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„Rong-ston on Buddha-Nature:
A Commentary on the Fourth Chapter of
the Ratnagotravibhāga (vv.1.27–95[a])”

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Foreword and acknowledgements

This work is, to me, a perfect example for dependent arising (Skt. *pratītyasamutpāda*) and I feel very fortunate to have been able to spend all this time “producing” it. Many people, many events, and many states of mind contributed and worked together, assisting me in the process.

First of all I would like to thank my parents for their generous support over the years to which I owe my entire education, and for their continuous encouragements; I am very grateful to them.

My interest in the studies of religions in general and in Buddhist studies in particular manifested itself in the year 2000, after an extended visit to India and Nepal with its many sacred Buddhist sites. Subsequently I enrolled at the University of Vienna to study comparative religions and Tibetan and Buddhist studies, and at the International Buddhist Academy in Kathmandu where I spent several of my summer holidays studying traditional Buddhist treatises with Tibetan scholars. One of the texts I encountered in Nepal was to become the subject of this present work. I am therefore particularly indebted to Khenpo Dr. Ngawang Jorden who introduced me to this text and with whom I had the opportunity to spend many hours discussing the various questions that came up in the course of my research. Also, I would like to thank him for letting me use his yet to be published dissertation.

In the years 2004 and 2005 Prof. Klaus-Dieter Mathes from the University of Hamburg was a visiting professor at the Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies in Vienna. As I was already looking for a suitable subject for my M.A. thesis at this time and my interests concurred with Prof. Mathes’ fields of research, I asked him to be my advisor to which he kindly consented. Initially, I chose a religious biography of a Tibetan master from the last century as the subject of this M.A. thesis. After a few months of research however, I found this enterprise to exceed the scope of my abilities and decided to drop it, with both reluctance and a sense of release at the same time. With Rong-ston’s commentary on a classical treatise on buddha-nature I soon found a more suitable subject. I want to thank Prof. Mathes for

his patience and for supporting me in pursuing my personal interests, as well as for his able guidance and his many suggestions and corrections that helped me produce this work.

From the outset of my journey into the world of Tibetan Buddhism literature until today, I have had the opportunity to study the Tibetan language under a number of teachers both native speakers and western scholars. All of them played their part in this puzzle and I want to express my gratitude towards all of them, mentioning in particular Genla Jamyang Zangpo, Dr. Horst Lasic, Dr. Helmut Tropper, and Dr. Junjie Chu. My understanding of the Sanskrit language, though only rudimentary, I owe to Prof. Karin Preisendanz—I hope to nurture the seeds she sew in my *ālayavijñāna*.

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It is evident that this work is, in fact, a work in progress. There are bound to be mistakes (for which I want to apologise at this place), and I certainly could have continued correcting it *ad infinitum*. At best, I hope it can contribute to our understanding of a chapter of the Tibetan Buddhist religion. At least, I hope not to distort my author's views in presenting my necessarily limited understanding of his treatise.

Introduction

Set within the broader framework of Buddhist world view, the fundamental concern of the *Tathāgatagarbha* literature is to show that all sentient beings, without exception, can attain freedom from every kind of suffering and unease, and, ultimately, actualise the state of a fully awakened buddha. According to these scriptures, all sentient beings are by their very nature either empowered to attain buddhahood, or essentially already buddhas (depending on the interpretation). This innate quality of all sentient beings is given the name “buddha-nature” (Skt. *tathāgatagarbha*; Tib. *de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po*).

This doctrine has played an important role in the history of Buddhism. Although rudimentary elements of this doctrine can be identified already within the Pāli canon,¹ those passages relating to the natural luminosity of the mind, which is said to be temporarily stained by adventitious mental afflictions, required the emergence of the Mahāyāna movement before developing into a fully fledged doctrine in its own right. Since it is supported by a number of sūtras² and śāstras (i.e. the Buddhist canon composed of the Buddha’s sermons and the Indian commentarial literature), it can be regarded as a third school of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist thought, the other two being Madhyamaka and Yogācāra.³ However, the concept of buddha-nature reached its apogee not in India but in East Asia and Tibet where it became a cornerstone for Buddhist philosophy and religious practice. In Tibet, in particular, this concept was treated diversely by many scholars, all of whom were ambitious to fit it into the

¹ For example in AN I.v, 9: “This mind, O monks, is luminous! But it is defiled by adventitious defilements.” (After Mathes 2008: ix.) See also Takasaki 1966: 34–35.

² A prevalent doxographical classification of Buddhist sūtras distinguishes between the so called “three turnings of the Dharma-wheel” (a concept introduced in the *Sandhinirmocanasūtra*). Scriptures of the first turning fundamentally discuss the four noble truths as expounded in Nikāya Buddhism which represents the common ground for all traditions and the basic framework for all Buddhist teachings. Sūtras from second turning emphasise the doctrine of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) as expounded in the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, and those of the third teach about the three natures (*trisvabhāva*), the latter two being classified as belonging to the Mahāyāna corpus. The sūtras on buddha-nature are generally regarded as belonging to the third turning.

³ As Seyfort Ruegg (1969: 2) remarks, the language used in the *tathāgatagarbha* treatises differs noticeably from that of the other two schools, and even comes suspiciously close to that of the Vedānta. Indeed, a number of modern scholars have accused this doctrine to be alien to Buddhist thought, an accusation refuted by others. For a collection of articles on this topic see Hubbard and Swanson 1997.

philosophical framework of their own respective schools. Rong-ston Shes-bya kun-rig (1367–1449) of the Sa-skya tradition of Tibetan Buddhism figures among the most influential of these scholars. In general, his commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, the main Indian śāstra on buddha-nature, and in particular, a translation of his exposition of the subject by means of ten categories, will be the focus of this work.

In the first chapter I will introduce the doctrine of buddha-nature, giving a brief account of its sources and formation. The second chapter will deal with the main treatise on buddha-nature, the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. Here, I will present the text itself, discuss the question of its authorship, as well as its transmission in India and early reception in Tibet. This chapter will also include a brief overview of previous studies on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and the doctrine of buddha-nature. The third chapter will be devoted to the author of our treatise and his presentation of the subject. The final and main part of the work will consist of an annotated translation of a selected passage of his abovementioned commentary.

Throughout this work I have used the transliteration system of Turrell Wylie for the Tibetan.⁴

⁴ Cf. Wylie 1959.

1. The doctrine of buddha-nature

1.1. Overview:

The expression *tathāgatagarbha* is a Sanskrit compound consisting of the terms *tathāgata* (an epithet of the Buddha) and *garbha* which can signify “womb” (or simply “inside, interior”) and “embryo” (and semantically related concepts such as “essence”, “offspring” and so forth), as well as “to contain” when used at the end of a *bahuvrīhi* compound.⁵ According to Zimmermann, this last option is precisely the intended meaning *tathāgatagarbha* had in its earliest instances in the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*, which he renders with “[sentient beings] contain a *tathāgata*.”⁶ For later treatises however, the *tatpuruṣa* interpretation of the term seems to be suitable in most cases. According to this interpretation, beings can be said to have the *garbha* of a *tathāgata*.⁷ This twofold interpretation of the term is also reflected in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, the main śāstra on the subject, which supports both concepts as we shall see below.⁸

Why teach buddha-nature?

Schmithausen has argued that Buddhist philosophical theories, in many cases, have their roots in spiritual practices, rather than in mere theoretical considerations.⁹

One fact supporting his theory in the case of the doctrine of buddha-nature would be that the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*,¹⁰ the earliest sūtra to mention the term *tathāgatagarbha*, illustrates the presence of buddha-nature in sentient beings by means of the nine similes, without giving theoretical explanations for this statement. Rather, it is

⁵ In the last case, the first part of the compound denotes what is being contained in the subject the whole compound refers to. Cf. Zimmermann 2002: 40–41.

⁶ Cf. Zimmermann 2002: 43–44.

⁷ For a detailed analysis of this term see Zimmermann 2002: 40–46 and Sefort Ruegg 1969: 507–514.

⁸ It is interesting to note that the Tibetan translators rendered *garbha* in this expression with *snying po* (“essence, heart, core”), leaving no room for the “womb” meaning of the term. Chinese translators, on the other hand, usually used the term *tsang* (“storehouse”), which could be an indication for the proximity between the concepts *tathāgatagarbha* and *ālayavijñāna* as attested in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* for example. Cf. Sefort Ruegg 1969: 501–505.

⁹ Schmithausen illustrates this by showing how the Yogācāra doctrine of “Mind Only” (*cittamatrā*), the doctrine of the momentariness of all phenomena, as well as the “Mahāyāna illusionism,” all have been mentioned at their earliest instances in contexts related to spiritual practices and mystical experiences. Cf. Schmithausen 1973.

¹⁰ See below for a short analysis of this sūtra.

presented as being the buddha's own realisation, or as his special vision.¹¹ In the *Śrīmālādevīsūtra*—another fundamental scripture for the formation of this doctrine—the *tathāgatagarbha* is said to be a profound teaching beyond the reach of the intellect and accessible a *tathāgata* alone.¹² Along these lines, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* states that the ultimate truth of the buddhas (which in this context stands for the buddhas' realisation that all beings have buddha-nature) can be understood by faith alone.¹³ All of this, following Schmithausen, would indicate that some sort of spiritual experience must have predated the formulation of the buddha-nature theory.

Furthermore, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* itself gives pedagogical legitimisation for the formulation of this doctrine.¹⁴ We read that buddha-nature has been taught in order to eliminate five faults or obstacles on the path, namely: the feeling of discouragement (*līnaṃ cittam*), contempt against inferior beings (*hīnasattveṣvavajñā*), holding the untrue [to be true] (*abhūtagrāha*), disparaging the true nature (*bhūtaḍḍharmāpavāda*), and attachment to the self (*ātmasneha*). These are the practical reasons for introducing this concept into the doctrinal system. In this way, the doctrine of buddha-nature can be viewed as being directly relevant for Buddhist practice.

1.2. Sources

1.2.1. The sūtras:

With the emergence of the Mahāyāna movement, between 300 and 400 years after the Buddha's passing, the spiritual goal to be achieved by the followers of the Buddhist path was no longer reserved for the ordained members among his followers, but (in theory) made accessible to all, monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen alike.¹⁵ In a fundamental scripture of the Mahāyāna, the so-called *Lotussūtra* (*Saddharma-puṇḍarīkasūtra*), the principal spiritual ideal of the arhat is replaced by that of the

¹¹ Zimmermann 2002: 104ff.

¹² Cf. Wayman and Wayman 1974: 96.

¹³ Cf. RGV I.153.

¹⁴ Cf. RGV I.157 and I.161–167.

¹⁵ This opposition ordained-lay excludes a third category of vow-holders called *gomin*, which, being of marginal importance, has been left out for convenience sake. *Gomins* have a somewhat ambiguous status, being celibate and wearing religious robes, without, however, holding the vows of novices or fully ordained monks. On this see Sefort Ruegg 2004: 24–27.

bodhisattva, who strives not to bring his personal suffering alone to an end, but rather to attain the state of buddhahood for the sake of all beings.¹⁶ Arhatship is presented as an inferior, temporary result offered by the Buddha to the tired spiritual adept, whereas in actuality all beings are to strive for the ultimate goal of buddhahood. Although the concept of buddha-nature does not appear in this sūtra, its roots can, according to Zimmermann, be traced back to it.¹⁷ One simile in particular (used in the *Lotussūtra* to illustrate sentient beings' wish to attain omniscience) shows great similarity with a simile from the later *Tathāgatarbhasūtra*.¹⁸

Another early scripture important in the history of the formation of *tathāgatarbha* doctrine is the *Avataṃsakasūtra*, the earliest portions of which were translated into Chinese in the early third century CE. A key concept found therein is that of the buddha's gnosis (*buddhajñāna*) pervading and therefore being present in all sentient beings.¹⁹

It is in the abovementioned *Tathāgatarbhasūtra*, dated back to the second half of the third century CE,²⁰ that we find the expression “*tathāgatarbha*” for the first time.²¹ The core of the text consists of the illustration of this concept by means of nine similes.²² According to Zimmermann, the idea conveyed by means of these similes is

¹⁶ In the early scriptures, where the term bodhisattva is mainly used to denote Buddha Śākyamūni when referring to his previous lives, not everyone is encouraged to become a bodhisattva. Of the three goals—arhatship, pratyekabuddhahood and perfect buddhahood—the first is understood to be the most accessible one and the last the most exalted, reserved for rare individuals of superior capacity alone. However, arhats too are noted for their efforts for the benefit of beings. In the *Jinna Sutta* (SN 16.5) for instance, the Buddha praises his arhat disciple Mahākassapa for practising for the welfare and benefit of others. As noted by Rahula (1971: 70), references to the bodhisattva ideal can be found in the Pāli scriptures. They are, however, relatively rare and widely dispersed.

¹⁷ Cf. Zimmermann 2006: 21–23.

¹⁸ In the simile in question, a wealthy benefactor sews a jewel into man's coat without the latter's knowledge. The man then goes on a journey, loses his wealth and lives, ignoring his secret possession, in poverty until his long lost friend reveals it to him. The friend represents the Buddha who has awakened the wish to attain omniscience for all beings.

¹⁹ This passage is quoted in RGVV I.25 (Cf. Johnston 1950: 22, 10–11).

²⁰ The original Sanskrit of this sūtra is no longer extant. The earliest translation of this sūtra into Chinese dates, according to ancient catalogues, from the end of the third century CE. Cf. Zimmermann 2002: 69–74 and p. 77–79.

²¹ For a analysis of this compound see Seyfort Ruegg 1969: 499–516; and Zimmermann 2002: 39–46, for its use in the *Tathāgatarbhasūtra* in particular.

²² The *tathāgatarbha* present within all sentient beings is said to be similar to: 1) *tathāgatas*, sitting in putrid lotus flowers; 2) honey, in a honeycomb protected by bees; 3) a kernel, in its husk; 4) a golden nugget, covered in excrement; 5) a hidden treasure, buried underneath a house; 6) the sprout of a tree, in

that of fully awakened buddhas being present within sentient beings, without their being aware of it.²³

Philosophically, other Mahāyāna sūtras were more important for the formulation of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory.²⁴ Of them, the *Śrīmālādevīsīṃhanādasūtra* in particular adds a number of original and relevant points in this regard. In this scripture, translated into Chinese in the first half of the fifth century, the buddha's *dharmakāya* (i.e. the buddha's ultimate, non-dual realisation of reality),²⁵ when not free from mental afflictions or defilements (*kleśa*), is referred to as *tathāgatagarbha*. This *garbha* is said to be empty of mental afflictions, while at the same time being endowed with innumerable and inseparable buddha-qualities.²⁶ It is also said to be the very basis or support for both saṃsāra (in the sense that its being without beginning serves as a basis for the beginningless cycle of birth and death) and nirvāṇa (in the sense that it is the existence of this *garbha* that is the cause for one's aspiration towards nirvāṇa).²⁷

Another important canonical source for the *tathāgatagarbha* theory is the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*.²⁸ In it, the terms “self, permanent, blissful, and very pure” (*ātman, nitya, sukha, pariśuddha*) are brought up in relation with the *tathāgatagarbha*—the self referring to the buddha, the *dharmakāya* being permanent, the *parinirvāṇa* blissful, and the real *dharma* of the buddhas and bodhisattvas very pure.²⁹ Also, buddha-nature is termed “self,” a self, however, that is explicitly differentiated from the self as understood by the non-Buddhist schools (*tīrthika*), the existence of which is denied. Later in the text, the whole exposition is unmasked as being merely of a

the seed; 7) a Tathāgata's statue, in a tattered rag; 8) the embryo of a future world monarch, in his miserable mother's womb; and 9) a golden sculpture, in its clay mold. Cf. Zimmermann 2002: 105–144.

²³ Cf. Zimmermann 2002: 34–39. Some Tibetan authors however, such as 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba Gzhon-nu-dpal (1392–1481) or Rong-ston Shākya rgyal-mtshan (1367–1449), have tended to see in simile 6) and 8), in particular, indications for their being the potential in sentient beings for the development into fully awakened buddhas. On Gzhon nu dpal see Mathes 2008: 8 and 342–343. On Rong-ston see below.

²⁴ Takasaki (1966: 32–45) traces a genealogy of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory, taking into account a great number of sources of which I will merely mention the most important ones.

²⁵ The definition of *dharmakāya* varies according to time and tradition. For a detailed analysis of this term and the controversies over it see Makransky 1997. For a brief overview of the buddha-bodies in the Mahāyāna see also Williams 1989: 167–184.

²⁶ Cf. Wayman, Wayman 1974: 98–99.

²⁷ Cf. Wayman, Wayman 1974: 106–107.

²⁸ There exist two Chinese versions of this sūtra, both of which have been translated in the first half of the fifth century. The two Tibetan sūtras of this name have been produced from the Sanskrit and the Chinese, respectively. Cf. Seyfort Ruegg 1969: 10–11.

²⁹ Cf. Seyfort Ruegg 1973: 81–82.

didactical nature, aimed at converting non-believers, the actual meaning of buddha-nature being unfathomable.³⁰

Finally, the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśa*, another scripture significant for the formation of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine, teaches the equality of *tathāgatagarbha* with the *dharmakāya*, which in turn is said to possess innumerable inseparable qualities.^{31 32}

The important *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*³³ is yet another major Mahāyāna sūtra to mention the *tathāgatagarbha*. It can, however, be considered to be the first reaction to this doctrine, rather than a scripture important for its formation. In it, we find buddha-nature being equated with emptiness on one hand, and with the *ālayavijñāna* on the other, aligning it thus with the Yogācāra doctrine.³⁴

1.2.2. The śāstras:

The Tibetan tradition attributes the main śāstras related to the doctrine of buddha-nature to Maitreya.³⁵ Of them, only the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* and the *Ratnagotravibhāga* explicitly mention the term *tathāgatagarbha*, and only the latter is exclusively devoted to its doctrine.³⁶ However, the influence of this last mentioned work can be noticed in the case of the other two Maitreya works found in the Cittamatrā section of the Tengyur. This influence is, according to Mathes, evident in the exposition of the mind's natural luminosity and the adventitious nature of mental afflictions in both the *Madhyāntavibhāga* and the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*.³⁷

A term closely connected to buddha-nature is *gotra* to which the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* devotes its entire third chapter. *Gotra* (Tib. *rigs*: “lineage, family” also

³⁰ For the translation of selected passages of this sūtra and an analysis of the hermeneutical methods given therein to understand the concept of buddha-nature see Ruegg 1989a: 19–44.

³¹ This sūtra (no longer extant in the original Sanskrit) is quoted in RGVV I.1. Cf. Mathes 2008: 7–8.

³² For further sūtras related to this doctrine, especially those quoted in the RGV, see Takasaki 1966: 32–33.

³³ The earliest form of this sūtra was translated into Chinese in the first half of the fifth century. For a study of this sūtra see Suzuki 1930.

³⁴ Cf. Mathes 2008: 17–21.

³⁵ The Tibetan tradition attributes five treatises to Maitreya: *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*, *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, *Madhyāntavibhāga*, *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*, and *Ratnagotravibhāga*.

³⁶ In its only passage to mention the *tathāgatagarbha*, the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* (IX.37) equates buddha-nature with suchness.

³⁷ Cf. Mathes 2008: 19–20.

translated as “spiritual gene”) denotes the spiritual potential or propensity of sentient beings.³⁸ The *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* asserts the existence of different *gotra*-s or propensities leading beings to different resultant states, as well as the existence of a certain class of beings definitely cut-off from their spiritual potential. Thus, beings with a śrāvaka *gotra* can only attain arhatship (as opposed to the full awakening of a buddha), those with a pratyekabuddha *gotra* only pratyekabuddhahood and so forth, while some are said to be “doomed” to wander eternally in the cycle of existence.³⁹

This position—associated with Yogācāra philosophy—is, however, not maintained in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.⁴⁰ There, we rather read that *all* beings possess buddha-nature because the *gotra* “exists.”⁴¹ This *gotra* is said to be twofold—naturally present in all beings (*prakṛtistha*) and generated (*samudānīta*)—and is explained to be the cause (*hetu*) for the attainment of buddhahood.⁴²

As a whole, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (including the *vyākhyā*) seems to be in favour of the interpretation of buddha-nature as found in the *Śrīmālādevīsīṃhanādasūtra*, identifying beings as buddhas obscured by adventitious mental afflictions. A subtle yet clear distinction between buddhas and sentient beings can, however, be made on the basis of stanza I.27. There, we read that all beings are said to possess buddha-nature by virtue of three reasons, one of them being that the result (i.e. the term “buddha”) has been “metaphorically” applied to the *gotra*.⁴³ Thus, the term “buddha” in *buddhagarbha* (and related expressions) would only denote a potential present in beings, as opposed to a fully fledged resultant state merely covered by adventitious defilements. This, as we shall see below, became an important topic of debate for later

³⁸ On the meaning of this term see Seyfort Ruegg 1976.

³⁹ See Seyfort Ruegg 1969: 77–86, as well as D’Amato 2003 for an analysis of the *gotra*-theory in the MSA.

⁴⁰ The *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, a commentary on the implicit meaning of the Prajñāpāramitā literature and thus associated with Madhyamaka philosophy, similarly rejects a distinction between *gotra*-s on the ground of the undifferentiated nature of the *dharmadhātu*. Cf. Seyfort Ruegg 1969, chapter 3.

⁴¹ Cf. RGV I.27–28. One isolated stanza (RGV I.41) seems to indicate that, indeed, some beings are without the potential for liberation. Seyfort Ruegg (1969: 280) remarks that this is indeed surprising, as it contradicts its doctrine of *tathāgatagarbha* and universal awakening. At this point, the *vyākhyā* explains that such statements are used to convert those opposed to the Mahāyāna. For an translation of the relevant passage see Takasaki 1966: 222–224.

⁴² The RGV also mentions another type of *gotra* which functions as a “mine” for the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, and Saṃgha). Cf. RGV I.23–24 as well as Seyfort Ruegg 1969: 282–283.

⁴³ RGV I.27b: *bauddhe gotre tatphalasyopacārād [...]* (Cf. Johnston 1950: 26,3–4).

exegetes. It is important to note that throughout the text, *garbha*, *dhātu* (“element”),⁴⁴ and (*prakṛtistha*) *gotra* are used synonymously to refer to defiled suchness (*samālā tathatā*), as opposed to undefiled suchness (*nirmalā tathatā*) equalled with awakening (*bodhi*).⁴⁵

While the *Ratnagotravibhāga* played an important role in the history of Tibetan scholarship, it did not receive that much attention on its own home ground, as we shall see below. Takasaki lists four works known only through Chinese sources (*Dharmadhātvaśāstra*, *Buddhagotraśāstra*, *Anuttarāśrayasūtra*, and *Mahāyāna-śraddhotpādaśāstra*) which possess similarities with the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.⁴⁶ One can consider the first three in particular to be based to a great extent on the presentation of buddha-nature as found in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. Since, however, their authorship and originality are uncertain, they can hardly be taken as examples for the continuation of the *tathāgatagarbha* literature in India.

⁴⁴ With the exception of the term *tathāgatadhātu* which can refer to the resultant state as well.

⁴⁵ “Suchness” stands for ultimate reality. This means that as long as mental afflictions (*kleśa*) are present, there is no liberating awakening to the actual state of things. Once freed from those afflictions, awakening is attained. On this, see also below (2.1.).

⁴⁶ Takasaki 1966: 45–54.

2. The *Ratnagotravibhāga*

2.1. The text of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*

The most important śāstra discussing the *tathāgatagarbha* theory is the *Ratnagotravibhāga* together with its commentary (the *vyākhyā*). It is the earliest systematic presentation of this doctrine, composed at latest towards the end of the 5th century by drawing from numerous sources.⁴⁷ Takasaki has identified nineteen canonical sources for this treatise—including both sūtras and śāstras—and eight unidentified ones.⁴⁸ The treatise itself is of a composite nature and consists of both verses—*kārikā*-s supplemented by explanatory verses and quotations drawn from canonical sources—and a prose commentary. Takasaki has identified an original text consisting of 27 verses from the first chapter.⁴⁹ His theory, however, has been rejected by Schmithausen who assumes that this “Ur-Text” (identified by Takasaki and again reduced to consist of only 15 verses by Schmithausen himself) is only one building block of the original *Ratnagotravibhāga*, which in turn should be identical with the Chinese translation (the original Sanskrit being extant only together with its *vyākhyā* and not as a separate text).⁵⁰

The content of the treatise has been discussed in detail, among others, by Seyfort Rugg.⁵¹ Following his presentation, I will give a brief outline of it here:

The *Ratnagotravibhāga* basically deals with seven *vajrapada*-s (“adamantine topics”), so called because of their unfathomable nature. Those seven are: the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, and Saṃgha), the element (*dhātu*, equivalent to *tathāgatagarbha*), awakening (*bodhi*), the buddha excellences (*guṇa*), and activity (*kriyā*).

⁴⁷ The earliest extant Chinese translation was produced between 511 and 515 A.D. by Ratnamati, who had returned from India in 508. Mathes (2008: 1) dates the earliest layers of the RGV back to the third or fourth century, attributing them to Sāramati. On the question of the authorship of this treatise see below.

⁴⁸ The seven topics presented in the RGV (I. 1–2), for example, are taken from the *Dhāraṇīśvara-rājasūtra*, and the set of nine similes for buddha-nature from the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* are reproduced and expounded upon in RGV I.95–143 together with its commentary. Cf. Takasaki 1966: 32–33.

⁴⁹ This text is rendered in its entirety on pp. 393–395.

⁵⁰ Cf. Schmithausen 1971: 123–130.

⁵¹ Cf. Seyfort Rugg 1969: 247–259.

The first chapter—dealing with the first four topics—is by far the longest of the treatise. After presenting the topical outline of the text, it begins with an analysis of the Three Jewels, establishing buddha(hood) (*buddhatva*) as the single ultimate refuge for sentient beings. The text then goes on discussing the main topic of the treatise at great length. Having established all beings as *buddhagarbha*-s,⁵² the *dhātu* (i.e. defiled suchness) is explained by means of ten categories and nine similes. To end this section, the reasons for this doctrine are explained.

The second chapter deals with awakening (*bodhi*)—equated with undefiled suchness—by means of eight categories. Awakening is explained as the result of purification, attained by removing all adventitious mental afflictions from the mind’s nature. (From this chapter onwards, almost no explanatory commentary is given in the *vyākhyā*.) The third chapter discusses the sixty four buddha excellences (*guṇa*) inseparable from undefiled suchness and the fourth covers the thirty two kinds of buddha activities (*jinakriyā*), which are said to be both effortless and uninterrupted. The final chapter describes the benefits of this teaching, explaining the advantages of adhering faithfully to it, and closes with a dedication of the merit obtained by this exposition.

2.2. The question of the authorship of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*

The question of the authorship of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* has remained unsolved to this day. According to the Chinese tradition, Sāramati (fl. about 250 A.D.) is identified as the author of the treatise. The Tibetan tradition, however, attributes the root text to the bodhisattva Maitreya—the future buddha residing in Tuṣita heaven—and the commentary to his human disciple Asaṅga (fl. 4th century). A Sanskrit fragment of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in Saka script attributes the text also to Maitreya, indicating that his authorship was probably accepted in India as well.⁵³

Among modern scholars, Seyfort Ruegg favoured the Tibetan view, evoking, however, the possibility of Sāramati being an epithet of Maitreya.⁵⁴ Frauwallner, on the other hand, follows the Chinese tradition, making of Sāramati the most important figure of a

⁵² Or as “containing a buddha” following Zimmermann. Seyfort Ruegg (1969: 249, n.5) remarks that the Tibetan translations state that beings “possess” (*can*) buddha-nature.

⁵³ Cf. Takasaki 1966: 7.

⁵⁴ Cf. Seyfort Ruegg 1969: 46.

distinct school which was to become very influential in the later developments of Mahāyāna philosophy.⁵⁵

With regard to Maitreya's identity, scholars have put forth all possible explanations. Some see in him Asaṅga's human teacher (Ui, Frauwallner), others a divine source for the latter's inspiration (Demiéville, Seyfort Ruegg), and others still (Lévi, Obermiller) completely deny his existence, making Asaṅga the sole author of the work.⁵⁶ This leaves us with dissenting traditional explanations woven into a net of modern theories and explanations, without there being enough historical evidence to form any conclusive opinion. Other, more recent publications (Mathes, Thurman)⁵⁷ defend the traditional Tibetan account in so far as to consider the possibility of yogis acquiring exceptional powers by means of specialised training, enabling them to communicate with transcendent beings like bodhisattvas. This, of course, lies beyond the reach of historical evidence and belongs to the realm of religious belief and practice.

At least, as Mathes points out, it is important to note that the works attributed to Maitreya (in the Tibetan tradition) differ in both form and content from Asaṅga's writings to a degree that one can hardly attribute them altogether to a single author.⁵⁸

2.3. The *Ratnagotravibhāga* in India

According to a most widely accepted Tibetan historiography, the text of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* was lost in India soon after its composition, only to be retrieved in the 11th century under mysterious circumstances, along with the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* (another work attributed to Maitreya), by the Indian adept Maitrīpa.⁵⁹ This could explain the fact that neither are mentioned in later treatises until this time, nor listed in the *Ldan-dkar-ma* catalogue (dating from the 9th cent.) which does mention

⁵⁵ Cf. Frauwallner 1994: 255.

⁵⁶ Cf. Mathes 1996: 11–17.

⁵⁷ Cf. Mathes 1996: 14–15 and Thurman 2004: xvii–xviii.

⁵⁸ Cf. Mathes 1996: 14.

⁵⁹ For Gzhon-nu-dpal's account see Roerich 1949 (1996): 347–350.

Kano (2006: 27–31) mentions another account according to which a certain Aṇarakṣita, disciple of Paṇḍita Maitreyaṇātha, discovered both texts. This account stems from Rong-ston Shākya Rgyal-mtshan's (the author of our commentary) introduction to his commentary on the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*.

the other three works attributed to Maitreya.⁶⁰ The earliest Indian works to quote or gloss either of these two treatises come from Maitrīpa's own teachers Jñānaśrīmitra and Ratnākaraśānti (both 10th–11th century), who therefore must already have known these texts.⁶¹ In any case, it was mostly due to Maitrīpa's efforts that these treatises were introduced and spread in scholastic circles. The teachings on buddha-nature as found in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* proved to be an ideal link between the tantric teachings of the mahāsiddhas, so important at that time, and mainstream Mahāyāna.

