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Saraha's Adamantine Songs:
Texts, Contexts, Translations and Traditions
of the Great Seal

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Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

My dissertation is focused on a cycle of Saraha's Adamantine Songs and their relationship to the Great Seal. Belonging to a genre known as 'Adamantine Songs' - *Vajra Gīti* in Sanskrit, or *rDo rje'i gLu* in Tibetan – their titles are: “A Body Treasury called the Immortal Adamantine Song”; “A Speech Treasury called the Mañjughoṣa Adamantine Song” and “A Mind Treasury called the Unborn Adamantine Song”. The dissertation is divided into two parts: the first is the contextualization of a Great Seal (Sanskrit: *mahāmudrā*; Tibetan: *phyag rgya chenpo*) root text by the adept Saraha; and the second is a critical edition of the Tibetan text along with the first full translation of the text into English. The critical edition of the Tibetan is based on versions of the poems drawn from five different Tibetan sources – four scriptural (the sDe dge, Co ne, sNar thang and 'Peking' *bsTan 'gyurs*) and one literary (Mipham Rinpoche's 19th century collection '*phags yul grub dbang dam pa rnams kyi zab mo'i do ha rnams las kho la byung mu tig phreng ba* or “Pearl Garland of the Profound *Dohās* of the Noble Great *Siddhas* of India”).

The first chapters of the dissertation explore the contexts of this song cycle, its author and traditions that relate to it, in particular the Karma Kagyü (*karma bka' brgyud*) school of Tibetan Buddhism. The first chapter is a discussion of the author, Saraha, the tales of whose many 'lives' pervade Tibetan Buddhist traditions to this day. Chapter 2 explores the broader context of South Asian *siddha* traditions, while Chapters 3 and 4 provide an analysis of the Great Seal both as it emerges through Saraha's work and as it exists as a living tradition in the Tibetan Buddhist context. As mentioned above, particular emphasis is given to the Karma Kagyü school. Finally, Chapter 5 provides an introduction to Tibetan poetics and the Sanskrit traditions that influence it.

Résumé

Le point central de ma dissertation se porte sur un cycle des Chansons adamantines de Saraha et de leur rapport avec le Grand Sceau. Appartenant à un genre connu sous le nom des «Chansons adamantines» - *Vajra Gīti* en sanskrit, ou *rDo rje'i gLu* en tibétain - leurs titres sont : «Un trésor du corps surnommé Chanson adamantine immortelle», «Un trésor de la parole nommé Chanson adamantine Mañjughoṣa», et «Un trésor de l'esprit connu sous le nom de Chanson adamantine qui est innaissable». Cette dissertation se compose largement de deux parties : la première est la contextualisation d'un texte de base «Grand sceau» (Sanskrit: *mahāmudrā*; Tibetan: *phyag rgya chenpo*) par l'adepte Saraha ; et la seconde est une édition critique du texte tibétain avec la première traduction complète du texte en anglais. L'édition critique tibétaine est basée sur des versions de poèmes issus de cinq sources tibétaines différentes – quatre scripturales (les *bsTan-'gyurs* du sDe dge, Co ne, sNar thang et Pékin) et une littéraire (la collection du 19^e siècle de Mipham Rinpoche *'phags yul grub dbang dam pa rnams kyi zab mo'i do ha rnams las kho la byung mu tig phreng ba* ou «Rosaire de perles du profond Dohas du grand noble Siddhas des Indes»).

Les premiers chapitres de la dissertation explorent les contextes de ce cycle de chansons, leur auteur et les traditions qui s'y rapportent, en particulier l'école de bouddhisme tibétain Karma Kagyü (*karma bka' brgyud*). Le premier chapitre est une discussion sur l'auteur, Saraha, dont les histoires de ses nombreuses vies imprègne les traditions bouddhistes tibétaines à ce jour. Le chapitre 2 explore le contexte plus large des traditions *siddha* de l'Asie du sud, tandis que les chapitres 3 et 4 offrent une analyse du «Grand sceau» non seulement tel qu'il apparaît dans le travail de Saraha, mais aussi comme une tradition vivante dans le contexte du bouddhisme tibétain. Tel que mentionné plus haut, un accent particulier est donné à l'école Karma Kagyü. Finalement, le chapitre 5 donne une introduction à la poétique tibétaine et aux traditions sanscrites qui l'influencent.

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དེར་ལུས་ཆང་གིས་ར་རོ།
ཟག་རྩོམ་རྒྱུས་ར་རོ།
སེམས་ལྷན་སྤྱིས་ཡི་གེས་ཀྱིས་ར་རོ་སྟེ།

My body is intoxicated by beer,

My speech is intoxicated by Adamantine Songs,

My mind is intoxicated by innate wisdom!

- verse attributed to Saraha (Pawo Tsukle 742)

Introduction

My dissertation is providing the first ever access in English to an important root text of the Great Seal tradition (Sanskrit: *mahāmudrā*; Tibetan: *phyag rgya chenpo*) of Vajrayāna Buddhism. This text is comprised of three long poems which are meant to be read (or heard) together as what is known as a ‘cycle’. They belong to a genre known as ‘Adamantine Songs’ - *Vajra Gīti* in Sanskrit, or *rDo rje’i gLu* in Tibetan – which defined loosely are songs that express a spiritually accomplished person’s realization. Engaging with the highest view of the Great Seal through the three doors of body, speech and mind, their titles are, in order of appearance, “A Body Treasury called the Immortal Adamantine Song” (Sanskrit: *kāyakośāmrta-vajragīti*; Tibetan: *Ku’i mdzod ‘chi med rdo rje’i glu*); “A Speech Treasury called the Mañjughoṣa Adamantine Song” (Sanskrit: *Vāk-kośa rucira svara vajra-gīti*; Tibetan: *gSung gi mdzod ‘jam dbyangs rdo rje’i glu*) and “A Mind Treasury called the Unborn Adamantine Song” (Sanskrit: *Cittakośa aja vajra-gīti*; Tibetan: *Thugs kyi mdzod skye med rdo rje’i glu*)¹. This dissertation is not only offering the first ever translation of these poems into English, but is also presenting a critical edition of the Tibetan, with versions of the poems drawn from five different Tibetan sources – four scriptural (the sDe dge, Co ne, sNar thang and ‘Peking’ *bsTan ‘gyurs*) and one literary (Mipham Rinpoche’s 19th century collection *‘phags yul grub dbang dam pa rnams kyi zab mo’i do ha rnams las kho la byung mu tig phreng ba bzugs so* or “Pearl Garland of the Profound *Dohas* of the Noble Great *Siddhas* of India”).

¹ They will be referred to throughout this dissertation as Body Treasury, Speech Treasury and Mind Treasury. Citations drawn from them will be referenced to the verse number.

This particular cycle of songs has been largely ignored until now in Western academia. Although important enough to have been included in the *bsTan 'gyur*², although relative to other song cycles this is clearly a colossus, and although clearly dealing with themes and terms important to both the Great Seal (Mahāmudrā, Phyags rGya Chen po) and Great Perfection (Mahā Ati, rDzogs Chen), even in the Tibetan tradition there does not exist (to my knowledge) so much as a topical outline, never mind a commentary. My own research into the large body of Tibetan literature pertaining to the Great Seal has failed to locate any indigenous commentarial literature on these songs³. While it would be a worthwhile task to comb the relevant literature to find any traces of a commentary, it would be a mammoth task in itself and one which I unfortunately have neither time nor space to perform at this time⁴.

I believe that the Adamantine Songs have largely been eclipsed by Saraha's famous *Dohā* trilogy (aka: *Doha skor gsum; grub snying*⁵). His *Dohās* have been translated numerous times into English and into other Western languages and have been the subject of such major studies as Guenther's *Royal Song of Saraha* and *Ecstatic Spontaneity*, and Mohammad Shahidullah's *Les Chants Mystiques de Kāṇha et Saraha*. Saraha's Adamantine Songs, however, have scarcely been touched. The only work I have found

² The *bsTan 'gyur* (pronounced 'Tengyur') is the portion of the Tibetan Buddhist canon which includes commentaries (and elaborations) on the Buddha's teachings by Indian masters. This complements the *bKa' 'gyur* (Kangyur) portion of the canon, which contains the sacred utterances of the Buddha himself.

³ Where I was both most hopeful and finally disappointed was in Mikyo Dorje's volume on the Great Seal - *Phyag rGya Chen po sGros 'bum*. from *dPal rGyal ba Karma pa sku brgyad pa Mi bskyod rDo rje 'i gSung 'bum* - where he makes substantial references to Saraha's works. Unfortunately (for me) his citations are principally drawn from the *Dohā* trilogy, and none are from the Body, Speech and Mind Treasuries I have translated here.

⁴ This absence of any commentary is confirmed by Herbert Guenther (1993, p. 20 note 14), whose life-long engagement with the work of Saraha consoles me in my failure to find any such commentary.

⁵ It is often referred to as "Grub sNying" or "The Heart of Accomplishment" in *The Blue Annals* (Roerich 856 ff).

on the cycle translated in this dissertation are short references and brief translated passages in Guenther's *Ecstatic Spontaneity*. While this is to a degree a reflection of the emphasis placed on Saraha's *Dohās* within Tibetan traditions themselves, it remains a curiosity to me, given both the scope of his Adamantine Songs and the pervasiveness of the genre in general. Adamantine, or 'Diamond' Songs (as they are often called) are one of the most popular genres of spiritual poems in Tibetan Buddhist culture. From Marpa in the 11th century to Allan Ginsberg in the 20th, adopted by spiritual masters from the incarnations of the Karmapa to the most simple *yogin*, the composition, recitation, reading and studying of Adamantine Songs quietly pervades Tibetan Buddhist culture, especially the Karma Kagyü. I hope that this study and translation will draw more attention to this neglected genre.

In addition to drawing attention to Adamantine Songs in general, my work is also filling in a specific gap in the context of the Great Seal: a translation of a root text. I believe this is important in the spheres of both academics and practitioners as for the first it is a large window onto a relatively new and distinctly specialized area of study, and for the second it provides access for the world of English-speaking practitioners to a complex and profound work on the nature of mind and reality (though given the oblique language and partly corrupt editions I have been working with, parts of the translation are unavoidably rough and must be considered provisional).

This study will also contribute to the field of Religious Studies in general, as it explores issues of great concern to the discipline such as the interface between mystical experience and philosophy; and the interface between language and truth.

Outline

Chapter 1, as mentioned above, discusses Saraha. There exist multiple accounts of his biography/hagiography which I review in brief. There were also multiple transmissions of his work into Tibet between the 12th and 14th centuries CE, which I again review in brief. In his unpublished 2000 dissertation, *Tales of the Great Brahmin*, Kurtis Rice Schaeffer has painstakingly collected, translated and organized the biographies and records of transmission. His research makes a stunning contribution to the study of Saraha, and in many respects I have allowed myself to use his dissertation as the groundwork for my own discussion of Saraha. As it lacks one coherent thesis to tie the work together, it is understandable that it hasn't yet been published as a book. As a reference tool for any study of Saraha, however, it is invaluable.

The other work I have drawn on extensively is that of Herbert Guenther. In my discussion of Saraha himself, I have principally referred to his 1969 *The Royal Song of Saraha*, which also provides a number of accounts of Saraha's biography as well as strong support for my own assertion that Saraha is particularly important to the Karma Kagyü school of Tibetan Buddhism. His later work on Saraha, *Ecstatic Spontaneity* (1993), in fact was my inspiration for embarking on this project to begin with. It was

there that I first found reference to the Adamantine Song trilogy that I have spent the past four years translating. It also provides a detailed (and rather unnecessarily complex) exposition of his understanding of the philosophy, cosmology and soteriology connoted in Saraha's *Dohā* trilogy.

As well as providing a summary of the results of past research that has been done on traditions of Saraha's life and work, I also explore in some detail his undeniable presences, and the process of his presencing, in the four principal schools of Tibetan Buddhism: Nyingma, Kagyü, Sakya and Geluk. By doing so Saraha's importance to the religious culture of Tibet and especially to the Kagyü school is established.

Chapter 2 provides a discussion of the Buddhist *siddha* and *Mahāsiddha* traditions. The siddhas are a curious group, partaking of Tantric concepts, cosmology and practices; and at the same elaborating a system – counter to that of Tantra – that enjoyed popular (as opposed to elite) support, did not require multiple and complex levels of initiation, and rejected its elaborate ritualism. The common *siddha* method of teaching and expressing realization through songs and poems rather than treatises and formal discourses is also discussed.

This chapter then continues by situating Saraha – his life, pedagogy and work – in the greater South Asian context. Many studies of Buddhist *siddha* and *Mahāsiddha* traditions ignore the fact that these traditions of antinomian *yogins* and *yoginīs* who teach through songs and poetry – often spontaneously composed – are not unique to Buddhism.

Jain, Śakta, Śaiva (and later Sufi) *siddhas* lived, sang and shocked their respective orthodox communities across South Asia, from Assam to Tamilnadu⁶. Many of these traditions belong to a common time (Pālā period – 8th to 12th centuries CE) and the Northern traditions have a common locus and often common languages. Though as a minority religion in South Asia, ‘Buddhism’ is often understandably presented as being completely unique, that characterization is not completely accurate. This examination of the commonalities and diversity of South Asia’s Pālā period *siddhas* demonstrates that there is good reason to situate the life and work of Saraha and other Buddhist *Mahāsiddhas* in the context of South Asia’s multiple *siddha* traditions, and not simply in the context of South Asian Buddhism.

The last section of Chapter 2 explores the importance of the *siddha* traditions to Tibetan / Himalayan Buddhism. As I am principally situating Saraha in his Tibetan context, this is an important subject of discussion.

It is in this chapter that I draw on the vintage studies of such legendary luminaries as Dasgupta and Eliade. Their common thesis of the *sahajiyā* cult, a diverse system with practitioners nominally belonging to virtually all of South Asia’s religious traditions of the time, is explored and neither fully discarded nor accepted. Roger Jackson’s 2004 publication *Tantric Treasures* also provides the basis for many ideas and for much of my discussion of *siddha* philosophy and practice.

⁶ Not all traditions referred to them as *siddhas*, of course. Their name as a group depended on their linguistic and religious context. Tamil *siddhas*, for example, are known as *cittars*.

Chapter 3 explores the Great Seal directly through the lens of Saraha's work. Drawing on the Adamantine Songs themselves as well as his famous Dohā trilogy, I analyze the form and content of his works in order to glean an understanding of what the Great Seal is to Saraha himself. The form of the Adamantine Songs – divided as they are into treasuries of body, speech and mind – calls to mind not only the three spheres of activity of sentient beings (otherwise known as the 'three doors'), but can also be read as representing the three bodies of the Buddha (*trikāyā, sku gsum*): transformation body (*nirmāṇakāya, sprul sku*); enjoyment body (*saṃbhogakāya, longs sku*); and truth body (*dharmakāya, chos sku*). I explore this range of interpretations through direct references to the poems themselves.

In addition, I explore in detail the two chief analogies used throughout his work: water (in its various states) and lamps; and finally I review in detail his usages of the terms 'innate' (*sahaja, lhan cig skye pa*), one taste (*samarasa, ro cig/ro snyoms*), non-thought (*dran med*) and the unborn (*skye med*). This leads the discussion of the Great Seal into the next chapter, which takes a different angle.

Chapter 4 attempts to elucidate the multiple meanings of 'Great Seal' in its Tibetan contexts. It is a broad survey of traditions, practices, definitions and classifications of the Great Seal, divided into discussions of the relevance of the Great Seal to the four principal schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Three out of four of those schools – Kagyü, Sakya and Geluk – have their own Great Seal lineages, and the fourth, Nyingma, relates to the Great Seal in the context of its own highest transmission, the Great Perfection

(*rDzogs-chen; Mahā Ati*). While it is in fact impossible to describe the Great Seal directly, as it is above all the fully realized, awakened nature of mind and all phenomena, through a discussion of lineages, practices and debates, I have attempted to at least make its outline perceptible.

On the subject of the Great Seal there is a remarkable absence of scholarly work. I draw, therefore, principally on non-academic sources such as Takpo Tashi Namgyal's *Mahāmudrā: The Quintessence of Mind and Meditation*, an assortment of Great Seal practice texts and commentaries intended for practitioners, and some excerpts from the songs of Milarepa.

Chapter 5 is a broad discussion of poetics: Tibetan, Sanskrit and hybrid. Saraha's songs were composed in and certainly rebelled against a particular literary context in South Asia (though it is difficult to pinpoint precisely as we know with certainty neither the dates nor the language). When they were transmitted into Tibet during the 12th-14th centuries, they contributed to and became a part of an already flourishing indigenous literary context that was becoming hybridized with the Sanskrit poetics that were being imported from the 12th century onwards. It is necessary to provide this introduction to the South Asian literary context out of which Saraha emerged in order to contextualize the genre and opaque language of his Adamantine Songs. By also providing a general introduction to Tibetan poetics I allow readers to glimpse the literary context his work was read in at the time of its transmission to Tibet, and given some idea of how it may be read in contemporary Tibetan religious contexts as well.

In this chapter I draw on rather diverse sources, from Dandin and Sakya Pandita to contemporary studies by Roger Jackson, Per Kvaerne and Thupten Jinpa.

Following these five contextualizing chapters, there is a short introduction to the particular cycle of Adamantine Songs translated here, the editions used, and the style of the translation itself. Footnotes provide immediate access to textual differences between the different Tibetan editions, and to more detailed explanation of key terms and concepts in the English translation.

Methodological Issues

While my translation is from Tibetan, Tibetan was not the original language of composition. Truthfully, no one is quite sure what that language was, but the best scholarly estimate these days is Apabhramśa, a late-middle Indo-Aryan vernacular language, while traditional accounts maintain his work was in Sanskrit. In either case, the author was a man named Saraha, nicknamed ‘the Great Brahmin’, who was raised practicing Brahmanical Hinduism but converted to Buddhism and became an enlightened master of that tradition, famous for his unconventional life-style and practice, and for the fact that he taught by means of spontaneous songs. His dates are also uncertain – anywhere from the 2nd century BCE to the 11th century CE. I am most grateful that there

has at least been no controversy surrounding his authorship of the three Adamantine Songs I have translated here⁷.

There does not exist any record of ‘translation theory’ from Tibetan sources. While from the relatively early days of the translation of texts “from the Indian language” into Tibetan a lot of attention was put into making sure that there was a standard lexicon, questions regarding the nature of text, author, translation, translator, etc. do not appear to have been articulated or answered. For that reason, though clearly there is no one standard version of any texts found in the *bsTan ‘gyur* or other authoritative sources, there exists a rather naïve attitude among some Tibetans, Tibetologists and scholars of Buddhism regarding the relationship of any given Tibetan translation to its ‘original’⁸. This naivete pertains to the belief in original texts, in direct translations, in notions of authenticity and authority that rely on fidelity to that which is ‘original’ and ‘direct’. While a technical discussion of the particular issues regarding the editions of the Adamantine Songs will precede the critical edition itself later in this dissertation, what follows below is an exploration of the theoretical issues relevant to the project of translation.

Translation is never an easy task – it is never simple or straightforward. There is no escaping the fact that translation is always at least an interpretation. At times it is

⁷ I am aware of the fact that an absence of controversy regarding an accepted piece of information does not by default make it true. I in fact attribute the lack of controversy about the authorship of the Adamantine Songs to the lack of attention they have received.

⁸ It is particularly with regard to this issue that the work of Leonard Van der Kuijp and Kurtis Rice Schaeffer is useful, as both use a technique of tracing *transmissions* of texts into Tibetan contexts that avoids reifying ideas of ‘original’ texts and ‘authoritative’ translations.

composition, and sometimes – as explored by post-colonial and translation theorists – a violation, a subjection to a particular ontology, epistemology and historiography.

Gayatri Spivak writes, “Translation is the most intimate act of reading,” (Spivak 398), and I believe this engaging of the language of intimacy is most appropriate, as the relationship of the translator to text is as complex, delicate, rewarding or destructive as any intimate relationship can be.

Every kind of translation has its unique challenges. A philosophical treatise, for example, requires that the translator can with some semblance of accuracy explain the philosophical context the text emerges in, and the cultural, political, and religious context the author was writing in. Once poetry gets involved, a whole new set of variables come into play – playfulness of language, literary conventions, culturally specific analogies and references, rhythm, alliteration, puns – not to mention the complexities of deliberate ambiguity, and the deliberate toying with the very limits of language. Pauses. Silence. Religious poetry, then, makes things so much the harder – as the translator’s facility with the both the languages and religions is crucial. With works like Saraha’s Adamantine Songs, where the poems are nothing short of vehicles for the transmission of realization, the burden is overwhelming.

Unless, then, the translator is herself enlightened (definitely not the case here), the task of translation seems *almost* impossible. In fact, the apparent difficulties can easily be seen as an opportunity. Appropriate to its function, Saraha’s Adamantine Song trilogy only presents problems to me as a translator when my view is incorrect. As I mentioned at the

outset, approaching a translation from a non-self-reflexive point of view can place the translator squarely within what may be termed a colonialist or neo-colonialist discourse. Tejaswini Niranjana writes: "Translation functions as a transparent presentation of something that already exists, although the 'original' is actually brought into being through the translation." (3) In other words, approaching a text as a static artifact of the past gives that text an identity it never had in its proper context. It is created by the translator for the translation. Approaching Saraha's work in that way indeed creates a problem, but the mistake of believing in a static 'original' is one I cannot now make. Saraha won't let me.

While he does not explain in any detail the actual theoretical underpinnings of his methodology and does not examine the post-colonial potential of his own ideas, Schaeffer does voice – in theoretically vaguer terms – similar concerns:

Previous attempts at editing and explicating the Treasury of Doha Verses, as well as attempts at identifying Saraha have been aimed at eliminating what seen to be errors and inconsistencies wrought by tradition, and uncovering the original form of the work, as well as the 'historical' Saraha. These attempts have been misguided by a methodological imperative which makes a strict division between, on the one hand, the author as the sole creative force and owner of the original, and therefore correct, literary work, and on the other hand, the subsequent tradition of scribes, orators, teachers, and interpreters whose activities amount only to a degeneration of the original purity of the author's intended work. (Schaeffer 4)

I believe this articulates well many of the difficulties faced in studies of Saraha to the present time, and Schaeffer's attempt to shift scholarly attention away from the

“misguided methodological imperative” he describes is both timely and useful, though it could have been stated more explicitly. Niranjana continues:

Conventionally, translation depends on the Western philosophical notions of reality, representation, and knowledge. Reality is seen as something unproblematic, ‘out there’; knowledge involves a representation of this reality; and representation provides direct, unmediated access to a transparent reality. (2)

In other words, a conventional approach to translation relies on an unproblematized conception of subject and object; it additionally relies on an unproblematized conception of language, where a word is a sign that denotes *one thing*. ‘Conventional’ translation, in other words, is conventional in the Buddhist ‘*samvṛtti*’ sense. These assumptions run entirely against both Saraha’s principles of radical non-duality and the way language functions in his work. In fact, they run against the function of his work and what it represents to the Tibetan tradition that is so informed by it. Therefore, by allowing Saraha’s Adamantine Songs to speak to me in the present, rather than trying to seek out some ‘original’ ‘authentic’ static version of them from the past, not only am I engaging with the text in the way it is meant to be engaged, but I give myself the best possible chance to produce a translation that will respect the words, meanings and ambiguities that are meant to be there.

While this dissertation is not the appropriate forum for a full articulation of how post-colonial translation theory is relevant to the study of Buddhism, I sincerely hope that it will contribute to carrying the study of Buddhism in general forward into the sphere of contemporary critical theory.

Sources

Where possible, I have grounded myself in the primary texts, namely, the Adamantine Songs themselves. Since there are no extant commentaries on them, the next ‘layer’ of information is drawn principally from Tibetan indigenous sources on the Great Seal (principally Takpo Tashi Namgyal’s work, long considered authoritative in its proper context), the history of Buddhism in Tibet and polemical texts. As the Great Seal has received nearly no scholarly attention, and as it is a thriving living tradition, I have also made use of the many teachings made available by modern teachers of that tradition, in this case principally drawn from the Karma Kagyü school which informs my own interpretation of the Great Seal.

In drawing the Great Seal into the sphere of scholarly attention I hope to contribute to a broader understanding the Kagyü school. While the Nyingma-pas have Samten Karmay’s work and the Geluk school receives a proportionally enormous amount of attention, the Kagyü-pas have been relatively marginalized in the study of Tibetan Buddhism and I do hope to contribute to rectifying that state of affairs.

A Note on Transliteration

While I would have preferred to cite Tibetan terms and the Tibetan texts of the translated poems in the Tibetan script, I have bowed to the norms of the academic study of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism and used transliteration. Although Tibetan is ‘a’ language whose

pronunciation varies immeasurably from region to region, and which is rife with homonyms, I have provided phonetic transliteration for personal names, place names and the names of religious schools (in accordance with the system devised by the *Institute of Tibetan Classics*). A glossary after the conclusion provides the Wylie equivalents. For technical terms and titles of works I have adopted the tried and true Wylie transliteration system which – ugly though it is – remains the most useful and universally legible form of Tibetan transliteration.

Chapter 1

Locating Saraha

“Although the historicity of Saraha cannot be doubted, the elusiveness of the man is matched by that of his teaching” (Guenther, 1969, 12-13).

“Saraha has been definitively dated by modern scholarship to somewhere between the Third century B.C.E. and the 12th century C.E., and located in East, North, or South India – though curiously never West.” (Schaeffer 15)

Pasts

This is a fair introduction to the author of the cycle of poems I have translated. There is nothing uncomplicated in the study of Saraha. In fact, any study of his life, times and corpus is destined to be an articulation of a host of ambiguities.

Let’s start with his name. He is most commonly known as Saraha or Sarahapā – ‘the one who has shot the arrow’. This is explicitly a reference to an incident in his biography (most versions of it), when he studied with a *ḍākini* disguised as a low-caste arrowsmith. Metaphorically, it refers to one who has shot the arrow of non-duality into the heart of duality. He is also known as ‘The Great Brahmin’, at times Rāhulabhadra, Brāhmaṇa

Rāhula, Śābari, Sarojavajra, Saroruha and Saroruhavajra. In Tibetan he is generally referred to as Saraha, Danün¹ (Arrow Shooter) or Dramsé Chenpo (Great Brahmin).

Some claim that he was the first of the renowned 84 Mahāsiddhas, as do the Karma Kagyü tradition and some scholarly accounts, such as the work of Benoytosh Bhattacharyya (Chakravarti, 1999, 236) and Samkrtyayan (Samkrtyayan 9, 21). Sumpa Yeshe Päljor (1704-1788), in his *chos 'byung dpag bsam ljon bzang*, also lists Saraha as the first (Sumpa Yeshe Päljor 238). Abhayadatta's 11th/12th century *Lives of the 84 Adepts* (Skt: *Caturaśīti-siddha- pravṛtti*; Tib. *Grub thob brgyad cu rtsa bzhi'i lo rgyus*), which is by far the most commonly cited source for the list of 84, places Saraha as number six. As a list which is intended to lump the 84 Mahāsiddhas together as a the lineage of great adepts it represents one way of conceptualizing them. Other accounts place priority on the lineage of specific tantras as they have been passed along through a line of great adepts. The lineage of the *Cakrasamvāra Tantra*, for example, begins with Saraha (Chakravarti, 1999, 236). Depending on the function and context of the particular list being cited, the order of names will almost always differ. Per Kvaerne sums it up rather well when he writes: "It is futile to attempt to establish historically the existence of a 'first Siddha'. The various schools and lineages inevitably regarded their founder as a 'first Siddha'" (Kvaerne, 1986, 6). Indeed, 'history' as a record of 'facts' that stand outside of their function in a particular context is not entirely relevant in the study of Saraha or any of the *siddhas*. It will suffice for our purposes to note that Saraha is

¹ Dragpa Dorje Päl Sangpo (b. circa 1444) even argues in his *History of the Three Ordination Lineages* (*mKhan rGyud rnam gSum byon Tshul gyi rnam thar*) that Danün is an incorrect translation, and that Dadzin (Arrow Handler) is more appropriate (quoted in Schaeffer, 2000, 106 ff)

inevitably included in the lists of 84 *Mahāsiddhas* and in some contexts he is listed as coming first.

Little is actually known about when he lived – we can loosely place him in a range of about 1300 years. Earliest claims place him in the fourth century BCE as a direct disciple of Buddha's son², most traditional accounts hold that he was the preceptor of Nāgārjuna (circa 2nd century CE) and the latest estimates place him in the 11th century (Shahidullah 1928, Kvaerne 1986, Nakamura 1989). Since Saraha already had international status as an authority by the early 11th century, evidenced by references to him as an already established religious authority in the biography of Naropa (1016-1100 CE) and the active transmission of his work into Tibet during that same century (Roerich, 1988, 72; Schaeffer 2000), I am satisfied that the latest estimate is untenable. Rahula Sankrtyayana places him in the 8th/9th century, contemporary with King Dharmapāla (769-809) (Wayman, 1977, 96), and Dharmvir Bharati places him in the 9th century (Kvaerne, 1986, 6). Benoytosh Bhattacharyya and Kurtis Rice Schaeffer both place him around the 7th century CE. Though this does not place Saraha squarely within the Pala period (8th to 12th centuries CE) when the Mahāsiddhas flourished, in the context of one whose range of dates is so broad, it places him *close enough* to that period to be plausible, and maintains his status as being one of the earliest of their ilk.

Complicating the situation further is the fact that there is no consensus on what language he composed his works in. The two possibilities to date are Sanskrit and Apabhramśa.

² Pema Karpo (1527-1592) in his *Phyag-rgya chen-po'i man-ngag-gi bshad-sbyar rgyal-ba'i gan-mdzod* claims that Saraha was born only thirty years after the Buddha's death (p. 108).

