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## A Eulogy of Mind's Connate Qualities, Zhwa dmar Chos Grags ye shes on the Hidden Meaning of Luminosity

### Introduction

The Fourth Zhwa dmar pa Chos grags ye shes (1453–1524) as well as being a prominent student and biographer of the famous 'Gos Lo tsā ba, also established himself as a scholar, a central Tibetan ruler, and a monk. His collected works discuss among much else the topic of luminosity as it is developed in the Bka' brgyud pa Mahāmudrā tradition.

This paper focuses on his writings on the “hidden meaning of luminosity”. According to Chos grags ye shes the nonaffirming negation in the second cycle of the Buddha's teaching is of not fully perfected definitive meaning while the affirming negation of the third wheel, the inseparability of mind's emptiness and luminosity, in other words *mahāmudrā*, constitutes the fully perfected definitive meaning.

### The Author

Chos grags ye shes was identified as the rebirth of the Third Zhwa dmar pa Chos dpal ye shes (1406–1452) by Gu śrī dpal 'byor don grub (d. 1490) who was the regent of Mtshur phu monastery. His name, Chos grags ye shes, he received from the Seventh Karma pa Chos grags rgya mtsho (1454–1506) upon their first encounter in Zur mang. Chos grags ye shes travelled widely throughout South-, East- and Central Tibet, receiving extensive training from various teachers such as Kun mkhyen 'Jam dpal bzang po, 'Gos Lo tsā ba, and Khrims khang Lo tsā ba Bsod nams rgya mtsho.<sup>1</sup> In Central Tibet he established close connections with the Phag gru rulers which finally led to a situation where he promised at the death bed of the Eighth Phag gru governor Spyan-snga Ngag gi dbang po that he would carry out the function of the 'Spyan snga' at the Phag gru court until the coming of age of the ruler's son. This is how he became both, the religious and secular ruler of Tibet with the title Spyan snga Chos kyi grags pa for a period of eleven years (1495–1506). During this period of time, he founded the monasteries Lhun grub chos sde and Yangs pa can.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, 1115<sub>5</sub>-1116<sub>23</sub>.

The main students of Chos grags ye she were: Dpa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba (1504-1566), Zha lu lo tsā ba Chos skyong bzang po (1441-1528), Karma 'Phrin las pa (1456-1539), Spyan snga bcu gcig pa, Spyan snga bcu gsum pa, Kun spangs pa chen po as well as several disciples from the Sa skya, Rnying ma and Dge lugs schools.

There is no evidence that wooden printing blocks were ever prepared for his Collected Works which might be a reason why his writings did not receive much attention until recently. It was only in the year 2009 that upon the initiative of the Zhwa dmar pa's monastery Yangs pa can in Central Tibet a complete manuscript version of his writings in thirteen divisions which had been kept in the Cultural Palace of Minorities in Beijing<sup>2</sup> was reprinted in six volumes. His works cover a variety of topics such as hymns of buddhas, bodhi-sattvas and special places, hagiographies of lamas, extensive expositions on philosophical and tantric treatises, questions and answers, miscellaneous advice, and prayers.

### **The Hidden Meaning of Luminosity**

*The Hidden Meaning of Luminosity* ('od gsal gyi sbas don) is contained in vol. 6 (na) in the Collected Works of Chos grags ye shes. Being part of an exposition of the so-called six *dharmas* of Nāropa it has a tantric context. The explanation is embedded in a short presentation of the Buddhist path comprised of the causal vehicle of perfection and the resultant mantra vehicle. Chos grags ye shes points out that based on the causal philosophical vehicle, awakening takes the practitioner three immeasurable eons, whereas the resultant *mantra* vehicle, depending on the individual's capacity, allows for swift accomplishments. Provided that they are able to abide by the tantric *samayās*, even practitioners with inferior capacity and diligence will accomplish their aim either in the intermediate state or after eight lifetimes.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ehrhard 2002: 11, in Monograph Series, 3, Lumbini International Research Institute.

<sup>3</sup> *Dpal nā ro chos drug gi khrīd kyi rim pa'i sbas don*, 1<sub>12-17</sub>: "Mahāyāna, then, is present as both the causal Pāramitāyāna and the resultant Mantrayāna. By virtue of the former of [these two] paths, unsurpassable awakening will be achieved through engaging in the practice for three immeasurable eons etc. In the latter path [provided one] is of highest capacity, endowed with great diligence, aspiring for the supreme and attends to tantra as the unmistakable core of the path, one will achieve in this very life the no-more-learning [state] of Vajradhara in union endowed with the seven features. With middling capacity and diligence one will actualize the first *bhūmi* of a vajra holder of learning. And even with inferior capacity and no diligence one will attain buddhahood either in the intermediate state of becoming or after eight lifetimes." *theg pa chen po nyid la yang | rgyu pha rol tu phyin pa'i theg pa dang | 'bras bu sngags gyi theg pa gnyis su gnas pa'i snga ma'i lam gyis | bskal pa grangs med pa gsum la sogs par spyad pa*

Introducing the topic, Chos grags ye shes distinguishes the resultant *mantra* vehicle according to the *gsar ma*-tradition into the four classes of the *kriyā*-, *caryā*-, *yoga*- and *yoganiruttaratantras* and specifies the distinctive features of their associated empowerments which are the indispensable gateways for the respective practices.<sup>4</sup> After a brief survey on these *tantra* classes, special emphasis is given to the *yoganiruttara-tantras* and their generation- and completion-phases (*bskyed rim*, *utpattikrama*; *rdzogs rim*, *utpannakrama*) of meditation practice, a distinction which is based on the *Guhyasamājatantra*.<sup>5</sup> The quote provided by Chos grags ye shes comes from the *Hevajra Tantra*.<sup>6</sup> The transmission of the teachings on the practice of luminosity is traced back to the tantric

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*spyod pas bla na med pa'i byang chub 'grub bo | phyi ma'i lam la skal rab mchog tu mos pa'i brtson pa chen po dang ldan zhing | lam gyi gnad phyin ci ma log pa rgyud la bsten pas | tshe 'di nyid la mi slob pa'i rdo rje 'chang kha sbyor yan lag bdun ldan 'thob la | skal ba dang brtson pa 'bring gis slob pa'i rdo rje 'dzin pa sa dang po pa mngon du byed cing | skal dman brtson par mi ldan pas kyang srid pa bar do'am | skye ba brgyad nas sangs rgyas 'grub ste |*