Maitrīpa passed on the teachings on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* to *Ānandakīrti,⁶² who in turn handed them over to Sajjana (fl. second half of 11th cent.), the great paṇḍit from Kashmir and author of one of the two only remaining commentaries on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* of Indian origin.⁶³ Kashmir subsequently became an important centre for the study of this treatise and, as it was a platform for Tibetan translation activity, it was from here that the treatise eventually found its way to Tibet.

2.4. The *Ratnagotravibhāga* in Tibet⁶⁴

Prominent among Sajjana's disciples, the Tibetans Rngog Blo-ldan shes-rab (1059–1109) and Btsan Kha-bo-che (b. 1021), became known as the founders of the so-called analytical or epistemological school (*thos bsam gyi lugs / mtshan nyid lugs*) and the meditative school (*sgom lugs*) respectively. The fact that these two exegetical traditions can be traced back to a common source, namely Sajjana, indicates that they are by no means contradictory by nature. While the former is concerned with analysing the philosophical implications of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in order to remove mistaken concepts about the nature of reality, the latter focuses on the “positive”

⁶⁰ Those works being the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, the *Madhyāntavibhāga*, and the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*. Cf. Mathes 1996: 163.

⁶¹ As Kano (2006: 49) points out, either there was another line of transmission of these texts available at that time which does not pass through Maitrīpa, or they composed these works only after their common disciple had rediscovered them. See also Mathes 2008: 2–3.

⁶² He is omitted in Rong-ston's account of the lineage of those teachings.

⁶³ Those two are Sajjana's *Mahāyānottaratantraśāstropadeśa* - edited by Takasaki in 1974 (*Nyoraizō shisō no keisei*. Tokyo: Shunjūsha), and Vairocanarakṣita's *Mahāyānottaratantraṭippaṇī*. Both have recently been edited by Kano (2006) as appendices to his dissertation.

⁶⁴ For this chapter I follow mainly Mathes' presentations from 1996 (165–168) and 2008 (25–48), unless otherwise indicated.

aspect of this treatise, i.e. the luminosity of mind serving as a basis for the actualisation of the excellences of a buddha.⁶⁵

2.4.1. The analytical school of Blo-ldan shes-rab⁶⁶

Rngog Lo-tsā-ba Blo-ldan shes-rab⁶⁷ was instrumental in the transmission of this treatise and its study in Tibet, for not only did he work in collaboration with his Indian teacher to produce the only surviving translation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*,⁶⁸ but he was also the author of the first Tibetan commentary on it, i.e. the *Theg chen rgyud bla'i don bsdus pa*.⁶⁹

His tradition stands at the origin of the so-called *rang stong*-Madhyamaka interpretation of buddha-nature. It can, however, for obvious reasons, not be equated with it. Firstly, the whole *rang stong* versus *gzhan stong* discussion was a Tibetan invention of a later date,⁷⁰ and it is just natural for philosophical traditions to evolve over time and in response to new currents of thought. Also, “*rang ston*” does not equal “*rang stong*”, as we shall see below. That is, all schools who oppose themselves to the *gzhan stong* interpretation of buddha-nature cannot be thrown into the same basket.

Taking the *Ratnagotravibhāga* to be a commentary on the sūtras of definitive meaning (*nges don*; *nītārtha*),⁷¹ Blo-ldan shes-rab equates buddha-nature, or the “element” (*dhātu*; *khams*), with the ultimate—an ultimate, however, which cannot be the object

⁶⁵ This difference in emphasis, however, led to doctrinal disputes among later Tibetan authors as we shall see below. Cf. also van der Kuijp 1983: 43–44.

⁶⁶ This tradition will be analysed in more detail since the author of our treatise follows this interpretation quite closely.

⁶⁷ On the life of Blo ldan shes rab see Jackson 1994, as well as Kano 2006: 113–128.

⁶⁸ The work for this translation had been carried out in Kashmir during Rngog's visit there some time in the late 11th century. In his Blue Annals, Gzhon-nu-dpal reports that six different translations of the RGV had been made. Of them, only the one by Rngog and Sajjana has entered the Tengyur and therefore survived. See Roerich 1949 (1996): 350. For a description of these six translations see Kano 2006: 89–111.

⁶⁹ This text has been edited by David Jackson and was published 1993 in Dharamsala. The first chapter of this commentary and an analysis of its author's position and influence on later developments form the main part of Kano's thesis (2006).

⁷⁰ Dol-po-pa Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan (1292–1361) was the first to use the term *gzhan stong* in a systematic fashion. See Mathes 1996: 160.

⁷¹ The four remaining Maitreya works are regarded by him to be commentaries on sūtras with provisional meaning (*drang don*; *neyārtha*). Kano (2006: 173) notes that this is probably due to the fact that the RGV is the only treatise among those five to teach the single-vehicle (*ekayāna*) theory. However, the AA does reject the existence of different *gotra*-s. Cf. Sefort Ruegg 1969: 189–205.

of conceptual thought (which by definition belongs to the realm of concealing truth).⁷² Equating buddha-nature with the ultimate, it is explained to be emptiness, bringing the teachings on buddha-nature thus in line with Madhyamaka philosophy.⁷³ To be more precise, buddha-nature is, for him, the nature of mind which is emptiness, or the absence of the two types of self—the self of person and the self of phenomena⁷⁴—in sentient beings. Commenting on RGV I.13, he writes:

Awareness of the extent refers to the “vision that a perfect buddha is present in all [sentient beings].” The awareness that the common defining characteristics—the very selflessness of phenomena and persons—are the nature of the tathāgata, [namely] buddha nature, and that [this reality] completely pervades [its] support, [i.e.,] the entire element of sentient beings, is the [awareness of] the extent. Furthermore, the unmistakable awareness of mere selflessness, which exists in all beings, is the awareness of how [reality] is. [...] ⁷⁵

Furthermore, emptiness is understood in the sense of a non-affirming negation (*med par dgag pa*), which means that while it negates the existence of that which does not exist (i.e. the superimposed sense of self), it does not affirm the existence of anything else in its place. Rngog writes:

As to the [buddha] element that has become the conventional object of a nonaffirming negation, it is called the substantial cause that has become the conventional object of a nonaffirming negation; but something that amounts to human effort [as a substantial cause of buddhahood] does not actually exist. As to the conventional object, it has the meaning of a nonaffirming negation—

⁷² The question, whether or not the ultimate can be an object of conventional language became an important topic of debate between later Dge-lugs-pa and Sa-skyapa scholars. On this question see Tauscher 1995: 291ff. and Sweet 1979.

⁷³ This approach follows the interpretation of the doctrine of buddha-nature as found in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* as seen above.

⁷⁴ The self of person refers to the sense of personal identity attached to the five aggregates of human experience (*skandha-s*), and the self of phenomena to a superimposed essence inherent to all elements of existence (*dharma-s*).

⁷⁵ Quoted after Mathes 2008: 27.

namely that anything that is established as an own-being does not exist in reality.⁷⁶

Crucial for Blo-ldan shes-rab's presentation of the *dhātu* is his commentary on RGV I.28 which gives three reasons for beings' possession of buddha-nature. Those three—namely (1) the pervasion of the body of the perfect buddha, (2) suchness (*tathatā*) being without differentiation, and (3) the *gotra*'s presence in sentient beings—are explained to refer to the resultant, the natural, and the causal buddha-nature respectively. By this, Blo-ldan shes-rab essentially means that while the actual buddha-nature pertains to a buddha only, this name (i.e. *tathāgatagarbha*) has been metaphorically applied to sentient beings because they have the potential to attain this aim. The link between those two states is suchness (a synonym for emptiness)—which is the nature of both equally—the full realisation of which results in buddhahood.

This *dhātu* thus becomes the cause for realising buddhahood. This is so, because, firstly, only when emptiness is possible, are all other things possible as well.⁷⁷ But more importantly, Blo-ldan shes-rab explains the *dhātu* to function as the seed for buddhahood because taking it (i.e. the ultimate or emptiness) as an objective support for one's inferential cognition will result in the actualisation of a buddha's excellences (*guṇa*; *yon tan*).

Another fundamental question with regard to the interpretation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (and related the question of emptiness being taken as a non-affirming negation) is whether those excellences are newly produced upon the attainment of buddhahood, or only revealed, in the manner of a buried treasure that has merely been unearthed.⁷⁸ Commenting on RGV I.154 and 155—which state that

⁷⁶ Quoted after Mathes 2008: 30.

⁷⁷ To clarify Rngog's position here, Rong-ston, commenting on RGV I.26, quotes Nāgārjuna's MMK XXIV.14 where it is explained that without emptiness nothing would be possible, while everything becomes possible when emptiness applies. Cf. Kano 2006: 150.

⁷⁸ Among the nine examples for buddha-nature taken from the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* and reproduced in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, two seem to be in favour of the former interpretation, namely the analogy of the tree growing from a tiny seed and the embryo of a future universal emperor growing in the womb of a destitute woman. According to Zimmermann (2002: 63–64), however, the main focus of those two examples does not so much lie in the aspect of growth, but in the idea that the future result is already contained in the present state.

(a) nothing is to be removed from or added to reality (*bhūta* - referring here to the *dhātu*) and (b) that the *dhātu* is empty of impurities, while not being empty of inseparable qualities—Blo-ldan shes-rab introduces the topic of the two truths. He states that to see reality, one must neither superimpose an ultimate existence of an objective support for defilements (“nothing to add”), nor deny the existence of the objective support for purification on the level of concealing truth (“nothing to remove”).⁷⁹ With regard to there being nothing to be added to reality he writes that no excellences need to be added, since the objective support for their attainment is present since beginningless time. This objective support for the attainment of the strengths and so forth—in other words the object focussed on in meditation—is, as seen above, the *dhātu* or emptiness itself. Thus, for him, “nothing to be added” does not refer to the excellences, but to the cause for their actualisation.

Furthermore, Rngog also follows Asaṅga’s commentary on RGV I.51, where we read that the inseparable qualities pertain to the thoroughly purified state, in contrast to the impurities which appear in the impure and partially purified states only.⁸⁰ Commenting on this stanza he writes:

[...] The realization of the ultimate is the cause of all qualities, because all buddha qualities are summoned as if called when you realize the *dharmadhātu*.⁸¹

2.4.2. The meditative school of Btsan Kha-bo-che

Btsan Kha-bo-che was the second major Tibetan heir in Sajjana’s transmission of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. Due to the language barrier he was, however, unlike Blo-ldan shes-rab, forced to study under the master with the help of the translator Gzu Dga’-ba’i rdo-rje. Having stayed in Kashmir for a number of years, he returned to Tibet before his compatriot and established a learning centre in Brag-rgya in Yar-stod, Central Tibet.⁸²

⁷⁹ Cf. Mathes 2008: 31.

⁸⁰ Cf. Takasaki 1966: 234–235.

⁸¹ Quoted after Mathes 2008: 31.

⁸² Cf. Van der Kuijp 1983: 42.

This tradition takes the Maitreya works in general and the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in particular literally. Here, buddha-nature is positively described in the sense of an “affirming negation” (*ma yin dgag*): the *dhātu* is indeed empty of defilements, but possesses all the excellences from the very beginning. Shākya mchog-ldan summarises the view of Btsan Kha-bo-che as follows:

[T]he ultimate intent he obtained from having studied the ‘Teachings of Maitreya[nātha]’ [...] was [that of] the inherently pure originary cognitiveness (*rang rig rnam dag gi ye shes*) which pervades [everything] from Buddha[s] to sentient beings, and that this very natural luminosity [of mind] is what has been named *tathāgatagarbha*.⁸³

Relatively little is known of this tradition, the transmission of which has been interrupted at some point according to ’Gos Lo-tsā-ba Gzhon-nu-dpal.⁸⁴ However, one can see a continuation of its doctrine in the Jo-nang school and the proponents of the *gzhan stong* view.⁸⁵

2.5. Previous studies and the aim of the present work:

The *Ratnagotravibhāga* was first introduced to modern academia by Eugène Obermiller who translated it together with its *vyākhyā* from the Tibetan into English in 1931. The Sanskrit text was edited only 19 years later by E. H. Johnston on the basis of two manuscripts found in Tibet by Rāhula Sāṃkṛtyāyana. This text was then translated by Jikido Takasaki in 1966. Later, the root verses were again translated several times from the Tibetan by western Tibetan scholars (most notably by Rosemarie Fuchs (2000), who translated Kong-sprul Blo-gros mtha’-yas’s commentary together with the entire root-text, and by François Chenique (2001) into French, based on both the Sanskrit and the Tibetan versions.)

Among Takasaki’s numerous publications on the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine—most of which have, due to my inability to read Japanese, not been accessible to me—two

⁸³ Quoted after van der Kuijp 1983: 43.

⁸⁴ The only teachings from Btsan available today are contained in a collection of instructions compiled by Jo-nang Kun-dga’ grol-mchog (1501–1566). They are, according to Stearns (1999: 42), the earliest extant writings dealing with the *gzhan stong* tradition in Tibet.

⁸⁵ On the *gzhan stong* interpretation of the RGV see Mathes 2008: 45–48 and Hookham 1991.

monographs represent his major contributions in this field: his study of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (1966) including the lengthy introduction, a synopsis of the text, and the abovementioned translation of it together with its *vyākhyā*,⁸⁶ and his work on the formation of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory in Indian Buddhism⁸⁷ which, unfortunately, is available only in Japanese.

Among Seyfort Rugg's valuable contributions to this field, his famous *La Théorie du Tathāgatagarbha et du Gotra* (1969) is the most important, presenting a detailed analysis of the doctrines of *gotra*, *ekayāna*, and *tathāgatagarbha* as found in the Indian commentarial literature, relying to a good extent on Tibetan, and in particular Dge-lugs-pa, interpretation.⁸⁸ Aside from his papers on this subject,⁸⁹ another important work by Seyfort Rugg is his annotated translation of Bu-ston's *mDzes rgyan* (1973), a Tibetan commentary on the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine from the 14th century consisting mainly of an anthology of canonical excerpts.

Among the more recent important works related to the reception of this doctrine in Tibet in general and within the Bka'-brgyud tradition in particular are Susan Hookham's (1991)⁹⁰ work on the *gzhan stong* interpretation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and Klaus-Dieter Mathes' (2008) analysis of 'Gos Lo-tsa-ba Gzhon-nu-dpal's (1392–1481) *mahāmudrā* interpretation of the same treatise.⁹¹

Also available to me, although not yet published, were the dissertation by Ngawang Jorden (2005) on Go-rams-pa's understanding of buddha-nature based on his supplement to Sa-skya Paṇḍita's *Sdom gsum rab byed* and Kazuo Kano's (2006) study,

⁸⁶ De Jong (1968) and Schmithausen (1971) both have contributed reviews of Takasaki's first mentioned work in which many of the latter's philological mistakes are corrected.

⁸⁷ Takasaki Jikido (1974): *Nyoraizō shisō no keisei* [The formation of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory]. Tokyo: Shunjūsha.

⁸⁸ For an extensive review of this work see Schmithausen 1973b.

⁸⁹ Cf. bibliography.

⁹⁰ Hookham's presentation is mainly based on Kong-sprul Blo-gros mtha'-yas's (1813–1899) commentary on the RGV and oral teachings by contemporary masters. A review of this work has been given by Franz-Karl Erhard (1994) in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 144, pp. 415–419.

⁹¹ The latter includes in part 1 (on the Tibetan historical context) an interesting overview of various positions related to Gzhon-nu-dpal's interpretation, including among others those of Rngog Blo-ldan shes-rab, Dol-po-pa, Sa-bzang Ma-ti paṇ-chen, and Klong-chen-pa.

annotated translation, and edition of Rngog Blo-ldan shes-rab's summary of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, the first Tibetan commentary on this seminal work.⁹²

Until now, only one study of the Sa-skyā school's understanding of this fundamental chapter of Mahāyāna thought has been written,⁹³ notwithstanding the fact that this tradition has known a glorious past in terms of scholarly achievements. Among its great luminaries figure such important names as Sa-skyā Paṇḍita Kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan (1182–1251), Red-mda'-ba gzhon-nu blo-gros (1349–1412), Rong-ston Shes-bya kun-rig (1376–1449), and Go-rams-pa Bsod-nams seng-ge (1429–1489). Among the Sa-skyā commentaries on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, it is Rong-ston's extensive treatise that is regarded as the most important by contemporary scholars of the tradition.⁹⁴ The aim of the present work is to help fill the gap in modern academia by providing an annotated translation of a crucial chapter of this treatise, namely its exposition of buddha-nature by means of ten categories.

⁹² An important article to be added to this list of monographs would be Dorji Wangchuk's exposition of the Rnying ma tradition's interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory (2004).

⁹³ I refer to Jorden 2003, which has yet to be published.

⁹⁴ Chos-rgyal 'phags-pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1235–1280) and Red-mda'-ba both composed summaries of the treatise. Khenpo Ngawang Jorden pointed out two other Sa-skyā commentaries on the RGV to me: the *Rgyud bla ma'i ṭīka* by Ngag-dbang chos-grags (1572–1641) and the *Rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos kyi nges don gsal bar byed pa rin chen sgron* by Gnas-phrug-pa (who lived sometime after Gorampa). Other masters with a Sa-skyā background to comment on the RGV were Sa-bzang ma-ti paṇ-chen (1294–1376) and Dol-po-pa. Since his commentary expounds a *gzhan stong* position, however, it cannot be regarded as mainstream Sa-skyā. For provisional lists of Tibetan commentaries on the RGV see Buchardi 2002: 55–73 and Kano 2006 (Appendix G).

3. Rong-ston and his presentation of buddha-nature

3.1. A short glimpse at the life of Rong-ston Shes-bya kun-rig

Despite the fact that the intellectual luminaries of the Sa-skya Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism have received a relatively modest amount of attention within western academia up until now, we can be thankful to Professor David Jackson for having contributed as much as he did in this field.⁹⁵

In particular, with regard to the author of the text translated herein, Smra-ba'i seng-ge Rong-ston Shes-bya kun-rig, also known by his ordination name Shākya rgyal-mtshan, Jackson has published a number of historically very insightful papers, the most important of which is the introduction to his edition of a sub-commentary on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* by Rong-ston.⁹⁶ In this article, Jackson bases his account of Rong-ston's life on two extensive biographies written by two of the master's disciples, namely Nam-mkha' dpal-bzang (fl. 15th century) and Shākya mchog-ldan (1428–1507). More recently, he has published a paper which has as its focus some overlooked details of Rong-ston's scholastic career.⁹⁷

In addition to the information taken from Jackson's research, I will include in my brief summary of this scholar's life some details found in the short account given in 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba Gzhon-nu-dpal's *Deb ther sngon po* (Blue Annals) reprinted in Khentsun Sangpo's *Biographical Dictionary*,⁹⁸ as well as other information gathered from writings of the tradition, to see how Rong-ston was perceived by his own people.

Traditionally, the career of a Buddhist scholar should encompass the three domains of exposition, debate and composition (*'chad rtsod rtsom gsum*) called “the three activities of the learned” (*mkhas pa'i bya ba gsum*). Inspired by this format, my account of Rong-ston's life will start with these three categories, supplemented by a small section about his activities as the founder of a monastic institution and another one on Rong-ston “the saint,” as he is perceived within his own tradition.

⁹⁵ See bibliography.

⁹⁶ Jackson 1988.

⁹⁷ Jackson 2007.

⁹⁸ Khentsun Sangpo 1979: 379–381.

Rong-ston, the student and teacher:

Born in 1367 in Rgyal-mo-rong in Far-Eastern Tibet into a Bon-po family, Rong-ston's religious path commenced, according to his biographer Shākya-mchog-ldan, by studying the Bon-po teachings from a young age. At the age of seventeen, he travelled to one of the greatest centres of Buddhist learning in Central Tibet, namely the seminary of Gsang-phu Ne'u-thog.⁹⁹ It was there that he received monastic ordination and started his very thorough scholastic training, which would lead to his studying under more than twenty teachers.¹⁰⁰

He proved to be such a bright student that he was able to compose his first major commentary, a sub-commentary on the *Pramāṇaviniścaya* by Dharmakīrti, the age of twenty-one. Yet, it was not until the age of twenty-six that Rong-ston met the most prominent among his teachers, the Sa-skyā scholar G.yag-ston Sangs-rgyas-dpal (1348–1414), whose successor he would eventually become. Under him Rong-ston studied extensively the Prajñāpāramitā scriptures along with many commentaries, as well as several treatises on logic and epistemology (*tshad ma*; *pramāṇa*),

Among all the subjects he was trained in, which for all great Tibetan Buddhist scholars cover both sūtra and tantra fields of knowledge, he was particularly renowned for his mastery of, and commentaries on the Prajñāpāramitā philosophy of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*.

During his professional career (which Jackson points out as one of the longest of any Tibetan teacher, lasting for about sixty years), Rong-ston's two main seats in Central Tibet were the Gsang-phu seminary and the monastery of Nālandra (which he founded in 1436).¹⁰¹ Apart from his occasional travels to other seminaries and monasteries in the region, he made three visits to Gtsang which greatly contributed to his fame becoming widespread. These visits (which lead him repeatedly to Sa-skyā) consisted mainly of teaching and debating tours, and earned him, among others, the title “Rong-ston Smra-ba'i seng-ge, the Teacher from [Rgyal-mo]-rong, Lion among Expounders.”

⁹⁹ On the history of this institution see van der Kuijp 1987.

¹⁰⁰ For the list of these teachers given by Shākya mchog-ldan see Jackson 1988: II–IV.

¹⁰¹ See below for more details on his founding of Nālandra.

Rong-ston was able to confirm his academic status as a *bka' bcu pa* (“master of ten scriptures”) on these tours,¹⁰² a challenge that had become a common practice to test the qualifications of advanced scholars in Central Tibet at that time. The ten scriptures in question, which the bearer of this title was supposed to have mastered, covered all major fields of monastic study, namely Prajñāpāramitā philosophy (based on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*), logic and epistemology (*tshad ma; pramāṇa*), Abhidharma, Vinaya, Cittamātra and Tathāgatagarbha-theory (based on the remaining four works attributed to Maitreya), as well as Madhyamaka.¹⁰³

Assuming that Rong-ston personally taught all the major treatises on which he composed commentaries (making about forty scriptures), we can say that he taught approximately sixty different classes during his long teaching career, to a vast number of disciples.¹⁰⁴ According to Shākya mchog-ldan, he “had more students *who understood philosophical texts* than any Tibetan teacher of all time.”¹⁰⁵ Many of the next generations’ great scholars, of all traditions (including the Bon tradition),¹⁰⁶ were either direct or indirect disciples of Rong-ston, making him one of the most influential scholars of his time. Among these disciples are included such illustrious names as Mus-chen Sems-dpa’ chen-po Dkon-mchog rgyal-mtshan (1388–1469), ’Gos Lo-tsa-ba Gzhon-nu-dpal (1392–1481), Shākya mchog-ldan (1428–1507), and Go-rams-pa Bsod-nams-seng-ge (1429–1489) (who studied under Rong-ston only very briefly), as well as many abbots from various great monasteries and seminars, such as those of Gsang-phu, Ngor, Se-ra, ’Bras-spungs and others.¹⁰⁷ Even the name of the Mahāsiddha Thang-stong rgyal-po (1361–1485) appears in the list provided by Shākya mchog-ldan among “those who gained faith in the master, having made a connection with him.”

¹⁰² For an detailed explanation of this title see Jackson 2007.

¹⁰³ Jackson gives the following tentative list of ten treatises based on Rong-ston’s own studies and personal interests: 1) *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*; 2) *Pramāṇaviniścaya*; 3) *Abhidharmasamuccaya*; 4) *Abhidharmakośa*; 5) *Vinaya*; 6) *Ratnagotravibhāga*; 7–9) possibly the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*, *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*, *Madhyāntavibhāga*; 10) either a Madhyamaka treatise or another Pramāṇa scripture. Jackson 2007: 350.

¹⁰⁴ Jackson gives a list of twenty-one treatises Rong-ston taught during his career, which he did not compose commentaries on. Jackson 1988: V.

¹⁰⁵ Jackson 1988: IV.

¹⁰⁶ Such as Mnyam-med Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan (1356–1415), who studied Buddhist philosophy under Rong-ston.

¹⁰⁷ See the list given by Shākya mchog-ldan in Jackson 1988: VI–VIII.

According to Jackson, not only do almost all dialectical and scholastic lineages from the Sa-skya tradition pass through Rong-ston, but the majority of these lineages from the Bka'-brgyud and Rnying-ma traditions as well.¹⁰⁸

Rong-ston, the debater:

In his own tradition, Rong-ston is remembered as an undefeated debater.¹⁰⁹ By his rivals, however, he was probably remembered mainly for being the first scholar of major influence to directly oppose the ideas of Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang grags-pa (1357-1419), who was to become one of the most important figures in the religious history of Tibet.¹¹⁰ In fact, Shākya mchog-ldan even mentions an account according to which both are supposed to have met and debated in Lhasa, with Rong-ston emerging from this debate as a winner. Although this event is not recorded in Tsong-kha-pa's own biography,¹¹¹ one cannot assume that it did not happen. It is, I believe, as much a common practice for followers of religious leaders not to include events in their teacher's biography, which could "stain" their account, as it is for them to ornament and glorify their masters' life-stories.

Regardless of whether or not this debate took place, there were other sources of controversy between him and members of the Dga'-ldan tradition, particularly Mkhas-grub-rje Dge-legs dpal-bzang (1385–1438),¹¹² laid out in more detail by Jackson in his recent paper.¹¹³ For our purposes, it suffices to say that unfortunate outcomes of events lead to great sectarian disputes between these two schools after Tsong-kha-pa's passing.

Rong-ston, the writer:

Jackson gives us two lists of Rong-ston's writings: one by Shākya mchog-ldan included in his biography of the master and the other, more recent one, compiled by

¹⁰⁸ Jackson 1989: 6.

¹⁰⁹ Jackson 1988: V.

¹¹⁰ On Rong-ston's critique of Tsong-kha-pa see Kobayashi 2005: 15–23.

¹¹¹ Tauscher 1995: 36–37.

¹¹² On the name given to this school and Mkhas-grub's Sa-skya background see van der Kuijp 1985: 33–35.

¹¹³ See Jackson 2007: 352–356.

Khenpo Appey Rinpoche and others. Depending on the source, Rong-ston is said to have authored forty-one or forty-three major sub-commentaries and nineteen minor treatises, as well as many smaller works such as praises, *sādhana*s, personal communications and so forth. All in all, Rong-ston authored about three hundred works which are said to have filled either thirteen or twenty volumes.¹¹⁴

Among his most important compositions are his commentaries on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* as well his commentaries on the treatises attributed to Maitreya (one of which is the focus of the present work).

Unfortunately, only about half of his oeuvre is available to us today. And of these, Jackson notes, many are still difficult to access.

Rong-ston, the founder:

One of Rong-ston's most significant achievements was his founding of the monastic institution of Nālandra in 'Phan-yul (Central Tibet) in the year 1436.

Jackson points out ¹¹⁵ that this was assisted by the loss of power of his former patrons, the Phag-mo gru-pa.¹¹⁶ Until 1434, Rong-ston lived and taught either near their main seat, Sne-gdong near Lhasa. When, due to internal struggle for power, the Phag-mo gru-pa clan started to collapse and the political conditions got unstable (this continued until they eventually had to cede their sovereignty over Tibet to the Rin-spungs-pa clan), Rong-ston was invited to take up alternative residence in the 'Phan-yul valley, to the north of the capital. In 1435 he was offered a piece of land there by a local lord and soon the construction work on Nālandra began. Due to his fame and excellent reputation, Rong-ston's efforts were greatly supported by the local nobility, as well as by monastic communities of the area.

After serving as an abbot for about eight years, Rong-ston appointed his disciple Dwags-po paṇ-chen Bkra-shis rnam-rgyal (1399–1458) as his successor in 1442, but continued teaching at Nālandra until just a few days prior to his passing.

¹¹⁴ Jackson 1988: XIV. See also Chogay Trichen 1983: 30.

¹¹⁵ Jackson 1988: x–xi; and 1989: 7–8.

¹¹⁶ In the 14th century, the Phag-mo-gru-pa clan took over the sovereignty over Tibet from the Sa-skyapas, which lasted until internal instability led to their collapse in 1434.

In a short account of Nāleन्द्रa, the late Bco-brgyad khri-chen, Mkhyen-rab legs-bshad rgya-mtsho (1920–2007),¹¹⁷ states that, from the time during which Rong-ston served, to the time of the seventh abbot, between two and three thousand monks were usually in residence there.¹¹⁸ This number later varied, depending on the political stability of the region. In 1959, just prior to the take-over by the Chinese communists, the monks residing in Nāleन्द्रa were said to have numbered seven hundred.¹¹⁹

Rong-ston, the mystic and saint:¹²⁰

Traditionally, Rong-ston is regarded as an emanation of the future Buddha Maitreya, who resides in the Tuṣita heaven.¹²¹ He himself is supposed to have declared several times that his next incarnation will not take place in the human realm, but that he would rather be reborn as a god in the realm of Tuṣita.¹²²

Rong-ston is also believed to be the reincarnation of several paṇḍitas from India, such as Kamalaśīla and Haribhādra, with both of whom he shares academic interests.^{123 124}

With regard to his spiritual practice, 'Gos Lo-tṣā-ba mentions that he exerted himself in the path of “pacification” (*zhi byed*),¹²⁵ the instructions on which he had received from his principal teacher G.yag-ston.¹²⁶ From his intensive practice, which he was able to maintain while appearing to engage continuously in the activity of teaching, several signs of realisation are said have occurred. He was, for instance, able to see the

¹¹⁷ This master, who served as the last abbot of this monastery before the cultural revolution, was recognised as the eighteenth incarnation in the line of Mkhyen-rab chos-rje (1436–1497), the eighth abbot of Nāleन्द्रa.

¹¹⁸ Chogy Trichen Rinpoche 1983: 31.

¹¹⁹ Jackson 1989: 63.

¹²⁰ This paragraph might not add anything to our understanding of the historic person Rong-ston as such, but it is important in order to understand how he was and still is perceived in his own tradition. Descriptions of a master's inner signs of realisation and outward performances of miracles are as commonly intertwined with accounts of historically verifiable events in Tibetan religious biographies, called *rnam thar*, as they are in hagiographies of saints of other religious traditions.

