

ORNA ALMOGI

The Materiality and Immanence of Gnosis in Some rNying-ma Tantric Sources*

1. INTRODUCTION

In certain rNying-ma (“Ancient”) tantric sources one finds the notion that gnosis is immanent in the human body, or more precisely, in the centre of the heart. From the description of gnosis found in these sources (i.e. as having, for example, colours and shapes), one gets the impression that the gnosis abiding in the body is in a way understood as a material entity. In this paper I shall attempt to present what may be called the meta-physiology of this gnosis and its abode as conceived in these sources. First of all I shall briefly look into the perception and role of the human body in Buddhism in general, and then discuss shortly the concept of the inherence and immanence of gnosis and the soteriological goal and models relevant to the discussion. This will be followed by a discussion of gnosis itself, which is conceived of as a focal point of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* that is laid bare at some critical moments such as death, and if recognised could trigger the collapse of the entire saṃsāric machinery.

2. THE PERCEPTION AND ROLE OF THE HUMAN BODY IN BUDDHISM

In non-Mahāyāna Buddhism, the psycho-physiological complex of a person comprising five aggregates (*phung po lnga: pañcaskandha*) is considered impure, impermanent, painful, and non-substantial. In particular, the human body is perceived as consisting of thirty-six impure substances¹ and is often meditated upon on the basis of nine

* I would like to express my thanks to Prof. Eli Franco for his useful comments and to Philip Pierce for proofreading this paper.

¹ These impure substances (*mi gtsang ba'i rdzas*) are various bodily parts and fluids—hair, nails, flesh, bones, bladder, liver, pus, blood, excrement, and the like. The list of thirty-six, however, varies slightly from one source to another. See, for example, the lists found in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, p. 209.3–11 (a translation is found in Bendall

notions of repulsive [objects], that is, by imagining the various stages of the decomposition of the body.² Such meditation is clearly intended to combat one of the numerous intellectual-emotional defilements (*nyon mongs pa: kleśa*)—the greatest challenge for the seekers of salvation in Buddhism—namely, attachment, particularly to one’s body and the bodies of others. In Mahāyāna, the human body is also conceived of as illusory and empty. Nonetheless, despite an apparent negative attitude towards the human body, the usefulness of the body has been recognised as being the basis for human existence, which latter enables one to tread the path to salvation. The Buddha’s teachings are considered as mere aids with the help of which one is to cross the river of *saṃsāra* and are thus often compared to a boat that one leaves behind after crossing the river.³ This analogy is occasionally also employed in the case of the human body—for example, in Śāntideva’s *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, where it is stated that a *bodhisattva* should view his body as being like a boat and use it to fulfill the needs of living beings.⁴ In the tantric context, the human body, which plays now a greater role, particularly in the so-called higher tantric systems, is often compared to

& Rouse 1922: 202); *Arthaviniścayasūtra*, pp. 23.5–24.4 (reference to further sources and a short discussion of the development of the list and differences between existing lists are provided by the editor in n. 9), and p. 41, where a slightly different list is given. Note that most of these substances are included in the list of bodily parts found in the *Mahāvvyutpatti*, nos. 3929–4065.

² The nine kinds of meditation on repulsive [objects] (*mi sdug pa sgom pa: aśubhabhāvanā*), also referred to as nine notions of repulsive [objects] (*mi sdug pa’i ’du shes dgu*), are listed in the *Mahāvvyutpatti* (nos. 1155–1164) as follows: (1) the notion of a bluish [corpse] (*rnam par (b)sngos pa’i ’du shes: vinīlakasaṃjñā*), (2) the notion of a putrefying [corpse] (*rnam par rnags pa’i ’du shes: vidhūtika/vipūyaka-saṃjñā*), (3) the notion of a maggot-infested [corpse] (*rnam par ’bus gzhig/ bzhigs pa’i ’du shes: vipaḍumakasaṃjñā*), (4) the notion of a decomposing [corpse] (*rnam par bam pa’i/ber ba’i ’du shes: vyādhmātakasaṃjñā*), (5) the notion of a reddish [corpse] (*rnam par dmar ba’i ’du shes: vilohitakasaṃjñā*), (6) the notion of a devoured [corpse] (*rnam par zos ba’i ’du shes: vikhāditakasaṃjñā*), (7) the notion of a lacerated [corpse] (*rnam par mthor ba’i ’du shes: vikṣiptakasaṃjñā*), (8) the notion of a burned [corpse] (*rnam par tshig pa’i ’du shes: vidagdhakasaṃjñā*), and (9) the notion of a skeleton (*rus gong gi ’du shes: asthisamjñā*). See also *BHSD*, s.v. *aśubhabhāvanā*, where several sources are provided.

³ For references, see Almqvist 2009: 272, n. 98.

⁴ *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 5.70. See Steinkellner 1981: 57 (for a German translation of the pertinent verse) and Crosby & Skilton 1995: 40 (for an English translation). See also *Caṭuḥśataka* 2.1 (Lang 1986: 32 (Tibetan text) and 33 (English translation)).

a boat, here, however, in a somewhat different sense; that is, the body itself is now to be steered to reach the shore of salvation.⁵ One of the arguments offered by some Tibetan Buddhist authors for the essentiality of a human body for tantric practices is the indispensability of a body endowed with the six elements (*khamṣ drug gi bdag nyid can: ṣaḍdhātv-ātma*),⁶ which only a human body is said to possess.⁷ This is apparently because the so-called “white” and “red” *bodhicitta*, that is, the male “semen” and female “blood,” which are substances which only a body endowed with the six elements can possess are necessary for the “secret empowerment” (*gsang ba’i dbang: guhyābhiṣeka*) and “insight-gnosis empowerment” (*shes rab ye shes kyi dbang: prajñāñānābhiṣeka*).⁸ One finds different lists of these six elements. The most common is that of the six (cosmic) elements found already in Pāli sources which include earth, water, fire, wind, space, and the mental element.⁹ In the tantric context, one occasionally finds a slightly different list in which the mental element (*rnam par shes pa’i khamṣ: vijñānadhātu*) is replaced with “gnostic element” (*ye shes kyi khamṣ: jñānadhātu*).¹⁰

⁵ For examples of the analogy of a boat with the human body in the tantric context, see Dasgupta 1962: 44–45 & 90, where several songs by tantric adepts are translated and discussed.

⁶ See Negi 1993–2005, s.v. *khamṣ drug gi bdag nyid can*, where the *Vimalaprabhā* is given as a source. See also Vajragarbha’s *Hevajrapīṇḍārthaṭīkā* 6.73d (Shendge 2004: 44; Tibetan: 123.13), where the expression *ṣaḍdhātukaṃ kulam (khamṣ drug rig can)* is employed.

⁷ See Mi-pham’s *bKa’ brgyad rnam bshad* (pp. 65.4–66.2), where the necessity of a physical body endowed with six elements for the practice of Vajrayāna is discussed.

⁸ For a discussion of “white” and “red” *bodhicitta*, see the section on what has been designated by Dorji Wangchuk “psycho-physiological *bodhicitta*” in Wangchuk 2007: 217–225.

⁹ See, for example, *Majjhima Nikāya* iii 63 (an English translation is found in Horner 1959: 105; Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi 1995: 926, §5), where also other lists of six elements are provided. For a discussion of these six (cosmic) elements, see Langer 2001, chap. 6, which however focuses on the mental element (*viññāna*).