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 4<sub>20-23</sub>: “The resultant *yāna* as well is known as the four *tantra* groups and also classified as the five *tantra* groups or the seven etc. These are the subdivisions of it and with each, before entering [the practice] there is an empowerment that ripens [the mind-stream] which must be obtained according to the system of the respective *tantra* group. 'bras bu'i theg pa de yang rgyud sde bzhir yongs su grags shing | rgyud sde lnga 'am bdun la sogs par mdzad pa ni | de nyid las rnam par dbye ba yin la | de rnam so so la 'jug pa'i snga rol du smin par byed pa'i dbang bskur ba | rgyud sde rang rang gi lugs ji ltar ba thob dgos pas. And: “Not only does one have to obtain the empowerment, the *samaya* must also be unspoiled.” Ibid., 7<sub>19</sub>: *dbang thob pa kho nar ma zad | dam tshig ma nyams pa dgos te ||*

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 8<sub>1-2</sub>: “From the later *Guhyasamāja*: ‘The Buddha’s teachings abide fully in the two phases, the generation- and the completion phase.’” *gsang ba 'dus pa'i rgyud phyi ma las | sangs rgyas rnam kyi chos bstan pa || rim pa gnyis la yang dag gnas || bskyed pa yi ni rim pa dang || rdzogs pa yi ni rim nyid do || GS 18.82 (Gaekwad’s Oriental Series 53, Baroda 1967: 157): kramadvayam upāśritya vajriṇāṃ tatra deśanā | kramam utpattikaṃ caiva kramam utpannakaṃ tathā ||* The Tibetan has a slight variation taking “*sangs rgyas*”, i.e., buddhas, instead of “*vajriṇaḥ*”, i.e., the adamant ones who can manifest tantric form-*kāyas* which ordinary Mahāyāna Buddhas don’t do.” I am indebted to Prof. Mathes for this information.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 7<sub>24-25</sub>: “From the Śrī Hevajra [Tantra]: “The *dharma* teachings by the adamant one are based on two stages (i.e., the *utpattikrama* and the *utpannakrama*). The process of generation has been told, and now I will teach the process of completion.” *dpal kye rdo rje las | bskyed pa'i rim pa nyid dang ni || rdzogs pa yi yang rim pa nyid || rim gnyis mnyam par gnas nas ni || rdo rje can gyis [text: gyi] chos 'chad do || zhes dang | Hevajra Tantra I.8.25, see Hevajratantram, Sarnath 2001: 87. See Snellgrove 1959, part 2: 28 kramadvayam samāśritya vajriṇā dharmadeśanā || utpattibhāgaṃ kathitam utpannaṃ kathayāmy ahaṃ ||*

Nāgārjuna<sup>7</sup> and therefore, according to the Third Karma pa, to the so-called southern tradition.<sup>8</sup>

With reference to a *Cakrasaṃvara* commentary, the generation phase is glossed with the stages of “taking birth” and “arising”. The completion phase, is glossed with the stages of “perfecting”, “maturing” and “unifying”.<sup>9</sup> The generation phase is explained as contrived in that causes, conditions and the entire process of consciousness and its workings are involved, whereas the completion phase is shown to be uncontrived in that it pertains to luminosity as such.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, he says:

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 20<sub>25</sub>-21<sub>1</sub>: “It is taught that the illusory body and luminosity were transmitted through Nāgārjuna.” *nā ga rdzun las sgyu lus dang ’od gsal | ... gi bka’ babs par bzhed do |*

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 21<sub>4-6</sub>: “Even though there are different long transmission lineages, Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje said that [the transmission went such] that the Buddha, the Great Vajradhara, taught it to bodhisattvas such as the Master of Secrets, [i.e., Vajrapāṇi] and others. From them it went to the teachers of the four transmission lineages of the Southern directions, i.e., Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Candrakīrti, and Mataṅgi ...” *ring rgyud la lugs tha dad pa yod kyang | karma pa rang byung rdo rje’i zhal nas | yang dag par rdzogs pa’i sangs rgyas rdo rje ’changs chen pos gsang ba’i bdag po la sogs pa’i byang chub sems dpa’ rnam la gsungs | de rnam las bka’ bzhi rgyud pa’i bla ma rnam la rgyud de | klu sgrub | ārya de wa | zla ba grags pa | ma tangi rnam lho’i rgyud pa’o ... ||* The textual source of the quote not identified.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 8<sub>3-5</sub>: “Moreover, in the *Samvarodaya* word commentary *Padmanī* it is said that the phases of developing, taking birth, and arising [on the one hand] and perfecting, maturing, completing, and unifying [on the other hand] are [respectively] of one meaning and merely different terms.” *de yang bskyed pa dang | bltams pa dang | skye ba zhes bya ba dang | rdzogs pa dang | yongs su smin pa dang | grub pa dang | zung du ’jug gi rim pa zhes pa don cig la ming rnam grangs par bde mchog ’byung ba’i dka’ ’grel padma can las bshad do ||* See D1420 *Śrīmahāsamvarodayamahātāntrarājapadminīnāma-pañjikā* (rgyud, wa 1b-101b) by Ratnarakṣita, 15<sub>7</sub>-16<sub>1</sub>: *bskyed pa zhes pa bskyed pa dang bltams pa dang skye ba’o || de la rab tu sbyor ba ’di yis zhes pa rnal ’byor te de’i mtshan nyid do || de nas de’i thabs las byung ba rdzogs pa’i rim pa ste || bskyed pa dang rdzogs pa dang grub pa dang zung ’jug gi rim pa’o ||*

<sup>10</sup> *Dpal nā ro chos drug gi khrid kyi rim pa’i sbas don*, 8<sub>5-10</sub>: “When I, the great master asks what is the meaning of the two phases, what is the phase of contrived deity yoga, which of the deity yoga is a contrived phase and [which] an uncontrived phase, [the reply is as follows:] as for the contrived, what does not just arise from causes and conditions, but which also goes along with concepts that are endowed with terms and meanings is the contrived. As concerns the uncontrived, these are not what goes along with the five consciousnesses such as the eye etc. and with the appearance of luminosity of the non-conceptual mental consciousness. The uncontrived is luminosity as such. The entire completion phase is purely a mental state of luminosity.” *kho bo’ yongs su ’dzin pa chen po ni | rim pa gnyis kyi don ci zhe na | lha’i rnal ’byor gang bcos ma’i rim pa dang | ma bcos pa’i rim pa yin te | de yang bcos pa ni | rgyu dang rkyen las byung ba tsam ma yin gyi sgra don can gyi rtog pa ’khor dang bcas pas bcos pa dang | ma bcos pa yin la | ’khor*

As the generation phase is of the worldly, conventional reality, it cannot uproot ordinary conceptualizations, it can just hold them back. ... The practice of the completion phase which is by nature profound and vast, uproots ordinary conceptualizations along with their habitual tendencies.<sup>11</sup>

This is required for the ultimate attainment of buddha, the state of awakening:

If one asks whether it would not be possible to relinquish these [i.e. habitual tendencies] by means of the vehicle of perfection [the answer is] that the realization of the two [aspects] of essencelessness indeed consists in not falling into the three realms and turning towards *nirvāṇa*. However, by the path of essencelessness alone, one will not be able to train [this accomplishment] to completion. Thus cultivating the profound methods of generating and completing is the proper way in which, by means of these [methods], the [state of] awakening is attained.<sup>12</sup>

Regarding the question what by means of these completion phases is being made the path, the answer is that it is the ultimate nature which does not waver from coemergence.

