

## THE FRUITION IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE\*

DYLAN ESLER

It must be remembered that *nirvāṇa* refers to that which thoroughly transcends the world of concepts, i.e. cyclic existence. This transcendence can only be defined from the point of view of worldly experience through negation. Since the most pervasive characteristic of the world is conceptual elaboration, transcendence can be defined as its absence (Skt. *niṣprapañca*) or cessation (Skt. *prapañca-nirodha*).

Paraphrasing Nāṇananda 1976: 54–55.

The transformation from an ordinary being into a Buddha may be compared to “the change from caterpillar to butterfly, in which almost everything alters and only a few significant features remain invariant.”

Guenther 1989: 3.

“A progressive enlightenment (*krama-mukti*) can then be expressed as a gradual contraction of the radius, bringing the circumference ever closer to the centre, until that which seemed to enclose the point is seen to be contained within it, knowledge being thus concentrated into a single form, which is the form of very different things. That is *Nirvāṇa*, unitary being, ‘with residual existential elements,’ and by a vanishment of the point becomes also *Parinirvāṇa* without residuum of existence.”

Coomaraswamy 2009: 44–45.

\* This article is an expanded version of a paper first presented at the 17<sup>th</sup> Congress of the IABS held at the University of Vienna from 18 to 23 August 2014. I would like to thank Prof. Taiken Kyuma (Mie University) for welcoming my paper in the panel that he organized, as well as Prof. Dorji Wangchuk (University of Hamburg) for suggesting the parallel with the *ekayāna* versus *gotra* controversy touched upon below. Prof. Kyuma and Prof. John Newman (New College of Florida) both provided valuable comments on an earlier draft of this article, helping me to improve it thereby. I am also very grateful to Prof. Christophe Vielle (Université Catholique de Louvain), Dr. Jean-Luc Achard (CNRS, Paris) and Lopon P. Ogyan Tenzin Rinpoche (Sarnath) for the keen and supportive interest they have taken in my work.

## Introduction

If “all roads lead to Rome” (or did so in the days of the Roman Empire), all paths do not lead to enlightenment – at least not to the same enlightenment. This, in any case, is the conclusion we must derive from reading gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes’ doxographical work, the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* (Tibet, 10<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>1</sup> Since its rediscovery and publication in 1974 by Chhimed Rigdzin Rinpoche (alias Prof. C.R. Lama, 1922–2002),<sup>2</sup> this text has attracted the attention of Tibetologists and Buddhologists alike.<sup>3</sup>

The *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* presents four distinct ways to reach enlightenment that encompass both *sūtra*-based and *tantra*-based doctrinal formulations: the gradual approach of the classical *Mahāyāna*, the simultaneous approach of *Chan*, the method of alchemical transformation of *Tantra* and the path of self-liberation, *rDzogs-chen*. These four different paths lead to distinct forms of fruition (*’bras-bu*; Skt. *phala*). It is the latter that will be the focus of the present article.

Before examining these in detail, it will be worthwhile to consider the following backdrop to the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*’s exposition. The theme of different paths leading to distinct results harkens back to the old tension in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism that exists between the *Yogācāra* theory of the distinct spiritual classes (Skt. *gotra*) of beings with their corresponding vehicles and goals on the one hand, and the notion of the single vehicle (Skt. *ekayāna*) on the other. According to the former theory, the vehicles of the auditors (Skt. *śrāvaka*), independent Buddhas (Skt. *pratyekabuddha*) and *bodhisattvas* are to be pursued by those whose spiritual class (Skt. *gotra*) endows them with the distinct propensity specific to each of these vehicles; for those who are of no spiritual class whatsoever

<sup>1</sup> On gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes’ dates and the time of composition of the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*, see Esler 2014.

<sup>2</sup> gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes, *rNal-’byor mig-gi bSam-gtan or bSam-gtan mig-sgron*. Henceforth abbreviated as C. A further edition was published in the 1990s under the auspices of mKhan-po Mun-sel: gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes rin-po-che, *sGom-gyi gnad gsal-bar phye-ba bSam-gtan mig-sgron ces-bya-ba*. Henceforth abbreviated as M. Variants are signalled where appropriate in the footnotes.

<sup>3</sup> See in particular Guenther 1983, Karmay 2007: 103–120, Dalton and van Schaik 2003, Meinert 2003, and Esler 2012. Note that this list is not exhaustive.

(Skt. *agotraka*), it would be a waste of time to seek to follow any of these paths (Wangchuk 2007: 37). On the other hand, the notion of the single vehicle is based on the recognition that ultimately there is only one class, the class of integral identity (*bdag-nyid-kyi rigs*), which is emptiness and which exists in all sentient beings as the matrix of the Thus-gone One (Skt. *tathāgatagarbha*), but of which they are unaware due to ignorance (Skt. *avidyā*) (Ruegg 1977: 299).

In Tibet, this tension was later articulated by the Sa-skyā scholar bSod-nams rtse-mo (1142–1182), who proposed four soteriological modalities (*tshul*) derived from *Mahāyāna* sources; they have been presented by Prof. Wangchuk as follows: (1) a *Yogācāra*-derived modality exposing three paths and three distinct goals pertaining to the auditors, independent buddhas and *bodhisattvas* respectively; (2) a modality derived from the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* exposing a single path and three goals, whereby even those searching for the goals of an auditor and an independent buddha must in any case pass through the single gateway, which is true insight into the nature of reality; (3) a modality derived from a presumable offshoot of the *Yogācāra* school, called *gCig-pur smra-ba* (\*Skt. *Ekatvavāda*), exposing one path and one goal, the goal being recovery of the awakening that is present in beings in an unrefined state, and the path being the process of purification leading thereto; (4) a modality derived from the *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine exposing a single goal and three paths, whereby it must be emphasized that even those following the lower paths of the auditors and independent buddhas must, after a certain point, enter the *bodhisattva* vehicle which is the only one capable of leading them to full enlightenment, the single goal to which they too aspire, albeit unknowingly.<sup>4</sup>

According to Abhayākara-gupta (11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries),<sup>5</sup> the theory of the different classes need not necessarily be seen to contradict the teaching of the undifferentiated class and of the single vehicle. He holds that the *Yogācāra* notion of three distinct vehicles corresponding to three spiritual

<sup>4</sup> See the detailed presentation in Wangchuk 2007: 37–38, quoting bSod-nams rtse-mo, *rGyud-sde spyi-rnam*, p. 15; and, regarding the *gCig-pur smra-ba*, Rong-zom chos-kyi bzang-po, *Theg-pa chen-po'i tshul-la 'jug-pa*, p. 456.

<sup>5</sup> On the problem of Abhayākara-gupta's dates, see Bühnemann 1992; Tomabechi and Kano 2008: 22; Sanderson 2009: 126, n. 294, 157, n. 361.

classes is a teaching of provisional meaning (Skt. *neyārtha*) that serves to introduce beginners to the doctrine; however, it is only the single vehicle (Skt. *ekayāna*) that reflects the definitive meaning (Skt. *nītārtha*). Indeed, while beings may differ according to the level of their accumulations (Skt. *saṃbhāra*), ultimately there can be but one vehicle, since the open dimension of phenomena (Skt. *dharmadhātu*) is non-differentiated. The single vehicle is thus identified with the undifferentiated absolute nature, phenomena's open dimension, which is non-dual wisdom (Skt. *advaya-jñāna*), whereas the distinctions between vehicles are merely nominal (Skt. *nāmamātra*) and reflect the relative differences in the capacities and propensities of sentient beings.<sup>6</sup> Abhayākara Gupta's stance agrees with the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*'s statement that the vehicles of auditors and of *bodhisattvas* are in fact a single vehicle,<sup>7</sup> and with the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*'s declaration that ultimately there is only a single vehicle, and that the different vehicles are merely mentioned for the purpose of the childish.<sup>8</sup>

Bearing in mind this contextual background, we should note that the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*'s four vehicles all pertain to the *Mahāyāna* or above: whereas the gradual and simultaneous approaches are different ways of practising the *Mahāyāna* and attaining the stage of universal light (Skt. *samantaprabhā*), the tantric vehicle of *Mahāyoga* and the vehicle of *rDzogs-chen* are held to lead to modalities of enlightenment that transcend even the eleventh *bodhisattva* stage, as will be shown below. Historically speaking, the controversy between the theory of the spiritual classes and their corresponding vehicles on the one hand, and the notion of a single vehicle on the other, can be seen as two different ways employed by *Mahāyāna* exegetes to integrate the non-*Mahāyāna* doctrines that preceded them into a coherent framework. gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes, on the other hand, introduces vehicles which, while they presuppose the generation of the enlightened mind (Skt. *bodhicitta*) (C 17.1) and hence might be said to be a prolongation of the *Mahāyāna*, are distinguished therefrom *not only* through their means or mode of approach, *but also* through the fruition to which they lead.

<sup>6</sup> Ruegg 1977: 286, 295, 298.

<sup>7</sup> Lamotte 1935: 147 (Tibetan text), 255–256 (French translation).

<sup>8</sup> *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, p. 55 (Sanskrit text); Suzuki 2009: 116 (English translation).

We will pursue our enquiry by examining one by one the different presentations of the fruition exposed in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*'s principal chapters that deal with these approaches, and will then offer some comparative reflections on these distinct understandings of enlightenment.