His complete works are extant in translation in Tibetan only, and only fragments exist in Apabhramśa – particularly exciting is a recently discovered Apabhramśa manuscript of his most famous work, the *Dohākośa*, and this discovery has led many to believe that this was the language he originally composed his work in. If that is eventually proven to be the case, we could narrow down his dates to somewhere in the range of 7th to 10th century, since that is the approximate period of the ascendancy of that language where the dates of his life are believable. Academic accounts generally hold that he worked in Apabhramśa, and that idea is taking root (perhaps through sheer force of repetition) as a fact, “After some initial uncertainties, the language of the *Dohākośas* has been identified as an eastern dialect of Apabhramśa (sometimes called Avahattha)” (Jackson, 2004, 9). Incidentally, this is a curious conclusion to draw, given that Jackson’s discussion of the genealogy of the Apabhramśa version of Saraha’s *Dohākośa* immediately preceding this conclusion, has an air of anything but certainty:

The “standard” Apabhramśa version, discovered in a Nepalese royal library in 1907 and published in 1916 by Haraprasad Sastri, then worked and reworked by Muhammad Shahidullah and Prabodh Chandra Bagchi, never has been found as an independent manuscript but rather has been extracted from a later (eleventh-century?) commentary, in Sanskrit, the *Dohākośa-Panjika* of Advayavajra – who may be the same as the Indian tantric theorist Maitripa. In 1929, Bagchi found in Nepal a fragment of still another Apabhramśa version that coincides with the other editions not at all. Yet another version of the Apabhramśa of Saraha’s text was discovered by Rahula Samkrtyayana at Sakya monastery in Tibet in 1934 and published in 1957; it only replicates about half the verses in the “standard” edition. Furthermore, the Tibetan translation contains both common and unique verses, adding further evidence, as if it were needed, of the complexity and fragmentation of the textual tradition surrounding Saraha’s signal work. (Jackson, 2004, 7-8)

Though writing without the same humorous resignation as Roger R. Jackson, Schaeffer acknowledges the same sketchy history of the Apabhramśa texts at the same time that he affirms, “The *Dohākośa*... is one of handful of these late Indian Buddhist poetic works initially composed in the Apabhramśa dialect.” (Schaeffer, 2000, 5) Given that the above is what is meant to convey the certainty that Saraha worked in Apabhramśa, my openness to alternative possibilities will – I trust – be given some respect! Herbert Guenther is one academic writer who refutes at least the certainty that Apabhramśa was Saraha’s ‘original’ language of composition:

It has been argued that the language in which Saraha expressed his ideas is a late Apabhramsa form pointing to Bengal... [I]t remains a strange fact, reflecting rather unfavorably on the scholarliness of those who have dealt with the “People Dohas,” that none of them noted that the Tibetan translation, apart from being larger than the alleged original, does not tally with the Apabhramsa version. The latter studiously avoids all the technical terms characteristic of Saraha’s line of thought. (Guenther, 1969, 8-9)

Guenther’s point needs to be seriously considered. Given that Tibetans devised and maintained a rigorous and accurate system of translating texts and that the multiple versions of Saraha’s texts that exist in the diverse editions of the *bsTan* ‘gyur more or less agree with each other, the simple fact that the Tibetan version is longer necessarily means that the ‘Indian’ language version³ it was translated from was not the Apabhramśa text – at least not the one scholars today are working with.

³ The Tibetan translations always prefaces the ‘original’ title as being in ‘Gya-gar skad du’ – meaning, “in the Indian language” – without ever specifying what that language was.

Traditional accounts – which is to say, accounts of Saraha’s life and teachings given by Tibetan Buddhist Lamas and scholars who have been trained principally in traditional, monastic settings – tell us that Saraha taught in Sanskrit. During an interview conducted in February, 2000, Professor Sempa Dorje, one of the leading scholars of Kagyü Buddhism, informed me he believes Saraha was one of very few Mahāsiddhas who actually used Sanskrit. Given that he is renowned in both Indian and Tibetan traditions as ‘The Great Brahmin’, it seems a plausible scenario. While I am unable to determine with any certainty what language Saraha functioned in, I at least feel satisfied that I have established definitive *uncertainty* with respect to the issue.

Unsurprisingly, Saraha’s location is also uncertain. In Abhayadatta’s 11th/12th century *Lives of the 84 Adepts*⁴, which is the standard reference for the collected biographies of the 84 Indian Buddhist Mahāsiddhas, it is stated that he came from a village called Rajñi in the land of Roli, somewhere in Eastern India⁵. According to Pema Karpo in his *Phyag-rgya chen-po’i man-ngag-gi bshad-sbyar rgyal-ba’i gan-mdzod* Saraha was born in Varanasi (Padma dKar po 108). Pawo Tsuglak Trengwa (1504-1566) and Karma Trinlaypa (1456-1539) concur that Saraha was from a place called Beta, or Baidharbha (Vidarbha) in Southern India (Schaeffer, 2000, 15). Also, locating him in the south is an episode from the biography of Marpa where the famous translator encounters Saraha in a

⁴ Even the attribution of the *Caturaṣṭi-siddha-pravṛtti* to Abhayadatta is questionable. Though all who encounter the text repeat the received idea that it was originally composed in Sanskrit by Abhayadatta, the general tenor of discussions of the text is leaning towards taking that fact as apocryphal. In truth, there exists not so much as a fragment of the ‘original’ Sanskrit.

⁵ *Yul rgya gar shar phyogs kyi grong khyer ra’dznyi’ zhes bya ba’i bye brag saroli zhes bya ba yin.* (Sempa Dorje, 1998, 29)

dream vision. While on his way back to Tibet after his first journey to India, Marpa is delayed in a town on the Nepalese border:

His last night there, he had a dream in which dakinis lifted him up in a palanquin and carried him to Sri Parvata in the South. There Marpa met the Great Brahman Saraha, who blessed his body, speech, and mind. Saraha gave him the signs and the meanings of the dharma of the essential truth, mahamudra. Undeified bliss dawned in his body, and unperturbed realization dawned in his mind, so that Marpa's dream was filled with immeasurable delight. Even after he awoke, he did not forget what Saraha had said. (Tsang 42)

Again, if we could determine that his language was in fact Apabhramśa, we could loosely locate him in the region of today's Bengal, since that is the area where the language was in currency.

Having established uncertainty with respect to Saraha's dates and language, it is perhaps an appropriate time to present some traditions of his biography. While the multiple and diverse accounts of his life and times have been compiled in detail by Schaeffer, it is worth at least reviewing in brief the most common versions of his biography.

In its tamest form, Saraha's life is recorded in Abhayadatta's 'Lives of the 84 Adepts'. It is worth quoting in full here:

Guru Sarahapā's biography:

[Belonging to] the Brahman caste, [Saraha was born] in Roli, in Eastern India, in particular in a village named Rajñī. Because he was the son of a Dakini, he was a Daka himself.

Although he was a Brahman, he believed in the Buddha-Dharma [and] since he listened to the Dharma of innumerable teachers he had faith in the Dharma of secret instructions (ie. Tantra).

He maintained the duties of both a Brahman and a Buddhist. [During the] daytime he practiced the Brahmanical religion. At night he practiced the religion of the Buddhists and he also drank beer.

Having been discovered by all the Brahmans, in order to expel him all the Brahmans gathered. They asked King Ratnapāla: "If you are King, is it right that in your land one is following a confused system? This Saraha is master of 15 000 villages in Roli. Since he is drinking alcohol [and] breaking with what is correct, expel him!"

The King said: "Having said that he governs 15 000 villages, it is not desirable to expel him."

The King said as he approached Saraha: "As you are a Brahman, this beer drinking is not good." (he said).

Then Saraha said: "I don't drink beer. In any case, I reject [their] oath. Gather all the Brahmans and all the people."

Having said that, everyone gathered. Saraha said, "If I drink [my] hand will burn; if I don't drink, [it] will not burn." Although he placed his hand in boiling ghee it did not burn.

The King asked, "Is it true that [he] drinks?" (he said).

Then all the Brahmans said, "[It's] true, we say he drinks."

Again, speaking as before, [Saraha] drank molten copper and was not burned. And again [they] said, "He drinks".

Having said, "Well then, [let's] enter the water, and whoever sinks, he drinks; and [whoever] doesn't sink, he doesn't drink," when he entered the water together with another Brahman, Saraha did not sink. The other one sank, and Saraha said, "I don't drink."

Again, [they stepped] on a scale/ [he commanded them] to weigh: "Whoever is heavier does not drink, and whoever is lighter drinks" he said. Doing just that, Saraha being heavier, said, "I don't drink."

Likewise, although [they] put aside a man together with three pieces of steel of equal weight, Saraha was heavier, and when even with six [pieces of steel] Saraha was heavier, the King said, "If he has powers like that, if he [wants to] drink beer, drink!"

All the Brahmins and the King prostrated and asked for instruction. Since he sang a song for the King, Queen and people, it is known as the “Cycle of Three Dohas” (Doha skor gsum). The Brahmins abandoned their own religion and accepted the teachings of the Buddha; and the King and his retinue also attained siddhi.

Then Saraha took a 15 year old wife. Bringing her, they went to another land, and staying in an isolated place, the husband devoted himself to practice [and] the wife, fetching food, delivered it.

Once, having asked [for] cooked radishes, the wife, having prepared radishes and buffalo curd arrived before her husband. Since he had entered samādhi, when he did not accept it she went back. Then Saraha did not arise from the midst of samādhi for 12 years.

Then he arose, and said to his wife, “Where are my cooked radishes?”

[His] wife said, “You didn’t arise from samādhi for 12 years, so now where are they? Now it is Spring there aren’t any [radishes]” she said.

(And) then Saraha said to his wife, “I will go to practice on the mountain.”

His wife said, “Physical solitude is not solitude. Solitude from dualistic mind and conceptual thought – that is the highest solitude. Although you abided in meditation for 12 years, if you could not sever the subtle thought of radishes, of what benefit is it to go to the mountain?”

Saraha realized that truth. He abandoned naming (dualistic mind, wrong perceptions) and conceptual thought. Since he achieved the essential meaning, having accomplished the highest siddhi which is the Great Seal, he achieved the limitless welfare of beings.

Together with his wife they went to the celestial realm⁶.

A more exciting version of his biography is recounted by the Kagyüpa Lama Karma Trinlaypa (15th century). The youngest of five sons, Saraha and his brothers were famous for their knowledge of the Vedas. His four older brothers were seduced one day by four Dākinis disguised as Brahmin girls who had been sent by Hayagrīva (rTa-mgrin, a protective deity). Somehow this motivated him to become a Buddhist monk, and with the

⁶ Translation my own. Tibetan text from Sempa Dorje’s 1998 bilingual Tibetan/Hindi edition of Abhayadatta’s text (Dorje 29-33)

King's permission (King Mahāpāla) he did so. He became a noted scholar and spiritual master. One day in a park, he was approached by four *Ḍākinis* disguised as Brahmin girls, who offered him four cups of beer. Succumbing to their begging, he drank the cups of beer and felt four extremely pleasant sensations (the four kinds of bliss⁷), and he met the Bodhisattva Sukhanātha face to face, who told him to go seek "a mysterious arrowsmith woman who is making a four-piece arrow" (Guenther, 1969, 5). He found, in the marketplace, a woman of low-caste who was making her four-piece arrow with intense concentration. He asked her if she was an arrowsmith and she replied, "My dear young man, the Buddha's meaning can be known through symbols and actions, not through words and books." (Guenther, 1969, 5). She explained the symbolic meaning of the arrow to him⁸ and he recognized her as a teacher, abandoned his studies and monastic vows, and moved to a cremation ground with her to practice.

A well-respected Brahmin man turned Buddhist monk, who appears one day in a charnel ground openly drinking alcohol and living as the student and consort of a low-caste woman, does attract attention. Soon word got out to the King, and the story ends in much the same way as the first one did.

⁷ Joy, Highest Joy, Free of Joy, Innate Joy (dga' ba; mchog dga'; dga' bral; lhan cig skyes pa'i dga' ba). These are stages of psycho-spiritual experience, felt and established as states by *yogins* and *yoginis* engaging in union practices – whether with an actual consort, by means of visualization of a consort, or taking place as processes within the subtle body.

⁸ The reed is the symbol for the uncreated; the three joints, that of the necessity to realize the three existential norms (*kāyas*); the straightening of the shaft, that of straightening the path of spiritual growth; cutting the shaft at the bottom, that of the necessity to uproot *Samsāra*, and at the top, that of eradicating a belief in a self or an essence; the splitting of the bottom into four sections, that of memory (*dranpa*), nonmemory (*dran-med*), unorigination and transcendence; inserting the arrowhead, that of the necessity to use one's intelligence; tying it with a tendon, that of being fixed by the seal of unity; splitting the upper end into two, that of action and intelligence; inserting four feathers, that of looking, attending to the seen, acting on the basis of what has been seen and attended to, and their combination of fruition; opening one eye and closing the other, that of shutting the eye of discursiveness and opening that of a priori awareness; the posture of aiming at a target, that of the necessity to shoot the arrow nonduality into the heart of the belief in duality. (Guenther, 1969, 5-6)

As Schaeffer points out, the theme of a “female figure without whom Saraha would not have achieved realization” (2000, 8) pervades all the narratives about Saraha. Whether that female figure is the ‘radish girl’ or the ‘fletcheress’ changes from narrative tradition to narrative tradition, however, the arrow itself is consistently iconographically related to Saraha. He is usually recognizable in religious art by the downward- or horizontally pointing arrow in his hands, his shorts, his meditation belt, and his long yogin’s hair tied up in one top-knot.

There are also numerous accounts of his life that attribute a phase of life as a Buddhist monastic to him. In fact, he is taken by many to have been the preceptor of Nāgārjuna. Pawo Tsuglak Trengwa (16th century CE) has an account of Saraha’s life in his work *Mkhas pa’i dga’ ston* in which he takes ordination from Rahula (Buddha’s son?) and “become perfect in ethical conduct and was in incomparable scholar.” (Schaeffer, 2000, 40). According to Drikung Chöje Kunga Rinchen’s account (1475-1527) in *Golden Rosary of Kagyü Masters (bKa’ rgyud bla ma rnams kyi rnam thar rin chen gser phreng)*, Saraha not only took ordination, but became the abbot of Vikramaśīla Monastery (Schaeffer, 2000, 43). Karma Trinlepa (1456-1539) also relays the ordination part of the story, and, again, traditional accounts relay the same story. In all Kagyü iterations of Saraha’s story, he becomes a yogin *after* his ordination, abandoning the monastic life. As recounted in Schaeffer’s work, the Tibetan historian Dragpa Dorje Päl Sangpo (b. 1444) places Saraha in a monastic ordination lineage. Since as a member of such a lineage, it would be most unseemly for him to have abandoned the monastic life in favour of such

radical practices as the imbibing of alcohol and sexual yogas, his story is reworked such that his ordination takes place *after* his career as a yogin.

I could carry on at great length exploring the spectrum of biographies/hagiographies of Saraha, but as mentioned above already, these narratives have been explored in detail by Schaeffer and others – and done extremely well at that. In any case, establishing the historically verifiable details of Saraha's life is a useless venture. As established in the 'methodology' section, I am interested in exploring Saraha's presence in living narrative and religious traditions – which does not require much in the way of 'historical' detail.

Presence

Now I will move on to another strand of 'locating' Saraha, one that entails not tales of his life, but tales of people's encounters with him in their own lives. We have had a taste of this already, in the passage I cited from Marpa's biography. Living in the 11th century CE, Marpa traveled by foot across the Himalaya to India three times to meet his guru, Naropa. There is no attempt made in his biography (composed in the 16th century) to link him to Saraha in terms of a face to face, physical encounter. In fact, Marpa receives teachings from Maitripa on his first journey to India, receiving the Great Seal transmission from him, with the following song:

You hold the tradition of the Great Brahman
And stayed with the emanation, Lord Śavari.
Please give me the holy dharma, well taught by them,
The essential meaning of the pinnacle of all yānas,
The mahamudra free from extremes,
Which is like space. (Tsang, 1995, 28)

The Great Seal will be explored in detail in Chapter 3, but at this point it is relevant to bring it up as its transmission is held to have been passed from Vajradhāra (primordial Buddha) to Saraha ('The Great Brahman'), from Saraha to Nāgārjuna, from Nāgārjuna to Śavaripa ('Lord Savari'), and from Śavaripa to Maitripa. The evidence of the temporal distance between Marpa and Saraha should thus be made clear. It is nonetheless accepted that Marpa received a direct transmission from Saraha himself in the dream vision cited above.

The tradition of direct encounters with Saraha in dream or meditative visions pervades the Tibetan traditions, but far and away his closest connection is with the Karma Kagyü school. I will continue the explanation of the lineage specific to the transmission of the Great Seal below, but for the moment I will stick to the history of the Kagyüs. The line goes as follows, beginning with two Indian teachers and from Marpa onward consisting of Tibetans: Tilopa (988-1069 CE), Naropa (1016-1100 CE), Marpa (1012-1097), Milarepa (1052-1135), Gampopa (1079-1153), Dusum Khyenpa (1110-1193). Düsum Khyenpa was then first in a line of reincarnated hierarchs of the Karma Kagyü school known as the Karmapas. The Karmapa lineage remains unbroken to this day. At present, the Karma Kagyü school is under the leadership of the 17th Karmapa. The story of the Karmapas is especially relevant to this chapter on Saraha, because they are considered to be reincarnations of him.

As cited by Schaeffer, Karma Trinlepa's homage to Saraha which appears in his *Middle Commentary on the Three Cycles of Doha* (*Do ha skor gsum gyi ti ka 'bring po*), makes some astounding claims about Saraha and the Karmapas, beyond even the initial and widely accepted idea that the latter are reincarnations of the former:

To the illustrious arrowsmith Saraha I bow down.
Though he has known and seen suchness before the Buddha,
Out of compassion for living beings he acted in this realm of becoming with the
drama of illusion.
For his descendants, the famous Karmapas, the black-hatted scholars who point
out the mirage of becoming and quiescence,
Saraha himself is the very foundation of non-referential reverence.
(Schaeffer, 2000, 95)

Here, Karma Trinlaypa is claiming that Saraha was awakened before the Buddha of our own historical era. Schaeffer comments:

By claiming that Saraha in fact attained enlightenment before the Buddha... Karma 'phrin las pa claims also a lineage for the Karma bka' brgyud that stretches beyond the Buddha himself to the primordial origins of enlightenment itself, embodied in the figure of Saraha. (ibid)

This claim is neither outlandish nor rare. Buddhism, as an institution, is a system where innovation is not looked upon as a good thing. For something to be authentic, it should be trace-able back to a guaranteed 'enlightened' source. Not just information, teachings, or texts – this also applies to something called a 'transmission', or realization itself, which is supposed to be directly passed on from master to disciple. While it is contentless, and therefore will be expressed or taught differently by each realized master

in turn, the spark must be ignited somewhere and that needs to be established is that the source was authentically ‘enlightened’. That source does not need to be Sakyamuni Buddha, the historical Buddha. As enlightenment is considered to be completely timeless, it is understood that awakening is not something that Sakyamuni invented or composed – it is perhaps useful to think of it as something that is instead tapped into. Therefore, it is not necessary to find some way of linking the Karmapas to Sakyamuni Buddha – any connection to a lineage of awakened masters is more than sufficient. Seeing Saraha as a manifestation of ‘primordial enlightenment’ is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in the following passage by the third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje (1284-1339), excerpted from his own work, titled *Songs of Rangjung Dorje (Rang Byung rDo rJe 'i mGur rNam)*:

When [I], the yogi Rang byung rdo rje was staying a (*sic*) Bkra shis gsar ma, in a dream one night myself and two friends went to Sri Parvata Mountain to search for the Great Brahmin, Master [Saraha]. My two friends went south of the mountain, and I [went] east. There signs arose on a panoramic and euphoric high plain, and an unfathomable rain of flowers fell. We then arranged a border [with the flowers] and when we were sitting equiposed within their ring a small melodious voice sounded from the sky:

*Listen you noble sons,
The master, the Great Brahmin
is mind itself,
And to search elsewhere is, alas, a mistake!*

As that was proclaimed, so this did I speak:

*The Master, the Great Brahmin
Is our own minds,
And in this circle where manifold [experiences are of] a single taste,
Free of what searches and what is searched for,*

*My two friends are done with searching;
We stay together as one.
Rejoice, The symbolic teaching of the Great Brahmin,
Are (sic) indeed wondrous.*

Because I so spoke, the voice of the Great Brahmin resounded from the sky...
[Saraha's sang (sic) his song, and] the border [of flowers] which we arranged, all
the earth, stones and animals transformed into the nature of the Great Brahmin,
and remained. And when the meaning of what is real, free of becoming, cessation
and abiding, uninterrupted and impartial, continuous and overflowing, was in our
minds, there was no difference between waking and sleeping.
(Schaeffer, 2000, 98-99)

Though this is rather a long citation, it does demonstrate the polysemic presence of
Saraha in Karmapa Rangjung Dorje's entire being. Interestingly and germane to the
above passage, in his biography as it is told in Karma Thinley's compilation *The History
of the Sixteen Karmapas of Tibet*, it is written that the young Third Karmapa was seen "as
an embodiment of Saraha" (Thinley, 1980, 55) by one of his principal teachers, Nyenré
Gendün Bum. Both devoted to and identical with Saraha, Karmapa Rangjung Dorje
indeed embodies the very complexity of the Great Brahmin. Saraha is identified with
natural, awakened mind itself, and all of manifest existence for that matter. Saraha may
be identified with the Dharmakāya itself in Rangjung Dorje's dream/vision.

The second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi (1204-1283), also experienced Saraha as present.
Schaeffer writes:

The eternal presence of Saraha was a concrete phenomenon for the second
hierarch of the Karma bka' brgyud school, Karma Pakshi (1204-1283), who
relates to us in his autobiography visions of Saraha and the rest of the Eighty-Four

Adepts. He rejoices at having received their blessings as they wove magical illusions, and danced throughout the Mongolian lands and regions north of Tibet. (Schaeffer, 2000, 96-7)

Saraha's constant and pervasive presences in the Kagyü school are striking. I would like to draw attention to another example which shows how Saraha pervades even the most basic practices for Kagyüpas as well. Each of the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism have their own version of what is called a 'Refuge Tree' (*tshogs zhing*, literally 'merit field'). Becoming a Buddhist entails committing oneself to the three jewels: the Buddha, his teachings and the community of practitioners as one's 'Refuge' or 'śaraṇam'. The refuge tree is an elaborate visual depiction of that refuge. It includes not only the three jewels, but also what are referred to as the three roots (*rtsa ba gsum*): these roots are *bla ma* (Skt. *Guru*; spiritual master), *Yi dam* (*devatā*; meditational deity) and *Chos sKyang* (*dharmaṇḍā*; dharma protector). The *Yi dam* and Protector in fact represent transformed mental states and the activity of the guru. The very central character on the refuge tree is in fact the guru, depicted here as Vajradhāra, a primordial Buddha. Blue in colour, with his arms crossed at his chest, Vajradhāra (*rDo rje 'chang*) is understood by practitioners to not only represent the guru, or *bla ma*, but to actually *be* the guru's mind. While devotion to one's main teacher, or 'root Lama' (*rTsa ba'i bLa ma*) is foundational to any Tantric practitioner⁹, the extent to which that devotion is meant to be personal is limited.

⁹ An incident from the biography of Marpa illustrates well the centrality of the guru. The following details the last night and morning spent together of Marpa and his guru Naropa: "That night they slept near each other and at dawn Mahapandita Naropa manifested the mandala of Hevajra with the nine deities, bright and vivid in the sky. He said, 'Son, teacher Marpa Chokyi Lodro, don't sleep, get up! Your personal yidam Hevajra with the nine emanation devis has arrived in the sky before you. Will you prostrate to me or to the yidam?' Marpa prostrated to the bright and vivid mandala of the yidam. Naropa said, 'As it is said: Before any guru existed/ Even the name of the Buddha was not heard. / All the buddhas of a thousand kalpas / Only come about because of the guru.'" (Tsang, 1995, 92)

Picturing the Root Lama as Vajradhāra can function as an antidote to the clinging that can arise if one's visualization of the guru has become too personal. Additionally, having Vajradhāra as generically representing the guru's mind on a *thanka* or any other representation of the Refuge Tree, allows any number of practitioners to use the same image as an aid for practice, even if some opt to visualize a form of their guru in Vajradhāra's stead. While some Refuge Trees have a specific Lama depicted in the center – Karmapa for Kagyū-pas, Padmasambhava for Nyingmapas, or Tsongkhapa for Gelukpas – all show that central figure surrounded by the founders and lineage holders of the school the Tree represents. The refuge tree is important because it is the focus of one of the most basic practices of all practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism: prostrations. While visualizing this elaborate tree and its denizens, usually with a representation like this before oneself, a practitioner must perform 111,111 full body prostrations – from full standing position to stretching out fully on the floor and back up again, while repeating the refuge formula. This is the first of four practices which together constitute the sNgon 'gro or 'preliminary practices' and the prostrations alone usually take years to complete. Given that, the details of the tree become rather important, and ingrain at many levels what one's refuge consists of. The purpose of this rather long tangent is to work up to one particular use, or 'presencing,' of Saraha in a ritual/practice context. In one particular stream of Karma Kagyū Buddhism, practitioners under the guidance of H.H. the 14th Shamar Rinpoche¹⁰ are instructed to visualize Saraha as that central Lama. While a typical sNgon 'gro Sadhana¹¹ may read:

¹⁰ The Zhwa-mar or 'Red Hat' Rinpoches are a lineage of reincarnated Lamas who historically have functioned as 'regents' to the Karmapas

¹¹ Incidentally, and quite interestingly, the sadhana text I have excerpted this passage from was composed by H. H. the 6th Zhwa-mar Rinpoche, Chokyi Wangchuk (1584-1629)

In front of me, in the center of a lake, is a wish-fulfilling tree.
 It has one root, one trunk, and four main branches.
 At the central fork is lion throne, on which rests a lotus, sun, and moon.
 On this sits my root guru as Vajradhara,
 Surrounded by all the Kagyu gurus¹². (Chokyi Wangchuk, 9-10)

The instruction to visualize one's root guru (*rtsa ba'i bla ma*) as Vajradhāra, simply Vajradhāra, or at times a generic Karmapa figure (a Buddha-form in golden colour, wearing a five-pointed black crown) is the norm. I do not by any means intend to imply that it is therefore mundane, but for the specific purposes of this chapter, I compare this to the sNgon 'gro sadhana composed by the current, 14th, Shamar Rinpoche, Mipham Chökyi Lodrö:

In the middle of a lake in front of me is a wish fulfilling tree with one trunk and four branches. At the crown of the central trunk is Saraha, the master of the Mahamudra teachings, manifesting in the form of Vajradhara. He is seated on a lion throne, on a lotus and moon disc, and is surrounded by all the Mahamudra Siddhas¹³. (Mipham Chökyi Lodrö, 3a-b)

Though one would be hard pressed to find someone who identifies Saraha directly as her Lama, the direct transmission is in theory still possible to attain, and in the context of the Great Seal, the transmission one receives from one's teacher is understood to be that of Saraha.

¹² mdun du mtsho dbus dpag bsam ljon shing gi / sdong po rtsa bag cig la yal ga lngar / gyes pa'i dbus mar seng khri pad ma dang / nyi zla'i steng du rtsa ba'i bla ma ni / rdo rje 'chang la Kagyü bla mas bskor

¹³ mdun du mtsho dbus dpag bsam ljon shing gi / sdong po rtsa ba gcig la yal ga lngar / gyes pa'i dbus mar seng khri pad zla'i steng / phyag chen bstan pa'i bdag po sa ra ha / rham pa rdo rje 'chang gi skur sprul bzugs / de la phyag chen grub pa yongs kyis bskor

While the entirety of Chapter 3 is dedicated to an exploration of the Great Seal, it is necessary here to at least mention Saraha's place in that particular lineage. The Great Seal is "simultaneously the climax of *Vajrayāna* and the thread running through the entire Kagyu path." (Thinlay, 1980, 34). That it is inextricably tied to Saraha is of course not a coincidence. While in some iterations of the Great Seal lineage, the name of Ratnamati falls between Vajradhāra (as the enlightened 'source' of the teachings) and Saraha, when the direct transmission of the Great Seal occurs, it comes directly from Saraha. Ratnamati is in any case a curious character, as it remains ambiguous whether he is understood to have been human being or a kind of intermediary Bodhisattva. There exists no biography or detailed record of Ratnamati, and as Saraha's is the (human) name associated most closely with the birth of the Great Seal lineage, I will allow Ratnamati to maintain his obscurity. In Gö Lotsawa Shönupāl's (1392-1481) famous *Deb-ther sngon po*¹⁴ (known in English simply as the *Blue Annals*), an encyclopedic and highly influential source for the history of Buddhism in Tibet for all the *sarma* schools, it is quoted: "In this Doctrine of the Jina Sakyamuni, the great Brahmana Saraha was the first to introduce the Mahamudra as the chief of all Paths" (Roerich, 841). To illustrate how Saraha remains an 'eternally' contemporary source for the Great Seal transmission, I already drew attention, for example, to the Third Karmapa's transmission from Saraha, and to Marpa's Great Seal transmission from him. Saraha's centrality to the Karma Kagyü school and to their Great Seal lineage have, I hope, been sufficiently outlined above.

¹⁴ the full title is: *Bod-kyi yul-du chos-dang chos-smra-ba Ji-ltar byung-ba'i rim-pa Deb-ther sngon-po* (*The Blue Annals, the Stages of the Appearance of the Doctrine and Preachers in the Land of Tibet*)

Saraha has also left his traces on other lineages as well. For lack of any real reason to approach those other lineages in any particular order, I will go chronologically, beginning with the Palyül lineage of the Nyingma, or 'old school'. In brief, an association between Saraha and the Palyül Nyingma was established in the 19th century by the famous *tertön* Dudjom Lingpa Rinpoche (1835-1904) who not only claimed to have received teachings from Saraha (among others) in dream visions, but also claimed to be part of a line of incarnated enlightened masters, of which Saraha was the third and to which he was heir (a line of reincarnated teachers still in existence).

The Sakya school also has a connection to Saraha, predominantly highlighted by Shakya Chokden (Serdog Panchen Shakya Chokden, 1428-1507), master of the Sakya tradition and famous philosopher and writer in his day. Schaeffer has translated a lengthy encomium (*stotra*; *bstod pa*) to Saraha that Shakya Chokden composed, an excerpt of which I will reproduce here:

From the prince Rahula,
First-born son of the King of the Sakyas,
You took ordination, Brahmin Rahula.
....
You were Nagarjuna's master.
....
Then, in the realm of immortal nectar,
You dwelt on the Great Seal ground.
....
Glorious Saraha,
I hold you in my eyes and in my mind.
Acting out straightening arrow and reed,

You saw that there's nothing
Other than your own primordial awareness.

....

Fearless Saraha, you swiftly
Opened the three doors,
And saw that all things are empty of essence,
Without cause,
Without result, but rather
Your own face – primordial awareness.

....

The ocean, where primordial awareness frolics without grasping,
A single taste you showed to be, Glorious Saraha. (Schaeffer, 2000, 89-93)

While praising Saraha's insight and continuing pointing-out of the ultimately blissful nature of everything, Shaka Chokden also attributes the founding of the Madhyamaka school of philosophy (generally attributed to Nāgārjuna) to Saraha. In his text, *Wish Fulfilling Meru: a discourse explaining origination of Madhyamaka (dbu ma'i byung tshul rnam par bshad pa'i gtam yid bzhin lhun po)*, he writes:

As it was said: "Four hundred years after my nirvana..." etc¹⁵, it is generally accepted that initially the tradition of Madhyamaka treatises was pioneered by the Protector Nagarjuna. Nevertheless, besides him, a short time before, the Great Brahmin, the Glorious Saraha, in a form of singing a song, composed a Madhyamaka treatise whose topic was the mind-vajra free from [conceptual] analysis. (Chokden, 2000, 9)¹⁶

¹⁵ This is a reference to a prophecy from the *Mañjuśrīmūlatantra* which predicts the appearance and Madhyamaka teachings of Nāgārjuna.

¹⁶ The translator's footnote to this passage is worth quoting in full: "Saraha actually was Nagarjuna's guru and the person from whom he received monastic ordination. When we say that Nagarjuna pioneered the Madhyamaka tradition, we usually mean pioneering Madhyamaka of Sutras. But Saraha can be said to have pioneered the Madhyamakās of both Sutras and Tantras". (Chokden, 2000, 66 n. 54)

Thus, for this Sakya writer, Saraha not only precedes Nāgārjuna's articulation of Madhyamaka philosophy but encompasses and surpasses it as well. Just what constitutes a specifically *tantric* understanding of Madhyamaka will be explored in Chapter 4 when I explain some of the key concepts underlying Saraha's Adamantine Song Cycle. For now I will push on to the last point of this chapter.