When discussed as part of the meditative practices of the six *dharma*s of Nāropa, luminosity is thus part of this uncontrived completion process. When presented generally, as to its essence, it is the wisdom of coemergence, clarity and emptiness<sup>13</sup> and therefore “the nature of luminosity, *mahāmudrā*”.<sup>14</sup>

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*yang mig la sogs pa'i rnam par shes pa lnga dang | yid kyi rnam par shes pa rtog pa med pa 'od gsal gyi snang ba can ma yin pa rnam so || ma bcos pa ni 'od gsal ba nyid de | rdzogs pa'i rim pa thams cad ni 'od gsal ba'i shes pa 'ba' zhig yin no || zhes 'chad do |*

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 10<sub>10-13</sub>: *bskyed rim kun rdzob kyi bden pa 'jig rten pa yin pas tha mal pa'i rnam rtog rtsa ba nas drungs 'byin mi nus kyang | ldog pa tsam ni nus la | ... don zab pa dang rgya che ba'i bdag nyid can gyi rdzogs rim nyams su blangs pas | tha mal gyi rnam rtog bag chags dang bcas pa drungs 'byin par byed do |*

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 10<sub>13-16</sub>: *ci pha rol du phyin pa'i theg pas de spong bar mi nus sam zhe na | bdag med pa gnyis rtogs pas kham gsum du mi ltung zhing mya ngan las 'das pa phyogs pa yin mod kyi | bdag med rtogs pa'i lam kho nas de dpyis phyin par sbyong mi nus la | bskyed rdzogs kyi thabs zab mo bskoms pas de dag nas byang chub 'thob par 'gyur ba'i tshul |*

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 36<sub>6</sub>: “The essence of luminosity is the wisdom of coemergence, clarity and emptiness.” *'od gsal gyi ngo bo gsal stong lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes ...*

<sup>14</sup> *Phyag chen drug bcu pa*, vol. 6, 321<sub>25</sub>-322<sub>1</sub>, [v. 27a]: *'od gsal phyag rgya chen po'i rang bshin no ||*

Zhwa dmar Chos grags ye shes refers to Nāropa's *Dka' ba spyad pa'i gnad kyi yi ge phyi ma*,<sup>15</sup> *The Later Words on Key Points of Austerities*, where Nāropa is quoted as saying

“phenomena are naturally luminous [and] primordially pure like the sky”; primordial luminosity is identified as “the indestructible all-pervasive identity of all phenomena, the primordial pure natural luminosity of the mind of all sentient beings”.<sup>16</sup>

Chos grags ye shes points out:

This also shows the intent of the illustrious Saraha where, following quotes such as the one from the so-called *Dohākoṣa* or *People Dohā*, “Mind itself is the seed of everything”, [mind] is explained as the essence (*bdag nyid*) of all.<sup>17</sup>

According to Chos grags ye shes, when Saraha employs the term mind itself (*sems nyid*), it pertains to nothing other than the element, suchness, buddha nature, the mind of *dharmatā*, the *vajra* of mind, explaining that:

That alone is the seed that gives rise to all phenomena [implies that] any given phenomenon of cyclic existence or of the peace of *nirvāṇa* is encompassed by and emanates from the mind. Or, the meaning of “emanating” is that from that kind of mind itself [and] alone occurs, at the time when it is stained, the infinity of abodes, bodies, and enjoyments; and at

<sup>15</sup> Quote not identified in the text found at TBRC W21554. *Phyag chen rgya zhung*, published by D. Tsondu Senghe, 1985, vol. 1, 281-286.

<sup>16</sup> 'Od gsal gyi sbas don mtha, 207<sub>12-15</sub>: *dka' ba spyad pa'i gnad kyi yi ge phyi ma'i 'od gsal gyi tshig sbram las | chos rnams rang bzhin 'od gsal ba | gdod nas dag pa nam mkha' bzhin | zhes gsungs pa ltar | sems can thams cad kyi gdod ma'i sems rang bzhin gyi 'od gsal ba rnam par dag pa chos thams cad kyi khyab bdag gzhom du med pa gcig bu ste | zhes gdod ma'i 'od gsal ngos bzung nas |*

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 207<sub>15-17</sub>: *de dpal chen sa ra ha pa'i dgongs par ston pa yang | ji skad du | do hā mdzod ces pa'am | dmangs do hā las | sems nyid gcig pu kun gyi sa bon te | zhes sogs | kyi lung drangs pa'i rjes su | thams cad kyi bdag nyid du bshad pa dang | zhes brjod bya mdor bstan no ||*

See the Dohā quote in Shahidullah 1928: 139, *bajjhai kammaṇa uṇo kamma-vimukkeṇa hoi maṇamokkhaṃ maṇokkheṇa a nūṇaṃ pāvijjai parama-nivvāṇa. (Gāthā.)*

*citte ka saala bīaṃ bhabanibbāṇā bīja sma bisphuranti taṃ cintāmaṇirūaṃ paṇamaha icchāphaladei iti.*

the time when it is being purified from stains, the manifold features that go along with overcoming and realizing, and at the time when it has become free from stains, the unsurpassable and immeasurable qualities of no-[more-]training.<sup>18</sup>

He also quotes Nāgārjuna and his *Dharmadhātustava* as a reference for the teachings on luminosity:

For this very reason, as [the mind alone is what] gives the entirety of temporarily desired fruits [on all levels,] ground, path, and fruition, it “is like a wish fulfilling jewel which grants what fruit is desired” spontaneously. Thus the special qualities of the mind are shown extensively.