### **Progressive development: the fruition of the gradual path<sup>9</sup>**

The gradual *Mahāyāna* path to enlightenment may be said to consist of two complementary movements: one of purification (Skt. *śodhanī*) and one of accumulation (Skt. *saṃbhāra*). Each of these movements has both affective and cognitive aspects. In the case of purification, that which is to be purified consists of the obscurations of the afflictions (Skt. *kleśāvaraṇa*) and of the knowable (Skt. *jñeyāvaraṇa*). The process of purification occurs gradually as one traverses the ten stages and five paths outlined in *Mahāyāna* soteriology. For example, the path of seeing only removes those afflictions that prevent the adept from seeing the four noble truths, the main one being the view of corporeality (Skt. *satkāyadṛṣṭi*). However, the co-emergent afflictions (Skt. *sahaḥa-kleśa*), i.e. passion (Skt. *rāga*), hatred (Skt. *dveṣa*), etc., must be relinquished through meditation (Skt. *bhāvanāheya*) (Lamotte 1958: 682). This process is a long-winded one since, in order for it to be thorough and for complete awakening to be attained, it is not only necessary to destroy the afflictions, but also their imprints. This is precisely what distinguishes the enlightenment of a Buddha from that of the auditors and independent victors. The latter have destroyed the afflictions, but not their imprints. They therefore continue to involuntarily engage in acts which are the result of past habits. Whereas the afflictions pertain to the non-virtuous phenomena (Skt. *akuśala-dharma*), the imprints as such are morally neutral or indeterminate (Skt. *avyākṛta*). Examples may be given of the *arhat* Gavāmpati, who, after five hundred existences as an ox, continued to ruminate, or of Pilindavatsa who, true to his Brahman past, involuntarily continued to greet his fellows as outcasts. Moreover, even Mahāmaudgalyāyana and Mahākāśyapa, both of whom had been monkeys in previous lives, could

<sup>9</sup> For a presentation of the gradual path as explained in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*, see Esler 2015.

not resist tracing some dance steps on hearing music (Lamotte 1974: 92–93). Correlatively, in terms of the cognitive quality of enlightenment, there is a difference between the science of a Buddha and that of an *arhat*: the knowledge of a Buddha is not so much, metaphysically speaking, superior to that of an *arhat*, but is rather of a vaster nature, since it implies in a sense a penetration into cosmic realities, being comparable to the shadow of the Buddha's dilation into transcendence projected in the direction of manifestation (Schuon 1993: 124). This is why the *arhat*'s abilities of retrocognition (Skt. *pūrvanivāsānusmṛtyabhijñā*), clairvoyance (Skt. *divyacakṣurabhijñā*) and knowledge of the exhaustion of contaminations (Skt. *āsravakṣayajñānasākṣātkārābhijñā*) are incomplete (Skt. *aparipūrṇa*) when compared to those of the Buddha.<sup>10</sup> For instance, the *arhat*'s retrocognition will in some cases extend merely to two or three generations, and at most to eighty thousand aeons, whereas the Buddha's capacity to recollect past lives knows no limit (Lamotte 1944: 129–130).

Likewise, accumulation also has both affective and cognitive aspects, comprising the accumulation of merit (Skt. *puṇya*) and of wisdom (Skt. *jñāna*). These accumulations may be understood as the practices with referential imaging (*dmigs-bcas*) and without referential imaging (*dmigs-med*) respectively.<sup>11</sup> According to the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, the accumulations accrued from the first through to the seventh stage propel the *bodhisattva* so that he may then enter the three pure stages which are spontaneous and without effort (Carré 2004: 147).

As explained by Kamalaśīla, the joint accumulations of merit and wisdom are both necessary, since they allow the *bodhisattva* to work for the welfare of sentient beings in the manner of an illusionist, all the while relinquishing the afflictions that are the cause of bondage. He is thus able to perform a delicate balancing act, remaining beyond the limitations of both cyclic existence (Skt. *saṃsāra*) and transcendence (Skt. *nirvāṇa*) (Third *Bhāvanākrama*, Tucci 1971: 12). By completing the two accumulations, the *bodhisattva* eventually comes to attain the

<sup>10</sup> On the importance ascribed by the Buddha to retrocognition and clairvoyance, see Kalupahana 1994: 25, 39.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Chhimed Rigdzin Lama n.d.: 23. See now the published version: Chhimed Rigdzin and Low 2011.

state of omniscience that characterizes a Buddha (Second *Bhāvanākrama*, Namdrol 1997: 83, 231). In the present context, this state is described as non-abiding transcendence (Skt. *apraṭiṣṭhita-nirvāṇa*), since while being poised beyond the turmoil of existence, it is not fixed in an absolutistic quietude and retains the capacity to act for the benefit of sentient beings (First *Bhāvanākrama*, Tucci 1958: 197). As specified in the *Madhyamakāloka*, the factors of means (Skt. *upāya*) and sapience (Skt. *prajñā*) are the functional equivalents to merit and wisdom, since they actualize the integration of compassionate concern for others' welfare with insight into the insubstantial nature of phenomena:<sup>12</sup>

Here, the illusory cause of the yogic wisdom, etc., is to duly concord with the accumulations of merit and wisdom. In brief, the cause of the non-abiding transcendence of the Hallowed Ones is compassion and sapience. It is through love indeed that even in the assimilation of transcendence, they [i.e. the *bodhisattvas*] do not implement its actualization [as would the auditors, etc.]. It is through sapience that, since there is no leeway for total dullness, the cause of all the totalizing afflictions, they do not fall into cyclic existence, being untainted by the stains of cyclic existence's defects. Hence, they abide in neither of the two [i.e. cyclic existence and transcendence].

<sup>12</sup> Kamalaśīla, *dBu-ma snang-ba*, in TD, vol. 107: 446.1–4; Kamalaśīla, *Madhyamakāloka*, pp. 122 (restored Sanskrit text), 439–440 (edited Tibetan text). Here is the passage restored in Sanskrit: *tatra yogi-jñānādi-māyā-hetus tāvad yathāvat puṇya-jñāna-sambhārānukūla eva | saṃkṣepato bhagavatām apratiṣṭhita-nirvāṇa-hetus tu karuṇā prajñā ca | kṛpayā hi tan-nirvāṇāvabodhe 'pi te naiva tasya sāksātkāraṃ kurvanti | prajñayā tāvat sarva-saṃkleśa-hetoḥ sammohasyānavakāśāt saṃsāra-doṣa-gandhenāpy aliptāḥ santo naiva saṃsāre patanti | atas te naivānayoḥ dvayoḥ [saṃsāra-nirvāṇayoḥ] tiṣṭhanti | ataḥ prajñopāya-yuganaddha-caryā tāvad-apraṭiṣṭhita-nirvāṇa-hetuḥ | ata eva ca sā bodhisattvānāṃ mārga ucyate | tayā virahitāḥ sattvās tu śrāvakādi-bhūmiṣu patanti |*

The Tibetan reads as follows (where the mention “Dorjee” indicates an emendation by Penpa Dorjee, the editor of Kamalaśīla *Madhyamakāloka*): *| de la rnal 'byor pa'i ye shes la sogs pa'i sgyu ma'i rgyu ni bsod nams dang ye shes kyi tshogs kyi bdag nyid ji lta ba'i rjes su mthun pa yin no || bcom ldan 'das rnams kyis mi gnas pa'i mya ngan las 'das pa'i rgyu ni mdor na thugs brtse ba dang | shes rab dag yin te | de dag thugs brtse bas ni mya ngan las 'das pa de gcig pu zhi bar thugs su chud kyang nyan thos la sogs pa bzhin du mngon sum du mi mdzad do || shes rab kyis ni kun nas nyon mongs pa ma lus pa'i rgyu kun tu rmongs pa'i go skabs thag bsrings pa'i phyir 'khor bar gtogs pa'i nyes pa'i dri mas ma sbags [sbags Dorjee: sngags TD] pa'i sgo nas [sgo nas Dorjee: sngo nas TD] 'khor bar mi ltung bas 'di dag gnyi ga la mi gnas par grub pa kho na'o || de nyid kyi phyir thabs dang shes rab zung du 'brel par rgyu ba ni mi gnas pa'i mya ngan las 'das pa'i rgyu yin pa'i phyir byang chub sems dpa' rnams kyi lam zhes bya ste | de dang bral ba rnams nyan thos la sogs pa'i sar ltung ba'i phyir te |*

That is why conduct that integrates sapience and means is indeed the cause of non-abiding transcendence, and why it is said to be the path of the *bodhisattvas*. Those beings free from such [conduct] fall down to the stages of the auditors, etc.

The intimate connection between the affective and cognitive aspects of this process is further brought out by Kamalaśīla in the following words:<sup>13</sup>

One who is endowed with means and is reliant on sapience is correctly skilled in the relative and absolute truths. Hence, from the obtainment of unobscured wisdom, one obtains all the principles of a Buddha. Likewise, without discernment as to the genuine, there can be neither occurrence of correct wisdom nor the relinquishing of the obscuration of the afflictions.

