his finger, he would say, “All this—the peaks and the hollows—is just the same.”

rDo-grub Rin-po-che would also say that the three parts of preparation, main part, and conclusion must be complete. And when they are complete, anyone who meditates on this view of emergence, presence and departure for three years will be able to gain liberation during the intermediate state, even if they were to die before ever meditating upon Khregs-chod itself. This is excellent and is not how it is usually understood. Such a practitioner would indeed have gained the certainty that all that appears in the intermediate state is the union of appearance and emptiness. For the duration of meditative equipoise, there would be no clinging, not even to the four extremes, to permanence and nonexistence, or to the self-identity of an individual or phenomena, and so on. This is to have set out on the path; it is also the Great Perfection.

In short, all phenomena without exception, whether they belong to saṃsāra, nirvāṇa, or the path, are the union of absolute space and wisdom, or the union of appearance and emptiness. On the impure, saṃsāric plane, all that appears, without even the slightest exception, is the union of appearance and emptiness. At the time of the ultimate fruition too, appearances that arise out of the space of great, primordial emptiness—the pure realms and buddha forms—appear as the limitless, self-manifesting array of wisdom. And at the stage when yogis are on the path, there is direct realization of the natural state of all phenomena, which is the union of absolute space and wisdom. Then, during the post-meditation phase, perceptions arise as the union of appearance and emptiness, illusory and insubstantial.

Bla-ma Nyag-bla once asked rDo-grub Rin-po-che whether there was any qualitative distinction between the view of emergence, presence and departure in this context and the Middle Way view. Rin-po-che replied that there is a difference. “The

897 Once again, this clause—phyag gi mdzub mo bsgrengs te—appears as a note in the original text.
Middle Way,” he said, “corresponds to the sūtras, above which are the three tantra classes of the Mantra Vehicle, and beyond those, the three inner tantra classes of mantra. It is among these final three classes that we find the very pinnacle of all nine vehicles, the Great Perfection or Atiyoga. So, there is a difference.”

gTer-ston Tshang (i.e., gTer-ston bSod-rgyal) would say, “Aside from this distinction in terms of the basis, there is also a great difference in the features themselves.” When he was asked, “Well then, must there be a philosophical standpoint (’dzin stangs) or not?” he replied, “If there were, this would not be breaking down the house of the mind so much as constructing it.” When told that Lama Lung-rtogs says there must be a philosophical standpoint, he said, “Oh yes, he does say that.” So, while Bla-ma Nyag-bla says there should be no standpoint, Bla-ma Lung-rtogs said there must be. When Bla-ma Tshang (gYu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol) was asked, “How do you believe it is?” he said he too didn’t think there should be a standpoint.899

Then, when asked what are the distinctive features over and above the difference in the basis itself, the lama said that here, when settling with ease in meditative equipoise, based on a lamp-like certainty as to the union of appearance and emptiness, there is no philosophical standpoint whatsoever related to the four extremes. The sign of this is that whatever arises within the basic space of the essence of mind can do so without obstruction—and this is a special feature not found in the Middle Way.

On the path of Khregs-chod, the arising and liberation of thoughts occur simultaneously. So, at that stage, as a sign that the view of emergence, presence and departure has pervaded the mind stream, [378] there is self-liberation without the need for any other antidote. And this is another special feature not to be found in the Middle Way.

Although the path of Khregs-chod generally involves the simultaneous arising and liberation of thoughts, this practice (of emergence, presence and departure) does not feature the genuine form of liberation upon arising, as that belongs only to the main practice. Still, it does mark the point at which such

898 Sometimes translated as “modal apprehension”, this refers to the deliberate focusing upon, or maintaining of, a (philosophical) notion in meditation. See Chapter Four above.
899 The fact that g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol is here cited in his own text underscores the point that this was compiled an anonymous editor.
liberation upon arising begins, and that is why it is considered a Khregs-chod preliminary.

There is a further point here concerning the investigation of emergence, presence and departure. As adventitious, delusory appearances are absent at the time of the original ground, they are empty in terms of their origin. Nor is there anywhere that such appearances remain in the interim—they are all just as transient as an unexpected guest. They are like the falling hairs that appear in the sky for someone with an eye disorder, or the sight of a yellow conch to someone with jaundice, or water in its frozen state. As such analogies indicate, appearances are by nature adventitious; they constantly arise afresh and are therefore without any abiding essence. Finally, as such phenomena are absent at the time of the ultimate fruition, they are also empty in terms of their destination.

As Rong-zom, Klong-chen rab-'byams, Mi-pham, and others have asserted, when establishing appearances as divine and the subjective mind as wisdom, conventional valid cognition has two aspects: that based on narrow, limited vision and that based on vision that is pure. If we consider only the first of these, it is impossible, from the perspective of either valid direct perception or valid inference, for pure appearances to derive from impure appearances. Considering the second, however, from the perspective of the wisdom that is present in the meditative equipoise of noble beings, the fading of all dualistic perception means that the dualism of clinging to subject and object is definitively averted. And, even during the post-meditation phase, appearances arise without being taken as real. Then, on the eighth bodhisattva level (bhūmi), during the post-meditation phase, appearance and existence dawn as infinite purity. In the pure perception of the buddhas, the vision, within even a single atom, of inconceivable pure realms, each containing teachers together with their retinues, as numerous as atoms, is the valid cognition of the ultimate vision of how things are. As this is the valid cognition of ultimate [379] vision, we can realize how all the delusory appearances that we currently have as ordinary beings are not truly valid but are in fact false and deceptive.

A sign of pure awareness (rig pa) is that no ordinary thought will arise. Neither potential deviations nor the slightest stains of ordinary mind should be present. All thoughts should arise with the quality of pure awareness. Just as when the sun rises there is no possibility for darkness or gloom to remain, when pure awareness dawns, all thoughts should arise with pure awareness’s features.
As for maintaining mindfulness (dran pa; smṛti) and vigilance (shes bzhin; samprajanya), when you have mindfulness, you have meditation, and when you let mindfulness slip away, meditation also slips away. Being “mindful and aware” here means being continually cognizant, continually present.

Meditative equipoise should be relaxed. Within such a state, any mental expressions that arise will be freed before they have the chance to create habitual impressions (bag chags; vāsanā)—and this is what we call post-meditation. During ordinary daily activity, pure awareness must be more concentrated. As Mi-pham says:

Pith instructions are like children’s games.
Meditation is like the king of mountains or the ocean.900

In the primordial ground, beyond transition or change, the original experience
Is the guru of primordial purity, beyond the mind and free of complexity;
To this guru, while experiencing my own undeluded awareness, I pray:
Grant your blessings so I may attain enlightenment in this very life!

Revealer of pure awareness, which has never known delusion,
Original lord, primordially awakened,
Recalling your kindness, I pray to you:
Grant your blessings so the world and its inhabitants may be liberated as dharmakāya!

The dharmakāya guru of awareness and emptiness
Wrote this to fulfil the wishes of the child of awareness.
May the mantra protectress guard over it
And prevent it from falling into samaya-breakers’ hands!


900 I have been unable to locate the source of this quotation in Mi-pham’s writings.
III. Texts by mDo-sngags chos-kyi rgya-mtsho

1. gSang sngags gsar rnying gi lta ba gcig tu sgrub pa dag snang nor bu’i me long⁹⁰¹

DCc vol. 2: 3–48; DCz 3–48

na mo gu ru mañdzu gho shā ya| |

phyogs bcu’i zhing du rgyal sras rnam pa yis| |
zab mo’i gtam gyis ’gro ba ’dul ba la| |
zla med thugs bskyped mthu grub ’jam dpal dbyangs| |
dge ba’i bshes su rol ba’i blo gros gter⁹⁰²| |
yab rje de dang dbyer med bstan pa’i bdag| |
padma ka ra kun mkhyen tsong kha pa| |
mkhas pa’i khyu mchog rong klong rnam gnyis sog| |
’dren mchog dam pa rnams⁹⁰³ la phyang byas te| |
thun mong theg par khyad par med mod kyang| |
gsang sngags snga phyi’i ’gyur gyis phye ba yi| |
 bka’ srol so so’i grub mtha’i gsung sgros ’ga’| |
’dra min snang yang dgongs pa’i gnad geig tshul| |
cung zad mthong nas rang blo goms pa’i slad| |
lung rigs ’phrul gyis dka’ gnad bkrol ba la| |
rgyal bstan dbyen la sbyor rnams mi dgyes mod| |
lung stong phyugs rdzi gling bu ’bud bzhin sgros| |

de la ’dir bsil ldan gyi ljongs ’di’i skye dgu’i phan bde’i (’byung gnas)⁹⁰⁴ rgyal ba’i bstan pa rin po che la rnam grangs mang du yod pa las| gtso bor gyur pa bstan pa snga dar gyi rang lugs snga ’gyur [4] gsang sngags rnying ma dang| phyi dar gyi lugs bzang bka’ gdams gsar rnying gnyis dang| khyad par du dka’ gdams glegs bam las

⁹⁰¹ As already noted, this text is translated in Wallace 2018. I have included a critical edition here but not a translation.
⁹⁰² I have added the italics here to highlight the reference to A-mdo dge-bshes ’Jam-dpal rol-bai’i blo-gros.
⁹⁰³ DCcz rnam
⁹⁰⁴ This term is in parentheses in the original.
tha mar bstan pa'i me ro dag|
grags pa'i dbang\(^{905}\) gis\(^{906}\) gso bar byed\(^{907}\) | 
ces lung bstan pa ltar gyi mnyam med ri bo dge ldan pa'i bka' srol chen po gnyis su thub bstan rin po che'i srog tu bzhugs bzhin pa 'dir| da lta dus kyi dbang gis lta ba snyigs mar gyur pa'i stobs kyis lung rigs kyi sgo nas legs par gtan la 'bebs pa shin tu dkon pas phan tshun lta grub 'gal 'dur mthong ste| rgyal bstan la ris gcod byed pa mang bas bstan pa rin po che nyag phra bar gyur mod| bdag ni skyes sbyangs kyi nmam dpayod shin tu chung bas rgyal bstan la bya ba byed pa rngo mi thogs kyang| mtshan ldan gis bshes gnyen dam pa du mas rjes su bzung ba'i thugs rjess bstan pa snga phyi de dag gi dgongs pa'i babs so shin tu gcig par mthong nas phyogs ris kyi mun pa sangs pa ltar rang dang skal mnyam gyi’ang chos spong gi las kyi sgo khegs pa dang| rgyal bstan phyogs med la dad gus dang| dag snang 'phel ba'i slad gzhi lam 'bras gsam gyi nmam bzhad bzhed tshul mthun pa'i lung rigs kyi sgo tsam dbyed bar bya yi| dug sbrul gis sla tshi'i dri thon pa mi bzod pa ma mdzad par gzu\(^{[5]}\) bor gnas pa'i nmam dpayod kyis bdag la grogs dan mdzad du gsal lo zhes mkhas pa nmam la gsal ba 'debs so| |
de yang dang po gzhi ngo bo'i gnas tshul gyi skor la| mnyam med ri bo dge ldan pa nmam nges don mthar thug gi zab mo lta ba'i shing rta'i srol 'byed la de bzhin gshegs pa so so rang rig gi theg pa'i bstan pa'i gsal byed chen por lung bstan pa'i phyir mgon po klu sgrub kho nar gsungs shing| de'i dgongs pa 'grel ba la jo bo dang mai tri ba sogs rgya gar mkhas pa'i bzhed pa bzhin sangs rgyas bskyangs dang zhi ba lha dpal ldan zla ba grags pa gsum 'gran zla med pa'i slob dpon du bzung nas| gtso bor de dag gi rjes su 'brangs nas zab mo'i lta ba 'tshol ba yin la| de bzhin du gsang sngags snga 'gyur ba'i phyogs nas kyang mdzad pa yin te| kun mkhyen chos kyi rgyal po\(^{908}\) snga ma klong chen rab 'byams kyis yid bzhin rin po che'i mdzod kyi le'u bcu gnyis pa'i rtsa 'grel las|