¹²¹ Chogy Trichen 1983: 30

¹²² Khentsun Sangpo 1979: 381: *rgyun ldan du gsung ba la | nga khams pa phob phob 'di dra mi byed par | dga' ldan du lha'i bu bdud rtsi 'thung ba zhig byed gsung bas da lta dga' ldan na bzhugs par nges so ||*

¹²³ Kamalaśīla was a master of the Svātantrika Madhyamaka philosophy and author of the *Madhyamakāloka* (*Dbu ma snang ba*, Derge no. 3887), which Rong-ston studied at Gsang-phu; and Haribhādra was (like Rong-ston) an important commentator on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*.

¹²⁴ Chogy Trichen 2003: 22.

¹²⁵ A tantric practice introduced to Tibet by the master Pha-dam-pa Sangs-rgyas (b. 11th cent.).

¹²⁶ Khentsun Sangpo 1979: 379.

colours of the five wind energies (*rlung lnga*) individually, and it is recorded that a fallen-off toe-nail of his transformed itself into a relic-like item.¹²⁷ He was also able to foretell precisely the age at which he would pass away, namely eighty-three.¹²⁸ All of these are considered to be great signs of spiritual accomplishment, indicating that Rong-ston had reached the sixth level of realisation (*bhūmi*).¹²⁹

One can confidently say that Rong-ston Shes-bya kun-rig was one of the most outstanding Tibetan scholars of his time. He became known as one of the “six ornaments of Tibet,”¹³⁰ which refers to the six most illustrious teachers of the Sa skya tradition, after its five founding masters.¹³¹

3.2. Rong-ston’s presentation of buddha-nature

3.2.1. Introduction

In the list of Rong-ston’s teachers provided by Shākya mchog-ldan, only one of them is mentioned as his teacher for the “Five Dharmas of Maitreya” (*rje bstun byams pa’i chos lnga*), namely Karma Dkon-mchog gzhon-nu (b. 1333),¹³² a disciple of the fourth Karma-pa Rol-pa’i rdo-rje (1340–1383). This master stood in the lineage of the meditation tradition (*sgom lugs*) of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.¹³³ Certain teaching records (*gsan yig*), however, also state that he received the reading transmission (*lung*) of Rngog’s commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* by one of his principal teachers,

¹²⁷ Khentsun Sangpo 1979: 380: ‘*phral du chos bshad pa kho na la brtson pa ltar mdzad kyang rnal ’byor la rgyun du gnas pas rlung lnga’i kha dog kyang so sor gzigs/zhabs kyi mthe bong gi sen mo zhig lung ba nya lcibs su gyur*’

¹²⁸ Khentsun Sangpo 1979: 380,

¹²⁹ Chogay Trichen 1983: 30.

¹³⁰ The six are: (Rong-ston’s teacher) G.yag ston Sangs rgyas dpal (1350–1414) and Rong-ston Smra-ba’i Seng-ge (1367–1449), known for their mastery of the sūtra teachings; Ngor-chen Kun-dga’ bzang-po (1382–1456) and Rdzong-pa Kun-dga’ rnam-rgyal (1432–1496), known for their expertise in the tantras; and (Rong-ston’s students) Go-rams-pa Bsod-nams seng-ge (1428–1489) and Shākya mchog-ldan (1428–1507) masters in both the sūtras and the tantras. See Chogay Trichen 1983: 27.

¹³¹ Sa-chen kun-dga’ snying-po (1092–1158), Slob-dpon Bsod-nams rtse-mo (1142–1182), Rje-btsun Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan (1147–1216), Sa-skya Paṇḍita Kun-dga’ rgyal-mtshan (1182–1251), and ‘Grom-gon Chos-rgyal ‘phags-pa (1235–1280).

¹³² Cf. Jackson 1988: III.

¹³³ This lineage, as discussed above, goes back to Sajjana’s Tibetan disciple Btsan Kha-bo-che. Dga’-ba rdo-rje, Btsan’s translator, had composed his own commentary on the RGV based on Sajjana’s teachings, based on which the third Karmapa Rang-byung rdo-rje (1284–1339) wrote a summary, which Karma Dkon-gzhon in turn composed a commentary on. Cf. Mathes 2008: 33.

G.yag-ston Sangs-rgyas-dpal (1348–1414).¹³⁴ With regard to his study of Blo-ldan shes-rab's treatises, he is said to have studied “many exegetical traditions of the Svātantrika Madhyamaka transmitted by Rngog Lo-tsa-ba”¹³⁵ under Rkong-ston Blo-gros dbang-phyug.

Rong-ston composed exegetical treatises on all five Maitreya texts and, as mentioned above, was particularly renowned for his explanations of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, on which he is reported to have authored seven commentaries.¹³⁶ His commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* was composed at Gsang-phu (the date of composition is not given in the colophon).¹³⁷ In his exposition, he follows Blo-ldan shes-rab's analytical tradition of bringing the teaching on buddha-nature in line with the Madhyamaka doctrine of emptiness. Another important feature of his commentary is, as I will try to show below, his use of Asaṅga's *vyākhyā* which he follows verbatim in many places. However, he persistently reinterprets and to greater part omits all passages and quotations in favour of a *gzhan stong* interpretation of buddha-nature. This comes without surprise considering his education at the monastery of Gsang-phu Ne'u-thog, the famous learning centre established by Rngog Legs-pa'i shes-rab (student of Atīśa and Blo-ldan she-rab's paternal uncle) in 1073. On the other hand, it would be at odds with the exegetical tradition of the meditation school to which his teacher of the treatises attributed to Maitreya, namely Karma Dkon-gzhon, belonged.¹³⁸ As stated above, the analytical school of Rngog followed by Rong-ston and the meditative school of Btsan both go back to Sajjana and are thus complementary according to Shākya mchog-ldan.¹³⁹ However, the differences lying in those two approaches gave rise to doctrinal controversies already prevalent at Rong-ston's time, which eventually lead to the *rang ston* vs. *gzhan stong* debate.

¹³⁴ This is reported by the Fifth Dalai Lama and Zhu-chen Tshul-khrims rin-chen. Cf. Kano 2006: 218.

¹³⁵ Jackson 1988: II

¹³⁶ Cf. Jackson 1988: V.

¹³⁷ Kano (2006: 218) notes that he probably composed this commentary in the 1380s, around the time he was engaged in the study of Rngog's tradition.

¹³⁸ Unfortunately no commentary by this master is available to us today. Mathes notes, however, that his RGV commentary has been supplemented by Karma Phrin-las-pa's (1456–1539) notes, inserted as corrections in the text. This text—also unavailable to us—is mentioned next to Gzhon-nu-dpal's RGV commentary in Kong-sprul's presentation of the meditative school of Btsan. From this, Mathes concludes that looking at Gzhon-nu-dpal's commentary would help understand this tradition of which no written commentary has turned up so far. Cf. Mathes 2008: 33.

¹³⁹ Cf. van der Kuijp 1983: 43.

In order to fathom Rong-ston's final understanding of buddha-nature it would be necessary to read all his major treatises and especially those of later date, including his tantric commentaries (as can be seen with the example of Dol-po-pa as we will see below). Since this task is yet beyond my scope and certainly beyond the scope of this present work, I limit myself to his presentation of buddha-nature as found in his commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. Considering his concise manual on the stages of meditation related to this treatise, however, we can estimate that his view on the subject did not substantially change. In this short text, the short title of which is "Ornament to Maitreya's Intent" (*Mi pham dgongs rgyan*), he summarises the content of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*:

The substantial cause for the attainment of perfect awakening is the defiled *dhātu*. Once the defilements have been purified, undefiled suchness is obtained, this is awakening. From the attainment of awakening, the excellences, such as powers and so forth, are obtained, and one accomplishes others' benefit [by means of] enlightened activities. This teaching subsumes the whole meaning of this [treatise].¹⁴⁰

In the following, I will try to present Rong-ston's interpretation of buddha-nature systematically, at times contrasting his views on the main topics with those of other influential scholars.

3.2.2. The buddha excellences and the *dharmakāya*

To be sure, an important doctrinal claim of Dol-po-pa's brand of *gzhan stong*, namely the presence of the *dharmakāya* and the buddha excellences (*guṇa*) in sentient beings, is explicitly rejected by Rong-ston. For Dol-po-pa, the teachings on the *tathāgatagarbha* represent the crucial bridge between sūtra and tantra. He thus presents his final view of buddha-nature in accord with the *mantrayāna* teachings in general and with the *Kālacakrat Tantra* in particular, rather than with the common

¹⁴⁰ MG: 105,4–6: *rdzogs pa'i byang chub thob pa'i rgyu'i nyer len ni dri bcas kyi khams yin la | dri ma sbyangs nas dri med de bzhin nyid du gyur pa thob pa ni byang chub yin la | byang chub thob pa nas stobs sogs kyi yon tan brnyes te | gzhan don phrin las 'grub ces pa ni | 'dī'i don thams cas bsdu te bstan pa'o ||*

interpretation as found in treatises such as the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.¹⁴¹ In his “extraordinary” presentation (in accord with the tantras), he distinguishes between two sets of buddha bodies (*kāya*-s) and excellences, one pertaining to ultimate truth and the other to the level of concealing truth.¹⁴² While the former are present in all sentient beings’ ultimate nature since beginningless time, the latter are to be generated on the path and are therefore, in the final analysis, not really existent.¹⁴³

Commenting on RGV I.51 (and following Asaṅga’s *vyākhyā*) Rong-ston states that in the impure state adventitious defilements cover the *dhātu*, while in its purified state alone it is endowed with the excellences.¹⁴⁴ He then goes on saying:

Explaining that “naturally endowed” means to be endowed from the beginning is simply wrong. In brief, when the *dhātu* is free from defilements it inherently possesses the excellences, similar to fire which naturally possesses heat. This is called “naturally endowed.”¹⁴⁵

Thus, for Rong-ston, the buddha excellences are not present in sentient beings. They are, however, inseparable from the perfected state and in this way are called “naturally endowed.”

The stanzas RGV I.154–155, so crucial for the *gzhan stong* interpretation of buddha-nature, state that nothing needs to be added to the *dhātu* since, while empty of adventitious defilements, it is not empty of inseparable qualities. Rong-ston’s take on this fundamental passage is the following:

¹⁴¹ Dol-po-pa’s understanding of buddha-nature seems not to be fully revealed in his RGV commentary. Rather, as Mathes (2008: 76) remarks, his ultimate *gzhan stong* view is fully laid out in his *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho* which, in turn, repeatedly quotes the RGV.

¹⁴² To be more precise, Dol-po-pa identifies the fruit of dissociation (i.e. the ten strengths, the four fearlessnesses, and the eighteen exclusive features of a buddha) as the unproduced excellences present in all beings. That which is produced on the level of concealing truth is the fruit of maturation (i.e. the thirty-two major and minor marks). Cf. Mathes 2008: 81–82.

¹⁴³ Cf. Mathes 2008: 78–80.

¹⁴⁴ Note that regarding this crucial point, both commentaries directly contradict the verses of the root text, which do not differentiate between the three states at this point.

¹⁴⁵ LS: 56,5–6: *rang bzhin gyis ldan zhes pa’i don dang po nas ldan par ’chad pa ni nor ba kho na’o || mdor na khams dri ma dang bral ba na me la tsha ba rang chas su ldan pa bzhin du yon tan rang chas su ldan pas na de la rang bzhin gyis ldan zhes bya’o ||*

Also, the meaning of “not empty of unsurpassable qualities” must be explained as “not empty of unsurpassable qualities, [i.e.] the two types of selflessness.” But to maintain that [it means] “not empty of the excellences such as the powers and so forth” is not acceptable.¹⁴⁶

He could not be more explicit. It is in this way that, for Rong-ston, the *dhātu* is related to the philosophical view of emptiness which does not superimpose a self to either the person or phenomena. Since those two types of self do not exist there is nothing to be removed from the *dhātu*, and since, on the other hand, it by nature lacks the two types of self nothing needs to be added to it either.

Regarding the *dharmakāya*, Rong-ston, referring back to Blo-ldan shes-rab’s commentary on RGV I.27–28, remarks that it is the essence of beings only nominally, since their actual essence is the *gotra*, which is the potential to attain the ultimate result. He writes:

[...] while the *dharmakāya* is the actual Tathāgata, [saying it is] “the essence of sentient beings” is nominal, and since it is attainable by sentient beings it is said to be pervasive.¹⁴⁷

Further below in the commentary he again explicitly states that the term *dharmakāya* exclusively applies to the thoroughly purified state alone, while *gotra* pertains only to the impure state of ordinary beings and to the partially purified state of bodhisattvas. Of the three aspects of buddha-nature—*dharmakāya*, suchness, and *gotra*—only suchness actually pervades all states:

The first two (i.e. ordinary beings and bodhisattvas) do not participate in the *dharmakāya*, while the latter (i.e. buddhas) do not participate in the *gotra*. Therefore natural suchness manifests [in all three].

In the commentary [of Asaṅga it is stated that] the pure suchness of all phenomena is that which is taught to be the general characteristic.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ LS: 97,3–4: *bla na med pa'i chos kyis mi stong pa'i don yang | bla na med pa'i chos bdag med gnyis kyis mi stong pa la bshad par bya ba yin gyi | stobs sogs kyi yon tan gyis mi stong pa la 'dod pa ni mi 'thad do ||*

¹⁴⁷ LS: 34,2: *chos sku ni de bzhin gshegs pa dngos yin la | sems can gyi snying po ni btags pa ba yin zhing | sems can rnam kyis thob tu rung ba'i phyir khyab par bshad pa'o ||*

3.2.3. The *dhātu* as a cause

The *dhātu*'s most prominent feature, according to Rong-ston, is its function as a cause for achieving perfect awakening. By taking it as the focal object for the one's meditation practice—which is called “individual correct mental engagement” (*so so rang gi tshul bzhin yin la byas pas*)—it becomes a cause for buddhahood. Since the *dhātu*, as seen above, by nature lacks the two types of self, fully realising its nature is tantamount to achieving the ultimate result. By realising that the person (*gang zag*) is empty of a self the obscuration of defilements (*nyon mongs pa'i sgrib pa*) is removed, and by realising that all phenomena are devoid of self one removes the obscuration of knowledge (*shes bya'i sgrib pa*).¹⁴⁹ Along these lines, Rong-ston, commenting on RGV I.26 which identifies the *dhātu* as the cause for the achievement of the Three Precious Jewels, writes:

In this way, since one is liberated when the *dhātu* is realised, the *dhātu* is the object (*gnas*) to be realised. When it is not realised, however, one will not be liberated. [...] since this *dhātu* is the seed for beyond-worldly qualities the Three Precious Jewels arise based on total purity from defilements [achieved] by means of individual correct mental engagement. Thus it is the cause.¹⁵⁰

In other words, by focussing on the *dhātu* one achieves perfect purity which in turn is the basis for the Three Precious Jewels to arise. This understanding is in line with Rngog's presentation of buddha-nature in terms of a non-affirming negation summarised by Mathes in the following way: “The buddha nature or element, which is repeatedly said to be the emptiness of each mindstream, can become the objective support of inferential cognitions that negate without affirming anything. As such it becomes the substantial cause for the attainment of buddha qualities.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ LS: 52,3–4: *chos sku la 'jug pa snga ma gnyis dang rigs la phyi ma med pas rang bzhin de bzhin nyid kyis 'jug pa ste | 'grel par chos thams cad de bzhin nyid rnam par dag pa spyi'i mtshan nyid bstan pa gang yin pa de la zhes pa'o ||*

¹⁴⁹ Cf. LS: 96, 2–3.

¹⁵⁰ LS: 32,1 & 3–4: *'di ltar kham ni rtogs bya'i gnas te | kham rtogs na grol bar 'gyur la | mi rtogs na mi grol bas so || [...] kham de ni 'jig rten las 'das pa'i chos kyi sa bon yin pas so so rang gi tshul bzhin yin la byas pas dri mas rnam par dag pa la brten nas dkon mchog gsum 'byung bas rgyu'o ||*

¹⁵¹ Mathes 2008: 29.

3.2.4. The *gotra* and the luminous nature of the mind

As seen above, the *gotra*—the third aspect of the *tathāgatagarbha*—exclusively relates to sentient beings in the impure state and to bodhisattvas who have partially purified the *dhātu* from adventitious defilements. The *gotra* has a twofold nature representing: (a) sentient beings’ fundamental potential for perfect awakening called naturally abiding *gotra* (*prakṛtisthagotra*; *rang bzhin gnas rigs*), and (b) its activated form which becomes the cause for the actualisation of buddhahood called the accomplished or generated *gotra* (*samudānītagotra*; *bsgrubs pa [las gyur pa]’i rigs*). Following Rngog Blo-ldan shes-rab, Rong-ston therefore calls the *gotra* the “causal *sugatagarbha*” (*’bras bu’i bde gshegs snying po*).

In his commentary on RGV I.40, Rong-ston defines the natural *gotra* as being composed of both aspects of the mind, namely cognisance (*rig pa*) and emptiness (*stong pa*):

For those who maintain that the naturally abiding *gotra* is the unconditioned *dharmatā* only, an awakening through conditions does not make sense. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain [that the natural *gotra* comprises] the cognitive aspect [of mind] as well. Consequently the cognitive aspect creates the appropriating cause of the buddha-wisdom. Moreover, if it (i.e. the cognitive aspect) were not empty of an own-being it would not change, and on that account it would not make sense to nurture it [through conditions].

For this reason, since the result arises from the mind qualified by being empty of an own-being, it is necessary to maintain the non-differentiation of expanse and cognisance.¹⁵²

In other words, a twofold nature of the *gotra* is necessary for it to be awakened on one hand and for there being room for change (and eventually the actualisation of buddhahood) on the other hand.¹⁵³

¹⁵² LS: 46,6–47,3: *rang bzhin gnas rigs ’dus ma byas chos nyid ’ba’ zhig tu ’dod pa la ni rkyen gyis sad pa’i don med pas rig pa’i cha’ang ’dod dgos so || des na rig pas ni sangs rgyas kyi ye shes kyi nyer len gyi rgyu byed la | de yang rang bzhin gyis mi stong na mi ’gyur bas rkyen gyis gsos btab par mi rung ngo || des na rang bzhin gyis stong pas khyad par du byas pa’i sems las ’bras bu ’byung ba’i phyir | dbyings rig dbyer med pa ’dod dgos so ||*

¹⁵³ The second aspect relates to Nāgārjuna’s teaching in MMK XXIV,14. See also n.77.

The view Rong-ston refutes here is based on Rngog Blo-ldan shes-rab's position which equates the naturally abiding *gotra* with emptiness.¹⁵⁴ It found its followers among the Dge-lugs-pa school and has been formulated, among others, by Rong-ston's younger contemporary Mkhas-grub-rje (1385–1438), a disciple of Tsong-kha-pa (1357–1419):

Voidness (*śūnyatā*) which is void of the *citta* established in reality (*sems bden par grub pas stongs pa*) is what we call the *citta*'s naturally pure (*prakṛtipariśuddha*) *dharmatā*. The *citta*'s naturally pure *dharmatā* in the condition (*avasthā*) which is not free from the adventitious impurities (*āgantukamala*) we call the *tathāgatagarbha*, or the *prakṛtisthagotra* [...].¹⁵⁵

In other words, the naturally abiding *gotra* and *tathāgatagarbha* are synonymous for Mkhas-grub-rje and both refer to the mind's mere emptiness.

From Rong-ston's commentary on two later verses one can infer that he too maintains a non-separation of *gotra* and *tathāgatagarbha*, albeit in a different manner:

(1) Commenting on RGV I.41, he states that it is the Mind-only school which separates the *gotra* and the *tathāgatagarbha* claiming that some beings, although possessed of the *garbha*, lack the cause for liberation.¹⁵⁶ Refuting the idea of the so-called cut-off *gotra*, Rong-stong says that such statements found in the sūtras are intended to convert those opposed to the Mahāyāna teachings and are thus not of definitive meaning.

(2) In a second step he also refutes the assertion of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* belonging to the Mind-only school. In his commentary on I.87b he writes that since in this treatise there is no nirvāṇa apart from buddhahood, it cannot belong to the Cittamātra corpus.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Kano 2006: 157–158.

¹⁵⁵ Quoted after Seyfort Ruegg 1968: 505.

¹⁵⁶ To justify this statement, he calls the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* to witness. Indeed, in the third chapter of this treatise (III.11) we read of some beings lacking the cause for liberation (i.e. the *gotra*), while IX.37 states that all beings possess the [*tathāgata*]*garbha*.

¹⁵⁷ Seyfort Ruegg has shown in various places that Yogācāra treatises do accept the idea of there being three *gotra*-s (or four, if those of uncertain *gotra* are counted separately), as well as a class of beings with a cut-off *gotra*, implying the existence of three definitive vehicles (i.e. śrāvaka-, pratyekabuddha-,

In his commentary on the third chapter of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*, Rong-ston discusses the *Ratnagotravibhāga*’s stance on buddha-nature in a section on the Madhyamaka’s interpretation of the *gotra* and says that in this treatise, the *gotra* equals the *sugatagarbha* of sentient beings’ continuum.¹⁵⁸ He further argues that sometimes the *sugatagarbha* is explained from the point of view of *dharmatā*, while at others it is taught from the point of view of the *dharmin* or “bearer of the quality” (*chos can*),¹⁵⁹ which he explains to be the mind’s cognitive aspect (*sems rig*) and mere luminosity (*gsal tsam*).¹⁶⁰ In other words, the mind’s cognitive aspect or luminosity has emptiness as its nature. One can therefore speak of the non-differentiation of “awareness” and emptiness (*rig stong*) or luminosity and emptiness (*gsal stong*) with regard to the mind’s nature and this is indeed what Rong-ston does in his commentary on RGV I.64.¹⁶¹

One has to note, however, that since the cognitive aspect of mind is contrasted with the unconditioned *dharmatā*, the former should be accepted as conditioned. I could not identify any passage in the course of my research where Rong-ston addresses this point directly. On the other hand, he writes about the *dhātu*:

The nature of the mind which is emptiness, is similar to the element of space [in that it] has neither a substantial cause nor an assisting condition, nor the combination of both. Therefore, it has no arising in the beginning, no disintegration in the end, and no abiding in between. [...] Therefore this *dhātu* is not conditioned by causes and conditions, and is established as emptiness free from elaborations.¹⁶²

and bodhisattva-vehicles) leading to three corresponding definitive results (i.e. arhatship, pratyekabuddhahood, and buddhahood). See for example Seyfort Rugg 1976.

¹⁵⁸ In other words, it is the causal *sugatagarbha* as explained in his commentary on RGV I.28.

¹⁵⁹ In general, the term *chos can* (Skt. *dharmin*) denotes the bearer of a specific characteristic or *dharma*. In particular, it can refer to the subject of a syllogism. In my translation, I usually rendered *chos can* with “subject.” When it is used to mark the subject of a syllogism, however, I kept the Sanskrit term to mark this subject.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. NG: 49,1–4.

¹⁶¹ See also below (3.2.4.).

¹⁶² LS: 60,5–61,1: *sems kyi rang bzhin stong pa nyid ni nam mkha’ ltar nyer len gyi rgyu med cing lhan cig byed pa’i rkyen med de | de gnyis tshogs pa’ang med cing | des dang po skye ba dang mthar ’jig pa dang bar du gnas pa’ang yod pa min no || [...] zhes gsungs pas kyang kham ’di rgyu rkyen gyis ’dus ma byas shing stong nyid spros bral du grub bo ||*

I take this to mean that in this case *dhātu* refers to the natural *tathāgatagarbha*, i.e. unconditioned suchness, while the *gotra* does have a conditioned aspect to it which is the cognitive aspect of mind.

3.2.5. Rong-ston and the *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā*

In many places, Rong-ston follows the *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā* up to the point of giving the same quotations to support specific claims with authoritative scriptures. However, some passages of the root text and the *vyākhyā* are clearly in favour of the *gzhan stong* interpretation of buddha-nature. In those cases, Rong-ston either interprets the meaning of given passages in light of the Madhyamaka view or simply leaves them out. (Of course, it would have been extremely redundant for him to reinterpret every controversial passage once his position has been clearly laid out.)

For instance, on RGV I.50, in the chapter on the all-pervasive nature of the *dhātu*, the *vyākhyā* quotes the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśaparivarta*:

“[...] living beings and the Absolute Body are not different from each other.
[...] These two are non-dual by meaning, and different merely by letters.”¹⁶³

Since this quote goes against Rong-ston’s explanation given on RGV I.28—namely that the *dharmakāya* is the essence of beings only nominally—he chose to ignore it.¹⁶⁴ Rather, he chose to elaborate on the simile of the all-pervasive nature of space given in the root text. After explaining how the naturally pure expanse (i.e. suchness), on account of being pervasive to all *dharmīn*-s on one hand and its undifferentiated nature on the other, is neither a singular phenomenon nor multiple in nature, he goes on to say:

While the example of space pervading all forms [of vessels] should be applied to the naturally pure characteristic pervading all [states], it should not be

¹⁶³ Transl. Takasaki 1966: 234. Cf. Johnston 1950: 41, 15–17.

¹⁶⁴ It has to be noted that a similar point was made already in relation to RGV I.48, where Asaṅga’s commentary also quotes the same scripture. Commenting on this stanza, Rong-ston refers back to Blo-lan shes-rab’s explanation of the *gotra* being the actual essence of sentient beings. Cf. LS 53,6–54,1. Therefore, it would have been redundant to repeat the same arguments.

applied to the total purity from adventitious [defilements] pervading all [states].¹⁶⁵

In other words, natural purity (i.e. suchness) pervades all *dharmīn*-s, but the state of total purification of the adventitious defilements, i.e. the *dharmakāya*, does not pervade ordinary sentient beings or bodhisattvas. This directly contradicts the quotation given in Asaṅga's commentary.

Another example for Rong-ston's procedure is his commentary on RGV I.61–63 which establishes the nature of the mind as luminosity devoid of mental afflictions within the chapter on the *dhātu*'s immutability. On RGV I.62, Rong-ston defines the nature of mind as being emptiness free from elaborations on account of it not being conditioned by causes and conditions. Neither the root text nor the *vyākhyā* mention emptiness at this point. Again, on RGV I.63 which defines the mind's nature as luminosity, Rong-ston comments:

The nature of the mind, the very luminosity-emptiness, is similar to space [in that] it does not change into something else.¹⁶⁶

On the next stanza he then omits the quotation from the *Gaganagañjāparipṛcchā* given in Asaṅga's commentary in support of the root verses, which explains the nature of the mind as luminosity owing to it being untainted by defilements.¹⁶⁷ In this way he adds a crucial detail—namely the nature of the mind to consist of both luminosity *and* emptiness—necessary for his particular non-*gzhan stong* interpretation of buddha-nature. This luminosity (*'od gsal*), as seen above, is also called the cognitive aspect (*rig cha*) of mind which Rong-ston identifies as one part of the naturally abiding *gotra* all beings are said to be endowed with.

3.2.6. Summary

¹⁶⁵ LS: 55,4–5: *nam mkha' gzugs can thams cad la khyab pa'i dpes kyang spyi'i mtshan nyid rang bzhin rnam dag gis thams cad la khyab pa la sbyar bar bya yi | glo bur rnam dag gis thams cad la khyab pa la sbyar bar bya ba ma yin no ||*

¹⁶⁶ LS: 61,2: *sems kyi rang bzhin 'od gsal stong pa nyid gang yin pa de ni nam mkha' bzhin du gzhan du 'gyur ba med de |*

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Takasaki 1966: 239 and Nakamura 1967: 87.

To sum up: Rong-ston's position regarding buddha-nature as expressed in his commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* follows Rngog Blo-ldan shes-rab's analytical tradition in that he brings it in line with the Madhyamaka view of the ultimate. Since this would be the claim of other later Tibetan exegetes (such as Dol-po-pa) as well, one has to be more specific. In his view, the qualities the *tathāgatagarbha* is said to be endowed with are the two types of selflessness, as opposed to the fully fledged strengths and fearlessness of a buddha as Dol-po-pa claims (or their subtle form, which would be Gzhon-nu-dpal's take on this issue). Thus the buddha's *dharmakāya* and sentient beings' *gotra* are mutually exclusive terms.

Following Rngog, Rong-ston lays out three distinct usages of the term "*sugatagarbha*." It can relate to: (a) a resultant aspect which is the actual buddha-nature, called *dharmakāya*; (b) natural suchness (i.e. emptiness) pervading ordinary beings' minds and buddhas alike; or (c) sentient beings' potential to attain buddhahood, i.e. the *gotra*. Unlike Rngog (and his heirs in the Dge-lugs-pa tradition), however, Rong-ston accepts buddha-nature to comprise in its causal aspect—more precisely, as the naturally abiding *gotra*—not only the unconditioned *dharmatā* equivalent to emptiness, but the cognitive aspect of mind as well. One might want to interpret this as the remains of Rong-ston's inheritance from his affiliation with Btsan Ka-bo-che's meditation tradition, which emphasises the luminous aspect of the mind. Being as firmly grounded in scholastic training as he was, however, I would rather think that this was for him a question of proper reasoning and not an attempt to reconcile differing views.

Be that as it may, Rong-ston was certainly one of most influential Tibetan luminaries, to honor the *Ratnagotravibhāga* as a fundamental śāstra by composing a detailed commentary on its meaning.

4. Translation of Rong-ston's commentary on RGV I.27–95[a]

4.1. Notes on the translation

Aside from the Sanskrit edition of the text by Johnston, the most notable academic publications in European languages relating to the root verses of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (including the *vyākhyā*) are Takasaki's English translation based on the Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese, and the publications by de Jong and Schmithausen including numerous annotations and corrections. The translation of the root verses in this present work is primarily based on the Tibetan¹⁶⁸ to agree with Rong-ston's commentary. Whenever I found deviations in meaning from the Sanskrit I noted them in the footnotes, referring back to the above mentioned articles as well as Takasaki's translation. Footnotes also include significant terminological differences with Takasaki.