The Geluk school is no exception to the trend of revering Saraha. The first Panchen Lama, Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen (1570-1662), is renowned for having evoked Saraha in the opening passage of his treatise on Mahāmudrā, the *dGe ldan bka' brgyud rin po che'i phyag chen rtsa ba rgyal ba'i gzhung lam*. Of particular interest in the relationship of the first Panchen bLa ma to Saraha, is an episode from his biography where he embarks on a number of projects to build stupas and retreat centers that would so please the Saraha, that he would actually appear:

Following the retreat, with renewed energy, he once again undertook great construction projects. He had new stupas built and completely refurbished the retreat dwellings surrounding Tashilunpo, making their appearance so excellent as to invite the actual coming again of such great meditators as the great yogi Chokyi Dorje and the great siddha Saraha. (Willis, 1995, 93).

Thus, while Saraha is strongly associated with the Kagyü traditions, his link with the Great Seal in its various forms carries his inspiration and presence well beyond the confines of any one school. It indeed appears to me that Saraha functions as a kind of wish-fulfilling spring for all who call on him – as root Lama, teacher, preceptor or philosopher. Saraha is something for (and in some cases *as*) everyone.

Conclusion

This chapter has functioned more or less as an introduction to the ambiguities entailed in any study of Saraha. Showing how historically accurate facts regarding his dates, location and language are all inaccessible, it has been my intention to shift the 'search' for Saraha into the multiple contexts in which he is used. It is therefore his presence and the means by which various schools of Buddhism *presence* him that must be viewed as the only 'truths' about him.

While it may not be possible to assert anything historical about him, however, another useful approach to understanding the phenomenon of 'Saraha' is to situate him culturally in his South Asian context. Chapter 2 explores the variety of antinomian traditions that flourished in South Asia during the range of dates ascribed to Saraha. By understanding some of the cultural and religious ambience that he emerged in, it my hope that Saraha's contours may become slightly more pronounced.

Chapter 2

Siddha Traditions

The term ‘siddha’ is derived of the Sanskrit verbal root $\sqrt{\text{sidh}}$, which means to accomplish or perfect. A *siddha* is therefore one who has accomplished, or perfected – in other words, an adept. I will be using the terms ‘adept’ and *siddha* interchangeably throughout this chapter.

Historically situated roughly in the Pālā period – 8th to 12th centuries CE – the *siddhas* as a class of religious practitioner span all the major religious traditions present in South Asia at that time (and in many cases the tradition or lineages of teaching have continued right up into the current South Asian context). Jains, Sufis, Vaiṣṇavas, Śaivas, Śāktas Nāthas and, of course, Buddhists had communities and individuals striving against their respective normative structures, and together constituting an antinomian tradition which – despite the major differences between the orthodox versions of their religions – coheres together in some rather striking ways. While a comparative study of the *siddha* traditions present in South Asia during the Pālā period would easily constitute a dissertation in itself, I hope to at least draw attention to some of the *siddha* traditions which existed contemporaneously with that of Buddhism as it can provide helpful context in understanding the phenomenon as a whole, rather than as one tradition specific to Buddhism alone. Before widening the scope to include a discussion of some of South Asia’s other *siddha* traditions, I will start with Buddhism.

At the start of the 8th century CE, when the Buddhist *siddhas* emerged on the scene, South Asian Buddhist orthodoxy was peaking: the great monastic universities housed thousands of well-trained monastics, royal/popular patronage was pouring in, and monastic Buddhism – serving the lay population’s needs and its own – was flourishing. What is popularly taught as Buddhism in academic circles – the intricate philosophy of the *Mādhyamikas* and *Yogacārins* – was current and being debated in great detail. It was also at this point in time that Tantric Buddhism was flourishing. From as-yet undetermined beginnings – it began to gain popularity in the sixth century CE – it had become a highly complex and highly ritualized mode of striving for Buddhist enlightenment. Complex and refined so as to be almost totally inaccessible to ‘the common folk’, it entails level upon level of initiation, a comprehension of complicated ideas, rituals and visual depictions. Dasgupta writes:

Though Tāntricism condemned orthodoxy in the strongest possible terms, it developed within its province the most elaborate form of practices. In formalism, ceremonialism, ritualism, magic, sorcery and in the most complicated system of worship accompanied by the muttering of innumerable Mantras Tāntricism superseded all the other orthodox systems. (Dasgupta, 1962, 76)

Although his characterization of *Tantra* as an orthodox system which superseded all the others is perhaps a little strong, his point is well-taken. As often happens, what started as an alternative movement eventually became exclusive and intensely rarified itself.

Ronald Davidson also situates the emergence of the Buddhist Adepts between two poles, though one of those poles is different from what I have described above. He writes, “In their public personas, *siddhas* occupied a space between institutional esoterism and the

larger world of Śaiva and Śākta personalities” (Davidson, 2002, 170). Though in general his sociological approach to medieval Buddhism creates an air of cynicism about the possibility of any sincere Buddhist practice existing or developing at that time, he does acknowledge the radical potential (or past?) of the siddhas, even if only in a well-qualified way¹: “Buddhist siddhas’ language and literature were inherently destabilizing, for they challenged the ideological bond of Buddhist institutions” (Davidson, 2002, 196). I would add that not only were their language and literature inherently destabilizing, but their life-style, their example, their teachings and followers must have been dreadfully destabilizing as well.

The *Mahāsiddhas*, or Great Adepts, constitute a movement on the periphery of all the systems it co-existed with. Though some *Mahāsiddhas* began their careers as monastics, and all were – in terms of their practice and its underlying system – *Tāntrikas*, still, the Great Adepts were notoriously opposed to anything institutionalized – within and without Buddhist tradition – and often went to great lengths to impress the force of their disdain upon the populace at large. As it is Saraha’s best-known work, this is perhaps a good time to use an excerpt from the ‘People Doha’ poem, third of the three works that together comprise his *Dohākośa*, or ‘*Dohā* trilogy’. While numerous translations exist – including those by Edward Conze (1954), Herbert Guenther (1993), Muhammad Shahidullah (1928) and Kurtis Rice Schaeffer (2000), I am opting to use that of Roger R. Jackson who has done a truly admirable job of capturing a mood of freshness and

¹ “If institutional Buddhist esoterism was sociologically and historically defined by the person of the scepter-carrying monk...the siddha represents a new form in Indian Buddhism, one that ultimately came to mark a movement that began on the periphery and eventually worked its way into the heart of Buddhist institutions.” (Davidson 196)

irreverence in his translation of Saraha's work. The opening stanzas demonstrate well Saraha's disdain of all traditions (I am placing in [] square brackets the specific tradition he is critiquing, when it is not obvious from the text itself):

Bah! Brahmins –
They don't know what's what:
In vain they incant
their four Vedas.
They incant, holding earth
And water and kusa grass,
And sit at home
Making offerings to fire.
Their oblations
are pointless –
the acrid smoke
just stings their eyes.

[Śaivas]
With staff or trident,
Dressed like lords,
They pose as sages,
Imparting ascetic advice.
They're fakes –
Their error deceives the world;
They don't know right
Any more than wrong.

[Vaiṣṇavas,]
These 'saints'
Smear their bodies with ashes,

And wear their matted locks piled on their heads.

....

Fixing his gaze,
Bound in a posture,
He whispers in to the ears
Of rich folk...
He grants a consecration –
For a fee.

[Jainas]

The long-nailed yogin
Looks filthy,
Goes naked,
Pulls out his hair by the roots.
Jains mock the path by the way they look;
They deceive themselves in teaching freedom.
If going naked means release,
Then the god and the jackal must have it.
If baldness is perfection,
Then a young girl's bottom must have it.

[Bauddhas]

Self-proclaimed
Novices, monks and elders,
These dress-up
Friars and ascetics!
Some sit writing comments
On the sutras,
Others seek
To dry up intellect.

Others run around
In the Great Way,
Where scripture turns to sophistry
And word play.
Some contemplate the mandala circle...
....
You may give up the innate
And fancy nirvana,
But not an ounce of the ultimate
Will you gain. (Jackson, 2004, 53-59)

The first poem of the Adamantine Song cycle, the Body Treasury, begins in the same manner:

Oh! The long-haired ones who grasp at self and agent,
The Brahmins, Jainas, Dagapas,
The materialists who accept a real basis for things -
Though they claim to be omniscient, they lack self-knowledge...
Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrantikas,
Yogācārins and Mādhyamikas, etc.
Criticize each other and argue.
Ignorant of suchness, the space-like equality of appearance and emptiness,
They turn their back on the innate nature. (verses 1, 2)

As must be obvious from the above two excerpts, Saraha likes to begin his work with a sound thrashing of all the traditions surrounding him – including Buddhism². Jackson comments that “these thoroughgoing social and religious critiques... do not seem to conform with the ecumenical spirit typified by so many Buddhists today” (Jackson, 2004,

² It is of particular interest to me to note how he dismisses the Madhyamikas, who he is later credited with founding!

19). Though he adds, and I wholeheartedly agree, that “satire, caricature, and scorn, along with pointed philosophical criticism, have been part of the Buddhist rhetorical arsenal for a very long time” (Jackson 20). Indeed, that critical spirit is something that pervades *siddha* literature and doctrine in general.

An episode from the life of another famous Buddhist *Mahāsiddha* – Virupa – will further illustrate the point. The following takes place while Virupa is a monk living in a monastery in Somapuri (translation mine):

Then, having practiced for twelve years, he accomplished the *siddhi* of the most excellent Great Seal, [while] a servant offered him meat and beer. Then, having killed the monastery’s pigeons, he ate their meat. When all the pigeons were dead, the monks asked, “We are respectable, who would eat them? [Among] all of us here, none would eat [pigeons].” Having looked in all the cells, [including] Virupa’s cell, they abandoned the search. Then, looking through the window, they saw [Virupa] drinking beer and eating pigeon meat. Having sounded the bell [to call a gathering], they expelled Virupa from that place. Virupa offered his robes and begging bowl before a Buddha image. The attendants [did] not [see him] pass through the door. On the grounds of that monastery there was a big lake. One monk asked him, “What path will you take?”. [Virupa answered], “You are driving me away, what do you care what path I take?” Having said that, he placed his feet on the petals of a lotus which was on the lake, he made an offering to the Buddha, and he went to the other shore, not sinking in the water [while] walking on the lotus flower.

[Then] all the people of Somapuri felt remorse. They seized his feet and worshipped him. “Why did you kill the pigeons?” they asked. “I did not kill them,” he said. His servant came carrying pieces of the pigeon’s wings, and the master – having concentrated in meditation – snapped his fingers. [The pieces of

wings] became the pigeons themselves. They flew into the sky, but bigger and better than ever before. This was seen by everyone. Then Virupa cast away the signs of his monkhood, and took on the practice of a *yogin*³. (Dorje 11-13)

This episode is typical of the kind of incidents one reads about in the biographies of the Adepts. Killing, stealing, becoming intoxicated, becoming disciples of and even Tantric sexual partners of outcaste women or men... these are only a few of the themes that run through the biographies. Take the case of Luipa, who sat on the banks of a river subsisting exclusively on raw fish guts for twelve years; or Āṅgulimāla, a murderous *yogin* who wore a necklace made of the fingers of his human victims – these stories are quite shocking today, and were even more so in their original context. The *siddhas*' outwardly shocking behaviour served the dual function of helping them break through stiff concepts about morality with respect to themselves, and confronting whatever community they were offending with their own hypocrisy and inability to recognize skillful means and enlightened behaviour when they saw it⁴. Of course that is something

³ De nas yang lo bcu bnyis bsgrubs pas / phyag rgya chen po mchog gi dngos grub thob nas g.yog pos sha dang chang nyos shing drangs / de nas gtsug lag khang gi phug ron yod pa bsad nas sha byas te zos pa dang / phug ron rnams zad nas / dge 'dun gyis nged kyis mchod gnas sus zos byas pas / de na yod pa'i btsun pa kun gyis nged kyis ma zos zer / brang khang kun bltas pas wi ruu? pa'i brang khang bltar btang ba dang / skar khung nas bltas pas / de chang 'thung zhing phug ron gyi sha za ba mthong nas / dge 'dun gyis ghanti brdungs te gnas nas dbyung bar byas pa dang / wi ruu pas chos gos dang lhung bzed sku gzugs kyis spyang sngar phul / phyag byas te sgo la ma phyin pa dang / gtsug lag khang de'i rtsa na mtsho chen po zhig yod pa la / dge slong gcig gis khyod lam gang la 'gro byas pas / nga khyed kyis bskrad pa la lam la bza' gtad ci yod / gsungs nas chu de'i thog na phar padma'i 'dab ma la zhabs bzahag nas padma'i me tog chur ma nub par bcad de sangs rgyas la mchod pa byas nas pha mthar song ngo // sooma purii'i mi kun 'gyod pa skyed (skyes) te / zhabs la 'jus te pyag byas nas / khyed kyis phug ron ci la bsad byas pas / ngas ma bsad pa yod zer / g.yog pos phug ron gyi gshog pa'i dum bu rnams khyer 'ongs pa dang / slob dpon gyis se gol cig rtog par mdzad pas (gshog dum de dag) phug ron nyid du song nas / de yang sngar bas kyang che ba dang bzang bar byas te nam mkha' la 'phur nas song ba kun kyis mthong ngo // de nas wi ruu pas dge slong gi rtags bskyur nas rnal 'byor pa'i spyod pa mdzad de

⁴ Here one may be tempted to draw a parallel between the outrageous and violent behaviour of the 84 Buddhist *Mahasiddhas* and that of the 63 Tamil Saiva saints, the *Nayanars*, who committed equally (if not, at times, more) gruesome acts that bore positive results. Whereas in the case of the *Mahasiddhas* there is a strong sense that the *siddha* who is committing a particular act is doing so on the basis that ultimately the nature of all things is *sunya*, or empty, and the display of seemingly immoral behaviour is a kind of *upaya*

of an oversimplification; the antinomian behaviour of the *siddhas* must also be seen as reflecting some quite specific aspects of what may loosely be termed their doctrine.

It is not enough to say that what the Buddhist *siddhas* have in common is a love of flaunting social conventions. If that were the case, there would be no distinction between the revered Adepts and the average teenager. What distinguishes them? What informs their rebellious behaviour that makes it different from that of ‘regular’ rebels? Their principal distinguishing feature is their insight into the nature of reality. The Great Adepts are understood to have been awakened masters – as we saw in Chapter 1, Saraha is understood by his devotees to be identical with enlightened mind itself. The awakening of the *siddhas* is generally associated with a few key terms and concepts, principal among which is what I translate as ‘the innate’ or ‘innate nature’ (Skt: *sahaja*; Tib: *lhan cig skye pa*)⁵, which has a connotation of that which is natural or spontaneous. Per Kvaerne writes, “*Sahaja* is an ontological category; it is the true nature of ‘the world’, of that which can be experienced. However, it is also, and basically, an experience, a psychological category” (Kvaerne, 62). The term ‘innate’ appears

or skillful means employed to help others attain some insight; in the case of the *Nayanars* the transgressive behaviour is rooted in profound, devotional love (*anpu*) for Siva and bears fruit according to how moved Siva is. For that reason, I see more of a parallel between the *Nayanars* antinomianism and that which takes place in the Guru/disciple context in Indian and Tibetan Buddhist hagiographies/biographies (see *Life of Naropa*, *Life of Marpa the Translator*, or the *Life of Milarepa* for good examples of this), where there is a relationship between two agents based on love and devotion. For a discussion of *Nayanars* and *anpu* see D. Dennis Hudson’s “Violent and Fanatical Devotion Among the Nayanars: A Study in the *Periya Puranam* of Cekkilar” (*Criminal Gods and Demon Devotees*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1989. 373-404). Chandrleka Vamadeva’s 1995 dissertation, *The Concept of vannanpu >>violent love<< in Tamil Saivism, with Special Reference to the Periyapuram*, argues that the Nayanar’s violent acts evolved in accordance with Tamil literary traditions of heroism and violence, distancing the traditions of the 63 *Nayanars* even more from that of the 84 *Mahasiddhas*.

⁵ Jackson’s list of various translations of *sahaja/lhan-cig-skye-pa* is worth citing: “‘the Together-born,’ ‘the Simultaneously-arisen,’ ‘the Spontaneous,’ ‘Coemergence,’ ‘Connate,’ ‘Complementarity-in-Spontaneity,’ and ‘Being’” (Jackson, 2004, 21)

relatively frequently in the Adamantine Songs⁶ (just over a dozen times in the Body Treasury, and 3 times in each of the Speech and Mind treasuries), and pervades his famous Doha trilogy. In truth, any discussion of *siddhas* necessitates an explicit discussion of ‘the innate’, as it is so central to their teachings and hagiographies that there are a number of scholars⁷ who identify *siddhas* across the gamut of religious traditions they emerged in as ‘sahajiyās’⁸. Defining themselves “against the formalities of life and religion” (Dasgupta 51), the Sahajiyās are understood to be linked by their goal of directly realizing the ultimate nature of self and all dharmas. From the Sahajiyā point of view, maintaining an outwardly disciplined life (ie: monasticism) demonstrates nothing of inner realization. If one has really understood non-duality, then the idea of a ‘religious’ or ‘non-religious’, ‘disciplined’ or ‘non-disciplined’ lifestyle is meaningless. These are all conventional dualities. Spontaneity and authenticity are key concepts in characterizing the behaviour of the Great Adepts – indeed all those who are considered to have penetrated the innate.

Though employing esoteric yogic practices developed in Tantric or Vajrayāna Buddhism, they sought to relieve their movement of all ritualistic and philosophical accretions.

Bhattacharyya cites a description of the main principles of the Sahaja movement:

Negatively speaking, these were (a) sharp criticism and rejection of all external formalities in regard to religious practices and spiritual quests; and (b) protest against and rejection of priestly and scriptural authority, celibacy, penances, austerities, and the like. Positively, the most important elements were (a)

⁶ In Saraha’s Adamantine Songs, ‘the innate’ is synonymous with the Great Seal as it functions as basis and fruition, as well as the Great Bliss. The Great Seal is discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

⁷ Most notable are Mircea Eliade’s *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (1958); N. N. Bhattacharyya’s *History of the Tantric Religion* (1982); and Shashibhusan Dasgupta’s *Obscure Religious Cults* (1946).

⁸ saha jāyate iti sahajah; saha: with, together with; jāyate: born, that which is born

recognition of the guru as essential for any spiritual exercise and quest, (b) recognition of the human body as the seat and habitat of all religious and spiritual experience, indeed, of the Truth or Ultimate Reality and finally (c) recognition of the experience of the ultimate Reality as one of inexpressible happiness and ineffable radiance, waveless equipoise, absolute peace and tranquility, and of absolute non-duality or complete unity. (297)

Interestingly, though I have found no evidence of anyone claiming that the above is not true of the Buddhist *siddhas*, there are a number of scholars who entirely dismiss the notion of a *sahajiyā* cult, or *sahajayāna*, including Per Kvaerne and Roger Jackson. Though clearly the idea of the *Mahāsiddhas* belonging simply to a movement one may term *sahajiyā* has passed out of vogue, to my knowledge no comprehensive study has explored the reasons for it. Perhaps the blatant sectarianism present in the works of individual *siddhas* from an assortment of traditions has led to the discarding of that idea; in any case, there is no denying the centrality of the notion of *sahajalhan-cig-skyes-pa* to the *Mahāsiddhas* in general and to Saraha in particular. In the meantime, I believe Kvaerne's rather short comment, putting the identification of the Buddhist *siddhas* as *sahajiyās* down to "confusion with the term *sahajiya* used in the connection with the Vaisṇava *Sahajiyā* movement in Bengal" (Kvaerne 61) may touch on something like a truth. Given the importance of *sahaja* to all the *siddha* traditions and the striking similarities in their doctrines and practice, it is an understandable assumption to have made.

But let us turn our attention back to the innate and it connates. The importance of the innate to *siddha* Buddhism brings us back to the connection between the *siddhas* and

Tantra. As mentioned above, the *siddhas* constituted a movement that rebelled against the growing rarification and ritualisation of Tantrism. At their outset, both movements may be considered to have been elite. They were not so in the sense of being the preserve of a certain social or economic class, but rather in the sense that as movements which prescribe transgressive behaviour, disciples and gurus both had to be selected with great care, as the potential for all-out debauchery was rather high. If we may at least provisionally accept Ronald Davidson's hypothesis that in the medieval period, Buddhist Tantra actually became mainstream as it attracted royal patronage, it may also be possible to assert that the *siddhas* were actually also rebelling against the growing popularity of Tantric doctrine and especially practice⁹. But again I digress. The underlying doctrine of the *siddhas* is that propagated by the Tantras as a general class of literature, and most specifically by the highest Tantras, the so-called *anuttarayoga tantras*¹⁰. These *anuttarayoga* Tantras are traditionally divided into two categories: 'father tantra', whose synonyms are listed by Panchen Sönam Drakpa in his 16th century work *Overview of Buddhist Tantra* as 'yogi tantra', 'method tantra' and 'daka tantra'; and 'mother tantra', also known as 'yogini tantra', 'wisdom tantra' and 'dakini tantra' (Sonam 43)¹¹. Khedrup-je, in his 15th century work *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems* (*rGyud sde spyi'i rnam par gzhas pa rgyas par brjod*) adds to this list the appellation '*maha-yoga-tantra*' for the Father tantras. The principal text representing the

⁹ David Gordon White's recent work *Kiss of the Yogini* supports that hypothesis in a pan-South Asian – though predominantly Hindu – context.

¹⁰ I say so-called, as Elizabeth English presents a rather convincing argument in *Vajrayogini: Her Visualizations, Rituals and Forms* that the Sanskrit term 'anuttarayoga' never existed as such in the Indian Buddhist Tantric context, but rather is a translation of the indigenously created Tibetan term for the category, "rnal 'byor bla na med pa'i rgyud".

¹¹ In vajrayana systems, *prajna* / *ye shes* and *upaya* / *thabs* are a pair that must be united in perfect harmony in order for full Buddhahood to occur. Traditionally they are associated with 'male' and 'female' aspects and qualities (*yab-yum* in Tibetan – the translation of which is 'father-mother'), and are depicted iconographically by deities in union.

‘father tantras’ is, according to Alex Wayman, the *Guhyasamaja*, though Panchen Sönam Drakpa further lists the *Krsnayamari-tantra* and the *Mahatantrarajanama*; while chief among the ‘mother tantras’ (again, according to Wayman) is the *Cakrasamvara*, though includes such important and influential works as the *Kalacakra-tantra* and the *Hevajra-tantra*. Wayman summarizes Khedrup-je’s explanation of the difference between the two classes of *anuttarayoga tantra*:

[A] Father Tantra emphasizes the ‘Means’ side of the ‘means-insight’ union, and so deals especially with the topics so prominent in the present work [Guhyasamaja Tantra] of evoking the three lights and the Clear Light....A Mother Tantra puts emphasis on the ‘Insight’ side of the ‘means-insight’ union, and so treats the indissoluble bliss and void. (Wayman, 1977, 61)

Khedrup-je himself explains that there is a difference between the understanding of skillful-means (‘means’ *upāya*, *thabs*) and wisdom (‘insight’ *prajñā*, *yeshe*) in their proper context, understood as individual terms, and as the appellations associated with the two divisions of the *anuttarayoga-tantras*. On its own, ‘skillful means’ refers to “the Knowledge born together with (*sahaja*) Great Beatitude (*mahāsukha*).” (Khedrup-je, 261); and ‘wisdom’ refers to “the knowledge which fully comprehends that all natures (*sarvadharmāḥ*) are devoid of intrinsic reality (*niḥsvabhāva*)” (ibid). In other words, bliss and emptiness. He contrasts this with their meanings in their contexts as names for the divisions for the Highest Tantras:

A Mother Tantra is established as follows: It is any Tantra which emphasizes the subject matter of the Knowledge of indissolubility of Beatitude [bliss] and Void [emptiness] in the part of ‘Insight’ [wisdom] on the Void side, while not especially emphasizing such things as the method of accomplishing the Illusory Body in the part of ‘Means’ on the phenomenal side. (Khedrup-je, 265)

In other words, a Mother Tantra is one which deals with insight into the union of bliss (*mahāsukha*) and emptiness (*śūnyatā*; *niḥsvabhāva*). He explains the Father Tantra as consisting more in practices, “those which teach elaborately the coming forth with skill in the method of accomplishing the Illusory Body from the five rays of wind riding on the four Voids in the part of the ‘Means’” (ibid).

For my purposes, I will be focusing primarily on the Mother Tantras, as it is specifically within the realm of this class of Tantra that we find a worldview and system of stages of development consistent with what is found in the works of the *Mahāsiddhas*. Indeed, in the introduction to the index (dkar chag) of the *sDe dge bsTan* ‘gyur, Shuchen Tsultrim Rinchen (1697-1774) explicitly states that the teachings of (and those associated with) the Dohās refer to the Mother Tantras (698), and in fact Saraha’s work comes after the section of the Tengyur dedicated to the *Cakrasaṃvāra Tantra* indicated that they belong together thematically.

The Mother Tantras emerge in written form sometime around the 8th century CE, and represent one of the latest bodies of Indian Buddhist literature. Roger R. Jackson provides a useful summary of characteristic traits of the Mother Tantras, as he asserts that the Doha treasuries of Saraha (as well as those of his fellow *Mahāsiddhas* Tilopa and Kanha) “each presents clear evidence that its author was familiar with, and probably a practitioner of, the Yogini tantras.” (Jackson 2004 10-11) I will now review some of Jackson’s points. In common with most South Asian yogic traditions, the Mother Tantras

base themselves on a 'saṃsāra-nirvāṇa' cosmology, which describes at a general level the state and goal of all sentient beings. In specifically Buddhist terms, sentient beings are propelled from one life to the next by the force of their *karma* or past actions, words, and thoughts, and because of their affliction by basic ignorance do not easily change the bad habits which perpetuate the suffering experienced throughout their endless existences. Following the *bodhisattva* path, all sentient beings must strive to attain full awakening – Buddhahood – which is achieved by some particular means, in the Tantric context.

Central to any understanding of Tantra is the relationship of body to universe. 'Body' here does not refer to merely the physical body, or imply a body-mind duality. In the Tantric context, 'body' refers to the subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīra*), which is neither distinct from nor identical to the gross physical body or 'mind' as it's conceived of, and which consists of a network of channels (*nāḍi, rtsa*), winds (*prāṇa, rlung*) and drops (*bindu, thig le*). The subtle body is the locus of all spiritual work, transformation and eventual awakening. Its relationship to the universe or cosmos at large, is one of identity.

Transformations effected at the micro-level of the subtle body influence the experience at the macro-level that is the cosmos. Conversely, practices that engage with the gross, physical world effect transformations at the level of the subtle body. The universe as a sacred realm is mapped onto the subtle body, and *vice versa*. In conceiving the outer world as a sacred realm, the yogin conceives him/herself as the principal deity inhabiting that realm, thus experiencing everything as a *maṇḍala*. Particular to the practices associated with the Mother Tantras, is the elaboration of a set of 'seals' (*mudrā, phyags rgya*) which refer at once to a type of practice and a level of attainment – the highest of which is the Great Seal (*Mahāmudrā, phyags rgya chen po*) – and these seals will be

explored in detail in Chapter 4. Also particular to the Mother Tantras are the four ecstasies (discussed in Chapter 1, note 7), which is discussed in more detail in the annotations to the English translation, but which build on each other and culminate in the ‘great bliss’ (*mahāsukha*, *bde ba chen po* / *bde chen*) which is held to be synonymous with both *sahaja*, the innate, and the Great Seal. (Jackson, 2004, 12-15). In the Hevajra Tantra it is written in a discussion of the four joys, “*caturtham sahaṃ smṛtam*” – “the fourth is known as the Innate” (Farrow, 124).

Another key concept is that of ‘one taste’ (*samarasa*, *ro gcig* or *ro snyoms*), which characterizes the ‘flavour’ of all experiences and phenomena¹². It entails not only the one blissful flavour of all experiences, but points as well to the nature of all phenomena and the indivisibility of experiences and phenomena. The innate, Great Bliss is the true nature of everything, and so everything should be experienced with the same joy. Learning to experience the diversity of life’s experiences as being uniformly blissful expressions of awakening is not a simple process, and necessitates difficult and intense training. This notion underlies the theory of the higher Buddhist Tantras in general:

The work of transformation requires overcoming dualistic aversion to notions of pure and impure, a willingness on occasion to transgress conventional moral norms, and skillful manipulation of one’s mind and energies... In order to harness one’s energies, one must be willing on occasion to ingest ‘impure’ substances such as alcohol, semen, and blood, and engage in sexual yoga practices... The

¹² While it doesn’t appear very frequently in the Adamantine Songs, where it does appear it is significant, as when used to describe the ‘flavour’ of *Dharmatā*: “*Dharmatā* has one taste, the same as flowers for bees. / The faults and virtues are themselves equal in the indivisible nature” (Body Treasury 21)

result of controlling one's energies is the production – or revelation – within the central channel of a blissful, enlightened gnosis¹³. (Jackson 13)

The relationship of subtle body to cosmos, the four Seals and four Joys, the innate and 'one taste' are indeed all central to both the Mother Tantras and to the teachings of the Mahasiddhas. Another important aspect, which I believe is somewhat understated by Jackson, is the importance of the Guru. While I touched on this peripherally above in my discussion of devotion and transgressive behaviour, it is time to raise the subject again, as the importance of the Guru cannot be overstated. Interestingly, though Saraha is not understood to have had a human guru, his work is nonetheless permeated by exhortations to revere the Guru above all. In the "Body Treasury" he writes: "In one's reverence to the Guru, the vows and precepts of the secret vehicle are complete." (35) Further, he ends the second song of the trilogy, the 'Speech Treasury', with the following statement: "Pleasing the Lama is basis of all siddhis. / Not abandoning the precious Lama, the awakened qualities arise" (189-190). As a narrative example about the importance of the Guru, drawn from the biography of two of the Mahāsiddhas whose stories are told together as they are sisters, I particularly enjoy the story of Mekhala and Kanakhala. Mekhala and Kanakhala are sisters, born into the family of a householder in Devikota. Though their behaviour is irreproachable, the townspeople gossip about them maliciously, moving them to seek refuge in something other than worldly life. Kanha¹⁴ comes to town and when the sisters witness his numerous, impressive *siddhis*, they beg

¹³ For a discussion of the history of ingesting these ritually impure substances and their various functions in a number of contexts, I refer readers again to David Gordon White's *Kiss of the Yogini*.

¹⁴ Another aspect of this particular story which seems quite appropriate to this chapter is the fact that their guru is Kanha, another *Mahāsiddha* who, like Saraha, is renowned for his songs. For translations of his work see Jackson (2004) and Shahidullah (1928).

him to be their Guru. He accepts, instructs them in a practice on Diamond Sow (*Vajravarahi*, *rDo-rje'i Phag mo*), and they retreat to practice for twelve years. After that time, they went back to Kanha to present him with offerings. After a brief exchange, Kanha demands his fee – which happens to be their heads. Without hesitation they lop off their own heads (with wisdom swords that emerge spontaneously from their own mouths!) and present them to their Guru. The Guru naturally restores their severed heads and they go on to achieve full awakening and the benefit of many sentient beings¹⁵. The biographies of the *Mahāsiddhas* are full of stories like this one, detailing the devotion of the disciples to their Guru. Suffice it to say that among the numerous other crucial factors, derived in large part from the Mother Tantras, that define the practice and theory of the Buddhist *siddhas*, the teacher is also a factor of high importance.