This dual movement of purification and accumulation eventually results in a radical transformation that “permanently alters, at its most fundamental level, the affective and cognitive structures of consciousness itself” (Makransky 1998: 79). In the gradual perspective of the *bodhisattva* path outlined in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*’s fourth chapter, this fruition corresponds to the eleventh stage or the stage of universal light (Skt. *samantaprabhā*),<sup>14</sup> which, according to the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra*, is termed the level of a Buddha because, having relinquished the obscurations of the afflictions and of the knowable, it illuminates all the aspects of the knowable.<sup>15</sup>

The fruition again reflects the dual aspect of the *bodhisattva*’s accumulation of merit and wisdom along the path: whereas the principial body<sup>16</sup> (Skt. *dharmakāya*) corresponds to the fulfilment of one’s own

<sup>13</sup> Third *Bhāvanākrama*, Tucci 1971: 17. Here is the passage in Sanskrit: *upāya-yuktāḥ prajñā-sevanatāś ca samyak saṃvṛti-paramārtha-satya-kuśalo bhavati | ato ’nāvaraṇa-jñāna-lābhāt, sarvān eva buddha-dharmān adhigacchati | tasmān na vinā bhūta-pratyavekṣayā samyag-jñānodayo nāpi kleśāvaraṇa[-prahānam] |*

<sup>14</sup> C 118.1 (Chapter IV, §4). Paragraph numbers correspond to editorial divisions introduced in the English translation and critical edition I have been preparing of the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*.

<sup>15</sup> Lamotte 1935: 127 (Tibetan text), 240 (French translation).

<sup>16</sup> The adjective “principial” (Fr. *principiel*) is derived from “principle;” it is used here in the translation of *dharmakāya* because, in the Buddhist context, the principle of phenomena is nothing other than their emptiness. The word *dharmakāya* thus signifies the embodiment of the realization of this emptiness, at least according to the understanding of this term proposed by Ārya Vimuktisena, who interprets *dharmakāya* as being an



purpose (Skt. *svārtha*) and to the accumulation of wisdom, the form body (Skt. *rūpakāya*) corresponds to others' purpose (Skt. *parārtha*) and to the accumulation of merit. The former may be said to represent the essential aspect of the Buddha's realization of emptiness, whereas the latter arises "through the power of aspirations and compassion" (C 118.2) in spontaneous responsiveness to the needs of others. To explain how the unconditioned principial body brings forth activity for the purpose of sentient beings in contingent existence, the *Mahāyāna sūtras* elucidate that it is, diachronically, because of accumulations accrued by the *bodhisattva* on the path prior to awakening, and, synchronically, because of the given conditions of sentient beings, that this activity naturally manifests in response to their needs and capacities (Makransky 1998: 361). According to the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, just as the gems in the ocean increase due to the virtuous roots of sentient beings, so the body of the Thus-gone One, produced from his past accumulations, cannot be localized anywhere throughout the ten directions. However, it nevertheless appears when the right conditions are assembled (Conze 1994: 292).

At this point it should be emphasized that, even from a gradual perspective, there is no denying that the path's fruition occurs in some way instantaneously (and simultaneously). For instance, Haribhadra (late 8<sup>th</sup> century), Kamalaśīla's co-disciple, recognized the single-moment awakening (Skt. *ekakṣaṇābhisaṃbodhi*) in addition to the gradual accumulation of wisdom (Ruegg 1989: 156–160). Nonetheless, Haribhadra's primary understanding was that awakening is created by the accumulations of the path. This perspective must be distinguished from that of Ārya Vimuktisena (early 6<sup>th</sup> century), who held that the path does not produce awakening *per se*, since the latter is unconditioned, but merely creates the conditions so that a decisive breakthrough in realization may occur. The latter view, unlike the former one which is purely gradualist in orientation, is amenable both to gradualist and simultaneist interpretations of the path (Makransky 1998: 445, n. 61). The *Daśabhūmikāsūtra* tends to confirm

abbreviation of *dharmatākāya*, i.e. the body (in the sense of embodiment) of phenomena's beingness (Skt. *dharmatā*) (Makransky 1998: 417, n. 44, n. 47). This interpretation appears, moreover, to be consistent with the *Prajñāpāramitā* tradition, since the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* directly identifies the Buddha with thusness (Skt. *tathatā*) (Conze 1994: 177).

this latter understanding. It explains that just as, before undertaking a journey, there are many preparations to accomplish, but, once one takes one's boat, one quickly reaches one's destination, so the *bodhisattva* accrues the accumulation of merit and engages in the many practices of a *bodhisattva*, so that in an instant the wisdom of non-effort enables him to reach omniscience. This is explained in the context of the eighth stage, the unwavering (Skt. *acalā*), which is characterized by the perfection of aspiration (Carré 2004: 167).

To conclude this section, we might recall that the dual movement of purification and accumulation is reflected at the level of the fruition in the very etymology of the Tibetan word for Buddha: the term *sangs-rgyas* implies the idea of a simultaneous process of dispelling of afflictions and unfolding of awakened bodies and wisdoms (Guenther 1989: 14).

### **Instant discovery: the fruition of the simultaneous path**

The simultaneous approach of *Chan* has a different view of the path, which, needless to say, also influences its conception of the fruition. According to the doctrine of the matrix of the Thus-gone One (Skt. *tathāgatagarbha*), which is pivotal for *Chan*, sentient beings are already enlightened. In order to recognize and actualize their true nature, they must develop faith in this inherent enlightenment (Buswell 1989: 143). Hence, for *Chan* practitioners what is required is not to artificially change or transform oneself so as to remove the illusory conceptions that obscure one's perception of the Buddha nature, but rather simply to realize that these obscurations have no fundamental reality of their own (McRae 1986: 111). In this regard, gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes writes:<sup>17</sup>

Thus, since there is no maturation [of deeds], there is nothing to cleanse. If it be asked how this can be the case, [it is replied that] though unborn, [obscurations appear to be] produced. For him who engages on the religious path which is uncorrupted by the intellect, neither the obscuration of the afflictions nor an individual [who could be obscured] exist.

<sup>17</sup> C 183.2–4 (Chapter V, §4): / *de lta bu rnam par smin pa med pas / mi shyong bar* [pa ins. C] / *'grub / de ji lta bu zhe na / ma skyes pa skyes te / blo ma bsad pa'i chos lam spyod pa la nyon mongs pa'i sgrub pa dang / gang zag med pa a cang yang ches na / chos su 'dzin pa yang med / gnyis 'dzin med pas shes bya'ang dag ste / de yang skyon du mi skyong ste ma dmigs pa nyid kyis dag go /*

Needless to say, when one does not hold on to phenomena and is without dualistic grasping, the knowable too is purified. Without protecting oneself against its flaws, these are purified through non-imaging.

In such a context, it might be asked how the fruition is to be attained. Indeed, in the *Xiuxin yaolun*, Hongren (601–675) admits that there is a certain mysterious element as to why Buddhas become enlightened and sentient beings do not. Since both have the Buddha nature, it obviously depends on recognition or non-recognition of this fact, but just what makes the circumstances conducive to this awakening occur cannot be determined (McRae 1986: 124). gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-she explains that one attains the stage of universal light through the strength of non-imaging (*mi-dmigs*; Skt. *anā lambana*) (C 185.1–2), which is very much in line with *Chan*'s emphasis on the fruition being unproduced. Simultaneous enlightenment cannot be the result of gradual practice, for in that case it would be nothing more than a construct. Even when gradual practice precedes it, simultaneous awakening does not arise in the manner of an effect from its cause, but rather as a state of grace and rapture that signifies a rupture with all that precedes it (Faure 1991: 45).

This is not to say that merit plays no role whatsoever in the attainment of the fruition. Sangs-rgyas ye-she says that the two awakened bodies (Skt. *kāya*) arise from a meritorious conscious continuum and compares them to a grain of rice enclosed by husk (C 185.2–3). This is in accord with the view of the matrix of the Thus-gone One, which holds that sentient beings are potentially enlightened, but merely fail to recognize their true nature. The corollary of this is that enlightenment is no longer seen as something to be achieved after an extremely long and arduous journey, but rather as a shift in perspective which allows one to recover what in fact has always been the case but was merely obscured by adventitious afflictions (Buswell 1989: 80). If we compare enlightenment to a mirror or to the sun, and the obscurations to dust or to clouds, we should remember that the mirror's intrinsic clarity and the sun's brilliance can in no wise be destroyed, but are merely obscured, so that they remain temporarily unperceived. This is because the mirror and the dust covering it, or the sun and the clouds that obscure it, cannot be placed on the same footing, and in fact belong to two distinct orders of reality, the former fundamental, the latter adventitious (McRae 1986: 122, 135).

The *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* further explains that the two bodies arise through one's previous aspirations and compassion, likening their unfolding to the sun and moon appearing in limpid water (C 185.3). This metaphor is particularly apt: while the principal body (Skt. *dharmakāya*) represents, as previously noted, the essential aspect of a Buddha's enlightenment, and is solar in character in that it embodies the unchanging realization of emptiness, the body of form (Skt. *rūpakāya*) may be said to be lunar insofar as it is a projection of this essential realization in the direction of contingent and mutable existence and derives its light from the sun of the principal body. Furthermore, the image of the limpid lake indicates that when the adventitious stains of the minds of sentient beings have been dispelled, they are able to reflect the luminaries of the awakened bodies. Moreover, both bodies appear in the manner of an insubstantial reflection, which reminds us of the fact that in *Chan* one should not seek to hold on to awakening, since the very concepts of "ignorance" and "enlightenment" are considered arbitrarily posited names that have no reality in themselves (McRae 1986: 106), and since *Chan* assumes the ultimate identity between actual enlightenment and apparent non-enlightenment (Buswell 1989: 161).