¹⁰ *Tshig mdzod chen mo*, s.v. *khamṣ drug ldan: nam mkha’|rlung|me|chu|sa|ye shes kyi khamṣ rnamṣ ldan pa’i mi’i lus rten gsang sngags rdo rje theg pa sgrub pa’i snod du rung ba*. See also Negi 1993–2005, s.v. *ye shes kyi khamṣ*, where references to the *Vimalaprabhā* are given. Cf. Vajragarbha’s *Hevajrapīṇḍārthaṭīkā* 6.73–74 (Shendge 2004: 44; Tibetan, 123.12–15), where the six elements mentioned consist of the four great elements—earth, water, fire and wind—and in addition semen (*śukra: khu ba*) and (menstrual) blood (*rajas: rdul*), and where *jñānadhātu* is also mentioned, but not as one of the six. This source is cited by Mi-pham in his *Dus ’khor ’grel pa* (p. 710.3–4). Semen and (menstrual) blood are commonly considered

The tantric attitude towards the human body is generally more positive than the one found in non-tantric Buddhism. The body is now conceived of as a microcosm containing the entire universe, is meditatively envisioned as the pure (though illusory) body of a deity, and is not to be abused in any way.¹¹ Most important of all, the body is considered the abode of gnosis, the attainment of which is the soteriological goal of all Buddhist vehicles and the unfolding of which is often referred to in the tantric context as great bliss.¹²

3. THE INHERENCE AND IMMANENCE OF GNOSIS

Normally, gnosis is conceived of as a liberating insight that is acquired by a yogin by sheer dint of sustained and correct meditative practices on the path, which culminates with the gnosis of a *buddha*.¹³ Yet one encounters not only the concept of acquired (or transcendental) gnosis, but also the concept of inherent (or immanent) gnosis, which is changeless. This idea is greatly underscored by the rNying-ma tantric traditions, and such rDzogs-chen expressions as “gnosis that abides on

in Indian works, including Buddhist ones, procreatory elements stemming from the father and mother, respectively (Das 2003: 3–5, §1.5 and 14–29, where the problem of identifying the female fluid is discussed). This reminds one of yet another list of six elements, that is, bone, marrow, and semen, inherited from one’s father, and flesh, skin, and blood, inherited from one’s mother recorded in the *Tshig mdzod chen mo* (s.v. *mngal skyes khams drug*: ‘*dzam bu gling pa’i mi mngal skyes rnams ma’i mngal du tshang bar ldan pa’i khams drug ste pha las thob pa’i rus pa dang| rkang| khu ba bcas gsum dang| ma las thob pa’i sha dang| pags pa| khrag bcas drug*). This list more or less corresponds to the list of seven elements commonly listed in Indian (medical) works which has in addition the “nutrient fluid” or “chyle” (*rasa-dhātu*), and “fat” instead of “skin” (Das 2003: 19–20, § 2.4); “skin,” however, is occasionally included as one of the seven elements, commonly replacing *rasadhātu* (*ibid.* pp. 273ff., §§10.7ff.). It is also reported that there is some confusion between two lists found in tantric literature: one of seven, beginning with skin instead of *rasa*, and of six, again having skin but lacking semen (*ibid.* p. 276, §10.8).

¹¹ On the importance of the body in tantric practices, see Dasgupta 1962: 88–92; Snellgrove 1987: 288–294.

¹² *bKa’ brgyad rnam bshad* (pp. 43.6–44.3). On the notion of great bliss, see Almogi 2009: 134–137.

¹³ It may be noted that although teachings on the gnosis of the Buddha or a *buddha* pervade the diverse Buddhist scriptures, the true existence of such a gnosis has been a subject of debate among Buddhist scholars, particularly in Mādhyamika circles. For more on this issue, see Almogi 2009.

the [universal] ground” (*gzhi gnas kyi ye shes*) and “gnosis that illumines from within” (*nang gsal gyi ye shes*) are quite popular. But the idea that gnosis abides and pervades the body can be found in a number of Indian sources as well. For example, the *Dharmadhātustava* attributed to one Nāgārjuna compares the gnosis which abides in the body wrapped in *kleśas* to milk in a container that is mixed with water, and states that just as a goose is able to extract the milk from the water, so is a yogin able to mine the gnosis abiding in the body from within the *kleśas*. Similarly, the *Caryāmelāpakapradīpa*, apparently roughly citing from the *Dharmadhātustava*, compares the gnosis abiding in the body to a lamp inside a pot that can shine without only if the pot is broken, and so the gnosis can manifest only when the body is “broken” with the help of a master.¹⁴ Other sources, too, such as the *Hevajratantra*,¹⁵ Vajraghaṅṭa’s (or Ghāṅṭāpāda’s) *Cakrasaṃvarapañcakrama*,¹⁶ the *rDo rje me long gi rgyud*,¹⁷ and *dPe chung rang gnas*,¹⁸ a small work

¹⁴ See Wangchuk 2007: 202–203, where sources in which this idea is found, including the *Dharmadhātustava*, *Hevajratantra*, and *Caryāmelāpakapradīpa*, are provided.

¹⁵ The *Hevajratantra* is often cited in this connection by rNying-ma authors. See, for example, the *gSang bdag dgongs rgyan* (p. 23.2–3), *gSang bdag zhal lung* (vol. e, p. 278.1–3), and *bKa’ brgyad rnam bshad* (p. 61.3–4).

¹⁶ *Cakrasaṃvarapañcakrama* (p. 152.13–14):

hṛdaye vartate nityaṃ bindur eko nirakṣarah |
tañ ca bhāvayatāṃ puṃsāṃ jñānam utpadyate dhruvam ||

I thank Prof. Harunaga Isaacson for drawing my attention to the Sanskrit version of this text. The Tibetan text reads (p. 160.8–11; P, fol. 261a5–6; D, fol. 225a5; S, vol. 11, p. 569.15–17):

rtag tu snying la gnas pa yi||
thig le gcig la ’gyur med de||
de sgom byed pa’i skye bo la||
nges par ye shes skye bar ’gyur||

This verse is cited in the *bKa’ brgyad rnam bshad* (p. 61.4).

¹⁷ *rDo rje me long gi rgyud* (p. 536.5–6):

lus can snying la gang gnas pa’i||
rang ’byung zag med ye shes gzugs||
mi shigs thig le bde chen po||
nam mkha’ lta bur kun khyab pa||
mi gnas chos sku’i rang bzhin te||

Cf. the citations in the *gSang bdag zhal lung* (vol. e, p. 429.1–2) and *bKa’ brgyad rnam bshad* (p. 61.3–6).

¹⁸ *dPe chung rang gnas* (P, fol. 594a1; S, vol. 43, p. 1234.18–19):

mi shigs ye shes thig le ni||
sku gsung thugs kyi rdo rje’i bdag||

attributed to Vilāsavajra, are often cited as scriptural support for the idea that this gnosis pervades the body and is changeless. The *rDo rje me long gi rgyud*, for example, describes this inherent and immanent gnosis as self-occurring (*rang byung*), undefiled (*zag med*), an indestructible seminal drop (*mi shigs thig le*), great bliss (*bde ba chen po*), pervasive in the same way as space (*nam mkha' lta bur kun khyab*), unfixed (*mi gnas*), and as having the nature of the *dharmakāya* (*chos sku'i rang bzhin*). Likewise, the *dPe chung rang gnas* describes it as an indestructible gnostic seminal drop (*mi shigs ye shes thig le*), the nature of a *buddha's* Body, Speech, and Mind, free from singularity and plurality, and as appearing in manifold ways, and so indeterminable.