¹⁵ Gu ru mekhalaa'i lo rgyus ni / yul dewiikota na khyim bdag cig la bu mo gnyis yod pa la / ded dpon zhig la yang bu gnyis yod pa gnyen du byas pa dang / bu mo de gnyis la thams cad kha zer bar byed pa la / de gnyis kyis ngan pa byas pa ni ci yang med do // de'i tshe nu mo na re / rgyu mtshan med pa la kha zer ba 'di 'dra las / gzhan du 'khyams dgos zer / phu mo na re / gang du phyin kyang tshogs ma bsags pas 'di dang khyad mi 'ong bas 'di rang du bsdad dgos zer ba'i tshe bla ma kanhapaa bya be der byon / de ni rnal 'byor pho mo bdun brgyas bskor ba / ma reg pa'i gdugs dbu la 'khor ba / daamaru'i sgra ma dkrol bar 'khrol ba la sogs pa'i yon tan dpag tu med pa dang ldan par grags pas / spun gnyis kyis 'o skol gnyis la yul mi dang khyos kyang kha zer bas / bla ma 'di la gdams pa zhus nas sgrub pa byed dgos byas nas de'i can du phyin nas / sngar gyi lo rgyus bsnyad cing gdams pa zhus pas / des kyang gnang ste / dbang bskur nas lta ba sgom pa spyod pa 'bras bu zung 'jug phag mo'i gdams pa gnang ngo // de gnyis kyis brtson pas bsgrubs pas lo bcu gnyis nas grub pa thob ste / bla ma can du phyin nas phyag dang mchod pa byas / bka' drin gyis khyab pa'i gtam btang bas / khyed gang pa yin / ngas ma shes gsungs pas / sngar gyi lo rgyus bsnyad do / 'o na nga la yon 'bul dgos gsungs pas / bla ma ci bzhed pa 'bul zhus pas / 'o na nga la khyed gnyis kyi mgo bo byin cig gsungs pas des kyang bla ma bzhed na 'bul zer nas / de gnyis kyis rang gi khan as ye shes kyi ral gri rno ngar dang ldan pa re phyung nas yan lag gi dam pa mgo bcad nas pul te / bdag cag gnyis po bla ma'i bka' drin gyis // bskyed rdzogs zung 'jug 'khor 'das spros pa bcad // lta spyod zung 'jug spang blang spros pa bcad // dbyings rig zung 'jug bdag bzhan spros pa bcad // sbros med brda yi tshul du 'di 'bul lo // (1) zhes gsungs gzhiin dbu bcad de gar mdzad pas / kanhapa'i zhal nas / e ma rnal 'byor chen mo gnyis // yon tan mchog thob dge ba ste // rang nyid zhi bde dman pas na // 'gro ba'i don phyr gnas par mdzod // (2) ces gsungs pas / mgo bo slar gsos te rma med par gyur pas / thams cad ngo mtshar skyes nas dbu bcad ma spun gnyis su grags / Kanhapaa'i zhabs 'bring byas nas phyag rgya chen po'i dngos grub thob / lo mang du 'gro don mdzad nas rtogs pa brjod pa la sogs pa mdzad / de nas mkha' spyod du gshegs so // (Dorje 228-231)

Non-Buddhist South Asian *Siddha* Traditions

In the Four Eternal Vedas,
In the study and reading of scripts,
In sacred ashes and in Holy Writs
And muttering of prayers
You will not find the Lord!
Melt with the Heart Inside
And proclaim the Truth.
- Sivavakkiyar, Tamil *siddha* (circa 9th/10th century CE)

I do not exist
The Lord does not exist
The Self does not exist
The Teacher does not exist

Mantras do not exist
Experience does not exist
Tantras do not exist
Doctrines have been destroyed

Rites are just devil's play
Knowledge – a hollow stable
The Lord is but an illusion
Everything is like that

Why and whatfor to study?
Why and whatfor to act?
All set rules and all forms
Have been burnt and annulled

All manifested actions
You see are only Void
Those which in fact do not appear
Will appear in Pure Nothingness

- Akkapey-cittar (Hees 288)

While much of what I have discussed above has been mentioned in the context of the Buddhist *siddhas*, most of it can be equally applied to any analysis of the *siddhas* ‘belonging’ to other traditions. The songs quoted above are by Tamil *Cittars* (*siddhas*), dating somewhere in the late medieval period, and serve as a fine introduction to the commonalities between *siddha* traditions. It is of particular interest to note that Sivavakkiyar opens his song (*patal*) with a dismissal of the Four Vedas – precisely where Saraha begins his critique in his famous *Dohākośa* that I cited at the beginning of this chapter¹⁶. That the second *cittar* I quoted, Akkapey, describes the path and goal in purely negative terms also provides a striking parallel to the language of Saraha’s Adamantine Songs, translated in the latter half of this dissertation. Another similarity worth noting is that in all the *siddha* movements – whether the 63 *Nayanars*, the 9 *Natha Siddhas*, the Tamil *Rasa Siddhas*, the Bengali Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā *Siddhas* or members of any other group, the dominant expressive mode was through poetic verses of song. This is a tradition that remains intact to this day in an assortment of contemporary *siddha* movements from the Bauls of Bengal to the Nāth yogis, to Newari Buddhist *Vajrācaryās*. The dominant forms of these songs and their poetics is explained in Chapter 4, but for the

¹⁶ To me this indicates that the early *siddha* movements were critiquing a common milieu, a point for other researchers to take up...

moment I would like to present another example – this one from an undetermined tradition in Kashmir (she is claimed by Kashmiri Śaivas and Sufis alike) – whose work here iterates a strong sense of anti-ritualism and a clear familiarity with Tantric worldview (how the body and cosmos are not separate, and when awakened both reflect pervasive perfection) and techniques of practice. Her name is Lalla and she dates from the 14th century:

I took the reins of the mind-horse
Through practice, I learned breath control
Then only the orb of moon melted and flowed down into my body
Nothingness merged with nothingness

Cold changes water into ice or snow
Discernment shows the three states though different are not really different
When the sun of consciousness shines,
The plurality is dissolved into oneness
Then the universe appears throughout permeated with Shiva

When teachings disappear, the mantra remains
When the mantra disappears, nothing remains
Nothingness merges with nothingness

Easy to read but difficult to follow
Attaining self-knowledge is subtle and difficult
Absorbed in practice, I forgot the scriptures
Consciousness-bliss I realized (Heehs 294-5)¹⁷

¹⁷ Sun and moon in tantric terms refer to specific yogic techniques involving the subtle body.

I am struck here by many features of Lalla's work, including her use of the relationship of water and ice as an analogy to describe the single nature (one taste) of what appears as multiplicity. Saraha uses precisely the same analogy in the first Adamantine Song translated in this work. I will stop citing poems from other *siddhas* at this point, but the relationship of the contents of their teachings has been, I believe, sufficiently introduced.

To continue at least briefly in the vein of demonstrating similarities between *siddha* traditions, I will turn now to one feature strongly shared by all: the goal is achieved within and incorporating the living body of the practitioner. David Gordon White opens an essay on the 'microcosmology' of the medieval *siddhas* with the following statement: "Le but commun à toutes les pratiques tantriques, dit en termes très généraux, est d'incarner le divin, de l'incorporer en soi et d'obtenir ainsi une expérience corporelle de la divinité" (White 2002 189)¹⁸. While in specifically Buddhist terms, the idea of a deity engages a particularly Buddhist ontology, this is nonetheless a fair statement to make. All *siddha* traditions are 'tantric' in the sense that they conceive of the locus of practice and transformation to be the body. While the number and name of such features as channels, winds, drops and energy centers (*cakras*) of the subtle body change from tradition to tradition (and sometimes within traditions – the number of *cakras* for example varies from one Buddhist tantra to the next), the basis of transformation and its relationship to the universe at large is consistent.

¹⁸ The goal common to all Tantric practice, in very general terms, is to embody the divine, to incorporate it into oneself and have an embodied experience of the deity.

Interestingly, one of the sites where the cross-fertilization of *siddha* cultures makes itself evident, is in lists of Adepts' names as they are presented by the various traditions. The amazing proliferation of names common to many different lists is painstakingly detailed by David Gordon White in *The Alchemical Body*, his 1996 of alchemical *siddha* traditions in medieval South Asia. I will not repeat his work here, but draw out one comparison to illustrate my point. There are reputed to be 9 Nāth *siddhas* who are traditionally looked to as the basis of the Nāth movement. First on the list is generally Matsyendra-nath, whose name some conflate with both Mina-nāth and Luipa (White 91). Minapa and Luipa – though each having their own biography in the *Lives of the 84 Mahāsiddhas* – nevertheless both appear there, and depending on the explanation one receives, the founder of the Nāths is one of these two *Mahāsiddhas*, claimed by the Buddhists as well. Second on the Nāth's list is Gorakh-nāth, or Goraksa, another *siddha* also claimed by the Buddhists in their famous list of 84. In fact, these two appear on *siddha* lists belonging to numerous traditions, frequently alongside such names as Nāgārjuna¹⁹.

To turn our attention now to some of the distinctions between Adepts, I will now briefly examine the goal of the transformation sought by the *siddhas*. The mundane *siddhis*, or 'accomplishments', are more or less consistent between schools – from the power of flight, to being able to enlarge, shrink or multiply one's physical form, to invisibility to the power to transfer one's consciousness to the body of any recently deceased sentient being, there is a seemingly endless list of possibilities. As far as the 'ultimate' aim goes,

¹⁹ For a detailed account of the 'cross-indexing' between *siddha* lists, please see Chapter 4 in White's *The Alchemical Body* (pp. 78-122).

however, things begin to change. For Buddhist *siddhas*, there is only one ultimate *siddhi*: full awakening. For many other South Asian *siddha* movements, however, achieving immortality – *jivanmukti* – is the ultimate goal. The *Rasa Siddhas*, for example, are another group of adepts who are traced back to the medieval period. ‘*Rasa*’ is a complex term. White writes:

Since the time of the Vedas, *rasa* – the fluid element found in the universe, sacrifice, and human beings – has been more or less identified by Indians with the fount of life. All fluids, including vital fluids in humans, plant resins, rain, the waters, and the sacrificial oblation, are so many manifestations of *rasa*. (White 1996 4)

The *Rasa Siddhas* are basically alchemists, expanding the substance of *rasa* to include such minerals as sulphur, mica and mercury. Through transforming the minerals, the yogin’s body would also be transformed, refined and eventually liberated from the cycle of birth and death by achieving immortality. While this technique was refined and developed by the *Rasa Siddhas*, it was not their invention. White explains:

Within the Indian medical science of Ayurveda, the term employed for the prestigious body of techniques devoted to rejuvenation therapy is *rasayana*, “the path of *rasa*,” of which an important component consists in the application of herbal remedies, inherited in part from the *Atharva Veda*. This same term, *rasayana*, is also used by the *Rasa Siddhas* to designate their alchemical “Work in two parts,” with its dual emphasis on transmutation and bodily transubstantiation. In this alchemical context, *rasa* is a term for the fluid metal mercury, the mineral hierophany of the vital seed of phallic god Siva. (White 1996 13-14)

I do not wish to branch out too far into the systems and goals of the Rasa Siddhas or any others – it is my intention to merely show how once one more than scratches the surface, the diversity between *siddha* traditions makes itself apparent.

The Importance of the Indian *Siddhas* in the Tibetan Context

Now that the introduction to the Buddhist *Mahāsiddhas* is complete, I would like to turn my attention to one more issue – namely, why it is that the 84 Indian *Mahāsiddhas* are so important in the Tibetan context. As mentioned early-on in this chapter, Abhayadatta's *Lives of the 84 Mahāsiddhas* is something of a mysterious text, as there are no extant traces of it in any 'Indian' context. In any case, the tradition of believing it to be a text originally written in Sanskrit is alive and well, and the biographies/hagiographies it contains are read and revered across the multiple lineages and sub-schools of Tibetan Buddhism. In his Foreword to James B. Robinson's translation of Abhayadatta's text, Tarthang Tulku writes: "The siddha tradition could, in many ways, be considered the foundation of Tibetan Buddhism, for the siddhas and their lives provide us with a central vision of the Vajrayana teachings, the way to live in perfect freedom" (Robinson xi). While his assertion that the siddha tradition is the foundation of Tibetan Buddhism is perhaps rather overstated, it does underline its importance.

There are two factors at work here: one, that the *siddha* traditions must be traceable to an 'Indian' source; and two, that the transmission of their stories and teachings provide access to potential awakening here and now. These two factors are linked. The desire to trace a line of teachings to an 'Indian' source is not one based simply on a pedantic need

to attribute everything worthwhile to the Buddha. It is true that Buddhism, as an institution, is a system where innovation is not looked upon as a good thing. For something to be authentic, it should be trace-able back to a guaranteed 'enlightened' source. But this does not solely apply to information, teachings, or texts – this also applies to something called a 'transmission', or realization itself, which is supposed to be directly passed on from master to disciple. Being able to trace one's received teachings – including secret teaching and transmissions – to an authentic 'source' that stands outside geographical and temporal boundaries is crucial both to one's confidence as a disciple and credentials as a Guru. Thus, a connection to 'Indian-ness' and the potential to awaken are linked when one is discussing the *siddhas*. Robinson writes:

As Buddhism passed into Tibet, the criterion for a valid religious doctrine was considered to be its connection with the Indian doctrines of the Buddha as carried on by those whose understanding was like a Buddha. Living examples of what it meant to be successful in practice, the *siddhas*, like all of the great teachers of Buddhism, preserved the doctrine by embodying it themselves; they transmitted a living lineage. (Robinson 3)

In general, the principal lineages of Tibetan Buddhism establish their authenticity by being able to connect present teachers and teachings back an acceptable source – whether that be the historical Buddha, Śākyamūni; or a figure like Saraha or Nāgārjuna. The Karma Kagyü school is intimately connected with Saraha (as explained in detail in Chapter 1); while, for example, the Sakya school associates itself closely with the tradition of Virupa. Depictions of one or all of the Great Adepts frequent the altars and walls of Tibetan *Lha Khangs* (temples), devotees flock to empowerments and initiations into the specific instructions of the various *Mahāsiddhas*, and the old haunts of the Great

Adepts remain important pilgrimage sites. In truth, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of the Great Adepts in the Tibetan context.

I must admit, however, that I find what can only be referred to as their ‘canonization’ a perplexing issue. On the one hand, for example, we have a figure like Saraha who is celebrated widely for his anti-institutional stance, his wild behaviour, his naturalness and authenticity, for his beautiful spontaneous songs on the nature of mind. Devotion to his life, presence and work is so developed, however, that he has, in fact, been made the head of a rather rigidly hierarchical school of Tibetan Buddhism, his teachings on naturalness and authenticity have been rigorously systematized, and his beautiful spontaneous songs are for the most part read in Tibetan or increasingly English, as they are unavailable in their original language, meter or melody. The question of what constitutes spontaneity is one I will explore further in Chapter 3, in my discussion of the Great Seal, but at the same time I have learned to accept the apparent contradictions that appear in a study of the *siddhas* as par for the course.

Conclusion

This chapter covers a lot of territory. The *siddhas* have a long and complex history that weaves in and out of various religious traditions and social contexts, giving them a lot of common ground and a lot of differences. From a basic discussion of the initial context of the *siddhas*, to a detailed examination of the doctrines and historical setting of the

siddhas considered to be specifically Buddhist, I trust my analysis of the Buddhist *siddhas* is satisfactorily nuanced and complete. While my discussion of other *siddha* traditions, such as the Nāths, Nayanars, and Rasasiddhas does not provide an in-depth study of those particular traditions, it is simply my aim to bring them into the fold of my discussion of Buddhist *siddhas* far enough that their close relationship should be apparent to the reader. Finally, by demonstrating how very important the *siddhas* are to the traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, the relevance of a detailed study of Saraha to any contemporary evaluation of Tibetan Buddhism should be at least moderately apparent.

Chapter 3

Saraha and the Great Seal

Having established the context out of which Saraha emerged, and to which he currently belongs, in the previous two chapters, what follows will lay down a framework for understanding the ‘content’ of the works I have translated. The three ‘Adamantine Songs’ describe in form and content the Great Seal as ground, path and fruit. While I believe the three songs predominantly detail the Great Seal *view* of the innate (*sahaja / lhan cig skyes pa*), they also bring up aspects of practice and attainment that will be discussed in this and the subsequent chapter. This chapter provides a description of the Great Seal as it can be understood from Saraha’s work, along with a discussion of the structure of the Adamantine Songs and some of the key terms relating to the Great Seal that appear in them.

Form

“Oh! In the Great Seal are present body, speech and mind, the epitome of fruition.”

(Body Treasury 36)

It is difficult to find somewhere to begin a discussion of something akin to ‘doctrine’ in the Adamantine Songs of Saraha. To do so requires assuming or imposing some structure on his work that will necessarily be antithetical to his message. One must, however, attempt to get a grip or establish a foothold somewhere, no matter how provisional. What follows ought to be read as a strategic formulation designed to bring

one aspect of Saraha's work into focus for the specific purpose of this discussion of the Great Seal. This formulation is contingent on this particular discussion and I hope will not be taken as a reification of the Great Seal as it is invoked in the Adamantine Songs.

One may with relative ease broadly structure the Adamantine Songs into three parts, based on the titles themselves: body treasury (Sanskrit: *kāyakośa*; Tibetan: *sku'i mdzod*), speech treasury (Sanskrit: *vāḱkośa*; Tibetan: *gsungs gi mdzod*) and mind treasury (Sanskrit: *cittakośa*; Tibetan: *thugs kyi mdzod*). Body, speech and mind are referred to as the 'three doors' and refer to the three spheres of activity of human beings, ranging from the gross to the subtle. Reflecting both that range of levels of materiality and the range of lengths of the songs themselves (the body treasury weighs in at 513 lines; the speech treasury at 192 or 193 lines, depending on the edition; and the mind treasury is a slender 105), we can read the body treasury as the extensive discussion, the speech treasury as the middle-length discussion, and the mind treasury as the condensed discussion.

In addition to referring directly to the three doors, this trinity can also be read as a slightly more abstract reference to the three bodies (Sanskrit: *trikāya*; Tibetan: *sku gsum*) doctrine, reflecting again levels of materiality and subtlety of the transformation body (Sanskrit: *nirmāṇkāya*; Tibetan: *sprul sku*), enjoyment body (Sanskrit: *sambhogakāya*; Tibetan: *longs sku*) and the truth body (Sanskrit: *dharmakāya*; Tibetan: *chos sku*). In brief, the three bodies of the Buddha equally express his awakening but do so according to the needs and capacities of beings. Similarly, the three Adamantine Songs express the

Great Seal, but do so in graded levels of subtlety and detail. For example, a quick comparison of the opening verse of each of the three songs is sufficient to get a taste.

The Body Treasury opens with:

Oh! The long-haired ones who grasp at self and agent,
The Brahmins, Jainas, Dagapas¹,
The materialists who accept a real basis for things -
Claiming to be omniscient, they lack self-knowledge.
You will be deceived by this, and will be distant from the path of liberation.
(verse 1)

This passage is, for Saraha, uncharacteristically clear and yet typical of the Body Treasury. It is evident what topic is being addressed – the insufficient insight of adherents of other schools and religions – and its result: deception and non-liberation of the practitioner. Compare this to the first verse from the Speech Treasury:

Oh! The highest *samādhi* pervades [all] practice with one taste,
Authentic and inauthentic thoughts are abandoned because of wandering in
Samsāra.
Thatness is immutable, beginning from grasping appearance and emptiness.
[Once] everything has arisen as the nature of the *Dharmadhātu*, one abides in
dissolution. (verse 1)

Here the reader/listener is struck at the beginning with a heady taste of the Great Seal: one taste, thatness as equivalent to appearance and emptiness, abiding in what arises as the very nature of the ultimate – the *Dharmadhātu*. One enters this treasury at the level of non-duality itself, dispensing with the relatively developed introduction to the ideas of

¹ The meaning of ‘Dagapa’ is unclear. It could be a corruption of a *Carvaka*, the materialist school referred to on the next line; or it could be a reference to people who believe in the doctrine of momentariness (*da ga* means moment). P and N provide the alternative reading ‘*Sang ga pa*’ but that has no meanings at all.

the Body Treasury. In an already rarefied atmosphere that is not easily accessible, the third song, the Mind Treasury, sets out with an even more abstract verse:

The pristine wisdom which is the innate nature [of] all sentient beings,
That itself is the experience of self.
That itself is knowledge, ignorance, illuminating apperception;
[As a] lamp illuminates the dark, the self-illumination of the self is the
discrimination of the self. (verse 1)

This Adamantine Song opens with a direct reference to the pristine innate nature of all sentient beings, a counter intuitive statement about self as though it is somehow existent and ignorance as equal to apperception, and finally a densely packed and complex metaphor. The concision and intensity is apparent from the outset, and mirrors well the connotations of both mind and truth body. While the opening of the Speech Treasury was also complex, it at least made some reference to a moderately concrete phenomenon: Samsara. Here, in the Mind Treasury, all boundaries have been removed and all hopes of understanding through discursive thought must be abandoned.

An examination of how the term Great Seal is used in the three songs also helps to illustrate this point. In the Body Treasury, for example, the term 'Great Seal' appears no less than 43 times. In the vast majority of the references, it is used as a referent which has positive qualities, and is something which is attainable. It has some form or appearance, in other words, and can be said to correspond to the qualities of the transformation body. I will use some examples to illustrate, lest one be tempted to believe that Saraha makes anything really clear: unchangeable great bliss (7); the complete result (7); the innate nature within sentient beings (14); experienced as ocean

and space (20); the equanimity of all phenomena (34); the highest union (63); and instantaneous full awakening (72). These are only a few of many possible examples. While they are not exactly easily graspable, they use distinctly positive language and that is worth noting.

This may be compared to uses of 'Great Seal' in the Speech Treasury, where it appears 17 times. Here, as with description of the Enjoyment Body, the language becomes more ephemeral. Here the Great Seal is 'described' by means of the contours of what it is not: its aspects are innumerable (2); liberated in the non-dual sphere (16); free of essential characteristics (20); unsullied apperception (31) and so forth. While there are a couple of instances of positive attribution (the resulting state (37); it has a single taste (14)), by and large this song refers to the Great Seal indirectly through negation and the absence of particular qualities.

In the Mind Treasury, the term hardly appears at all (three times). I would argue that the Great Seal pervades the three songs thoroughly in any case, and in the Mind Treasury which is composed at the most subtle and condensed level (analogous to the Truth Body), Saraha is beyond even needing to making any references to a thing called 'Great Seal'. He writes, "The Great Seal is without thought, beyond the intellect" (5); "The Great Seal, separate from realization, is the basis of everything" (15); and "The Great Seal is free of grasping" (16). These are the only mentions of the direct subject of the song.

This brief analysis of the appearances of the term 'Great Seal' in the three songs illustrates well the graded moods of the three songs as body, speech and mind; and emanation, enjoyment and truth bodies.

Formless

As it is popularly understood, the 'Great Seal' describes the ultimate nature of reality, and recognizing it is the goal of Tibetan Buddhist practice. One can say it has broadly three aspects: ground, path and fruition. As the ground, it is the basis of everything, the ultimate nature of reality. As the path, it describes a system of practices devised to bring practitioners to full awakening in a single lifetime. As the fruition, it is the term used to describe the state of ultimate awakening. The path aspect will take some shape in the later discussion of the Great Seal in Tibetan traditions. In Saraha's work, however, all references to anything as concrete or systematized as a path is a topic for mockery and subject to disdain, as it is abundantly clear that in his teachings anything that inhibits spontaneous, natural awakening and realization is an obstacle². This general point has been discussed at length in Chapter 2, so I will not retread the same ground here. The point is simply to show that Great Seal as 'path' is not something that evidences itself directly in Saraha's work. What can be discerned are ideas concerning the nature of the Great Seal as Basis and Fruition. Since there is nothing narrative about Saraha's work, strategies must be devised to discuss any of the content. Here I propose to begin with a

² I hesitate to draw any conclusions from his work about how he would actually instruct a group of disciples. In general, *siddhas* give direct instruction to one disciple at a time based on the strengths and weaknesses of that particular individual. As is discussed somewhat in chapter 2 and later in this chapter, spontaneity as an awakened quality is something that must be cultivated.

discussion of the most common analogies, and move on to a discussion of the key terms and related concepts.

It seems fitting to begin this discussion with two quotations from the Adamantine Songs that will put this into an appropriately destabilized context. The Speech Treasury contains the following line: “The Great Seal is the simile (metaphor) which pervades everything” (35). This very nicely summarizes the simultaneous omnipresence and elusiveness of the Great Seal. Compared to the following line which also pertains to the Great Seal from the Mind Treasury, however, it becomes rather confusing: “By being without similes, it is free of objects that can be characterized” (19). Typical of Saraha, one may choose an angle from which to interpret the text, but at some point it is pretty much guaranteed that he will contradict your conclusions. At any rate, let us begin with the discussion of his devices.

One of the most common similes to be found in the Adamantine Songs is that of blazing – flames – appearing most often in the context of the Great Seal and its qualities being likened to a lamp and its qualities. In the Body Treasury, for example, there is a passage that compares body, speech and mind to a lamp, cotton and oil. When their true nature (the Great Seal) is realized, “they are self-illuminating like a lamp” (3). The natural state is again later described as being “self-revealing like an illuminating lamp” (40). Later in the same song, the effect of the dawning of profound wisdom (*prajñā/ye shes*) is described as pervading a sentient being’s entire experience, “Just as fire, blazing on its own, spreads through tinder” (108). Similarly, the process by which mind discovers its

own nature is described, “Since it illuminates its own nature, thought is like a lamp” (109). In the Speech Treasury, the only reference to the lamp simile is a negative one, in which the ignorance resulting from dualistic conceptions makes one unable to perceive the nature of the Great Seal: “Even if a lamp is lit, it cannot possibly appear to those who are blind” (3). Though drawn in a more opaque manner than in the previous two songs, the Mind Treasury also features the lamp simile. For example, “[As a] lamp illuminates the dark, the self-illumination of the self is the discrimination of the self” (1). Further, he writes: “Like the sun which is the colour of a burning lamp, / When apperception itself blazes, grasping thoughts are exhausted” (4). And finally he compares the innate (which is here synonymous with the Great Seal) to a lamp which is difficult to transcend (6). The main qualities of the lamp, therefore, that can be equally applied to the innate nature of beings (which is the Great Seal) is that it is self-illuminating (which in fact does have implications for the path) and all-consuming.

Different qualities can be drawn from the similes of the element known as H²O in its various states (water, ice, etc.) and forms (stream, river, ocean, etc.). Though curiously absent from the Speech and Mind Treasuries, water similes pervade the Body Treasury providing some of the most beautiful passages from the songs. For example, one line describes the experience of the innate as “Bliss indivisible, like water [mixing] into water” (22). A strikingly beautiful passage from the same song describes how the innate inheres in all sentient beings: “Pervading all sentient beings it abides like moisture in water, / In continuity which is like the uninterruptedness of the water of a flowing stream” (40). Demonstrating how thoughts are neither separate from nor identical to

mind, he writes, “With the condition of wind, from a clear ocean / The ripples of water and waves suddenly arise; / However, they are indivisible from the ocean” (69). Another favourite passage of mine reads:

First the experience of appearance and emptiness occurs,
Like recognizing water even when it appears as ice.
Second, without obstructing the appearance of thought,
Emptiness arises as non-dual from the bliss.
Like the state of ice melting into water,
Thought and non-thought are dissolved in the unborn.
Since everything is not distinguished, it is one in the great bliss.
This is like the ice being melted into water. (103-4)

There are more examples of the use of water as an analogy in the Adamantine Songs, but I believe the above examples suffice to show how it is used. I will also mention here that water appears as the principal metaphor in his King Doha (*Dohākośa nāma Caryā gīti do ha mdzod ces bya ba spyod pa'i glu*), fulfilling the same multiple functions as it does in the Adamantine Songs. From the opening verse, water is key:

Just as when unmoving water struck by the wind,
Becomes stirred by waves,
So Saraha appears to the King
In many ways, although he is one man³.

Continuing with analogies like, “Although there are many rivers they become one in the ocean / And though there are many lies, [they will be] conquered by one truth⁴”, the King Dohā has another ‘water’ verse worth quoting in full:

³ ji ltar rlung gis brgyab pas mi g.yo ba'i / chu la g.yo pas rba rlabs rnam su 'gyur / de ltar rgyal pos mda' snun snang ba yang / gcig nyid na yang rnam pa sna tshogs byed (verse 1)

Just as a cloud [comes] from the ocean, and
However much rain the earth accepts,
They stay the same, like the sky,
Without increasing or decreasing⁵.

That the same chemical composition can appear as a solid, a liquid and as vapour (clouds, for example), demonstrates how one cannot trust form to indicate the nature of something; in fact, it points to the absence of one natural state of anything. Similarly, he uses water to demonstrate how flowing, existing as waves, rain or stillness are not characteristics of water but instead products of the conditions surrounding it. The analogous states of peace and agitation experienced as mind should therefore similarly be understood as products of ambient conditions and not indicative of the nature of mind itself.

Although my treatment of similes and analogies used in the Adamantine Songs has not been exhaustive (I left out sky, lotus-flowers, and number of animals), it provides sufficient exposure to some of Saraha's literary devices to give readers a taste of what is to come in his work.