Regarding Rong ston's commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* entitled *Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos legs par bshad pa*, I have had three editions at my disposal: (the sigla used throughout the translation are given first)

- **G**: *Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos legs par bshad pa. A detailed exegesis of the Uttaratantraśāstra (Ratnagotravibhāga) by Roṅ-ston Śes-bya-kun-rig. Reproduced from a rare manuscript from Jakhar Tshang. Gangtok, 1979: (G). This is a manuscript of 96 folios (192 pages) written in dbu med script.*

- **LS**: *Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos legs par bshad pa bzhugs so. In: Rong ston bka' 'bum: vol. JA. Skye dgu mdo: Gangs ljong rig rgyan gsung rab par khang, 2004. A modern printed edition of 100 folios (199 pages).*

- **K**: *Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos legs par bshad pa bzhugs so. In: Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos rtsal 'grel bzhugs so. Khreng tu'u (Chengdu): Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1995. A book in western format including a consice account of Maitreya's career, the root verses of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, Rong-ston's commentary, and its outline.*

¹⁶⁸ I used Nakamura's edition of this text. Cf. Nakamura 1967.

Since this last publication was the first edition I had access to, my translation was, at the beginning, based on this version. I did, however, manage to acquire the other two editions later, the first from University of Vienna and the second from the International Buddhist Academy in Kathmandu. The latter turned out to offer the most correct reading. As I did not intend to produce a critical edition of this commentary, it was not necessary for me to collate the three editions. Whenever I found the meaning of a passage altered by the readings found in the other editions, the variants got marked and indicated at in a footnote. Since the edition from Skye-dgu-mdo has the best reading of the text and is widely available today (via the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Centre, New York) I found it sensible to base the page references throughout my translation on this edition. A partial facsimile reproduction of this edition is given in appendix III.

4.2. The translation

The extensive explanation of the *dhātu*

[33,3] This first chapter [of the individual explanation of the four last Vajra Points] has five divisions: (1) the explanation that all sentient beings have buddha-nature (*sangs rgyas kyi snying po*), (2) determining the *dhātu* by means of ten categories (*rnam gzhas*), (3) explaining the way the essence (*snying po*; *garbha*) is obscured by defilements [by means of nine analogies], (4) the explanation of the person who realises (*rtogs pa*) this *dhātu*, and (5) the purpose of explaining the *dhātu*.¹⁶⁹

1. The explanation that all sentient beings have buddha-nature (*buddhagarbha*)

Concerning this first chapter:

rdzogs sangs sku ni 'phro phyir dang ||
de bzhin nyid dbyer med phyir dang ||
rigs yod phyir na lus can kun ||
rtag tu sangs rgyas snying po can || (I.28)¹⁷⁰

sangs rgyas ye shes sems can tshogs zhugs phyir ||
rang bzhin dri med de ni gnyis med de ||
sangs rgyas rigs la de 'bras nyer btags phyir ||
'gro kun sangs rgyas snying po can du gsungs || (I.27)

All embodied beings are permanently endowed with the *buddhagarbha*, due to the pervasion¹⁷¹ of the body of the perfect buddha, because suchness is without differentiation, and because the *gotra* is present [in sentient beings].

All migrators are said to possess the *buddhagarbha*, because the buddha's wisdom is present in the multitude of sentient beings, this stainlessness is non-dual by nature, and its fruit has been “metaphorically” applied to the *buddhagotra*.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ The translation covers points (1) and (2) of this chapter.

¹⁷⁰ As Takasaki (1966: 197, n. 2) and Chenique (2001: 99) both point out, the order of this and the following verse in the Sanskrit text are reversed in the Tibetan versions. For further details consult Takasaki. I have kept the order as given in the Tibetan text, since I am following Rong-ston's commentary.

¹⁷¹ Skt. *spharāṇa*. Takasaki (1966: 197) reads: “The Buddha's Body penetrates everywhere, [...]” Edgerton (repr. 1998: 613) gives *suffusion* and *pervasion* as possible translations for *spharāṇa*.

In terms of defiled suchness (*dri bcas de bzhin nyid; samalā tathatā*), what is the meaning of the statement “all sentient beings possess the tathāgatagarbha,” found in many sūtras? ¹⁷³

[All beings possess the *tathāgatagarbha*] because (1) the *dharmakāya* of the perfectly awakened ones pervades, (2) because [sentient beings] are endowed with suchness which is inseparable from the naturally pure aspect of the suchness of the *dharmakāya*, and (3) because the *gotra* of the *dharmakāya*, [i.e.] the potential (*nus pa*) of the *dhātu*, exists.

[34] Because of these three reasons it is said that all embodied beings are permanently endowed with the *buddhagarbha*.

Mahā¹⁷⁴ states that these three [reasons refer] to the resultant, the natural, and the causal *sugatagarbha* (*bde gshegs snying po*) respectively:

The first (i.e. the resultant *sugatagarbha*, *dharmakāya*) is explained [thus]: while the *dharmakāya* is the actual tathāgata, [saying it is] “the essence of sentient beings” is nominal, and since it is attainable by sentient beings it is said to be pervasive.

The second (i.e. the natural *sugatagarbha*, suchness) is explained as actually being the essence of both the tathāgata and sentient beings. From the point of view of the naturally pure suchness alone, it exists in both.

With regard to the third (i.e. the causal *sugatagarbha*, *gotra*), it is explained that since it is the cause of that Tathāgata, it is named after it, but [in this case] it is the actual “essence of sentient beings.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Takasaki (1966: 197) reads: “Its result manifests itself on the Germ of the Buddha; [...]” Takasaki bases this reading on the Chinese version, stating himself that it is difficult to identify it with the Sanskrit reading. See also Seyfort Ruegg 1969: 273 and Mathes 2008: 11.

¹⁷³ For a sūtra reference see TGS 248b2–6, for śāstra see MSA 9.37. See also Takasaki 1966: 31–45.

¹⁷⁴ “Mahā” refers to Rngog Blo-ldan shes-rab, “the great translator from Rngog” who, in addition to a translation of the RGV accomplished in collaboration with the Indian scholar Sajjana, also composed an important commentary on it entitled *Rgyud bla ma'i don bsdu pa*. Cf. Introduction. For an edition and translation of the first chapter of this treatise see Kano 2006.

¹⁷⁵ For Rngog’s explanation of the three aspects of the tathāgatagarbha see Kano 2006: 331–332 (transl. 444–446), and Mathes 2008: 28.

Further commenting on this, [another translation of RGV I.27 reads]:

The buddha’s wisdom abides inside sentient beings’ aggregates. That [wisdom] is by nature non-dual and undefiled. Having given the *buddhagotra* the name of the result, it is said that all embodied beings [are] *buddhagarbhas*.¹⁷⁶

Further, since it is explained in the commentary [by Asaṅga] that “these three are explained below, following the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra”¹⁷⁷, it is said below:

Its own-being is the *dharmakāya*,
suchness, as well as the *gotra*.
These are to be known by means of
three, one, and five examples respectively.¹⁷⁸

[35] This is in connection with the nine examples [used] for the [*tathāgata*]*garbha*.¹⁷⁹

As for “the *dharmakāya* of realisation¹⁸⁰ pervading all sentient beings” in the extensive explanation of the commentary [by Asaṅga], the meaning of “*dharmakāya* of the *tathāgata* suffuses¹⁸¹ all sentient beings” is further [explained] in the commentary [on verse I.147]:

In reference to the meaning of “the *dharmakāya* pervades the element (*kham*s, *dhātu*) of all sentient beings without exception,” [the fact] that these sentient beings are endowed with the *tathāgatagarbha* is explained by means of these three examples, i.e. the body of a buddha (abiding in a putrid lotus), the honey (hidden by the bees), and the husk (enclosing a seed).¹⁸²

¹⁷⁶ *sems can phung po'i nang na sangs rgyas ye shes gnas || de ni rang bzhin gnyis med phyir na dri ma med || sangs rgyas rigs la 'bras bu rnam par brtags nas ni || lus can thams cad sangs rgyas snying por brjod pa yin ||*. This alternative translation is given in Bu-ston’s *mDzes rgyan*, 17b2–3. For a translation of this passage see Seyfort Rugg 1973: 102.

¹⁷⁷ See Johnston 1950: 26,9–10; Nakamura 1967: 49,14; and Takasaki 1966: 198.

¹⁷⁸ RGV I.144

¹⁷⁹ For their analysis from the TGS see Zimmermann 2002: 34–39.

¹⁸⁰ This refers to RGV I.145, where the *dharmakāya* is explained to have two aspects: (1) the perfectly pure aspect, and (2) its natural outflow, i.e. the teaching. The perfectly pure aspect of the *dharmakāya* is the *dharmadhātu*, which is the domain of non-conceptual wisdom - it is the truth to be realised. The *dharmakāya*’s second aspect is the natural outflow of this realisation, namely the teaching given to the various types of disciples according to their needs and capacities. See also Takasaki 1966: 284–285.

¹⁸¹ Skt. *pariṣpharana*; Tib. *'phro ba*.

¹⁸² See Johnston 1950: 70,16–18; Nakamura 1967: 137,20–22; and Takasaki 1966: 286

In addition to this, the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* is cited as a scriptural source:

Just as space is accepted to be all-pervasive at all times,
Likewise this [transmutation] is accepted to be always all-pervasive.
Just as space pervades all forms,
Likewise this [transmutation] also pervades
the multitude of sentient beings.¹⁸³

The meaning of those [lines] is:

“The naturally pure aspect [of the *dharmakāya*] pervades all sentient beings,” means that [it is] the cause for attaining the transmutation of the basis of both the *dharmakāya* of realisation and the teaching [aspect of the] *dharmakāya*.¹⁸⁴

Concerning the meaning of “suchness being without differentiation:”

Because [all phenomena] are empty of a true essential nature (*bden pa'i ngo bo nyid*), [suchness] is explained as being indivisible because it pervades the entire basis and result, as well as everything outside and inside.

Concerning “the *gotra* pervades:”

The potential of the mind which is to be awakened by means of [certain] conditions is the cause for taking hold of the buddha’s wisdom. [36] As it is said:

[...] the undefiled knowledge present in embodied beings is similar to honey
[...]¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ MSA IX.15. The ninth chapter of the MSA gives an analysis of a buddha’s awakening in general, and an explanation of the “transmutation of the basis” (Skt. *āśrayaparivṛtti*, Tib. *gnas gyur*) in particular. This transmutation is achieved when the obscuration of mental afflictions (hindering liberation) and the obscuration to knowledge (hindering omniscience) are completely abandoned. In his MSABh Vasubandhu adds that the transmutation of the basis equates buddhahood, the pervasion of which is explained in verses IX.4 and 6. He further states that the reason for buddhahood’s pervasion of sentient beings in particular, is the “perfection of (a buddha’s) acceptance of all beings as himself.” Cf. Thurman 2004: 74–80.

¹⁸⁴ Seyfort Ruegg has shown how, in the RGV, the “basis” refers to the *dhātu* or defiled suchness, while “transmutation” denotes awakening or undefiled suchness. Cf. Seyfort Ruegg 1969: 422.

¹⁸⁵ RGV I.104. The whole stanza reads : *ji ltar sbrang rtsi srog chags bye ba khrag khrig stong bsgribs sbrang rsti don gnyer mis | sbrang ma de dag bsal te ji ltar 'dod pa bzhin du sbrang rtsi'i bya byed pa |*

Explaining the *dhātu* to be purified and explaining that the function of the *gotra* is to see the faults of suffering and the benefits of happiness, is the function of precisely this [verse?].

Here, [with regard to] the meaning of “the *dharmakāya* pervades,” the ascertainment that enlightened activities pervade is not acceptable because it is in contradiction with the [abovementioned] meaning derived from the scripture of the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*.

Therefore, the naturally pure [aspect of the *dharmakāya*] refers to that which is encompassed by mental continuums only, while suchness pervades all inner and outer [phenomena]. For this reason there is no fault of repetition.

Suchness and the naturally pure aspect [of the *dharmakāya*] exist in the manner of the excellences and that which possesses these excellences. Furthermore, it says in this text: “the excellences are naturally pure.”¹⁸⁶

“The suchness of the buddha is present in all sentient beings without differentiation”¹⁸⁷ means that the suchness of the tathāgata is undifferentiated in all sentient beings. In the commentary [of Asaṅga this is illustrated] by [using] the one example of gold.¹⁸⁸

“Undifferentiated suchness” means that the suchness of the tathāgata is [equal to the suchness of] these sentient beings. As a quotation in support [of this]:

Even though suchness is undifferentiated in all,
having become purified it is the Tathāgata.

Therefore [37] all living beings possess its essence (*garbha*).¹⁸⁹

de bzhin lus can la yod zag pa med pa'i shes pa sbrang ma'i rtsi dang 'dra | nyon mongs sbrang ma dang 'dra de 'joms pa la mkhams pa'i rgyal ba skyes bu bzhin |

¹⁸⁶ RGV I.164. The whole stanza reads: *bcos ma glo bur ba nyid phyir | sems can skyon de yang dag min | yang dag nyes de bdag med pa | yon tan rang bzhin dag pa yin ||*.

This stanza seems to say that sentient beings' faults, i.e. their mental afflictions, are not truly existent because they are fabricated and adventitious, while the selflessness of these faults truly exists. The last quarter of this stanza is, however, more difficult to interpret. The question is to know whether this selflessness is to be equated with the naturally pure excellences (as Rong-ston's commentary, as well as Takasaki's translation of the root text suggest) or not. This is, of course, a dividing point for the *rang stong* and *gzhan stong* interpretations of the RGV. Asaṅga himself does not comment on this stanza.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. MSA IX.37.

¹⁸⁸ See RGV I.108–114 as well as I.148 along with Asaṅga's commentary. See Johnston 1950: 71; Nakamura 1967: 139; and Takasaki 1966: 287–288.

That is to say, in *dharmatā*, [i.e.] the emptiness of own-being, there is no difference [with regard to sentient beings and the Tathāgata].

“The *gotra* which generates the three types of buddha-bodies is present in sentient beings,”¹⁹⁰ means that the *gotra* of the tathāgata is present in all sentient beings.

In the commentary, the remaining five examples—the treasure, the tree, the precious statue, the universal emperor, and the golden sculpture—refer to the existence of the *gotra* which generates the three types of buddha-bodies.

This *dhātu* of the tathāgata is taught to be the essence of all sentient beings.

In the *Mahāyānābhidharmasūtra*¹⁹¹ it is stated:

The *dhātu* which exists since time without beginning
is the basis of all phenomena.

Due to its existence all modes of existence,
as well as the attainment of nirvāṇa come about.¹⁹²

The brief and extensive explanations explained that [sentient beings] possess the [Tathāgata] *garbha* for three given reasons. [This presentation] is most agreeable and undoubtedly his (i.e. Maitreya’s) very intention.

2. Determining the *dhātu* by means of ten categories

This second division has three [subdivisions]: a brief explanation by means of summarizing terms, an extensive exposition, and a summary.

2.1. A brief exposition by means of summarizing terms

ngo bo rgyu ’bras las ldan ’jug pa dang ||

¹⁸⁹ MSA IX.37. Cf. Mathes 2008: 19.

¹⁹⁰ Here, Rong-ston paraphrases the meaning of RGV I.150 along with its commentary by Asaṅga. See Johnston 1950: 72; Nakamura 1967: 137–139; and Takasaki 1966: 290.

¹⁹¹ This text, important for the formation Vijñānavāda, is no longer extant in either Sanskrit, Tibetan, or Chinese. Cf. Takasaki 1966: 290, n. 175.

¹⁹² This verse quoted by Asaṅga in his commentary to RGV I.152. Cf. Johnston 1950: 72,13–14; Nakamura 1967: 141,14–15; and Takasaki 1966: 290–291, n. 175.

gnas skabs de bzhin kun tu 'gro ba'i don ||
rtag tu mi 'gyur yon tan dbyer med ni ||
don dam dbyings kyi dgongs don yin shes bya || (Skt.I.29)

**Essential nature,¹⁹³ cause, result, function, connection,¹⁹⁴
 manifestation, states, all-pervasiveness, unchangeability,
 and inseparable excellences.¹⁹⁵**

**With regard to these [ten points] one should know that
 the intended meaning [is that] of the ultimate expanse (*dbyings*).¹⁹⁶**

The last five issue from [the first five] one by one [respectively].

2.2. Extensive explanation

This second [part] has eight points:

(1) The meaning of essential nature and cause, (2) the meaning of result and function,
 (3) the meaning of connection, (4) the meaning of manifestation, (5) the meaning of
 states, (6) the meaning of all-pervasiveness, (7) the meaning of unchangeability, and
 [38] (8) the meaning of inseparable excellences.

2.2.1. The meaning of “essential nature” (*ngo bo*) and “cause” (*rgyu*)

For this first [presentation] there are two [points]: a common explanation and an
 individual exposition.

2.2.1.1. Common exposition

rin chen nam mkha' chu dag bzhin ||
rtag tu rang bzhin nyon mongs med ||
chos mos lhag pa'i shes rab dang ||
ting 'dzin snying rje las byung ba || (I.30)

**Just as a jewel, space and water are pure,
 [the essential nature of the *dhātu*
 in terms of *dharmakāya*, suchness and *gotra*]**

¹⁹³ The term *svabhāva* has two Tibetan equivalents, namely *ngo bo* and *rang bzhin*. Since the focus of this work is the Tibetan text, I decided to maintain this distinction by rendering the first with “essential nature” and the second with “own-being.”

¹⁹⁴ Takasaki (1966: 199) reads “union.”

¹⁹⁵ Takasaki (1966: 199) associates “immutability” with the qualities, making it “unchangeable qualities”.

¹⁹⁶ This whole verse is included in Rong-ston’s commentary.

**is ever naturally free of mental afflictions.
[They] arise from adherence to the teachings,
superior supreme knowledge,
meditative concentration and compassion.**

The essential nature:

The essential nature of the three points (i.e. the *dhātu* in terms of the *dharmakāya*, suchness and the *gotra*) has both an individual and a general characteristic.

The individual characteristics of the *dharmakāya*, suchness, and the *gotra* are like a jewel, space, and water [respectively]. With regard to the general characteristic, just as the three examples are by nature pure, similarly [these three are] by nature permanently free of mental afflictions.

The cause:

[The *dharmakāya*, suchness, and the *gotra*] arise from the adherence to the teachings of the great vehicle, from superior supreme knowledge, from meditative concentration and from great compassion [respectively].

In what manner are they the causes for the three points?

Because they are the causes of the *dharmakāya* endowed with four excellences, for the purification of the defilements [covering] suchness, for the purification of the defilements [covering] the actualised *gotra*,¹⁹⁷ and for increasing the potential [respectively].

¹⁹⁷ The text reads: *yon tan bzhi ldan gyi chos sku dang | de bzhin nyid kyi dri ma sbyong ba dang | mngon du byed pa'i rigs kyis mi byong ba dang | nus pa 'phel ba'i rgyu yin pas so ||* *mi byong ba* (“not purifying”) does not seem to make sense in this context. Although all other editions of this text available to me have the same reading, it is probably a typing fault. This was further confirmed in a meeting with the Venerable Khenpo Appey Rinpoche in Kathmandu in August 2006. Being careful enough not to give a definite alternative reading of this passage, Appey Rinpoche confirmed the possibility of reading the text as translated above, in which case it has been amended to conform to the foregoing statement (*de bzhin nyid kyi dri ma sbyong ba dang | mngon du byed pa'i rigs kyi dri ma byong ba dang [...]*). Alternatively, omitting the negation particle *mi* one would read *mngon du byed pa'i rigs kyis byong ba dang [...]* (“the purification through the actualised *gotra*”).

2.2.1.2. Individual explanation

This second [part] has two: the explanation of the essential nature and the explanation of the cause.

2.2.1.2.1. Explanation of the “essential nature”

mthu dang gzhan du mi 'gyur dang ||
brlan pa'i ngo bo rang bzhin phyir ||
'di dag nor bu rin chen mkha' ||
chu yi yon tan chos mthun nyid || (I.31)

**Due to the essential nature¹⁹⁸ of power,
not changing into something else,¹⁹⁹ and being moist -
Those [three, i.e. the *dharmakāya*, suchness and the *gotra*]
correspond to the excellences of a wishfulfilling jewel, the sky, and
water.²⁰⁰**

The individual characteristics of the three objects:

The *dharmakāya* of the tathāgata [is like] [39] a wishfulfilling jewel, for it is endowed with the power to accomplish the aspirations [of sentient beings]. Suchness [is said to be like] the sky because it does not change into something else. The *gotra*, due to its nature of being moist, [that is] due to its compassion for sentient beings, has a feature in common with the attributes of water.

The general characteristic of these three objects corresponds to all three examples since all are pure by nature. From the explanation of the general and individual corresponding features in the root [text], it is evident [that they] mutually supplement [each other].

2.2.1.2.2. Explanation of the “cause” (*rgyu*)

This second [point] has three [subdivisions]: (1) that which is to be abandoned, (2) the antidote, and (3) the temporary result.

¹⁹⁸ Tib. *ngo bo rang bzhin*; Skt. *svabhāvataḥ*

¹⁹⁹ Tib. *gzhan du mi 'gyur*; Skt. *ananyathābhāva*. Takasaki (1966: 200): “identity.”

²⁰⁰ Cf. Mathes 2008: 395

2.2.1.2.2.1. That which is to be abandoned (*spang bya*)

chos la khong khro bdag lta dang ||
'khor ba'i sdug bsngal gyis 'jigs dang ||
sems can don la ltos med nyid ||
'dod chen mu stegs nyan thos dang || (I.32)

rang 'byung rnams kyi sgrib rnam bzhi ||
dag rgyu lhag par mos pa²⁰¹ la ||
sogs pa'i chos ni rnam bzhi nyid || (I.33)

(1) Enmity towards the Dharma,
(2) a view [asserting the existence of a] self,
(3) being frightened by the sufferings of saṃsāra, and
(4) being without concern for the purpose of sentient beings:
These are the four types of obscuration of
[those afflicted by] great desire,²⁰²
tīrthikas, śrāvakas, and pratyeka[buddhas].
The causes for [their] purification are the four aspects
[mentioned above, namely:]
exceptional adherence [to the Dharma] and so forth.

In general, there are three types of sentient beings: those who desire existence (*srid pa*), those who desire to be free from existence, and those who desire neither of these two.²⁰³

With regard to the [obscurations] to be abandoned present in the [mental] continuum of these supports:

Those who are hostile to Mahāyāna teachings [are obscured by] the obscuration of great desire, which is the desire for existence itself.

Those who view a self in phenomena, although they wish to be free from existence, engage in [a path which] does not have the [correct] means. [Thus they are obscured by] the obscuration of the tīrthikas.

²⁰¹ Nakamura (1967: 53,3): *lhag par smos pa*.

²⁰² Tib. *'dod chen* ; Skt. *icchantika*

²⁰³ While Rong-ston does not really elaborate on these three types, Asaṅga gives a detailed description of them in RGVV I.33. Interestingly, Rong-ston identifies those three types of beings as the supports for the four types of obscurations to be abandoned (*rten de dag gi rgyud la yod pa'i spang bya la [...]*). Asaṅga, on the other hand, identifies “those who desire neither existence, nor the release from it” as those of the highest faculty, firmly rooted in the Mahāyāna. In other words, the bodhisattvas who remain fixed neither in saṃsāra, nor in nirvāṇa. See Johnston 1950: 28,14–18; Nakamura 1967: 55,1–6; and Takasaki 1966: 204. See also this commentary on RGV I.66–72.

Those who, with regard to themselves alone, are frightened by the sufferings of cyclic existence and those who are without concern for the purpose of sentient beings, gradually enter the [correct] means [for those who] desire freedom from existence. [These beings are obscured by] the obscurations of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas [respectively].

[40] These are the four types [of obscurations which are to be abandoned].

2.2.1.2.2.2. The antidote (*gnyen po*)

theg mchog la mos sa bon shes rab ni ||
sangs rgyas chos bskyed ma dang bsam gtan gyi ||
bde ba'i mngal gnas snying rje'i ma ma can ||
gang yin de dag thub pa'i rjes skyes sras || (I.34)

Whoever is endowed with

- (1) the seed of adherence to the supreme vehicle,**
- (2) supreme discriminating knowledge, the mother giving birth to the qualities of a buddha,²⁰⁴**
- (3) the blissful womb of meditative concentration, and**
- (4) the nurse, which is compassion -**
those are heirs,²⁰⁵ born in the succession of the Sage.²⁰⁶

The causes for attaining the *dharmakāya* of utmost purity endowed with four qualities (i.e. great purity, great self, great happiness, great permanence) are:

- 1) exceptional adherence to the Mahāyāna of the bodhisattvas' lineage, who have no desire for either saṃsāra or nirvāṇa;
- 2) the *pāramitā* of supreme knowledge which realises the non-existence of a self;
- 3) the meditative concentration of 'space treasure'²⁰⁷; and
- 4) the cultivation of great compassion.

²⁰⁴ Takasaki (1966: 206) "On account of the origination of the Buddha's Doctrine [...]." Schmithausen (1971: 142) corrects this mistaken reading.

²⁰⁵ Lit. "sons" (Skt. *putra*; Tib. *sras*)

²⁰⁶ Takasaki (1966: 206, n. 62) takes this verse to be a quotation from an older source. As this verse indeed hints at the buddha qualities' production, Schmithausen (1971: 142–143) agrees that this assumption is not unfounded.

²⁰⁷ This particular type of meditative concentration enables the bodhisattva to extract from space, for the benefit of beings, whatever resources are necessary. In his commentary on the MSA, Thogs-med bzang-po writes (RP: 63b3): *nam mkha' mdzod kyi ting nge 'dzin thob nas sems can rnams la yo byad rin che ba dpag tu med pa'i char 'bebs pa yo byad la dbang [...]*. This control over resources is included in the ten types of controlling powers (*vaśitā*) the bodhisattva attains on the eighth stage (*bhūmi*) of the path. See Thurman 2004: 58, n. 11.

In this regard, through [the qualities of] adherence and so forth, [pertaining] to the bodhisattva's mental continuum, the four obscurations of his own mental continuum, which are similar to those present in the [abovementioned] four types of persons, are abandoned. Although [the bodhisattva] does not actually abandon the obscurations of the mental continuum of the four [types of persons mentioned earlier, such as] those with great desire and so forth, since these obscurations are predominant in the persons with strong desire etc., it is explained in that way.

2.2.1.2.2.3. The temporary result

From the four causes of (1) the seed of the father king, (2) his pure queen, (3) her faultless womb, and (4) a special nurse that brings him up, there emerges a son with the capacity to become the king's successor.

In the same way, [one] who is endowed with: (1) the seed of buddhahood, which adheres to the supreme vehicle, (2) supreme knowledge realising the non-existence of a self, the mother which gives birth to the qualities of a buddha, (3) dwelling in the blissful womb of meditative concentrations such as the "space treasure" etc., and (4) the cause which develops the realisation, the nurse which is compassion, [such a person] is an heir born in the footsteps of the Sage and becomes capable of being his successor.²⁰⁸

2.2.2. The meaning of "result" (*'bras bu*) and "function" (*las*)

For this second point, [41] the meaning of "result" and "function," there are two parts.

2.2.2.1. Common exposition

gtsang bdag bde dang rtag nyid kyi ||
yon tan pha rol phyin pa 'bras ||
sdug bsngal yid 'byung zhi thob par ||
'dun dang smon pa'i las can no || (I.35)

**The result is the perfection of the excellences of
purity, self,²⁰⁹ happiness, and permanence.
The function is [feeling] discontent**

²⁰⁸ LS (40,6) and K (87,14) both read *gdung 'tshob*. G (41,3) has *gdung 'tsho ba*.

²⁰⁹ Tib. *bdag*; Skt. *ātman*. Takasaki (1966: 207) "unity."

**with suffering and unsatisfactoriness,²¹⁰
and the longing and aspiration to obtain peace.²¹¹**

The result:

The body of the Tathāgata²¹²—[i.e. having reached] the perfection of the four excellences of purity, self, happiness, and permanence—is the result of the four [abovementioned causes], [namely:] adherence to the Dharma and so forth.

If it is asked how these four results are the results of the three points (*dharmakāya*, suchness, and *gotra*):²¹³

From the *dharmakāya* of previous buddhas stems the teaching of Dharma, from that stems adherence to the Dharma, and from that arises purity. Therefore purity is the cause and the result of the *dharmakāya*. From supreme knowledge having suchness as its object, arises the true self. Therefore it is presented as the result of suchness, the object. The result of the *gotra*: since the two perfections of true happiness and true permanence arise from meditative concentration and compassion, they are the result of the *gotra*.

The function:

To possess the function of feeling discontented with the suffering and unsatisfactoriness of saṃsāra and the longing desire and the aspiration to attain the pacification of suffering and unsatisfactoriness, i.e. nirvāṇa. [This] is the function of the actual awakening of the *gotra*.

Furthermore, the awakening of the *gotra* manifests because of the predominant condition of the *dharmakāya* [of the buddhas] and by the power of being endowed with the naturally pure *dhātu*. For these reasons it is presented as the function of these (i.e. *dharmakāya* and the existence of the *dhātu*) as well.

²¹⁰ When the general condition of saṃsāra is explained, I decided to use “suffering and unsatisfactoriness” to translate *sdug bsngal*, since the meaning would not be totally covered by using one term alone. However, when later in the text obvious sufferings are mentioned, such as those of aging, sickness, and death, and the like, I use “suffering” alone.

²¹¹ See also Mathes 2008: 403.

²¹² *de bzhin gshegs pa'i sku* is here synonymous to *chos sku*.

²¹³ Here, Rong-ston follows Rngog's exposition very closely. Cf. Rngog's *don bsdus pa* (Kano 2006: 332–333; transl. 447)

2.2.2.2. Individual explanation

For the individual explanation, there is the explanation of the “result” and the explanation of the “function.”

2.2.2.2.1. Explanation of the “result”

This first part has two subdivisions: [42] a brief exposition and a detailed explanation.

2.2.2.2.1.1. Brief exposition

*'di dag 'bras ni mdor bsdu na ||
chos kyi sku la phyin ci log ||
rnam pa bzhi las bzlog pa yi ||
gnyen pos rab tu phye ba nyid ||* (I. 36)

**In brief, the result of these [qualities]
is divided by means of the antidotes
which counteract the four types of mistaken [views]
with regard to the dharmakāya.²¹⁴**

The four mistaken [views] and their opposites, the four unmistaken [views]:

Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas regard the aggregates as having four [attributes, namely] impurity and so forth.