It will thus be seen that the gradual and simultaneous approaches are not merely two differing conceptions of the path, but indeed two distinct ways of metaphysically understanding absolute reality itself and its realization, the fruition. Whereas the gradual approach, which might be said to relativize the absolute, sees the absolute as the result of a progressive accumulation of virtues, the simultaneous approach considers the absolute as irreconcilable to multiplicity and to spatial and temporal determinations (Demiéville 1973: 253). The point at issue is the path's status and the homology between ground and fruition (Ruegg 1989: 7). The simultaneous approach is in a sense a state of grace which focuses on the absolute nature of mind, thereby bypassing the wrong notions and adventitious afflictions that pertain to the domain of relativity. Since the latter are in any case illusory, rather than seek to purify them, the simultaneous approach prefers to focus on the underlying purity of the mind's true nature (Faure 1988: 173), allowing the latter to unfold simultaneously when the conditions are ripe.

### The gold of alchemical transformation: the fruition of *Mahāyoga*

The tantric vehicle of *Mahāyoga* is chiefly characterized by its skilful means, which enable the *yogin* to transform the obscurations without having to relinquish them. gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-she likens this process to alchemy, where a single drop of tincture suffices to transform base metals into gold, or to light which in a moment dispels a thousand years of darkness, without this darkness first having had to be abandoned (C 271.2–4). The fact that metal can be turned into gold, poison into medicine and obscurations into wisdom is because actually nothing that appears has a permanent essence (Lamotte 1976: 1821). In Guenther's words (Guenther 2008: 28):

Energy as a whole is capable of endless transformations so that one appearance is followed by another. Therefore, there is neither absolute identity nor absolute diversity.

Through these special tantric methods, then, one exhausts the contamination of the aggregates (*phung-po'i zag-pa*), i.e. of one's body, and reaches the stage of an awareness-holder who dominates life<sup>18</sup> with the body constituted of one's remaining *karma*.<sup>19</sup> This remarkable attainment is said to enable one to extend one's lifespan for up to one thousand six hundred years (C 277.1–2). As one can accomplish the ultimate fruition within that period, one is said to achieve the fruition within a single lifetime. Meinert has already pointed out that the accomplishment of an awareness-holder who dominates life would seem to correspond to the stage of transcendence with a remainder of the aggregates (Meinert 2002: 301). According to the *Abhidharmakośa*, the transcendence with a remainder of the aggregates (*phung-po lhag-ma dang-bcas-pa'i mya-ngan-las 'das-pa*; Skt. *sopadhiśeṣa-nirvāṇa*) is a definition of the transcendence obtained in this life (Skt. *dṛṣṭadharmānirvāṇa-prāpta*).

<sup>18</sup> There are four types of awareness-holder counted in *Mahāyoga*, among which this is the second. The four are the awareness-holder of maturation (*rnam-smin rig-'dzin*), the awareness-holder who dominates life (*tshe-dbang rig-'dzin*), the awareness-holder of the great seal (*phyag-rgya chen-po'i rig-'dzin*) and the awareness-holder of spontaneous presence (*lhun-grub rig-'dzin*). See Cornu 2006: 694.

<sup>19</sup> C 277.1 (Chapter VI, §4.4): [...] *phung po'i zag pa yang zad nas / da ltar gyi rnam par smin pa lhag ma'i lus 'dis tshe la dbang ba'i rig 'dzin 'grub /*

This is contrasted with the transcendence without remainder of the aggregates (*phung-po lhag-ma med-pa'i mya-ngan-las 'das-pa*; Skt. *nirupadhiśeṣa-nirvāṇa*), which is obtained at death.<sup>20</sup> While the attainment of longevity signified by the accomplishment of an awareness-holder dominating life allows the *yogin* to prolong his lifespan far beyond what is commonly held possible, it still belongs to the domain of individuality and cannot, whatever its extent, go beyond perpetuity, which pertains to duration.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, it does offer conditions particularly favourable to the attainment of the state of final liberation, transcendence without a remainder of the aggregates, which is the extinction of the aggregates making up the individual. The latter is attained at the time of death, “as soon as the *yogin* is free from the net or knot of his body.”<sup>22</sup> In view of the fact that this latter attainment may be less spectacular (i.e. less obviously apparent) than the former, gNubs-chen writes:<sup>23</sup>

If one were to ask for an example [to illustrate] the Great *Yoga*, *Mahāyoga*, [we would say] it is similar to the sun. When the light of the sun rises in the sky, it illuminates everything, so that there is not even the name of darkness: thus luminous clarity is the very essence of daytime. Likewise, in *Mahāyoga*, one's own intrinsic awareness, the enlightened mind, is the thusness of all phenomena; everything is the wisdom of intrinsic awareness, primordial intrinsic clarity, untouched by limitations. One is primordially free from such temporarily made designations as appearing and non-appearing.

The question may now be raised as to whether the fruition of the tantric path is to be identified with the stage of universal light obtained through the gradual and simultaneous *sūtra*-based approaches. This question is

<sup>20</sup> La Vallée Poussin 1971, vol. 1, ch. 2: 284; vol. 4, ch. 6: 211. On the correspondences between gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' formulation of the fruition in the tantric context and the classical *Abhidharma* presentation, see Esler 2016: 343–344.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Guénon 2005: 269.

<sup>22</sup> C 278.5 (Chapter VI, §4.5): [...] *lus kyi drwa [drwa M 200b.6: dra C] ba'am rgya mdud [mdud C: mdung M 200b.6] bral ma thag pa la rnal 'byor pas gdon mi za'o |*

<sup>23</sup> C 278.6–279.3 (Chapter VI, §4.5): *| rnal 'byor chen po ma hā yo ga'i dpe ci 'dra zhe na | [shad M 201a.2: om. C] nyi ma dang 'dra ste | dper na nyi ma'i 'od nam mkha' la shar ba la | mun pa ming med de thams cad snang ba nyi tshe'i ngo bor gsal ba dang 'dra ste | ma hā yo ga'i rang rig pa byang chub sems | chos thams cad kyi de bzhin nyid ni ril rang rig pa ye shes mthas ma reg pa ye nas rang gsal ba la || da 'phral ['phral em.: dpral C, M 201a.5] du byas pa'i snang mi snang gi tha snyad dang ye nas bral lo |*

especially pertinent, since a correspondence between the stage of universal light and the ultimate attainment of the tantric path, the level of an awareness-holder of spontaneous presence (*lhun-grub rig-'dzin*), is signalled by Dudjom Rinpoche (1904–1987), who, however, qualifies the remark by saying that the intentions of the beings traversing both stages differ greatly.<sup>24</sup> gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes, for his part, maintains a clear distinction between both stages and considers the awareness-holder of spontaneous completeness a superior level of attainment precisely because it is spontaneously accomplished, unlike the stage of universal light which is the result of the *bodhisattva*'s striving. He declares:<sup>25</sup>

The *Mādhyamikas* train for aeons in order to accomplish [the stage of] universal light. Through the strength of their aspirations and compassion, they arise as the body of form. But [here, in the vehicle of] great means, the five awakened bodies of non-duality,<sup>26</sup> complete without striving, dwell as the integral identity of all the phenomena of cyclic existence and transcendence; hence, emanations arise on their own, like waves in the ocean – this is their demarcation.

[...] It is needless to say that, as do the followers of the *sūtras*,<sup>27</sup> there are parties [of people] who have not, as individuals, assimilated the *Mantrayāna* with confidence but are full of pretentious pride [in their prattling of] words; they say that though the *Sūtrayāna* and *Mantrayāna* [vary in terms of] the distance of the accomplishment, the fruition of [the stage of]

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Dudjom Rinpoche 1991, vol. 1: 282.

<sup>25</sup> C 287.6–288.6 (Chapter VI, §5.1.11): *dbu mas bskal par sbyangs pas grub pa'i kun tu 'od / smon lam dang snying rje'i stobs kyis gzugs sku 'char ba dang / thabs chen po gnyis med kyi sku lnga ma brtsal [brtsal C: btsal M 207a.4] rdzogs pa ni // 'khor ba dang mya ngan las 'das pa'i chos ril gyi bdag nyid du bzhugs pas / rgya mtsho'i rlabs bzhin du sprul pa rang las 'char bas gal mdo [mdo em.: sngo C, M 207a.6] ste / [...] / de la ni mdo sde pa ltar a cang ches / sngags kyi gang zag gdengs [gdengs em.: gdings C, M 207b.3] ma chud par tshig gi nga rgyal snyems pa rabs gcig // mdo sngags la grub thag ring thung ni yod kyi / 'bras bu kun tu 'od gcig par smra ba yod de / de ni rang gis sngags gdengs [gdengs C: gding M 207b.5] ma rnyed par rgyud gcal lo /*

<sup>26</sup> The five awakened bodies are the principal body (*chos-kyi sku*; Skt. *dharmakāya*), the enjoyment body (*longs-spyod rdzogs-pa'i sku*; Skt. *sambhogakāya*), the emanation body (*sprul-pa'i sku*; Skt. *nirmāṇakāya*), the body of actual enlightenment (*mngon-byang-gi sku*; Skt. *abhisambodhikāya*) and the adamantine body (*rdo-rje sku*; Skt. *vajrakāya*). See Dorje and Kapstein 1991, vol. 2: 141.