The Buddha Nature (*tathāgatagarbha*) theory is employed to doctrinally legitimize the inherence and immanence of gnosis within one's body,¹⁹ and indeed this gnosis is identified with the Buddha Nature itself.²⁰ Such an idea, however, is not without its doctrinal problems, particularly given its similarity to the non-Buddhist idea of an eternal "soul" (*ātman*). The problem becomes even more acute when the inherent and immanent gnosis, as we shall see later, is described in terms of colours and shapes. One thus sees efforts on the part of rNying-ma scholars to distance the Buddhist idea of inherent and immanent gnosis from the non-Buddhist idea of an eternal soul.²¹

4. THE SOTERIOLOGICAL GOAL AND MODELS

The fact that gnosis is inherently and immanently present and pervasive in the body is in itself regarded as soteriologically irrelevant; that is, unless one explores and exploits this gnosis, one remains bound in *samsāra* and will continue to suffer. Gnosis should be elicited from the body primarily by manipulating the physiological bases skilfully. If gnosis were not found within one's body, it could not be elicited by such techniques, just as oil cannot be gained from sand or butter from water.

*gcig dang du ma rnam spangs pa||
sna tshogs snang ba mtshon du med||.*

Cf. the citation in the *gSang bdag zhal lung* (vol. e, p. 429.2).

¹⁹ See, for instance, the *gSang bdag zhal lung* (vol. e, p. 278.3–6).

²⁰ See, for example, Klong-chen-pa, *Shing rta chen po* (vol. 2, fol. 13b1): *de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po chen po'ang de yin te|*.

²¹ See the *gSang bdag zhal lung* (vol. e, pp. 278.6–280.4).

Different tantric traditions may have one or more models for gaining access to the gnosis inherent and immanent in one's body. Here, I should like to allude to the two tantric soteriological models found in the rNying-ma tantric tradition, namely, the models of (1) "Way of Efficient Strategy" (*thabs lam*) and (2) "Way of Release" (*grol lam*), primarily as presented by Mi-pham rNam-rgyal-rgya-mtsho (1846–1912) and rDo-grub 'Jigs-med-bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma (1865–1926).²² In the rNying-ma tradition, the *sGyu 'phrul rgya mtsho'i rgyud*, regarded as the explanatory tantra of the **Guhyagarbhatantra*, is often quoted as a scriptural authority for the division into these two models.²³ *Thabs lam* uses special yogic techniques called "striking at the core" (*gnad du bsnun pa: marmaprahāra*) of the physical bases (*rten: ādhāra*), namely, the channels (*rtsa: nādī*), vital winds (*rlung: vāyu*), and seminal drops (*thig le: bindu*), and as a result the gnosis emerges inevitably (*btsan thabs su: haṭhena*). This model is subdivided into two types, involving (a) the upper aperture (*steng gi sgo: ūrdhavadvāra*) and (b) the lower aperture (*'og gi sgo: adhodvāra*). *Grol lam*, on the other hand, uses special yogic techniques to strike directly at the core of the gnosis, so that it emerges without having to depend on the body.²⁴

Since *thabs lam* concerns the manipulation of the physiological bases (channels, vital winds, and seminal drops), it is particularly relevant to the present discussion. The idea behind these yogic practices involving the exploitation of one's physiological bases and resources for soteriological purposes is that the various degrees of spiritual realisation and qualities that a *bodhisattva* following the non-tantric

²² For a description of the *thabs lam* and *grol lam*, see Mi-pham's 'Od *gsal snying po* (pp. 47.6–51.6) and rDo-grub's *mDzod lde* (pp. 424.2–440.1). See also Klong-chen-pa's *Yid kyi mun sel* (pp. 143.2–146.2); Lo-chen Dharma-shrī's *gSang bdag dgongs rgyan* (pp. 20.1–23.3); Kong-sprul's *Shes bya mdzod* (pp. 810.2–811.23).

²³ *gSang bdag zhal lung* (vol. e, p. 301.4); *mDzod lde* (p. 424.2–3); *Shes bya mdzod* (p. 810.4): *bshad rgyud rgya mtsho las| grol lam thabs su rnam par bstan|| zhes so||*. The text in the *sGyu 'phrul rgya mtsho'i rgyud* itself reads (p. 10.2): *grol thar [= thabs?]* *lam du rnam par bshad||*.

²⁴ The alchemic procedure of transforming iron into gold instantly by the efficient manipulation of a mineral called *mākṣika* (MW, s.v.) is given as an analogy of the *thabs lam* technique, while the alchemic procedure of transforming iron into gold gradually by efficiently manipulating a jewel called *kaustubha* (MW, s.v.) is given as an analogy of the *grol lam* technique (*gSang bdag zhal lung*, pp. 303.1–304.2; 'Od *gsal snying po*, pp. 48.1–49.5; *mDzod lde*, p. 426.2–3). For more on these models, see Wangchuk 2007: 224–225.

Mahāyāna is said to accrue at the various stages (*sa: bhūmi*) and on the various paths (*lam: mārga*), and the two kinds of accumulation, namely, the accumulation of beneficial resources (*bsod nams kyi tshogs: pūnya-sambhāra*) and the accumulation of gnosis (*ye shes kyi tshogs: jñāna-sambhāra*), can be accrued by a yogin by making his normally dysfunctional channels, vital winds, and seminal drops functional (*las su rung ba*).²⁵

5. THE META-PHYSIOLOGY ACCORDING TO THE *gSANG THIGS* AND RELATED WORKS

We shall now delve briefly into “meta-physiology,” particularly its relation to immanent gnosis and its abode. It is not possible to provide a comprehensive picture of the divergent descriptions of the channels, vital winds, and seminal drops found in the various old and new tantric sources. Even within the rNying-ma tradition alone there seems to be no one shared understanding of the matter. I shall, therefore, limit myself to a few works of the tradition of the **Guhyagarbhatantra*, the most fundamental tantra of the rNying-ma school, and primarily to a short work entitled *gSang thigs/thig* (i.e. *Secret Seminal Drop*) and a commentary on it, both attributed to the Indian master Vimalamitra.²⁶ Notably enough, although these two works are classified as Mahāyoga texts, their content seems to be also found in texts belonging to the Anuyoga and Atiyoga systems.

I shall begin with the main channels and the six points of psycho-physiological energy called *cakras*. Commonly there are said to be three axes (*srog shing: akṣa*)²⁷ and four or six *cakras*. The three axes are:²⁸

²⁵ *Shing rta chen po* (vol. 2, fol. 106a1–b4). The *sGyu 'phrul rdo rje* is cited to bolster this idea.

²⁶ The *gSangs thigs* (spelt there *gSang tig*) is listed in the *lDe'u chos 'byung* (p. 318.15) as one of the thirty-one minor pieces of literature on the Māyājāla cycle.