The antidote to this is that the *dharmakāya* is endowed with the four [attributes of] purity and so forth. While only the buddha himself possesses these four excellences of purity etc., others do not. In this way, arhats, pratyekabuddhas, and even bodhisattvas who have obtained powers²¹⁵ have the four characteristics of condition, cause, coming into being, and disintegrating, which are hindrances for the attainment of the excellences of the Tathāgata's *dharmakāya*.

²¹⁴ Takasaki (1966: 208) reads: “Because of the change of value in the Absolute Body, the result of these [4 causes] are, in short, [the Purity, etc.] represented as the Antidote to the four kinds of delusions.” See also Mathes 2008: 403.

²¹⁵ Tib. *dbang thob pa'i byang sems*. According to Thurman (2004: 58), the powers referred to here are the ten masteries, or controlling powers, taught in the DBhS in the context of the eighth bodhisattva stage. In this case “bodhisattvas who have obtained powers” would refer to those abiding on the eighth stage onward. Basing himself supposedly on the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, Takasaki (1966: 214, n. 109) remarks that this expression is an epithet for bodhisattvas in general. However, in his *Studies in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra* Suzuki confirms the attainment of what he calls “the tenfold Self-mastery” by bodhisattvas on the eighth stage. See Suzuki 1999: 210. (De Jong (1968: 44) remarks that the quote Takasaki bases his assumption on actually comes from the *Lalitavistara*.)

Of these, the “condition” is the ground of the imprints of ignorance, and is similar to ignorance. The “cause” is uncontaminated karma²¹⁶ caused by that condition, and is similar to formative factors (*'du byed; saṃskāra*). The “coming into being” is the coming into being of the three bodies of mental nature²¹⁷ which have the two [abovementioned] as condition and cause, and it is similar to the three realms of existence which have acquisition as their condition. The “disintegration” is the completely inconceivable death and transference conditioned by those bodies, and is similar to aging and death conditioned by birth.²¹⁸

Arhats and so forth [i.e. pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas], all three do not obtain [true] purity, because there is no abandonment [of the hindrances] due to the imprints of ignorance. Conditioned by that ground the true self [is not obtained], since they have subtle application of the conceptual elaborations of [grasping] signs. [43] In dependance on uncontaminated karma caused by these subtle signs, the aggregates of mental nature arise. Therefore the [true] happiness of cessation [is not attained]. And as long as these [aggregates] do not cease, [they] are not free from inconceivable death and transference. For this reason, [true] permanence is not obtained.

In the *Dpal phreng [gi mdo]* (*Skt. Śrīmāladeviśiṃhanādasūtra*) it is stated:

Bhagavan, just as for example the three realms of existence arise, produced through the cause of contaminated karma and conditioned by grasping, likewise Bhagavan, the three bodies of mental nature of arhats, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas who have attained powers arise, produced through the cause of uncontaminated karma and conditioned by the ground of the imprints of ignorance.^{219 220}

²¹⁶ LS (42,4) and G (42,6) both read *zag med kyi las*. K (89,11) has *bag med kyi las*.

²¹⁷ The “three bodies of mental nature” refer to the mental bodies of śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas. The detailed explanation follows below.

²¹⁸ This passage follows closely Asaṅga’s RGVV I.3 where the steps of the process which hinder the attainment of the *dharmakāya* are related to specific links of the twelve links of dependent arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*) which binds beings to saṃsāra. See Johnston 1950: 32,14–33,3; Nakamura 1967: 63,8–17; and Takasaki 1966: 214–216.

²¹⁹ ŚMS 265b7–266a1, quoted in RGVV I.36. See Johnston 1950: 33,15–34,4; Nakamura 1967: 65,10–15; and Takasaki 1966: 217.

²²⁰ The passage I found in D is identical, except for the following terminological differences:

And so forth, [this] appears extensively.

In this regard, in the auto-commentary of the [Dbu ma la] 'jug pa,²²¹ in the Snying po mchog,²²² as well as in others places, the ground of the imprints of ignorance is explained as being the hindrance for completely cutting through knowable objects.²²³ The essential nature [of the ground of the imprints of ignorance] is the imprints of the mental afflictions. Since they act as the basis for the obscurations, they are explained to be the “ground.”

The conceptual elaborations of [grasping at] signs is the subtle clinging which is the activator of uncontaminated karma.

In the *Blo gros rgya mtshos zhus pa'i mdo* (*Sāgaramatipariṣcchāsūtra*) it is stated that the virtuous roots of those skilled in means (i.e. bodhisattvas) are labelled “mental afflictions.”²²⁴ Explaining [this] to be the subtle clinging to phenomena has the same meaning.

In the 'Bum tikā²²⁵ [44] it is stated:

That which is explained as the cooperative condition²²⁶ of uncontaminated karma, this is precisely the ground of the imprints of ignorance.²²⁷ The karma

LS: *mi rig pa'i bag chags kyi sa*, D: *mi rig pa'i gnas kyi sa*; LS: *zag ma med pa'i las*, D: *zag pa ma mchis pa'i las*; LS: *yig kyi rang bzhin gyi lus*, D: *yid kyi lus*. Especially the first of these terminological differences is noteworthy. According to Seyfort Rungg (1969: 182), the term *mi rig pa'i gnas kyi sa* (*avidyāvāsabhūmi*), used in the ŚMS refers to a plane of existence (consisting of those subtle imprints) to which arhats and pratyekabuddhas would “retreat”, instead of reaching the definitive release of nirvāṇa. The LAS, on the other hand, uses *mi rig pa'i bag chags kyi sa* (*avidyāvāsanabhūmi*), which is the term Rong-ston uses in his quotation from the ŚMS. He therefore either had an edition different from Derge, Peking, or Narthang (I checked all three), or else he quoted from memory and switched terminology. I would exclude the possibility of him deliberately altering the wording from the printed or written Kangyur out of personal preference.

²²¹ *Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya* by Candrakīrti, D 3862.

²²² I was unable to identify this text.

²²³ This means it is a hindrance for gaining omniscience.

²²⁴ Here, Rong-ston refers to a quote from the *Sāgaramatipariṣcchāsūtra* found in Asaṅga's commentary. For this quote see Johnston 1950: 47,7–16; Nakamura 1967: 91,11–93,3; and Takasaki 1966: 245–246.

²²⁵ This probably refers either to the *shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa 'bum pa rgya cher 'grel ba* (D 3807), or to the *shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa 'bum pa dang | khri brgyad stong pa'i rgya cher bshad pa* (D 3808), both by Daṃṣṭrāsena. Rong-ston himself composed a commentary on the *Śatasahasrika-Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* entitled *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa stong phrag brgya pa'i rnam 'grel*, called 'Bum tikā. However, it seems unlikely that he would quote himself here.

²²⁶ *lhan cig byed rkyen*

of the noble bodhisattvas’ uncontaminated intention which possesses the condition of the imprints of ignorance is uncontaminated karma.

The body of mental nature is the result produced through the cause and condition taught above, appearing as an unobstructed body, which is similar to mind.

The inconceivable death and transference is the intentional discarding and taking up of the body of mental nature.

2.2.2.2.1.2. Extensive explanation

*de ni rang bzhin dag phyir dang ||
bag chags spangs phyir gtsang ba yin ||
bdag dang bdag med spros pa dag ||
nye bar zhi ba dam pa'i bdag || (I.37)*

*yid kyi rang bzhin phung po dang ||
de rgyu log phyir bde ba nyid ||
'khor ba dang ni mya ngan 'das ||
mnyam pa nyid du rtogs phyir rtag || (I.38)*

**That [*dharmakāya*] is pure due to
its natural purity and because of having discarded the imprints.
It is the supreme self²²⁸ because
conceptual elaborations in terms of self and
non-self are thoroughly pacified.²²⁹**

**It is happiness because
the aggregates of mental nature and their causes are reversed.
It is permanence because
saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are realised as equal.**

The general characteristic of the Tathāgata’s *dharmakāya* is its naturally purity. Its special characteristic is its freedom of adventitious defilements along with their imprints. For these [two] reasons it is the “perfection of true purity.” In terms of its general characteristic, it is empty of an essential nature (*ngo bo*) of defilements. This is a [characteristic] it has in common with every mind which is pure and impure due to

²²⁷ K (90,14–15) reads *ma rig bag chags kyi sa de nyid do ||*. LS (44,1) and G (44,3) both have *ma rig bag chags kyi de nyid do ||*.

²²⁸ Tib. *dam pa'i bdag*; Skt. *paramāṭma*. Takasaki (1966: 218): “highest Unity.”

²²⁹ On this verse see also Schmithausen 1971: 143 and Seyfort Ruegg 1969: 369.

defilements.²³⁰ While this is the case, with regard to the special characteristic, it is [also] free of adventitious defilements. This is a special feature common only to a mind free from contamination.

Due to the thorough pacification of the entirety of conceptual elaborations concerning the two [types of self]²³¹, the self of person imputed by the *tīrthikas* and the self of phenomena imputed by the *śrāvakas*, it is the “perfection of true self.”²³² In this regard, to the non-existence of a self, [the term] “self” has been given, which is similar to [the expression] [45] “abiding in the manner of non-abiding.”²³³

Due to the abandonment and absence of the aggregates of mental nature and their causes, the ground of the imprints of ignorance, and erroneous uncontaminated karma, it is the “perfection of true happiness” itself.

Not conceptualising *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* to be accepted and rejected separately, due to realising [them] as equality, it is the “perfection of true permanence.”

bdag sred ma lus shes rab kyis bcad de ||
sems can sred phyir brtse ldan zhi thob min ||
de ltar blo brtse byang chub thabs brten nas ||
'phags pa 'khor ba'am mya ngan 'da' mi 'gyur || (I.39)

[Though] having completely severed all attachment to a self

²³⁰ LS (44,4–5) and G (45,1) read: *dri mas dag ma dag gi sems thams cad* [...]. K (91,5) has: *dri mas ma dag pa'i sems thams cad* [...].

²³¹ Nakamura's (1967: 67,4) edition of the corresponding passage from the RGVV reads: *rgyu rnam pa gnyis kyi bdag gis pha rol tu phyin par rig par bya ste* ||. Based on the Sanskrit (Johnston 1950: 34,13–14: *dvābhyāṃ kāraṇābhyāṃ ātmapāramitā veditavyā* ||), I think that Nakamura, against the Derge variants, did not edit this passage correctly. However, the edition of the RGVV available to Rong-ston probably had exactly this reading. Since there is a mention of “two types of self” according to this reading (*rnam pa gnyis kyi bdag*), Rong-ston identifies them as shown above. Asaṅga in his commentary, however, mentions the two reasons (*rgyu rnam pa gnyis kyis*) for which the *dharmakāya* is to be known as the perfection of self (*bdag gyi pha rol tu phyin par rig par bya*), namely the removal of the concepts of self and no-self. See also next footnote.

²³² Here, Rong-ston deviates from the root text as well as Asaṅga's commentary which identify the two hindrances to the attainment of the true self as (1) the *tīrthikas*' concept of a self, and (2) the *śrāvakas*' concept of non-self. (Nakamura 1967: 67,4–6: [...] *mu stegs kyi mtha' dang bral bas bdag gi spros pa dang bral ba'i phyir dang / nyan thos kyi mtha' spangs pas bdag med pa'i spros pa dang bral ba'i phyir ro* ||. Note that Nakamura reads: *bdag gis spros pa*.) He precisely follows Rngog's interpretation of the verse. Cf. Kano 2006: 335 (transl. 451).

²³³ This comment, referring to bodhisattva's way of abiding in the manner of abiding neither in the extreme of *saṃsāra*, nor in that of *nirvāṇa* (cf. RGVV I.39), comes from RGVV I.36: *bdag med pa nyid bdag tu byas pa ste / ji skad tu / mi gnas pa'i tshul gyis gnas pa zhes gsungs pa lta bu'o* ||. See Nakamura 1967: 61,3–4; Johnston 1950: 31,16; and Takasaki 1966: 211. In my opinion, Takasaki's translation of this passage lacks in clarity at this regard.

by means of supreme knowledge,
those endowed with affectionate love do not attain peace
out of the strong desire to [help] sentient beings.

Thus, having relied on intelligence and affectionate love,
the means [for attaining] awakening,
the noble ones remain neither in saṃsāra, nor in nirvāṇa.

The cause for realising saṃsāra and nirvāṇa as equal is twofold: means and supreme knowledge. These two are the root for the unsurpassable awakening.

If it is asked in what ways they are the root:

It is so because the supreme knowledge which realises the non-existence of a self has severed all attachment to a self without remainder. In this way, the intellect or the supreme knowledge becomes the means for [attaining] unsurpassable awakening. The *dharmin*, the noble bodhisattva, does not dwell in saṃsāra because he has firmly established that supreme knowledge which realises the non-existence of a self in [his] mental continuum.

That bodhisattva endowed with affectionate love does not attain nirvāṇa, [i.e.] the peace which would interrupt the benefit of others, out of strong desire. [That is to say] he does not give up sentient beings out of compassion. In this way, affectionate love becomes the means for [attaining] unsurpassable awakening. This noble bodhisattva will not abide in nirvāṇa because he has firmly established great affectionate love and compassion in [his] mental continuum.

2.2.2.2.2. Explanation of the meaning of “function”

[46] The explanation of the meaning of “function” has two [subdivisions]: Establishing the existence of the function of the *gotra* by means of [excluding] the opposite (*ldog pa*), and establishing [it] by means of positive concomitance and excluding [the] opposite (*rjes su 'gro ldog gnyis*).

2.2.2.2.2.1. Establishing the existence of the function of the *gotra* by means of [excluding] the opposite (*ldog pa*)

gal te sangs rgyas kham med na ||
sdug la'ang skyo bar mi 'gyur zhing ||
mya ngan 'das la 'dod pa dang ||

don gnyer 'pa'ang med par 'gyur || (I.40)

**If the *buddhadhātu* were not existent,
There would be no aversion to suffering,
And [beings] would neither desire a state beyond sorrow (*nirvāṇa*),
Nor [develop] the effort and the aspiration towards it.**

For an eternalist, if the *buddhadhātu* were not present in sentient beings, nobody would ever feel aversion to the suffering and unsatisfactoriness of *saṃsāra* because [its] awakening would be impossible. Also, the desire which is the mind's inclination to attain *nirvāṇa*, exerting effort in the search for the means to attain [it], as well as the aspiration thinking: “May I attain [it]!” would not come about.

This [verse deals with] the resultant aspect [of the presence of the *dhātu*]: aversion²³⁴ to the suffering and unsatisfactoriness of *saṃsāra*, and desire for *nirvāṇa*.

With regard to the following [verse, i.e. I.41]:

The cause for the aversion [towards *saṃsāra*] is to see the fault of the suffering and unsatisfactoriness of *saṃsāra*, and the cause for the desire [to attain *nirvāṇa*] is to see the benefits of the happiness of *nirvāṇa*. This is the distinction of the function of the previous and the following *ślokas* (I.40–41). These [two] are actually also the function of the accomplished *gotra*.²³⁵

Furthermore, the naturally abiding *gotra*²³⁶ arises from being nourished²³⁷ by the [necessary] conditions. In this regard one should not be confused.

Hence [Asanga states] in the commentary:

The *gotra* of purity, which is the *buddhadhātu*, calls forth the twofold function for sentient beings, even when they are fixed in falsehood.^{238 239}

²³⁴ LS (46,3) and K (92,17) both read *skyo ba*. G (46,7) has *skyob* (“to protect”).

²³⁵ *bsgrubs pa'i rigs* (Skt. *samudānītagotra*). This is the second aspect of the *gotra*, the first being

²³⁶ LS (46,5) and G (47,1) both read *rang bzhin du gnas pa'i rigs*. K (93,3) has *rang bzhin gyis gnas pa'i rigs*.

²³⁷ LS (46,5) and K (93,4) both read *gsos pa*. G (47,1) has *gsol ba*, “to request, to wear, to offer.”

²³⁸ Tib. *log pa nyid du nges pa'i sems can*; Skt. *mīthyātvanīyata*. The technical translation is taken from Edgerton 1953 (vol. 2): 432.

²³⁹ Johnston 1950: 36,2–3; Nakamura 1967: 69,13–14; Takasaki 1966: 221

For those who maintain that the naturally abiding *gotra* is the unconditioned *dharmatā* only, [47] an awakening through conditions does not make sense. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain [that the natural *gotra* comprises] the cognitive aspect (*rig pa'i cha*) [of mind] as well. Consequently the cognitive aspect creates the appropriating cause of the buddha-wisdom. Moreover, if it (i.e. the cognitive aspect) were not empty of an own-being it would not change, and on that account it would not make sense to nurture it [through conditions].

For this reason, since the result²⁴⁰ arises from the mind qualified by being empty of an own-being, it is necessary to maintain the non-differentiation of expanse and cognisance (*dbyings rig dbyer med*).

2.2.2.2.2. Establishing [it] by means of positive concomitance and [excluding] its opposite (*rjes su 'gro ldog gnyis*)

srid dang mya ngan 'das la de'i ||
*sdug bde'i*²⁴¹ *skyon yon mthong ba 'di ||*
rigs yod las yin gang phyir de ||
rigs med dag la med phyir ro || (I.41)

**Seeing the faults of the suffering of [cyclic] existence
 and the benefits of nirvāṇa's happiness
 stems from the existence of the *gotra*.**

Why? Because it is not present in those without *gotra*.²⁴²

Relying on a holy being, living in a favourable country, having performed virtues in the past, and making pure aspirations: a person endowed with [these] four wheels sees the faults of the suffering and unsatisfactoriness of this existence, and the benefits of the happiness of nirvāṇa. This [seeing results] from the existence of a *gotra* and its awakening. But, it is not the case that there are no causes and conditions for the awakening of the *gotra*. Why? Because, if [for] you the *gotra* exists even without causes and conditions for its awakening, [it follows that it] exists before its awakening

²⁴⁰ The result being the *dharmakāya* endowed with the two purities.

²⁴¹ Nakamura (1967: 69,20): *sdug bde*

²⁴² This statement contradicts RGV I.28, where we read that all beings possess the *buddhagarbha* due to three reasons, the *gotra* being present (in them) being one of them. This apparent contradiction is addressed and resolved by Rong-ston, following Asaṅga, in the commentary below.

even in those attached to falsehood, who possess the *gotra* of not passing beyond sorrow (i.e. who will not attain nirvāṇa). But it doesn't.

By being connected to the four wheels (i.e. relying on a holy being, etc.), even for those attached to falsehood the functions [of the *gotra*] will arise from the time of the *gotra*'s awakening, having produced adherence to the ground of any of the three vehicles.

In the *Ye shes snang ba rgyan gyi* [48] *mdo* (*Jñānālokālaṃkārasūtra*) it is stated:

After that, the light of wisdom of the Tathāgata's sun will strike even the bodies of those sentient beings who have become constantly fixed in falsehood. This will benefit them and when the cause of future [happiness] has correctly arisen, [it will cause] the virtuous qualities to thoroughly increase.²⁴³

In regard to "after that" mentioned [above]: The sun, for example, having first gradually illuminated the high mountains and so forth, later on also illuminates the lower regions of this world. Likewise [the Tathāgata's sun] will benefit in the first instance those endowed with a *gotra* fixed in [one of] the three vehicles, and then those endowed with an uncertain *gotra*.²⁴⁴ After that, it accomplishes the benefit of sentient beings attached to falsehood too.

However, one may wonder why it is stated in the *Myang 'das chen po* [i] *mdo* (*Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*) that those constantly attached to falsehood possess the quality of not passing beyond sorrow at all. This is [a statement] of provisional meaning [given] with a [certain] intention.

The purpose is to utterly terrify those who are hostile towards the Mahāyāna by saying [they] will never be liberated. Having [achieved that], the basic intention [is that] of

²⁴³ This quote, attributed by the Chinese tradition to the *Avataṃsakasūtra*, is taken from the RGVV. See Johnston 1950: 36–37; Nakamura 1967: 71,6–8; and Takasaki 1966: 223, n. 177. The passage from the JAA 285b6–7: *de'i og tu de bzhin gshegs pa nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor hyi ye shes kyi 'od zer dag than sems can log pa nyid du nges pa'i sems kyi rgyud dang ldan pa rnams kyi lus la 'bab par 'gyur zhing/ de dag la ma 'ong pa'i rgyu yang dag par skyed pas phan 'dogs pa dang/ dge ba'i chos rnams kyis yang dag par 'phel bar yang byed do* ||.

²⁴⁴ LS (48,4) and K (94,13) both have [...] *dang ma nges pa'i rigs can* [...]. This passage is omitted in G.

reversing [their path]. It is stated with the [hidden] intention of another time (i.e. long time), since they will not [be liberated] for a long time.²⁴⁵

With regard to the refutation of the explicit meaning: because of the existence of the naturally, totally pure [aspect of the] *gotra*, [49] it is not right [to say that] those attached to falsehood never become purified.

Why? Considering the fact that all sentient beings without distinction have the aptitude for complete purity the Bhagavān said:

Although it [i.e. *saṃsāra*] is without beginning, it has an end.
[That which is] naturally pure and
has the quality of being permanent,
is externally obscured by a cover without beginning
and cannot be seen,
just as a golden statue that is covered.²⁴⁶

In this way, the [assertion] of sentient beings with a cut-off *gotra* is negated by means of scripture and reasoning. With regard to the naturally abiding Mahāyāna-*gotra*, this is called the *dharmadhātu* of the mind associated with defilements. In the *Mngon rtogs rgyan* (*Abhisamayālaṅkāra*) it is said:

[...] the foundation of accomplishment,
[which has] the nature of the *dharmadhātu* [...].²⁴⁷

Therefore there cannot be beings with a cut-off *gotra*.

In the [*Theg pa chen po*] *mdo sde'i rgyan* (*Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*) the *sugatagarbha* and the *gotra* are taught as being separate. While the *sugatagarbha* is explained to be present in all sentient beings, beings with a cut-off *gotra* are [also] taught to exist.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ Again, Rong-ston follows Asaṅga's RGJV very closely here. See Johnston 1950: 37,8–9; Nakamura 1967: 71,14–15; and Takasaki 1966: 224. According to Takasaki (1966: 40) the idea of this teaching being a skilful means to convert others to the Mahāyāna stems from the *Mahāyāna-Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. See also Seyfort Ruegg 1969: 10–11.

²⁴⁶ This quote, the origin of which remains untraced, comes from Asaṅga's commentary. (Obermiller's attribution of this passage to the ŚMS could not be confirmed.) See Johnston 1950: 37,8–9; Nakamura 1967: 71,14–15; and Takasaki 1966: 224.

²⁴⁷ AA I.6b (D: 2a2–3): *sgrub pa yi ni rten gyur pa | chos kyi dbyings kyi rang bzhin dang* |; K (95,8) reads *sgrub pa yin* [...]. See also AA I.40 (D: 3b2)

Therefore, to maintain that the *sugatagarbha* and the *gotra* are distinct is the view²⁴⁹ of the followers of the Cittamātra [school].

2.2.3. The meaning of “connection” (*ldan pa*)

The third point, the meaning of “connection” has two [subdivisions]: a brief exposition and a detailed explanation.

2.2.3.1. Brief exposition

*rgya mtsho che bzhin dpag med pa'i*²⁵⁰ ||
yon tan rin chen mi bzad gnas ||
dbyer med yon tan dang ldan pa'i ||
ngo bo nyid phyir mar me bzhin || (I.42)

Similar to the great ocean, it is an inexhaustible repository of jewels, the excellences of which are immeasurable. Because its essential nature is endowed with inseparable excellences, it is similar to a butter lamp.

[50] Just as the vast and extensive vessel of the great ocean contains immeasurable [quantities of] jewels and water, likewise the *dhātu* of the Tathāgata, which is the vessel of adherence, is the repository of the immeasurable jewel-[like] excellences of supreme knowledge and meditative concentration, and the inexhaustible waters of compassion.

The connection [of the *dhātu*] with the result: Because it is endowed with the inseparable excellences of the first five types of supernatural knowledge (*mngon shes*),²⁵¹ of uncontaminated wisdom, and of abandonment,²⁵² it is similar to the three inseparable characteristics of a butter lamp.²⁵³

²⁴⁸ Rong-ston refers here to MSA III.11, where it is mentioned that some beings lack the cause for liberation; and to MSA IX.37, where it is stated that all beings possess the *[tathāgata]garbha*.

²⁴⁹ Lit.: tradition (*lugs*)

²⁵⁰ Nakamura (1967: 71,18): *dpag med pa*. RGVV (D: 94b5): *dpag med pa'i*.

²⁵¹ This refers to: 1) divine eye (*lha'i mig* eye); 2) divine ear (*lha'i rna ba*); 3) knowledge of other's minds (*gzhan gyi sems shes pa*); 4) recollection of past abodes (lives) (*sngon gyi gnas rjes su dran pa*); 5) miracle (*rdzu 'phrul*). See MSA VII.1 (Thurman 2004: 55); as well as Nyānatiloka (1999:13–15): “Abhiññā.”

²⁵² On “abandonment” refer to the commentary on verse I.44.

²⁵³ These three qualities are light, warmth and colour (see I.44).

Here, the cause is the connection with the *gotra*, and the result is both the connection with the *dharmakāya*²⁵⁴ and the connection with suchness.

2.2.3.2. Extensive explanation

chos sku rgyal ba'i ye shes dang ||
thugs rje'i khams ni bsdus pa'i phyir ||
snod dang rin chen chu yis 'di ||
rgya mtsho dang ni mtshungs par bstan || (I.43)

**Because it comprises the causes²⁵⁵ for the *dharmakāya*,
the Conqueror's wisdom, and compassion,
it is taught to be comparable to the ocean,
Due to [its being] a vessel [containing] jewels and water.**

In [this] explanation, with regard to the causal connection [of the *dhātu*]:

- (1) As to the cause for attaining the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata, which is the cultivation of adherence to the Mahāyāna Dharma, it is similar to a vessel because within it are contained the jewels of supreme knowledge and meditative concentration, and the waters of compassion.
- (2) The causes of the Conqueror's wisdom, which is the cultivation of supreme knowledge and meditative concentration, are similar to jewels. This is because just as jewels do not conceptualise and possess great power, through supreme knowledge one does not conceptualise the two types of self, and the power of meditative concentration and the five types of supernatural knowledge are inconceivable.
- (3) The cause [of the Tathāgata's] *dhātu* of great compassion, which is the cultivation of great compassion, is similar to water [51] because it has the natural single taste of extreme moisture with regard to all beings.

Accordingly, these three points are taught as being similar to a great ocean.

The individual similarities for the resultant connection:

dri med gnas la mngon shes dang ||
ye shes dri med de nyid dang ||

²⁵⁴ LS (50,3) and G (50,5) both read *chos sku'i ldan pa*; K (96,8) has *chos sku'i bden pa*.

²⁵⁵ Lit. "elements" (Skt. *dhātu*; Tib. *khams*). According to Takasaki (1966: 225, n. 194), in this case *dhātu* is to be taken as *hetu*, cause.

rnam dbye med phyir mar me yi ||
snang dang dro mdog chos mtshungs can || (I.44)

**Since the supernatural knowledges, stainless wisdom,
and suchness are totally inseparable on the stainless basis,²⁵⁶
[these] properties are comparable to the light, the warmth,
and the colour of a butter lamp.**

The five types of supernatural knowledge (*mngon shes*) in the expanse, which is the state free from the stains of the two obscurations, correspond to the illumination of a butter lamp, because they destroy the darkness which is opposed to the experience of the respective objects.

Uncontaminated wisdom corresponds to [its] warmth, since it consumes the entire ‘fire-wood’ of karma and mental afflictions.

The undefiled transmutation of the basis²⁵⁷ corresponds to [its] colour. Due to the abandonment of the obscuration of mental afflictions it is stainless, and due to the abandonment of the obscuration of knowledge it is pure. Since both are adventitious, they are not the own-being [of the *dhātu*]. Thus it is luminous.

The general similarities are similar to the inseparability of a butter lamp and the illumination of the butter lamp.²⁵⁸ This is because the stainless expanse and these seven characteristics²⁵⁹ of the mental continuum of a no-more-learner are completely inseparable.

2.2.4. The meaning of “manifestation” (*’jug pa*)

2.2.4.1. Brief exposition

In regard to the [brief] exposition:

so so’i skye ’phags rdzogs sangs kyi ||
de bzhin nyid dbye’i ’jug pa las ||

²⁵⁶ Takasaki (1966: 227, n. 206) remarks that here, following the RGVV, *āśraya* (Tib. *gnas*) is to be understood as synonymous with *dhātu* (which is the word used in the Chinese version at this place). The “undefiled basis” is therefore, according to him, the *dharmakāya*. This understanding is in line with Rong-ston’s commentary.

²⁵⁷ Tib. *gnas gyur pa dri ma med pa*

²⁵⁸ LS (51,4) and G (51,6) both read: *mar me dang mar me’i snang ba [...]*. K (97,8–9) has: *mar mar me dang mar me’i snang ba [...]*.

²⁵⁹ These seven are the five types of higher knowledge, uncontaminated wisdom, and the twofold abandonment.

de nyid gzigs pas sems can la ||
rgyal ba'i snying po 'di bstan ni || (I.45)

**The perceiver-of-suchness taught
the buddha-nature (*jinagarbha*) to sentient beings,
based on the different manifestations of suchness²⁶⁰
of ordinary beings, noble ones, and perfect buddhas.²⁶¹**

Buddha-nature (lit. “essence of the victorious one”) is taught to be present in sentient beings.

By whom? By the buddha who sees reality.

How? [From] the point of view of the divisions of the manifestations of suchness of the possessors of the quality:²⁶² ordinary beings, noble ones [on the path of] learning, and perfect buddhas.

Where? [52] In the *Prajñāpāramitā*[*sūtras*] and so forth.

For what purpose? For the purpose of generating non-conceptual wisdom.

For whom? It is taught for bodhisattvas.

The last three [statements] are taken from the commentary [of Asaṅga].²⁶³

2.2.4.2. Extensive explanation

so so'i skye bo phyin ci log ||
bden pa mthong ba bzlog pa ste ||
de bzhin gshegs pa ji lta bzhin ||
phyin ci ma log spros med nyid || (I.46)

**Ordinary beings have mistaken [views],
those who have seen the truth have reversed [them],
and the Tathāgatas [see things] as they are,
without mistake and without mental elaborations.**

²⁶⁰ Takasaki (1966: 229) reads: “The Ordinary People, the Saints, and the Buddhas, - They are indivisible from Reality, [...]” based on the Skt.: *pṛthagjanāryasambuddhatathatāvyatirekataḥ* (Cf. Johnston 1950: 39,10).