\(^{905}\) DCC mtshan  
\(^{906}\) DCC gyis  
\(^{907}\) AT vol. 1: 547–548.  
\(^{908}\) DCC bo
da ni nang pa sūgs rgyas pa dag gi mṭshan nyid theg pa chen po ’i rtse mo
dbu ma thal ’gyur ba’i lugs nam par bzhag pa ni| rgyal ba’i dongs pa mṭhar
thug snying po’i don| thal ’gyur ba sī| spros pa kun ’gog stei| chos kun rten
’brel stong nyid rang bzhin med| bden gnyis sgyu ma [6] mṭha’ bral nyid so

nas| lam dang ’bras bu’i chos nams mṭhar phyin byed| thub pa bcom Ĭdan
’das kyi dongs pa phyin ci ma log pa909 ston pa ni dбу ma thal ’gyur910 yin
la| de’i shing rta ’dren pa’i srol ’byed pa thog ma ni bcom Ĭdan ’das kyi s ma
bo che chen po’i mṭdo r lung bstan pa ’phags pa shes rab kyi nyi ma dri ma
med pas lṭa ba ngan pa’i ’thibs po911 sel bar mṭzdad pa mgon po klu sgrub yin
te| de’i gzhung rigs pa’i tshogs drug gi don ’grel ba po’ang912 ’phags pa lha
dang| sūgs rgyas bskyangs913 dang| legs Ĭdan ’byed dang| zla ba grags pa la
sogs pa ste| de dag gi nang nas mi ’phrgs914 pa’i mkhyen rab dang thugs
rje915 Ĭdan pa ’phags pa zla ba grags pa ni slob dpon gyi dongs pa phyin ci
ma log par thugs su chud nas dбу ma rtsa ba’i don gyi ’grel pa916 dбу ma la
’jug pa dang| tshig gi ’grel pa917 tshig gsāl ba mṭzdad de| ’dzam bu’i gling du
sūgs rgyas kyi dongs pa mṭhar thug pa dбу ma thal ’gyur gyi nyi ma shar
bar mṭzdad pas|918 lṭa ba ngan pa’i ’thibs po919 gsāl920 bar byas pa yin no|921
zhes gsung so| |

klu sgrub thal ’gyur ba’i shing rta’i srol ’byed lṭa bur gsung pa922 ni| dбу ma’i shing
rta’i srol ’byed dang| thal ’gyur ba’i gzhī mṭhun gyi don yin pa las sger gyi srol
’byed zla bar bzhed pa gsāl te| [7] ’dzam gling du thal ’gyur gyi nyi ma ’char bar
mṭzdad mkhan zla bar gsungs pa’i phyir ro|
kun mkhyen phyi ma rig 'dzin chen po 'jigs med gling pa yang de ltar bzhed de| de’i nyams mgur las|

yum chen shes rab phar phyin dang 'khyud rgya zhig byas pas| |
dpal mgon 'phags pa klu sgrub kyi nyams shig shar byung| |
bshad pa’i chu 'go923 de zla ba grags pa la zhu’o924| |

zhes gsungs pa’i phyir ro| |

1. yang rje btsun bla ma tsong kha pa chen pos thal rang gi khyad parchos can
mthun snang ba bzhed mi bzhed soqs kyis thal zlog dang rang rgyud ’gog tshul gyi
khyad par gangs can 'dir sngar ma grags pai rgya gar mkhas pa’i legs bshad zhib
mor phye ba’i rigs lam gyi sgo chen po btod kyang| mdor bsdu na de gnyis rang
mtshan gyi khas len yod med kyis ’byed pa ltar kun mkhyen chos kyi rgyal po yang
bzhed de| yid bzhin mdzod kyi le’u becu gnyis pa’i sngar gyi ’phrod las|

'dir de’i gzhung phyin ci ma log pa’i don bsdu te brjod pa ni| gshis ngo bor
gang yang rang bzhin ma grub pa dang khas len pa thams cad bden zhen dang
bcas pas rang bzhin du smra ba dag gi lugs rang gi gzhung khas blangs
nang925 'gal ba dang dngos po stobs zhugs khas len pa po de’i gzhung la
ggrags tshad des ’gog pa [8] yin la| bkag pa’i rjes la rang rgyud pa ltar nges pa’i
dam bca’ med de| gal te nga la dam bca’926 ’ga’ yod| des na nga la skyon ’di
yod| nga la dam bca’ med pas na| nga ni skyon med kho na yin| zhes pa’i
thsul gyis go bar byed pas|927 ‘dir de’i928 don929 gtan la dbab pa la930|

zhes gsung pa’i phyir| ’di’i khas len med lugs kyng snga rabs pa kha cig dbu ma pa
la khas len spyi med par ’dod pa’i don ltar min te| khas len mi len gyir rnam gzhag

923 DCc mgo
924 These lines appear in 'Jigs-med gling-pa’s autobiography. See 'Jigs gling rnam thar 44; JLa vol.
14 34a.1: yum chen shes rab kyi pha rol phyin pa khong la ’khyud rgya zhig byas pas| dpal mgon
'phags pa klu sgrub kyi nyams shig shar byung ngo| a ho ye bshad pa’i chu 'go de zla ba grags pa la
zhu ba no| |
925 DCc na
926 DCc bcas
927 DCc. omits |
928 DCc de
929 DCc om. don
"'og nas gsal bar bstan pa’i phyir te| gtsang ba dang rma bya ltar khas len yod med kyi phyogs geig mi ’dzin par khas len mi len kun rdzob tu yin gyi| don dam du khas len yod med kyi dpyad pa med pa dang| yang kun rdzob tu skabs kyi dbyes bas khas blang rgyu dang| mi len rgyu gnyis yod par gsungs pa’i phyir| de ltar yang gsungs te| de nyid las|

rtsod pa dang\textsuperscript{931} don dam yul du byed pa’i tshe snang ba gang yang rang bzhin med pas\textsuperscript{932} gshis la yod par\textsuperscript{933} khas len med pa’i phyir\textsuperscript{934} khas blang bar bya ba ma yin no| \textit{lam rjes thob pa tha snyad yul du byed dus gsung rab las bshad pa ltar mam dbyes dang bcas pa rmi lam sgyu ma’i grub mtha’ tsam du shes nas rang gis kyang dpyad de bsam zhing| gzhan la’ang bstan pas\textsuperscript{935} blang dor gyi dmigs phyed nas lam dbu ma tshogs gnyis [9] la zhugs te ’bras bu sku gnyis ’grub pa’i dgos pa yod do\textsuperscript{936} | |
sogs zhib par gsungs so| |
de bzhin du ’grel ba phyogs bcu’i mun sel las kyang
de’ang dbu ma rang rgyud pa ni chos thams cad kun rdzob tu snang la\textsuperscript{937} de yang brtags na don dam par rang bzhin med par ’dod de| \textit{dbu ma bden gnyis las}|

kun rdzob ’di ltar snang ba ’di| |
rig pas brtags na ’ga’ mi rnyed| |
ma rnyed pa nyid\textsuperscript{938} don dam\textsuperscript{939} te| |
ye nas gnas pa’i chos nyid do\textsuperscript{940} | zhes so| |

\textsuperscript{931} DCc adds | \textsuperscript{932} DCc \textit{pa} \textsuperscript{933} DCc \textit{pa} \textsuperscript{934} DCc adds | \textsuperscript{935} DCc \textit{nas} \textsuperscript{936} KLR vol. 14: 127 \textsuperscript{937} DCc omits | \textsuperscript{938} DCc \textit{de} \textsuperscript{939} DCc \textit{ldan} \textsuperscript{940} This is not from \textit{Satyadvayavibhanga-kārikā} but appears in Bhāviveka’s \textit{Madhyamakaratnapraḍīpa} (DT vol. 97: 521.1). Note, however, that the latter gives the fourth line as \textit{de phyir kun rdzob shes par bya}\textsuperscript{[1]} | .
dbu ma thal ’gyur ba ni dpyad rung ma dpyad rung dus gtan du chos thams
cad spros pa nye bar zhi ba khas len thams cad dang bral bar ’dod de| ’jug pa
las|

ji ltar khyod kyi gzano dbang dngos ’dod ltar\[941\]
kun rdzob kyang ni bdag gi khas ma blangs\[942\]

zhes pa dang\[943\]

zhes su gsungs nas dngos smra ltar rang mtshan gyi dngos po khas len pa dang mi
len pa’i sgo nas dbye bar gsal bar gsungs so| |

2. thal rang la dgag bya’i khyad de lta bu yod pas thub dgongs mthar thug thal ’gyur
ba’i lugs gzhir bzhag ste| rang mtshan gyis grub pa’am yul rang ngos nas grub pa
rdul phra mo tsam yang rje bdag nyid chen pos zhal gyis mi bzhes te| de bzhin du
gsang sngags snga ’gyur ba’i nang rgyud gsum gyi nges don gyi lta ba yang rang
bzhin gyis [10] grub pa med par shin tu bzhed de| slob dpon chen po’i man ngag lta
ba’i phreng ba las|

de la rgyud gcig par rto gs pa ni| chos thams cad don dam par ma skyes pas so
so ma yin pa dang| kun rdzob du\[944\] sgyu ma’i mtshan nyid kyis\[945\] so so ma
yin pa dang| ma skyes pa nyid chu zla ltar sgyu ma sna tshogs su snang zhih
bya ba byed nus pa dang| sgyu ma nyid ngo bo med de| ma skyes pas kun
rdzob dang don dam par dbyer med pas rgyud\[946\] gcig pa rto gs pa’o\[947\] |

zhes gsungs te|

de yang bshad bya rtsa ba’i mdo| chos thams cad ni ngo bo nyid kyis stong pa’o| |
zhes sogs drang nas bshad pa mdzad la| ’di’i nyid sgra gnyis kyang dmigs gsal can

\[941\] DCc omits |
\[942\] Madhyamakāvatāra
\[944\] DCc tu
\[945\] DCc du
\[946\] DCc, DCz rgyu
\[947\] Karmay 1988: 167 (Translated on p. 158).
gyi dgag pa’i skabs ’od srung gis zhus pa’i mdo drangs pa ltar rang mtshan ’gog pa’i tshig yin la| bden gnyis dbyer med kyi don kyang ngo bo gcig pa tsam la mi byed par dgag bya phra mo khlegs pa’i bden gnyis kyi go thob khyad par can zhig la byed dgos par rong zom chen pos gsungs so| |

gzhan rong zom lo tsā ba chen pos theg chen tshul ’jug tu dgag bya rang mtshan phra mo nas ’gog tshul ’di ltar gsungs te|


948 DCc omits | 949 DCc med (DCc omits all archaic spellings, which are retained in RZ).
950 DCc yin
951 DCc pa’i
952 DCc omits |
953 DCc rI
954 DCc med
955 DCc pa’i
956 DCc pa’i
957 DCc adds |
958 DCc ba’i
959 DCc omits |
960 DCc rtswa dang spu’i
961 DCc omits |
962 DCc nyid
kyIs⁹⁶₃ stong pa¹⁹₆₄ stong pa⁹₆₅ nyid tsam yod par mthong ba de’i tshe| don dang blor bcas pa thams cad snga ma bzhin no|⁹₆₆ |de nas yang stong pa⁹₆₇ nyid la rnam par brtags na| stong pa⁹₆₈ zhes bya ba ’di’ang dngos po la ltos nas mam par bzhag pa tsam ste| [¹₂] dngos po nyid ma grub na stong pa⁹₆₉ nyid mi ’grub ste| gang zhig stong⁹₇₀ chos gang gis stong| su’i⁹₇₁ stong pa⁹₇₂ ste| bsgrub par bya ba’i chos gang yang myed⁹₇₃ par rtogs pa na| don thams cad myed⁹₇₄ par ’go mnyam mo| |blo thams cad ’khrul par⁹₇₅ ’go mnyam mo| | ’khrul pa⁹₇₆ thams cad ji ltar snang ba de ltar ma yin par ’go mnyam mo| | de ltar ma yin pa thams cad de’i bdag nyid thob pa myed⁹₇₇ par ’go mnyam mo| | bdag nyid thob pa myed⁹₇₈ par gyur pa na| don dang blo gnyis ga⁹₇₉ la’ang mtshan nyid ’go mi mnyam pa myed⁹₈₀ do| | de la dang po sbrul du mthong ba na skrag ste sdang ba skyes so| | de nas thag par mthong ba na sdang ba spangs pa’i rlom sms ’byung ste| chags pa skyes pa’i blo ’byung ngo| | de nas thag pa’i blo zhig pa na thag pa zlum ril la chags pa¹⁹₈₁ blo spangs nas⁹₈₂ du ma ’dus pa tsam la chags pa¹⁹₈₃ blo skyes ste⁹₈₄ |ji srid du dngos por lta ba ma log pa de srid du chags sdang spang ba dang skye ba¹⁹₈₅ blo ni ldog par mi ’gyur mod kyį| don gyi mtshan nyid la ni yang dag par bzhag pa¹⁹₈₆ rdzas ma grub tsam na| re shig⁹₈₇ par gzhag⁹₈₈ pa’i rdzas dang ’go mi
mnyam par mi 'grub ste| snang ba tsam la mi skur\textsuperscript{989} ba ma gtogs pa| mtshan nyid thams cad 'go mnyam mo\textsuperscript{990} |  

zhes gsungs te|  
gang tshe dngos dang dngos med dag| |  
blo yi mdun na mi gnas pa\textsuperscript{[3]} |  

zhes gsung pa de yang 'di ltar| dmigs pa’i gtad so zhig pa zhig la byed rgyu yin ’dug pas gsar rnying gi rjes ’brang blo gsal rnams thugs rig grim pos gzig la phyogs ris kyi mun pa sel bar mdzod cig| |  
rong zom gyi gsung ’dir rang mtshan ’gog lugs dpe dang bcas shin tu gsal zhing rgyas par gsungs ’dug kyang yi ges ’jigs nas ma drangs la| rjes ’jug nges don gyi lta sgom la re ba can yod na legs bshad kyi rin thang shes dgos so| |  
de dang mtshungs par kun mkhyen chen po’i \textit{theg mchog mdzod} kyi rim khang bcu gsum par|  

thag pa dang chos mthun pa’o| | thag pa yang brtags na spu nyag ma re re ba ’ching ba’i don byed mi nus pa dang ’dra ba la| ma brtags na tshogs pa ’ching byed du grub pa ltar ’khrul snang dang ’khrul ’dzin gnyis po dpyad na gzhi med| ngo bo nyid kyang stong yang ma brtags na blo dang snang yul ’khrul pa\textsuperscript{992} rang rig ’ching byed ltar snang ba’o| | bcings par snang dus nas bcings pa med la| grol bar snang dus nas ’ching byed rang mtshan pa med pas grol ba med de| sgyu ’phrul las|  

sus kyang ma bcings bcings med de| |  
’ching bar bya ba yod ma yin| |  
bcings med rnam par bkrol med pa| |  
ye nas lhun rdzogs sangs rgyaschos| |  