<sup>27</sup> This expression must here be understood as referring to the simultaneous approach, not to the *Sautrāntika Madhyamaka* as elsewhere in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*; it is also used in this sense in C 283.6 and C 284.3, 284.5 (Chapter VI, §5.1.3, §5.1.4).

universal light is the same.<sup>28</sup> They are rash and have not themselves gained confidence in the *Mantrayāna*.

Interestingly, a similarly rigorous distinction between the fruition of the tantric vehicle and that of the common *Mahāyāna* is drawn by the later Indian master Abhayākaragupta, on the grounds that only the former induces an experience of co-emergent (Skt. *sahaja*) great bliss, and that, moreover, it is alone in using this experience as a means (Skt. *upāya*) of practice.<sup>29</sup>

### Ever-present great completeness: the fruition of *rDzogs-chen*

Unlike *Mahāyoga* which focuses on transforming the afflictions into wisdom, the path of *rDzogs-chen* bypasses this strategy, since it is said to directly and nakedly uncover the state of intrinsic awareness (*rang-rig*), which is none other than the primordially present enlightened mind (Skt. *bodhicitta*). Since this state of great completeness (*rdzogs-chen*) is ever present and primordially perfect, there is no need to seek to improve it in any way. What is required is to recognize it and to rest uncontrived in this recognition.

It follows from this that any attempt to apply antidotes to the afflictions or even to transform them into wisdom can only be seen as unwarranted tampering and restless contrivance. Furthermore, to search for the fruition betrays lack of confidence in intrinsic awareness' great completeness; one thereby fails to realize that absolute meaningfulness (*don*) and the fruition are always completely perfect and already fully present as one's integral identity (*bdag-nyid*).<sup>30</sup> In the words of the *Khyung-chen lding-ba*:<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Note that the non-technical expression *gcig-par smra-ba* found here (which signifies "to say that something is the same as something else") should not be confused with the technical designation *gCig-pur smra-ba* mentioned in the introduction above.

<sup>29</sup> Luo 2010: 37–38 (Sanskrit text), 102–103 (English translation).

<sup>30</sup> C 318 (Chapter VII, §1.2.1.2); Esler 2012: 88.

<sup>31</sup> *Khyung-chen ldings-pa*, in NGT, vol. 1/ka: 421.1–2, quoted in C 319.2–4; see also *Kun-byed rgyal-po*, ch.22, in NGM, vol. 1/ka: 89.2–3; Norbu and Clemente 1999: 159; *Khyung-chen-gyi rgyud*, in NGM, vol. 1/ka: 540.6–7: *lam med lam du 'jug pa lam gyi nad chen yin* [*lam gyi nad chen yin* C, M 228a.2: *rnams kyi nad che ba* NGT] / *phyin par*



Since there is no path, to enter a path is the great illness of the path.  
 To desire to go [somewhere] is similar to deer chasing after a mirage.  
 There is no object to gain, nor will one occur among the entirety of the three worlds.  
 Even the abodes associated with the ten stages are an obscuration to enlightenment.

*rDzogs-chen*'s paradigm of goal-realization may be called disclosive, in that it refrains from interfering with the self-manifesting radiance of the universal ground's wisdom (*ye-shes*; Skt. *jñāna*). It therefore points out the futility of applying antidotes to the afflictions in an attempt to relinquish (*spong-ba*) them, but also bypasses the need to transform (*bsgyur-ba*) them into wisdom. In this regard, such a transformation can only be considered a provisional teaching (Skt. *neyārtha*), since it makes little sense to transform something adventitious into something that is primordial and unfabricated.<sup>32</sup> It is rather by attuning one's focus to the ever-present great completeness of intrinsic awareness that the adventitiously occurring obscurations begin to lose their hold and to dissipate of their own accord.

We are reminded that the fruition is neither produced by the Victorious Ones, nor created through luck or by an omnipotent god, but that it is in fact spontaneously present (*lhun-grub*).<sup>33</sup> The *Rig-pa'i khu-byug*, which is here invoked, declares:<sup>34</sup>

Once one seizes [this state], one relinquishes the illness of striving.  
 Since it abides spontaneously, one rests.

As already alluded to above, the state of great completeness is qualified by its absolute meaningfulness. What does this mean? The term "absolute

*'dod pa* [*'dod pa* C, M 228a.3: *'dod pas* NGT] *ri dwags* [*ri dwags* C, M 228a.3: *ri dags* NGT] *smig rgyu snyeg pa* [*snyeg pa* NGT: *snyed pa* C: *snyegs pa* M 228a.3] *'dra* // *rnyed pa'i yul med 'jig rten gsum las yongs mi 'byung* // *sa bcur ltos pa'i gnas kyang byang chub sgrib pa yin* /

<sup>32</sup> On this disclosive paradigm as a distinguishing feature of *rDzogs-chen*, see Higgins 2013: 27–30.

<sup>33</sup> C 323 (Chapter VII, §1.2.2.1).

<sup>34</sup> *Rig-pa'i khu-byug* (IOL Tib J 647), edited in Karmay 2007: 56; the text is quoted in C 323.3–4: *zin pas rtsol ba'i* [*rtsol ba'i* C, Karmay: *rtsol bas* M 230b.6] *nad spangs te* // *lhun gyis gnas pas bzhag pa yin* /

meaningfulness” (*don*; Skt. *artha*), which also occurs in the *Chan* chapter and is closely connected to, though not identical with, the notion of absolute truth (*don dam-pa*; Skt. *paramārtha*), refers to the fact that when properly comprehended, the absolute (in the present context, intrinsic awareness) is meaningful in and of itself (cf. Guenther 1972: 12). Whereas other pursuits and interests project their *telos* outside of themselves, for example in a goal to be realized or an aim to be achieved (and this is precisely one of the aspects that characterizes their relativity), that which is most meaningful and most valuable contains its own fulfilment in itself. It requires no extrinsic validation or confirmation, and any attempt to authenticate it can have but the preliminary role of awakening confidence in its intrinsic value and meaning. Indeed, gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes writes that “the absolute meaningfulness of this state is without characteristics to reveal.”<sup>35</sup>

However, it would be a mistake to consider it stagnant or inert, since while effecting the purposes of all beings, it accomplishes all actions yet requires no props.<sup>36</sup> The *rTse-mo byung-rgyal* reminds us that while it is itself free from elaborations, it includes merit and wisdom as its natural manifestation, just as the waves are the display of the ocean:<sup>37</sup>

Like the full moon, it has no elaborations.  
It is primordially similar to the swirling dimension of the ocean:  
Even as it radiates, so it absorbs.  
Merit and wisdom are complete in the awakened body, speech and mind.

In line with mainstream *Mahāyāna* understandings of non-abiding transcendence (Skt. *apraṭiṣṭhita-nirvāṇa*), a term which signifies the Buddha’s complete transcendence from the limiting conditions of cyclic existence while retaining the ability to remain pervasively active within the world for the purpose of wandering beings (Makransky 1998: 85–87), gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes writes that in actual fact sentient beings and

<sup>35</sup> C 323.1: / *ngang gi don ni mtshan nyid kyang bstan du med pa* /

<sup>36</sup> Paraphrasing C 322.

<sup>37</sup> *rTse-mo byung-rgyal*, in NGM, vol. 1/ka: 608.1–2, quoted in C 371.5–6 (Chapter VII, §1.2.8.1): / *zla rgyas bzhin du spros pa mi mnga’ ba [mnga’ ba C, M 261b.5: mnga’ bar NGM] // ye nas rgya mtsho ’khyil ba’i dbyings dang mtshungs // spros kyang de bzhin bsdu kyang de bzhin pa // bsod nams ye shes sku gsung thugs la rdzogs /*

Buddhas are non-dual, and that if a cause and effect relationship exists between the two, cause and effect must in fact be regarded as non-dual.<sup>38</sup>

The fruition of *rDzogs-chen* is called “awakening without remainder” (*lhag-ma med-par sangs-rgyas*) and is identified with the spontaneously present beingness of phenomena (Skt. *dharmatā*).<sup>39</sup> This fruition can be achieved by those of outstanding or middling faculties, though it is specified that this may or may not occur in this life.<sup>40</sup> In view of what was said above concerning the difference between the transcendence with remainder of the aggregates (attained in this life) and that without remainder of the aggregates (obtained after death), the statement that the awakening without remainder may be realized in this life or later might at first glance seem surprising. This apparent difficulty is resolved, however, once one realizes that while the terminology may be similar, we are in fact dealing with quite different understandings of the fruition. The *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*’s discussion of the two forms of transcendence (with and without remainder of the aggregates) occurs only in the *Mahāyoga* context (Karmay 2007: 193). Here, on the other hand, the author exposes a distinct form of fruition, called “awakening without remainder.” Since he identifies it with the realization of phenomena’s beingness, it follows that this fruition is the actualization of the universal ground’s primordially present wisdom. The qualification “without remainder” (*lhag-ma med-pa*) must here probably be taken in a less technical sense to refer to the fact that there is no aspect of the individual (i.e. no aggregate) that has not been pervaded by awakening, rather than to a post-mortem form of transcendence. Furthermore, given the fact that the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* pertains to what is known in *rDzogs-chen* doxography as the “mind orientation” (*sems-phyogs*), we should not be surprised that no mention is found of the rainbow body (*’ja’-lus*), since the latter is more typical of the pith instruction section (*man-ngag-sde*).<sup>41</sup>

A further question may arise concerning the disclosive model of goal-realization espoused by *rDzogs-chen*: what distinguishes this paradigm

<sup>38</sup> C 357–358 (Chapter VII, §1.2.7.1).