²⁷ See, for example, the *sGyu 'phrul rgya mtsho'i rgyud* (p. 11.1–2):

'khor lo bzhi dang srog shing gsum||
me rlung 'gro bas nam mkha'i ba||
bzho ba steng du rnam par grags||.

This verse is cited in the *Yid kyi mun sel* (p. 145.5–6), *mDzod lde* (p. 427.6), and *Shes bya mdzod* (p. 810.14–16). Elsewhere the three axes are also called the “three chiefs” (*gtso mo gsum*). See, for instance, the *bKa' brgyad rnam bshad* (pp. 58.5, 63.5) and Negi 1993–2005, s.v. *gtso mo*, where the *Hevajratantra* is indicated as a

1. the central main channel, called *dbu ma* or *dbu ma'i rtsa* (*madhyānāḍī*),²⁹ and referred to elsewhere as *kun 'dar ma* (*avadhūtī*)
2. the right main channel, called *ro ma* (*rasanā*)
3. the left main channel, called *rkyang ma* (*lalanā*)

The six *cakras* are identified as:³⁰

1. the “*cakra* of great bliss in the forehead” (*spyi bo bde chen gyi 'khor lo*)
2. the “*cakra* of the Saṃbhoga[kāya] at the throat” (*mgrin pa longs spyod kyi 'khor lo*)
3. the “*cakra* of the Dharma[kāya] at the heart” (*snying ga chos kyi 'khor lo*)
4. the “*cakra* of the Nirmāṇa[kāya] at the navel” (*lte ba sprul pa'i 'khor lo*)
5. the “*cakra* of fire” (*me dkyil*), also called the “fire of Brahmā” (*tshangs pa'i me*), situated four fingers below the navel
6. the “*cakra* of conditions” (*rkyen gyi 'khor lo*), situated below the “*cakra* of fire”

The **Guhyagarbhatantra* tradition emphasises the *cakra* of the Dharma[kāya] at the heart,³¹ which is therefore described in the

source. These three channels are also said to stand like three pillars (*ka ba'i tshul du gnas*). See the *Shing rta chen po* (vol. 2, fols. 9a3, 10a3).

²⁸ *mDzod lde* (p. 428.2): *srog shing gsum ni| dbu rkyang ro gsum mo||*.

²⁹ Negi 1993–2005, s.v. *rtsa* referring to the *Vimalaprabhā*.

³⁰ *mDzod lde* (pp. 427.6–428.2): *'khor lo gsum phrag gnyis ni| spyi bo bde chen gyi| mgrin pa longs spyod kyi| snying ga chos kyi| lte ba sprul pa'i 'khor lo ste rtsa ba'i 'khor lo bzhi dang| de 'og sor bzhi gzhal bar lte ba'i gtum mo las yar 'bar ba rgyud gzhan du tshangs pa'i me zhes grags pa'i me dkyil dang| de'i 'og na me de sbor byed thur sel gyi rlung ste rkyen gyi 'khor lo gnyis so||*. See also the *Shing rta chen po* (vol. 2, fols. 9a5–10a3), where varying numbers of *cakras* are discussed.

³¹ *mDzod lde* (p. 429.6): *lugs 'dir snying ga'i gnad gtso bor byed de|*. See also the *Shes bya mdzod* (p. 810.16–24), where it is stated that the meditative practices involving the manipulation of the *cakras* at the heart, navel, throat, and forehead are taught in the thirteenth chapter of the **Guhyagarbhatantra*, and that the meditative techniques of striking at the core (*gnad du bsnun pa*) of these four *cakras* are called the “quintessential instruction (or rather, here, meditative technique) of Samantabhadra” (*kun tu bzang po'i man ngag*), the “quintessential instruction of Samantabhadra” (*kun tu bzang mo'i man ngag*), the “quintessential instruction of accurate procedure”

associated literature in greater detail, and with which I shall be mainly concerned in this paper, since it is the location where gnosis is said to abide.

(a) *Eight Pure Essence Channels (rtsa'i dwangs ma brgyad) or Eight Petals of Channels (rtsa'i 'dab ma brgyad) in the Centre of the Heart*

The *gSang thigs* and its commentary, which seem to be the main sources for this particular meta-physiology, are not without textual problems.³² Nonetheless the main points can be more or less extracted, occasionally with the help of other works dealing with the same topic, such as Klong-chen-pa's *Shing rta chen po*.³³ According to these works, there are eight pure essence channels (*rtsa'i dwangs/dangs/dwang ma*), commonly referred to in the literature as petals of channels (*rtsa'i 'dab ma*), in the *cakra* of the Dharma[kāya] in the heart. Three of them, described as great, are said to be outer ones, and five of them inner ones. In the centre of the five inner ones there is the seminal drop (*thig le: bindu*) of *bodhicitta* (i.e. *bodhicitta* in its gnoseo-physiological sense). It is located in an empty space within the heart, where the eight pure essence channels form a network with secondary channels (*rtsa bran*) said to resemble a curved rope (*thag pa gug pa*). Of these eight pure essence channels, three are said to be of true reality (*chos nyid kyi rtsa*), one of gnosis (*ye shes kyi rtsa*), three of one's continuum (*rang rgyud kyi rtsa*), and one of qualities (*yon tan gyi rtsa*).³⁴

(*sbyor ba dag pa'i man ngag*), and the “quintessential instruction of great pervasion” (*khyab rdal chen po'i man ngag*), respectively.

³² Most particularly, the commentary does not seem to be a coherent text. It appears that it is the result of the merging of two different commentaries, possibly by two different authors, since each point is explained twice and often slightly differently, not so much, that is, in a contradictory as in either a repetitive or supplementary manner. Moreover, the reading of both the basic text and its commentary is often uncertain. The fact that the extracanonical versions found in the *NyK* often offer readings different from the ones found in the canon only adds to the ambiguity of the reading. To resolve these problems a careful edition of these texts and the consultation of related works will be necessary, a task that cannot be undertaken in the present paper.

³³ *Shing rta chen po* (vol. 2, fols. 8b5–17a3, 50b4–55a2).

³⁴ Note that according to the *bKa' brgyad rnam bshad*, three channels are of true reality, three of gnosis, one of the continuum, and one of qualities (pp. 58.6–59.1): *snying ga'i rtsa 'dab brgyad kyi gsum ni chos nyid kyi rtsa zhes bya| gsum ni ye shes*

These essence channels are described as follows: Inside the channels of true reality there is a yellow light (*'od ser po*), circular in shape (*dbyibs zlum po*) and resembling a mixture of mercury (*dn̄gul chu*) and melted butter (*zhun mar*). Its essence-syllable (*snying po: hr̄daya*) is OM; its phonic seeds (*sa bon: b̄ija*) are SU, situated on top of the essence-syllable, and TRI, situated beneath it. The colour of these three syllables is said to be like the colour of a pitched tent made of silk brocade (*za 'og gi gur phub pa*).