\textsuperscript{989} DCc bskur  
\textsuperscript{991} Bodhicaryāvatāra IX 93 ab.  
\textsuperscript{992} DCc ba
bstan phyir spro ba sna tshogs \[14\] mdzad\[993]\ |

ces gsungs pa bzhin no\[994]\ |

zhes gsungs la de ltar thag khra’i sbrul bzhin gsungs pa ni| rten cing ’brel bar ’byung ba’i gzhan dbang la| kun rdzob kyi snang tshul ’di rang bzhin du ’jog pa thag pa la sbrul ltar sgro btags sam kun btags ’ba’ zhig dang| mnyam bzhag ye shes kyi gzigs tshul thag pa la thag pa ltar yongs su grub pa’i mtshan nyid gsum gyi rnam gzhag dpal ldan zla bas gsungs pa’i don yin no| |

gzhan yang kun mkhyen chen po’i dgongs nyams glegs bam du shar ba’i rdo rje’i tshig chos dbhyin rin po che’i mdzod las| |

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{rnam dag byang chub sems kyi ngo bo la|} & \text{ |} \\
\text{blta ba’i yul med lta ba’i chos kyang} & \text{995 med|} \\
\text{blta bar bya dang byed pa rdul tsam med|} & \text{ |} \\
\text{sgom pa’i blo med bsgom bya’i chos kyang med} & \text{996|} \\
\text{spyad dang spyod pa gnyis med lhun grub pas|} & \text{ |} \\
\text{bsgrub par bya ba’i ’bras bu rdul tsam med|} & \text{ |} \\
\text{med pa’i chos la bgro pa’i sa med pas|} & \text{ |} \\
\text{phar phyin bya ba’i lam yang ye nas med|} & \text{ |} \\
\text{’od gsal thig le chen por grub zin pas|} & \text{ |} \\
\text{rnam rtog ’phro ’dus bskyed pa’i dkyil ’khor dang|} & \text{ |} \\
\text{snags dang kha ton dbang dam dam tshig med|} & \text{ |} \\
\text{rim sdud la sogs mi dmiig rdzogs rim med|} & \text{ |} \\
\text{ye nas grub zin sku dang ye shes la|} & \text{ |} \\
\text{’dus byas glo bur rkyen byung rgyu ’bras med|} & \text{ |} \\
\text{’di dag yod na rang byung ye shes min|} & \text{ |} \\
\text{[15] ’dus byas nyid phyir ’jig pa nyid dang ni|} & \text{ |} \\
\text{lhun grub ’dus ma byas zhes gang slad mtshon|} & \text{ |} \\
\text{de phyir don dam dbhyings kyi ngo bo la|} & \text{ |}
\end{align*}
\]

\[993\] Cf. *Guhyagarbha Tantra* II 15–16.  
\[994\] KLR vol. 17: 479  
\[995\] DCC su  
\[996\] DCC sgom pa’i blo med bsgom bya cung zad med
rgyu 'bras las 'das rang bzhin rnam bcu med| |
rtsol dang sgrub med sems nyid rnal ma’i don| |
yod med spros kun zhi bar mkhyen ’tshal lo997| |

zhes gsungs shing gnas lugs mdzod du med pa sogs bzhi re re la ’gag sdom gnad du
dril ba la bzla ba’i skor du yang shin tu gsal la| gzhan mdzod chen bdun dang| ngal
gso gsum sogs su chos sku stong nyams chen po’i rdo rje’i tshig gi do ha bsam gyis
mi khyab pa zhig bka’ btsal pa rnams ni dgag bya phra mo ’gog tshul yin pa shes
par gyis la chos sku’i gdung ma bcad par dag snang gi ngang du bzhugs zhes da lta’i
gsar rnying gi blo gsar rnams la zhu’o| |

3. de ltar dgag bya rang ngos nas grub pa rdul phra mo tsam mi bzhed kyang snang
phyogs la gtsigs su byed dgos zhes ’jam pa’i dbyangs kyi bka’ bzhin rje btsun bla ma
tsong kha pa chen pos snang tsam ’di mi ’gog ste| snang ba rten ’brel bslu ba med pa
dang| zhes sogs gsungs pa ltar gsang sngags snga ’gyur gyi lugs su yang snang tsam
mi ’gog pa ni| lta phreng las| ma skyes pa nyid chu zla ltar sgyu ma sna tshogs su
snang zhing bya ba byed nus pa dang| zhes gsungs shing| [16] kun mkhyen rong zom
lo tsā ba chen pos kyang| |

rgyen rnams nye bar gnas bzhin du| |
’bras bu snang bar mi ’gyur zhes| |
gang du’ang skur ba ma btab pas| |
’di la skur ba’i gnas ma mthong| |
rgyu ’bras rten cing ’brel tshul du| |
snang ba tsam las ma gtogs pa| |
rgyu ’bras dngos po mi sgrub998 pas| |
’di la sgro ’dogs gnas ma mthong| |
gang gzhan sgro skur bral ba’i don| |
tshul gzhan dag gis sgrub byed kyang| |
nges don bka’ yi rjes ’brangs nas| |
don la bdag blo ’di ltar skyes999| | zhes gsungs la|

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998 DCc bsgrub
999 These lines appear at the end of Theg chen tshul ’jug. See RZ vol. 1: 554.
de bzhin kun mkhyen chen pos chos dbyings mdzod du yang|

'pho 'gyur med pa’i rig pa byang chub la| |
spangs thob med pa’i snang srid 'khor 'das1000 shar| |
gzung 'dzin med pa’i rnal ’byor ngo kha la| |
med la snang 'di ya mtshan rgod po 'chor| |
snang bar med la sna tshogs snang bar shar| |
stong pa1001 med la mtha’ dbus khyab par gdel1002| |
gzung 'dzin med la nga bdag so sor zhen| |
gzhi rtsa med la tshe rabs brgyud mar snang| |
dgag sgrub med la bde sdug blang dor byed| |
phar bltas skye 'gro’i snang ba mtshar re che| |
mi bden bden par zhen pas bden bden1003 'dra1004| |

zhes sogs dang| yang|

'di yi ngang la rgyu 'bras bya rtsol med| |
Ita ba bsgom1005 du med pa la sogs te| |
mtha’ dbus gnyis med [17] 'gog1006 pa’i tshul brjod kyi1007| |
gzhan du ngang las phyir 'kyam1008 rtsal nyid las| |
rol pa1009 sna tshogs snang srid dgu 'char bas| |
rgyu 'bras med ces nam yang ma brjod cig1010| ces gsungs|

4. de lta bu’i snang tsam gyi 'khor 'das gyi rnam gzhag thams cad ming rkyang btags yod tsam du rje bdag nyid chen po bzhed pa bzhin| gsang sngags snga ’gyur ba yang gzhi grub na btags yod kyis khyab par bzhed de| rnying rgyud kun 'dus rig pa’i mdo

1000 DCe 'dus
1001 DCe bar
1002 DCe bdel
1003 DCe chen
1005 DCe bsgom
1006 DCe dpog
1007 DCe kyis
1008 DCe 'khyal
1009 DCe ba

311
las

de nas sems dpa’ chen pos bka’ btsal pa| ’dus pa chen po’i tshogschos thams cad ni| brda dang| tha snyad dang| btags pa tsam du shes par gyis shig| btags pa’i chos thams cad ni phyi nang gang na yang mi gnas te| chos thams cad la ming gi gzhi med cing btags pa’i tha snyad dang bral ba yin no\(^{1011}\)| \(\|\)

\(\|\)

yang spyi mdo dgongs ’dus le’u bdun cu don Inga ba las gsungs pa bzhin gnubs chen gyi mdo ’grel mun pa’i go cha las kyang ’di ltar gsungs te|

gzhi la ’gro ba rang rgyud pa med pas zhen rtog snang ba’i spyir btags pa’i yod pa tsam pas so\(^{1012}\)| \(\|\)

zhes dang|

’o na gang med pa las snang na ri bong rwa dang nam mkha’i me tog kyang ’byung bar rigs so zhe na| gang las ming du btags pa’i gzhi| med rgyu\(^{[18]}\) btags chags bsgrub ’grub cing| zhes pa de kho na nyid kyi dngos po tha dad pa la btags pa ril gyi gzhi ni ji lta bu zhe na| mtshan nyid thams cad pa mtshan nyid med pa| rnam pa kun ldan rnam pa bral ba| brjod pa kun ’byung brjod pa med pa ni| gang yang ma bkol bas rnam pa’i phyogs bral ba’i phyir ngo bo med pa lhun gyis grub pa’i rgyu la ji ltar btags bsnyad pa ltar chags grub bsams\(^{1013}\) pa ltar snang ba’o| \(\|\)

de lta bas\(^{1014}\) na ri bong rwa dang mi mtshungs so\(^{1015}\)| \(\|\)

zhes gdags gzhi rang bzhin med kyang snang ba’i chos la brten nas tha snyad btags pa chags te ’dogs yul de go zhin de’i dgos pa bsgrub nus par grub pa’i cha nas don rang mtshan du med kyang ri bong rwa bzhin med mi dgos pa’i khyad par legs par gsungs te| tha snyad kyi ’jog mtshams shin tu phra mo de la gnubs chen yang rje btsun bla ma tsong kha pa dang dgongs pa gcig dang dbyangs gcig pa’i tshul ’di shes par gyis la zhwa’i kha dog tsam rgyu mtshan du byas nas| rgyal bstan dbyen la ma

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\(^{1011}\) D vol. 98: 44a.3.

\(^{1012}\) NyKs vol. 93 45b.6

\(^{1013}\) DCc bsam

\(^{1014}\) DCc bus

\(^{1015}\) NyKs vol. 93: 46a.6–46b.4
sbyor zhes gsar rnying gi da lta’i blo gsar rnams la gsol ba ’debs so| sgyu ’phrul gsang ba snying po’i le’u gsum pa las|

chos rnams ming du btags pa tsam| ston pas don dang mthun phyogs su| ming dang tshig tu btags nas bstan| ston ming tshig la [19] dngos po med1016| ces dang|
de’i thad kyi phyogs bcu mun sel las|

snang srid ’khor ’das kyis bs dus pa’i chos rnams thams cad don la grub pa med pas ming du btags pa tsam ste| mdo las|

rab ’byor chos thams cad ni brda tsam btags pa tsam ste ngo bo nyid kyis yongs su grub pa med do| zhes so|

sus btags1017 na lha mi’i ston pa sangs rgyas kyis snang tsam ma ’gags pa| kun rdzob kyi bden pa’i don dang re zhig mthun pa’i phyogs su mdzad de| ’khor ba dang mya ngan las ’das pa phung po1018 dang khams dang skye mched ces pa la sogs pa’i ming dang tshig tu btags nas bstan to| dgos pa ni don gyi gnas lugs blos rtogs par bya ba’ phyir ro| de ltar ming tshig tu btags nas ston pa’i dus nyid na ming tshig la dngos po med de| nam mkha’ zhes brjod du na ming tshig de nyid nam mkha’i khams la ni grub pa med cing| lus dang sms la nam mkha’i ming tshig kyang med de| gang nas kyang nam mkha’i ming tshig mi nnyed pas dngos po dang ngos gzung med de1019| de nyid nam mkha’i don dang dbyer med pas chos thams cad blos ming tshig tu btags kyang ming don gang du’ang1020 grub pa med pa’i rang bzhin du shes par bya1021|

zhes shin tu gsal bar gsungs la| sems phyogs nas kyang chos dbyings rin po che’i mdzod [20] las|