<sup>39</sup> C 320.3 (Chapter VII, §1.2.2.1); for a translation of this passage, see Esler 2012: 89.

<sup>40</sup> C 322.2–3: *dus ’di’i tshe ’byung dus ’di’i tshe mi ’byung bya ba yang med /*

<sup>41</sup> On the rainbow body, see Achard 1999: 152–154.

of the fruition from that of *Chan*? The answer that gNubs-chen suggests seems to be that while *Chan* seeks an unmediated and simultaneous access to unborn emptiness, this focus on absolute truth causes a rift in the practitioner's experience of the universal ground; this rift becomes visible in the fact that the two truths are felt to be discrete, so that actually the *Chan* practitioner is incapable of experiencing non-duality and is bound to the subtle effort aimed at remaining acquainted with the state of emptiness.<sup>42</sup> Since he does not see the great absolute meaningfulness (the inseparability of emptiness and clarity, *stong-gsal dbyer-med*), he is compared to the grey duck, whose dexterity does not in the slightest stir the ocean.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, in *rDzogs-chen* the ground is approached as a unified continuum whose correlative aspects of alpha-purity (*ka-dag*) and spontaneous presence (*lhun-grub*) are inextricably intertwined. All striving to realize emptiness as opposed to relative truth (as in *Chan*), or any attempt to artificially channel the ground's clarity through the generation of deities (as in *Mahāyoga*) is abandoned and gives way to a simple mode of naturally abiding in the ground of what is.

The manifestation of the fruition is eventually accompanied by a number of miraculous signs, termed indications (*rtags*), which are said to arise like rainbows in the sky or waves in the ocean. These indications occur in three phases, called wavering, attainment and stability, or else referred to as the first, intermediate and final feelings (*tshor-ba*), and corresponding to outer, inner and secret warmth (Esler 2012: 119–122). To illustrate these signs, we can do no better than to quote the *rDo-rje bkod-pa*, which is referred to at this point in the text:<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> C 490.4–5 (Chapter VII, §5.1); C 493.3 (§5.4.3); Esler 2012: 123.

<sup>43</sup> C 61 (Chapter III, §3.2.2); cf. Dalton and van Schaik 2003: 172.

<sup>44</sup> *rDo-rje bkod-pa*, in NGM, vol. 15/ba: 429.6–430.3, quoted in C 468.2–5 (Chapter VII, §4.2): [...] / de nas nyi ma'i 'od zer gyis // rdul phran 'dra ba'i mtshan ma 'byung // 'di ['di C, M 336a.2: de NGM] ni g.yo ba'i snga ltas so // de nas smig rgyu lta bur [bur NGM: bu C, M 336a.2] 'byung // dang po'i drod ces bya bar bshad // de nas mtsho yi [mtsho yi NGM: mtsho'i C, M 336a.3] rlabs ltar 'byung // bar gyi drod ces bya bar bshad // de nas rlung chen lta bur [bur NGM: bu C, M 336a.4] yang // thogs pa med par 'byung ['byung NGM, M 336a.4: 'gyur C] bar 'gyur // tha ma'i drod ces bya bar bshad // de nas yig 'bru'i drod spros [spros C, M 336a.5: 'phros NGM] pas // char chen 'bab pa lta bur 'byung // de ni thob pa'i drod ces bshad // de ni [ni C, M 336a.5: nas NGM] mkha' la sprin lding bzhin [lding bzhin NGM, C: bzhin lding M 336a.6] // ting 'dzin rtsal 'phangs mtho [mtho C, M 336a.6: mthong NGM] bar 'gyur // de ni shin tu brtan [brtan C, M 336a.6: bstan NGM] pa'i drod // de nas ta la gcig [gcig NGM, M

There then occurs the sign that is like particles of dust  
 [Appearing] due to the rays of the sun:  
 This is the presage of wavering.  
 There then occurs [the sign that is] like a mirage:  
 This is explained as the first warmth.  
 There then occurs [the sign that is] like the ocean's waves:  
 This is explained as the intermediate warmth.  
 There then occurs, unimpededly,  
 [The sign that is] like the wind:  
 This is explained as the final warmth.  
 There then occurs the warmth that radiates from the seed-syllable,  
 Like a great downpour of rain:  
 This is explained as the warmth of attainment.  
 Then, like clouds soaring in the sky,  
 The dynamism of concentration becomes elevated:  
 This is the warmth of veritable stability.  
 Then, as if it were a mere palm leaf,  
 One's body, powerlessly,  
 Leaps across the sky and strives upwards:  
 This is the warmth of veritable clarity.

Despite the unimpeded arising of these indications, it must be remembered that in actuality the fruition can be no more than the full blossoming of the spontaneously present wisdom of intrinsic awareness, which is inherently non-dual. This non-dual nature counts among its most fundamental characteristics the fact of being without cause, without condition, without fruition and without effort.<sup>45</sup> There is thus a sense in which one cannot even speak of a fruition at all, since this would imply that the great completeness of intrinsic awareness is subject to causes and conditions. It is of course from the perspective of the individual practitioner that the fruition signifies the full realization of the purity and perfection that have always been present but were temporarily veiled due to the adventitious obscurations. This realization is usually, as mentioned, accompanied by a number of indications of progress, but the practitioner is warned that hope for the fruition and its signs is listed among fourteen defects of contemplation,<sup>46</sup> and is also reassured with a quote from an

336a.6: *cig C* | *tsam du* // *bdag gi lus ni dbang med par* // *mkha'* [mkha' C, M 336b.1: *mtha'* NGM] | *la 'phar zhing 'phags par rtsol* // 'di ni shin tu gsal ba'i drod /

<sup>45</sup> C 443 (Chapter VII, §2.4).

<sup>46</sup> C 438 (§2.3.5).

unidentified text, the *rNal-'byor-gyi chos-gzhung*, that even should the warmth of experience fail to arise, if he persists in meditation he will eventually become an awareness-holder of spontaneous presence and will then become Samantabhadra himself.<sup>47</sup> It will be recalled that the awareness-holder of spontaneous presence was already evoked in the context of *Mahāyoga* as the ultimate attainment of the tantric path.<sup>48</sup> The difference between the awareness-holder of spontaneous presence and the stage of Samantabhadra<sup>49</sup> is that the former describes enlightenment as the path's culmination, whereas the latter alludes to the ever-present awakening of the primordial ground (*ye-gzhi*) (Guenther 1989: 195–199). We thus return to the difference between describing the fruition from the point of view of the person following the path and evoking what enlightenment means in and of itself. In *rDzogs-chen*, the difference between enlightenment and confusion is the recognition and non-recognition of one's intrinsic nature. While such a view might seem to make

<sup>47</sup> C 469.5–6 (§4.2).

<sup>48</sup> Even though, strictly speaking, in the *Mahāyoga* context gNubs-chen uses the term “awareness-holder of spontaneous completeness” (*lhun-gyis rdzogs-pa'i rig-'dzin*) (cf. C 288.3, Chapter VI, §5.1.11) rather than “awareness-holder of spontaneous presence” (*lhun-gyis grub-pa'i rig-'dzin*) as here (C 469.6), it seems to me unnecessary to posit a radical distinction between both terms, since the words “spontaneous completeness” and “spontaneous presence” appear to be used interchangeably. Of course, this does not detract from the fact that we are dealing with two different paths, viz. *Mahāyoga* and *rDzogs-chen*, leading to the result in question, and that in each case the nature of the path influences the understanding of the fruition, even if the latter is described with the same or similar words. This is indeed borne out by the evidence before us, since while the *rDzogs-chen* approach shares the fruition of the awareness-holder of spontaneous presence with the vehicle of *Mahāyoga*, it also subordinates this attainment to the stage of Samantabhadra, which it conceives as the ultimate fruition.