Inside the channel of gnosis there is a blue (*mthing ga*) light that is square in shape, and like a raised rope (*zhags pa bsdogs/thogs pa*).³⁵ It resembles a mirage on the surface of a river in springtime, or a dewdrop (*zil pa*) on the tip of an ash-coloured leaf of grass (*rtsa skya'i kha na*).³⁶ The essence-syllable is HŪM, and the phonic seeds are A, situated on top of the essence-syllable, and NRI, situated beneath it. Inside the channels of one's continuum there is a red light (*'od dmar po*) in the shape of a crescent (*zla gam*). It resembles a red silk pennon (*le brgan lce*) running through a crystal ball (*shel sgong*). The colour is also said to resemble liquid copper tinged with brass. The essence-syllable is ĀḤ,³⁷ and the phonic seeds are PRE, situated on top of the essence-syllable, and DU, situated beneath it. The channel of qualities is described only briefly in the *gSang thigs* and its commentary, and in the other works consulted by me. It can be merely stated at this stage that the light found in it is dark-red (*'od dmar nag*),³⁸ and that the qualities situated in it are said to be both good and bad.

kyi rtsa zhes bya| gcig ni rang rgyud kyi rtsa zhes bya| gcig ni yon tan gyi rtsa zhes bya ste de ltar brgyad do||

³⁵ The precise meaning of *zhags pa bsdogs pa* and its connection with a square shape is not quite clear. Cf. the *Shing rta chen po* (vol. 2, fol. 12a5–6): *zhags pa thogs pa'am sbrul 'khyil ba dang 'dra'o||*. See also the *bKa' brgyad mnam bshad* (p. 59.3), where the shape is also compared to a “coiled snake” (*sbrul dkyus pa*).

³⁶ The text names here as an alternative the colour red in the shape of a crescent (*zla gam*) and compares it to a red silk pennon (*le brgan lce*) running through a crystal ball (*shel sgong*) and compares the light of the following channel to a mirage, and so forth. It seems, however, that the description of these two channels was mistakenly reversed.

³⁷ The forms A and Ā are also found, but they seem to be faulty.

³⁸ This detail is missing in the *gSang thigs* and is supplemented from the *bKa' brgyad mnam bshad* (p. 59.4–5). Note, however, that some paragraphs later there is a reference to the dark-red colour which runs through the channel's pure essence of

The syllables A and NRI are said to run through the breath's impure essences (*snyigs ma: kaṣāya*); SU and TRI, through the channel's impure essences; and PRE and DU, through the blood's impure essences. The channel's pure essence (*rtsa'i dwangs ma*) runs through the yellow light; the breath's pure essence (*dbug kyi dwangs ma*), through the blue; and the blood's pure essence (*khrag gi dwangs ma*), through the red. The phonic seeds are the causes of *samsāra*, and the essence-syllables are the causes of gnosis and thus *nirvāṇa*. These two, namely, the causes of purification and pollution, are said to be commonly mixed with one another, and they in turn to be mixed with the seminal drop of *bodhicitta*.

The yellow light of the channels of true reality houses the fundamental mind (*kun gzhi'i rnam par shes pa: ālayavijñāna*); the blue light of the channel of gnosis, the mental perception (*yid kyi rnam par shes pa: manovijñāna*); the red light of the channels of one's continuum, the defiled mind (*nyon mongs pa'i yid: kliṣṭamanas*); and the dark-red light of the channel of qualities, the five types of sense perception (*sgo lnga'i rnam shes*). Taking birth as a god or a human is said to be facilitated by the mental perception, and the seeds of such births are found in the syllables A and NRI; taking birth as a semi-god (*lha ma yin: asura*) or an animal is facilitated by the fundamental mind, and the seeds of such births are found in the syllables SU and TRI; and taking birth as a hungry ghost (*yi dwags: preta*) or hell-being is facilitated by the perceptions of the senses and the defiled [mind], and the seeds of such births are found in the syllables PRE and DU.³⁹ This arrangement is said to be found in the continuum of each of the sentient beings of the six realms. The above description of the eight essence channels in the heart can thus be summarised in the form of a table as follows:

the five doors, that is, the five sense organs—with no mention, though, of the channel of qualities.

³⁹ The correlation of the phonic seeds TRI and PRE with animals and hungry ghosts, respectively, is according to rDo-grub's *mDzod lde* (p. 431.1–6). The *gSang thigs 'grel pa* has it the other way around, which is obviously an error, evidently due to confusion between these two phonic seeds (TRI being often spelt TRE).

Type of channel	3 channels of true reality (<i>chos nyid kyi rtsa</i>)	1 channel of gnosis (<i>ye shes kyi rtsa</i>)	3 channels of one's continuum (<i>rang rgyud kyi rtsa</i>)	1 channel of qualities (<i>yon tan gyi rtsa</i>)
Colour	yellow	blue	red	dark-red
Shape	circle	square	crescent	
Type of pure essence (<i>dwangs ma</i>)	channel's pure essence (<i>rtsa'i dwangs ma</i>)	breath's pure essence (<i>dbugs kyi dwangs ma</i>)	blood's pure essence (<i>khrag gi dwangs ma</i>)	
Essence-syllable (<i>snying po: hrdaya</i>) = cause of purification/ gnosis / <i>nirvāṇa</i>	OM̐	HŪM̐	ĀḤ	
Phonic seeds (<i>sa bon: bīja</i>) = causes of pollution /ignorance /<i>saṃsāra</i>	SU and TRI run through the channel's impure essence (<i>rtsa'i snyigs ma</i>)	A and NRI run through the breath's impure essence (<i>dbugs kyi snyigs ma</i>)	PRE and DU run through the blood's impure essence (<i>khrag gi snyigs ma</i>)	
Type of mind residing in the channel	Fundamental mind (<i>ālaya-vijñāna</i>)	mental perception (<i>manovijñāna</i>)	defiled mind (<i>kliṣṭāmanas</i>)	five types of sense perception
Birth caused by the pertinent phonic seeds and type of mind	semi-gods & animals	gods & humans	hungry ghosts & hell-beings	

(b) *The Five Pure Essences (dwangs ma lnga)*

The gnosis immanent in the body is closely related to the pure essences just mentioned, which are described as follows:

1. The channel's pure essence (*rtsa'i dwangs ma*), located in the centre of the heart, resembles a white silk thread (*dar dkar gyi skud pa*) and is said to be as thin as 1/50th of the diameter of a strand of a horsetail (*rta rnga*) and to have the form of a cobweb (*ba thag*), serves from beginningless time as the support of the psycho-physiological complex (*phung po'i rten byed*), and therefore is a pure essence of the elements.

On the *samsāric* level it appears as the element of earth, while on the *nirvānic* level it appears as the female deity *Locanā*; it is in fact the gnosis of great emptiness (*stong pa chen po'i ye shes*), for it serves as the base from which everything assumes the nature of the purified *dharmadhātu* (*rnam par dag pa'i ngang du ma gyur pa med pa'i rten byed*).

2. Within the channel's pure essence is the blood's pure essence (*khrag gi dwangs ma*), which resembles cinnabar (*mtshal cog la ma*). This, too, is a pure essence of the elements, for it purifies the psycho-physiological complex (*phung po dag par byed*) from beginningless time. It appears as water, while in reality it is the female deity *Māmakī*. It is in fact the gnosis of equality (*mnyam pa nyid kyi ye shes: samatājñāna*), whose nature it is to collect or gather everything into the sphere apart from anybody's bidding (*bkol ba med par dbyings gcig tu sdud pa'i bdag nyid*).