1016 NGB vol. 9: 5a.6
1017 DCe adds she
1018 DCe bo
1019 DCe do
1020 DCe du yang
1021 KLR vol. 23: 181.

313
rtén med rmi lam 'dra ba'i rang bzhin la| |
'khor 'das rang mtshan zhen pa mtshar re che| |
thams cad kun bzang lhun grub chen po ni| |
ma 'khrul mi 'khrul 'khrul bar mi 'gyur bas| |
srid pa ming tsam yod med mtha’ las 'das|1022|

zhes dang| |

ye nas lhun grub rang byung rig pa che| |
ma grol mi grol grol bar mi 'gyur la| |
'das pa ming tsam su yang grol ma myong| |
myong bar mi 'gyur bcings pa ye nas med|1023|

ces sogs gsungs so| |

de lta bu'i ming du btags pa tsam la bya byed 'thad pa yang theg mchog mdzod kyi
rim khang bcu dgu bar|

phyi snang ba sna tshogs| nang dran rtog glo bur| dbang po drug snang yul
dang bcas pa thams cad med pa gsal snang tsam las| don la phyi nang gang na
yang med pa rab rib can gyi skra shad dang| sgyu ma dang mi 'phrul dang|

sprul pa1024 lta bur blo la snang yang| snang dus de nyid nas yod med kyi mtha’
las 'das par shes par bya ste| snang ba’i ngos nas ji ltar btags kyang mi 'gal| yin
du chug| min du chug| yod du chug| med du chug| snang du chug| stong du
chug| 'khrul du chug| grol du chug| bzang du chug| ngan du chug1025| sems su
chug| gzhan du chug| gang ltar btags kyang stong ba’i ngos nas ji ltar btags pa
de nyid kyis thog mar stong ste| btags pa sems yin|21 sems med pa yin| med
pa la 'dogs mkhan med pas rmi lam gyi bya byed dang1026 sgyu ma’i bya byed

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1024 DCc ba
1025 KLR has a typographical error: chugsems.
1026 DCc omits dang
bzhiṅ no\textsuperscript{1027} | |

zhes gsungs te|

rang bzhin med kyang yin min yod med grol 'khrul sogs 'thad lugs dang| de ltar btags tsam nas skra shad kyi snang ba sogs dang 'dra bar ye nas yul steng du yod ma myong ba’i snang tsam yin lugs gsungs pa sogs shin tu gsung ’gangs che ste| dbu ma rtsa ba las| gang la stong pa\textsuperscript{1028} nyid rung ba| | de la thams cad rung bar ’gyur\textsuperscript{1029} | sogs dang|

byang chub sams ’grel las|

chos rnams stong pa\textsuperscript{1030} ’di shes nas| |
las dang ’bras bu bsten pa gang| |
ngo mtshar bas kyang ’di ngo mtshar| |
rmad byung bas kyang ’di rmad byung\textsuperscript{1031} | zhes don ji bzhin pa yin no| |
gzhan yang rgyal po\textsuperscript{1032} rā ma ṇas bu ’ba’ le mched gnyis kyi lo rgyus sogs dpe dang bcas te rang bzhin med pa sgyu ma la bya byed ’thad lugs shin tu rgyas par rong zom mkhas pa’i dbang phyug de nyid kyis legs par gsungs yod pas de’i gsung rab la mi blta ba shin tu phangs so| |

5. yang bden gnyis kyi mtshan nyid ’khrul ba dang ma ’khrul ba’i blo’i rnyed don gyi cha nas rje bdag nyid chen pos ngos ’dzin gnang ba ltar snga ’gyur pa yang bzhed de| ’phags pa gsum gyi \textsuperscript{22} mnyam bzhag ye shes don dam ’jog byed ma ’khrul ba’i blo dang| ma rig pa dang de’i bag chags kyis bslad pa’i blo rnams kun rdzob ’jog byed blo ’khrul bar kun mkhyen chen pos bzhed pa’i phyir te| grub mtha’ mdzod las| dbu ma thal ’gyur ba’i lugs la gsum ste| blo ’khrul ba dang ma ’khrul ba’i dbye ba| de ltos te bden pa gnyis su dbye ba’i tshul| thal ’gyur gyis spros pa gcod

\textsuperscript{1027} KLR vol. 18: 190.
\textsuperscript{1028} DCc ba
\textsuperscript{1029} Mīlamadhyamakārikā XXIV 14a: sarvam ca yujyate tasya śūnyatā yasya yujyate.
\textsuperscript{1030} DCc ba
\textsuperscript{1031} Bodhicittavivaraṇa 88. (English translation in Jinpa 2006).
\textsuperscript{1032} DCc bo
pa’i tshul sogs rgyas par gsungs te| yi ges ’jigs nas ma drangs so| | yang spyod ’jug gi dgongs pa ltar gnyis snang can gyi mngon sum gyi spyod yul yin min gyi sgo nas kyang kun mkhyen chen pos bden gnyis kyi mtshan nyid gsungs te| yid bzhin mdzod las|

kun rdzob kyi bden pa’i mtshan nyid blo’i yul las ma ’das pa’i chos dpyad mi bzod pa| don dam bden pa’i mtshan nyid blo las ’das pa’i chos nyid dmigs pa nye zhi ba’o| | dpyad bzod mi ’thad de sngar bkag zin to\(^{1033}\)

zhes gsungs shing ’di’i blo ’das kyi don gnyis snang can gyi kun rtog gi yul du mngon sum du mi ’gyur la gsungs te| don dam so so rang rig gi yul du gsungs pa la| so so rang rig gi blo yin pas don dam yang blo ’das ma yin pa’i dogs pa bslangs nas bsal ba’i phyir te| yid bzhin mdzod las|

so so rang rig \([23]\) dang blo gcig yin mod snyam na| brda la rmongs pas re bden| ’on kyang blo ni kun rtog pa la skabs ’dir mdzad de\(^{1034}\) | zhes gsungs so| |

des na ye shes yul med dang| |chos nyid yul ma yin pa dang| |don dam blo yi spyod yul min| |sogs snga rabs pa ’ga’ zhig ltar ’grel ba ni| rang lungs kun mkhyen gyi gsung ngag bdud rtsi’i btung ba yod bzhin du gzhan zer mchil ma’i thal ba la longs spyod pa yin no| |

’on kyang ye shes yul med du gsungs pa ’ga’ re yod pa ni yongs gcod sgrub pa’i chos yul du mi ’gyur bar dgag bya ’khrul rtog gi zhen stangs sun dbyung ba’i don tsam la mnyam par bzhag pa’i tshul gsungs pa ste| gsar bu ba rnams skrag pa skye ba’i gnas med dgag cig gzigs ngor shar ba’i don no| |

6. de lta bu’i bden gnyis kyi dbye ba ni| phung gsum sel ba’i grangs nges kyi dbye ba yin par rje bdag nyid chen pos bzhed pa ltar kun mkhyen dri med ’od zer kyang bzhed de| grub mtha’ mdzod las|
bzhi pa\textsuperscript{1035} grangs nges pa ni| spros pa las grol ma grol dngos ’gal du nges pas bgrub phyogs dang dgag phyogs kyi phung po\textsuperscript{1036} gsum pa khets pas gnyis su grangs nges so| | rnam pa geig tu na yul rnam s ni yul can la ltos nas ’jog pa na yul can ni mthar ma thug pa [24]\textsuperscript{1037} blo dang| mthar thug pa ma ’khrul pa’i\textsuperscript{1038} blo gnyis las mi ’da| de la ’khor ba’ichos rnam s ni ’khrul pa\textsuperscript{1039} dang|chos nyid ni ma ’khrul pa’i\textsuperscript{1040} yul yin pas blo’i dbang gis gnyis su bzhag ste| ’jug pa las| dngos kun yang dag rdzun pa’i mthong ba yis\textsuperscript{1041} sogs drangs nas gsungs so| |
derglicher Text:
des na yod min med min gyi shes bya phung gsum pa sogs khas len pa’i gsang sngags rnying ma ba yod na rang lugs don la sgrib pa yin pas mi mdzes so| |
7. bden gnyis kyi ya gyal kun rdzob bden pa la yang log gnyis su don la ’byed rgyu med par gangs can gyi shing rta chen pos bzhed pa ltar gsang sngags nang rgyud sde gsum gyi lta ba’i bka’ srol la yang legs par snang ste| kun mkhyen rong zom chen pos theg tshul du gsal bar gsungs te| dbu ma rang rgyud pas| snang du ’dra yang| don byed dag| nus pa’i phyir dang mi nus phyir| zhes bum pa dang| de’i gzugs brnyan gyi chu ’dzin pa’i don byed nus mi nus yod pas kun rdzob yang log tu ’jog pa ni| chus khyer bas rtswa drungs phyung la ’ju ba ltar mi ’thad tshul rgyas par gsungs te| rgyal po grags pa mtha’ yas dper byas te| ngo mtshar dang bzhad gad kyi gnas su bshad de| de nyid las|
chus thams cad don dam par spros pa [25] thams cad nye bar zhi ste| bgrub par bya ba gang yang mi bgrub par lta bzhin du| yang dag pa’i\textsuperscript{1042} kun rdzob kyi mtshan ma nyid spang ba dang blang bar bya ba’i rdzas yod par ’dzin pa ’di ni| shin tu mi ’tsham pa ’dzin pa ste\textsuperscript{1043} ngo mtshar ba’i gnas yin no\textsuperscript{1044} | 

\textsuperscript{1035} DCe ba
\textsuperscript{1036} DCe bo
\textsuperscript{1037} DCe ba ’i
\textsuperscript{1038} DCe ba ’i
\textsuperscript{1039} DCe ba
\textsuperscript{1040} DCe ba ’i
\textsuperscript{1041} KLR vol. 15: 106. The quotation is from Madhyamakāvatāra VI 23.
\textsuperscript{1042} DCe pa ’i
\textsuperscript{1043} DCe adds
\textsuperscript{1044} RZ vol. 1: 424. (English translation in Sur 2017: 46)
zhes dang| 'grel ba phyogs bceu mun sel las|

dpyad na yang dag pa dang| log pa gnyis ka yang snang bar mnyam zhing| gzhigs na don la ma grub pas1045 mnyam pa’i phyir| 'khor ‘das snang srid thams cad da lta nyid nas rnam dbye med par mnyam pa nyid du gnas so1046 |

zhes byad dang de’i gzugs brnyan rang ngos nas ma grub mnyam pa pas yang log mi 'thad par gsungs so| |
yang 'jig rten shes ngo la ltos te bden rdzun gyi tha snyad 'thob rung lta bu’i yang log gnyis su dbye ba zla ba dang rje btsun tsong kha pa bzhed pa ltar kun mkhyen chen po yang bzhed de| yid bzhin mdzod las|

kun rdzob la tha snyad 'jig rten pas bden rdzun du byed pa dang bstun nas brda’ shes pa’i yan lag tui yang dag kun rdzob dbang po1047 gnod pa med pa drug gi snang yul du snang ba’i gzugs sgra dri ro reg bya dangchos rnam s yin la| log pa’i kun rdzob gnod pas dkrugs pa’i snang ba rab rib dang skra shad lasogs par snang ba ste| 'jug pa las| gnod pa med pa’i dbang po1048 [26] drug rnam s kyis1049 |

zhes sogs drangs nas gsungs so| |

'jig rten na bden par grags pa dang| ma grags pa dang sgo bstun nas yang log byed pa grub mtha’ mdzod las gsungs so| |

8. don dam la yul can gtso bor byas te gnyis snang gi spros pa log ma log gi sgo nas rnam grangs dang rnam grangs ma yin pa’i dbye ba gnyis su rang rgyud pa’i gzhung nas bshad pa ltar rje bdag nyid chen po yang bzhed la| yang dgag bya’i spros pa rdzogs par khegs ma khegs kyis don dam dngos btags sam rnam grangs dang| rnam grangs ma yin pa’i dbye ba yang phye tshul yod la| rong zom gyi lta phreng 'grel

1045 DCc omits pas
1046 KLR vol. 23: 167
1047 DCc bo
1048 DCc bo
1049 KLR vol. 14: 122–123. The quotation is from Madhyamakāvatāra VI 25.
kun mkhyen chen pos dgag bya rang bzhin gyis stong ba nam grangs ma yin pa dang| de rtogs pa’i spros bral gyi mkhyen pa rnam grangs pa’i don dam par bzhed de| phyogs bucu mun sel las|

don dam blo las ’das pas ngo bo la dbye ba med kyang| blos cung zad dbye na| chos rnams rang gi ngo bo nyid kyis stong pa1051 de ni gshis kyi don dam [27] yin te| mdo las| rab ’byor ’di lta ste| dper na nam mkha’i khams la ’ga’ zhig gis bsngags pa brjod cing| ’ga’ zhig gis bsngags pa ma yin pa brjod na gang ba’am bri ba med do1052| de bzhin du de bzhin gsheds pa rnams kyischos rnams kyi ngo bo nyid don dam pa gcig pu zhi ba’i rang bzhin brjod cing| gzhann yang mu stegs byed kun tu rgyu rnams kyis rtag pa ther zug pa’i chos su bstan yang| yang dag pa’i de bzhin nyid la gnyis su gyur pa med do| zhes so| rnal ’byor pas1053 don de nyid bsgoms pas spros pa dang bral ba’i blo skyes pa ni rnam grangs pa’i don dam zhes bya ste| bden gnyis las|1054 skye la sogs pa bkag pa yang1055|

zhes sogs drangs nas gsungs so| |
des na don dam gyi dbye ba’i gsung sgros cung mi thun kyang gnad gcig la| da lta kun mkhyen rong klong gnyis kyi rjes ’jug la| rang bzhin gyis stong ba don dam btags pa ba dang| kun rdzob mtshan nyid pa sogs su ’dod pa yod na kun mkhyen gnyis kyi gsung ’di dag ma mthong bar snga rabs pa ’ga’ re’i grub mtha’i shan shor ba yin no| rang bzhin gyis grub pa khegs pa’i stong ba nyid dgag ba rdzogs par khegs pa’i yul rnam grangs min pa’i don dam yin pa la ni rje btsun tsong kha pa chen po dang| rong zom chen po kun mkhyen ngag gi dbang [28] po gsum dgongs pa gcig