Likewise [Nāgārjuna teaches] in the *Dharmadhātustava*: “The element that is the seed, is maintained as the support for all qualities”<sup>19</sup> and “when that which is the cause for all *saṃsāra* is purified, this purity itself is *nirvāṇa* and this itself is the *dharmakāya* too.”<sup>20</sup>

Along with quotations from various tantras, Chos grags ye shes draws on a number of verses from the *Ratnagotravibhāga*:

The luminous nature of mind ... [I.63.1]<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 207<sub>17-24</sub>: *de gcig bu | chos kun bskyed pa'i sa bon thams cad pa ste | srid pa 'khor ba dang | myang 'das zhi ba'i chos gang yin pa rnam la | sems des khyab cing 'phro cing 'phro ba 'am | yang na | de 'dra ba'i sems nyid gcig pu gang las | dri bcas kyi tshe srid pa gsum gyi gnas lus longs spyod rab 'byam 'byung zhing | dri ma sbyong ba na | lam pa'i spangs rtogs kyi khyad par du ma dang | dri bral gyi dus su mi slob pa'i yon tan bla na med cing tshad bzung med pa 'byung ba ni 'phro ba'i don te |*

<sup>19</sup> *Dharmadhātustava* 17.

<sup>20</sup> 'Od gsal gyi sbas don mtha, 207<sub>24</sub>-208<sub>4</sub>: *de nyid kyi phyir | rgyu lam 'bras bu'i gnas skabs kyi 'dod pa'i 'bras bu mtha' dag ster bar byed pas | dgos 'dod lhun grub tu 'byung ba yid bzhin nor bu dang 'dra zhes sems de'i khyad par gyi chos rgya cher bstan pa bzhin | sa bon gyur pa khams de nyid | chos rnam kun gyi rten du 'dod | ces dang | gang zhig 'khor ba'i rgyur gyur pa | de nyid sbyang ba byas pa las | dag pa de nyid mya ngan 'das | chos kyi sku yang de nyid do | zhes chos dbyings bstod par gsungs la | Dharmadhātustava 2.*

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 208<sub>10</sub>: *sems kyi rang bzhin 'od gsal gang yin pa | zhes sogs |*  
RGV I.63:

*cittasya yāsau prakṛtiḥ prabhāsvarā na jātu sādya iva yāti vikriyām |  
āgantukai rāgamalādibhis tvasāvupaiti saṃkleśam abhūta kalpajaiḥ ||  
sems kyi rang bzhin 'od gsal gang yin pa || de ni nam mkha' bzhin du 'gyur med de ||  
yang dag min rtogs las byung 'dod chags sogs || glo bur dri mas de nyon mongs mi 'gyur ||*

And:

There is nothing to be removed from it ... [I.154.1]<sup>22</sup>

He emphasizes that the luminous nature of mind is uncovered by obscurations or adventitious stains; this is the *dharmakāya*. It is for this very reason, that no actual change is involved and that in fact nothing is removed from it. Therefore, according to him, the nature as such was never tainted by anything, just like the element space is never contaminated by anything that happens in it. Thus, Chos grags ye shes explains:

Mind is naturally luminous. What is luminous, like the element of space that is a phenomenon that does not undergo change, such that it expands in some cases and diminishes in others, also does not undergo change which would constitute a flaw.

If the final adventitious stains of the *skandhas*, *dhātus*, *āyatanas* induced by passion etc., i.e., by what is triggered by imputations of what is unreal (*abhūtaparikalpa*) would have the power to obscure [mind's luminosity], change [in mind's nature] would be possible. Yet, because it is not possible that [the

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Takasaki 1966: 237, "The innate nature of the mind is brilliant and, like space, has no transformation at all; It bears, however, the impurity by stains of desires, etc. which are of accident and produced by wrong conception."

While in Sanskrit *prabhāsvarā* is an adjective, the Tibetan equivalent 'od gsal could be also read as a substantive.

<sup>22</sup> RGV I.157 (J I.154)

*nāpaneyam atah kiṃcid upaneyam na kiṃcana |*  
*draṣṭavyam bhūtaṃ bhūtaṃ bhūtaṃ darśi vimucyate ||*  
*'di las bsal bya ci yang med || gzhag par bya ba cung zad med ||*  
*yang dag nyid la yang dag lta || yang dag mthong na rnam par grol ||*

"There is nothing to be removed from it and nothing to be added. The real should be seen as real, and seeing the real, you become liberated." Transl. by Mathes 2008: 8. See also *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* V.21 (with a slight variation in b. *prakṣeptavyam na kiṃcana*) Takasaki 1966: 300 note 53.

The reading 'di las instead of di la in the first line of the Tibetan verse rendering RGV I.157 corresponds with the wording in the commentary by 'Gos Lo tsa wa gzhon nu dpal on the RGVV. See *Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos kyi 'grel bshad de kho na nyid rab tu gsal ba'i me long*, p. 439. In the Tenjur, RGVV (D4025) reads 'di la.



mind as such] becomes obscured, this is a reason for the non-observation of the cause (*anupalabdhihetu*).<sup>23</sup>

Regarding the question whether these explanations are given in accordance with the second or the third turning of the wheel of *dharma*, Chos grags ye shes explains:

Upon the question posed by the Ārya Asaṅga as to what is *tathāgatagarbha*, [the Bodhisattva Maitreya's] answer was that he composed exactly that verse: "There is nothing to be removed from it ..." etc., and to elucidate its meaning [further] the second verse "having the defining characteristic of being separable ..." <sup>24, 25</sup>,

### The Correlation with Mahāmudrā

According to this presentation, the backbone of the *mahāmudrā* teachings on luminosity thus lies mainly in the sūtras ascribed to the third turning and its associated treatises such as the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and the *Dharmadhātustava*.

Moreover, Chos grags ye shes does not only regard the third dharma cycle to be in harmony with the second turning of the wheel of *dharma*, but considers it furthermore to be its perfection: On the one hand, in relation to the third one, the middle wheel of dharma is not completely perfected and, on

<sup>23</sup> 'Od gsal gyi sbas don, 208<sub>13-19</sub>; *sems ni rang bzhin gyi 'od gsal ba'o | 'od gsal gang yin pa de ni | nam mkha'i khams chos 'ga' zhiq gis 'phel ba dang | 'ga' zhiq gis 'brid pa'i rnam par 'gyur ba med pa bzhin du | 'di yang skyon gyi rnam par 'gyur ba med de | yang dag pa ma yin pa'i kun tu rtog pa las byung ba'i 'dod chags dang | sogs pas phung khams skye mched kyi mthar thug pa'i glo bur gyi dri ma rnams kyis nyon mongs pa can du byed nus na 'gyur [ba inserted] srid pa las | nyon mongs pa can du 'gyur ba mi srid pa'i phyir te | rgyu ma dmigs pa'i gtan tshigs so |*

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 209<sub>3</sub>-209<sub>6</sub>; *'phags pa thogs med kyis | de bzhin gzhegs pa'i snying po de gang zhe na zhes dri ba'i lan du | 'di las bsal bya ci yang med | ces sogs tshigs su bcad pa de nyid dang | de'i don gsal byed | rnam dbyer bcas pa'i mtshan nyid can | zhes sogs tshigs bcad gnyis pa dang bcas pa bkod nas |*

<sup>25</sup> RGVV, 226<sub>7</sub>; transl. by Mathes 2008: 9

"The [buddha] element is empty of adventitious [stains], which have the defining characteristic of being separable; but it is not empty of unsurpassable qualities, which have the defining characteristic of not being separable."