The next discussion of how the Great Seal is expressed and understood in Saraha's work, is through an examination of a few key terms that pervade his Adamantine Songs, some of which have not been discussed until now. 'The innate' (Sanskrit: *sahaja*; Tibetan:

⁴ chu bo sna tshogs pa yang rgya mtsho gcig nyid dang / brdzun pa dum dag kyang bden pa gcig gis 'joms (verse 4)

⁵ ji ltar chu 'dzin gyis ni rgya mtsho las / chu blangs nas ni sa gzhi gang byas kyang / de ni mnyams nam mkha' dag dang mnyam / 'phel ba med cing 'grib pa dag kyang med (verse 5)

lhan cig skye pa) and ‘one-taste’ (Sanskrit: *samarasa*; Tibetan: *ro cig/ro snyoms*) were discussed at length in Chapter 2, but I will nonetheless briefly examine them again as they appear in Saraha’s context. As mentioned earlier, the innate appears at important junctures in the Adamantine Songs, although it does not appear with the same frequency as the term Great Seal, for example. It is synonymous with the Great Seal and also carries with it connotation of Great Bliss. What I would like to discuss here in particular are the implications of non-duality inherent in the term as it appears in not only the Adamantine Songs but in the Treasury of Dohā (Dohā trilogy) as well. Where it appears in the songs it is always being used to point to the inseparability of not only self and other, experience and phenomena, but crucially and ultimately to *Samṣāra* and *Nirvāṇa*. If we analyse the term this may become more clear. The Sanskrit ‘*sahaja*’ is derived from ‘*jati*’ – to be born – and ‘*saha*’, which means ‘together with’. It connotes a sense of things coming into being simultaneously with each other. This sense is equally present in the Tibetan term. ‘*Skye pa*’ means ‘born’ or ‘arisen’, and ‘*lhan gcig*’ means ‘together with’, or ‘spontaneously’. What those things are that are simultaneously arising are appearance and emptiness; *Samṣāra* and *Nirvāṇa*. In other words, everything is completely pervaded by every other thing, and for one who is awakened such as Saraha, the experience of that indivisibility is Great Bliss. In the Body Treasury, Saraha writes of the ignorant: “Ignorant of suchness, the space-like equality of appearance and emptiness, / They turn their backs on the innate nature” (2). We may even draw a parallel between the innate and the Buddha-nature as in the following passage: “The Great Seal exists as the innate within sentient beings” (14). The Mind Treasury actually begins with a reference to the innate: “Oh! The pristine wisdom which is the innate nature! / That itself

is the experience of self” (1). In the ‘People Doha’ (as it is known), we find the following: “One may abandon the innate [and] / cultivate *nirvāṇa*, / But although you may be rent with joy, / You won’t accomplish even the first [step toward the] ultimate⁶”. Further he writes of experiencing the innate when all attachment has ceased: “When thoughts will stop / [and] the fetters of the body will be cut, / then, [where there are experienced] the innate and one-taste, / Then there is no more low-born caste and no more Brahmin⁷”. Realization, non-duality and the one taste of bliss are what all references to the innate have in common.

Now I will turn my attention to a pair of terms that have yet to be discussed: non-thought (*dran med/dran pa med pa*) and the unborn (*skye med/skye pa med pa*). As may be gleaned from the terms themselves, neither is particularly easy to discuss directly. That is the nature of negation, but I won’t let it inhibit me, either. *Dran med* is often seen paired with *dran pa*, or ‘thought’. The term *dran pa* is actually difficult to translate as it has many possible definitions, among them memory, recollection, thought and consciousness. Herbert Guenther innovated the term ‘mentation’ as a translation, which I do believe captures well the sense of what is taking place when we talk about *dran pa* and *dran med*, but which is at the same time rather too obscure and technical sounding to work in poetry. As it appears in his songs, *dran pa* and *dran med* do not mean memory in the sense of, “I remember how to ride a bicycle”. Nor does it mean thought in the sense of fully-formed discursive thoughts that one may have or not have. Its sense is of something

⁶ lhan cig skyes bral gzhan gang gis / mya ngan ‘das gang sgom byed pa / de dga’ gas kyang don dam ni / cig shos ‘grub par mi ‘gyur ro // (verse 13)

⁷ gang tshe yid ni nye bar ‘gags gyur na / lus kyi ‘ching ba mnam par ‘chad par ‘gyur / gang tshe lhan cig skyes dang ro mnyam pa / de tshe dman pa’i rigs dang bram ze med // (verse 46)

rather more subtle, referring to habitual processes of the mind's discursiveness. Thus, while we may translate *dran pa* as 'thought' (as I have chosen to do), we cannot say that *dran med* means 'no thought', or 'not thought', or 'not thinking' as somehow the opposite of 'thought'. Instead, I translate *dran med* as 'non-thought', referring not to a silencing of thought processes, but a radical de-habitation of the patterns of thought that traditionally lead to cognitive categories such as 'self', 'other', 'table', 'coffee', 'suffering' and 'nirvāṇa'. 'Non-thought,' therefore, is more of a retraining, or rerouting of habitual thought, rather than a silencing of it. This will perhaps be easier to grasp if we look at some examples. The Mind Treasury, for example, provides a passage which shows that *dran med* should not be taken as being simply the absence of thought: "Non-thought and non-arising are like reflections in a mirror" (17). In other words, it's not that nothing is actually arising or being perceived, it's that 'those things' are insubstantial and empty in nature. In the Speech Treasury we read, "Because of the illumination of non-thought, benefiting self and other is not two" (2). Again, if mental processes can be characterized as non-thought, in that the habitual dualistic tendencies have been overwritten, there is no longer a sense of self and other, in terms of harm or welfare. To demonstrate the complex relationship between thought and non-thought, I will close this section with a verse from the Body Treasury that illustrates it well: "From the natural liberation of thought, non-thought arises freely. / Recognizing whatever arises as mere appearances, non-thought is trained." (39)

The term that I translate as 'unborn' (*skye med / skye pa med pa / ma skye*) can be approached along the same lines. In other words, it is not the opposite of 'born' or

‘arisen’ (*skye pa*), which logically would then refer to either or both of nothing or permanent entities. Rather, it concerns how an awakened mind can be non-discriminating (*mi byed*). In the Body Treasury, for example, we find the following, “In the sphere of the unborn nature, the awakened mind does not discriminate” (12). The sphere of the unborn nature is not a distinct locus, it denotes rather a mode of perception of an awakened being, referred to in at times even contradictory ways in the work of Saraha. For example, in the Speech Treasury we find:

Although the own-nature of the authentically real appears due to the conditions of arising,

The unborn is beyond [any] object [and is] not experienced.

Authentically real and unreal, meditative equipoise, etc. are all indivisible (*‘byed pa med*)

That is the object which is non-thought, unborn:

The Great Seal is always free of essential characteristics. (19)

Here the unborn is characterized at once as ‘beyond any object’ and ‘the object’. Clearly something is intended here that not graspable by means of ordinary thought. Later in the same song, Saraha tells us, “From the realization of the King of Physicians (ie. Buddha) dawns the unborn” (43); a deceptively simple utterance. In fact at this point it is apparent that as something which dawns it cannot be said to be nothing. Furthermore, it dawns from the Buddha’s realization, hinting that perhaps perceiving it means accessing the Buddha’s realization, not that the unborn literally comes out of it.

Conclusion

This has by no means been an exhaustive study of Saraha's Great Seal. To embark on such a work would constitute another dissertation in itself. However, by demonstrating with concrete references to the Adamantine Songs and the Doha trilogy how structure and content mirror (even embody?) Saraha's Great Seal as basis and fruition, I hope I have at least provided some road signs that will be useful in reading my translation of his songs. It is time now to shift the focus onto the Tibetan contexts of the Great Seal, as that is where Saraha's Great Seal left a deep foot-print and where in the contemporary context it lives on vibrantly.

Chapter 4

Tibetan Traditions of the Great Seal

This chapter is a discussion of the place of Mahāmudrā within the four major traditions of Tibetan Buddhism with a special focus on the Kagyü-pa school. Included is a description of some of the key concepts included in Kagyü teachings of the Great Seal, an exploration of aspects of the two (sometimes three) Great Seal paths – the *Sūtra*, *Tantra*, and sometimes *Anuttara-tantra*, and finally an examination of how the Great Seal is also traditionally divided in the three aspects of view, meditation and conduct.

The Nyingma and the Great Seal

The Great Seal has a place (multiple loci, actually) in each of the four principal lineages of Tibet – the Nyingma, the Kagyü, the Sakya and the Geluk. While the Nyingma school has its roots in the earliest transmission of Indian Buddhism to Tibet in the 7th/8th century – long before the transmission of Great Seal teachings to Tibet in the 11th century – as it has developed over the centuries, the Nyingmas and Kagyüs have developed an extremely close relationship. In fact, it is not uncommon for high Nyingma and Kagyü teachers to be joint lineage-holders of the two traditions, often with one *tülku* (*sprul sku*; reincarnated Lama) simultaneously holding the transmission of the Great Seal and the Great Perfection (*rDzogs pa chen po*) – the highest teachings of the Nyingmas. One of the best-known examples of this is the case of the Third Karmapa (1284-1339), Rangjung Dorje, who in his lifetime preserved both transmissions. Another link between the Great

Seal and the Great Perfection is something of a polemical one: proponents of each have been known to claim that, as the highest possible teachings, it is either identical or superior to the other¹, but I won't detail that particular struggle here.

The Kagyü, Sakya, and Geluk lineages together make up what is referred as the Sarma, or 'New Translation' schools. All three identify the Great Seal as the highest teachings of their schools. Though within each tradition there is some variety with respect to both the theoretical content and the practices taught, the name and general idea is nonetheless the same. The Kagyü Mahāmudrā tradition is what I will predominantly focus on below, so I will give it only the briefest of introductions: the Kagyü Great Seal transmission originates with Vajradhāra's (rDo-rje 'chang) transmission to Saraha, is passed through generations of Indian Mahāsiddhas, and eventually travels to Tibet with Marpa in the 11th century. From Marpa it is transmitted to Milarepa, and from Mila to his two key disciples, Rechungpa and Gampopa. Gampopa synthesizes (one may even say sanitizes) the Great Seal transmission with his Kadampa teachings, and that is the transmission that is passed along as the Karma Kagyü Great Seal to this day.

¹ For an example of a 'Mahamudra-supremacist' view: "The Mahamudra that the Buddha gave to his closest students, came to Tibet twice. The first time it was introduced by the great Guru Rinpoché [Padmasambhava] around 750 A.D.... About 1000 A.D., the Mahamudra came to Tibet again, with the teacher Marpa. The first time it was called Dzog Chen...; now the name was Chag Chen." (Nydahl 12). For the 'Dzog-chen supremacist' view, I draw an example from Tulku Urgyen Rinpoché, who explains that each level of Mahamudra (sutra, tantra, essence) corresponds to a level of Dzog-chen – except, of course, for the highest level. He writes, "Essence Mahamudra is the same as Dzogchen, except that it doesn't include Tögal" (Tulku Urgyen 33). Tögal, to use Ray's definition, "addresses what reality is like from the point of view of the nondual awareness, in other words, how reality manifests itself when one is resting in the primordial nature" (Ray, 301). While these are – I will admit – quite randomly selected passages, they do represent the normative view of both traditions. As the three 'New Translation' (gSar-ma) schools (Kagyü, Sa skya, dGe lugs) all claim the Great Seal as the highest teachings, they can easily afford to appropriate the Great Perfection tradition as an earlier iteration of their own transmission. The rNying-mapas, however, defining and authenticating themselves against the other three schools (a political/sectarian issue with a long history and requiring more space than I can spare at the moment), have a vested interest in showing the unique-ness and superiority of their own highest teachings.

The Geluk Great Seal

The Geluk-pas, while also showing great reverence toward Saraha (as demonstrated in Chapter 1 by the behaviour of the first Panchen Lama, Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen), have their own Great Seal lineage account which does not formally include him. While Geluk references to the Great Seal go back as far as Tsongkhapa, the distinctive lineage and teachings of the Geluk-pa Great Seal were formally established by the first Panchen Lama². While excluding Saraha as a formal member, it does also begin with Vajradhāra, move second to a bodhisattva (Mañjuśrī, Tsongkhapa's tutelary deity), and then onto the great Geluk master Tsongkhapa. The following list is referred to as the oral lineage of the dGa' lden Oral Great Seal tradition, and details the Geluk Mahāmudrā practice lineage:

1. Vajradhāra / rDo rje 'chang
2. Mañjuśrī / 'Phags pa 'Jam dpal
3. Tsongkhapa (rJe btsun bLo bzang grags pa) (1357-1419)
4. Tokden Jampe! Gyatso (rTogs ldan 'Jam dpal rgya mtsho) (1356-1428)
5. Baso Chökyi Gyaltsen (Ba so Chos kyi rgyal mtshan) (1402-1473)
6. Drupchen Chokyi Dorje (Grub chen Chos kyi rdo rje)
7. Ensapa (dbEnsapa; bLo bzang Don yod grub pa) (1504/1505-1566)
8. Khedrup Sangye Yeshé (mKhas grub Sangs rgyas ye shes) (1525-1590/1)
9. Panchen Losang Chokyi Gyaltsen (bLo bzang Chos kyi rgyal mtshan) (1570 -1662)
10. Drupchen Gendun Gyaltsen (Grub chen dGe 'dun rgyal mtshan)
11. Drup-pe Gyaltsen Dzinpa (Grub pa'i rGyal mtshan 'dzin pa)

² When Tsongkhapa refers to the Great Seal, it is in the context of the four seals (action, wisdom, commitment, great – these are explained at length below), while the first Panchen Lama's presentation was the first Geluk-pa formulation of the Great Seal as referring to a specific instruction on basis, path and fruition.

12. Gyüchen Könchok Gyaltsen (rGyud chen dKon mchog rgyal mtshan) (1612-1687)
13. Panchen Losang Yeshé (rJe btsun bLo bzang ye shes) (1663-1737)
14. Jetsun Losang Trinlé (rJe btsun bLo bzang 'phrin las)
15. Drupchok Losang Namgyal (Grub mchog bLo bzang nam rgyal)
16. Drinchen Yeshé Tsenchen (Drin can Yeshes mtshan can; Tshe mchog gling Yongs 'dzin Yeshes rgyal mtshan)
17. Jetsun Ngawang Jampa (rJe btsun Ngag dbang byams pa) (1682-1762)
18. Panchen Palden Yeshé (Pan chen dPal ldan ye shes) (1738-1780)
19. Khedrup Ngawang Dorje (mKhas grub Ngag dbang rdo rje)
20. Jetsun Dharmabhadra (rJe btsun Dharma Bha dra)
21. Yangchen Drup-pe Dorje (dbYangs can Grub pa'i rdo rje)
22. Khedrup Tenzin Tsondru (mKhas grub bsTan 'dzin brtson 'grus)
23. Losang Tsondru Gyaltsen (bLo bzang brTson grus rgyal mtshan)
24. Losang Dönyö Drupa (bLo bzang Don yod grub pa)
25. Jetsun Gelek Gyatso (rJe btsun dGe legs rgya mtsho)
26. Drinchen Ngawang Jampa (Drin can Ngag dbang byams pa)
27. Khechok Jigme Wangpo (mKhas mchog 'Jigs med dbang po)
28. Jetsun Tenpa Drönme (rJe btsun bsTan pa' sgron me)
29. Jetsun Könchog Gyaltsen (rJe btsun dKon mchog rgyal mtshan)
30. Drupchen Ngödrup Raptan (Grub chen dNgos grub rab brtan)
31. Yongzin Gendun Gyatso (Yongs 'dzin dGe 'dun rgya mtsho)
32. Palden Tenpe Nyima (dPal ldan bsTan pa'i Nyi ma)
33. Jetsun Trinlé Gyatso (rJe btsun 'Phrin las rgya mtsho)
34. Drinchen Losang Yeshé (Drin can bLo bzang Ye shes) (H.H. Trijang Rinpoché) (1900/1-1981)
35. Pelwe Trinlé Dame (sPel ba'i 'Phrin las zla med) (H.H. Ling Rinpoché) (1903-1983)
36. Drinchen Tsawe Lama (Drin can rTsa ba'i bla ma) (one's own root guru)

(based on translation in Willis, 99-100³)

Two features which I find rather striking in the Geluk Great Seal lineage, are, first of all, the absence of an Indian link in the chain; and secondly, that there appear to be no common lineage holders between the Gelukpas and the Kagyüpas⁴. Though the two traditions co-existed in Tibet for some five hundred years, they have remained quite distinct. This is, I believe, a rare testament to religious diversity in pre-modern Tibet.

Sakya and Kagyü: Great Seal, Great Controversy

The Sakya Great Seal tradition is carefully guarded one. It is difficult to uncover texts which discuss it openly, though references to (and evidence of) its existence are readily enough found. As with the Geluk and Kagyü schools, for the Sakya the Great Seal is considered to be the highest possible teachings on the nature of mind. What distinguishes the Sakya approach in particular is its strict classification of Great Seal teachings as Tantric – in all the possible senses that entails. For the purposes of a researcher like myself, that means above all that it is secret. One locus where the Sakya Great Seal tradition comes strongly into focus, however, is the site at which it engages with the Kagyü Great Seal – a contested site. The context is a rather heated conflict between the two schools regarding some issues in both practice and philosophy of the Great Seal. I

³ The biographies/hagiographies of rTogs-ldan 'Jam dpal rgya mtsho, Ba so Chos kyi rgyal mtshan, Grub chen Chos kyi rdo rje, bLo bzang Don yod grub pa (dbEnsapa), mKhas grub Sangs rgyas ye shes, and rJe btsun (Panchen) bLo bzang chos rgyan (bLo bzang Chos kyi rgyal mtshan) (numbers 4-9!) have been translated by Janice D. Willis in her insightful work on the dGe-lugs Mahamudra transmission, understood through hagiographies of its lineage holders, *Enlightened Beings: Life Stories from the Ganden Oral Tradition*.

⁴ This is not a conclusive statement. While it is sadly no longer extant, Norzang Gyatso (d.1513) wrote a work entitled *The Lamp Which Illuminates the Single Intention of the Accomplishment of the Kagyu and Geluk Great Seal* (*dka' dge' dgongs pa gcig tu sgrub pa phyag chen gsal ba'i sgron me*).

very briefly mentioned above that Gampopa was responsible for systematizing the Great Seal tradition he received. Less than a hundred years after Gampopa's death, Sakya Pandita Kunga Gyaltsen (1182-1253) - to be referred to hereon as Sapan - took great issue with Gampopa's Great Seal teachings. Examining some of the issues Sapan engaged with will allow us to examine some of the particularities of both traditions in tandem.

In approximately 1232, Sapan wrote a text called *sDom gSum Rab dBye* (available in translation as *A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes*). In it, he attempts to correct what he perceives to be errors in contemporary interpretations of the three Buddhist codes of ethics: the *pratimokṣa* (monastic code, or vows of individual liberation), the bodhisattva code (bodhisattva vows), and the Tantric code (vows of the Vajrayāna). By far the bulk of the text is dedicated to the last category - Tantrism - and it focuses, interestingly, more on correcting what he deems to be improper rather than on explaining the details of Tantric commitments themselves⁵. This fits with the general Sakya approach to Tantra; while all schools of Tantric Buddhism consider some levels of explanation and practice to be secret, the Sakyapas have a penchant for keeping as much private as possible. While detailed analyses of the elements that go into Sapan's critique of Gampopa's *Mahāmudrā* exist⁶, I will only briefly summarize them here after an even briefer summary of Gampopa's innovations.

⁵ I must credit Ulrich Kragh's 1998 Master's thesis with introducing me to many of the ideas that are to follow.

⁶ I refer readers here to Jackson (1982); Kragh (1998).

As heir to a number of different traditions - namely, the Mahāyāna doctrine and monastic discipline of the Kadam-pa (founded by Atīśa in the early 11th century), plus the dual transmission of the so-called 'Six Yogas of Naropa' and the Great Seal from his La ma Milarepa - Gampopa undertook the enormous task of synthesizing and systematizing the entirety of his transmissions. As a highly realized, highly educated monastic, Gampopa was in a good position to manipulate the teachings as he saw fit to be useful to those he was in contact with. Most relevant to our purposes here, he had to devise means for practitioners to achieve enlightenment in one lifetime - attainable only by means of insight into the *Mahāmudrā* - while eliminating the sometimes lengthy process of Tantric initiations that would anyways be inaccessible to monastics, as many of the Tantric means require the ingestion of forbidden or ritually impure substances, and engaging in ritualized sexual intercourse. In other words, he altered what were traditionally considered to be necessary preliminaries to embarking on the Great Seal path, namely, the numerous Tantric initiations and practices. In the *Deb sNgon (Blue Annals)*, it is written:

Now the Venerable Mid-la did not teach the upaya-marga and the Mahamudra separately, but sGam-po-pa used to preach the hidden precepts of the upaya-marga to those only whom he considered fit to receive Tantric Initiations. (On the other hand) he used to bestow the hidden precepts of the Mahamudra on those who were fit to receive the paramitas, though they did not get any (Tantric) initiation.... The understanding of the Mahamudra doctrine was even produced by him in some individuals of weak intellect, poor ones and sinners without delay... It is said since that time the streams of the bKa'-gdams-pas and those of the Mahamudra became united. (Roerich 459-460)

‘Upāya mārga’, or ‘thabs lam’ in Tibetan, literally means “path of skillful means” and is a reference to the very skillful transformative methods of Tantra. What is explained in the above quote, is that the secret methods of the ‘upāya mārga’ Gampopa reserved only for the elite few who were ready to receive them, while the “hidden precepts of the Mahamudra” were taught to anyone who was fit to receive teachings on and practice the path of the Mahayana – what is referred to above as “the parāmitās”. It is in removing the element of tantric initiation from the Great Seal instructions that Gampopa blended the two streams of Kadam and the Great Seal.

Now it was precisely the elimination of the Tantric initiation from the Great Seal transmission that was the basis for Sapan’s critique of the ‘new and improved’ Kagyū Mahamudra. Tantric initiation (*abhiṣeka; dbang*) consists of four levels: vase or outer (*bum dbang*), secret or inner (*gsang dbang*), knowledge-wisdom (*shes rab ye shes dbang*) and word (*tshig dbang*). Each entails a particular outer ritual and effects a particular inner result, a combination of purification and transformation. Each empowers the practitioner to practice a particular meditation, building up in complexity, profundity and efficacy from first to fourth.

In its South Asian context and its initial Tibetan context, the Great Seal would be taught only after a neophyte’s progress through and accomplishment of the four initiations. That Gampopa removed it from that preparatory context was an outrage as far as Sapan was concerned. While according to Sapan’s phrasing, the main thrust of the critique of the practice of allowing people to engage in Tantric practices without having received the

full and proper initiations, Gorampa's (1429-1489) commentary points specifically to an assortment of Kagyü customs (Kragh 45). Sapan himself directly critiques (one may say even insults!) the Kagyü Great Seal practice as systematized by Gampopa in the following passage:

A monk who has no vows, a bodhisattva who has not awakened the will to enlightenment, and a Mantra practitioner who lacks initiation: these three are plunderers of the Buddhist Doctrine. Even if they meditate the Great Seal, they cultivate in meditation only a restriction of the conceptual thought, while they do not understand the Great Seal to be Gnosis derived from the two processes. The Great Seal meditation of the ignorant, it is taught, usually becomes a cause of animal birth. If not that, then they are born in the realm lacking even fine matter, or else they fall into the Disciples' cessation. Even if that meditation may be excellent, it is no more than a Madhyamaka meditation. The latter meditation, while very good in itself, is nevertheless extremely difficult to accomplish. As long as the two accumulations have not been brought to completion, that meditation will not be perfected. To complete the two accomplishments for this, it is taught that 'innumerable aeons' are needed⁷. (Rhoton 116-117)

The 'two developments' he refers to are the development (*bskyed rim*) and completion (*rdzog rim*) stage of Tantric practice. The development stage – for example, generating a visualization of a specific meditation deity, or oneself as that deity – is cultivated on the basis of the first initiation. The completion stage – the dissolution of all appearance into

⁷ *dge sbyong sdom pa med pa dang / rgyal sras sems bskyed ma thob pa / sngags pa dbang bskur med pa gsum / sangs rgyas bstan pa'i chom rkun yin // phyag rgya chen po bsgom na yang / rtog pa kha 'tshom nyid bsgom gyi / rim gnyis las byung ye shes la / phyag rgya chen por mi shes so // blun po phyag rgya che bsgom pa / phal cher dud 'gro'i rgyu ru gsungs / min na gzugs med khams su skye / yang na nyan thos 'gog par ltung // gal te de ni bsgom legs kyang / dbu ma'i bsgom las lhag pa med / dbu ma'i bsgom de bzang mod kyi / 'on kyang 'grub pa shin tu dka' // ji srid tshogs gnyis ma rdzogs pa / de srid bsgom de mthar mi phyin / 'di yi tshogs gnyis rdzogs pa la / bskal pa grangs med dgos par gsungs // (verses 159-163)*

blissful clear light – is cultivated on the basis of the second and third initiations. The two together – recognizing their non-duality – are cultivated on the basis of the fourth. Thus the gist of what Sapan is pointing to above, is the inseparability of authentic Great Seal practice from correct Tantric practice. Acknowledging the effectiveness and authenticity of Mahayana practice (“Madhyamaka meditation”), he points out that that is a multiple-lifetime path. The venom dripping from his words is, I trust, apparent, in his claim that followers of the “fools’ *Mahamudra*” will surely be reborn as animals!⁸ In contrast, Sapan explains:

Our own Great Seal consists of Gnosis risen from initiation and the self-sprung Gnosis that ensures from the meditations of the two processes. Its realization will be attained in this very life if one is skilled in the techniques of Mantra. Besides this, the Buddha did not teach the realization of the Great Seal otherwise. Thus if one is interested in the Great Seal, one should practice in accord with Mantra Vehicle texts⁹.
(Rhoton 117)

Sapan’s attack is honed as he goes on to identify the Kagyü Great Seal teachings with what is generally translated as the White Panacea (*dkar po chig thub*). In itself, this does not constitute a criticism. In the late 12th century, Zhang Rinpoché (Zhang g.yu brag pa brtson ‘grus grags pa) – the founder of a particular lineage of Kagyü Great Seal – himself coined the term as synonymous with *Mahāmudrā*. It is indeed not difficult to find sources explaining that the White Panacea describes the state of *Mahāmudrā*. For instance, Norsang, cited in Tuken’s *Grub mTha’ shel gyi me long* writes “When the

⁸ In Buddhist cosmology, the condition of animals is characterized by stupidity.

⁹ *nged kyi phyag rgya chen po ni / dbang las byung ba’i ye shes dang / rim pa gnyis kyi ting ‘dzin las / ‘byung ba’i rang byung ye shes yin // ‘di yi rtogs pa gsang sngags kyi / thabs la mkhas na tshe ‘dir ‘grub / de las gzhan du phyag rgya che / rtogs pa sangs rgyas kyis ma gsungs // des na phyag rgya chen po la / mos na gsang sngags gzhung bzhin sgrubs //* (verses 164-166)

earlier Kagyü pas called their *mahāmudrā* meditations the White Panacea, their intention was that by producing the essence of the Original Mind, which is great bliss, by that one meditation on reality they would obtain the final fruit¹⁰ (Tuken 155). This passage belongs to a long vindication of Zhang Rinpoché's received transmission and own teachings. Linking his transmission explicitly all the way back to Saraha himself (Tuken 156 ff), by extension he also exculpates Gampopa, whose reputation would later bear the brunt of Sapan's critique. Sapan twisted the Kagyü doctrine of the Great Seal by claiming that 'White Panacea' was in fact the name of the Chinese monk Hvashang Mahāyāna's subitist doctrine, conquered by Kamalaśīla's Indian gradualist approach in the famous bSam yas debate of circa 792. His account is as follows:

After the Chinese tradition was suppressed,
 That of the gradualists was made to flourish.
 Still later, the royal rule itself vanished,
 And some, who based themselves solely
 On texts of the Chinese master's tradition
 Changed the name of his system secretly
 To Great Seal. The present-day Great Seal
 Is virtually [the same as] the Chinese religious system¹¹. (Rhoton 118-119)

To coin a rather colloquial expression to describe the above passage, *them's fightin' words!*¹² Sapan's version of that now legendary moment in Tibetan Buddhist history¹³ is

¹⁰ *Kagyü gong ma rnams kyis phyag rgya chen po bsgom pa la dkar po chig thub ces gsungs pa yang gnyug sems bde ba chen po'i ngo bor skyes pas gnas lugs bsgom pa gcig pus mthar thug gi 'bras bu thob par 'byur ba la dgongs pa yin.* I gratefully acknowledge Roger Jackson's 1984 article for pointing me towards Thukén's text.

¹¹ *rgya nag lugs de mub mdzad nas / rim gyis pa yi chos lugs spel / phyi nas rgyal khrims mub pa dang / rgya nag mkhan po'i gzhung lugs kyi / yi ge tsam la bten nas kyang // de yi ming 'dogs gsang nas ni / phyag rgya chen por ming bsgyur nas / da lta'i phyag rgya chen po ni / phal cher rgya nag chos lugs yin //* (verses 174-175)

the only one which names Hwashang Mahāyāna's doctrine 'White Panacea' and directly accuses Gampopa of renaming that shameful Chinese subitist doctrine 'Great Seal'.

Tuken clearly feels that Sapan's attack on Zhang is not only misguided, but downright shallow (*kha mang*) (Tuken 154). Jackson aptly explains that by doing this, Sapan is attempting "to discredit the pandita's contemporary opponents by associating them with an historical person of established notoriety" (Jackson, 1984, 96). Jackson further concludes that "Sa skya pandita's virulent opposition to the White Panacea and other *mahamudra* teachings gave him a motive for attempting to discredit them" (*ibid*).

Why would Sapan have been so strongly opposed to Gampopa's formulation of the Great Seal that he – truly one of the greatest minds in the history of Tibetan Buddhism – would make outlandish claims just to discredit it? While it is impossible to say for sure, Kragh points to some rather convincing and very worldly arguments based on an analysis of the socio-political situation Sapan was in at the time he was writing. I refer reader's to Kragh's thesis for a detailed exposition, but in brief, during Sapan's lifetime, there was a struggle for political power between a collection of Kagyü-pa communities and Sapan's family, the 'Khon clan. Forming an allegiance with the Mongol Prince Kōdān, Sapan's

¹² While I wish to avoid recounting the conflict in too much detail, the Kagyü response is worth reading. In his seminal 16th century text on Mahamudra (which will be covered further on in this chapter), Dagpo Tashi Namgyal responds directly to Sapan's words: "Such a statement was probably made out of the sheer wish to criticize.... This statement is completely false for it reflects the critic's personal feeling rather than the truth. There is neither evidence nor logic in the contention that, even though the system was based on the texts of the Chinese abbot, the name was changed to that of mahamudra. This name was already known in the tantras and the exegetical treatises, and to the Buddhist scholars and sages. He arbitrarily equated this system with a wrong one while concealing his own shortcomings in the tantric treatises that refer to mahamudra. To make such a comment without a definite understanding is not the dispassionate way of scholars." (Lhalungpa 105)

¹³ While this is not the place to review the bSam yas debate, I recommend for further reading Paul Demieville's 1954 *Le Concile de Lhasa*; Giuseppe Tucci's *Minor Buddhist Texts* II (1958); G.W. Houston's *Sources for a History of the bSam yas Debate* (1980); R. A. Stein's "Illumination subite ou saisie simultanee: Note sur la terminologie chinoise et tibetaine" (1971).

family secured tremendous political power. It so happens that throughout the 13th century, the Kagyü-pas had also been courting the Mongols' favour, but the Sakyas won out. While Leonard Van der Kuijp (1986) and David Jackson (1994) have both argued in defense of Sapan's integrity as a scholar and practitioner, I agree with Kragh that to discount the political climate – always a hot and heavy one in the Land of Snows – is naïve.