1050 This is not a direct quotation, but a reference to RZ vol. 1: 323.
1051 DCe ba
1052 DCe de
1053 DCe bas
1054 DCe omits bden gnyis las|
par yod pas rang bzhin med pa la med mtha’i spros par ’dzin pa’i rnying ma pa ni shin tu yang mi mdzes te| chos dbyings mdzod sogs nges don gyi rdo rje’i do ha rnams la skur ba btab pa’i phyir ro| | nang ba sungs rgyas pa thams cad kyis zab khyad du brtsi ba’i bdag med pa’i lam chen dor nas| gsal rig tsam dang yin min yod med sogs gang du yang ngos bzung med pa’i ci yang yid la mi byed pa tsam la snying bor ma ’dzin par mdo sgyu sems gsum gyi gsung rab snga ma rnams kyi gsung sgros ltar bya bar rigs zhes da lta’i rnying ma pa phal cher la gsol ba ’debs so| | 9. de lta bu’i bden gnyis ngo bo gcig la ldog pa tha dad bu bzhed pa yang| rje bla ma dang kun mkhyen chen po dgongs pa so sor med de| theg mchog mdzod kyi rim khang brgyad pa las| yang snang ngo kun rdzob kyi cha nas lhun grub la| stong ngo don dam gyi cha nas ka dag tu tshig gis brjod pa tsam las| de gnyis rdzas tha dad du med pas so sor mi ’gyur te| ngo bo gcig la ldog pa tha dad| bram ze yin pas mi yin la| sdom ldan yin pas rab tu byung ba yin pa gnyis mi ’gal ba bzhin no1056| | zhes gsungs so| | 10. don dam dpe’i sgo nas gtan la ’bebs pa la| rab rib [29] kyis ma bslad pa’i mig gis nam mkhar bltas na ci yang ma mthong ba ltar ji ltar btsal kyang gang du yang ma rnyed pa’i bdag nyid yin pa yang dgongs pa gcig ste| theg mchog mdzod kyi rim khang bcu dgu bar| de ltar rnam pa du ma’i sgo nas rang gi sems la gcig dang tha dad kyi brgal1057 bas brtags te btsal bas gang yang ma rnyed pa ni chos nyid ka nas dag pa’i don shes rab kyi dbang pos rtogs pa ste1058| zhes dang| chos dbyings rin po che’i mdzod las| 

1056 KLR vol. 17: 322.
1057 KLR rgal
1058 KLR vol. 18: 184.
gzung ’dzin med pa’i mna’ byor ngo kha la
med la snang ’di ya mtshan dgod\textsuperscript{1059} po ’chor\textsuperscript{1060}

zes so ds dang| \textit{yid bzhin mdo} kyile’u bco brgyad pa las|

kun rdzob ’di ltar sna tshogs snang ba ’di| |
sgyu ma chu zla sprul pa\textsuperscript{1061} gzugs brnyan bzhin| |
rang bzhin med la snang ba gang yin ’di\textsuperscript{1062} | |
shin tu brtags na gzhi rtsa dngos med pas| |
mkha’ ’dra stong zhing mtshan nyid chad pa ste| |
ma brtags nyams dga’ sna tshogs sgyu ma bzhin| |
bag chags ’khrl pa’\textsuperscript{1063} rten ’brel las byung ba| |
ji ltar dha tu ra yi snang ba bzhin\textsuperscript{1064} | |

zes gsungs so| |

11. kun rdzob kyi dpe rab rib can gyi skra shad kyi snang ba dang ’dra bar yang
dgongs pa gcig ste| sngar gong du drangs pa rnam s kyi kyang shes la| \textit{theg mchog mdo} kyirim khang nyer gcig par| \textsuperscript{[30]}

phyi snang ba sna tshogs dkar dmargyi snang ba snod bcud ’byung ba lnga
bsdus kyi klong na gsal ba ’di dag| rang sms ’khrl pa’\textsuperscript{1065} ngo la snang ba
ma gtogs pa phyi don gyi dngos po dang| nang sms kyi dngos po gnyis kar ma
grub pas| gzhi med stong pas\textsuperscript{1066} cho ’phrul med pagsal snang gi rang bzhin
rab rib can gyi skra shad dang| rmi lam sgyu ma’i snang ba dang ’dra bar shes
par bya\textsuperscript{1067} |

zes so| |

\textsuperscript{1059} \textsc{DCC} \textit{rgod}
\textsuperscript{1060} \textsc{KLR} vol. 16: 17 (Cf. Longchen Rabjam 2001a: 58).
\textsuperscript{1061} \textsc{DCC} \textit{ba}
\textsuperscript{1062} \textsc{DCC} \textit{pa}
\textsuperscript{1063} \textsc{DCC} \textit{ba’i}
\textsuperscript{1064} \textsc{KLR} vol. 13: 54–55.
\textsuperscript{1065} \textsc{DCC} \textit{ba’i}
\textsuperscript{1066} \textsc{DCC} \textit{bas}
\textsuperscript{1067} \textsc{KLR} vol. 18: 276.
des na kun rdzob kyi chos rnams la med snang stong ba’i gzugs brnyan du snga ’gyur mkhas pa rnams yang yang gsungs pa nyid| slob dpon zla ba grags pas|

rab rib mthu yis skra shad la sogs pa| |
ngo bo log pa gang zhig rnam brtags pa| |
de nyid bdag nyid gang du mig dag pas| |
mthong de de nyid de ni ’dir shes bya1068| |

zhes sogs gsungs pa dang shin tu mthun pa’i bden gnyis dbyer med kyi tshul gyi nges don mthar thug gtan la ’bebs pa ha cang ’gangs che’o| |

12. stong ba de nyid gsar du blos byas glo bur ba ma yin par gnyug ma ye grol gyi rang bzhin ’dus ma byas su kun mkhyen chen po bzhed pa ltar| tha snyadchos skad kyi khyad tsam las don mthun par rje bdag nyid chen po yang bzhed pa ni|

gnas lungs zab mo’i don la skrag gyur nas| |
blos byas nyi tshe’i stong pa1069 mchog ’dzin pa’i| [[31]
log pa’i lta ngan mtha’ dag rab spangs te| |
chos kun gdod nas stong par1070 rtogs par shog1071| |

ces smon lam du gnang ngo| |

13. don dam la dpyod pa’i rtags kyi bsgrub bya med dgag tu tshig gsal dang| shes rab sgron ma sogs su gsungs pa bzhin rje bdag nyid chen po yang bzhed la| spyir na dgag pa gnyis kyi mtshan nyid rje rang gi legs bshad rnams su yang yang nan chen pos rgya gzhung rnams drangs te gtan la phab pa ltar gsang sngags snga ’gyur ba yang bzhed de| rong zom pa pañḍi ta chen pos| theg chen tshul ’jug tu

de la dgag pa ji snyed pa thams cad kyang|1072 myed1073 par dgag pa dang ma

1068 Madhyamakāvatāra VI 29.
1069 DCe ba
1070 DCe bar
1071 Thog mtha’ bar gyi smon lam. TKz vol. 2: 673.1
1072 DCe omits |
yin par dgag pa gnyis su 'dus so| | de la myed\textsuperscript{1074} par dgag pa zhes bya ba ni| yod pa bkag pa tsam yin te\textsuperscript{1075}| gzhan bsgrub par bya ba’i don myed\textsuperscript{1076} de| 'di ltar ma rtogs pa dang\textsuperscript{1077} log par rtogs pa dang\textsuperscript{1078} the tshom za ba tsam sel bar byed pa kun tu brtags pa tsam 'gog par byed pa yin te| don gzhan ston pa myed\textsuperscript{1079} do| | dper na bum pa myed\textsuperscript{1080} zhes\textsuperscript{1081} brjod na| bum pa yod par rtog pa bzlog pa tsam du zad de| bum pa myed\textsuperscript{1082} pa’i sa phyogs la stsogs\textsuperscript{1083} pa ni ston par mi byed do| | de bzhin du gang zag myed\textsuperscript{1084} ces brjod na| gang zag yod par rtog pa tsam bzlog par zad de| gang zag gIs\textsuperscript{1085} stong pa’i\textsuperscript{1086} phung po\textsuperscript{1087} \[32\] yod par ston par ni mi byed pa’o| | de bzhin du kun la sbyar\textsuperscript{1088} ro| | ma yin par dgag pa gang zhe na| gzhan bkag\textsuperscript{1089} nas gzhan ston pa ste| 'di ltar bum pa myed\textsuperscript{1090} pa zhes brjod na\textsuperscript{1091}| bum pas stong pa’i\textsuperscript{1092} sa phyogs go bar byed pa bzhin du\textsuperscript{1093} gang zag myed\textsuperscript{1094} pa zhes brjod na| gang zag gis stong pa’i\textsuperscript{1095} phung po\textsuperscript{1096} ston par byed pa lta bu’o| | de lta bas na myed\textsuperscript{1097} par dgag pa ni gzhan gyis grub pa’i mtha’ sel ba tsam yin la| ma yin par dgag pa ni de tsam gyis mi chog ste| rang gi grub pa’i mtha’ ‘ang\textsuperscript{1098} sgrub par byed pa yin no\textsuperscript{1099} | 

zhes dgag pa gnyis kyis mtshan nyid gsungs pa ni shing rta chen po’i gzhung drangs

\textsuperscript{1073} DCc med
\textsuperscript{1074} DCc med
\textsuperscript{1075} DCc gyi
\textsuperscript{1076} DCc med
\textsuperscript{1077} DCc adds
\textsuperscript{1078} DCc adds
\textsuperscript{1079} DCc med
\textsuperscript{1080} DCc med
\textsuperscript{1081} DCc ces
\textsuperscript{1082} DCc med
\textsuperscript{1083} DCc sogs
\textsuperscript{1084} DCc med
\textsuperscript{1085} DCc gis
\textsuperscript{1086} DCc ba’i
\textsuperscript{1087} DCc bo
\textsuperscript{1088} DCc shyor
\textsuperscript{1089} DCc bkag
\textsuperscript{1090} DCc med
\textsuperscript{1091} DCc pa ni
\textsuperscript{1092} DCc ba’i
\textsuperscript{1093} DCc omits
\textsuperscript{1094} DCc med
\textsuperscript{1095} DCc ba’i
\textsuperscript{1096} DCc bo
\textsuperscript{1097} DCc med
\textsuperscript{1098} DCc yang
nas rje bdag nyid chen po gsungs pa ji lta bu bzhin yin la| gnas lugs rtogs pa’i
mnyam bzhag ye shes kyi gzigs ngo na ’khurul pa’i
blos sgro btags pa’i don bkag pa’i stong sam tsam las bsgrub bya gzhan gang yang med pas so so rang rig gi ye
shes de’i gzhal bya’i spros bral ni| gong du bshad ma thag pa ltar gyi dgag bya bkag
tsam gyi med dgag kho na yin te| theg mchog mdzod kyi rim khang brgyad pa las|

ka dag dngos po dang mtshan mar ma grub pa’i ldog pa ltos te| rig pa med| ma
rig pa med| sangs rgyas med| sems can med

ces pa nas|

ci yang grub pa dang dmigs su med pa ste| [33] dgagchos ’ba’ zhig gis bsgrub
chos dor bar bstan pa ni

zhes bkra shis mdzes ldan chen po ’i rgyud drangs nas gsungs pa’i phyir ro |
des na dgag bya bkag shul du chos gzhan ’phen mi ’phen gyis dgag pa gnyis kyi
rnam dbye byed pa ni| rgya gar mkhas pa’i gzhung dang| bod ’dir yang rong klong
gnyis dang| ’jam mgon bla ma yab sras dgongs pa gcig dang dbyangs gcig gis gzhed
la| chos rnams kyi gnas lugs ngos ’dzin pa’i tshe yang ’khurul ba’i blos sgro btags pa
bkag pa’i cha tsam zhig las gzhan bsgrub tu med pa dang| gal srid yod na spros pa
ma chod pa’i skyon yod par yang mkhas pa’i dbang po de dag bzhed pas stong nyid
med dgag yin pa la mi mthun pa med do| |

’on kyang deng sang sa rnying gi klog pa ba mang po
zhig| med dgag la skyon du
mthong ba ni med dgag gi don ma shes pa ste| don gyi dbang de mngon par mkyhen
pas gzigs nas mkhas pa rnams kyang dgag pa gnyis kyi mtshan nyid mang du gtan la
phab pa ’dra yang| rang gi rjes ’jug la ltos te dgos pa grub ma grub ci rigs yod la|
mkhas pa’i’i dbang phyug ’jam dbyangs mi pham rnam rgyal ba ni nges shes sgron
mer chos nyid med dgag tu gsungs so| | smin gling sku mched gnyis ma yin dgag tu
gsungs pa ni stong nyid [34] rang ldog tsam min par tshul gzhan la dgongs pa ste
dpyad bya mang yang yi ges ’jigs nas bzhag go| |