3. The breath's pure essence (*dbugs kyi dwangs ma*), said to steam like a vapour (*rlangs pa: bāspa*) of fine grains of gold (*sa le sbram*) that have been found beneath the earth, functions from beginningless time as a basis for the lightness and mobility of the psycho-physiological complex (*phung po yang zhing g.yo ba'i rten byed*), and so it, too, is a pure essence of the elements. It appears as wind, but in reality it is the female deity *Samayatārā* (*dam tshig sgröl ma*). It is the gnosis of performing (beneficial) activities (*bya ba sgrub pa'i ye shes: kṛtyānu-ṣṭhānajñāna*), whose nature it is to move in the sphere of great bliss (*bde ba chen po'i dbyings su bskyod pa'i rang bzhin*).

4. The warmth's pure essence (*drod kyi dwangs ma*) is said to resemble the glittering (*'od kyi ngad*) or mere shimmer (*ngad tsam zhig*) of a mirror in the sun. Its nature is to ripen (*smin par byed pa'i rang bzhin*) the psycho-physiological complex from beginningless time, and thus it, too, is a pure essence of the elements. It appears as fire, while it is in reality the female deity *Pāṇḍaravāsīnī* (*gos dkar mo*). It is the discerning gnosis (*so sor rtog pa'i ye shes: pratyavekṣaṇajñāna*), that is, gnosis that realises everything as the sphere of great bliss (*thams cad bde ba chen po'i dbyings su rtogs pa'i ye shes*).

5. Within this multi-coloured light exists the great seminal drop of *bodhicitta*. It is the great pure essence (*dwangs ma chen po*). It serves as a support for the illumination of the psycho-physiological complex (*phung po gsal bar byed pa'i rten byed*), and thus it, too, is a pure essence of the elements. It appears like space, but it is in fact the all-pervading gnosis, the female deity *Samantabhadrā* (*kun tu bzang mo*). It

provides space for all that both appears and is empty to be illuminated in the absolute sphere of reality (*snang stong thams cad yang dag pa'i dbyings su gsal ba'i go skabs 'byed*). This seminal drop, which resembles liquid gold or the disk of the rising sun, is insight, the essence of all female deities. That which looks like a precious stone called *ze'u ka/kha*⁴⁰ placed in the cavity of this liquid gold is the essence of the male deities including Samantabhadra, the king of method, and that which looks like the quartz *karketana*⁴¹ hanging from a rail (*gdang*) is the mirror-like gnosis (*me long lta bu'i ye shes: ādarśajñāna*). This is the essence of the sphere of reality (*dharmadhātugarbha*), the cause of all ultimate goals (*don dam*).

The above description of the five pure essences is summarised in the next page. In brief, the gnosis (or “awareness,” as it is often referred to in the rDzogs-chen literature) inherent and immanent in the body, whose essence is said to be primordially pure (*ngo bo ka dag gi rig pa*), abides in the centre of the heart of all sentient beings as the great pure essence in what Klong-chen-pa calls the “precious secret womb” (*rin po che'i sbubs*), or the “naturally luminous palace,” which is a residence consisting of light, whose radiance flows through the eight petals in the form of the remaining pure essences, corresponding to the various kinds of gnosis.

Mi-pham,⁴² however, equates the first four pure essences with the pure essences of the earth element (*sa'i dwangs ma*), water element (*chu khams kyi dwangs ma*), fire element (*me'i sa bon dwangs ma*), and wind element (*rlung gi dwangs ma*), respectively, while also designating the brilliant inner space (*bar snang sang sang po*), which provides the needed room (*go 'byed*), as the pure essence of the space element (*nam mkha'i dwangs ma*). Within the concentrate of these five pure essences (*dwangs ma lnga 'dus*) is said to reside the mind's pure essence (*sems kyi dwangs ma*), which is referred to above as the great pure essence (*dwangs ma chen po*) and described as *bodhicitta*, the great seminal drop that has gnosis as its essence (*ye shes snying po'i thig le chen po*). Thus the expression “six great pure essences” (*dwangs ma chen po drug*) is employed by him.⁴³

⁴⁰ It is not clear what precious stone *ze'u ka/kha* might be.

⁴¹ See *Mahāvīyūtpatti* no. 5949; MW, s.v. *karkenata*; *karketana*.

⁴² *bKa' brgyad rnam bshad* (pp. 59.6–61.1).

⁴³ See *ibid.* (p. 62.2).

Type of Pure Essence	Resemblance	Function	Appearance (<i>saṃsāra</i>) = one of the elements	Actual nature (<i>nirvāṇa</i>) = one of the five female deities	Type of gnosis
1. channel's pure essence	white silk thread	serves as a support for the psycho-physiological complex	earth	Locanā	gnosis of great emptiness (<i>stong pa chen po'i ye shes</i>)
2. blood's pure essence	cinnabar	purifies the psycho-physiological complex	water	Māmakī	gnosis of equality (<i>munyam pa nyid kyi ye shes: samatājñāna</i>)
3. breath's pure essence	"vapour" of gold	serves as the basis for the lightness and mobility of the psycho-physiological complex	wind	Samayatārā	gnosis of performing (beneficial) activities (<i>bya ba sgrub pa'i ye shes: kṛtyānuṣṭhāna-jñāna</i>)
4. warmth's pure essence	glittering of a mirror in the sun	ripens the psycho-physiological complex	fire	Pāṇḍara-vāsinī	discerning gnosis (<i>so sor rtog pa'i ye shes: pratyavekṣaṇa-jñāna</i>)
5. great pure essence = seminal drop of <i>bodhicitta</i>	liquid gold or the disk of the rising sun	imparts glow/radiance to the psycho-physiological complex	space	Samantabhadrā	all-pervading gnosis = mirror-like gnosis (<i>me long lta bu'i ye shes: ādarśa-jñāna</i>)

6. NATURAL EXPOSURE TO THE INHERENT AND IMMANENT GNOSIS

According to the rNying-ma tantric tradition, a qualified master introduces the disciple to the inherent and immanent gnosis within him, and the disciple is supposed to recognise it and finally experience it as a soteriological event by practising one or more of the prescribed yogic practices. If a yogin succeeds in achieving the desired soteriological goal during his life, so much the better, but even if he does not, a

number of options have been put at his disposal. We have seen that the meta-physiological bases and the inherent and immanent gnosis have been conceived of as having a “support-supported relationship” (*rten dang brten pa'i 'brel pa*), which is, strictly speaking, a very weak relationship.