Having covered in as much detail as necessary the conflict between the Sakya-pas and Kagyü-pas with respect to the Great Seal, I will turn my attention in a more focused way toward the latter tradition. While clearly there is a polemical zeal in the Sakya critique, some of the points made by Sapan in the 13th century are clearly in evidence in the Kagyü-pa context to this day. For example, one of the specific cases Go-ram-pa points to in his commentary to Sapan's work is when practitioners are allowed to practice *gtum mo* (inner heat – one of the six yogas of Naropa) having only received a *rDo rje Phag mo* empowerment (Kragh 45). While today it is difficult to access *gTum mo* teachings, *Pho ba* (transference of consciousness – another of the six yogas) is readily available as a transmission and practice to anyone willing to commit a few days to it. It is taught widely as it is considered to be a particularly useful practice to be put into use at the moment of death, and while it requires an Amitabha (*Od phag med*) empowerment, it certainly does not require the four levels of Tantric initiation or any prior experience. Specifically with respect to the Great Seal teachings, it is undeniable that they are much more accessible in the Kagyü-pa context than in any other. While there are multiple levels of teachings and practices to be taught in the Great Seal, and while they must be

taught in a specific order with each new level being built on the firm accomplishment of the level previous, it is nonetheless true that someone embarking on the Kagyü path can expect to receive *Mahāmudrā* instructions – even if only at a rudimentary level – even if one never comes close to practicing the ‘upaya marga’. This is in large part due to the marvelous systematization performed by Gampopa, who – despite the controversy initiated by Sapan – is the subject of the following verses of praise, from the opening of the most famous Kagyü work on the Great Seal, *Nges don Phyag rgya chen po 'i sGom rim gSal bar byed pa 'i Legs bshad Zla ba 'od zer*, written by Takpo Tashi Namgyal:

He had attained enlightenment
 Before [Sakyamuni] Buddha,
 As the bodhisattva Candrabhadra-kumara¹⁴ ...
 Known as Gampopa, the second Buddha,
 Throughout the three spheres of the universe,
 He proclaimed aloud the dharma of the ultimate reality
 In an age of decadence. (Lhalungpa 4)

Kagyü: Path *Mahāmudrā*

i. Introduction

It is generally accepted that what any Kagyü-pa receives as Great Seal instructions is based in the transmission of Gampopa. Very loosely, that transmission entails an entire framework which leads up to the highest Great Seal teachings. The preparatory practices are quite ‘basic’ and suitable to any practitioner of the Mahā- or Vajrayāna. Dagpo Tashi Namgyal writes:

¹⁴ This is a reference to the understanding that Gampopa was an incarnation of *Candrabhāḥkumāra* (zla-'od gzhon-nur), as predicted in the *Samādhirāja-Sūtra*.

Regarding the manner of imparting the profound path [of mahamudra], the venerable Gampopa considered it to be an independent path of tantra. So he did not make the esoteric empowerment a prerequisite for receiving the mahamudra teachings. He spoke about the method of directly guiding the disciple toward the intrinsic reality of the mind. This [simple] method consists of seeking refuge in the guru and the three jewels, offering to them the symbolic cosmos (mandala), accounting for all one's harmful deeds, and invoking them with intense faith and devotion. This practice includes meditation on love, compassion, and an enlightened attitude (bodhicitta). (Lhalungpa 123)

In short, what is described above is a form of the *sNgon-'gro*, or 'Preliminary Practices,' which I discussed briefly in Chapter 1. The *sNgon-'gro* has been systematized as well, and is in place as the preparatory practice for all Kagyü-pas who are embarking on the Great Seal path. While it is glossed over as mere preparatory practices in larger works detailing the Great Seal, it should be borne in mind that the *sNgon-'gro* (outside of a retreat situation) generally takes years to complete. Gampopa himself has several works on the Great Seal, nearly none of which has been studied with any great care by Western academics. With the exceptions of David Jackson's treatment of one of Gampopa's shorter Great Seal works (*phyag rgya chen po'i man ngag thog babs*) in *Enlightenment by a Single Means*, *Tibetan Controversies on the "Self-Sufficient White Remedy"*, and Kragh's review of all ten of the Great Seal works attributed to Gampopa or one of his close disciples, Gampopa's works apart from his famous 'Jewel Ornament of Liberation' have been largely ignored. The most lengthy and detailed work that Kragh reviews is the *Rje dwags po lha rje'i gsung zhal gyi bdud rtsi thun mong ma yin pa*, a very general work which reviews much of Gampopa's Great Seal doctrine and many of the attendant issues, such as what teachings to give to students of higher and lower capacity, some

comparisons between Tantric and Mahāyāna methods, and some discussion of subitist versus gradualist paths.

The Kagyü Great Seal ‘manuals’ (*khrid yig*) inevitably provide a description of preliminary practices which correspond to those of the ‘conventional’ Mahayana.

Another example of this kind of work is *Phyag-chen ma-rig mun-sel* (translated as *The Mahamudra Eliminating the Darkness of Ignorance*) by the 9th Karmapa, Wangchuk Dorje (1556-1603). It is structured in the same as the others, though in this case with added emphasis on the preliminaries, focusing on the so-called ‘ordinary’ preliminary thoughts (*thun mong sngon ‘gro*) of precious human existence, impermanence (*mi-rtag-pa*), karma and the disadvantages of Samsara. While works expressing direct, inspired insight (Dohās, Adamantine Songs, etc.) are a different genre altogether and therefore do not concern themselves with descriptions of stages and paths, the manuals clearly show how and where to begin.

The ‘Great Seal’ practice itself is – very broadly – twofold, consisting in calm abiding (*śamātha*; *gzhi-gnas*) and insight (*vipāśyana*; *lhag mthong*) meditation. Instruction on ‘calm abiding’ generally begins with a description of correct meditation posture and is followed by numerous techniques and exercises to train the mind to rest calmly, including visualization and breathing exercises.¹⁵ Insight meditation instruction is focused on training the meditator to understand the nature of mind, once it has been pacified through

¹⁵ As this is a doctoral dissertation and not a meditation manual, this does not seem to me to be an appropriate forum for an explanation of meditation techniques. For more detailed discussions of calm-abiding/insight meditation, I refer readers to Wangchuk Dorje (1978), Lhalungpa (1993), Tsele Natsok Rangdrol (1989), Khenchen Konchog Gyaltshen (1986), Ray (2001).

calm-abiding. One is trained to skillfully examine the many aspects and activities of mind in order to understand the nature of mind itself.

ii. The Four Yogas

O Illuminated Conqueror, all bodhisattvas and mahasattvas who possess the four dharmas will attain to the yoga of the great perfection. What are the four dharmas [yoga stages]?

- Lankāvatāra-sūtra (Lhalungpa 354)

Another feature particular to the Kagyü Great Seal is the classification of the stages of development into four categories, called ‘yogas’. Though there are references to these four stages of development in Sūtra and Tantra texts, their clear systematization and detailed explanation originate with Gampopa. Tashi Namgyal writes:

Je Yanggonpa and others consider the system of the four stages of yoga as originating from the personal realization of Je Takpopa (Gampopa), although the term ‘four yogas’ is found in the tantric treatises and is known to have the same meaning. We remain indebted to Je Gampopa for having composed a clear elucidation on each of the four yogas of mahamudra with a fine differentiation between the high and the low levels of experience and understanding, which is designed to help present-day meditators.... I have never seen other orders having such a system as ours for determining the level of inner sensation and understanding arising from the meditation (on tranquility and insight), nor methods of enhancing the progress or of differentiating the high and low stages of realization. This system shows the unexcelled characteristics of the Takpo Kagyupa order. (Lhalungpa 357-358)

While there are a number of different translations of the names of the famous four yogas, I will be using the following: one pointed yoga (*rtse-gcig rnal-'byor*); yoga free from elaboration (*spros-bral rnal 'byor*); yoga of one-taste (*ro-gcig rnal 'byor*); and finally non-meditation yoga (*sgom-med rnal 'byor*). One-pointed yoga refers to a state where one is “resting firmly, serenely, and lucidly in clear and empty awareness, without center and circumference, like space” (Lhalungpa 359). Since ‘one-pointed’ refers to a meditative experience which I myself have not had (as with the other three yogas) I will rely entirely on other people’s descriptions of the states. According to Tashi Namgyal, “The one-pointed yoga is so designated because the meaning of the term consists of either one-pointed mindfulness, which is focused undistractedly on the meaning of the mind’s abiding reality, or the spontaneous blend of fleeting thoughts with the settled nature of mind” (Lhalungpa 375). It is not, in other words, characterized by the *object* of the one-pointedness, but rather by a grounded and stable awareness of mind. If there may be said to be a sensation accompanying it, it is bliss accompanied by clarity¹⁶. Basing his description on Gampopa’s *rJe Phag-mo-gru-pa'i Zhus-lan* (or *Responses to the Questions of Lord Phag-mo-gru-pa*), Dan Martin writes about the experience of trying to achieve one-pointed yoga, “However many mental effusions might at first take place in this yoga, the inner propulsions for troubling thoughts are lessened. Their lessening makes Mind Proper progressively evident, and this wears away all the defilements” (Martin 250).

¹⁶ A more elaborate explanation can be found in Lhalungpa (373 ff.) and Tsele Natsok Rangdrol (38–40).

The yoga which is free from elaboration “consists of a determinate awareness that all subject-object dualities are but nonarising (emptiness)” (Lhalungpa 359). Tsele Natsok Rangdrol describes it this way:

You will realize correctly that the natural state of your mind-essence is free from the extremes of arising, dwelling, and ceasing. During the ensuing understanding, you are liberated when, having embraced that state with mindfulness, it turns into the state of meditation. (Tsele 40)

In other words, at this stage the practitioner realizes that everything – all sentient beings, all events (internal and external), all objects – they all have the same nature, which is empty. All mental elaborations and that which they fixate upon are understood to be of one nature. The state is:

Detached from the modes of eternalism and nihilism,
As well as from the view of absolute arising, dissolving, etc.
It transcends not only the worldly concern for acceptance and abandonment,
But also all conceptual determinations. (Lhalungpa 359-360)

In this state there is no basis besides mind for all perceptions (Martin 250), as “The essence, form and seer are all unreal. / The sound and the listener are also unreal. / The beginning, middle, and end are unreal; / So are samsara and nirvana!” (Lhalungpa 357).

The yoga of ‘one-taste’ is particularly interesting to me, as the idea of one taste (*ro gcig*) pervades much of Saraha’s writing. Tashi Namgyal describes it thus:

The stage of one flavor consists of the mind settled evenly in its primal purity without affirming or rejecting the concepts of whether all things of samsara and

nirvana are empty or not empty and of whether the mind has detached itself from the view of phenomena as absolute arising or dissolving. (Lhalungpa 360)

The 'one taste' is the single flavour of all experiences for one who has cognized emptiness as the nature of all. Samsara and nirvana become indistinguishable, the root of duality is destroyed, and ultimately the experience of all phenomena blends into a state of evenness. This evenness is *never* described in bland or dull terms. It should not be understood to be a kind of averaging-out into a neutral and detached experience of phenomena. The one taste of emptiness is one perfumed with purity and sublimity. Tashi Namgyal explains, "This realized state cognizes all diverse appearances as the manifestation of the unceasing power of mind's primordial purity and evenness" (Lhalungpa 390). At this stage, the states of meditation and post-meditation are also blending into each other.

The final yoga, the yoga of non-meditation, describes a state where there is no longer any distinction between periods of meditation and post-meditation. Tashi Namgyal quotes Pamo Drubpa:

By perfecting this (nonmeditation stage)
The meditator attains naked, unsupported awareness.
This nondiscriminatory awareness is the meditation!
By transcending the duality of meditation and meditator,
External and internal realities,
The meditating awareness dissolves itself
Into its luminous clarity.
Transcending the intellect,
It is without the duality of equipoise and postequipoise.

Such is the quintessence of mind. (Lhalungpa 361)

At this stage the non-reality of meditation and the meditator dawns, and all dualistic elaborations – even the most subtle – are severed. Here Tashi Namgyal cites an excerpt from a song by Śavari:

A realized mind does not conceive the duality of meditation and meditator;
Just as space does not conceive space,
So emptiness does not meditate on emptiness.
Just as water and milk blend naturally,
So nondual awareness and diverse cognitions blend harmoniously
Into the one flavour of the unceasing stream of bliss. (Lhalungpa 394)

As should be well apparent by now, Gampopa's systematization of the stages of Great Seal practice into the four yogas does not render the progress towards awakening to be anywhere near as simple as one might imagine in a 'four-step programme'. To understand the four yogas requires a lifetime of meditation instruction and experience, and not simply study – though for readers who would like to know more, Tashi Namgyal does do a great job of summing up all the wisdom he inherited. Though he himself writes, "The distinctive features of the four yoga stages in general have to be elucidated according to one's personal experience" (Lhalungpa 399). As my mental elaborations may be said to be characterized by an absence of such experience, I will now leave this discussion of the four yogas.

Mahāmudrā / Phyag rgya Chen po: What's in a Name?

Ground and Fruition Great Seal

When it comes to the study of anything related to the Vajrayāna or Tantra, nothing is ever simple. This is perhaps especially so when one approaches language. What follows will be a short analysis of the layers of meaning accruing to the appellation “Mahāmudrā” or “Phyag rgya Chen po”. Beginning with the most basic definitions, “mahā / chen po” means “great” in all senses of the English word; “mudrā / phyag rgya” here mean “seal”, in the identity sense of something which marks something. The Sanskrit term “mudrā” has multiple meanings, ranging from anything from a ritual hand gesture, to parched grain (which functions ritually as an aphrodisiac) to an image to a Tantrika’s female consort. The Tibetan term “phyag rgya” shares all those meanings, plus takes on a few more, such as ‘bone ornament’ and ‘symbolic encounter’. Tashi Namgyal adds that it also carries the meaning of the Sanskrit terms *nimitta* (symbol) and *lakṣaṇa* (sign, characteristic mark). He adds his own explanation of the term as it stands for ‘seal’:

Just as a seal leaves its impression on objects, so *chakgya chenpo* (*mahamudra*), the ultimate reality, leaves its imprint upon all realities of samsara and nirvana. Just as the coat of arms on a suit of armor establishes the wearer’s identity, so *chakgya*, as a doctrine, indicates the inherent character or abiding reality of all things. *Chakgya* signifies binding authority, like the uncontested authority of a sovereign over his subjects. It also signifies the ultimate nature, which thus assigns to all realities their holistic qualities. (Lhalungpa 92-93)

In the *Gaganagañjaparipṛccha-sūtra*, ‘seal’ is further glossed as synonymous with the *tathāgatagarbha* (*sangs rgyas kyi snying po*), the Buddha Nature, and “is the seal of complete emptiness, complete singleness, complete aspirationlessless.... As suchness it is

the seal of purity and the seal of inner space” (Lhalungpa 93). As one looks into scriptural (sutra and tantra) and *sastric* elaborations, the term is unraveled even more. Citing the *Karṇatantravajrapāda*, Guenther writes, “*phyag*: the acquisition of non-dual knowledge; *rgya*: bliss since Samsara’s tangled skein is disentangled; *chen po*: authentic being (Dharmakaya), free in itself and being the shining lamp of coincidence” (Guenther 1963 222). Further, Tashi Namgyal cites a number of sources who break down the designation ‘great seal’ in some interesting ways. According to the *Mahāmudrātilaka*, “*Chak* [*phyag*] stands for awareness of vacuity (*sunyata*), *Gya* [*rgya*] signifies its intrinsic quality that transcends existential duality, *Chenpo* symbolizes the union of the two” (Lhalungpa 93). The *Pañcakrama* elaborates that *phyag* “signifies the attainment of insight into innermost awareness” and *rgya* “symbolizes the void of awareness, which transcends the limits of samsara and which has imprinted its mark upon all things” (ibid). According to Gampopa, *phyag* “stands for the realization that all appearances and actualities, samsara and nirvana, are not separate from their unborn void nature” and *rgya* “stands for the primal purity that encompasses everything – perceptions and possibilities”. Further, “*Chenpo* stands for the realization that freedom is inherent in the true nature of reality (*dharmata*)” (ibid 94). Lama Serdingpa’s *Theg sgron* explains that *phyag* “signifies the spontaneous dissolution of defiled thoughts and deeds, and the blending of the mind with the ultimate state of simplicity (*dharmakaya*)”; *rgya* “signifies the power of this state which cannot be overcome by the perceptive mark of duality”; and *chen po* “stands for the superior level of this system over all other vehicles” (ibid). Finally, a commentary on the *Kālācakra-tantra*, called *Padmini*, states:

Chakgya [*phyag rgya*] *chenpo* stands for wisdom-gone-beyond which has produced Tathagatas in the past, does so at present, and will do so in the future.

Chakgya means nonabiding nirvana or immutable bliss. Hence, it surpasses the seal of mystical performance (*karmamudra*), and the seal of transcending awareness (*jñanamudra*).

Chenpo is so designated because it (wisdom-gone-beyond) is unstained by the psychic sediments of *samsara*. (ibid)

I will explain the other seals mentioned above (*karma* and *jñāna*) shortly, but at the moment am content to have drawn attention to the elaborate explanations read into the name ‘Great Seal’ and to the individual syllables that make up its elements in both Sanskrit and Tibetan. Also significant to point out here is that there is no mention of any of the elements of the path in any of the above definitions of the term. Clearly, then, these elaborations are concerned with explaining the Great Seal as the basis for reality and as the fruition of full awakening, encompassing both a description of reality and of the insight accompanying awakening.

With respect to the term ‘*mudrā / phyag rgya*’ and the path, I will now turn my attention toward an explanation of the system multiple seals – sometimes there are said to be three, and more often there are said to be four. The Great Seal is sometimes the third and sometimes the fourth of the famous seals or *mudrās*. Saraha has placed it third in the system of four, but I will explore the constellation of possibilities the textual sources present. The names of the heretofore unrepresented seals are as follows: the Action Seal (*karmamudrā; las gyi phyag rgya*); the Dharma seal (*dharmamudrā; chos gyi phyag rgya* – this one is also sometimes identified as wisdom or *jñānamudrā* or *ye shes kyi phyag rgya*, principally in the system of three seals); and the Commitment seal (*samayamudrā; dam tshig gyi phyag rgya*). Common to all treatments of the seals, the

Action Seal is understood to be the female consort of a *yogin* and the practices they undertake as tantric consorts. The sensation of bliss achieved during intercourse and orgasm is cultivated and manipulated by both partners as a means to penetrate the bliss of emptiness. Bliss and ultimate awakening are closely linked, and as the source of highest mundane bliss, sexuality is employed *in a strictly ritual context* as a practice to cognize that ultimate bliss¹⁷. In particular, the luminosity and freedom from mental elaborations which manifests at the moment orgasm is seen as a special opportunity to work with the mind.

The Dharma, or Wisdom Seal, is both the inner – or imagined – consort, and the intense visualization practices associated with her. The inner consort and wisdom/awareness are nearly synonymous terms. Relying on the guru's instructions, the practice which entails visualizing sexual union with an enlightened consort also cultivates that experience of emptiness. The Commitment Seal has a two-fold meaning. At one level, as the 'altruistic act', it entails some level of re/engagement with unawakened beings at some level, presumably through the Bodhisattva vow. The etymology of the term in both Sanskrit and Tibetan points to the second level of meaning: 'dam tshig' and 'samaya' both have the connotation of a bond, or something which binds. This is a reference to achieving a level of Tantric practice where the deity one meditates on is bound to one at a

¹⁷ For a concise-yet-detailed theoretical treatment of the *karmamudra*, see Guenther (1971), 202-221. I also refer readers to Miranda Shaw's *Passionate Enlightenment*, Judith Simmer-Brown's *Dakini's Warm Breath*, and David Gordon White's *Kiss of the Yogini* for further reading on the subject. There exists a wealth of new-age reformulations of this and other related practices that disguise themselves as presenting 'ancient eastern wisdom' of one variety or another. Any text on sexual yoga that promises better sex, a better connection with your soul-mate, or enlightenment through great sex should be discarded forthwith.

profound level, to the degree that one identifies with it constantly instead of one's own ego-centred identity.

Saraha describes the four as follows: the Action Seal is the map; the Dharma seal is the path; the Great Seal is the result; and finally the Commitment Seal is the altruistic act. (Body Treasury 38). In a formulation of four seals, these are consistently the four seals but the order changes a fair bit. Saraha's list is one of the most common, the other common one changes the places of the last two, putting Commitment Seal third and Great Seal fourth. Sapan, for example, lists them in the latter order, as does a passage from the *Vajramāla* (Lhalungpa 100).

In formulations of three seals, the Great Seal is always the third and highest. The *Kālācakra-tantra* presents the three seals as stages following one after the other:

Out of critical determination, one dissociates from the female consort [Action Seal]

And abstains from the inner consort of manifest awareness [Wisdom Seal].

By concentrating on that which is supreme and immutable,

One meditates on mahamudra.

As the intimate union with the female consort

And the delightful application of an inner consort of manifest awareness

Are unified with the seal of the great mother¹⁸

Into a single state,

An immutable bliss will increasingly arise. (Lhalungpa 99)

¹⁸ This is a translation of the Tibetan term “phyag rgya chen mo” – the Great Seal but with the feminine ending ‘mo’ instead of the masculine ‘po’. This feminization of the term works well with the Sanskrit ‘Mahamudrā’ – itself with a feminine long ‘a’ ending. In the Tibetan tradition, the Great Mother usually refers to the goddess of perfect transcendent wisdom, Prajñāpāramitā.

Many other sources which rely on the three seal formulation do not openly valorize the Action Seal. While this is most likely a device to motivate practitioners to not become complacent and attached to such a pleasurable practice, the accounts can be a tad jarring. In the *Guhyasiddhi*, Padmavajra writes: “The female consort of transformation is tumultuous and devious. / So is the inner consort of manifest awareness. / Abandon these, which are replete with discrimination / And meditate on mahamudra.” (ibid). Further, Mañjuśrī writes in *lta ba’i ‘dod pa mdor bstan pa*: “Crazy and malignant is the female consort; / The inner consort of manifest awareness is the same. / Abandon these in the dualistic realm / And practice mahamudra” (ibid)¹⁹.

Thus we have seen how ‘Great Seal’ is a rather flexible term that can be used to describe many things, among which ground, path and fruition are a common trio. To wrap up this section, I am closing with a passage by Tashi Namgyal describing these three aspects of the Great Seal:

In summary, mahamudra of the foundation is shown in the tantras and sutras as being the quintessence of the Tathagata (Buddha nature), which from the beginning permeates the stream of individual consciousness. This intrinsic nature of the mind is described as being lucidity (emptiness). Mahamudra of the path is shown as being the creative methods for the blossoming of the innermost potentialities (the Buddha nature lying dormant in every stream-being) and for unifying (such an awareness) with the ultimate simplicity of nonconception, intrinsic emptiness, unreality of phenomena, and evenness. Mahamudra of accomplishment is shown in the teachings on achieving all-knowing

¹⁹ In his *rGyud sDe sPhyi’i rnam par gzhag pa rGyas par brJod* (Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems), Khedrup-je has a formulation of the seals which is completely different from all the others. Because it would entail a lengthy tangent that would not enhance this chapter, I am not summarizing it here. Readers may refer to directly to his text (1998 229ff) for details.

enlightenment, consisting of the four perfect aspects (caturkaya) and the five awarenesses (pancajnana). (Lhalungpa 98)

Sūtra, Tantra, Essence

Especially in the accounts which hold that there are four seals, there is understood to be an extraordinary, or essence ‘Great Seal’ which more or less stands apart from the one contextualized within the list. It is to this classification of the Great Seal as ‘Sūtra,’ ‘Tantra,’ and ‘Extraordinary’ (which is actually *Anuttara-tantra*) that I will now turn. Many discussions of the Great Seal divide it into two categories: Sutra (in other words, as taught in the Sūtras) and Tantra. The Sūtra Great Seal – in keeping with the traditional Buddhist polemical tone – is naturally seen as the one taught for the benefit of sentient beings with lesser capacities, and the Tantra transmission has been taught for beings of higher capacities. While these two main categories are described in different ways by different people, essentially, the Sūtra path entails the ‘standard’ path of the Bodhisattva – what is termed the ‘perfection of wisdom’ path in the Tibetan context. The Tantra path entails more typically tantric yogic practices. Both result in the same goal, both potentially within a single lifetime. Janice Willis’ discussion of the Sūtra and Tantra Great Seal paths is quite detailed and extremely useful. Here I will only give a summary. The Sūtra path is defined first and foremost by the fact that the Great Seal teachings are drawn from Sutras, specifically *prajñāpāramitā-sūtras*. The practice is what Willis refers to as without-form, “so named because this approach stresses the observation of the innate mind in its pristine, natural state” (Willis 119). The meditative techniques employed do not use visualization of deities or directly work with the subtle body. Willis

describes the result as “realization of the indivisibility of appearance and voidness” (118). The Tantra path, on the other hand, is described as the *upāya-mārga* – the path of methods – discussed in rather a lot of detail above. It relies on Great Seal teachings taken from the Tantras and employs techniques using form – in other words, working with the channels and drops of the subtle body and visualized deities. Its result is the “realization of the indivisibility of bliss and voidness” (Willis 118)²⁰. In the first Panchen Lama Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen’s text *rGyal ba’i gzhung lam* (*The Great Seal of Voidness*), he explains the difference:

There are many different ways of approaching the actual teachings of Mahamudra. In general, these can be divided into two basic classifications – the Mahamudra teachings of the sutras and those of the tantras.

For the latter, you must concentrate on the energy-channels of your vajra-body, and especially on the central energy-channel... From following such methods as this and others, you can come to experience the blissful realization of the Clear Light of Voidness on the finest level of consciousness.

This explanation of Mahamudra as the blissful realization of Voidness attained by channeling your body’s energy-winds into the central energy-channel is attested to by Saraha, Nagarjuna and Maitripa. It is taught specifically in ‘The Seven Texts of the Mahasiddhas’ and ‘The Three Core Volumes’ of Saraha. These Mahamudra teachings, thus, are the quintessence of the highest classification of tantra, anuttarayoga. This then, in brief is the explanation of Mahamudra according to the tantra system.

As for the previous one, the Mahamudra teachings of the sutras, this refers to the ways of meditating on Voidness as taught in the three ‘*Prajnaparamita Suttas*’ and in all three traditions of the Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas and Bodhisattvas. Nagarjuna has said that except for these methods there is no other path to Liberation. (Willis 117)

²⁰ There is in fact a four-fold classification of bliss which will be explored in my discussion of key terms, Chapter 5.

The Kagyü teachings from the time of Gampopa onwards employ – according to some teachers – a third method, the ‘extraordinary’ or ‘essence’ Great Seal. An offshoot of the Tantra path, but based in the *Anuttara-yogas*, it is a Great Seal teaching where the teacher (*guru; bla ma*) shows the nature of mind (Great Seal) by directly pointing it out to the disciple. This sounds deceptively simple. In fact, it is the Great Seal path that is taught without the tantric initiations, so scandalous to Sapan and in fact requires the same preliminaries and dual calm-abiding / insight practice as the other methods. While the Kagyü Great Seal transmission is also a means of cultivating bliss and emptiness together, in the discussion of the conflict between Sapan and Gampopa’s Great Seal I pointed out how Gampopa was making Great Seal teachings available to monastics who would be breaking their vows if they undertook the standard Tantric path. In the first Panchen Lama’s elaboration of the differences between Sūtra and Tantra Great Seal, he writes, “For the latter, you must concentrate on the energy-channels of your vajra-body, and especially on the central energy-channel...From following such methods as this and others, you can come to experience the blissful realization of the Clear Light of Voidness on the finest level of consciousness.” This reference to concentrating on the energy-channels, “and especially on the central energy-channel” is a reference to the Action Seal or other forms of sexual yoga. When engaging in that practice, the neophyte concentrates the mind in the central channel, mixing together the ‘male’ and ‘female’ elements from the right and left channels (*rasana* and *lālana*) and raising the concentrated mind up through the central channel to the crown of the head, where great bliss (*mahāsukha*) is experienced. Training the mind to rest in that state of great bliss is training for

awakening by means of sexual yoga. But for a monastic, that kind of practice is not available (though arguable the wisdom seal – visualization of the consort – is), though cultivation of bliss-as-awakening is still the path of choice for Kagyü-pas. Rather than employing the complicated, time-consuming and monastic-vow-breaking tantric initiations and practices, the direct teachings, passed along through – for example – Saraha's Dohās, constitutes an initiation into the Great Seal transmission of awakening. This interpretation of initiation will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

View, Meditation and Conduct

There is one final method of interpreting the Great Seal that I will discuss before closing this chapter, namely the division of Great Seal teachings into the three categories of view (*lta ba*), meditation (*spyod pa*) and conduct (*nyams len*). These three categories are in fact a standard Vajrayāna means of describing the totality of the path towards awakening. In his songs for a group of disciples sung at Yolmo in Nepal, Milarepa uttered the following verses:

The view of the mantrayana is how we should understand the true nature of phenomena. Intellectual knowledge of the view, however, is not sufficient to reach enlightenment because we have to meditate on what we have to understand.

Just engaging in meditation is also not sufficient to gain enlightenment because we have to know if our meditation is correct or not. Finally, to reach enlightenment we have to engage in pure conduct when we are not meditating.

The essence of the mantrayana is engaging in the correct view, proper meditation, and pure conduct. Each of these has three objects. (Khenchen Thrangu *Songs* 2004)

Dividing the elements of the path into these three categories is also a popular way of teaching Buddhism religiously. Though there is virtually no academic material available on this subject, if one turns to 'insider' (ie. religious) sources, it is everywhere. H. H. the 14th Shamarpa Mipham Chökyi Lodrö gives the following basic introduction:

The term *view* means the right understanding of the Buddhist path. *Meditation* is the actual practice, and *conduct* is the discipline necessary to stay on the path. The view is a very profound guide to meditation. Without proper knowledge of the teachings, many obstacles arise due to mistakes in the practice. Naturally, if you do not know anything about meditation you won't recognize them as mistakes. This is why before you start practicing, you should develop correct understanding. Then you can recognize obstacles and the meditation will progress. In this way view and meditation are connected.

Conduct is based on the understanding of karma. Right conduct means to ensure that actions, whether through body or speech, are not influenced by disturbing emotions. If actions are biased, negative karma is created. For example, we bring harm to people and possibly even kill others, if we let ourselves be influenced by anger. With the motivation of anger, a great deal of negativity and ill will arises. Right conduct means to be free of those influences and instead, let our actions be guided by positive qualities like compassion. (Shamarpa 1997).

In general, the view consists of the Madhyamaka understanding of emptiness. For the purposes of Great Seal teachings, however, critical to the correct view is an understanding of 'the innate' (*sahaja; lhan gcig skyes pa*). 'The Innate' as view describes how the practitioner is training her/himself to understand the Buddhist path – namely, as a process for understanding that every moment of mind is wisdom; every

thought is self-liberating; that everything – all *dharma*s – are indeed empty, but that emptiness is sealed by bliss, luminosity, wisdom and clarity.