14. nyan rang gischos nyid de rtogs dgos par zla bas ’jug ’grel sogs su lung rigs mang pos\textsuperscript{1104} nan tan du gsungs pa ltar rje yab sras bzhed la| snga ’gyur ba’i rang lugs la thun mong gi bshad srol mkhan chenyab sras kyi lugs ltar mdzad pas ma rtogs pa’i phyogs gsungs kyang| thun min nang rgyud sde gsum gyi nges don gyi lta ba dpal ldan thal ’gyur ba ltar bzhed dgos par kun mkhyen ngag gi dbang po bzhed pas nyan rang gis chos kyi bdag med phra mo rtogs pa bzhed dgos par grub la| gzhan yang mkhas pa’i dbang po rong klong gnyis kyi gsung rab tu gnas lugs rang bzhin med pa’i lta ba med par nyon mongs mi spong ba’i tshul shin tu mang po\textsuperscript{1105} gsungs pas kyang ’grub la| rtogs ma rtogs kyi dbang gis ’khor ’das kyi khyad par dbye dgos par yang mang du bka’ btsal pa ltar yongs su grags pas thun min gyi bshad srol du nyan rang gi stong nyid rtogs par bzhed pa la bsnyon du med do| | yi ges ’jigs nas rgyas par ma drangs so| |

15. rigs shes kyi dpyad bzod gzhi ma grub par rje bdag\textsuperscript{35} nyid chen po bzhed la| snga rabs pa ’ga’ re rigs shes kyi rnyed don dang rigs shes kyi dpyad bzod geig tu ’khrul nas don dam bden pa dpyad bzod du ’dod mkhan yod mod| kun mkhyen chos kyi rgyal pos grub mtha’ mdzod kyi skabs snga rabs pa’i rjes zlos mdzad kyang| yid bzhin mdzod ’grel padma dkar por don dam bden pa’i mtshan nyid kyi ’phros su dpyad bzod bkag pas rang bzhed rje rin po che dang dgongs pa geig tu ’bab bo| | rgyas par ma drangs so| |

16. kun rdzob dngos yul du byed pa’i sems can gya blo ni ’khrul par\textsuperscript{1106} zla ba dang rje btsun tsong kha pa bzhed pa ltar kun mkhyen chen po soggs gsang sngags snga ’gyur ba yang shin tu bzhed de| grub mtha’ mdzod las|

mthong ba rdzun pa blo ’khrul pa\textsuperscript{1107} ni so so skye bo ma rig pa’i bag chags kyis mig mdongs\textsuperscript{1108} pas\textsuperscript{1109} rab rib dang skra shad ’dzag pa la don du zhen pa ltar| ’gro ba drug gi gnas dang longs spyod la soggs pa’i bde sdu gna tshogs su
snang ba 'khrul pa\textsuperscript{1110} rten cing 'breI bar 'byung ba'i gzung 'dzin gyi nmam pa rnams dang| sa thob pa'i rjes thob na gzhan dang thun mong du snod bcud la sogs par snang ba'i nmam pa dang| snang tsam dbang po\textsuperscript{i111} mgon sum dang| me \textsuperscript{[36]} la sogs pa dpog pa'i rjes su dpag\textsuperscript{1112} pa la sogs te blo rim gnyis ni kun rdzob pa'i nmam pa 'jal ba la ltos nas snang la| de la'ang mig la sogs pa'i dbang po dag pa pa\textsuperscript{1113} dang| skyon can gnyis las kun rdzob gnyis su bzhag ste\textsuperscript{1114}]

zhes gsungs so| |

yang gzhan skye tha snyad du yang mi 'thad tshul 'jug pa rtsa 'grel du gsungs pa ltar rje bla mas gzhan skye 'gog tshul gyi rigs pa'i 'phul mtshams gangs can 'dir sngar yongs su ma grags pa'i shing rta chen po'i rigs lam phra mo'i nmam gzhag mkhas pa yid 'phrog pa'gi gnas mang du gsungs la| kun mkhyen dri med 'od zer kyang gzhan skye tha snyad du mi bzhed de| \textit{yid bzhin mdzod} 'grel gyis rang rgyud 'gog skabs| de ltar rgyu rkyen rten 'breI gyi snang ba las skye bar snang yang| gzhan kho na las 'dod par mi rigs te| tha snyad du gzhan las skye ba grub na rang las skye ba yang 'grub par 'gyur ro| zhes bdag skye dang| gzhan skye 'thad mi 'thad 'go mnyam du mdzad do| yang \textit{grub mtha} 'mdzod gyi rang rgyud pa'i skabs| shes bya bden gnyis kyi dbye ghizir bzhag cing| don dam dpod pa'i rtags kyis bsgrub bya med dgag yin par yang gsungs so| |

de bzhin du gsang sngags snga 'gyur ba rnams rang rig kyang mi bzhed pa'i phyogs yin te| dpal ldan zla ba la \textsuperscript{[37]} bshad pa'i chu mgo zhu dgos gang zhig| \textit{'jug 'grel} du rang rig rgyas par bkag pa'i phyir dang| rang rig gis bden dngos ci yang bsgrub tu med pa'i phyir te| snang tshul ltar bden pa rdul tsam yang khas mi len pa'i phyir dang| tha snyad pa'i nmam gzhag la snang tsam las logs su btags don dang 'jog byed kyi tshad ma Zur du 'tshol mi dgos pa'i phyir ro| rong klong gnyis zhig pa dngos por bzhed pa'i gsal kha med kyang nges par bzhed de| zla ba rgyas par bsgrub pa rang lugs gang zhig chos thams cad btags tsam du 'jog pa'i lugs la zhig pa dngos por bzhed par gnod byed med cing| bzhed dgos pa'i sgrub byed mang ba'i phyir| des na

\textsuperscript{1110} DC\textit{c} ba
\textsuperscript{1111} DC\textit{c} bo'i
\textsuperscript{1112} DC\textit{c} dpog
\textsuperscript{1113} DC\textit{c} omits pa
\textsuperscript{1114} KLR vol. 15: 101–102
zhig pa dngos po la yang than mthong ba ltar mi byed par blo gzu bos khas blang bar bya dgos so| spros rgyu mang yang yi ges 'jigs so| |

17. kun rdzob tha snyad pa'i chos mams ji snyed pa gzigs pa'i rnam mkhyen tshad ma'i gtsos tshad mas bslu med du grub pa yang dgongs pa gcig dang dbyangs gcig yin te| kun mkhyen chen po'i 'grel ba pad dkar du|

shes bya mtha’ med pa mkhyen pas thams cad gzigs shing| thugs rje mtha’ med pas ’jig rten kun la gzigs pa na yungs 'bru gcig gi go sa1115 na’ang| snod beud kyi [38] ’jig rten tshad med par snang bas don mdzad cing1116|

zhes pa nas|

nam mkha’ go sa1117 khab kyi mig tsam na’ang las mthun par bsags pa’i sems can snod beud kyi ’jig rten grangs med pa snang ba thams cad du ye shes kyi gzigs pa ’jug cing don mdzad pa yin no1118|

zhes sogs gsungs pa’i phyir|

18. de ltar gzhi bden gnyis kyi rnam gzhag gtan la ’bebs pa la gsar rnying dgongs pa mi mthun pa med la| khyad par du nges don gyi lta ba mthar thug gi tshul bden gnyis dbyer med kyi chos skad kyis yang yang nan tan du gsungs pa de nyid zla ba’i ’grel chen gsum gyi dgongs pa rje bla mas fi ka chen gnyis dang| lhag mthong che chung sogs su dkral ba dang tha snyad kyi sgros las dgongs pa’i gtad so shin tu gcig tu ’bab ste| don dam gtan la ’bebs tshe dgag bya rang ngos nas grub pa bkag pas| rang rgyud pa ltar kun rdzob rang mtshan pa log na med| kun rdzob ’jog tshe ’khor ’das kyi rnam gzhag snang tsam btags tsam gyi ming rkyang btags yod du ’jog pa’i phyir dgag bya dngos su khegs pas don dam zur du med pas na bden gnyis dbyer med ces tha snyad du rang rgyud kyi gtan tshig gis yang dag pa’i bsgrub bya sgrub pa’i dbu ma byings las [39] kyang phye ste| zla ba’i dgongs pa thun mong min par bsgrub pa’i phyir| de skad du| yid bzhiṃ mdzod kyi le’u bco brgyad pa las|

1115 KLR om. sa
1116 KLR vol. 14: 303.
1117 KLR om. sa
1118 KLR vol. 14: 304.
de la dang po gnas lugs shes pa gces | 
theg pa’i dbang gis rnam pa mang na yang | 
nges pa’i snying po\textsuperscript{1119} bden pa dbyer med de | 
sangs rgyas rnam kyi gsang ba’i mzhod khang yin | 
de yi rang bzhin ’od gsal ye shes te | 
thog ma med nas rab\textsuperscript{1120} zhi\textsuperscript{1121} spros med bdag | 
nyi mkha’ bzhin te\textsuperscript{1122} lhun grub ’dus ma byas | 
rang bzhin rnam dag chen por ye gnas pas | 
snang stong dbyer med grub bsal ’gro ’ong med | 
kun rdzob rnam chad rnam dbye’i yul ’das pas | 
brtags\textsuperscript{1123} pa’i bden gnyis ’das phyir spros kun zhi | 
bden pa dbyer med grub dang ma grub med | 
dbyings las snang stong rang bzhin gnyis med pas | 
bden pa de yang dbyer med ces su brjod\textsuperscript{1124} | 

ces dang|

’di ltar\textsuperscript{1125} rang bzhin stong la\textsuperscript{1126} bdag med pa | 
de nyid de yi gnas lugs yin pa’i phyir | 
don dam zhes bya snang cha kun rdzob ste | 
snang dus nyid nas skye sogs grub med pas | 
rang bzhin de yin bden pa dbyer med do\textsuperscript{1127} | 

sogs dang|

’di las gzhan du rtog pa log pa’i blo | 
gnas lugs don la rab tu rmongs pa yin\textsuperscript{1128} | 

\textsuperscript{1119} DCe bo  
\textsuperscript{1120} DCe rang  
\textsuperscript{1121} DCe bzhin  
\textsuperscript{1122} DCe du  
\textsuperscript{1123} DCe btags  
\textsuperscript{1124} KLR vol. 13: 54.  
\textsuperscript{1125} DCe dag  
\textsuperscript{1126} DCe ba  
\textsuperscript{1127} KLR vol. 13: 55.
zhes gsungs so| |

skabs ’dir rigs shes kyis dpyad nas ma rnyed pas med par [40] ’jog pa stong pa1129 phyang chad theg chen spyi sgsos las ring ba’i skal med skur ’deaux kyi lta bar gsungs shing| rigs shes kyi ma rnyed pa med pa’i don min zhes rang bzhin med pa dang med pa la dngos su tshig gis khyad mi dbye bar rigs shes kyis ma rnyed pa la brten nas rtogs pa’i ’od gsal stong pa’i1130 gnas lugs ni sangs rgyas kyi yon tan thams cad kyi ’char gzhir ye nas lhun grub tu yod pa’i gzhi lhun grub kyi yon tan gyi cha nas cang med ci med kyi phyang chad min par gsungs te| de yang dus dang rdul phran sogs su dpyad nas ma rnyed pa ni chos can bden pa ’dzin pa zlog pa’i drang don du gsungs mod| ’on kyang rigs shes kyis ’khrul pa’i1131 zhen stangs sun dbyung ba’i don stong nyid du mi bzhed pa ni min te| sngar drangs pa rnams dang| ’dir yang|

 ’di ltar snang yang ’khor ba ma grub pas| |
rang bzhin med de dbyings kyi don dam dang| |
tha dad so sor dbye ba’i chos med pas| |
 ’khor ’das dbyer med mnyam pa nyid du bstan1132| |

zhes sogs gsungs pa’i phyir ro| |

des na drang don du gsungs pa ni rigs shes de’i nges ngo’i gzhal bya tsam de la ltos te spros pa mtha’ dag log pa’i don dam min pa’i don no| |