<sup>49</sup> In the specifically *rDzogs-chen* context, the name Samantabhadra (“Always Good”) does not designate the homonymous *bodhisattva*, but rather signifies the primordial Buddha of the principal body (Skt. *dharmakāya*), whose awakening is coextensive with the universal ground (*kun-gzhi*) itself, having never departed from the recognition of intrinsic awareness. Vimalamitra (8<sup>th</sup> century) gives the following hermeneutical explication of the name Kun-tu bzang-po/Samantabhadra: “Its etymology is as follows: since it concerns the manifold, it is called *kun* (‘all’), and since the root [of all] is comprised in one's own mind, it is called *tu* (terminative particle, locative case). Since it interrupts the dismal concepts of cyclic existence, it is called *bzang-po* (‘good’).” The Tibetan reads: / *nges tshig ni mang bas kun zhes bya la / de yang rtsa ba rang sems la 'dus pas na tu zhes bya'o // 'khor ba'i rnam rtog ngan pa rgyun chad pas na bzang po ces bya'o /* See Vimalamitra, *Kun-tu bzang-po klong-drug rgyud-kyi 'grel-pa*, in NKJ, vol. 109/dze: 39.2–4.

the accumulation of merit superfluous, the liberation of Samantabhadra, which is the recognition of one's own nature, is itself a treasury of spontaneously complete merit. By recognizing intrinsic illumination (*rang-snang*) for what it is, the very basis of confusion and of the afflictions is cut through (Achard 1999: 107); Samantabhadra illustrates the fact that these accumulations are primordially accrued in the atemporal understanding of the abiding mode (Achard 2005: 82).

### Concluding remarks

It will be clear from the above that the four approaches to enlightenment outlined in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* are not merely different conceptions of the path, but also present distinct understandings of the path's fruition, since they are held to lead to different levels of attainment. The gradual approach takes as its goal the stage of universal light, which it considers to be the result of a progressive process of purification and accumulation. For the simultaneous approach of *Chan*, on the other hand, the stage of universal light manifests instantaneously when the practitioner is able to maintain an unwavering focus on unborn emptiness; this fixation on absolute truth bypasses the need for more relative practices. The tantric vehicle of *Mahāyoga* approaches the fruition of an awareness-holder dominating life and from there of an awareness-holder of spontaneous presence by transforming the afflictions into wisdom. The approach of *rDzogs-chen* sees the enlightened mind not as a goal to be achieved but rather as the consummately pure and perfect primordial state of the universal ground; without modifying it or altering it in any way, the practitioner learns to attune to this state: the fruition thereby attained is the stage of an awareness-holder of spontaneous presence and finally the blossoming of primevally present enlightenment itself, illustrated by the state of Samantabhadra.

The different levels of attainment and their distribution across the different vehicles may thus be summarized as follows: whereas the gradual and simultaneous *sūtra*-based approaches are different paths that share the same goal, i.e. the stage of universal light, the vehicle of *Mahāyoga* is believed to surpass this stage and to lead the practitioner to two distinctly tantric levels of attainment, respectively termed the awareness-holder dominating life and the awareness-holder of spontaneous presence. The

*rDzogs-chen* approach shares the latter accomplishment with *Mahāyoga*, but also sees an even higher fruition in what it calls the reawakening to the primordial enlightenment of Samantabhadra.

It is as if awakening were a totality which, in the *Mahāyāna* mode of approach, whether gradual or simultaneous, is conceived within a teleological framework as a plane of residence (*bsti-gnas*; Skt. *āśrama*),<sup>50</sup> that is, an immobile place where the *bodhisattva* can rest after his exertions in cyclic existence and whence he can emanate bodies of form (Skt. *rūpakāya*) for the sake of sentient beings. On the other hand, the tantric vehicle of *Mahāyoga* is able to connect more directly with the vibrantly blissful luminosity of the enlightened state, which is experienced and held in awareness, initially as life-bestowing creativity and then as a spontaneous presence wherein the five awakened bodies are non-dually complete without striving. The *rDzogs-chen* vehicle, which in the present framework is seen as the apex of all approaches, settles directly and effortlessly in the fullness of primordial awakening, without the least remnant attempt at rectification: with complete confidence it holds the awareness of the ground's spontaneous completeness, and accesses always present goodness which is the totality of enlightenment.

## Bibliography

### Abbreviations

- C = gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes, *rNal-'byor mig-gi bsam-gtan or bSam-gtan mig-sgron: A treatise on bhāvanā and dhyāna and the relationships between the various approaches to Buddhist contemplative practice*. Reproduced from a manuscript made presumably from an Eastern Tibetan print by 'Khor-gdong gter-sprul 'Chi-med rig-'dzin. Smarntsis shesrig spendzod, vol. 74. Leh: Tashigangpa, 1974.
- IOL Tib J = India Office Library, Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang library cave held in the British Library, London.
- M = gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes rin-po-che, *sGom-gyi gnad gsal-bar phye-ba bsam-gtan mig-sgron ces-bya-ba*. In *bKa'-ma shin-tu rgyas-pa*. Vol. 97/je. Edited by mKhan-po Mun-sel. Chengdu: Kaḥ-thog, n.d.

<sup>50</sup> C 288.2 (Chapter VI, §5.1.11). Sangs-rgyas ye-shes uses the expression *bsti-gnas-kyi sa* specifically to distinguish the fruition of the simultaneous approach (*Chan*) from that of *Mahāyoga*.



- NGM = *rNying-ma rgyud-'bum*. mTshams-brag edition. 46 vols. Thimphu: Royal National Library, 1982.
- NGT = *rNying-ma rgyud-'bum*. gTing-skyes edition. 36 vols. Thimphu: Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, 1973–1975.
- NKJ = *sNga-'gyur bka'-ma*. Edited by Kaḥ-thog mKhan-po 'Jam-dbyangs. 120 vols. Chengdu: Kaḥ-thog, 1999.
- TD = *bsTan-'gyur*. Facsimile of the sDe-dge 1737–1744 edition prepared by Tshul-khrims rin-chen. 213 vols. Delhi: Karmapae Chodhey Gyalwae Sungrab Partrun Khang, 1982–1985.

### Tibetan and Sanskrit Language Works

- Kamalaśīla, *dBu-ma snang-ba*. In TD, vol. 107: 266–487.
- Kamalaśīla, *Bhāvanākrama*. See Namdrol 1997, Tucci 1958 and 1971.
- Kamalaśīla, *Madhyamakāloka*. Restored and critically edited by Penpa Dorjee. Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 2001.
- Kun-byed rgyal-po*. In NGM, vol. 1/ka: 2–192.
- Khyung-chen-gyi rgyud*. In NGM, vol. 1/ka: 537–560.
- Khyung-chen ldings-pa*. In NGT, vol. 1/ka: 419–423.
- rDo-rje bkod-pa = Kun-'dus rig-pa'i mdo = De-bzhin gshegs-pa thams-cad-kyi thugs gsang-ba'i ye-shes don-gyi snying-po / khro-bo rdo-rje'i rigs / kun-'dus rig-pa'i mdo rnal-'byor bsgrub-pa'i rgyud*. In NGM, vol. 15/ba: 321–672.
- Bi-ma-la mi-tra (Vimalamitra), *Kun-tu bzang-po klong-drug rgyud-kyi 'grel-pa*. In NKJ, vol. 109/dze.
- rTse-mo byung-rgyal*. In NGM, vol. 1/ka: 606–618.
- Rig-pa'i khu-byug = IOL Tib J 647*.
- Rong-zom chos-kyi bzang-po, *Theg-pa chen-po'i tshul-la 'jug-pa*. In *Rong-zom chos-bzang-gi gsung-'bum*, vol. 1. Chengdu: Si-khron mi-rigs dpe-skrunkhang, 1999: 415–555.
- Lankāvatārasūtra*. Edited by P.L. Vaidya. Darbhanga: The Mithila Institute of Post-graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning, 1963.
- bSod-nams rtse-mo, *rGyud-sde spyi-rnam*. In *Sa-skya bka'-'bum*, vol. 3/ga. Dehra Dun: Sakya Centre, 1992: 1–147.

### Western Language Works

- Achard, Jean-Luc. 1999. *L'Essence Perlée du Secret: Recherches philologiques et historiques sur l'origine de la Grande Perfection dans la tradition rNying ma pa*. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Achard, Jean-Luc. 2005. “Le Mode d'Émergence du Réel: L'avènement des manifestations de la Base (*gzhi snang*) selon les conceptions de la Grande Perfection.” *Revue d'Études Tibétaines* 7: 64–96. Accessed October 30,

2015. [http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret\\_07\\_04.pdf](http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret_07_04.pdf).
- Bühnemann, Gudrun. 1992. "Some Remarks on the Date of Abhayākaragupta and the Chronology of His Works." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 142: 120–127.
- Buswell, Robert E. 1989. *The Formation of Ch'an Ideology in China and Korea: The Vajrasamādhi-Sūtra, A Buddhist Apocryphon*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Carré, Patrick, trans. 2004. *Soutra des Dix Terres, Dashabhūmika*. Paris: Fayard.
- Chhimed Rigdzin Lama, Khordong Terchen Tulku. n.d. *The Prayer of Aspirations of the Lamps (Mar-me smon-lam)*. Translated by James Low. n.p.
- Chhimed Rigdzin Rinpoche and James Low. 2011. *Radiant Aspiration: The Butterlamp Prayer 'Lamp of Aspiration.'* London: Simply Being.
- Conze, Edward, trans. 1994. *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines & Its Verse Summary*. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications.
- Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. 2009. *Elements of Buddhist Iconography: New Edition Revised & Enlarged in accordance with Author's Notes*. Edited by Krishna Deva. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts/Manohar.
- Cornu, Philippe. 2006. *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique du Bouddhisme*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- Dalton, Jacob and Sam van Schaik. 2003. "Lighting the Lamp: An Examination of the Structure of the Bsam gtan mig sgron." *Acta Orientalia* 64: 153–175.
- Demiéville, Paul. 1973. "La Pénétration du Bouddhisme dans la Tradition Philosophique Chinoise." In Paul Demiéville, *Choix d'Études Bouddhiques (1929–1970)*. Leiden: E.J. Brill: 241–260.
- Dorje, Gyurme and Matthew Kapstein. 1991. *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*. Vol. 2, *Reference Materials*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.
- Dudjom Rinpoche. 1991. *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*. Translated and edited by Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein. 2 vols. Boston: Wisdom Publications.
- Esler, Dylan. 2012. "The Exposition of Atiyoga in gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*." *Revue d'Études Tibétaines* 24: 81–136. Accessed October 30, 2015. [http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret\\_24\\_03.pdf](http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret_24_03.pdf).
- Esler, Dylan. 2014. "On the Life of gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes." *Revue d'Études Tibétaines* 29: 5–27. Accessed October 30, 2015. [http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret\\_29\\_01.pdf](http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret_29_01.pdf).
- Esler, Dylan. 2015. "Méditation graduelle au Tibet ancien." *Les Cahiers Bouddhiques* 8: 97–121.
- Esler, Dylan. 2016. "Traces of Abhidharma in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* (Tibet, Tenth Century)." In Bart Dessein and Weijen Teng, eds., *Text, History, and Philosophy: Abhidharma across Buddhist Scholastic Traditions*. Leiden: Brill: 314–349.