The question is what happens when the psycho-physiological bases of a person give in and cease to function as substrata for the inherent and immanent gnosis. Such moments, such as upon the occasion of dying, are opportunities that a yogin is supposed to seize and turn to soteriological advantage. Dying in Buddhism may be defined as a process during which the physiological constituents of a person gradually withdraw and cease to function as substrata for the psychical constituents (i.e. mind and the mental factors), and during which the entire psycho-physiological apparatus of an individual totally collapses. It is said that the intellectual-emotional defilements (*nyon mongs pa: kleśa*) described as the eighty inherent conceptual entities (*rang bzhin gyi rtog pa brgyad bcu*), namely, thirty-three associated with desire (*'dod chags: rāga*), forty associated with aversion (*zhe sdang: dveṣa*), and seven associated with disorientation (*gti mug: moha*), succumb at the end of the dissolution process. The process of dissolution is vividly described by Klong-chen-pa in his *Shing rta chen po*.⁴⁴ The white pure essence of the right main channel (inherited from one's father) dissolves into the upper end (*yar sna*) of the central channel, marked with the syllable HAM. The red pure essence of the left main channel (inherited from one's mother) dissolves into the lower end (*mar sna*) of the central channel, marked with the syllable A. The white and red pure essences dissolve finally into the “great pure essence of the luminous gnosis in the heart” (*snying ga'i ye shes 'od gsal gyi dangs ma chen po*). All gross and subtle conceptual entities cease, and the inherent and immanent gnosis is laid bare. This is a unique moment in saṃsāric existence—when the inherent and immanent gnosis is rid of all its obscurations (*sgrib pa: āvaraṇa*) and is in all respects identical with a *buddha*'s gnosis. In the event of recognition at this juncture, this gnosis would remain naked forever and not be defiled ever again. In other words, a sentient being would become a *buddha* then and there. According to Klong-chen-pa, this is what makes the idea of the so-

⁴⁴ *Shing rta chen po* (vol. 2, fols. 106b5–109a6).

called “release on the primordial ground” (*ye thog tu grol ba*) found in the rDzogs-chen literature so rational.⁴⁵

An ordinary person would simply pass by this critical moment without even having realised it. For a yogin who has still not been able to make the final breakthrough, the amount of time in which the inherent gnosis remains in its immaculate state would depend on the length of what is called a “meditation day” (*bsam gtan gyi zhag*), which varies according to the quality of the yogin’s meditative training. A meditation day is the period of meditative absorption that is completely free from conceptual thoughts. In other words, it is the gap between the preceding and the following conceptual thought, and is thus characterised by luminosity and lucidity. The longer one manages to abide in such a meditation day during the meditative practice, the greater is the chance that one becomes completely awakened during such moments of a total collapse of the psycho-physiological apparatus, and one is thus commonly advised to stabilize one’s meditative concentration while still alive.⁴⁶

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the present paper an attempt has been made to provide a general idea of the meta-physiology of the gnosis said to be inherent and immanent in the centre of the heart of all sentient beings; its abode; and how one’s physiological constituents can be exploited to induce this gnosis to manifest. It has also been shown that although this gnosis can be caused to emerge by means of meditative techniques, it can also become manifest in the course of a natural process of dissolution, and that then even an ordinary being can come very close to a state normally accessible only to a fully awakened being. I should like to conclude by stating that, while one does occasionally find statements that descriptions of this gnosis in terms of light, colours, shapes, and the like are merely meant as aids for confused sentient beings who have not yet recognised this gnosis within themselves,⁴⁷ the physicality and

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* (vol. 2, fol. 109b3): *bzhi pa’i dus su phra ba thim pas sgrib pa mtha’ dag bral ba’i skabs shig der ’byung bas ye thog tu grol ba’i ’thad pa ste| sangs rgyas mngon du byed dus bzhin no||*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* (vol. 2, fols. 109b3–110a4).

⁴⁷ *Prajñāpraveśa* (P, fol. 413b5–6; S, vol. 43, pp. 837.19–838.2):
sems can ma lus thams cad la||

materiality ascribed to gnosis in such descriptions is too vivid to be ignored, and it appears that such descriptions have been often taken literally.

ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Almogi 2009 Orna Almogi, *Rong-zom-pa's Discourses on Buddhology: A Study of Various Conceptions of Buddhahood in Indian Sources with Special Reference to the Controversy Surrounding the Existence of Gnosis (ye shes: jñāna) as Presented by the Eleventh-Century Tibetan Scholar Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po*. Studia Philologica Buddhica Monograph Series 24. Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies.
- Arthaviniścayasūtra N. H. Samtani, *The Arthaviniścayasūtra & Its Commentary (Nibandh[a]na) (Written by Bhikṣu Vīryaśrīdatta of Śrī-Nālandāvihāra)*. Critically edited and annotated for the first time with introduction and several indices. Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1971. Reprint: 2005.
- Bendall & Rouse 1922 Cecil Bendall & W. D. Rouse, trs., *Śikṣā Samuccaya: A Compendium of Buddhist Doctrine Compiled by Śāntideva Chiefly from Early Mahāyāna Sūtras*. 1922. Reprint: Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999.
- BHSD Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary, Volume 2: Dictionary*. 1953. Reprint: Kyoto: Rinsen Book Co., 1985.
- bKa' brgyad rnam bshad Mi-pham rNam-rgyal-rgya-mtsho, *dPal sgrub pa chen po'i bka' brgyad kyi spyi don rnam par bshad pa dngos grub snying po*. In *MS*, vol. 21, pp. 1–207.
- Bodhicaryāvatāra Vidhushekhara Bhattacharya, ed., *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Bibliotheca Indica 280. Calcutta 1960.
- Cakrasaṃvarapañcakrama Vajraghaṇṭa alias Ghaṇṭāpāda, “Śrīcakrasaṃvara-pañcakrama of Ghaṇṭāpāda. *dPal 'khor lo sdom pa'i rim pa lnga pa| mdzad pa po| rDo rje dril bu pa*.” *Dhīḥ* 39, 2005, pp. 149–168; P 2150; D 1433; S 0331, vol. 11.
- Catuḥśataka Āryadeva, *Catuḥśataka*. See Lang 1986.

ye shes lnga yis kun khyab kyang||
rang gi rnam rtog bsgribs byas te||
ye shes lnga yi don ma mthong||
ma mthong rmongs pa thams cad la||
ye shes mtshan nyid bstan pa'i phyir||
dkar dang dmar dang ser ba dang||
ljang gu la sogs nag por bstan||.

- Crosby & Skilton 1995 Kate Crosby & Andrew Skilton, trs., *Śāntideva. The Bodhicaryāvatāra*. With a general introduction by Paul Williams. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- D The sDe-dge Edition of the bsTan-'gyur. Nos. according to: Hakuju Ui *et al.*, eds., *A Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canons (Bkaḥ-ḥgyur and Bstan-ḥgyur)*. Sendai: Tōhoku Imperial University, 1934.
- Das 2003 Rahul Peter Das. *The Origin of the Life of a Human Being: Conception and the Female According to Ancient Indian Medical and Sexological Literature*. Indian Medical Tradition 6. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2003.
- Dasgupta 1962 Shashi Bhusan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*. Second and revised edition of 1946. Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1962.
- dPe chung rang gnas* Vilāsavajra (attributed), *sGyu 'phrul dpe chung rang gnas kyi rim pa*. P 4748; not found in D; S 2624, vol. 43.
- Dus 'khor 'grel pa* Mi-pham rNam-rgyal-rgya-mtsho, *Dus 'khor nang gi le'u'i 'grel pa*. In *MS*, vol. 17, pp. 601–927.
- gSang bdag dgongs rgyan* Lo-chen Dharma-shrī, *dPal gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa'i rgyud kyi 'grel pa gsang bdag dgongs rgyan*. In *NyK*, vol. 32 (*khi*), pp. 5–458.
- gSang bdag zhal lung* Id., *dPal gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa'i rgyud kyi rgyal po sgyu 'phrul drwa ba spyi don gyi sgo nas gtan la 'bebs par byed pa'i legs bshad gsang bdag zhal lung*. 2 vols (*e & wam*). In *NyK*, vols. 33–34 (*gi-ngi*).
- gSang thigs* Vimalamitra (attributed), *gSang ba'i thigs pa'i man ngag*. P 4738; not found in D; S 2600, vol. 43; *KShG*, vol. 81 (*zhu*), pp. 45–47.
- gSang thigs 'grel pa* Id. (attributed), *gSang ba'i thigs pa'i man ngag gi 'grel pa*. P 4765; not found in D; S 2641, vol. 44; *KShG*, vol. 81 (*zhu*), pp. 49–67.
- Hevajrapinḍārthaṭīkā* Vajragarbha, *Hevajrapinḍārthaṭīkā*. See Shendge 2004.
- Horner 1959 I. B. Horner, tr., *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings (Majjhima-Nikāya)*. Vol. 3: *The Final Fifty Discourses (Uparipaṇṇāsa)*. 1959. Reprint: Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004.
- KShG* *bKa' ma shin tu rgyas pa*. Compiled and edited by mKhan-po 'Jam-dbyangs. 120 vols. Chengdu, 1999.
- Lang 1986 Karen Lang, *Āryadeva's Catuḥśataka: On the Bodhisattva's Cultivation of Merit and Knowledge*. Indiske Studier 7. Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1986.
- Langer 2001 Rita Langer, *Das Bewusstsein als Träger des Lebens: Einige weniger beachtete Aspekte des viññāṇa im Pālikanon*. Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde 52. Vienna: Arbeitskreis für tibetische und buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 2001.