*sūnya āgantukair dhātuḥ savinirbhāgalakṣaṇaiḥ ||  
aśūnyo 'nuttaraiḥ dharmair avinirbhāgalakṣaṇaiḥ ||  
rnam dbyer bcas pa'i mtshan nyid can || glo bur dag gis khams stong gi ||  
rnam dbyer med pa'i mtshan nyid can || bla med chos kyis stong ma yin ||*

the other hand in terms of the subject matter and the explanation there is nothing more supreme than the third cycle of teachings.<sup>26</sup>

Regarding the importance of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* for the Bka' brgyud pa interpretation of *mahāmudrā*, Chos grags ye shes is fully in line with Sgam po pa, the founding father of the Dwags po Bka' brgyud pa, whose associated quote is mentioned frequently in this context:

The treatise for our *mahāmudrā* is this *Mahāyānottara-tantrasāstra* composed by the Bhagavān Maitreya.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, Chos grags ye shes considers the *Ratnagotravibhāga* not just as a valuable *śāstra*, but indeed as a “root-sūtra”<sup>28</sup> because as is pointed out in RGV I.2,<sup>29</sup> its body is based on the *Dhāraṇīśvarājaripṛcchāsūtra*<sup>30</sup> which is a part of

<sup>26</sup> *Mdo sde spyi'i nram bzhag*, 161<sub>12-13</sub>: “The middle cycle of dharma is, in relation to the last one, of temporary definitive meaning, its expressed and expressing not being fully perfected, and the third cycle of dharma is no other than superior than that and therefore of ultimate definitive meaning, its expressed and expressing to be understood as having the feature of being fully perfected.” *mdor na | chos 'khor bar pa de phyi ma la ltos nas gnas skabs kyi nges don te | brjod bya rjod byed yongs su ma rdzogs pa dang | chos 'khor gsum pa de las mchogs tu gyur pa gzhan med pas mthar thug gi nges don te | brjod bya rjod byed yongs su rdzogs pa'i khyad par khong du chud par bya'o |*

<sup>27</sup> See for example *Mi ldog pa seng ge'i nga ro*, 20<sub>11-13</sub>: 'o skol gyi phyag rgya chen po 'di'i gzhung ni bcom ldan 'das byams pas mdzad pa'i theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos 'di yin no | See also. (transl.) Hookham 1991: 277. 'Gos Lo tsā ba quotes Sgam po pa in his *Deb ther sngon po*, 632<sub>6</sub>-633<sub>4</sub>: 'o skol gyi phyag rgya chen po 'di'i gzhung ni bcom ldan 'das byams pas mdzad pa'i theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos 'di yin zhes gsung shing | See also (transl.) Roerich 1979: 734. The quote was, however, not identified in any of the versions of the Collected Works of Sgam po pa available at the moment.

<sup>28</sup> *Mdo sde spyi'i nram bzhag*, vol.3,150<sub>8-9</sub>: “As the body of the *Mahāyānottaratantra* relies on the *Dhāraṇīśvarājaripṛcchāsūtra*, [that] sūtra is like its root.” *theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma ni lus | gzungs kyi dbang phyug rgyal pos zhus po'i mdo la brten pa yin pas mdo sde rtsa ba lta bur bya zhing ... |*

<sup>29</sup> RGV I.2

*svalakṣaṇenānugatāni caīśāṃ | yathākramam dhāraṇīrājasūtre |  
nidānatas triṇi padāni vidyācatvāri | dhīmajjinadharmabhedāt ||  
'di dag rang mtshan nyid kyi rjes 'brel ba || go rims ji bzhin gzungs kyi rgyal po'i mdor ||  
gleng gzhi las ni gnas gsum rig bya ste || gzhi ni blo ldan rgyal chos dbye ba las ||*

“These [seven vajra-points] should be understood, each together with its own defining characteristics, [as explained] in sequential order in the *Dhāraṇīśvarājaripṛcchāsūtra*—The [first] three in the introductory chapter, And the [remaining] four in the [chapters on] a “Distinction of the Qualities of a Bodhi-sattva” and on a “[Distinction of the Qualities of a] Buddha.”

Transl. Mathes 2008: 204.

the *Ārya Tathāgatamahā-karuṇānirdeśa-nāma Mahāyānasūtra*.<sup>31</sup> Referring to RGV I.154-155:

There is nothing to be removed from it and nothing to be added.

The real should be seen as real, and seeing the real, you become liberated.

The [buddha] element is empty of adventitious [stains], which have the defining characteristic of being separable; but it is not empty of unsurpassable qualities, which have the defining characteristic of not being separable.

He quotes from the *Ratnagotravibhāḡavyākhyā* which according to the Tibetan tradition is attributed to Asaṅga:<sup>32</sup>

What is taught by that? There is no characteristic sign of any of the defilements (*saṃkleśa*) whatsoever to be removed from this naturally pure buddha element, because it is naturally devoid of adventitious stains. Nor does anything need to be added to it as the characteristic sign (*nimitta*) of purification, because its nature is to have pure properties that are inseparable [from it]. Therefore it is said [in the *Śrīmālādevīsūtra*]: “Buddha nature is empty of the sheath of all defilements, which are separable and recognized as something disconnected. It is not empty[, however,] of inconceivable buddha qualities, which are inseparable [in that it is impossible] to recognize [them] as something disconnected, and which surpass in number the grains of sand of the river Gaṅgā.” Thus we truly see that something is empty of that which does not

<sup>30</sup> Q814. *Mdo sde spyi'i rnam bzhag*, vol.3,150<sub>8-9</sub>: “As the body of the *Mahāyānottaratantra* relies on the *Dhāraṇīśvarāḡaparipṛcchāsūtra*, [that] sūtra is like its root.” *theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma ni lus | gzungs kyi dbang phyug rgyal pos zhus po'i mdo la brten pa yin pas mdo sde rtsa ba lta bur bya zhing ... |*

<sup>31</sup> D147.