 ’di dag ’khrul gzhi shin tu che bas zhib tu dpyad dgos te| pad dkar las|

 ’di lta bu’i [41] gnas lugs go ba ni deng sang shin tu nyung bar snang ngo1133|

zhes kyang gsungs so| |

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1128 KLR vol. 13: 55.
1129 DCe ba
1130 DCe ba’i
1131 DCe ba’i
1132 KLR vol. 13: 55.
1133 KLR vol. 14: 236.
de la rje btsun tsong kha pa chen po’i zhal snga nas ni| rigs shes kyis ma rnyed pa dang rang bzhin med pa med pa’i don min zhes pa’i gsung gcig gis ’gag thams cad bkrol te| de lta bu’i ’chad tshul bde ba’i legs bshad kyi zhib tig ni gzhan su la’ang med mod| gzhii lhun grub kyi yon tan gyis dbye ba yang don du med pa min pa’i don yin pas dgongs pa gcig pa’i tshul shing tu shes dgos la| ’di dag la spro bya mang yang yi ges ’jigs te| gzu bor gnas pa’i rnam dpyod dang ldan pa la ni sgo tsam bstan pas chog cing| blun po phyogs ris can la ni ci tsam spros kyang dgos don mi ’grub pas mdor bs dus so| |

theg chen tshul ’jug tu yang bden gnyis dbyer med kyi lta ba la bsngags brjod mdzad cing don kyang ’di khou na ltar gsungs te ma spros so| | lam bgrod tshul la| lam gyi ngo bo sku gnyis sgrub byed bden gnyis kyi lam rim gnyis yod pa la dgongs pa gcig dang dbyangs gcig yin te| ’grel ba pad dkar las|

de la kun rdzob kyi bden pa la brten nas thabs bsod nams kyi tshogs pha rol tu phyin pa drug la sogs pa nyams su len zhing| shes rab ye shes kyi tshogs la brten nas don dam pa’i ye [42] shes ’od gsal ba’i don la sgom par byed do’1134 | |
zhes dang| sems gnas tsam dang ci yang yid la mi byed pa sogs bkag mthar|

lam yang dag pa tshogs gnyis su thabs shes su ’brel dgos na| de med pas bstan pa ’di las phyi rol tu ’gyur pa1135 ste| byang chub ’dod na de las bzlog dgos par shes pas| mdo rgyud gzigs la spongs shig ces gdam pa yin no1136 | |
zhes sogs gsungs pa’i phyir ro| |

19. lam gcig tsam ma yin par rnam grangs du ma gdul bya’i khams dbang dang bstun nas grangs dang go rim nges pa’i tshul gyis nyams su len dgos pa yang shin tu mthun te| yid bzhin mdzod las|

1134 KLR vol. 14: 123.
1135 DCc ba
1136 KLR vol. 14: 278–279.
byis dang rgan bzhin kha zas tha dad ltar\textsuperscript{137} |
de yi chos kyang rang bzhin tha dad do\textsuperscript{138} |

zhes dang|

de nas rim par ’khrid pa’i tshul gyis bshad| |
des ni theg pa’i rim pa shes pa dang| |
yon tan gong ’phel ’jigs dngangs\textsuperscript{139} skrag pa med| |
nor ba med cing lta spyod zung ’brel ’gyur| |
de ltar ma bshad skyon ni tshad med de| |
gong ’og snga phyi’i rim pa dang bral bas| |
bstan pa’i spyi srol rim pas nyams pa dang| |
blas chung dngangs\textsuperscript{140} skrag log ltas ’dor ba dang| |
go rim mi shes zab mor mi rtogs dang| |
’dus byas dge ba khyad du gsod pa dang| |
sgro skur rgyur ’gyur rgyu ’bras ’chol ba dang| |
blang \textsuperscript{43} dor mi shes shes bya’i don la rmongs| |
theg chen sems bskyed snying rje spangs\textsuperscript{141} pa\textsuperscript{142} dang| |
stong lta\textsuperscript{143} dang\textsuperscript{144} ldan ngan ’gror bslus pa dang| |
byar med zer nas tha mal lus pa dang| |
ma smin ’gro la gsang ba sgrogs pa ste| |
nyes mang ldan phyir theg pa rim gyis bshad\textsuperscript{145} | |

ces dang| de’i ’grel ba [padma dkar po] las|

sna gcig gis chog na sngas rgyas kyis ’di tsam gsungs pa don med pa las de ltar ma yin pa’i phyir ro| | deng sang ni da ltar gyi rig pa ngos zin pas chog mang

\textsuperscript{137} DCe las
\textsuperscript{138} KLR vol. 13: 36.
\textsuperscript{139} DCe sngangs
\textsuperscript{140} DCe sngangs
\textsuperscript{141} DCe spang
\textsuperscript{142} DCe ba
\textsuperscript{143} DCe ltas
\textsuperscript{144} DCe dad
\textsuperscript{145} KLR vol. 13: 36.

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po\textsuperscript{1146} bstan pa la don med ces zer ba mang ste| des chog na sangs rgyas kyis
gzhan bstan mi dgos la| gcig tu na\textsuperscript{1147} da ltar gyi rig pa de yang thos pa dang|bla ma’i rnal ’byor tsam la bsten\textsuperscript{1148} dgos pas| rang tshig bsal ba la zhugs pa
yin no| | des na blo la dang po dang| bar pa\textsuperscript{1149} dang| tha ma’i rim pas gnyen
por\textsuperscript{1150} gang che\textsuperscript{1151} zab pa’i phyir de bstan par gdams pa yin no\textsuperscript{1152} | |

zhes sogs shin tu mang ngo| |

20. nyams su blang ba’i ’bras bu mthar thug sku gnyis kyi go ’phang mgon du byed
pa la yang mi mthun pa ga la yod de| yi’d bzhin mdzod las|
de ltar bsgoms\textsuperscript{1153} pas\textsuperscript{1154} dag pa’i ’bras bu ni| |
spangs rtogs mthar phyin sku dang ye shes te| |
ji ltar nyi zla sprin dang bral ba bzhin| |
khams kyi sgrib pa kun dang bral ba\textsuperscript{1155} na| |
byang chub ces bya [44] lhun grub yon tan snang\textsuperscript{1156} | |

zhes sogs gsungs pa ltar rang don gtsang bde rtag bdag dam pa’i pha rol tu phyin pa’i
chos sku zag med kyi yang tan brgya zhe bzhi sogs legs par thob pa dang lhan cig tu
gzhan don sprul sku mam pa thams cad pa’i bdag nyid du rtsol med du bzhugs pa’i
mtshan dpe gsar rdzogs kyi spras pa’i nges pa lnga ldan gyi longs sku jiri srid ’khor
ba ma stongs kyi bar du bzhugs nas sms can gyi don mdzad par bzhed pa yin no| |

slar yang smras pa|

dal ’byor gru bo che ’di thob gyur te| |
gangs ljongs phyogs med bstan pa’i rin chen nor| |

\textsuperscript{1146} DCe bo
\textsuperscript{1147} DCe omits na
\textsuperscript{1148} DCe brien
\textsuperscript{1149} DCe omits pa
\textsuperscript{1150} DCe po
\textsuperscript{1151} DCe tshe
\textsuperscript{1152} KLR vol. 13: 305–306.
\textsuperscript{1153} DCe bsgoms
\textsuperscript{1154} DCe pa
\textsuperscript{1155} DCe bas
\textsuperscript{1156} KLR vol. 13: 65.
'dod 'jo'i rnam 'phrul gang che ji dga’ ru|  
blang du yod pa’i skal bzang rnyed na yang|  
yang dag lam la rang gzhan phyogs 'byed dang|  
dag dang ma dag kun kyang dag snang khul|  
blo gros mig la ma rig ling tog gis|  
blta ba’i skal ba phrogs rnams snying rje’i gnas|  
kye ma rgyal bstan zab mo nyin mor byed|  
bsod nams mkha’ la shar dang 'phrad mod de|  
rnam dpyod mig gis mjal ba’i nus bral la|  
log rtog rab rib snang ba cir yang 'char|  
chos mig rdul bral theg gsum 'phags pa rnams|  
rgya chen gzhan don khur 'khyer nus min las|  
spros pas dub pa ngal gso’i zhi dbyings der|  
phyogs med [45] dgongs pa ro gcig ’di mthong ngam|  
kye hud zag med das dang bral ba yi|  
tsthur mthong blo yi gzhong stong ’di dag tu|  
rang gzhan phyogs ’dzin rtsod pas’o brgyal kyang|  
skyes mchog rnams ni dgongs klong gcig tu mnal|  
kye ma kyi hud nyon mongs gdon ’di yis|  
sgo kun nas ni ’di ltar brlag bzhin du|  
phan pa’i zol gyis snying la gnas bcas pa’i|  
dgra ’di ’joms pa’i skal ba nam zhig ’ong|  
mdo rgyud rgya mtsho’i dgongs zab nam mkha’i khyon|  
gsal byed legs bshad nyi ma ’bum phrag gis|  
lung rigs ’od zer cir yang rtse ba yi|  
dge ldan lugs bzang ’di ’dra su yis ’dor|  
sgrub rgyud gser gyi ri bo’i ngos dag tu|  
don gnyis sgrub byed theg dgu’i nor bu’i tshal|  
llag par rnam gsum yo ga’i khyad nor can|  
snga ’gyur rin chen gling du su mi spro|  
brtse chen thabs kyis bskyod pa’i ye shes gcig|  
gzhan phan sgyu ’phrul dra bar rol ba las|  
gangs ljongs bstan pa’i dpal du snang ba yi|  
rnam gsum sprul ba’i sku la blang dor ci|
gangs ri’i mu khyud ’dzin pa ’di tsam gyi| 
dam chos de ’dzin bcas pa rang lugs su| 
shong ba min na mkha’ khyab dkon mchog gsum| 
skyabs yul gcig tu sdud pa kha bshad tsam| 
theg mchog dar so che ba gangs can gyi| 
bstan pa [46] kun la dag snang thob mod de| 
bshad tshad yang dag lam du zhen pa yi| 
ris med rnam dbyed med par gol ba med| 
gzhi la snang stong ya bral ma song bas| 
lam la tshogs gnyis nyams len zung ’brel dang| 
’bras bu don gnyis sgrub pa’i phyag rgya ’di| 
yang dag ltar snang ’byed pa’i srang chen yin| 
de dag kun la nyams myong ma skyes kyang| 
ths bsam tsam gyi go yul rnam dag ’di| 
yab rje sangs rgyas dngos des bskyangs pa yi| 
bka’ drin yin phyir byang chub bar du mchod| 
bdag ni skyes stobs shes rab dang bral zhing| 
tshe ’dir sbyang ba’ang shin tu dman pas na| 
’di la log par bshad pa gang mchis kun| 
gsar rnying mkhas pa’i spyan sngar snying nas ’chag| 
de ltar yang dag lam la dpyad pa yis| 
phyogs med lta grub bshad pa’i dge ba ’dis| 
tshe rabs kun tu chos spong las spangs te| 
rnam dag chos dang ’phrad pa’i rgyur gyur cig| 
dge ldan legs bshad nyi mas mig phyes te| 
gsang chen snga ’gyur bstan pa’i nor bu sog| 
yang dag chos kyi rin thang rtogs pa’i blo| 
’di bzhin sgrub pa’i rgyal mtshan tshugs par shog| 
’jam pa’i rdo rjes sna tshogs thabs mkhas kyis| 
rab ’byams zhing du zab mo’i ’bel gtam gyis| 
grues don bstan pa’i ngang tshul bgro ba’i gral| 
nd stid pa ma [47] stongs bar du thob par shog| 
de yi tshe yang mgon de’i ye shes kyi| 
gyu ma’i rnam ’phrul ji snyed dang khyad par|
rang gi bsod nams me tog phog pa yi |
rigs bdag de yi bran du rtag gyur cig |

ces mnyam med ri bo dge ldan pa dang| gsang sngags snga ’gyur ba gnyis dgongs
bzhed gcig tu gyur pa’i tshul cung zad brjod pa dag snang nor bu’i me long zhes bya
ba ’di ni| dus gsum gyi rgyal ba thams cad kyi mkhyen pa’i ngo bo ’jam dpal gzhon
nu| 71157 ’jam dpal rol ba’i blo gros dpal bzang po1158 dang| brtse ba’i bdag nyid
spyan ras gzigz dbang 7 blo bzang dpal ldan bstan ’dzin snyan grags dpal bzang
po1159 dang| nus mthu’i rang gzugs gsang ba’i bdag po 7 las rab gling pa1160 rin po
che’i zhabs sogs theg pa chen po’i dge ba’i bshes gnyen mang po’i1161 zhab pad la
gtug pa’i skal pa1162 bzang po1163 thob pa’i shākya’i btsun pa’i gzugs brnyan| blo
bzang mdo sngags chos kyi rgya mtsho zhes bya bas| rang nyid kyi dad pa dang shes
rab phyogs med du ’phel ba’i dgos ched gtsor bzung| rang la legs bshad kyi re ltos
’cha’ ba’i skal mnyam gzhan dag ’ga’ zhig la’ang phan pa’i bsam pas| rigs gsum
sems dpa’i nam ’phrul de dag gis byin gyis brlabs te bstan ’gro’i gsos sman du [48]
grub pa’i dpal ldan snyan mo ri’i gtsug lag khang gi nye log ne’u gsing me tog sna
tshogs kyi mngon par bkra ba’i skyed mos tshal nas dkon mchog gsum rjes su dran
pa’i dad pa’i dga’ ston la longs spyod bzhin bris pa dge legs ’phel| dge’o| |