- lDe'u chos 'byung* mKhas-pa lDe'u, *rGya bod kyi chos 'byung rgyas pa*. Chief ed. Chab-spel-tshe-brtan-phun-tshogs. Gangs can rig mdzod 3. Lhasa: Bod-ljongs-mi-rigs-dpe-skrun-khang, 1987.
- Mahāvvyutpatti* Sakaki Ryōzaburō, ed., *Honyaku myōgi taishū (Mahāvvyutpatti)*. 2 vols. 1916. Reprint: Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1987.
- mDzod lde* rDo-grub 'Jigs-med-bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, *dPal gsang ba'i snying po'i rgyud kyi spyi don nyung ngu'i ngag gis rnam par 'byed pa rin chen mdzod kyi lde mig*. In *NyK*, vol. 35 (ci), pp. 367–588.
- MS* 'Jam mgon 'ju mi pham rgya mtsho'i gsung 'bum rgyas pa sde dge dgon chen phar ma. *The Expanded Redaction of the Complete Works of 'Ju Mi-pham*. Reconstructed and reproduced from the surviving prints at the order of H. H. Dilgo Chhentse Rimpoché. Paro: Lama Ngodrup & Sherab Drimey, 1984–1993.
- MW* Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. 1899. Reprint: Tokyo: Meicho Fukyukai Co., 1986.
- Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi 1995* Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, trs., *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*. 1995. Second Edition: Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001.
- Negi 1993–2005* J. S. Negi *et al.*, *Tibetan-Sanskrit Dictionary*. 16 vols. Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Dictionary Unit, 1993–2005.
- NyG* *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* [mTshams-brag Edition]. Thimphu: National Library of Bhutan, 1982.
- NyK* *rÑin ma Bka' ma rgyas pa. A Collection of Teachings and Initiations of the Rñin-ma-pa Tradition Passed through Continuous and Unbroken Oral Lineages from the Ancient Masters*. Completely edited and restructured by H. H. Bdud-'joms Rin-po-che on the basis of the successive Smin-grol-gliñ and Rdzogs-chen Rgyal-sras redactions. Kalimpong: Dupjung Lama, 1982–1987.
- 'Od gsal snying po* Mi-pham rNam-rgyal-rgya-mtsho, *gSang 'grel phyogs bcu mun sel gyi spyi don 'od gsal snying po*. In *MS*, vol. 19, pp. 1–271.
- P* The Peking Edition of the bsTan-'gyur. Nos. according to: Daisetz T. Suzuki, ed., *The Tibetan Tripitaka. Peking Edition: Catalogue & Index*. Reduced-size Edition. Kyoto: Rinsen Book Co., 1985.
- Prajñāpraveśa* Vimalamitra (attributed), *Mahāyogaprajñāpraveśa-cakṣurupadeśa*. P 4725; not found in D; S 2601, vol. 43.
- rDo rje me long gi rgyud* *rDo rje sems dpa'i sgyu 'phrul dra ba gsang ba thams cad kyi me long zhes bya ba'i rgyud*. In *NyG*, vol. 22 (za), pp. 481–692.
- S* *bsTan 'gyur (dpe bsdur ma)*. Sichuan: Krung-go'i-bod-kyi-shes-rig-dpe-skrun-khang, 1994–2005.

- sGyu 'phrul rgya mtsho'i rgyud* Shendge 2004
Shes bya mdzod
Shing rta chen po
Śikṣāsamuccaya Snellgrove 1987
 Steinkellner 1981
Tshig mdzod chen mo Wangchuk 2007
Yid kyi mun sel
- sGyu 'phrul rgya mtsho zhes bya ba'i rgyud*. In NyG, vol. 22 (za), pp. 1–103.
 Malati J. Shendge, ed., *Ṣaṣṭāhasrikāhevajratkā: A Critical Edition*. Delhi: Pratibha Prakashan, 2004.
 Kong-sprul Yon-tan-rgya-mtsho, *Theg pa'i sgo kun las btus pa gsung rab rin po che'i mdzod bslab pa gsum legs par ston pa'i bstan bcos shes bya kun khyab* [rtsa 'grel] (on cover: *Shes bya kun khyab*). Eds. rDo-rje-rgyal-po & Thub-bstan-nyi-ma. Beijing: Mi-rigs-dpe-skrun-khang, 2002.
 Klong-chen-pa Dri-med-'od-zer, *rDzogs pa chen po sems nyid ngal gso'i 'grel pa shing rta chen po*. 2 vols. In *Ngal gso skor gsum*, vols. *nya* & *ta*. Gangtok: Dodrup Chen Rinpoche. Reprint: Thimphu: National Library of Bhutan, n.d.
 Cecil Bendall, ed., *Ṣikṣāsamuccaya: A Compendium of Buddhist Teaching Compiled by Śāntideva Chiefly from Earlier Mahāyāna-sūtras*. 1897–1902. Bibliotheca Buddhica 1. Reprint: Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1992.
 David Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors*. 1987. Reprint: Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2002.
 Ernst Steinkellner, tr., *Eintritt in das Leben zur Erleuchtung (Bodhicaryāvatāra): Lehrgedicht des Mahāyāna aus dem Sanskrit übersetzt*. Śāntideva. Diederichs Gelbe Reihe. Munich: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1981. Reprint: 1989.
 Krang-dbyi-sun et al., *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*. Beijing: Mi-rigs-dpe-skrun-khang, 1993.
 Dorji Wangchuk, *The Resolve to Become a Buddha: A Study of the Bodhicitta Concept in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*. Studia Philologica Buddhica Monograph Series 23. Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2007.
 Klong-chen-pa Dri-med-'od-zer, *dPal gsang ba'i snying po'i spyi don legs par bshad pa'i snang bas yid kyi mun pa thams cad sel ba*. In NyK, vol. 27 (*sha*), pp. 5–182.