<sup>32</sup> The following quote corresponds to RGVV, 76.5-7 and is identical with its Tibetan translation D4025: 226<sub>7</sub>-227<sub>4</sub>.

exist in it, and we truly realize that that which remains there is present, [and] hence exists there.<sup>33</sup>

He thus identifies *tathāgatagarbha* with the hidden meaning (*sbas don*) of the completion phase practice of luminosity which is to arrive at the core of *mahāmudrā*. As mentioned earlier, this is the wisdom of coemergence, clarity and emptiness, as phrased in the *Sixty Verses of Mahāmudrā*.<sup>34</sup> Without employing the terms *rang stong* and *gzhān stong*, unmistakable emptiness (*phyin ci ma log pa stong pa nyid*) is defined both as mind's emptiness from features that are different from its nature, i.e. the adventitious stains, and mind's non-emptiness from inconceivable buddha qualities. And again he quotes Asaṅga's *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā*:

<sup>33</sup> Transl. by Mathes 2008: 9. RGVV, 76.5-7: *kim anena paridīpitam | yato na kiṃcid apaneyam asty atah prakṛtipariśuddhāt tathāgatadhātoḥ samkleśanimittam āgantukamalaśūnyatāprakṛtivād asya | nāpy kiṃcid upaneyam asti vyavadānanimittam avinibhāgaśuddhadharmatāprakṛtitvāt | tata ucyate | śūnyas tathāgatagarbho vinirbhāgair muktajñair sarvakleśakośaih | aśūnyo gaṅgānadīvālikāvyatirvrttair avinirbhāgair amuktajñair acintyair buddhadharmair iti | evaṃ yad yatra nāsti tat tena śūnyam iti samanupaśyati | yat punar atrāvaśiṣṭaṃ bhavati tat sad ihāstīti yathābhūtaṃ prajānāti |*

'Od gsal gyi sbas don mtha, 209<sub>6</sub>-209<sub>16</sub>: 'dis ci bstan zhe na | gang gi phyir rang bzhin gyi yongs su dag pa de bzhin gzhegs pa'i kham s 'di las | bsal bar bya ba kun nas nyon mongs pa'i rgyu mtshan ni 'ga' yang med de | blo bur ba'i dri ma dang bral ba ni 'di'i rang bzhin yin pa'i phyir ro || 'di la rnam par byang ba'i rgyu mtshan bzhag par | bya ba chung zad kyang yod pa ma yin te | rnam par dbye ba med pa'i chos dag pa'i chos nyid ni rang bzhin yin pa'i phyir ro || des na de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po ni rnam par dbye ba yod pa bral shes pa | nyon mongs pa'i sbubs thams cad kyis ni stong pa yin la | rnam par dbye ba med pa bral mi shes pa bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i sangs rgyas kyis chos gang gā'i klung gi bye ma las 'das pa ni mi stong ngo zhes gsungs so || de lta na gang zhig gang na med pa de ni des stong ngo zhes yang dag par rjes su mthong la | gang zhig der lhag mar gyur pa de ni de la rtag par yod do zhes yang dag pa ji lta ba bzhin du rab tu shes so ||

The last sentence Asaṅga quotes from the *Śūnyatānāmamahāsūtra*, D290 (which is identical with the *Cūlasuññatasutta* (*Majjhimanikāya* 121) with but a slight variation, 500: *gang la gang med pa de des stong ngo zhes bya bar yang dag par rjes su mthong yang | de la lhag mar gang yod pa de de la yod do zhes bya bar yang dag pa ji lta ba bzhin du rab tu shes te ||* But even though the wording is taken from the *Cūlasuññatasutta*, Mathes has convincingly argued in 2007: 12 that the meaning is different. The *itaretarāśūnyatā* as presented in that sūtra pertains to that a specific area is empty of elephants not negating elephants per se, whereas the emptiness of adventitious stains negates the existence of them altogether.

<sup>34</sup> *Phyag chen drug bcu pa*, vol. 6, 321<sub>25</sub>-322<sub>1</sub>, [v. 27.1]: 'od gsal phyag rgya chen po'i rang bshin no ||

With these two verses [RGV I.154.155], the characteristic of unmistakable emptiness is pointed out because of the freedom from the two extremes, the one of superimposition (*sgro 'dogs pa*) and of deprecation (*skur 'debs*).<sup>35</sup>

Without specifying the meditative technique, Chos grags ye shes continues to use Asaṅga's *vyākhyā* to emphasize the heart of the matter which is to relate to mind itself directly in order to experience a mode of emptiness consisting in mind's true nature beyond superimposition and deprecation. Thus he highlights mind's connate qualities of emptiness and clarity. A person who does not relate to mind's true nature directly is described in the following way:

In this regard, whoever [lets his] mind be distracted outwardly, away from this way of [its] emptiness, and [lets it] scatter itself, is not settled in equipoise and is not concentrated. Therefore, his is called a "mind being totally distracted from emptiness". In that [person] there is no ultimate wisdom of emptiness; there is no ability to realize and manifest the non-conceptual expanse.<sup>36</sup>

Actualizing the ultimate wisdom by not being distracted from emptiness is, according to Chos grags ye shes the way how the inseparable dharmas, the pure qualities that are characterized by the *dharmakāya*, manifest; these very qualities are by nature empty of adventitious stains.

The way in which the utterly pure nature is the essence of the qualities is explained to "not be within the domain of those whose minds are distracted from emptiness", because the inseparable dharmas, i.e., the completely pure qualities that are

<sup>35</sup> 'Od gsal gyi sbas don mtha, 209<sub>15-16</sub>; tshigs su bcad pa 'di gnyis kyis ni sgro 'dogs pa dang skur pa 'debs pa'i mtha' dang bral ba'i phyir | phyin ci ma log pa stong pa nyid kyi mtshan nyid bstan to || Quote from RGVV, D4025: 227<sub>4</sub>. RGVV 76<sub>9-10</sub>; samāropāpavādāntaparivarjanād aviparītaṃ<sup>a</sup> sūnyatālakṣaṇḍam anena ślokadvayena paridīpitam /.