²⁶¹ Schmithausen (1971: 147) translates RGV 45a: “(Der *jinagarbhaḥ* ist gelehrt worden) als unterschiedlich auftretend, [insofern er] die Soheit der Weltmenschen, der Heiligen und der vollkommen Erleuchteten [ist] [...]”

²⁶² *chos can* (Skt. *dharmīn*): in this case *chos* (rendered as “quality”) stands for suchness (Tib. *de bzhin nyid*, Skt. *tathatā*), which is present in ordinary sentient beings and buddhas alike.

²⁶³ See Johnston 1950: 39,15–16; Nakamura 1967: 77,5–6; and Takasaki 1966: 229–230.

What are the three manifestations?

The manifestation by:

- 1) Ordinary beings with perception (*'du shes*), mind (*sems*), and wrong views (*lta ba phyin ci log*);
- 2) Noble ones [on the path of] learning who, having seen the truth, turned away from being mistaken, and [no longer] have mistaken views; and
- 3) Tathāgatas, who, having abandoned the two types of obscurations together with their imprints, see things as they really are, without mistake (*phyin ci ma log pa*) and free from [conceptual] elaborations (*spros pa med pa*).

The first two do not participate (*'jug pa*) in the *dharmakāya*, while the latter do not participate in the *gotra*. Therefore natural suchness manifests [in all three].

In the commentary [of Asaṅga it is stated that] the pure suchness of all phenomena is that which is taught to be the general characteristic.²⁶⁴

2.2.5. The meaning of “states” (*gnas skabs*)

2.2.5.1. Brief exposition

ma dag ma dag dag pa dang ||
shin tu rnam dag go rim bzhin ||
sems can byang chub sems dpa' dang ||
de bzhin gshegs pa zhes brjod do || (I.47)

Impure, impure and pure, and completely pure.
[These three states] are called sentient being,²⁶⁵
bodhisattva and tathāgata respectively.

[Objection:] If there is the distinction of suchness into three [states], it follows that suchness is multiple.

[Response:] *Dharmatā* (*chos nyid*), which is classified into three from the [point of view of the] three states of the possessors of this quality, is not differentiable from the

²⁶⁴ Concerning this point, the RGVV reads: *sarvadharmatathatāviśuddhisāmānyalakṣaṇam upadiṣṭam*. See Johnston 1950: 39,15; Nakamura 1967: 77,6–7; and Takasaki 1966: 229–230.

²⁶⁵ As Schmithausen (1971: 148) remarks, the Skt. reads *sattvadhātu*, not just *sattva* (Tib. *sems can*). Thus he renders this passage with: “[Je nachdem, ob der *jinagarbhaḥ*] (a) unrein, (b) [teils] unrein und [teils] rein und (c) vollkommen rein ist, wird er respektive ‚*sattvadhātuḥ*‘, ‚*bodhisattvaḥ*‘ und ‚*tathāgataḥ*‘ genannt.”

point of view of its natural purity. Therefore there is no contradiction. Thus it is taught.

This *dhātu* is given the name “*dhātu* of sentient beings” in its defiled, impure state.

In the state of being impure due all the discards [to be abandoned on] path of cultivation,²⁶⁶ and pure through the various discards of the [paths of] seeing and cultivation,²⁶⁷ [53] it is given the name “bodhisattva.”

It is called “tathāgata” in the state in which the two types of obscurations are completely purified along with their imprints.

While it is differentiated into three [states] due to the three states of possessors of this quality, there is no distinction from the point of view of [its] natural purity. Therefore, [these statements] do not contradict [each other].

2.2.5.2. Extensive explanation

ngo bo nyid la sogs pa'i don ||
'di drug gis ni bsdus pa yi ||
kham ni gnas skabs gsum dag tu ||
ming gsum gyis ni bstan pa nyid || (I.48)

**The *dhātu*, which is summarised by means of these six points:
essential nature and so forth,
is explained according to the three states
by means of three names.**

The *dhātu*, taught by the Bhagavan in many divisions of [his] teachings and summarized by these six topics, essential nature and so forth,²⁶⁸ is divided into three states. The purpose of [this] is that it is taught by means of three particular names due to the three [types of] subjects (*chos can*; *dharmin*).

In a sūtra of this [section]²⁶⁹ the *dharmakāya* itself is referred to as “*dhātu* of sentient beings,” as well as “bodhisattva” and “perfect buddha.” Thus it is stated in [Asaṅga’s] commentary, that the *dhātu* of sentient beings and the *dharmakāya* are not different.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁶ LS (52,6) and G (53,2) both read: *sgom spang kun*; K (99,3) has: *sgom spong kun*.

²⁶⁷ *mthong sgom gyi spang bya ci rigs pa*

²⁶⁸ The complete list is given in Asaṅga’s commentary: essential nature, cause, fruit, function, connection, and manifestation. See Johnston 1950: 40,13; Takasaki 1966: 231.

²⁶⁹ This refers to the *Anūratvāpurnatvanirdeśasūtra* quoted by Asaṅga. See Johnston 1950: 41,1–5; Takasaki 1966: 231–233.

In the *sūtra* which relates to the Vajra Points²⁷¹ too the so called “*dhātu* of sentient beings” is an expression for buddha-nature (*tathāgatagarbha*), and the so called “buddha-nature” stands for the *dharmakāya*, and so forth. Therefore, even the so called *dharmakāya* is taught to exist in all [beings].

Some scholars say that Mahā’s (i.e. Blo-ldan shes-rab’s) explanation of the *gotra* as being the essence of sentient beings, and so forth [54] is a self-fabricated [doctrine].²⁷² This is not acceptable because if it were a self-fabricated [doctrine], it would follow that the repeatedly recurring expression “*dhātu* of sentient beings” is a self-fabricated [doctrine as well].

2.2.6. The meaning of “all-pervasiveness”

The meaning of "all-pervasiveness" has two [subdivision], a brief exposition and an extensive explanation.

2.2.6.1. Brief exposition

ji ltar rtog med bdag nyid can ||
nam mkha’ kun tu rjes song ltar ||
sems kyi rang bzhin dri med dbyings ||
de bzhin kun tu ’gro ba nyid || (I.49)

Just as space, which is by nature without discrimination,²⁷³
pervades everything,
Similarly the mind’s nature, the undefiled expanse,
is all-pervasive.

Why is [there] a distinction [with regard to] the states only and not [with regard to] the nature?

²⁷⁰ This refers to another quotation from the *Anūnatvāpurnatvanirdeśasūtra* in Asaṅga’s commentary: *sattvadhātur nānyo dharmakāyaḥ | sattvadhātur eva dharmakāyaḥ | dharmakāya eva sattvadhātuḥ | advayametadarthena | vyacchanamātrabheda iti ||*. See Johnston 1950: 41,15–17; Nakamura 1967: 79,1–3; and Takasaki 1966: 234.

²⁷¹ *Dhāraṇīśvararājasūtra*, see RGV I.2.

²⁷² Rong-ston refers again to Blo-ldan shes-rab’s commentary on RGV I.28, where buddha-nature is explained in view of its three aspects, namely the resultant *dharmakāya*, natural suchness, and the causal *gotra*. The latter is said to be the actual essence of sentient beings, while the first is only nominally attributed to them. See Kano 2006: 331–332 (transl. 444–446).

²⁷³ Tib. *rtog med*; Skt. *nirvikalpa*. When relating directly to mind, this term is often best rendered with “non-conceptual.” In this case however, following Takasaki (1966: 233), I chose to render it as “without discrimination,” since this seems to be more appropriate in this context.

[This] is taught because the general characteristic, [i.e.] the naturally pure [aspect], pervades the three states. Just as space, which is by nature is without discrimination, pervades all vessels—whether made of clay, copper, or gold—so too, the naturally pure expanse, which is the nature of the mind, primordially free of defilements, similarly like space, pervades all three states.

2.2.6.2. Extensive explanation

de'i spyi'i mtshan nyid nyes pa dang ||
yon tan mthar thug khyab pa ste ||
gzugs kyi rnam pa dman pa dang ||
bar ma mchog la nam mkha' bzhin || (I.50)

**The general characteristic pervades the faulty [ones],
 [Those possessing] excellences, and [those who have] reached the end.
 It is like space [which pervades] the various types of forms,
 inferior, middling, and superior [equally].**

The naturally pure expanse is present in all three states, [i.e.] the pure [state], the impure, and so forth. Since it is the general characteristic [of the *dhātu*], it pervades all states, [i.e.] ordinary beings possessing faults, bodhisattvas endowed with excellences, and buddhas who have reached the ultimate state of pure excellences.

It is similar to space which, for example, pervades all three vessels, those made of an inferior kind of material - clay, [those made of a] middling [kind] - copper, and [those of a] supreme [kind] - gold. Furthermore, [55] while the space in the three vessels is just space without distinction, [it] is not the same [space]. Similarly, while the naturally pure *dharmatā* of the three subjects (*chos can*) is only that which is without the distinction of different *gotras*, it is [also] not the same.

Some say that an indivisible, single *dharmatā* pervades all [three] subjects.²⁷⁴ Since this is similar to saying “there is a universal, permanent, indivisible, single [principle] which pervades everything manifest,”²⁷⁵ it must be refuted using the logic refuting

²⁷⁴ LS (55,2) and G (55,5) both read: *chos nyid cha med cig gis chos can thams cad la khab par [...]*. K (101,9) has: [...] *chos thams cad la [...]*.

²⁷⁵ The concept of a universal, permanent principle pervading all manifest phenomena is found in the Sāṃkhya idea of *prakṛtiḥ* (“nature”), representing the universal ground for all phenomenal manifestation. Cf. Frauwallner 2003 (vol. I): 225ff. For a refutation of this view by Dharmakīrti see

universals.²⁷⁶ Even those who claim the substantial [existence] of universals are like them.²⁷⁷

Although there is a distinction between defiled suchness and undefiled suchness, due to the difference of subjects who are pure or impure due to [the presence or absence of] defilements, there is no [distinction to be made] from the point of view of the essential nature (*ngo bo*). Still, due to the difference of subjects, who are pure or impure due to [the presence or absence of] defilements, [suchness] it is not a singular [entity] either.

While the example of space pervading all forms [of vessels] should be applied to the naturally pure characteristic pervading all [states], it should not be applied to the total purity from adventitious [defilements] pervading all [states].²⁷⁸

2.2.7. The meaning of “immutability”

The meaning of “immutability”²⁷⁹ has two [points]: a brief exposition and an extensive explanation.

2.2.7.1. Brief exposition

nyes pa glo bur dang ldan dang ||
yon tan rang bzhin nyid ldan phyir ||
ji ltar sngar bzhin phyis de bzhin ||
’gyur ba med pa’i chos nyid do || (I.51)

Dreyfus 1997: 95 and 155. On the concept of universals in the Vaiśeṣika school of thought see Frauwallner 2003 (vol. II): 96ff. For its Buddhist refutation see Dreyfus 1997: 127ff.

²⁷⁶ K (101,11) *spyi ’gog pa’i rigs pa sbyar nas dgag par bya’o ||* [...]; G (55,5): *skye ’gog pa’i* [...]; LS (55,3): *skya ’gog pa’i* [...]. Here, my translation follows K. G and LS (LS erroneously reading *skya*), however, would prefer: “[...] must be refuted using the logic of the refutation of arising [of phenomena].” Based on the teaching of the non-arising of all phenomena as expounded in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, this topic constitutes the first chapter of Nāgārjuna’s famous *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. A famous example for this type of refutation used in *Madhyamaka* reasoning can also be found in the *Madhyamakāvatāra* by Candrakīrti (MA VI.8–36), where the author uses the four-limbed reasoning (*catuskoṭi*) to refute the four possible dialectical positions concerning the arising of phenomena.

²⁷⁷ This is most certainly a reference to the Dge-lugs-pa view of universals advanced by some scholars—termed “moderate realism” by Dreyfus (1997: 104)—which is an important topic of debate between this school and the Sa-skye-pas. On the various interpretations of universals see Dreyfus 1997, chapters 6–10.

²⁷⁸ In other words, the state of total purification of the adventitious defilements, i.e. the *dharmakāya*, does not pervade ordinary sentient beings or bodhisattvas.

²⁷⁹ LS (55,5) reads: *mi ’byung ba’i don*, which is obviously a mistake.

Because it is adventitiously associated with faults,
and because it is naturally endowed with the excellences,
it is later just as it was before.
[This is] the immutable *dharmatā* (i.e. nature of phenomena).²⁸⁰

If the properties of the excellences did not pervade the three different states, then the [*dhātu*] would be endowed with faults in the two impure states. [56] And in the thoroughly purified state, having become free from faults, [it] would be endowed with newly [created] excellences. Therefore, one may wonder whether the *dharmatā* is not immutable, since it would become pure from a previously impure [state].

[Response:] In the state of ordinary beings *dharmatā* is said to be impure, due to it being associated with the faults of adventitious defilements.

In the state of noble ones [on the path of] learning, it is said to be pure and impure²⁸¹ due to having abandoned the defilements to be abandoned [by means of the path] of seeing and because the defilements to be abandoned [by means of the path] of cultivation are not [yet] abandoned.

In the state of buddhahood, it is said to be thoroughly purified because the excellences which are free from defilements are undifferentiable and inseparably endowed, in the manner of a nature and that which possesses this nature.

The defilements are said to be adventitious because they exist in an obliterated way.

The excellences are explained to be naturally endowed due to being endowed in an unobliterated way.

Further below, it says that it is similar to a precious jewel, its radiance, colour, and shape, because they are inseparable.²⁸²

Explaining that “naturally endowed” means to be endowed from the beginning is simply wrong.

²⁸⁰ Takasaki (1966: 234) renders *dharmatā* (Tib. *chos nyid*) with “character.”

²⁸¹ *dag la ma dag pa*. Compared to the state of ordinary beings, where the *dharmatā* is totally covered, it is said to be pure, since by reaching the first *bhūmi* upon entering the path of seeing, the bodhisattva perceives suchness for the first time directly. This seeing is the result of the bodhisattva’s elimination of mental afflictions. Since, however, the imprints of these afflictions remain to be purified through the path of cultivation, the bodhisattvas’ state is said to be impure.

²⁸² RGV III.37: *guṇā dvātriṃśadyete dharmakāyaprabhāvitāḥ | maṇiratnaprabhāvarṇasaṃsthāna-vadabhedatāḥ ||*. The second half of this stanza is quoted below.

In brief, when the *dhātu* is free from defilements it inherently possesses the excellences, similar to fire which naturally possesses heat.²⁸³ This is called “naturally endowed.”

One may say:

[Objection:] In that case it follows that *dharmatā* changes, because: [57]

- a) it changes from previously not being endowed with excellences, into being endowed with excellences later, and
- b) it changes from previously possessing defilements, into being free from defilements later.

[Response:] From the point of view of the basis, [i.e.] the subject (i.e. the possessor of *dharmatā*), there is the difference of being pure or impure due to defilements, and being or not being endowed with excellences. But since the own essential-nature (*rang gi ngo bo*) of the *dharmatā* is later just as it was before, it does not change.

It is like, for example, [the sky]: although the sky changes from a previous [state] of having clouds into a later [state] free of clouds, the essential nature (*ngo bo*) of the sky before and after is not different.

Previously, in the state of being endowed with defilements, [the *dhātu*] does not have the excellences; and later, it is endowed with the excellences.

Similarly, with regard to a jewel for example, if an expert in jewels, although [it may be] covered with dirt when not purified, purifies it from the dirt, it possesses the radiance, the colour and so forth, of the jewel in an undifferentiable or inseparable way.

Just as it is stated:

[...] because [the 32 properties of the *dharmakāya*] are indivisible [from it], as with the jewel, its radiance, colour, and shape.^{284 285}

²⁸³ This simile is used by Candrakīrti in his commentary on MMK XV.2ab which refutes the possibility of a created or fabricated own-being (*svabhāva*). Cf. Mathes 2008: 352.

²⁸⁴ RGV III.37cd: *nor bu rin chen 'od mdog dang || dbyibs bzhin dbye ba med phyir ro ||*

²⁸⁵ Here, the example means that there are no excellences perceivable in the unpurified state. Once the *dhātu* has been purified and the *dharmakāya* is attained however, these excellences are inseparable from this purified state, i.e. the *dharmakāya*, just as radiance, colour, and shape are not separable from a diamond, once it is cut and polished.

2.2.7.2. Extensive explanation

The extensive exposition has three parts: (1) immutability in the impure state, (2) immutability in the partially purified (*dag la ma dag pa*) state, and (3) immutability in the utterly pure (*shin tu rnam dag*) state.

2.2.7.2.1 Immutability in the impure state

This first part has four [subdivisions]: (1) a [brief] exposition, (2) a [detailed] explanation, (3) a summary, and [58] (4) the explanation of the corresponding features of the analogy and the meaning of destruction (*'jig pa'i dpe don gyi chos mthun bstan pa*).

2.2.7.2.1.1. Brief exposition

This first [subdivision] has two [parts]: (1) [the exposition of not being sullied by] wrong-doing; and (2) the exposition of not being sullied by production and disintegration.

2.2.7.2.1.1.1. The exposition of not being sullied by wrong-doing

ji ltar nam mkha' kun song ba ||
phra phyir nye bar gos pa med ||
de bzhin sems can thams cad la ||
gnas 'di nye bar gos pa med || (I.52)

**Just as all-pervasive space is never sullied due to its subtlety,
Similarly this [*dhātu*] present in every sentient being is never sullied.**

Even though space pervades material objects, it is completely unsullied by forms due its subtlety which stems from not having a physical form. Similarly, although this [naturally] abiding *dhātu* pervades all sentient beings, is not sullied by their mental afflictions because it is naturally pure.

2.2.7.2.1.1.2. The exposition of not being sullied by production and disintegration

In regard to this second [part]:

ji ltar 'jig rten thams cad du ||
nam mkha' la ni skye zhing 'jig ||
de bzhin 'dus ma byas dbyings la ||
dbang po rnams ni skye zhing 'jig || (I.53)

**Just as worlds, in every instance,
 arise and disintegrate in space,
 Similarly the sense faculties
 arise and disintegrate in the unconditioned expanse.²⁸⁶**

Although in all worlds containing [beings], [phenomena] arise and disintegrate in space space [itself] is not sullied by the arising and disintegration [of phenomena]. Similarly, although the aggregates, constituents and sources [of perception], characterised by faculties of sentient beings arise and disintegrate in the unconditioned expanse of phenomena (*chos dbyings*; *dharmadhātu*), the expanse [itself] is not sullied by [this] arising and disintegration.

In this regard, the four elements and space, [making] five, are the examples. Improper mental activity (*tshul bzhin min pa'i yid byed*); karma and mental afflictions; aggregates, constituents and sources [of perception]; death and aging; and the expanse: these five are the meaning [related to the five examples]. From these, the four elements are [used as] examples for both production and disintegration, and space is [used as] an example for not having both production and disintegration.

2.2.7.2.1.2. Extensive explanation

The second [subdivision], the extensive explanation, has two parts: (1) not being sullied by wrong-doing (*nyes pa*), and (2) not being sullied by production and disintegration.

2.2.7.2.1.2.1. Not being sullied by wrong-doing

In regard to the first part:

ji ltar nam mkha' me rnams kyis²⁸⁷ ||
sngon chad nam yang tshig pa med ||
de bzhin 'di ni 'chi ba dang ||

²⁸⁶ Tib. 'dus ma byas dbyings ; Skt. *asaṃskṛta-dhātu*. Takasaki (1966: 236) "Innate Essence."

²⁸⁷ Nakamura (1967: 83,1): *kyi*.

na dang rga ba'i mes mi 'tshig || (I.54)

**Just as space has until now never been burned by fires,
Similarly this [*dhātu*] is not burnt
by the fires of death, sickness, and aging.**

Just as space has until now never been burnt by the three fires of the end of time and so forth,²⁸⁸ [59] similarly this *dhātu* is not burned by the fires of death, sickness, and aging.

2.2.7.2.1.2.2. Not being sullied by production and disintegration

The second part has three [subdivisions]: (1) analogy and meaning, (2) joining the analogy with its meaning, and (3) The explanation of the corresponding features [of the analogy and the meaning] (*chos mthun bshad pa*).

2.2.7.2.1.2.2.1. Analogy and meaning

In regard to the first [subdivisions]:²⁸⁹

*sa ni chu la chu rlung la ||
rlung ni mkha' la rab tu gnas ||
mkha' ni rlung dang chu dag dang ||
sa yi kham la gnas ma yin || (I.55)*

*de bzhin phung po kham dbang rnams ||
las dang nyon mongs dag la gnas ||
las dang nyon mongs tshul bzhin min ||
yid la byed la²⁹⁰ rtag tu gnas || (I.56)*

*tshul bzhin ma yin yid byed ni ||
sems kyi dag pa la rab gnas ||
sems kyi rang bzhin chos rnams ni ||
thams cad la yang gnas pa med || (I.57)*

**Earth rests upon water, water upon air, and air upon space.
Space does neither rest upon the element of air,
nor upon those of water or earth.**

²⁸⁸ See RGV I.65.

²⁸⁹ In this chapter the analogy of the world's creation is used to illustrate the *dhātu*'s unconditioned purity. For a brief presentation of Buddhist cosmogony in general see Khongtrul 1995: 107–111.

²⁹⁰ Nakamura (1967: 83,6): *byed pa*.

Similarly the aggregates, the constituents, and faculties²⁹¹
rest upon karma and mental afflictions.
Karma and mental afflictions always rest upon
improper mental activity.²⁹²

Improper mental activity rests upon the purity of the mind.
The nature of the mind, however,
does not rest upon any phenomenon whatsoever.

The earth *maṇḍala* is based on the water *maṇḍala*, that water is based on the wind *maṇḍala*, and this wind is based on and depends on space. Space [however], does not depend on the elements of wind, water, and earth.

Likewise, the five aggregates, the eighteen constituents [of perception], and the six faculties together with their [respective] objects contained by a person, [all] depend upon karma and mental afflictions. Karma and mental afflictions depend upon improper mental activity. Improper mental activity depends entirely upon the natural purity of the mind. The properties which are the nature of the mind [however] do not depend in any way upon improper mental activity and so forth.

2.2.7.2.1.2.2.2. Joining analogy and meaning

In regard to the second [subdivisions]:

sa dang 'dra bar phung po dang ||
skye mched khams rnams shes par bya ||
chu khams dang 'dra lus can gyi ||
las dang nyon mongs shes bya ste || (I.58)

tshul bzhin ma yin yid byed ni ||
rlung gi khams dang 'dra bar blta ||
rang bzhin nam mkha'i khams bzhin du ||
de gzhi can min gnas pa med || (I.59)

**The aggregates, the sources [of perception], and the constituents
should be understood to be similar to earth.
Karma and mental afflictions of embodied beings
should be understood to be similar to the element of water.**

²⁹¹ Tib. *'phung po khams dbang* ; Skt. *skandha-dhātv-indriya*. Takasaki (1966: 236): “all the component elements [of Phenomenal Life].”

²⁹² Tib. *tshul bzhin min yid la byed pa*; Skt. *ayoni-manaskāra*. Takasaki (1966: 236): “Irrational Thought.”

**Improper mental activity should be viewed
as being similar to the air element.
The [mind's] nature, like the element of space,
is without basis and without support.**

The aggregates, constituents, and sources [of perception] should be understood as being similar to the element of earth. The karma and mental afflictions of embodied beings should be understood as being similar to the element of water. Improper mental activity should be seen as similar to the element of wind. The nature of the mind, similar to the element of space [60] [not depending upon the other elements], does not depend upon improper mental activity and so forth, since it is without the basis of improper mental activity.

2.2.7.2.1.2.2.3. The explanation of the corresponding features
(*chos mthun bshad pa*)

In regard to the third [subdivisions]:

tshul bzhin ma yin yid byed ni ||
sems kyi rang bzhin la gnas te ||
tshul bzhin ma yin yid byed kyis ||
las dang nyon mongs rab tu phye || (I.60)

las dang nyon mongs chu las ni ||
phung po skye mched khams rnams 'byung ||
de 'jig pa dang 'chags pa ltar ||
skye dang 'jig par 'gyur ba yin || (I.61)

**Improper mental activity rests upon the mind's nature.
Improper mental activity causes karma and
mental afflictions to come forth.²⁹³**

**From water[-like] karma and mental afflictions
arise the aggregates, the sources [of perception], and the constituents.
Just as this [world is subject to] disintegration and formation,
Those [also] arise and disintegrate.**

Just as wind depends upon space, similarly, improper mental activity such as clinging to purity, happiness, permanence, and so forth entirely depends upon the nature of the

²⁹³ Tib. *rab tu phye*; Skt. *prabhava*.

mind [which is] emptiness. Just as wind is the support for water, similarly, from improper mental activity, karma and mental afflictions have spread. Just as from the churning of the water *maṇḍala* the ground of the earth arises, similarly, from the water-like contaminated karma and mental afflictions arise the aggregates, sources [of perception] and constituents. Just as the container of the ground of the earth itself and so forth is [subject to phases of] disintegration and formation, similarly, the impure aggregates, constituents, and sources [of perception] and the like arise and disintegrate.²⁹⁴

Thus, having explained that which has the characteristic of arising [and disintegration], the expanse and space are explained as that which has the characteristic of not arising and not disintegrating:

sems kyi rang bzhin nam mkha' yi ||
kham s ltar rgyu med rkyen med de ||
tshogs pa med cing skye ba dang ||
'jig dang gnas pa yod ma yin || (I.62)

**The nature of the mind is, like the element of space,
 without cause, without conditions,
 and without the combination [of those].
 [It] has no arising, no disintegration, and no dwelling as well.**

The nature of the mind which is emptiness, is similar to the element of space [in that it] has neither a substantial cause nor an assisting condition,²⁹⁵ nor the combination of both. Therefore, it has no arising in the beginning, no disintegration in the end, and no abiding in between.

It is stated in a *sūtra* [quoted] here [by Asaṅga]:

²⁹⁴ As Takasaki notes, this passage refers to two of the four phases in which the formation and disintegration of the universe are divided. The first being the *kalpa* of formation (*chags pa'i bskal pa*), followed by the *kalpa* of abiding (*gnas pa'i bskal pa*), which is then replaced by the *kalpa* of disintegration (*'jig pa'i bskal pa*). The last *kalpa* is termed “empty *kalpa*” (*stong pa'i bskal pa*), which ends with the formation of a new universe.

²⁹⁵ The *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* gives following examples to illustrate the function of the “substantial cause” (*nyer len gyi rgyu*) and the “assisting condition” (*lhan cig byed pa'i rkyen*): in relation to growth of a sprout, the substantial cause would be the seed, and the assisting condition would be water, manure, warmth and moisture. (Cf. Zhang 1993)

All phenomena are completely devoid of foundation. They possess a foundation devoid of essence, an unstable foundation. The foundation [of all phenomena] is pure, [61] a foundation devoid of foundation.²⁹⁶

Therefore this *dhātu* is not conditioned by causes and conditions, and is established as emptiness free from elaborations.

2.2.7.2.1.3. Summary

The third [part], the summary, has two [subdivisions]: (1) the exposition of not being sullied by wrong-doing, and (2) the exposition of not being sullied by production.

2.2.7.2.1.3.1. The exposition of not being sullied by wrong-doing

In regard to this first [part]:

sems kyi rang bzhin 'od gsal gang yin pa ||
de ni nam mkha' bzhin du 'gyur med de ||
yang dag min rtog las byung 'dod chags sogs ||
glo bur dri mas de nyon mongs mi 'gyur || (I.63)

**The mind's nature, which is luminosity,
is similar to space, it is immutable.
It does not become afflicted by the adventitious defilements of
desirous attachment and so forth,
which arise from impure thoughts.²⁹⁷**

²⁹⁶ *Gaganagañjāparipṛcchā* (321a6–321a7): *de'i phyir chos thams cad ni rtsa ba yongs su chad pa zhes bya ste | snying po med pa'i rtsa ba | mi gnas pa'i rtsa ba | dag pa'i rtsa ba | rtsa ba med pa'i rtsa ba'o ||* Asaṅga's quotation from the *Gaganagañjāparipṛcchā* including this passage is found in his commentary on RGV I.64. See Johnston 1950: 45,8–9; Nakamura 1967: 87,16–18; and Takasaki 1966: 241 (n. 308). The end of this passage differs slightly in Rong ston's version who has *med pa'i rtsa ba* ("a non-existent foundation", or "foundation of non-existence"), instead of *rtsa ba med pa'i rtsa ba* ("a foundation devoid of foundation").

²⁹⁷ The second half of this verse reads differently in Sanskrit. Where we find "not afflicted by adventitious defilements" (*glo bur dri mas de nyon mongs mi 'gyur*) in the Tibetan, the Sanskrit has "to approach, to obtain" (*upaiti*). Takasaki's translation (1966: 237) reads: "It bears, however, the impurity by stains of desire, etc. which are of accident and produced by wrong conception." (Emphasis mine.) According to Takasaki, this negative interpretation is usual for the Tibetan tradition. See Takasaki 1966: 237, n. 280 and p. 240, n. 305.

Commenting on this verse, Chenique remarks that while this negative interpretation is the one usually followed in the Tibetan reading, it is the question whether the mind's nature can or cannot be sullied by the adventitious afflictions, which splits the different schools of thought. (See Chenique 2001: 145, n. 54b)

The nature of the mind, the very luminosity-emptiness,²⁹⁸ is similar to space [in that] it does not change into something else. That nature does not become afflicted by the adventitious defilements of attachment and the like, which arise from impure thoughts.

2.2.7.2.1.3.2. The exposition of not being sullied by production and destruction

In regard to the second [part]:

las dang nyon mongs chu sogs kyis ||
'di ni mngon par 'grub min te ||
'chi dang na dang rga ba'i me ||
mi bzad pas kyang 'tshig mi 'gyur || (I.64)

It is not brought forth by means of water[-like] karma and mental afflictions, and so forth.

Neither is it burnt by the unbearable fires of death, sickness, and aging.