The practice consists of the calm-abiding and insight meditations detailed above, and the conduct is guided by compassion / skillful means. At the level of practicing the Great Seal, observing correct conduct does not necessarily entail, for example, maintaining a particular set of outer vows, like the *pratimokṣa*. For Great Seal practitioners who are already monastics, maintaining the vows may be necessary in order to not damage the larger social community's view of the Buddhist *saṃgha* (as was the case in Tibet), and their own spiritual commitments, but it is not critical to one's development. In an explanation of the root downfalls of Vajrayāna practitioners, Panchen Sönam Drakpa (1478-1554), the famous Geluk scholar, explains, using fire sacrifice (*homa*) as an example:

It is also a downfall for a *tantrika* to transgress any of the vows of the three ordinations without a valid reason. For example, should a vajra-holding *bhikṣu* [fully ordained monk who at the same time practices the Vajrayana] perform the fire rite without at the same time being mindful of the *vinaya* injunction against touching fire... that *bhikṣu* would break this secondary tantric precept as well as his own vows of individual liberation. (Panchen Sönam 89)

In other words, once vows have been taken they cannot be discarded at will without consequence in order to perform certain prescribed practices. Ordained monastics have the difficult task of balancing their various sets of vows. H. H. the 14th Shamarpa writes:

The specific behavior to be applied depends on the developed level of practice. In Vajrayana, *samaya* is important. Beyond the meaning of receiving the

empowerment and practicing a certain buddha aspect, samaya means proper conduct. It is concerned with avoiding any behavior that could harm one's own practice. (Shamarpa 1997)

In a commentary to the song by Milarepa quoted above, Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoché explains:

(1) In the mantrayana one does not need to deliberately accomplish the ten good actions. The practice of good actions will occur spontaneously from the realization that comes from meditation. (2) Similarly, the ten unvirtuous actions will be spontaneously avoided without any need to deliberately control one's actions. With the realization of the nature of mind one does not need to have contrived conduct. (3) There will also be no need to deliberately contrive remedial actions, to engender realization through effort. If one rests relaxed in the natural state of the mind, the realization of clarity and emptiness will naturally arise. (Khenchen Thrangu *Songs* 2004)

Thus it becomes apparent that view, meditation and conduct are interdependent. While the conduct and practice can in fact accommodate just about any variations, the view of the Innate is the one feature that informs and defines the Great Seal as it is understood through these three categories.

Conclusion

This chapter has been a broad survey of traditions, practices, definitions and classifications of the Great Seal. It is in fact impossible to describe the Great Seal directly, as it is above all the fully realized, awakened nature of mind and all phenomena.

For that reason, one must be fully awakened oneself in order to even try. Saraha's Adamantine Song trilogy attempts just that – to express the author's insight into the Great Seal. Just how and why poetry has been the vehicle of choice for expressing realization directly is the subject of Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

Genre and Poetics: Understanding Adamantine Songs

Transmission and Tradition

In his dissertation, Kurtis Rice Schaeffer documents in careful detail the transmissions of Saraha's *Dohās* to Tibet. Since his *Dohā* cycle is his best-known work, and in all the collections of Saraha's works where I have located his Adamantine Song trilogy, the *Dohā* cycle is also present, I am going to take a chance and make the assumption that these two song cycles (together, most likely, with all the rest of Saraha's work) were transmitted together. Based on that assumption, the brief summary of the transmissions of the *Dohās* to Tibet is meant to apply equally to the Adamantine Songs. Here I recall Gö Lotsawa's statement from the 'Mahāmudrā' chapter in the *Blue Annals*: "In this Doctrine of the Jina Sakyamuni, the great brahmana Saraha was the first to introduce the Mahamudra as the chief of all Paths" (Gö 841). Since the textual traces of Saraha's transmission consists solely in songs of various genres and the subject of the Adamantine Songs is the Great Seal, I also feel I am on relatively safe ground to provisionally assume that his work was transmitted as an entire *corpus*¹. Interestingly, to a great extent, Gö Lotsawa's chronicle of the transmission of the Great Seal is a chronicle of the transmission of Saraha's songs. So beginning with an understanding of how important Saraha's poetry is to the Great Seal traditions, we can move forward from here.

¹ The only direct reference to the Adamantine Songs I have translated here is found later in the Mahāmudrā chapter of the *Blue Annals*, in a discussion of textual transmissions given by Vajrapani (b. 1017) to some of his Tibetan disciples: "When Vajrapani became old, Nag-po Śer-dad mNga'-ris stayed with him in Eastern India, and obtained (from him) the Ten texts of the Mahamudra... the sKu'i mdzod 'chi-med rdo-rje'i glu... the gSung gi mdzod 'Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje'i glu... the Thugs-kyi mdzod skye-med rdo-rje'i glu..." etc. (Roerich 865)

Schaeffer has counted no less than seventeen transmissions of Saraha's *Dohā* Cycle to Tibet throughout the 11th and 12th centuries, "be it through Tibetan translation or Sanskrit manuscript, through oral teachings or ensconced entirely or in part in commentarial literature" (Schaeffer 118). There is little doubt surrounding the identity of the first master who brought Saraha's transmission to Tibet: the Indian master Atīśa (982-1054, known to Tibetans principally as Srījñāna Dipāṅkara). Sadly, some would say, though Atīśa brought a diverse range of teachings both Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna (including, in the latter category, a wealth of instructions and practices on *Tārā – sgrol ma* – and teachings on Saraha's *Dohās*) he was quickly restricted to passing along only his Mahayana teachings, for fear of spreading immoral behaviour among Tibet's Buddhists. As is explained by Karma Trinlépa (1456-1539) in his commentary to Saraha's *Dohā* Cycle²:

Having received [instructions on the *Dohas*] from Maitripa, Atīśa arrived in mNga-ris [Tibet]. When he undertook teaching the *Dohas* and explained such expressions [as the following] literally: "what is the use of butter lamps? What is the use of food offerings?" [traditional offerings for deities], from fear that the virtuous conduct of the Tibetans would be diminished, he was asked to not teach them. In brief, though he was not at all pleased, from then on he is not known to have taught them.³

Gö Lotsawa provides the following account:

² Karma Phrin las pa's commentary, *Do ha skor gsum gyi ti ka 'bring po*, is in part translated in Guenther's *The Royal Song of Saraha*.

³ Jo bo rjes ma'i tri pa la gsan nas mnga' ris su phebs pa'i tshe do ha gsung bar ba brtsams pa na / mar me ci dgos lha bshos de ci dgos / shes sogs sgra ji bzhin par gsung pa la / bod rnam kyis 'dul byas kyi dge pa byed pa nyung ngur 'byur du dogs nas mi gsung bar gsol bas / cung zad thugs ma dgyes kyang de phyin du ma gsung bar grags la

Later when (Atīśa) was staying at bSam-yas he went for a few days to mČhims-phu, and taught there the Dohā, the Cycle of the Grub-snying, and the method of following the Samantabhadracarya... to ‘Brom-(ston) [Atīśa’s chief disciple]. ‘Brom suspected that these (teachings) might have a bad influence on the morals of Tibetan (monks) and abstained from preaching them much. (Roerich 844)

When Marpa Chökyi Lodrö (Marpa, 1012-1092) brought the same transmission as Atīśa from Maitripa (and, if we recall his visionary encounter with Saraha, from Saraha himself), he faced no restrictions in teaching the content of Saraha’s *Dohās*. It is also the case that Marpa was not instructing monastics, nor was he facing the same numbers of disciples as Atīśa; so it perhaps makes sense that while he passed along Saraha’s transmission to his chief disciple, Milarepa, there was no noise from the ‘establishment’. The other fifteen transmissions of Saraha’s *Dohās* do not need to be recounted here, but it is perhaps useful if I at least cite Schaeffer’s prepared list of the 17 transmissions, and leave it to readers to refer directly to his work for the full chronicle:

1. Atīśa (982-1054) and ‘Brom ston (1004-1064).
2. Atīśa and Nag tsho Tshul khriṃs rgya mtsho (b. 1011).
3. Atīśa and Ba ri lo tsa ba Rin chen grags (1040-1158).
4. Marpa (dMar pa Chos kyi blo gros) (1012-1092).
5. Vajrapāṇi (born 1017).
6. Bal po Asu *alias* Kyeme Dechen (Skye med bde chen) (11th century).
7. Ngari Joten (Mnga’ ris jo stan) (Jo gdan) (11th/12th centuries).
8. Nakpo Sherde (Nag pos sher dad) (11th/12th centuries).
9. Mapen Chöpar (Rma ‘ban Chos ‘bar) (1044-1089).
10. Dampa Kor Nirupa (Dam pa Skor Nirupa, *alias* (sic) Prajnasrijnanakirti) (1062-1102).

11. Rechungpa (Ras chung pa Rdo rje grags) (1083-1161).
12. Phadampa Sangyé (Pha Dam pa sangs rgyas) (d. 1117).
13. Vairocanarakṣita, *alias* Vairocanavajra (c. 11th/12th centuries).
14. Tengpa Lotsawa Tsultrim Jungne (Steng pa lo tsa ba Tshul khrim 'byung gnas) (1107-1190).
15. Jinadeva and Rgya lo tsa ba (c. 12th/13th centuries).
16. Jogen (Jo dgan) (13th century).
17. The Sa skya Manuscript of Rahul Samkrtyayana (date unknown).
(Schaeffer 121-122)

Most relevant to this chapter is that with the importation of Saraha's transmission and *corpus* in the 11th/12th century came the transmission of the *Dohā* and the Adamantine Song (vajra gīti; rdo rje'i glu) genres, already popular and in use in the *siddha* cultures of South Asia. The result, therefore, of Marpa's successful transmission was twofold: not only did he bring a transmission of Saraha to Tibet; he also brought with him the tradition of singing spontaneous songs to express realization to his disciples. Singing songs as a form of expression and method of teaching was quickly absorbed into all Tibetan Buddhist traditions, and one would be hard-pressed to find teachings by or a biography of any renowned master that did not include a song of one sort or another. From wild *yogins* like Drukpa Kunlé (1455-1529) whose work is filled with coarse sexual imagery, to Tibet's most important philosophers such as Longchen Rabjampa (1308-1363), using verse is a ubiquitous practice. At times it expresses in direct and emotive terms basic principals of Buddhism like impermanence⁴ or, foundational to Vajrayāna Buddhism,

⁴ To illustrate poetic teachings on impermanence, Thupten Jinpa's *Songs of Spiritual Experience* cites the following example (among others) by the seventh Dalai Lama, Kelsang rgya mtsho (1708-1757): "A golden hill ablaze with yellow grass - / silver mists hover round it like a belt; / now it's here, not it'sn ot. / This brings to mind impermanence." (Jinpa 4)

devotion⁵. Of this type of poetry, Thupten Jinpa writes, “The poetic vision crystallizes or condenses in a succinct and touching form what is taught in a didactic way” (Jinpa 4). Of central interest to me, however, are the songs that are meant to not only express the singer’s insight, but to transmit some measure of it as well. It is this genre of song that is not only most relevant to the transmission of the Kagyü Great Seal but to which, I believe, the Adamantine Songs translated in Part 2 of this dissertation belong. In reference to the tradition passed to Marpa by Maitripa and from there on to Milarepa and the whole Kagyü school we read:

Being spontaneous, these songs reveal the inner nature of the singer and express his insight and devotion in an uninhibited and unique fashion. Because they are born out of the realization that comes from practicing the guru’s oral instructions, they are also profound and direct in their ability to transform and awaken the mind of the listener. They direct the listener’s attention to the nature of mind, at that very instant. (Tsang xxxviii-ix)

At this point I will also draw attention to Kvaerne’s understanding of how this works, and simultaneously redeem Gampopa’s unique form of ‘Anuttara-tantra-Great-Seal-minus-the-Tantra’. In his discussion of the concept of *sahaja*, the innate, Kvaerne points to the songs themselves as the vehicle of transmission. He writes:

The paradoxical state of *sahaja*... is not perceived or experienced by ‘ordinary folk’... It is accessible to the initiated alone – and, since the elaborate initiations of tantric ritualism are rejected, *the songs themselves constitute an initiation*. By initiation we mean a *revelation* – any revelation of a sacred or extra-temporal mode of being; the initiation abolishes Time and History, revealing to the

⁵ For example, this excerpt from a song by Natsok Rangdrol (b. 1608): “A flower, colorful and robust, / attracts bees that hover humming songs. / Though they cannot remain together long, / if the flower is not destroyed by pests / and the bees not chased away by hailstorms, / the bees can sing and drink the flowers’ heart. / May I see my guru again and again.” (Jinpa 75)

neophyte a mode of being in which he is made truly deathless, truly adamantine in the midst of samsara. In what way do the songs of the Siddhas constitute such an initiation? Not, primarily, by anything they *say* on the subject *sahaja*... for no amount of illustration can ever reveal the nature of that paradoxical state of being in which samsara and Nirvana are experienced simultaneously.... The songs, therefore, constitute an initiation once their *essential structure* becomes apparent; *they reveal the nature of the ultimate state through the systematic ambiguity of their imagery*... it is their very ambiguity itself which reveals the coemergence of two modes of being. (Kvaerne 62-63)

The process by which songs constitute an initiation is difficult to comment on, in the same way that it is difficult to comment in formal language on the capacity of poetry to illicit strong emotions in the listener/reader. For that reason, I will leave this point here, though it ought to be kept in mind as this chapter progresses and in reading Saraha's Adamantine Song trilogy. As per the 'systematic ambiguity' of which Kvaerne speaks, I will address it briefly here and in more detail below in my discussion of Indian genres of songs. Whether Indian or Tibetan in provenance, this particular variety of songs typically use 'twilight' or 'intentional' language (*sandhyā bhāṣa*, *mkha'* 'gro *gsang ba'i brda*), that often presents in coded form detailed instructions on Tantric practices and yogic processes. These songs, therefore, function on many levels at the same time and effect the listener/reader differently depending on the present level of insight and initiation⁶. But as mentioned above, I will come back to this shortly. For now, I would like to explore some of the properly Tibetan genres of songs.

⁶ In my own as-yet unpublished Master's thesis I develop a reader-response theory of Buddhist reading, based in large part on a combination of my understanding of distinctly Buddhist narrative and the critical theory of Wolfgang Iser. See *A Road to Nowhere: the Significance of Pilgrimage in Buddhist Literature*. (Braitstein 1998)

Tibetan Poetic Genres: an introduction

Because the subject of this dissertation is a group of songs by Saraha composed initially in a South Asian language, I don't wish to do more than introduce the Tibetan song genres. Some of them can be directly linked with the transformative tradition of *siddha* songs like those of Saraha⁷, while many more had evolved by the 12th and 13th century into their own properly Tibetan genres. In truth they become nearly impossible to distinguish in literature composed after the 12th/13th century, because naturally development in some spheres of poetics will bleed into the literary culture as a whole.

Jinpa comments:

The spontaneous and fluid songs of Milarepa and his followers, full of vernacular terms and not so far from the language of the ordinary Tibetan, gave way to a much more stylized, refined, and elaborate poetic diction. In effect, the predominantly oral poetry of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries was transformed into a fully fledged literary and scholarly tradition. (Jinpa 11)

Examining the tradition of spontaneous songs on Tibetan soil necessitates mention of Milarepa (1052-1135), arguably Tibet's greatest and most famous *yogin* and poet. There is so much material available on Milarepa that recapitulating it seems unnecessary, but I will briefly mention that his inspiring life story permeates most of Tibetan popular religious memory, and his abundant output as a poet is read and revered to this day. Throughout his long career as a Buddhist *yogin* and teacher, Mila used spontaneously

⁷ Though Tibetan masters, even those directly influenced by Indian *siddha* songs like Marpa, still retained their 'Tibetan-ness'. For a discussion of this see Kapstein, "Indian Literary Identity in Tibet" p 770ff

composed poems and songs to express just about everything – from devotion, to realization, to reprimands, to instructions. Singing a genre of song known as *mGur*, Mila is more or less single-handedly responsible for turning that genre into a vehicle for religious songs (Jackson, 1996, 372). Initially a sub-division of the older *gLü* genre – one which today is predominantly used for secular and life-cycle songs but which, prior to the 11th century just meant ‘song’ and referred to all poetry – *mGur* evolved as a genre of religious song “with an experiential component: they might be either reports of spiritual realization or instructions based upon such realizations, or a combination of the two” (ibid). Mila’s *mGur* were solely preserved orally for hundreds of years after his death, though the influence of his stylistic innovations was felt immediately. Jackson identifies two main influences in the style of *mGur* that Mila innovated: first, the indigenous Tibetan poetic traditions of songs of “positive personal experience”; and second, the tradition of tantric songs brought to Tibet by Marpa (373). He further cites Döndrup Gyal’s (1953–1985) rather contemporary work⁸ which designates seven categories of *mGur*, generally according to content⁹.

A form of *mGur* which stands apart from the standard one, is the *Nyams mGur*, or ‘Song of Experience’, which may be characterized by its intense subjectivity and reflection of direct insight. Jinpa writes, “More than being merely a subgenre of poetry, the songs of spiritual experience are a profound element of meditative practice and inspiration” (15),

⁸ *Bod kyi mgur glu byung* ‘

rtsen pa'i skied tshal: mGur glu'i lo rgyus dang khyad chos (Lhasa: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1985)

⁹ There are, according to Don grub rgyal, *mGur* that 1. remember the guru’s kindness, 2. indicate the source of one’s realizations, 3. inspire the practice of Dharma, 4. give instructions on how to practice, 5. answer disciples’ questions, 6. admonish the uprooting of evil and 7. serve as missives to gurus or disciples. (Jackson 374).

and later adds that “the key themes of Tibetan experiential songs touch on the most personal aspects of the spiritual path and on the profound insights in to the nature of reality that are the fruits of the path” (Jinpa 17). It is the *Nyams mGur* that retained (in theory at least) the spontaneity and freshness of the *siddha* songs from the sub-continent.

The Tibetan genre which predates *mGur*, *gLü*, is broadly divided (according to Jackson) into two categories: royal songs (*rgyal po'i glü*) and popular songs (*'bangs kyi glü*). As ‘songs of positive personal experience’ prior to Mi-la’s time, *mGur* were one of two classifications of the royal songs, the other of which is *mChid*, “which are ‘usually songs of provocation and dispute... (which combine) vivid, sophisticated symbolic imagery with more direct insults to create sung verbal combat’” (Jackson – quoting Ellison – 370).

Turning back to Jinpa’s work, we see that standard verse was defined by two principal metres, one of nine syllables and the other of seven. With the accent falling on the first syllable of each foot, they look like this: *--/--/--/---* and *--/--/---* (Jinpa 13). The *mGur*, in comparison, as it evolved under the influence of Mi-la and his colleagues, “deliberately defy this convention” (Jinpa 13). Jinpa lists five potential metres for the post-Mila *mGur*: *--/--/---*, *--/--/--/---*, *--/--/--/---*, *--/--/---/---*, *--/--/---/---*. In all of these metres, the accent again falls on the first syllable of each foot.

The tradition of composing various types of *gLü*, *mGur*, and *Nyams mGur* is one that is still very much in practice in contemporary Tibetan religious culture. Presenting songs that express devotion to one’s lineage and guru, and one’s realization are standard ‘proofs’ of insight, skill and education. While most Lamas and Tulkus must spend most

of their youth submitting to and exceeding in the strict curriculum of a monastery, training in ‘spontaneity’ in some sense provides a controlled break from that. Jinpa writes:

Just as the continuing lineage of writing spontaneous poetry acted as a counterforce to the impact of the rigid formalization of verse writing, so in the lives of individuals the spontaneity of the experiential songs was most important counterbalance to rigorous philosophical training and analysis. (Jinpa 15)

It must be noted, however, that within the framework of formalized Tibetan religious training, the context of receiving songs and poetry has changed dramatically; rather than a spontaneous response to a query or insight in some remote mountain cave that would be uttered to a single disciple or a very small group, these days Buddhist masters publish their ‘spontaneous’ songs in handsomely edited volumes or on-line. One may say that this is in large part due to the enormous impact of Sanskrit poetics on Tibetan literary culture; once the intricacies of *kāvya* (Tibetan: *snyan gnag*) became part of an educated person’s knowledge base, it was impossible to avoid its influence in composition. The principal Sanskrit text that has guided the development of Tibetan poetics since its introduction to Tibet in the 13th century is Daṇḍin’s 7th century work, the *Kāvyaadarśa* (Tibetan: *sNyan ngag Me long*; *Mirror of Poetry*).

The *Kāvyaadarśa* was first introduced into Tibet by Sakya Pandita Kunga Gyaltsen (Sapan, 1182-1251) in his stunning treatise in which he lays out the required fields of knowledge to be mastered before one can be called ‘learned’ (Sanskrit: *paṇḍita*; Tibetan: *mkhas pa*) – *mKhas pa rnam la ‘Jug pa’i sGo*, or *Gateway for the Learned*. Being the

influential scholar that he was, Sapan's work made an enormous impact on the curriculum of educated Tibetans from his own time forward, making the *Kāvyaadarśa* or some of the famous commentaries on it required material in any study of the science of language (*sgra rig pa*; *śabdavidyā*). According to Van der Kuijp (1996), the *Kāvyaadarśa* was transmitted into Tibet some seven times, beginning with Sapan in the 13th century and ending in the 16th century (Van der Kuijp 396). Among Tibetan commentaries on the work considered to be authoritative, foremost among them are those by the fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Losang Gyatso (1617-1682), Mipham Gelek Namgyal (b. 1618) and Khamtrul Tenpā Nyima (b. 1745) (Jinpa 9). In very general terms, Daṇḍin's *Kāvyaadarśa* defines and classifies *kāvya* ("a series of words characterized by agreeable sense" Gupta 121); discusses and develops *mārga* theory (diction, or the appropriate combination of word and sense); explores fully the art of ornamentation (*ālaṃkāra*); examines the qualities (*guṇa*) and defects (*doṣa*) of *kāvya*; and finally the poetic figures (*ārthālaṃkāra*) among which ideal figures readers are most likely to be familiar with the concept of *rasa* (Gupta), or sentiment/taste/mood, of which Sapan says there are nine¹⁰. Jinpa writes of Daṇḍin's work:

The *Kavyadarsha* is a remarkable work of synthesis that brought together the vast array of poetic traditions in the Sanskrit language from the north and south of the Indian subcontinent. Its principal concerns were the detailed codification of all the different uses of metaphor in poetry and how they affect poetic meaning, and a lengthy discussion of the linguistic skills...involved in the mastery of rhymes,

¹⁰ They are: *sgeg pa nyams* or 'elegant'; *dpa ba'i nyams* or 'majestic'; *mi sdug pa'i nyams* or 'repulsive'; *bzhed gad kyi nyams* or 'ironic', 'humorous'; *drag shul gyi nyams* or 'wrathful', 'fierce'; 'ng nyams or 'terrifying', 'awe-inspiring'; *rnying rje'i nyams* or 'compassionate', 'empathetic'; *zhi ba'i nyams* or 'peaceful', 'pacifying'; and *rmad 'byung nyams* or 'admiring' (Jinpa 5). Kapstein comments that this classification of *rasa* draws a lot on the work of Bharata as well. (Kapstein 781)

puns, and acrostics.....Each verse of the *Kavyadarsha* consists of an exposition of a particular use of metaphor or a poetic device. (Jinpa 9)

Jinpa goes on to explain how one studies the *Kāvyadarśa* in a Tibetan context:

The method of study is for the teacher to explain the intricacies of the verse to be covered that day and to present sample poems by great masters illustrating how they conform to the rules of poetics set down in the *Kavyadarsha*. Students are then expected to read the commentary and to write their own sample stanzas for each of the forms studied that day. (Jinpa 9-10)

To cover even one book of the *Kāvyadarśa* using this method of study takes over six months. Given that this is the education in poetics and composition one would receive, even so-called 'spontaneous' verses would be thoroughly imbued with the esthetics and structural parameters set by Daṇḍin, Saṇḍan and others. One of the predictable outcomes, therefore, of the introduction of this sophisticated Sanskrit poetics was to make many forms of poetic composition in Tibet an activity for the elite educated members of society. No longer a spontaneous outpouring in direct response to insight or confusion, the vehicles of metaphors, the style of verse, the use of *rasa* and many other features relied directly on Daṇḍin's influence. Kapstein writes:

These works left an enormous legacy in Tibet, and from the fourteenth century onwards virtually every Tibetan author of note, whether monk or layman, tried his hand at some *kāvya*. Even the exponents of yogic song, who well appreciate the power of the Tibetan song-poem (*mgur*), were not untouched by the allure of Ratnakara's metrics and Daṇḍin's classifications of ornaments. (Kapstein 782-783)

What this has done to the concept of spontaneity is touched on here by Jinpa:

Traditionally, this transformation of Tibetan poetry has been regarded very positively. In poetry in general it is hard to see any serious defects in the impact of Sanskrit poetics. But for the poems with which this book [*Songs of Spiritual Experience*] is concerned – songs of spiritual experience and meditative realization, the kinds of songs for which Milarepa had already set a virtually supreme model by any standard – there was a price. The essence of spiritual songs is their spontaneity, their immediacy, the momentary capturing of a transformed state of mind while all the rules of meter, metaphor, and language encouraged by formalization can (and did) have the effect of hindering the natural flow of spontaneity in favor of technically refined forms. To a degree, mastery of form was emphasized at the cost of immediacy of content. (Jinpa 12)

Though to be sure, not every Tibetan poet-*yogin* had the benefit (or hindrance, depending on one's view!) of a monastic education, and therefore would have been much more influenced by indigenous literary and bardic traditions, Sapan is responsible for firmly planting the idea of being a *paṇḍita* as an ideal in Tibetan society (Kapstein 782) and from his time onwards, great Buddhist masters have striven to meet that ideal.

South Asian Literary Context of the *Siddhas*

But let us turn our attention now back to South Asia, and to an examination of the genres which comprised Saraha's literary context. While it is impossible to really separate the Indian and Tibetan contexts of these songs, since they exist as a tradition and transmission among Buddhists only in the Tibetan/Himalayan context, what follows will be grounded in the Indian context.

The author of the songs I have translated is equally well known as ‘Saraha’ and ‘The Great Brahmin’. Much has been made of his Brahmanical youth, and it is therefore easily believable to me that not only was he well-trained (and very possibly composing his songs) in Sanskrit, but must also have been educated in Sanskrit poetics. Though his work does not seem to be influenced by that of Daṇḍin, Bhārata and others, it is still interesting to imagine that he may have had to consciously shed that training, adding still another layer onto his already totally rebellious persona.

i. Dohā

In this section I will be discussing three forms of ‘yogic’ songs that emerged first in the South Asian context: *dohā*, *caryāgīti* (*spyod pa’i glu*), and *vajragīti* (*rdo rje’i glu*).

Dohās are one of the best-known styles of poetry or song composed by Saraha and the other Great Adepts. I have encountered two etymologies: first, the name can be broken down as ‘Do’ referring to the number, 2, and ‘hā’ meaning, roughly, ‘said’¹¹. Dohās, then, would simply be poems composed in 2-line stanzas, or couplets. Indeed, ‘Dohā’ is the name of the metre most frequently employed in their composition¹². Alternatively, we may allow that it comes from the Sanskrit root √duh ‘to milk’, “since the language of *dohā* is employed as the milking which deeply fills, it is milking the primordial awareness of one’s mind which is a mind filled with primordial awareness” (Schaeffer 267). To be frank, the ‘couplet’ and ‘milking’ definitions both make sense, to the exclusion of any mention of metre given that the metre of Dohā collections of various authors, still extant in their (presumably) original language, do not maintain regularity in

¹¹ Here ‘hā’ is a particle.

¹² Shahidullah has a detailed and totally incomprehensible discussion of Dohā as a metre – p 60ff.

that respect. So we are, then, left with ‘pithy couplets’ as the best translation (mine!) of *dohā*¹³, capturing (loosely) both form and content. David Templeman states:

As the *dohā* was primarily a means of direct, authentic communication between master and disciples, it had to express a spiritual truth in a way which would resonate with its listeners, rather than being understood by them at a conceptual level only. It had to fit into a wide range of folk rhythms and metres, as such songs had to travel into many cultural areas among unlettered people whose most practical way of gaining the message might well have been listening to such songs. (Templeman 17)

Schaeffer’s introduction to *dohā* is as follows:

From as early as the 7th century CE later North Indian Buddhism saw the emergence of a poetic form of religious expression, songs in the late Middle Indo-Aryan dialect of Apabhramśa, of various lengths and consisting primarily of rhymed couplets, extolling the beauty and simplicity of tantric spiritual experience and social practice. In time this genre came to be designated (sic) *dohā* the name of the meter most frequently employed. (Schaeffer 5)

Though referring to *dohā* as the name of a common metre, I must say that Schaeffer – like others to refer to it as such – does not specify what exactly that common metre is. For now I will bracket the notion that *dohā* is the name of a metre, and base my understanding of *dohās* on what I can perceive about them myself.

ii. Caryāgīti

It is difficult to present a precise definition of the genre designated by the term *caryāgīti*. Clearly, the *caryāgīti* are song-poems that are meant to be performed, and the locus of

¹³ Jackson uses ‘aphoristic couplet’ to translate *dohā* in *Tantric Treasures*.

their performance is at Tantric gatherings. That they are meant to be sung is evident because in most collections of them, there is a *rāga* specified for each. In the collection of *caryāgīti* translated by Kvaene, he has noted that each of the songs also has a refrain (*dhruvapada*) “indicating that a chorus alternated with a soloist” (Kvaerne 8). Beyond these specifications, even Kvaene himself writes that “it is a general term used to designate a genre of spiritual songs” (7) and pretty much leaves it at that. They are still very much in use in *Vajra* Buddhist traditions of Nepal¹⁴, and in *siddha* cultures throughout South Asia. Templeman points out that much of the imagery and many motifs are drawn from everyday life of simple people:

The freewheeling confidence and the ebullient language of the *caryās* perfectly complements the rustic ingenuity of the motifs. There is neither fussiness nor ceremony in these downright practical songs, but neither does their functionality make them dour or ‘spiritual’. (Templeman 30)

Templeman also explains that *caryās* are typically short songs, “consisting mostly of five verses of two lines per verse” (31). Since the songs are typically composed as part of a cycle, or group of songs, and are performed accompanied by instruments, elaborate rituals and often dance, a tantric song performance can take hours or even over a day to complete (31). As might be obvious to readers at this point, the *caryāgīti* are not transmitted or performed as a genre of spontaneous song, as they are performed by trained Tāntrikas at Tantric gatherings. While some of the composers of these songs

¹⁴ David N. Gellner’s *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest*, a study of Newar Buddhism, details some rituals in which Tantric singers are employed.

(such as Saraha) may have initially created them spontaneously, their function has not retained that aspect of them¹⁵.

iii. Vajragīti: Adamantine Songs

“*Śūnyatā vajram ucyate*”¹⁶

As with *Dohās* and *Caryāgīti*, Adamantine Songs (*Vajragīti*, *rDo 'rje 'i gLu*) are not a ‘genre’ in the way we usually understand it. They do not have a meter or mood (*rasa*) that defines them apart from other forms of verse. They are easily identified on sight by the fact that usually a title will have ‘adamantine song’ worked into it, but in fact the ‘vajra’ of ‘vajra songs’ refers to the *meaning* of the songs, not the form. The content, in other words, has the same qualities as a *vajra* is understood to have in a Buddhist context: It is pure, impossible to stain or alter, clear, unbreakable and precious. In Tantric contexts, it is also synonymous with *śūnyatā*, or emptiness. A particular feature of Tantric, or *Vajrayāna* thought is this particular understanding of emptiness. Whereas the standard (though by no means simple or uncomplicated!) Mahāyāna interpretation of emptiness is firmly rooted in Madhyamaka philosophy, where emptiness is understood to be synonymous with *pratītyasamutpāda* (dependent-arising)¹⁷, for Vajrayāna practitioners the situation is somewhat different. It is more similar, in fact, to the

¹⁵ For an example of a *caryāgīti*, I cite here in full Kvaene’s translation of song 32, attributed to Saraha: “Neither Sound nor Drop, neither Sun nor Moon [sun and moon refer to the left and right channels in the subtle body, *lalanā* and *rasanā*] – the Mind-King is in its own-being free / Abandoning the straight [central channel – *avadhūti*] do not take the crooked! Enlightenment is near – do not go to Lankā! [ie. Do not wander in Samsāra] / The bangle is on your wrist – do take a mirror (to see it)! You yourself must understand your Innate Mind. / Whoever goes on either bank certainly dies in the company of evil folk. / (As for) the ditches and holes on the left and the right [*lalanā*, *rasanā*] – Saraha says: oh! They have been thought to be the straight path.” (Kvaene 199) As is abundantly evident from this typical example, the *gīti* are short, technical, obscure and require instruction in order to understand.