<sup>a</sup> Corrected according to A (19a4) and B (39b5).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 209<sub>16-19</sub>; de la gang dag stong pa nyid kyi tshul 'di las sems phyi rol du rnam par g.yengs shing rnam par 'phro la mnyam par mi 'jog cing rtse gcig tu mi 'gyur ba des na | de dag stong pa nyid las sems rnam par g.yengs pa zhes brjod do || de la don dam pa stong pa nyid kyi ye shes med pa ni rnam par rtog pa med pa'i dbyings rtogs shing mngon du bya bar mi nus so || The quote is identical with the RGVV, D4025: 227<sub>5-6</sub>.

characterized by the *dharmakāya* which is beyond the world, are by nature empty of adventitious stains.<sup>37</sup>

At this point, Chos grags ye shes recommends reading the commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and its *Vyākhyā* by his teacher, 'Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal, and emphasizes that the *Ratnagotravibhāga* corresponds to the intent of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*. In this way he draws attention to the harmony between the second and third cycle of the Buddha's teachings:

In this way, the fundamental nature of reality, natural luminosity, the *dharmatā* of all phenomena, is spontaneously present primordially in the very purity of one's own mind and in a manner which is free from the extremes of proliferations. The "not existent mind" as quoted from the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, "mind does not exist as mind; the mind's nature is luminosity"<sup>38</sup>, was taught from [the perspective of it] being immutable, non-conceptualizing.

Likewise, "devoid of what can be expressed in language and thought, such is *prajñāpāramitā*" etc. from [Rahulabhādra's] *Prajñāpāramitāstotra*<sup>39</sup> says this as well.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 210<sub>2-3</sub>: *ji ltar rang bzhin gyis yongs su dag pa'i chos kyi snying po yin pa de ltar ni stong pa nyid las sems rnam par g.yengs pa rnam kyi spyod yul ma yin no zhes brjod de | de rnam par dag pa'i yon tan gyi chos rnam par dbye ba med pa 'jig rten las 'das pa'i chos kyi skus rab tu phyed ba rnam ni blo bur gyi dri mas stong pa'i rang bzhin yin pa'i phyir ro |*

The quote to 'not be within the domain of those whose minds are distracted from emptiness' comes from the (*Śrīmālādevīsīṃhanādasūtra*, a section where buddha nature is equated with the essence of the *dharmadhātu*, the essence of the *dharmakāya* and the essence of the other-worldly qualities. See: D92, 549: "Bhagavān, *tathāgatagarbha* is not in the domain of those who have fallen in the view of the transitory collections of beings and who due to being mistaken have deteriorated and whose mind is distracted from emptiness. Bhagavān this *tathāgatagarbha* is the heart of the *dharmadhātu*. It is the heart of the *dharmakāya*. It is the heart of the other-worldly phenomena. It is the heart of naturally perfectly pure phenomena." *bcom ldan 'das de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po ni sems can 'jig tshogs la lta bar lhung ba dag dang / phyin ci log gis nyams par gyur pa dag dang / stong pa nyid las sems g.yengs pa rnam kyi spyod yul ma lags so / bcom ldan 'das de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po 'di ni dam pa'i chos kyi dbyings kyi snying po lags so / chos kyi sku'i snying po lags so / 'jig rten las 'das pa'i chos kyi snying po lags so / rang bzhin gyis yongs su dag pa'i chos kyi snying po lags so /*

<sup>38</sup> ASP, quoted from tib. 'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa brgyad stong pa, 3a<sub>3</sub>: *sems nyid sems ma yin || sems kyi rang bzhin nyid 'od gsal ba yin ||*

<sup>39</sup> See Higgins 2013: 282 "Devoid of what can be expressed in language and thought, such is *Prajñāpāramitā* unborn, unceasing, the essence of space itself, it is the scope of

And [the quote] from [Maitreya/Asaṅga's] *Sūtrālaṃkāra*, [XIII.19] “Luminosity in not another mind (*cetas*), [one] different from the mind as true nature. It is taught as being the nature [of the mind].<sup>40</sup>

Likewise [in the *Sūtrālaṃkāra*, VI.1-2] which is commented on in the works by the master Vasubandhu: “The defining characteristic of the ultimate (*paramārthalakṣaṇa*) is not existent, not nonexistent, not identical [with the dependent and imagined] and not different [from them], does not arise nor pass out of existence does not decrease and nor increase. The [*paramārtha*] is neither purified nor not purified.”<sup>41</sup> So, in ac-

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primordial knowing as individual self-awareness. Praise to the Mother of all Victors of the three times.” See also his note 657: “The passage which the *Sems ye dris lan* here ascribes to ‘a scripture’ (*lung*) is elsewhere quoted by Klong chen pa under the title *Yum la bstod pa* (Skt. *Prajñāpāramitāstotra*). See, as examples, *Theg mchog mdzod* vol. 1: 1051.3, *Spyi don legs bshad rgya mtsho* in *Ngal gso skor gsum* vol. 3: 40.1, and *Sgyu ma ngal gso 'grel* in *Ngal gso skor gsum* vol. 2: 597. Most Indian, Tibetan and Chinese sources attribute this hymn to Rahulabhādra (Tib. *Sgra gcan 'dzin bzang po*). The hymn is prefixed (with this authorial ascription) to a number of *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* in Sanskrit (though neither the Tibetan nor Chinese translations contain the praise). See Seyfort Ruegg 2004: 19. The early (9<sup>th</sup> c.?) Tibetan *Ldan dkar ma* catalogue lists a *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa la bstod pa'i tshig gi sdeb sbyor* that it ascribes to this author. See Lalou 1953 no. 452. In the existing *bsTan 'gyur* collections, however, the *Prajñāpāramitāstotra* (Tib. *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i bstod pa*) is only found as one of the eighteen *stotras* ascribed to Nāgārjūna. E.g. D no. 1127, vol. KA: 151.1 f.. Nothing resembling the passage in question is found in this work. See comparison of the two Tibetan translations of the Rahulabhādra text by Seyfort Ruegg in *Doboom* 1995: 83 f.”

<sup>40</sup> Transl. Mathes 2008: 168 and note 966.

<sup>41</sup> 'Od gsal gyi sbas don mtha, 210<sub>18</sub>, 211<sub>2</sub>; 'di ltar gnas lugs kyi gshis rang bzhin gyi 'od gsal ba chos thams cad kyi chos nyid | rang gi sems kyi ngo bo rnam par dag pa nyid du gdod nas lhun gyi grub cing | spros pa'i mtha dang bral ba'i tshul | ji skad du 'phags pa brgyad stong pa las | sems ni sems ma mchis pa ste sems kyis rang bshin ni 'od gsal ba lags so || zhes lung drangs pa'i sems med pa ni 'gyur ba med pa rnam par rtog pa med pa'o zhes de nyid las gsungs pa ltar | smra bsam brjod med shes rab pha rol phyin | zhes sogs shes phyin gyi bstod pas kyang de bshad la | mdo sde rgyan las | chos nyid sems las gzhan pa'i sems gzhan ni | 'od gsal ma yin rang bzhin la brjod do | zhes pas don de gsal bar mdzad do | de bzhin du | yod min med min de bzhin min gzhan min | skye dang 'jig med bri bar mi 'gyur te | 'phel ba med cing rnam par dag pa 'ang med | rnam par dag 'gyur 'di ni don dam mtshan | zhes drang pa'i 'grel pa |

*Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṃkāra*, VI.1-2:

na sanna cāsanna tathā na cānyathā na jāyate vyeti na cāvahiyate |  
na varthate nāpi viśudhyate punarviśudhyate tatparamārthalakṣaṇam ||  
na cātmadṛṣṭiḥ svayamātmalakṣaṇā na cāpi duḥsaṃsthitatā vilakṣaṇā |  
dvayānna cānyad bhram eṣa taditastaśca mokṣo bhramamātrasaṃkṣayah ||

cordance with the demonstration of the necessity of the middle and the last cycle the abiding nature must be taken in this way. If in spite of that it is not understood, the meaning of reality will not become evident.<sup>42</sup>

Even though Chos grags ye shes pinpoints at this concordance between the second and the third cycle of the Buddha's teachings, the way in which reality is presented as a nonaffirming negation in the second wheel is not of fully perfected definitive meaning by his estimation, whereas the affirming negation of the third wheel is of fully perfected definitive meaning. According to Chos grags ye shes, only in the final turning is everything presented for those who dedicate themselves not just to the Mahāyāna, but to all Yānas; the entire view of reality is incorporated, i.e., the teachings on buddha nature, the teachings on the unity of *samsāra* und *nirvāṇa*, of nonarising and arising, of emptiness and dependent arising, thus avoiding any extremes of annihilating and attributing.<sup>43</sup> In this manner his verse from his *Sixty Verses of Mahāmudrā* becomes clear:

“This nonaffirming negation is totally inappropriate”,  
I do not raise such categorical objection,  
yet [by those who] wish to realize the actuality of this,  
*mahāmudrā*, an affirming negation,<sup>44</sup>  
it being [a nonaffirming negation] is to be given up.<sup>45</sup>

### Conclusion

Even though the presentation given by Zhwa dmar Chos grags ye shes is in the framework of the six dharmas of Nāropa, his emphasis on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and its *Vyākhyā* puts the topic of luminosity into a context which is not limited to Buddhist tantric discourses. He is shedding light on the core of the practice, its hidden meaning, where sūtras and tantras meet in their common aim of actualizing the nature of reality.

<sup>42</sup> 211<sub>12-13</sub>: *de ltar 'khor lo bar pa dang | phyi ma'i dgos pa bstan pa ltar | gnas lugs kyi don de lta bu yin du zin yang | ma rtogs na yang dag pa'i don mngon du mi byed pas | ...*

<sup>43</sup> See *Mdo sde spyi'i rnam bzhaq*, *Gsum 'bum*, vol. 3, 157<sub>5</sub>-160<sub>21</sub>.

<sup>44</sup> Without employing the terms *rang stong* and *gzhan stong*, by making this point, that *mahāmudrā* is an affirming negation, a *gzhan stong*-like position is taken.

<sup>45</sup> *Phyag rgya chen po drug bcu pa*, Zhwa dmar bzhi pa sphyan snga chos kyi grags pa'i gsung 'bum, vol. 6, 320-324.: *med dgag 'di ni kun du mi rung zhes || gcig tu bdag ni smod par mi byed kyang || phyag rgya chen po ma yin dgag 'di'i don || rtogs par 'dod pas spang bar bya ba nyid || [12]*



His strong emphasis on the verses RGV I.63, I.154 and I.155 exemplifies the essential role that the notion of mind being empty of adventitious stains already played in the framework of Bka' brgyud Mahāmudrā discourses in 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century Tibet.

This and similar positions advanced by post-classical Mahāmudrā exegetes such as Mi bskyod rdo rje calls into question the opinion that a view of *mahāmudrā* emphasizing mind's emptiness of adventitious stains was an adaptation made only by later Bka' brgyud scholars such as Si tu Paṅ chen Chos kyi 'byung gnas (1700-1774) and proclaimed by teachers such as Kong sprul Blo gros mtha yas.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand Chos grags ye shes can certainly not be considered a proponent of the *gzhan stong* tradition of Dol po pa<sup>47</sup> given that the term *gzhan stong* never appears in his Collected Writings and that he explicitly criticizes Dol po pa's view, for example in his *Sixty Verses of Mahāmudrā*.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, his explanation that delusion appears as wisdom found in his elaborations on the *Four Dharmas of Sgam po pa*<sup>49</sup> is a standpoint which would be unacceptable for Dol po pa.<sup>50</sup>

While more research is needed to identify the views of Zhwa dmar Chos grags ye she regarding various Buddhist doctrines, it nonetheless seems safe to say at this stage of our research that he advocated *mahāmudrā* as an affirming negation, that he identifies *tathāgatagarbha* with luminosity, establishing luminosity, the wisdom of coemergence, of clarity and emptiness, as mind's true nature free from adventitious stains and not empty from inconceivable buddha qualities. Zhwa dmar Chos grags ye she is therefore an example of a representative of the Bka' brgyud pa tradition in the 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century who taught a *gzhan stong* related type of *mahāmudrā* based on an affirming negation, following closely the lead of the Third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje, but rejected the eternalist strain of *gzhan stong* that had become associated in the minds of many post-classical Bka' brgyud thinkers with the Jo nang tradition of Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan.

<sup>46</sup> Smith 2001: 250; Stearns 2010: 80.

<sup>47</sup> See for example the remark in TBRC "Maintained the *gzhan stong* tradition of Dol po pa" <http://www.tbrc.org/#Irid=P317>; 10.10.2014.

<sup>48</sup> *Phyag rgya chen po mtshon par byed pa'i gtsam mdor bsdu pa bka' brgyud kyi dgongs pa gsal ba*, vol.6,17-19: *phyi rol rtag par smra ba la la ltar || don dam cha gang rtag dang brtan pa ste || cig shos brdzun par smra ba'i gnyis 'dzin du || bde gshegs snying por 'khrul pa bzhad gad gnas ||* (v. 10) For some, similar to non-buddhist propounders of eternalism, the aspect of the ultimate is permanent and stable, proclaiming everything else as fictitious. Confusing dualistic clinging as *sugatagarbha* is but a source of laughter.

<sup>49</sup> *Dwags po'i chos bzhi*, vol.3, 357; 'khrul pa ye shes su 'char ba.

<sup>50</sup> According to Dol po pa as wisdom and relative consciousness are two different "kingdoms", delusion can impossibly appear as wisdom. See Stearns 2010: 106-110.

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