The nature of the mind is not produced by the water-like collection of karma and mental afflictions, and the wind-like improper mental activity and so forth. Because of being unfabricated, although [one is] burned by the unbearable and violent fires of death, sickness, and aging, [it] does not get destroyed.

2.2.7.2.1.4. The exposition of the corresponding features of the analogy and the meaning of disintegration

In regard to the exposition of the corresponding features of the analogy and the meaning of disintegration:

dus mtha' dmyal ba tha mal pa'i ||
me gsum 'chi dang na ba dang ||
rga ba'i me gsum rim bzhin du ||
de dang 'dra bar shes par bya || (I.65)

The three fires of the end of time, of the hells, and ordinary fire, should be known to be similar to the three fires of death, sickness, and aging respectively.

²⁹⁸ It is important to note that in order to characterize the nature of mind Rong-ston added the term “emptiness” where the root verse only speaks of luminosity. This is important in order to align this teaching with the Madhyamaka philosophy of emptiness, following the tradition of Blo-ldan shes-rab. See part 3.2 of this work.

At the end of time, the fire of the disintegration of the *kalpa* destroys the [material] container-world. The fire of the hell realm creates suffering, and the ordinary [element of] fire brings the formative factors (*'du byed*) to maturation. Similarly, death destroys or disintegrates the aggregates of this life, sickness creates suffering, and aging brings the aggregates to maturation. [62] [Thus] they are to be known as being similar to those three fires.

2.2.7.2.2. Immutability in the partially purified state

[The explanation of] the immutability in the partially purified state has two parts: a brief exposition and a detailed explanation.

2.2.7.2.2.1. Brief exposition

In regard to the first [part]:

skye 'chi na dang rga ba las grol ba ||
'di yi rang bzhin ji bzhin nyid rtogs te ||
skye sogs phongs dang bral yang de yi rgyus ||
blo ldan 'gro la snying rje skye phyir bsten || (I.66)

**Free from birth, death, sickness, and aging
[a bodhisattva] has realised its nature as it is.
Although free from the miseries of birth, and so forth,
the intelligent one attends²⁹⁹ [the world]
because he has generated compassion for beings due to this [realisation].³⁰⁰**

A noble bodhisattva is free from birth, death, sickness, and aging because he has directly realised the nature of this *dhātu* exactly as it is. By this [statement] it is taught that [for bodhisattvas] having attained the first [bodhisattva-]stage, there is no birth and death by the power of karma and mental afflictions. Therefore, it is made clear that there are no mental afflictions once the first stage [is attained]. Although [they

²⁹⁹ Tib. *bsten*; Skt. *bhajante* (usually “to partake, assume” etc.). It is interesting to note that Rong-ston replaced this verb by *bstan* (to show) in his commentary. The meaning then equals that of RGV I.68.

³⁰⁰ The Skt. has *tan nidānam* where the Tib. reads *de'i rgyus*. Schmithausen (1971: 150) translates: “... nehmen die Bodhisattvas, obwohl [bei ihnen] die [normale] Ursache dafür fehlt, [dennoch] aus Mitleid mit der Welt das Ungemach der Geburt usw. auf.”

are] free from the destitution of birth, death, and so forth of saṃsāra, the intelligent bodhisattvas display being born and so forth in saṃsāra for the benefit of others. [They do this] because they have generated compassion for beings caused by that seeing of the *dhātu*.

2.2.7.2.2.2. Extensive explanation

The extensive exposition has three [subdivisions]: (1) the manner of being untainted by the suffering of birth and death, (2) the manner of being impure by displaying birth and death for others, and (3) the manner of performing conduct for the benefit others.

2.2.7.2.2.2.1. The manner of being untainted by the suffering of birth and death

In regard to the first [subdivision]:

*'phags pas 'chi dang na ba dang ||
rga ba'i sdug bsngal rtsad nas spangs ||
las dang nyon mongs dbang gis skye ||
de la de med phyir de med || (I.67)*

**Noble (bodhisattvas) have discarded the sufferings of death, sickness, and aging from the root.
Birth [occurs] by the power of karma and mental afflictions.
Since these are absent for those [bodhisattvas],
this [birth] does not occur.³⁰¹**

The noble bodhisattva, the *dharmīn*, has abandoned the sufferings of death, sickness, and aging from their root because he has directly seen the nature of the *dhātu*.

For such a noble bodhisattva, the *dharmīn*, this [type of] birth and death which come about by the power of karma and mental afflictions did not occur, [63] because [he] does not have such *karma* and mental afflictions.

³⁰¹ This stanza is translated in light of Rong-ston's commentary. However, the Skt. does not allow this reading. Johnston 1950: 46,12: *karmakleśavaśāj jātis, tadabhāvān na teṣu tat ||* Being a neuter demonstrative pronoun, *tat* cannot refer to birth (*jāti*), which is feminine. Thus, Schmithausen (1971: 150) reads *jāti* (Tib. *skye*) not as “birth”, but as “the arising [of suffering].” Inserting the implied subject “suffering” from the first part of the verse, he translates the second part: “[Das Leid] entsteht [nämlich] aus Taten und Lasten; weil diese [Taten und Laster] bei den Bodhisattvas] (sic) nicht vorhanden sind, ist auch das [Leid] bei ihnen nicht vorhanden.” He adds that although the commentary understands *jāti* as “birth,” this is probably a mistake indicating a possible difference in authorship.

2.2.7.2.2.2.2. The manner of being impure by displaying birth and death for others

In regard to the second [subdivision]:

ji bzhin yang dag mthong ba'i phyir ||
skye sogs rnams las 'das gyur kyang ||
snying rje'i bdag nyid skye ba dang ||
'chi dang rga dang na bar ston || (I.68)

**Although they have gone beyond birth and so forth,
due to seeing that which truly is just as it is,
the personifications of compassion display being born,
dying, aging, and becoming sick.**

The noble bodhisattva, the *dharmin*, personification of compassion, has gone beyond the suffering of birth and death and so forth, because of perfectly and directly seeing the *dhātu* exactly as it is. Although he is beyond birth and so forth, [he] displays birth, death, sickness, and aging for the benefit of others because he is the personification of compassion.

2.2.7.2.2.2.3. The manner of performing conduct for the benefit of others

The third [subdivision], the manner of performing conduct for the benefit of others, has four parts: (1) the conduct of one who has first given rise to [*bodhi*]*citta* (*sems dang po bskyed pa*), (2) the conduct of one who engages in untainted conduct, (3) the conduct of one who is irreversible in all aspects, and (4) the conduct of one who is impeded by one life.

2.2.7.2.2.2.3.1. The conduct of one who has first given rise to *bodhicitta*

The first [part] has two subdivisions: (1) the wonderful conduct of a noble one, and (2) through precisely this [conduct] he becomes the friend of sentient beings.

2.2.7.2.2.2.3.1.1. The wonderful conduct of a noble one

In regard to the first [subdivision]:

rgyal sras 'gyur med chos nyid 'di ||

*rtogs nas ma rig ldongs rnams kyis*³⁰² ||
skye ba la sogs dag tu ni ||
mthong ba gang yin de rmad do || (I.69)

**Having realised this changeless *dharmatā*,
the heir of the Victorious Ones
is seen by those blinded by ignorance
as being born and so forth. How wonderful!**

Having realised this changeless *dharmatā*, the heir of the victorious ones abiding on the first [bodhisattva-]stage is free from [the sufferings of] birth and so forth of saṃsāra. Still, he is seen by disciples whose eyes of supreme knowledge are blinded by ignorance as [experiencing] birth, death, and the like. How wonderful!

2.2.7.2.2.2.3.1.2. Through precisely this [conduct] they become friends
of sentient beings

In regard to the second [subdivision]:

'phags pa'i spyod yul thob pa gang ||
byis pa'i spyod yul du ston te ||
de nyid phyir ni 'gro ba yi ||
gnyen gyi thabs dang snying rje mchog || (I.70)

**Having attained the domain of the noble ones,
[he] show [himself] in the domain of the childish.
Therefore means and compassion of the friends of beings are supreme.**

This bodhisattva, the *dharmin*, is the friend of beings because he displays birth and so forth, even though he has attained the domain of the noble ones. [64] This is because he possesses skilful means for the sake of others as well as supreme compassion. Because of this very [reason, he is called friend of beings].

2.2.7.2.2.2.3.2. The conduct of one who engages in untainted conduct

In regard to the second [part], the conduct of one who engages in untainted conduct:

³⁰² Nakamura (1967: 101,1), following most of the editions he used, reads *kyi*. However, the Derge edition of the RGV has *kyis* (47b5), which is in line with the Sanskrit *avidyāndhair* (Johnston 1955: 51,12).

de ni 'jig rten thams cad las ||
'das kyang 'jig rten las ma g.yos ||
'jig rten don du 'jig rten na ||
'jig rten dri mas ma gos spyod || (I.71)

ji ltar padma chu nang du ||
skyes pa chu yis gos pa med ||
de bzhin 'di ni 'jig rten du ||
skyes kyang 'jig rten chos mi gos || (I.72)

**In this regard, although [they have gone] beyond all worlds,
[they do] not depart from the world.
[They] act in the world, for the benefit of the world,
unsullied by worldly defilements.**

**Just as the lotus, growing in water,
is unsullied by the water;
Similarly this [bodhisattva], although born in the world,
is unsullied by worldly phenomena.**

This bodhisattva abiding on the second [stage] up to the seventh has gone beyond all the worlds due to his supreme knowledge. Still, he pretends not to depart from the world out of compassion.³⁰³

One may wonder: If [he] has gone beyond the world, wouldn't it contradict [his] not departing from the world? There is no contradiction, because even though he abides in the world for the benefit of the world, [his] activity is unsullied by worldly defilements. Just as a lotus is not sullied by the water, although it grows out of water, similarly, the bodhisattva who has entered the conduct is not sullied by the things of the world, even though he is born in the world.

2.2.7.2.2.2.3.3. The conduct of one who is irreversible in all aspects

In regard to the third [part], the conduct of one who is irreversible in all aspects:

bya ba sgrub la rtag tu blo ||
me bzhin du ni 'bar ba dang ||
zhi ba'i bsam gtan snyoms 'jug la ||
rtag tu snyoms par zhugs pa yin || (I.73)

³⁰³ This means, he does not enter the cessation of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, although he has completely relinquished all mental afflictions.

**To accomplish [his] task,³⁰⁴ his fire-like intelligence ever burns,
and he constantly enters peaceful mental concentrations
and meditative absorptions.**

With regard to manner in which the bodhisattva abiding on the eighth [stage] up to the ninth engages his mind at all times effortlessly in acting for the benefit of others, [i.e. his way of] accomplishing the activity of gathering beings to be tamed by means of the four means of gathering [disciples]:

Just as fire naturally ignites on dry fire-wood smeared with butter, similarly [this bodhisattva] has the ability to evenly enter, at all times, mental concentrations³⁰⁵ and meditative equipoise³⁰⁶ which pacify selfish efforts as well as all elaborations, because he has gained mastery over the non-conceptual.

2.2.7.2.2.2.3.4. The conduct of one who is impeded by one life

[65] The fourth [part], the conduct of one who is impeded by one life, has five [subdivisions]: (1) Engaging effortlessly in others aims, (2) Engaging in the application of skilful means, (3) Engaging in limitless modes of conduct, (4) Being similar to the buddha [with regard to] the benefit [accomplished for] others, and (5) Being dissimilar to the buddha [with regard to] the benefit [accomplished for] oneself.

2.2.7.2.2.2.3.4.1. Engaging effortlessly in the aims of others

In regard to the first [subdivision]:

*sngon gyi 'phen pa'i dbang dang ni ||
rnam rtog³⁰⁷ thams cad bral ba'i phyir ||
de ni lus can smin pa yi ||
don du 'bad pa byed ma yin || (I.74)*

**Due to the propelling power of [prayers made in] the past,
and because he is [now] free from all discursive thinking,
he does not exert effort in order to ripen embodied beings.**

³⁰⁴ Takasaki (1966: 253): “For bringing about the welfare [to the world] [...]”

³⁰⁵ Tib. *bsam gtan*; Skt. *dhyāna*.

³⁰⁶ Tib. *sn'yoms 'jug*; Skt. *samāpatti*.

³⁰⁷ Nakamura (1967: 101,11): *rnam rtogs*.

In the past, this bodhisattva abiding on the tenth [stage] made the aspiration to effortlessly benefit others. By the propelling power³⁰⁸ of [this aspiration he later] engages [in these very activities], and since he is [now] free from all discursive thinking by having transformed his mind and thoughts, this bodhisattva does not rely on making efforts for the purpose of ripening embodied beings.

2.2.7.2.2.2.3.4.2. Engaging in the application of skilful means

In regard to the second [subdivision]:

*bstan dang gzugs sku dag*³⁰⁹ *dang ni* ||
spyod dang spyod lam gyis kyang rung ||
gang zhig ji ltar gang gis 'dul ||
des de de lta nyid du shes || (I.75)

**By means of teaching and form bodies,
conduct, as well as physical activities,³¹⁰
He knows precisely who is to be tamed,
how and by what [means].**

By verbally teaching the Dharma according to the interest of those to be tamed, showing various form bodies, and displaying a conduct in harmony with the minds of those to be tamed, as well as [appropriate] physical activities of walking and moving around and so forth, whoever is to be tamed, in whatever manner, and by whatever means, is tamed. This bodhisattva knows precisely the aspects of those means.

2.2.7.2.2.2.3.4.3. Engaging in limitless modes of conduct

In regard to the third [subdivision]:

de ltar nam mkha'i mtha' klas kyi ||
*'gro la*³¹¹ *rtag tu lhun grub par* ||

³⁰⁸ G (65,5) and K (113,5) both read *'phen pa'i dbang*. LS (65,3) has *'phel pa'i dbang*.

³⁰⁹ Following Rong-ston's commentary, I translate *dag* as a plural marker in this case. The Skt. (52,6), however, reads *deśanyā rūpakāyābhyām*, which is problematic (Cf. Schmithausen 1971: 152). Schmithausen favours an alternative reading of this passage (*deśanārūpakāyābhyām*), which would be rendered with: "By means of teaching and the form body [...]."

³¹⁰ Tib. *spyod dang spyod lam*; Skt. *cāryā* and *īryāpatha*. Takasaki (1966: 254) has: "by conduct [of worldly life] or by religious observances." In addition to the observances of religious mendicants, *īryāpatha* can also refer to the four positions of the body (i.e. going, standing, sitting, and lying). This is Rong-ton's understanding of this term here.

thogs med blo ldan de yis ni ||
sems can don ni yang dag 'jug || (I.76)

**Thus, for beings which are limitless like space,
one endowed with unimpeded intelligence
genuinely engages in benefiting sentient beings,
constantly and spontaneously.³¹²**

For beings who are [as] limitless [as] space is vast, this intelligent bodhisattva correctly engages [in the practice of accomplishing] the benefit of sentient beings. Furthermore [he] engages [in this practice] at all times, spontaneously, and in an unhindered [66] manner.

2.2.7.2.2.2.3.4.4. Being similar to the buddha [in regard to] the
benefit [accomplished for] others

In regard to the fourth [subdivision]:

byang chub sems dpa'i tshul 'di ni ||
rjes thob de bzhin gshegs rnams dang ||
sems can yang dag sgrol ba la ||
'jig rten na ni mnyam pa nyid || (I.77)

**This way of the bodhisattva in post-meditation
to genuinely liberate sentient beings in the world,
is equal to the tathāgatas' [way].**

The ways in which a bodhisattva in [the phases of] post-meditation of the tenth stage truly liberates sentient beings from suffering is equal with the tathāgatas' way of accomplishing benefit, in the face of the worldly beings to be tamed.³¹³ Here, there is only equality in the way of accomplishing enlightened activity to the face of those to be tamed, but they are not [actually] equal.³¹⁴

³¹¹ Nakamura (1967: 101,15): 'gro ba. The Derge edition of the RGV (48a1) reads 'gro la, which is not marked in Nakamura's edition.

³¹² Takasaki (1966: 254) gives the translation of the Skt. which has a slightly different reading: "In such a way, he does always, with no effort and with unobstructed Wisdom, bring benefits for the living beings among the worlds, [...]."

³¹³ LS (66,2) and G (66,4) both read: *gdul bya'i 'jig rten gyi ngo na don byed tshul*. K (114,6) has: *gdul bya'i 'jig rten gyi don byed tshul*.

³¹⁴ The explanation for this follows under the next heading.

2.2.7.2.2.3.4.5. Being dissimilar to the buddha [in regard to] the benefit [accomplished for] oneself

In regard to the fifth [subdivision]:

de lta mod kyi sa rdul dang ||
rgya mtsho ba glang rmig rjes kyi ||
khyad par gang yin sangs rgyas dang ||
byang chub sems dpa'i khyad de nyid || (I.78)

**Despite this fact,
whatever difference there is between the earth and a particle,
or between the ocean and [the water] in an ox's hoof print,
is the difference between a buddha and a bodhisattva.**

Although, from the perspective of other [beings] there might be such an equality in the way [buddhas and this bodhisattva] benefit others, the benefit [accomplished for] themselves is not equal. For example, whatever difference there is between the great *maṇḍala* of the earth and a minute particle, or between the water of the great ocean and [the water] in the hoof print of an ox, [there is] just as much difference between the excellences of a buddha and [those] of a bodhisattva on the tenth stage.

2.2.7.2.3. The manner of being immutable in the thoroughly purified state
[The explanation of] the manner of being immutable in the thoroughly purified state has three [parts]: (1) identifying the reasons (*rtags*), the predicates (*bsgrub pa'i chos*), and the meaning (*don*); (2) joining the reasons with the predicates to be established; and (3) explaining the meaning of “permanence”³¹⁵ and so forth.

2.2.7.2.3.1. Identifying the reasons, the predicates, and the thesis

For this first part:

gzhan 'gyur min bdag mi zad chos ldan phyir ||
'gro skyabs phyi ma'i mtha' med mur thug phyir ||
de ni rtag tu gnyis med mi rtog phyir ||
'jig med chos kyang ma byas rang bzhin phyir || (I.79)

³¹⁵ LS (66,5) and G (67,1) both have *rtag*. K (115, 2) reads *rtags*.

skye ba med cing 'chi ba med ||
gnod med rga ba med pa ste ||
de ni rtag dang brtan phyir dang ||
zhi ba'i phyir dang g.yung drung phyir || (I.80)

**[Its] nature does not change into something else,
because it is endowed with inexhaustible properties.
[It is] a refuge for beings, because it [lasts] endlessly.³¹⁶
It is ever non-dual, because it is non-conceptual.
It also [has] the property [of being] indestructible,
because its nature is uncreated.**

**This [*dhātu*] is unborn, undying, unimpaired, and not aging,
because it is permanent, stable, peaceful, and changeless.³¹⁷**

The *dharmakāya* of utmost purity, the *dharmin*, is without birth, without death, unimpaired, and without aging, because it is permanent, stable, peaceful, and changeless respectively. [67] The meaning (*don*) of the four reasons [presented] step by step:

- (1) It is permanent because it is a nature (*bdag nyig*) which does not change into something else. [This is] because it is endowed with inexhaustible excellences.
- (2) It is stable because it is the refuge for beings. [This is] because it remains until the final end.
- (3) It is peaceful because it is devoid of karma and mental afflictions. [This is] because it has the nature of being permanently non-conceptual.
- (4) It is changeless because it is indestructible. [This is] because it is the nature which is not made by karma and mental afflictions.

2.2.7.2.3.2. Joining the reasons with the predicates

In regard to the second part:

de ni yid kyi rang bzhin gyi ||
lus kyis skye med rtag pa'i phyir ||
bsam gyi mi khyab bsgyur ba yi ||
*'chi 'pho brtan phyir de mi 'chi ||*³¹⁸ (I.81)

³¹⁶ Tib. *phyi ma'i mtha' med mur thug*; Skt. *anaparāntakoti* (lit. “it has no limit in the future”).

³¹⁷ Tib. *rtag pa*, *brtan pa*, *zhi ba*, *g.yung drung*; Skt. *nityatva*, *dhruvatva*, *śīvatva*, *śāśvatatva*

³¹⁸ Derge's edition of the RGV (58a4) reads: *bsam mi khyab 'gyur 'chi 'pho yis || de ni mi 'chi brtan pa'i phyir ||*.

bag chags phra mo'i nad rnams kyis ||
gnod med zhi ba nyid kyī phyir ||
zag med mngon par 'du byed kyis ||
g.yung drung phyir na rga ba med || (I.82)

Being permanent,
this [*dhātu*] is not born from a body of mental nature.
Being stable,
it does not die due to an inconceivable death and transference.

Being peace,
[it is] unimpaired by diseases of subtle imprints.
Being changeless,
[it is] without aging caused by uncontaminated formative factors.³¹⁹

That *dharmakāya* of utmost purity, the *dharmin*, is without the arising of a body of mental nature because it is permanent. It does not die [and take rebirth] through an inconceivable death and transference because it is stable. It is unimpaired even by the disease of the subtle imprints of ignorance because it is peace itself. It is without aging, which ripens the result of uncontaminated formative factors (*zag med kyī 'du byed*), because it is changeless.

2.2.7.2.3.3. Explaining the meaning of “permanence” and so forth

2.2.7.2.3.3.1. Brief exposition

In regard to the first [subdivision], the brief exposition:

de la tshig gnyis de bzhin gnyis ||
gnyis dang gnyis kyis go rim bzhin ||
'dus ma byas kyī dbyings la ni ||
rtaḡ pa la sogs don shes bya || (I.83[a])

Here, in regard to the unconditioned expanse,³²⁰
the meaning of “permanent” and so forth
is to be known by means of two phrases,
and likewise [“stable”, “peaceful,” and “changeless,” by means of]
two, two, and two [phrases] respectively.

Laying out the meaning of “permanence”³²¹ and so forth:³²²

³¹⁹ Tib. *zag med mngon par 'du byed* ; Skt. *anāsravābhisaṃskārāḥ*.

³²⁰ Tib. *'dus ma byas kyī dbyings*; Skt. *asaṃskṛtapada*. Takasaki (1966: 257): “immutable Sphere.”

“[Its] nature does not change into something else [...]”³²³ is the phrase which shows the thesis (*dam bca*’), and “because it is endowed with inexhaustible qualities”³²⁴ is the explanatory phrase. Through [these] two phrases, the meaning of “permanent”³²⁵ is to be known in accordance with the *sūtras*. Here, the meaning of “permanent” is applied to the unconditioned expanse.

[68] Likewise, “refuge of beings” shows [the thesis], and “[because] it lasts endlessly” is the explanatory phrase.³²⁶ Through [these] two phrases, the meaning of “stable”³²⁷ [is to be known].

“Non-dual” shows [the thesis], and “non-conceptual” is the explanation³²⁸. Through [these] two phrases, the meaning of “peaceful”³²⁹ [is to be known].

“Indestructible” shows [the thesis], and “uncreated” is the explanation³³⁰. Through [these] two phrases, the meaning of “changeless”³³¹ is to be known.

If, according to what some say, [the thesis] is shown by means of one phrase³³² and the explanation is given by means of two phrases each, such as “inconceivable [death and transference]”³³³ and so forth, it would become three phrases. [This] is in contradiction with: “by means of two phrases each.”³³⁴ Also it would not conform to the statement found below:

Because it is endowed with inexhaustible excellences,
it has an immutable identity (*bdag*).
[This is] the meaning of “permanence.”³³⁵

³²¹ Again, K (116,6) reads *rtags* instead of *rtag*.

³²² In the next paragraph the verse Tib.68; Skt.I.79 is analysed.

³²³ RGV I.79a

³²⁴ RGV I.79a

³²⁵ RGV I.80b

³²⁶ These two are from RGV I.79b.

³²⁷ RGV I.80b

³²⁸ These two are from RGV I.79c.

³²⁹ RGV I.80b

³³⁰ These two are from RGV I.79d.

³³¹ RGV I.80b

³³² Tib. *tshig rkang pa* (Skt. *pāda*), one quarter of a stanza.

³³³ RGV I.81

³³⁴ *tshig gnyis gnyis kyis*. Here Rong-ston rephrases RGV I.83[a].

³³⁵ RGV I.83[b]

2.2.7.2.3.3.2. Extensive explanation

Second, the extensive explanation:

mi zad yon tan dang ldan phyir ||
gzhan 'gyur med bdag rtag pa'i don ||
mtsha' yi mu dang mtshungs pa'i phyir ||
skyabs kyi bdag nyid brtan pa'i don || (I.83[b])

rnam par mi rtog rang bzhin phyir ||
gnyis med chos nyid zhi ba'i don ||
ma bcos yon tan nyid phyir ni ||
'jig med don ni g.yung drung nyid || (I.83[c])³³⁶

**Because it is endowed with inexhaustible excellences,
it has an immutable nature.**³³⁷

[This is] the meaning of “permanence.”

**Because it is similar to the uttermost end,
it has the nature of a refuge.**³³⁸

[This is] the meaning of “stable.”

**Because [its] self-nature is non-conceptual,
it has the property of non-duality.**³³⁹

[This is] the meaning of “peaceful.”

**Because the excellences are uncontrived,
it is indestructible.**

[This is] the meaning [of] “immutability.”

The meaning of “permanent” is that it has the nature of not changing into something else. The explanation of this [is that this is so] because [even in the state] without remainder of aggregates it is endowed with inexhaustible excellences.

The meaning of “stable” is that it has the nature of being a lasting refuge. The explanation of this [is that this is so] because it is similar to the uttermost end.

The meaning of “peaceful” is that since it is free from both karma and mental afflictions, it is the *dharmatā* (*chos nyid*).³⁴⁰ The explanation of this [is that this is so] because it is non-conceptual.

³³⁶ Stanzas I.83 [b] and [c] are thought of as interpolations by Johnston (1950: 54, n. 7), as well as by Takasaki who does not include them in his translation. However, the Tibetan version follows Ms. B consulted by Johnston in that they are both included in the body of the text.

³³⁷ Skt. *ananyathātmavā*; Tib. *gzhan 'gyur min bdag*.

³³⁸ Skt. *śaraṇātmavā*; Tib. *skyabs kyi bdag nyid*.

³³⁹ Skt. *advayadharmatva*; Tib. *gnyis med chos nyid*.

³⁴⁰ It is interesting to note that the term *chos nyid* seems to have a different meaning in the root text, where it translates the Sanskrit term *dharmatva*, as opposed to *dharmatā*, which seems to be the term

The meaning of “changeless” [69] [is that] it is an indestructible continuum. The explanation of this [is that this is so] because it is the very excellence which is unaltered by contaminated karma.

2.2.8. Explanation of the meaning of “inseparable of excellences”

The eight point, the exposition of the meaning of “inseparability of excellences” has three [subdivisions]: (1) a brief exposition, (2) an extensive explanation, and (3) a summary.

2.2.8.1. Brief exposition

In regard to the first [subdivision]:

gang phyir de ni chos sku de ni de bzhin gshegs ||
de ni 'phags pa'i bden pa don dam mya ngan 'das ||
de phyir nyi dang zer bzhin yon tan dbyer med pas ||
sangs rgyas nyid las ma gtogs mya ngan 'das pa med || (I.84)

**Why is this [thoroughly purified *dhātu*] the *dharmakāya*,
the Tathāgata, the truth of the noble ones,
and the ultimate nirvāṇa?³⁴¹
Because, being inseparable from the excellences,
like the sun and its rays,
there is no nirvāṇa apart from buddhahood.**

One might wonder whether others apart from buddhas, [i.e.] śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, also partake in the final nirvāṇa. Since the utterly pure nirvāṇa is a synonym for the *dharmakāya* of the tathāgata and so forth, it is taught that śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas do not partake in the inseparable excellences, which have all the countless aspects and so forth.

Rong-ston refers to in his commentary. Apparently, this stems from the fact that both suffixes, *-tā* and *-tva*, are rendered with *nyid* in Tibetan.

³⁴¹ Tib. *don dam mya ngan 'das*; Skt. *paramārthanirvṛti* (“ultimate extinction”).

Note that in his commentary on RGV I.84 and I.86, Rong-ston reads ultimate (*don dam*) either as an apposition to the noble truth (*'phags pa'i bden pa*) or as an adjective, in which case we could render the expression with “the ultimate truth of the noble ones.” He writes (LS: 69,5–6): *khamsh shin tu rnam par dag pa de ni chos sku dang | de ni de bzhin shegs pa dang | de ni 'phags pa'i 'gog pa'i bden pa don dam pa dang | de ni mya ngan las 'das pas te bzhi po don [...]*. For a translation of this passage see below.

There is no attainment of the final nirvāṇa apart from [the state] of perfect buddhahood because, just as the *maṇḍala* of the sun and its light rays are not differentiable, the four excellences are [also] not differentiable.

One may further wonder why this is so.

It is so because the thoroughly purified *dhātu* and [these] four: the *dharmakāya*, the tathāgata, the truth of cessation of the noble ones, [i.e.] the ultimate truth,³⁴² and nirvāṇa, have the same meaning.³⁴³

2.2.8.2. Extensive explanation

The second [subdivision], the extensive exposition has two parts: (1) an explanation of the first half of the verse, and (2) an explanation of the second half.

2.2.8.2.1. Explanation of the first half of the verse

This first [part] has two [subdivisions]: [70] (1) an explanation of the synonyms by means of definitions and (2) an explanation of the differentiation between the definitions.

2.2.8.2.1.1. Explanation of the synonyms by means of definitions

In regard to the first [subdivisions]:

mdor na zag med dbyings la ni ||
don gyi rab tu dbye ba bzhis ||
chos kyi sku la sogs pa yi ||
rnam grangs bzhir ni rig par bya || (I.85)

**In brief, since in regard to the uncontaminated expanse
there are four divisions of meaning,
it should be known as (having) four synonyms,
(i.e.) *dharmakāya* and so forth.**

In brief, the expanse devoid of the contaminations of the two obscurations is to be known as having the four synonyms of *dharmakāya* and so forth.

One may wonder how this is so. It is so on account of the four divisions of the definition [of the *dharmakāya*].

³⁴² *phags pa'i 'gog pa'i bden pa don dam pa.*

³⁴³ Lit.: “[...] are subsumed in one meaning.”