2. Phyag rdzogs gdams pa’i skor gyi brjed tho

DCc vol. 2: 268–271

rang gi brjed tho la| phyag rdzogs kyi gdams pa ’di dag mi ’thad pa ma yin zhing |
’thad lugs kyang bstan pa spyi btsan dang | gang zag sgos btsan gnyis su phye ste|
phyi ma’i dbang gis dbang po’i khyad par dmigs bsal can la stong nyid ngo sprad
lugs dang | sgom lugs thams cad theg chen gyi shing rta’i srol gnyis kyi gzhung lugs
chen po’i spyi skad ltar min par sngags dang ’brel ba’i sgo nas tha mal gyi1164 shes

1157 The figure 7 (♂), which appears before the names of mDo-sngags chos-kyi rgya-mtsho’s three
teachers, is an honorific marker.
1158 DCc bo
1159 DCc bo
1160 DCc ba
1161 DCc bo’i
1162 DCc ba
1163 DCc bo
1164 DCc kyi
pa bcos bsgur mi dgos pa ’di’i steng nas yin lins ngo sprad pa dang | ngo spro dkyi
don bzhin brjod du med pa’i gnas lugs rtsis gdab bral ba rang babs su bskyangs pas
thun mong gi lhag mthong dang | thun mong min pa’i ’od gsal lam byed kyi sgo
gnyis ka stabs gcig tu ’ong ba yin no| |des na bstan pa spyi khyab dbang btsan du
thog mar dgag bya ngos ’dzin tshul| de nas de la rigs pas gnod pa ston tshul| rigs
stobs kyi rnyed pa’i bdag med gnyis kyi don la dpyad ’jog gi sgom spel [269] ba’i lhag
mthong gi skyong tshul sogs las dang po pa’i dbang du byas te gegs dang gol sa med
par gsungs pa ’di rtsa ba che| ’di la mdo sngags so sos stong nyid sgom tshul rang gi
skabs kyi thabs dang ’brel bar nyams su len pa’i srol ga so sor yod kyis thams cad
stabs geig pa min| deng sang phyag rdzogs pa sog s la dris na shing rta chen po’i
gzhung lugs kyi zhi lhag gi bgrod lugs sogs gang zag so so’i rang tshod kyi chos shig
yod pa’i gtam zur tsam yang med par kun kyang phyag rdzogs kyi lam der dang po
nyid nas e tshud blta zhing de tsam min pa thams cad chos min du bsgrags nas bstan
pa spyi btsan gyi tshul ’di bskal don sha za ltar gyur| de la gzhung lugs chen po’i rjes
’brang mkhas pa chos rgyus che ba rnam s khong tshos spyi sgo s kyis rnam dbyi mi
shes dgongs nas ’gog |chos rgyus chung ba rnam spyur na phyag rdzogs sog s rtsa ba
nas mi ’grig snyam nas bka’ rnying sog s la than ltar brtsi zhing | gang zag dgos btsan
gyi tshul ’di ltar po yas bskal don sha zar song nas rgyal ba’i bstan pa la nang sel
tshabs chen byung bar gda’| de yang lta ba snyigs ma’i dbang gis blo sems kyi na
thshod shin tu chung ste| theg pa chen po’i khal le ba ’degs pa’i rnam dpyod kyi shed
med pa der gda’| gang zag sgo s btsan gyi chos [270] ’di chod kyang che| ’khrul gzhi
yang che| ’di la ’khrul nas pha mes bzang po’i pha phogs kyi skal pa1165 yin no
snyam nas nor bu dang mching bu nor ba yang mang rabs shig yod ’dug |rgya gar
mkhas pa’i gzhung lugs la dri ma med pa’i rigs pas brdar sha bcad de ’jug pa la gegs
gang yang med| |yar ded na byams pa dang ’jam dbyangs la thug ’dug |de nas yar ded
na rdzogs pa’i sangs rgyas rang yin| chos zer rgyu’i chos de sgo gang nas bsams
kyang skyes bu gsum ka’i nyams su blang bya thams cad stan thog gcig gi nyams len
du dril ba’i byang chub lam rim ’di yin par ’dug | ’di la bag chags bzang po1166 zhig
ma zhog par shi dgos na shi mi thub par ’dug kyang | khyod kyi bya ba zin no zhes|
’chi bdag sdod par mi ’gyur gyis1167| gsungs pa ltar lags pas de ring sang la bag
chags shig thebs dgos| nyi ma re re bzhin bag chags re bzhag ste bag chags mthug po

1165 DCc ba
1166 DCc bo
1167 These lines appear to be based on Sa-skya Paṇḍita’s Sa skya legs bshad verse 433ab: khyod kyis
bya ba zin nam zhes| ’chi bdag sdod par mi ’gyur gyis|
Memorandum on Mahāmudrā and rDzogs-chen Instructions

[268] What follows is a reminder to myself.

The Mahāmudrā and rDzogs-chen instructions are not invalid. In fact, their validity becomes clear when we make a distinction between (1) teachings that apply more generally (bstan pa spyi btsan) and (2) teachings that are intended for individuals (gang zag sgo sogs btsan).

Regarding the latter, for those of exceptionally high capacity, the ways in which emptiness is introduced, as well as all the various modes of meditation, do not employ the general terminology of the great scriptural traditions of the two pioneering systems of the Mahāyāna. Instead, the teacher points out the way things are, in connection with the mantra vehicle, in a state of “ordinary awareness” (tha mal gyi shes pa) that does not need to be modified or transformed. Moreover, this inexpressible natural state, free from evaluation, which is the meaning of what is pointed out, is sustained in a natural way. This approach thus unites the entry points to both the common practice of insight (lhag mthong; vipaśyanā) and the uncommon practice of taking clear light as the path. Therefore, even though these instructions are extremely powerful, this potency is dependent on the level of students’ faculties. And it is crucial that the instructions are not misapplied, as in the example of Devadatta eating medicinal butter.¹¹⁶⁹

¹¹⁶⁸ DCc ba
¹¹⁶⁹ The story of Devadatta eating medicinal butter appears in the Karma-śataka (Las brgya tham pa). See sDe dge bKa’ ’gyur vol. 74 (mdo sde, a): 92a.1f. The story is also recounted in dMar-ston Chos-
In the approach that covers the teachings in general, it is of fundamental importance to teach from the beginner’s perspective, so that there is no possibility of hindrance or going astray. This would include explanations of how the object of negation is to be identified in the beginning; how it is to be refuted through reasoning; and how insight is to be sustained through the alternation of analytical and settling meditation on the two types of selflessness, as discovered through the power of reasoning. In this approach, there are separate ways of practicing meditation upon emptiness relating to sūtra and mantra, each making use of methods from their own level, and they are not brought together as one.

These days, however, if you consult followers of Mahāmudrā, rDzogs-chen, and the like, they will not make even the slightest acknowledgment of instructions that suit people’s actual capacity, such as the way to progress in tranquillity and insight as taught in the scriptural approach of the great pioneers. Instead, they will suggest that everyone follow the path of Mahāmudrā or rDzogs-chen right from the beginning and declare that anything else is not even Dharma. This only goes to show that the general approach to the teachings has become as inaccessible and remote as flesh-eating spirits (sha za)!

Furthermore, among the learned followers of the great scriptural approach, those with the greatest knowledge of the Dharma deny any possibility of a distinction between general and particular. Instead, they refute it. Those of lesser learning, on the other hand, simply believe that Mahāmudrā and rDzogs-chen and the like are unacceptable, and they regard schools such as the bKa’-brgyud and rNying-ma as evil. Thus, with the existence of an approach tailored to individuals as unapparent as invisible flesh-eating spirits, serious dissensions have emerged. Due to degenerate views, then, attitudes are extremely immature, and people lack the intellectual strength required to bear the weight of the Mahāyāna.

The teachings tailored to individuals are not only extremely effective, they can also be the basis for great confusion. There are many who have been led astray.

kyi-rgyal-po’s commentary to verse 169 of Sa-skya Paṇḍita’s Sa skya legs bshad. The details of the incident vary slightly in these sources, but the general outline is as follows. On one occasion, when the Buddha and his monks fell sick in Śrāvastī, he was advised by the doctor, Kumārā Jivaka, to take 32 (or twelve in some accounts) measures of powerful medicinal butter, while all the other monks were instructed to take no more than a single measure. Devadatta, claiming that he was of the same family as the Buddha, also insisted on taking 32 (two in some sources) measures, but nearly died as a result, and was only saved through the Buddha’s miraculous intervention. See Legs par bshad pa rin po che’i gter dang ’grel pa, 156–157. Cf. Desi Sangyē Gyatso 2010: 120.
mistaking trinkets for jewels, while thinking they have chanced upon some treasure bequeathed by masters of the past.

There are no obstacles at all to the approach of investigating and concluding with immaculate reasoning in the scriptural tradition of the scholars of India. Tracing back the lineage of this approach, you will find Maitreya and Mañjuśrī and, ultimately, the perfect Buddha himself. Whatever you think of this teaching, which we refer to as the Dharma, it is a gradual path to enlightenment combining all that is to be trained in by the three types of individual\textsuperscript{1170} in a form that can be practised in a single session, on a single seat. I cannot bear the thought that I might die without first establishing the habitual tendencies (\textit{bag chags}; vāsanā) for such a teaching. Yet, as the saying goes, “The Lord of Death does not wait for all our tasks to be completed.”\textsuperscript{1171} I must therefore establish such habitual tendencies today. And, from now on, through daily reaffirmation, I shall strengthen this impression on my mind.

From the very depths of my heart, I take refuge in the bKa’-brgyud, rNying-ma, and other schools. Yet I shall not practice, even in my dreams, any form of Sa-skya, bKa’-brgyud, or rNying-ma in which the scriptural tradition of the great pioneers is disregarded or abandoned.

Not only in this life but in all my lives to come, I aspire to serve the teachings of the second Buddha, Tsong-kha-pa. Yet, even at the cost of my life, I shall never practice any form of dGe-lugs that regards its own view as supreme and treats all types of individual\textsuperscript{1171} as if they were the same, blanketing them all under a single approach to the Dharma or means of training.

In short, I shall always follow my supreme guide, the Lord of Dharma, who gained full realization and mastery of all the teachings and, in the account of his liberation, offered the following advice as his final testament: “Keep the eyes of your intelligence directed upward, and pay no heed to hollow pronouncements of what is gSar-ma or what is rNying-ma.”

\textsuperscript{1170} i.e., those of lesser, intermediate and greater capacity.
\textsuperscript{1171} This line is taken from Sa-skya Pandita’s \textit{Sa skya legs bshad} verse 433.
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DND  *gDams ngag mdzod*. Delhi: Shechen Publications. 1999. 18 vols. W23605


IIJ  Indo-Iranian Journal

JA  Journal Asiatique

JBE  Journal of Buddhist Ethics

JIABS  Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies

JIATS  Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies

JIP  Journal of Indian Philosophy


LH  Lotsawa House (lotsawahouse.org)

NGB  *rNying ma rgyud ’bum (sde dge par ma)*. 26 vols. sDe dge: sDe dge par khang chen mo. 200? W21939

1172 TBRC/BDRC version numbers are added where available.
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JPB  'Jigs med phun tshogs ’byung gnas kyi gsung ‘bum. 3 vols. Xiang gang: Xiang gang xin zhi chu ban she. 2002 W00KG03976


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Nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor. g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang -grol. 'Od gsal rdzogs pa chen po bla ma rin po che'i khrid rgyun ltar gnad 'gag gsal bar bstan pa nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor. YCRa vol. 2: 146–162


lTa grub shan 'byed. Bod-pa sprul-sku mDo-sngags bstan-pa'i nyi-ma. lTa grub shan 'byed gnad kyi sgron me. BP vol. 1: 1–259. (Translated in Bötrül 2011).

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bDud 'joms chos 'byung. 'Jigs-bral ye-shes rdo-rje. Gangs ljongs rgyal ba bstan pa yongs rdzogs kyi phyi mo sngag 'gyur rdo rje theg pa'i bstan pa rin po che ji ltar byung ba'i tshul dag cing gsal bar brjod pa lha dbang g.yul las rgyal ba'i rnga bo che'i sgra dbyangs in bDud 'joms 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje gsung 'bum. Kalimpong: Dupjung Lama, 1979. Vol. 1: 7–852

mDo sngags skor gyi dris lan sna tshogs phyogs gcig tu bsgrigs pa. bDe-chen snying-po. In DN Vol. 6: 399–618.


gZhan phan sgra dbyangs. rGyal-sras gZhan-phan mtha'-yas. gSar rnying ris med kyi skyes chen dam pa rnams la gsol ba 'debs pa'i tshigs bcad gzhon phan sgra dbyangs in GZT vol. 2: 421–423.

Ye shes bla ma. 'Jigs-med gling-pa. rDzogs pa chen po klong chen snying tig gi gdod ma'i ngon po'i lam gyi rim pa'i khrid yig ye shes bla ma in KNT vol. 3: 305–469.

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Rang rig ye shes sogs. 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi blo-gros. Rang rig ye shes sogs ye shes bla ma'i zin bris rdo grub sprul sku bstan pa'i nyi ma'i gsung rgyun in JCLb vol. 8, 23–61.

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