- Faure, Bernard. 1988. *La Volonté d'Orthodoxie dans le Bouddhisme Chinois*. Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique.
- Faure, Bernard. 1991. *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Guénon, René. 2005. *Aperçus sur l'Initiation*. Saligny: Éditions Traditionnelles.
- Guenther, Herbert V. 1972. *The Tantric View of Life*. Berkeley: Shambhala.
- Guenther, Herbert V. 1983. "Meditation Trends in Early Tibet." In Whalen Lai and Lewis R. Lancaster, eds., *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*. Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press: 351–366.
- Guenther, Herbert V. 1989. *From Reductionism to Creativity: rDzogs chen and the New Sciences of Mind*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Guenther, Herbert V. 2008. *Yuganaddha: The Tantric View of Life*. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Amarabharati Prakashan.
- Higgins, David. 2013. *The Philosophical Foundations of Classical rDzogs chen in Tibet: Investigating the Distinction Between Dualistic Mind (sems) and Primordial Knowing (ye shes)*. Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien.
- Kalupahana, David J. 1994. *A History of Buddhist Philosophy: Continuities and Discontinuities*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Karmay, Samten Gyaltzen. 2007. *The Great Perfection: A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching of Tibetan Buddhism*. Leiden: Brill.
- Lamotte, Étienne. 1935. *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra: L'Explication des Mystères*. Louvain/Paris: Bureaux du Recueil/Adrien Maisonneuve.
- Lamotte, Étienne. 1944. *Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse de Nāgārjuna (Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra)*. Vol. 1. Louvain: Institut Orientaliste & Bureaux du Muséon.
- Lamotte, Étienne. 1958. *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien: Des Origines à l'Ère Śāka*. Louvain: Institut Orientaliste.
- Lamotte, Étienne. 1974. "Passions and Impregnations of the Passions in Buddhism." In Lance Cousins et al., eds., *Buddhist Studies in Honour of I.B. Horner*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company: 91–104.
- Lamotte, Étienne. 1976. *Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse de Nāgārjuna (Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra)*. Vol. 4. Louvain: Institut Orientaliste.
- La Vallée Poussin, Louis de. 1971. *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu, Traduction et Annotations*. 6 vols. Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises.
- Luo Hong. 2010. *Abhayākaragupta's Abhayapaddhati Chapters 9 to 14: Critically edited and translated*. Beijing/Hamburg: China Tibetology Research Center/Asien-Afrika-Institut.
- Makransky, John J. 1998. *Buddhahood Embodied: Sources of Controversy in India and Tibet*. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications.
- McRae, John. 1986. *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Meinert, Carmen. 2002. "Chinese Chan and Tibetan rDzogs chen: Preliminary Remarks on Two Tibetan Dunhuang Manuscripts." In Henk Blezer, ed.,

- Religion and Secular Culture in Tibet: Tibetan Studies II*. Proceedings of the International Association of Tibetan Studies 2000, Vol. 2. Leiden: Brill: 289–307.
- Meinert, Carmen. 2003. “Structural Analysis of the *bSam gtan mig sgron*: A Comparison of the Fourfold Correct Practice in the *Āryāvikalpa-praveśanāmadhāraṇī* and the Contents of the Four Main Chapters of the *bSam gtan mig sgron*.” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 26: 175–195.
- Namdrol, Gyaltzen, ed. 1997. *Bhāvanākrama: Tibetan Version, Sanskrit Restoration and Hindi Translation*. Restored, translated and edited by. Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies.
- Ñāṇananda, Bhikkhu. 1976. *Concept and Reality in Early Buddhist Thought: An Essay on ‘Papañca’ and ‘Papañca – Saññā – Saṅkhā.’* Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society.
- Norbu, Namkhai and Adriano Clemente, trans. 1999. *The Supreme Source: The Kunjed Gyalpo: The Fundamental Tantra of Dzogchen Semde*. Ithaca: Snow Lion.
- Ruegg, David S. 1977. “The *gotra*, *ekayāna* and *tathāgatagarbha* theories of the *Prajñāpāramitā* according to Dharmamitra and Abhayākaragupta.” In Lewis R. Lancaster and Luis O. Gómez, eds., *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems: Studies in Honor of Edward Conze*. Berkeley: University of California Press: 283–312.
- Ruegg, David S. 1989. *Buddha-nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism in a Comparative Perspective: On the Transmission and Reception of Buddhism in India and Tibet, Jordan Lectures 1987*. London: School of Oriental and African Studies.
- Sanderson, Alexis. 2009. “The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism During the Early Medieval Period.” In Shingo Einoo, ed., *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture: 41–349.
- Schuon, Frithjof. 1993. *Treasures of Buddhism*. Bloomington: World Wisdom Books.
- Suzuki, Daisetz Teitaro, trans. 2009. *The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra: A Mahāyāna Text*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Tomabechi, Toru and Kazuo Kano. 2008. “A Critical Edition and Translation of a Text Fragment from Abhayākaragupta’s *Āmnāyamañjarī*: Göttingen, Cod. ms. sanscr. 259.” *Tantric Studies* 1: 22–44.
- Tucci, Giuseppe. 1958. *Minor Buddhist Texts*. Part 2. Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente.
- Tucci, Giuseppe. 1971. *Minor Buddhist Texts*. Part 3. Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente.
- Wangchuk, Dorji. 2007. *The Resolve to Become a Buddha: A Study of the Bodhicitta Concept in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*. Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies.

Appendix – Table: Fruition in comparative perspective according to the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*

<i>Approach</i>	Gradual approach of classical <i>Mahāyāna</i>	Simultaneous approach of <i>Chan</i>	Tantric approach of <i>Mahāyoga</i>	Approach of self-liberation – <i>rDzogs-chen</i>
<i>Name of Fruition</i>	Stage of universal light (Skt. <i>samantaprabhā</i> ).	Stage of universal light (Skt. <i>samantaprabhā</i> ).	a) Awareness-holder dominating life ( <i>she-dbang rig-'dzin</i> ). b) Awareness-holder of spontaneous completeness ( <i>lhun-gyis rdzogs-pa'i rig-'dzin</i> ). (Cf. above, note 48.)	Awakening without remainder ( <i>lhaq-ma med-par sangs-rgyas</i> ) consists of: a) awareness-holder of spontaneous presence ( <i>lhun-gyis grub-pa'i rig-'dzin</i> ); b) state of Samantabhadra.
<i>Description of Fruition</i>	Two bodies [viz. body of form (Skt. <i>rūpakāya</i> ) and principal body (Skt. <i>dharmakāya</i> ] as the result of gradual accumulation of merit and wisdom.	Arises through the strength of non-imaging ( <i>mi-dmigs</i> ; Skt. <i>anālamibana</i> ), i.e. focusing on absolute truth of emptiness.	Through alchemical process of transformation → a) state of virtual release that dominates dimensions of human condition; still within the realm of temporal duration; b) state of actual release attained at death, spontaneously complete without striving.	Through attunement to disclosive blossoming of intrinsic awareness → a) fruition as spontaneously present realization of great completeness; b) enlightenment in and of itself; ever-present awakening of the primordial ground ( <i>ye-gzhi</i> ).

## ABSTRACT

If “all roads lead to Rome” (or did so in the days of the Roman Empire), all paths do not lead to enlightenment – at least not to the same enlightenment. This, in any case, is the conclusion we must derive from reading gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes’ doxographical work, the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* (Tibet, 10<sup>th</sup> century). In it he presents four distinct ways to reach enlightenment that encompass both *sūtra*-based and *tantra*-based doctrinal formulations: the gradual approach of the classical *Mahāyāna*, the simultaneous approach of *Chan*, the method of alchemical transformation of Tantra and the path of self-liberation, *rDzogs-chen*. These four different paths lead to distinct forms of fruition (*’bras-bu*; Skt. *phala*). It is the latter that will be the focus of the present article.