2.2.8.2.1.2. Explanation of the divisions of the definition

In regard to the second [subdivision]:

sangs rgyas chos dbyer med pa dang ||
de rigs de bzhin thob pa dang ||
brdzun med slu med chos nyid dang ||
gdod nas rang bzhin zhi nyid do || (I.86)

**The buddha-qualities are inseparable,
Attainment of the *gotra* as it is,
Not false, undeceiving nature,³⁴⁴ and
From the beginning by nature peace.**

The expanse devoid of the contaminations of the two obscurations, the *dharmin*, is called “*dharmakāya*” because of its abiding inseparably from the all the qualities of a buddha such as the powers and so forth.

It is called “tathāgata” because of having attained the realisation of the *gotra* of the six sources [of perception],³⁴⁵ suchness just as it is.

It is called “the truth of cessation,” [i.e.] the ultimate truth, because it is the pure and ultimate nature, which is neither false nor deceiving.

It is known as “nirvāṇa” because the adventitious defilements [which are placed] on that which is naturally pure from the beginning are pacified.

2.2.8.2.2. Explanation of the second half of the verse

The second [part], the explanation of the second half of the verse, has four [subdivisions]: (1) the meaning of “buddha” and “nirvāṇa” is not different, (2) the inseparability of “liberation” and “nirvāṇa,” (3) the cause for accomplishing the excellences, and (4) the common properties (*chos mthun*) of the inseparable excellences.

³⁴⁴ Tib. *chos nyid*; Skt. *dharmitva*.

³⁴⁵ Tib. *skye mched drug gi rigs*. The expression “six *āyatanas* or sources [of perception]” stands here for sentient beings endowed with those sources. Asaṅga’s commentary gives the following quote from the **Ṣaḍāyatanasūtra* which, as Takasaki remarks, is not extant: “[This Germ], having attained the Absolute Essence, has come down since beginningless time from one existence to another existence assuming various forms consisting of six organs of cognition, (i.e. in the form of various living beings).” (Takasaki 1966: 260; Johnston 1950: 55,16–17; Nakamura 1967: 109,6–7.)

On the *ṣaḍāyatanagotra* see also Ruegg 1969: 266.

2.2.8.2.2.1. The meaning of “buddha” and “nirvāṇa” is not different

In regard to the first [subdivision]:

rnam kun mngon par byang chub dang ||³⁴⁶
dri ma bag chags bcas spangs pa ||
sangs rgyas mya ngan 'das pa ni ||
dam pa'i don de gnyis med nyid || (I.87[a])

**Manifest awakening [in regard to] all aspects and
the abandonment of defilements together with [their] imprints,³⁴⁷
in the ultimate sense there is no duality
with regard to buddhahood [and] nirvāṇa.**

Because the four synonyms, [i.e.] the *dharmakāya* of the tathāgata etc., are subsumed in one meaning, [71] in the ultimate sense there is no duality with regard to “buddha”—who has manifestly and completely awakened to all aspects just as they are and however many there are—and “nirvāṇa”—which has abandoned the defilements of the two obscurations together with their imprints. Therefore, as long as buddhahood has not been attained, the ultimate nirvāṇa is not attained [either].

2.2.8.2.2.2. The inseparability “liberation” and “nirvāṇa”

In regard to the second [subdivision]:

rnam pa thams cad grangs med pa ||
bsam med dri med yon tan dang ||
dbyer med mtshan nyid thar pa ste ||
thar pa gang de de bzhin gshegs || (I.87[b])³⁴⁸

**Liberation, [has as its] characteristic to be inseparable from
the excellences in all [their] aspects,
which are innumerable, inconceivable, and undefiled.
Such liberation is the tathāgata.**

The *dharmakāya* of the tathāgata is:

³⁴⁶ My reading follows Nakamura (1967: 109,20). The Derge RGV reads: *rnam kun mngon rdzogs byang chub dang* ||. This same wording is found in Rong-ston's commentary as well.

³⁴⁷ Tib. *bag chags*; Skt. *vāsana*. Takasaki (1966: 261) reads “roots.”

³⁴⁸ This verse is not counted as part of the RGV in Johnston's edition (1950: 56,14–15 and n. 6), who attributes it to the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. Takasaki (1966: 262, n. 471) adds that the place within this sūtra remains untraced.

- (1) [endowed with] all aspects because the *gotra* of excellences is nunimpaired (or complete without anything missing);
- (2) not countable or immeasurable, because the divisions of [its] radiance are limitless.
- (3) profound and inconceivable for the conceptual intellect because it is impossible to fathom the number and powers [of its excellences]; and
- (4) undefiled and pure because the two obscurations are abandoned together with their imprints.

The *dharmakāya* which possesses the characteristic of [being endowed with these] four inseparably is liberation, [i.e.] the ultimate nirvāṇa.

Because such liberation is the tathāgata, if buddhahood is not yet attained, one does not attain [this liberation].

The nirvāṇa of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas is not the ultimate nirvāṇa.

In the *Dpal phreng gi mdo* (Skt. *Śrīmāladeviṣiṃhanādasūtra*) it was taught:

It is so, because the path is long, a town is magically created for the tired traveller in the middle of an empty plane. Similarly [the nirvāṇa of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas] is an irreversible means for [the followers of] the inferior vehicle of the Lords of Dharma, the perfect buddhas.³⁴⁹

[72] Thus, [the assertion that] the *Rgyud bla [ma]* belongs to the Cittamātra school is refuted.³⁵⁰

2.2.8.2.2.3. The cause for accomplishing the excellences

In regart to the third [subdivision]:

ji ltar ri mo 'dri byed pa ||

³⁴⁹ This quote actually comes from Asaṅga's RGVV on I.87 (Johnston 1950: 56,16–17; Nakamura 1967: 111,9–10; Takasaki 1966: 262), where he comments on the following short passage from the ŚMS: *nirvāṇam iti bhagavann upāya eṣa tathāgatānām iti*. (D: 264a5: *bcom ldan 'das yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa zhes bgyi ba 'di ni de bzhin gshegs pa rnams kyi thabs lags so ||*.)

³⁵⁰ In other words, if the RGV claims that all beings without exception can attain buddhahood, it cannot be counted as a Cittamātrā scripture. Indeed, in scriptures categorized as Yogācāra (or Cittamātrā), such as the *Sandhinirmocanasūtra* or the *Madhyāntavibhāga* and so forth, there is mention of three definite types of *gotras* leading to three different results, one uncertain *gotra*, and one class of beings being devoid of any spiritual propensity (*agotra*). In the scriptures counted among the Madhyamaka literature however, such as the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* or the *Madhyamakāvatāra* and so forth, these statements are not taken literally. Ultimately, there can be no difference between beings, as all are devoid of own-being. On the meaning of the term *gotra* according to the different philosophical see Seyfort Ruegg 1976, as well as the first part of his *Théorie* (1969).

gzhan dang gzhan la mkhas pa dag ||
gang zhig yan lag gang shes pa ||
de gzhan des zin³⁵¹ med par 'gyur || (I.88)

des na 'di la khyed kun gyis ||
nga yi gzugs ni gyis shig ces ||
mnga' bdag rgyal pos de dag la ||
bka' yis ras ni byin pa dang || (I.89)

de nas de ni thos gyur te ||
ri mo'i las la rab sbyor ro ||
de la mngon par sbyor rnam las ||
gcig cig yul gzhan song gyur na || (I.90)

de ni yul gzhan song bas na ||
de ma tshang phyir ri mo de ||
yan lag thams cad yongs rdzogs par ||
mi 'gyur bzhin zhes dper byas so || (I.91)

**Suppose there were variously skilled painters,
those knowledgeable in one area
unable to complete another [part].**

**Further, a mighty king gives them a cloth with the order:
“On this [I order] a portrait of mine to be realised
by all of you [together].”**

**Having heard this [order] from him,
they set out in their painting work.
Among those applying themselves to this,
one left alone for another country.**

**Since this [painter] went to another country
[the group] was incomplete,
and therefore the painting was not completed in all of its parts.
Thus the example is given.**

The cause for accomplishing the four excellences is the supreme knowledge realising emptiness endowed with all aspects of the means.³⁵² This is demonstrated by means of the example of the painters.³⁵³

³⁵¹ Nakamura (1967 : 111,19): *des gzhan des 'dzin med par 'gyur ||*. I followed Derge (58b3 and 105a4) in this case, since *zin pa* seems to be a better rendering for *ava-√dhr* (“ascertain”, “understand”).

³⁵² Tib. *thabs kyi rnam kun dang ldan pa'i stong nyid*. The meaning of this is given in the commentary to the next verse.

Suppose there are many skilled painters, certain painters being particularly skilled in [painting] individually different [parts of the body such as] the head and so forth. Those who know [how to paint certain] parts [of the body, such as] the head and so forth, will certainly not finish [the drawing of] other parts, [for] they will not know [how to do it].

Now, [suppose] the ruler of a land, the king, having given to those master painters a painting cloth, instructs them with these words: “All you master painters, complete a portrait of me, the king.” Then the painters, having heard this command of the king, individually set out to execute the task of painting whatever [the part of] the portrait³⁵⁴ they knew [how to paint]. Among those engaged in painting this portrait, the one who knew [how to paint] the head left for another country. Then, since the artist skilled in painting the head was missing, the painting of the king’s portrait was not completed. This is the example given.

de rnams 'dri byed gang dag yin ||
sbyin dang tshul khrims bzod la sogs ||
rnam pa kun gyi mchog ldan pa ||
stong pa nyid ni gzugs su brjod || (I.92)

Who are those painters?
[They are] giving, discipline, patience, and so forth.
Emptiness endowed with all supreme aspects³⁵⁵
is said to be the form [of the king].

What is illustrated by the artists painting the different parts [of the portrait]?

[They stand for] giving, discipline, patience, [73] diligent effort, and so forth, [i.e.] all the means for accomplishing buddhahood.

In this way, from supreme knowledge which realises emptiness endowed with all supreme aspects of the means, [i.e.] giving and so forth, the excellence of every aspect gets accomplished. [Thus] a buddha’s excellences endowed with all supreme aspects of the excellences, [such as] the powers and so forth, are completed.

³⁵³ This illustration is taken from the *Ratnacūḍasūtra* (RCP). See Takasaki 1966: 263, n. 484.

³⁵⁴ Lit.: painting.

³⁵⁵ Tib. *rnam pa kun gyi mchog ldan pa'i stong pa nyid*; Skt. *sarvākāraṇapetā śūnyatā*. Takasaki (1966: 264) “non-substantiality endowed with all sorts of excellences.”

Because on the level of buddhahood every single [*pāramitā*, such as] giving and so forth, is absolutely limitless, [they] are immeasurable. Because it is impossible to fathom [their] number and powers, [they] are inconceivable. Because of having cleared the imprints of [their] opposites, [i.e.] stinginess and so forth, they are the culmination of perfect purity.

2.2.8.2.2.4. The common properties of the inseparable excellences

The fourth [subdivision] has two parts: (1) the general common properties and (2) the particular common properties.

2.2.8.2.2.4.1. General common properties

In regard to the first [part]:

shes rab ye shes rnam grol rnam ||
gsal dang 'phro dang dag phyir dang ||
tha dad med phyir 'od dang zer ||
nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor rnam dang mtshungs || (I.93)

**Supreme knowledge, wisdom, and complete liberation are
similar to the light, the rays, and the orb of the sun
due to their clarity, radiance, and purity,
and because they are indifferentiable.**

The three aspects of (1) the luminosity of the sun, (2) the radiance of [its] light rays, and (3) [its] purity, are possessed inseparably by the *maṇḍala* of the sun. They are like (1) supreme knowledge which knows [things] as they are, (2) the wisdom which knows [things] in their multiplicity, and (3) the purity of being completely liberated from that which is to be abandoned, because [these] three are possessed inseparably by the undefiled expanse.

2.2.8.2.2.4.2. Particular common properties

In regard to the second [part]:

des na sangs rgyas ma thob par ||
mya ngan 'das pa mi 'thob ste ||
'od dang 'od zer spangs nas ni ||
nyi mab lta bar mi nus bzhin || (I.94)

**Therefore, without the attainment of buddhahood,
nirvāṇa is not attained;
just as one will not be able to see the sun
once the light and the light rays are removed.**

Knowing [things] as they are is similar to the luminosity of the sun,³⁵⁶ for it illuminates the way [things] are just as they are. Knowing [things] in their multiplicity is similar to the sun rays' radiance, [74] for it radiates onto the appearance of the multiplicity [of things]. Complete liberation is similar to the pure light of the *maṇḍala* of the sun, for it is pure from the defilements of the two obscurations.

2.2.8.3. Summary:³⁵⁷

Therefore, as long as buddhahood—[i.e.] the realisation of a wisdom devoid of attachment and obstruction³⁵⁸—is not obtained, nirvāṇa—[i.e.] the abandonment which frees from all obscurations—will not be obtained [either], just as [one] will not be able to see the orb of the sun, after [its] light and light rays have been removed.

For these [reasons] it is taught that there is no final nirvāṇa for śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas. However, it is not taught that there is no mere passing beyond sorrow [for them].

2.3. Summary:

The third [subdivision], the summary:

*de ltar rgyal ba'i snying po yi ||
rnam gzhas rnam pa bcu zhes brjod ||* (I.95[a])

**Thus has been expounded presentation of
buddha-nature (*jinagarbha*) in ten points.**

Thus, buddha-nature has been expounded by means of a presentation in ten points.
This ends the teaching on the presentation in ten points.

³⁵⁶ LS (73,6) and G (73,5) both read: *nyi ma'i 'od gsal*. K (122,17) has: *nyi ma'i 'od zer gsal*.

³⁵⁷ K omits this whole passage.

³⁵⁸ This phrase means it is a wisdom free from the two obscurations of mental afflictions and their imprints.

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Appendix II - Zusammenfassung

In meiner Diplomarbeit „Rong-ston über Buddha-Natur: ein Kommentar zum vierten Kapitel des *Ratnagotravibhāga* (v. I.27–95[a])“, geht es vornehmlich um die Darstellung der Interpretation eines wichtigen tibetischen buddhistischen Gelehrten aus dem 14/15 Jh. einer philosophischen Abhandlung aus Indien, die auf das 5 Jh. n.u.Z. zurückdatiert wird. Das Thema dieser Abhandlung, dem *Ratnagotravibhāga*, ist die Buddha-Natur (Skt. *tathāgatagarbha*; Tib. *de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po*). Sie stellt, je nach Interpretation, entweder das grundlegende Potenzial der Lebewesen zur Erleuchtung dar, oder aber deren grundsätzlich bereits erleuchtete, jedoch von abtrennbaren geistigen Befleckungen verdeckte, Natur. Dieses Konzept wurde zu einem zentralen Thema in der Entwicklung der Mahāyāna Tradition und zum Gegenstand zahlreicher philosophischen Debatten, besonders in Tibet.

Im ersten Teil meiner Arbeit gehe ich auf die ideengeschichtliche Entwicklung dieses Konzeptes ein, indem ich dem Leser, nach einem kurzen Überblick, die kanonischen Quellen, die zur Formulierung dieser Idee beitrugen, vorstelle.

Der zweite Abschnitt behandelt den *Ratnagotravibhāga* als wichtigstes Werk der indischen Kommentarliteratur zu diesem Thema. Hier wird auf textgeschichtliche Fragen eingegangen, sowie auf die Frage der Autorenschaft. Des Weiteren behandelt dieser Abschnitt auch die Rezeption dieses Werkes in Indien und Tibet. Abschließend gebe ich auch einen Überblick über die wichtigsten Etappen der modernen wissenschaftlichen Darstellung der Thematik

Das dritte Kapitel bezieht sich auf den Autor des von mir behandelten Kommentars. Zunächst stelle ich kurz das Leben und Werk von Rong-ston Shes-bya kun-rig (1367–1449) dar und gehe danach auf dessen Darstellung des Themas Buddha-Natur ein. Dieser Abschnitt ist eine systematische Studie des zentralen Teils seines Kommentars und vergleicht seinen Standpunkt mit denen anderer tibetischer Philosophen.

Der vierten und letzte Teil meiner Arbeit besteht aus einer annotierten Übersetzung von Rong-stons Kommentar zum vierten Kapitel des *Ratnagotravibhāga*

Den Abschluss der Arbeit stellen die aus Primär- und Sekundärliteratur bestehende Bibliographie, sowie drei Anhänge dar. Diese bestehen aus (I) einem detaillierten Inhaltsverzeichnis (Tib. *sa bcad*) des übersetzten Kommentars, (II) der deutschen Zusammenfassung der Arbeit und dem Lebenslauf des Verfassers, und (III) einer Faksimile Reproduktion des tibetischen Originals.

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Winter 2000	Caritas, Wien - Mitarbeiter beim Kanisibus
2001	Caritas, Wien - Karwan Haus

EDV Kenntnisse

MS Office, Classical Text Editor (CTE)

༡༩ །གཤེགས་ཉིད་དེ་ཡི་ཕྱིར། །འཕྱོ་ཀུན་དེ་ཡི་སྤྱིང་པོ་ཅན། །ཞིས་ཏེ་ཆོས་ཉིད་རོ་པོ་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྤྱིང་པ་ལ་ཁྱད་པར་མེད་པས་སོ། །སངས་རྒྱལ་གྱི་སྤྱུ་རྩམ་པ་གསུམ་བརྒྱུད་པའི་རིགས་སེམས་
 ཅན་ལ་ཡོད་པ་ནི་སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པའི་རིགས་ཡོད་པའི་དོན་ཏེ། །འགྲེལ་པར་གཏིར་དང་རྒྱན་མིང་དང་རིན་པོ་ཆའི་སྤྱི་དང་འཁོར་ལོས་སྤྱིར་བ་དང་གསེར་གྱི་གཞུགས་
 ཏེ། དཔེ་རྣམས་མ་ལུ་པོ་འདི་དག་གིས་ནི་སངས་རྒྱལ་གྱི་སྤྱུ་རྩམ་པ་གསུམ་བརྒྱུད་པའི་རིགས་ཡོད་པའི་དབང་ཏུ་བྱས་ནས། དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པའི་ཁམས་འདི་དག་སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་སྤྱིང་
 པོར་བསྟན་པ་ཡིན་ལོ་ཞིས་དང་། ཤེས་བྱེད་ཏུ་ཆོས་མཛོན་པའི་མཛོད་ན། ཐོག་མཐེད་པའི་རུས་ཅན་ཁམས། ཆོས་རྣམས་ཀུན་གྱི་གནས་ཡིན་ཏེ། ཇི་ཡོད་པས་ན་འཕྱོ་བ་ཀུན། ལྷ་དཔ་འདས་པ་ཐོབ་
 པར་འཕྱུར། །ཞིས་པ་དྲངས་སོ། །བསྟན་བཤད་གཉིས་ཀས་རྒྱ་དོན་གསུམ་གྱིས་སྤྱིང་པོ་ཅན་ཏུ་བཤད་དེ། ཤིན་ཏུ་འགྲིག་ཅིང་འདི་ཉིད་དགོངས་པར་གདོན་མི་ཟད། །གཉིས་པ་ལ་གསུམ་སྟེ། རྩམ་
 ཆོག་གིས་མཛོད་བསྟན་པ་དང་། རྒྱས་པར་བཤད་པ་དང་། མཇུག་བསྟུ་བཤོ། །དང་པོ་ནི། རོ་པོ་རྒྱ་འབྲས་ལས་ལྷན་འཇུག་པ་དང་། །གནས་སྐབས་དེ་བཞིན་ཀུན་ཏུ་འཕྱོ་བའི་དོན། །རྟག་ཏུ་མི་

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འཕྱུར་ཡོན་ཏུན་དབྱེར་མེད་ནི། །དོན་དམ་དབྱིངས་ཀྱི་དགོངས་དོན་ཡིན་ཞིས་བྱ། །ཞིས་ཏེ། བྱི་མ་ལུ་གཅིག་ལས་གཅིག་འཕྲོས་པའོ། །གཉིས་པ་ལ་བརྒྱད་དེ། རོ་པོ་དང་རྒྱའི་དོན། །འབྲས་བུ་དང་
 ལས་ཀྱི་དོན། །ལྷན་པའི་དོན། །འཇུག་པའི་དོན། །གནས་སྐབས་ཀྱི་དོན། །ཀུན་ཏུ་འཕྱོ་བའི་དོན། །མི་འཕྱུར་བའི་དོན། །ཡོན་ཏུན་དབྱེར་མེད་པའི་དོན་ལོ། །དང་པོ་ལ་གཉིས་ཏེ། ལྷན་མོང་དུ་བསྟན་པ་
 དང་། མོས་པར་བཤད་པའོ། །དང་པོ་ལ་དོ་པོ་ནི། དོན་གསུམ་གྱི་དོ་པོ་ལ་རང་སྤྱི་གཉིས་ལས། ཆོས་སྤྱི་དང་དེ་བཞིན་ཉིད་དང་རིགས་ཀྱི་རང་མཆོན་ནི་རིན་ཆེན་དང་མ་ལམ་འདྲ་ཆུ་བཞིན་དང་།
 སྤྱི་མཆོན་ནི་དཔེ་གསུམ་ཀ་རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་དག་པ་བཞིན་ཏུ་རྟག་ཏུ་རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་ཉོན་མོངས་པ་མེད་པའོ། །རྒྱ་ནི་ཐོག་ཆེན་གྱི་ཆོས་ལ་མོས་པ་དང་། །ལྷག་པའི་ཤེས་རབ་དང་། །ཏིང་ངེ་འཛིན་
 དང་། །སྤྱིང་རྩེ་ཆེན་པོ་ལས་བྱུང་བ་སྟེ། དེ་འདྲ་དོན་གསུམ་གྱི་རྒྱ་རྩེ་ལྷན་ཡིན་ཞིན། །ཡོན་ཏུན་བཞིན་ལྷན་གྱི་ཆོས་སྤྱི་དང་། དེ་བཞིན་ཉིད་ཀྱི་རི་མ་སྤྱིང་བ་དང་། མཛོན་ཏུ་བྱེད་པའི་རིགས་ཀྱིས་སྤྱིང་
 བ་དང་། རུས་པ་འཕེལ་བའི་རྒྱ་ཡིན་པས་སོ། །གཉིས་པ་ལ་དང་པོ་དང་། རྒྱ་བཤད་པ་གཉིས་ཀྱི། དང་པོ་ནི། དོན་གསུམ་གྱི་རང་མཆོན་ལས་བསྟན་པ་ནི་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པའི་ཆོས་སྤྱི་ནི་བསམ་

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རྒྱ བའི་རང་བཞིན་ཏུ་རྩ་གཅིག་པས་སྟེ། ཇི་ལྟར་གནས་གསུམ་པོ་འདི་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཆེན་པོ་དང་ཆོས་མཚའ་ས་པར་བསྟན་ཏེ། འབྲས་བུའི་ལྷན་པ་ལ་སོ་སོའི་ཆོས་མཐུན་ནི། སྤྱི་བ་གཉིས་ཀྱི་དྲི་
 མ་མེད་པའི་གནས་ཏེ་དབྱིངས་ལ་མ་འདྲོན་ཤེས་སྟགས་ལྟ་ནི་མར་མེའི་སྤང་བ་དང་ཆོས་མཐུན་ཏེ། རང་རང་གི་དོན་རྒྱུད་བའི་མི་མཐུན་རྟུགས་ཀྱི་ལྷན་པ་འཛུམས་པས་སྟེ། བླ་གཞི་དཀྱིལ་ཤེས་ནི་དྲི་
 བ་དང་ཆོས་མཚའ་ས་ཏེ། ལས་ཉེན་གྱི་བུད་ཤིང་མ་ལྟས་པ་བསྟེན་པས་སྟེ། གནས་ལྟར་པ་དྲི་མ་མེད་པ་ནི་མ་དོག་དང་ཆོས་མཚའ་ས་ཏེ། ཉེན་སྤྱི་བ་སྤངས་པས་དྲི་མ་མེད་ཅིང་། ཤེས་སྤྱི་བ་སྤངས་པས་
 དག་ལ། དེ་གཉིས་ཀ་སྟོ་བུར་བ་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་རང་བཞིན་མིན་པས་འོད་གསལ་བའོ། རྫུ་འཛིན་ཆོས་མཐུན་ནི་མར་མེ་དང་མར་མེའི་སྤང་བ་སྟགས་དབྱིར་མེད་པ་བཞིན་ཏུ་དྲི་མ་མེད་པའི་དབྱིངས་དང་།
 མི་སྤྱི་བ་པའི་རྒྱུད་ཀྱི་ཆོས་བདུན་པོ་འདི་རྩ་མཐུན་པར་དབྱི་བ་མེད་པར་ལྷན་པ་ནི། སེམས་ཅན་ལ་རྒྱལ་བའི་སྤྱིང་པོ་ཡོད་པར་བསྟན་ཏེ། གང་གིས་ན་དེ་
 ཉིད་གཞིགས་པ་སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱིས་སྟེ། ཇི་ལྟར་ན་ཆོས་ཅན་སོ་སོའི་སྤྱི་བ་དང་འཕགས་པ་སྤྱི་བ་དང་རྩོགས་པའི་སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་དེ་བཞིན་ཉིད་ཀྱི་འཕྲུག་པའི་དབྱི་བ་ལས་སྟེ། གང་ལས་ན་ཤིར་ཕྱིན་

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སྟགས་ལས་སྟེ། གང་གི་དོན་ཏུ་ན་རྩ་མ་པར་མི་རྟོག་པའི་ལེ་ཤེས་བསྟེན་པའི་དོན་ཏུ་འོ། ལྷ་ལ་ན་བྱང་སེམས་རྩམས་ལ་བསྟན་ཏེ། ཕྱི་མ་གསུམ་འབྲེལ་པ་ལས་སྤངས་པའོ། བཤད་པ་ནི། འཕྲུག་པ་
 གསུམ་པོ་གང་ཞིན། སོ་སོ་སྤྱི་བ་འདུ་ཤེས་དང་སེམས་དང་ལྟ་བུ་བཞིན་ཅི་ལྟོག་དང་། བདེན་པ་མཐོང་བ་འཕགས་པ་སྤྱི་བ་ཕྱིན་ཅི་མ་ལོག་པ་དང་། དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ་
 སྤྱི་བ་པ་གཉིས་བཀ་ཆགས་དང་བཅས་པ་སྤངས་པས་ཡང་དག་པ་ཇི་ལྟར་བཞིན་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་ཅི་མ་ལོག་པ་སྤྱི་བ་མེད་པས་འཕྲུག་པ་ཉིད་དོ། ཆོས་སྤྱི་བ་འཕྲུག་པ་སྤྱི་མ་གཉིས་དང་རིགས་ལ་ཕྱི་མ་མེད་
 པས་རང་བཞིན་དེ་བཞིན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་འཕྲུག་པ་སྟེ། འབྲེལ་པར་ཆོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་དེ་བཞིན་ཉིད་རྩམ་པར་དག་པ་རྫུ་འཛིན་མཚན་ཉིད་བསྟན་པ་གང་ཡིན་པ་དེ་ལ་ཞིས་པའོ། གནས་སྤྱི་བས་ཀྱི་དོན་ལ་
 བསྟན་པ་ནི། དེ་བཞིན་ཉིད་ལ་གསུམ་ཏུ་དབྱིར་ཡོད་ན་དེ་བཞིན་ཉིད་ཏུ་མར་ཐལ་ལོ་ཞིན། ཆོས་ཅན་གྱི་གནས་སྤྱི་བས་གསུམ་ཏུ་ཕྱི་ཤི་ཆོས་ཉིད་རང་བཞིན་རྩམ་དག་གི་སྟོན་པ་སྤྱི་བ་
 མིན་པས་མི་འགལ་ཞིས་ཉིན་པ་སྟེ། ལམས་དེ་དྲི་མ་མ་དག་པའི་གནས་སྤྱི་བས་སྤྱི་བ་སེམས་ཅན་གྱི་ལམས་ཅན་ཉིད་ཅིང་མཐོང་སྟེ། ཅི་རིགས་པས་དག་པའི་

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ཇི་མཆོག་དང་ལུན་པས་གཞན་དོན་ཏུ་སྐྱེ་བ་སྟགས་སུ་སྟོན་པ་དེ་ཉིད་ཀྱི་ཕྱིར། གཉིས་པ་མ་གྲགས་པའི་སྟོན་པ་ལ་ཞུགས་པའི་སྟོན་པའི་བྱང་སེམས་
དེ་ནི་ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱིས་འཇིག་རྟེན་ཐམས་ཅད་ལས་འདས་ཀྱང་སྟོང་རྫིས་འཇིག་རྟེན་ལས་མ་གྲལ་པའི་རྟོག་པོ། །ཀལ་ཏེ་འཇིག་རྟེན་ལས་འདས་ན་འཇིག་རྟེན་ལས་མ་གྲལ་པར་འགལ་ལོ་ཞི-
ན། མི་འགལ་ཏེ་འཇིག་རྟེན་ཀྱི་དོན་ཏུ་འཇིག་རྟེན་ན་གནས་ཀྱང་འཇིག་རྟེན་ཀྱི་དྲི་མས་མ་གྲོས་པར་སྟོན་པས་སོ། ཁྱིམ་པ་སྤྱོད་ཀྱང་དུ་སྟེས་ཀྱང་རྩ་ཡིས་གྲོས་པ་མེད་པ་བཞིན་ཏུ་སྟོན་པ་ལ་
ཞུགས་པའི་བྱང་སེམས་དེ་ནི་གཞན་དོན་ཏུ་འཇིག་རྟེན་ཏུ་སྟེས་ཀྱང་འཇིག་རྟེན་ཀྱི་རྩི་མས་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲོས་སོ། །ཀལ་པ་འཇམས་ཅད་ཏུ་ཕྱིར་མི་སྟོག་པའི་སྟོན་པ་ནི། ས་བསྐྱར་པ་དང་དགུ་པ་ལ་
གནས་པའི་བྱང་སེམས་གཞན་དོན་ཀྱི་བྱེད་པ་བསྟུང་དོས་པ་འཛིན་གསུམ་ཏུ་ལུ་སྟུང་པའི་བྱེད་ཀྱིང་འབད་མེད་ཀྱི་དང་
གིས་འབར་བ་བཞིན་ཏུ་རང་དོན་འབད་ཚུ་ཡ་དང་། སྟོམས་འཇུག་ལ་ཏུ་སྟུག་ཏུ་སྟོམས་པར་འཇུག་ཏུ་སྟོམས་པ་ལ་དབང་བཅའ་ཐོབ་

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