¹⁶ *Advaya-vajra-samgraha*

¹⁷ There are numerous academic works dedicated to the Madhyamaka interpretation of emptiness, usually based on the *Mūlamadhamakakarikā* of Nāgārjuna. I refer readers Garfield (1995; 2002), Hopkins (1995), Nagao (1991).

Yogācara understanding of emptiness, where emptiness is understood to have some qualities¹⁸. It is, I believe, reflected fully in the Tibetan *gZhan stong* or ‘other-empty’ doctrine (held by some Tibetan philosophers and virtually all the *yogins*) which holds that ‘emptiness’ is empty of all qualities not innate to it – in other words, empty of everything *other* than itself¹⁹. There is not a fully consistent list of qualities attributed to it but one that does span all the lists is bliss (*mahāsukha*). The sense its indestructibility, inherent purity and clarity also made it synonymous with *vajra*, as those are equally qualities of a diamond. Bhattacharya writes of the definition of the Adamantine Vehicle:

It was called Vajrayāna, because *śūnya* came to be designated by the term *vajra* on account of its indestructibility. The *śūnya* of the Vajrayāna is something different from the *śūnya* of the Mādhyamikas (nihilists) or the Vijnānavādins (idealists) [Yogacarins], because it includes the three elements *śūnya* (reality) *vijnāna* (consciousness), and *mahāsukha* (great bliss). (95)

While I disagree with both Bhattacharya’s identification of Mādhyamikas as nihilists and his characterization of Vijnānavādins (Yogācārins) as idealists, this is not the place to air my views on the topic. The purpose of including this citation is to draw attention to the identity of *vajra* and *śūnya*. On the subject of the transformation of South Asian Buddhist from Mahāyāna to Vajrayāna, Dasgupta writes:

In this mode of transformation the most important point is the transformation of the idea of Śūnyatā (vacuity) into the idea of Vajra, or the thunderbolt. The Śūnyatā -nature of the world is its ultimate immutable nature, as immutable as the thunderbolt, and so it is called the Vajra. It has been said in the *Advaya-vajra-samgraha*, - ‘Śūnyatā, which is firm, substantial, indivisible, impenetrable, incapable of being burnt and imperishable, is called the Vajra.’ This

¹⁸ See Nagao (1991)

¹⁹ See Hookham (1991); Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche (1994)

transformation of Śūnyatā to Vajra will explain the title Vajrayāna and in the Vajra-yāna all the gods, goddesses, articles for worship, yogic practices and elaborate rituals have been marked with the Vajra to specialize them from their originally accepted nature. (Dasgupta 26-27)

Thus it becomes clear that the term *vajra* denotes the ultimate nature of reality, and that reality is sealed with the qualities of a diamond. This vast and deeply significant term carries all its connotations with it when used in ‘Vajra-gīti’. As songs that express something about the ultimate nature of reality, Adamantine Songs have a special place in the Vajrayāna.

Kurtis Schaeffer attempts to lay down some parameters for defining Adamantine Songs:

Diamond songs are perhaps the most elegant of the songs preserved in the *Bstan 'gyur*... Dispensing with the often semi-exegetical style of works such as the *Treasury of Dohā Verses*, they use metaphor, paradox, and suggestion to portray the experience of tantric practice. The diamond songs are much shorter than *dohās* and more often employ metaphorical language. Diamond songs strive for a poetic beauty far exceeding that of the more prosaic *dohā* materials, and feel more like songs, like emotionally charged teachings whose lessons lie in the evocation of a certain feeling rather than in the promotion of a certain doctrine. (Schaeffer 166-167)

I appreciate Schaeffer's attempt to put his finger on some defining features of the genre, though most of what he writes is either equally applicable to *dohās* and *caryāgīti* (the use of metaphor, paradox and suggestion), or somewhat inaccurate. With respect to the length of Adamantine Songs, for example, they in fact can span from a single line to hundreds; and designating their purpose as ‘the evocation of a certain feeling’ does not

take their transformative function seriously enough. Above all they have a function, and that function is more than merely emotive. I take quite seriously Kvaerne's understanding of them as constituting an initiation in and of themselves. How this is possible will be explored now through an analysis of the language of Tantric songs.

Tantric Hermeneutics: Sandhyā bhāṣā

When it comes to Tantric songs of any variety, it is true that there are more and less educated hearers or readers of their words, and that there are specific ways that they can be read. What follows, however, will be a discussion of three correct levels of reading which we can loosely call outer (*phyi*; literal simile, referring to the outer world), inner (*nang*; emotive, subjective) and secret language (*gsang ba*; mystical). The 'outer' level of interpretation is the easiest to grasp as it is literal. It is also the least likely to convey any sense of what is actually at work in any Tantric text. When Atīśa was prohibited from teaching Saraha's *Dohās* and other tantric practices, it was because (according to Gö Lotsawa's *Blue Annals*, in any case) he was interpreting the teachings literally and there was great fear that he would thereby destroy the morals of Tibetans. The 'inner level' is along the lines of what Schaeffer appeals to in his definition of Adamantine Songs. At the level where a reader or listener is informed enough, enough of an 'insider' to have a direct and visceral response to what she or he is hearing/reading, that may be said to be the 'inner level'. Herbert Guenther writes of the songs of Saraha: "The point to note is that the decisive factor...is to bring about certain experiences that are felt to be valuable in their own right rather than to discuss the contents in propositions and to

assign them a purely speculative value” (1969 23). This also appeals to the inner, subjective level of response to a Tantric text.

The third, or ‘secret’ level is one accessible only to a very small, elite audience. In response to words that some will take literally as either nonsensical or totally immoral, that some will respond to at a deep, visceral level as being both edifying, inspirational and transformative, the third group will hear detailed instructions for advanced yogic practices. These are instructions that even Saraha would keep from the eyes and ears of the inexperienced. To use an example I referred to above (note 15), references to everyday images like the sun and the moon (“neither Sun nor Moon” Kvaerne 199), to a lotus flower or *bodhicitta* (the thought of awakening), are referring at this last secret level to everything from the channels of the subtle body, to semen and menstrual blood, to the human generative organs. This poetic language that is so very flexible that it has three formal levels of interpretation naturally has a name. Translated variously as twilight or intentional language, in (Buddhist) Sanskrit it is called *samdhyā-bhāṣā*. Sometimes written as *samdhā-bhāṣā*, it is at least clear that it is derived from the prefix *sam* and the verbal root *√dhā*, meaning to ‘join’, ‘unite’, ‘combine’ or ‘bring together’. When it becomes *samdhyā* that joining comes to refer to the joining of day and night, or twilight. Thus understood as ‘twilight language’ it connotes a linguistically interstitial space where things are not always easy to make out, as they come in and out of focus in the unsteady crepuscular light. This type of language, then, is enigmatic, obscure, or half-hidden. Alternatively read as *samdhā*²⁰, it can be glossed as ‘intentional’ or allusive speech. The connotations of the latter version imply more strongly the intentionality of the author,

²⁰ sometimes also *samdhāya*

though to my mind the two readings denote the same kind of polysemic language. The Tibetan translation of the term is *mkha' 'gro gsang ba'i brda*, or 'secret dākinī language', a type of language which has an intriguing development throughout Tibetan Buddhist history as both Tantric language and as the revealed language of *gTer mas*.

Attempts at deciphering *samdhyā* language – or at least some of the key terms therein – have been made most notably by Mircea Eliade and Mohammad Shahidullah, though especially in the case of the former, different Tantric systems have been conflated in his analysis of the language and results in some inaccuracies. In any case, one must be an initiate oneself to really understand 'intentional language', so whatever attempts scholars (including myself) may make to penetrate it are bound to be flawed. Secrecy is gently maintained to this day by means of propagation of limited and at times contradictory knowledge with respect to Tantric practices and theories. That secrecy is something I respect, though I nonetheless make every effort to understand the multiple interpretive layers of the Adamantine Song cycle translated here.

Conclusion

This chapter has covered a wide range of literary, linguistic and geographical variations. I felt it was necessary to provide this introduction to the South Asian literary context out of which Saraha emerged in order to contextualize the genre and opaque language of his Adamantine Songs. By also providing a general introduction to Tibetan poetics I have also allowed readers to glimpse the literary context his work was read in at the time of its

transmission to Tibet, and given some idea of how it may be read in contemporary Tibetan religious contexts as well.

Part II

TEXTS

Introduction to the Critical Edition

Initially using the *sDe dge bsTan* 'gyur edition as a skeleton, as I compared and studied the five versions I have been working with I made editorial decisions myself where there were textual variants. Where alternatives exist (whether in spelling, punctuation, grammatical particles, vocabulary or entire lines of poetry), it has been marked with footnotes.

While I have identified four of the five sources as 'canonical', this ought not give readers the impression that they are therefore unproblematic or consistent with each other. The numerous versions of the Tibetan canon – their composition, patronage, reproduction and appellation – have been the subject of rather a lot of discussion. Paul Harrison provides a useful and illuminating exploration of the various incarnations of the *bKa*' 'gyur in his 1996 essay, "A Brief History of the Tibetan bKa' 'gyur", and the editor's introduction to *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre* teases out some the complexities belonging to *bKa*' 'gyur, *bsTan* 'gyur as well as other large 'authoritative' collections of Tibetan literature.

I have identified the four canonical sources as the *sDe dge* (D), *Co ne* (C), *sNar thang* (N) and 'Peking' (P) *bsTan* 'gyurs. All were compiled over time, sometimes being revised with enormous time gaps in between (as in the case of the *sNar thang*, which has versions from the 14th and 18th centuries). The 'Peking' edition, for example, which is one of the most frequently referred to versions, doesn't properly exist as such. What is most commonly referred to as 'the' Peking canon is in fact a series of editions made

from woodblocks, beginning in circa 1411 with the Yonglé edition, but which inevitably wore out and needed to be recarved. Each new woodblock carving naturally entailed some changes, errors and small alterations, and as a result there also exists (as ‘the Peking edition’) the Wanli impression (1605), the two Kangxi impressions of 1684/92 and 1700, 1717-1720, the Qianlong of 1737, and at least one more impression (Harrison 81). From this brief discussion, it should be clear that there is a certain amount of fluidity inherent in the so-called ‘canon’ of Tibetan Buddhism.

The fifth version of the Adamantine Songs is taken from the collection *‘phags yul grub dbang dam pa rnams kyi zab mo’i do ha rnams las kho la byung mu tig phreng ba bzhugs so* or “Pearl Garland of the Profound *Dohas* of the Noble Great *Siddhas* of India” which was ordered, put together and carved into woodblocks overseen by the great Jamgon Ju Mipham Gyatso (1846-1912). While in theory this is supposed to be an edited volume, it is in fact very *lightly* edited, containing numerous small corrections (and errors), clearly principally drawn from the same source as the *sDe dge* and *Co ne* editions of the *bsTan ‘gyur*. In fact, the M, D and C editions differ little from each other, with only minor exceptions. Additionally, the P and N editions also differ little from each other, though are quite distinct from the M, D and C group. Throughout my comparison of the five recensions, I began and continue to think of them as two groups, one consisting of M, D and C and other consisting of P and N. I believe this reflects the provenance of the various versions of the *bsTan ‘gyur*.

Another issue that must be mentioned here is numbering of verses. In Sanskrit verse, each stanza tends to be explicitly numbered and when not so are nonetheless easily discerned by the standard 4-line stanza construction. The structure of these Adamantine Songs is really rather loose and there are no clear indications of how long each stanza should be. I have nonetheless marked and numbered the stanzas where it appears to be appropriate. In addition, I have numbered the lines which will allow readers to easily find corresponding passages in any given edition available to them. The stanza and line numbering are consistent between the Tibetan critical edition and the English translation that follows it.

*Body Treasury*¹

rgya gar skad du / kā ya koṣāmrita badzra gīti²

bod skad du / sku'i mdzod 'chi med rdo rje'i glu

1. 'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur ba la pyag 'tshal lo

kye ho bdag dang byed par 'dzin pa ral pa can

bram ze gcer bus³ da⁴ ga pa dang ni

kho na nyid gzhi 'dod pa'i⁵ rgyang phan⁶ pa

5. thams cad mkhyen zhes zer nas rang ma rig

des ni slu⁷ bar 'ong ste thar lam ring //1//

bye brag pa dang mdo sde sngags pa dang

rnal 'byor pa dang dbu ma la sogs te

gcig la gcig skyon 'gel zhing rtsod par byed

10. snang stong mkha' mnyam de nyid mi shes pa

lhan cig skyes la rgyab kyis phyogs par 'gyur //2//

sku gsung thugs gsal mar mer ras dang⁸ mar nag bzhin

kho na nyid ldan⁹ rang snang mar me lta bur gsal

rang rig gsal bas 'gro ba kun la khyab

15. dbyer med tshul gyis ma skyes pa yi¹⁰ rang bzhin yin //3//

¹ In N and P, the Adamantine Song Cycle is preceded by a title page reading: *sku gsungs thugs 'chi med rdo rje'i mdzod kyi glu rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug chen po sa ra ha'i zhabs kyis mdzad pa bzhugs*.

² P, N: kaa ya ko .shamri dha ba dzra gii taa

³ M: gcer bu ba

⁴ P, N: gcer bu sang ga pa

⁵ M: bzhin dod pa'i ; D, C: bzhi 'dod pa'i

⁶ P, N: pan

⁷ P, N: bslu

⁸ P, N: "ras dang" omitted

⁹ P, N: lhan

¹⁰ P, N: pa'i

bdag tu 'dzin pa'i sems kyis dran pa sna tshogs rgyu
 ngo bo nyid la¹¹ snang tshul cir yang 'char
 mun pa lta bu'i bag la kun gnas kyang
 de nyid rnyed pa'i rnal 'byor sgron me 'bar //4//

20. snying po'i don ni rtog ge'i yul las 'das
 mngon du mi gsal dran pa'i mthu yis bsgribs
 rtog med nges shes¹² dran med bde ba'i lam
 ci phyir¹³ bgrod med 'bras bu blo las 'das par snang //5//

25. lhan cig skyes pa thugs kyi gter mdzod nas
 dag dang ma dag 'khor 'das gzugs su snang
 snang yang skye ba med pa'i ngang¹⁴ dug cig
 de nyid mi g.yo tha snyad rang bzhin med //6//

- phyag rgya chen po 'gyur med bde chen dang¹⁵
 rgyu la mi ltos¹⁶ 'bras bu blo las 'das
 30. phyag rgya chen po rdzogs pa'i 'bras bu yin
 tha snyad lam gyi don la mtshon te sbyar¹⁷ //7//

- brjod bya rjod byed med pa snying po'i don
 kun gyi brjod bya dran med rig ba'i dbyings
 mos pa'i shes pas rtogs pa tha dad kyang
 35. dran med 'di la brdzun pa yod re skan //8//

lam gyi rtsol bas 'bras bu so so yang
 dran pa 'di la bden pa yod re skan

¹¹ P damaged

¹² P: rtogs med nges shes; D: rtag med des shes; C, M: des shes

¹³ D, C, M: *omit* ci phyir

¹⁴ C: dang

¹⁵ P: ngang

¹⁶ P, N: bltos

¹⁷ P, N: sbyor

- btang snyoms dbang gis re 'jog tha dad kyang
 skye med¹⁸ 'di la gnyis su yod re skan
40. yid la bya dang mi bya snyad 'dogs kyang
 blo 'das 'di la btsal¹⁹ du yod re skan //9//
- snang pa'i rkyen gyis²⁰ dran pa skye 'gyur yang
 stong pa'i dran med rkyen las 'da' ba med
 rtog med don la bya bral blta ru med
45. rang la gzhan²¹ nas tshol ba a²² re 'khrul //10//
- kye ho²³ rdo rje lta bur rtogs dka'²⁴ kho na nyid
 ma shes rtsol bas sgra phyir 'brang²⁵ sems kyis
 bya ba med pa'i don dang phrad²⁶ par dka'²⁷
 bya ba'i rang bzhin mi bya shes gyur na
50. rgyal ba'i dgongs pa nyag gcig yul las 'das //11//
- sku ni mi 'gyur chos nyid khong stong lags
 lus la mi gnas bya dang byed pa bral
 lam bslad lam gyi²⁸ 'bras bu mthong mi 'gyur
 skye med ngang²⁹ la mi 'byed rgyal ba'i thugs //12//
55. dran med ngang la mnyam gzhag bde ba che
 bde chen ngang la mi rtog rgyun la gnas³⁰

¹⁸ D: skye mad

¹⁹ P: bcal

²⁰ kyis

²¹ P, N: bzhag

²² P, N: e

²³ kye 'o

²⁴ C: dga'

²⁵ P: 'bangs

²⁶ P: prad; N: phrang

²⁷ C: dga'

²⁸ P, N: gyis

²⁹ N: dang

³⁰ P, N: bde chen mi rtogs rgyun tu rang la gnas

yid la mi byed snang ba rang sar dag
rkyen ni³¹ dran pa ma 'gag³² ye shes gsal //13//

- rtsa ba gcig rgyas skyon med padma bzhin
60. 'gro ba kun la lhan cig skyes bzhin gnas
gzhan yod long³³ mthong stobs kyis bslad mod kyang
ji bzhin thog ma'i padma me tog bzhin
legs mthong stobs kyi³⁴ phyag rgya che mi g.yo //14//

- gzung dang 'dzin pa'i rnyog mas bslad gyur kyang
65. dus gsum 'gyur med rtsa ba bdag nyid che
mam shes rlung dang 'og sgo sngags la sogs
ye nas spyod bral rang gzhan btang gzhag bral //15//

- 'khor bar mi sems³⁵ mya ngan 'das mi ltos
dus gsum srid gsum sku gsung thugs la 'dus
70. gang la mi 'bad³⁶ blang dor lta ba med
mtha' dbus mi 'byed dbu ma drang po'i³⁷ lam //16//

- bcas bcos bral na thugs kyi lam mchog ste
bgrod 'jug rim³⁸ sogs pha rol phyin pa'i lam
nye lam gzhag³⁹ nas ring du 'khor ba'i rgyu
75. lhan cig skyes dang gnyen po 'gran zla bral //17//

kho na nyid la sku bzhi ye shes lnga

³¹ C: pi

³² P, N: 'gags

³³ P, N: log

³⁴ P, N: kyis

³⁵ D: sams

³⁶ D: 'bang; P, N: ma 'bad

³⁷ D: pa'i

³⁸ D: bgrad 'jug ram; P, N: rims

³⁹ P, N: bzhag

nyon mongs la sogs tshogs pas 'khor ba'i lam
yul du gang skyes mi sbyad⁴⁰ yul med mthong
ngo bo nyid la dga' dang mi dga' med //18//

80. 'dzin rtog gnyis bcas ma bcas chos kyi sku
dbang po rang yan ma zin stong par gnas
smrar med nyams su myong ba rgyun mi 'chad
rang gi rgyud la sbyar te shes par bya //19//

- dri ma med pa'i don la phyag rgya che
85. rgya mtsho nam mkha' lta bu'i nyams myong 'byung
dbang po yul bral ltung ba'i g.yang sa med
dran pas zin pas khyod nyid chags pa ste //20//

- rang btang gzhag pas sbros⁴¹ pa slar la ldog
[89.]⁴² 'char nub med na nam rtog mun pa nub
90. chos nyis ro mnyom bung pa'i⁴³ me tog mtshungs
skyon dang yon tan dbyer med nyid du mtshungs
ngo mtshar che ste⁴⁴ nyams myong smrar ma gtub //21//

- bde ba⁴⁵ dbyer med ji ltar chu gzhag bzhin
lhan cig skyes dang mal 'byor de mi 'bral
95. dngos gcig⁴⁶ bsam pa du mar dran mthong yang
dran med gcig yin du ma nyid du yin
gang zhig lhan cig skyes dga' bde chen stong
mal 'byor spyod pa blo las 'das par sbyod⁴⁷

⁴⁰ P, N: spyad

⁴¹ P, N: spros

⁴² the *shad* (/) between lines 88 and 89 does not appear in the D edition, but does in all the others.

⁴³ D: bud ba'i

⁴⁴ P slightly damaged here

⁴⁵ P, N: bden pa

⁴⁶ P, N: cig

⁴⁷ C, P, N: spyod

chags lam gnyug ma'i don la sbyor 'dod na //22//

100. nang dang phyi rol ma dmigs bdag gzhan min
de nyid don⁴⁸ shes rang bzhin grol bar⁴⁹ bstan
sku gsum chos skur dbye ba med mod kyang
nyams su blangs na 'bras bu so sor⁵⁰ 'byung //23//

- kye ho dbyer med rtogs na lta ngan myur du 'joms
105. skye med stong pa dbyer med thug phrad don⁵¹
yin par shes na nags 'dab rten dang bral
thug phrad ma shes mtshan ma'i snying rje ni
'khor ba'i gnas su⁵² ci spyad zag pa'i rgyu //24//

- stong dang snying rje dbyer med skye ba med
110. gang zhig 'khor dang myang 'das re dogs bral
lus sems ma rnyed dran med rang dgar⁵³ gzhag
de nyid blo yis ma rnyed rang byung yin //25//

- mnyam gzhag rjes thob zhi gnas mtshan nyid de
don dam ma yin blo yis bsgom du med
115. lus ngag sems kyis gzugs sogs rtsol med gsal
sna rtse la sogs dbyibs dang nam mkha' dang
rtsa la reg par ma spyad gnyug mar gnas //26//

- snang ba thams cad bde ba yod mi⁵⁴ byed
dran pa snang tsam sgyu mar shes tsam gsal
120. zla ba'i gzugs brnyan cha med gzung pas stong

⁴⁸ P: ngong

⁴⁹ N: brol bar bzhin grol bar

⁵⁰ D, C, M: so so

⁵¹ P, N: do

⁵² N: "gnas su" becomes "gnsu"

⁵³ P, N: gar

⁵⁴ P, N: yid ma

btsal kyang med la bltas kyang mthong ba med //27//

- sgyu mar snang ba'i dran pa de dran te
dran pa med las cir yang mthong pa med
dran par snang yang de la 'dzin pa med
125. dran pas reg kyang reg⁵⁵ gi bsam bral bas //28//

bsam du med pas bral bas skye ba med
dran pa skyes kyang yul la mi sbyod par
cir yang ma grub stong pa'i rang sor gzhag
ji ltar byas kyang phyag rgya rgyun mi 'chad //29//

130. yan lag bzhi ldan phyag rgya chen po bzhi
skye med don rtogs pa yi yan lag dang
bden gnyis tha mi dad⁵⁶ kyi yan lag dang
snang ba skye med thug phrad nyid du rtogs //30//

- dran pa gzung du med pa'i yan lag dang
135. stong pa rkyen dang dran med blo las 'das
dngos po dgag sgrub med pa'i yan lag go //31//

- de nyid gzhir ldan 'dod pas dben pa dang
rtog pa dang bcas dpyod par bcas ba dang
dga' dang bde⁵⁷ dang dben par gnas la sogs
140. tha snyad de nyid mtshon pa'i yul du gsungs //32//

- gzhir ldan rab 'bring tha mar gsungs pa yang
dman pa'i don du mkhas bas rab tu bshad
[143]⁵⁸ phyag rgya chen po gang la gnas mi byed

⁵⁵ M: rag

⁵⁶ D: mi dar; P, N: mid dang

⁵⁷ M: bed

- blang dor bral ba'i don du de bzhin bshad
145. gtsang smer⁵⁹ mi 'byed gang yang dngos grub dag⁶⁰ tu byed //33//
- lhan cig skyes dang yul la gtum mo sbar la sogs⁶¹
 dam tshig bdag gi kho na nyid dang mal 'byor bsgom
 dngos po thams cad mnyam nyid phyag rgya⁶² chen po la
 rtog pa spang zhing mi rtog bsgom pa ci zhig⁶³ 'gyur //34//
150. bla ma la gus gsang ba'i 'dul sdom de ru rdzogs
 phyi nang gsang ba'i dbang bskur so so'i mtshon nyid dang
 bum pa gsang ba shes rab ye shes dang
 ngo bo nges tshig dbye ba la sogs kun
 thun mong mthu skyes phyag rgya che la reg mi nus //35//
155. kye ho⁶⁴ phyag rgya che la 'bras bu'i bdag nyid sku gsung thugs ldan pas
 'bras bu de yang snying po'i don la 'thad kyis⁶⁵ drang dang nges pa'i don la min
 lam dang 'bras bu'i snying po thams cad bcud bsdu⁶⁶ dang
 theg chen bla na med pa'i dngos dang theg⁶⁷ pa dag gi khyad par dang //36//
- kun gyi snying por gyur nas gsang ba bla na med
160. phyag rgya chen po⁶⁸ nges pa'i mtshan nyid ni
 dran dang dran med gnyis su med pas skye med de
 blo las 'das shing nam mkha' lta bur cir mi gnas //37//

⁵⁸ the *shad* (/) between lines 142 and 143 does not appear in the D edition, but does in all the others.

⁵⁹ P, N: rmer

⁶⁰ P, N: dpag

⁶¹ D: sags

⁶² P, N: "pyag rgya" is absent

⁶³ D: zhag

⁶⁴ P, N: kye 'o

⁶⁵ P, N: kyi

⁶⁶ P, N: 'dus

⁶⁷ N: thag

⁶⁸ D: pa

las kyi phyag rgya dpe dang chos kyi phyag rgya'i lam
 phyag rgya chen po 'bras bu dam tshig phyag rgya gzhan don te
 165. chos kyi phyag rgya man chad bsten pas mthar mi 'gro
 re dogs mthar lhung 'du 'dzi bya ba'i skyon du 'gyur //38//

kho na nyid la gnyen po dbyer med rang sor gzha
 rnam rtog ji snyed shar yang lhug pa nyid la shar
 dran pa rang sar grol nas dran med lhug pa nyid
 170. gang yang longs spyod snang bar shes shing dran med gsos //39//

rang bzhin nyams nyid⁶⁹ skye med dag tu ldan
 kun la khyab cing 'bab⁷⁰ chu lta bur gnas
 rgyun mi chad pa'i 'bab tshu lta bu dang⁷¹
 mar me ltar gsal rang rig byang chub sems
 175. 'gog pa med bzhin dran rig rang gis stong //40//

yang dag kho na nyid ni gang zhe na
 gzhan na yod na kun gyis mthong bar rigs
 rang la yod kyang lkog gyur bla ma'i zhal
 sems nyid sangs rgyas kho na nyid yin te
 180. dran pas bslad cing de nyid gzhan du brtags //41//

sangs rgyas yin phyir yon tan gang zhe na
 yon tan ras dang dkar po lta bu ste
 kho na nyid kyi yon tan phyag rgya che
 ngo bo yon tan so so tha dad min //42//

185. phyag rgya che dang bzhi pa la sogs 'og ma⁷² kun

⁶⁹ P, N: rnyed

⁷⁰ D: 'bang

⁷¹ P, N: *this line is entirely omitted*

⁷² D, C, M: 'og ma kun *is omitted*

yon tan so so ma yin tha dad min
dran med yon tan rgya mtsho ma 'gul bar
dran par mi 'gyur chu yi dba'⁷³ rlabs med //43//

190. skye med yon tan mi 'gyur brag dang 'dra
brag ca grag tsam rjes su 'brang ba med
blo las⁷⁴ 'das shing yul du ma gyur pa
phyag rgya chen po'i yon tan nam mkha' 'dra //44//

195. dran pa sems can sems las byung ba yin
de phyir stong pa gzhan nas btsal mi dgos
bzhi ru snang yang gcig gi yon tan ni
phyag rgya bzhi ru snang ba ci phyir mtshon //45//

200. gong gi khyad par dag gi bzhi ru byung
phyag rgya chen po gsum du rtog mi byed
gang la mi gnas chags pa med par⁷⁵ spyod
me tog sbrang rtsi sbrang mas 'thung dang 'dra //46//

205. so sor rtog pa'i ye shes thabs yin te
ro dang phrad na rol zhen pa med
de ltar kun gyis shes par 'gyur ma yin
snying po'i don gyi 'gro drug khyab mod kyang
'gro ba dran pas bcings te pad tra'i srin //47//

sems las dran pa byung phyir 'khrul pa'i rgyu
yid la mi byed shes na sangs rgyas nyid
'khrul pa de la thabs dang shes rab med
kye ho⁷⁶ dbyer med shes na thabs mchog de kho na //48//

⁷³ P, N: rba

⁷⁴ D, C, M: yis

⁷⁵ P, N: phyag rgya chen por (*instead of chags pa etc.*)

210. sangs rgyas sems can chos nam thams cad kun
rang gi sems nyid dag dang lhan cig skyes
yid la mi byed yid la skyes tsam na
dran pa'i snang ba nub ste bden brdzun med
de phyir de nyid kho na'i yul ma yin //49//
215. dper na mig gi yul du sgra mi snang
nam par mi rtog rtog pa'i⁷⁷ yul ma yin
stong pa'i rkyen gyis dran pa gsal tsam na
dran pa'i snang ba nub nas mthong ba med //50//
- ye shes 'on long lkugs par mi 'gyur te⁷⁸
220. ma dran pa la 'on long lkugs rgyu med
bems so la sogs tha snyad kun dang bral
snang ba nub ces bya ba'i tha snyad ni
dran pa phyags te dran med gsos su spungs //51//
- de nyid skye med blo las 'das pa ni
225. dran pa med⁷⁹ dang skye med ye shes mes
gzung⁸⁰ 'dzin bsregs sbyangs blo las 'das phul bas
smon lam dbang gis skye ba phyis mi brgyud //52//
- de phyir phyag rgya chen po sngon song la
su la mi brten gang la rag ma lus
230. chu⁸¹ la zhugs dang tshogs dang za⁸² 'gyed byed
rig⁸³ byed grong khyer dkrog⁸⁴ pa dag dang mtshungs //53//

⁷⁶ P, N: kye 'o

⁷⁷ P, N: dran pa'i (*instead of* rtog pa'i)

⁷⁸ P, N: ram

⁷⁹ P, N: me

⁸⁰ D: gzang

⁸¹ P, N: bcu

⁸² P, N: zas

phyag rgya chen po rang las gzhan med phyir
 mchod rdzas dran pa mgron⁸⁵ dang mchod gnas rang shes pas
 mchod pa rang gi dran pa med la mchod

235. blo las 'das kyi skye med tshogs la rol //54//

phyag rgya chen po gzhan la mi ltos phyir
 bsgom bya rang la sgom⁸⁶ byed rang gi sems
 blo 'das rang la dmigs pa nyid dang bral
 de nyid 'bras bu yin phyir gzhan la rag ma lus //55//

240. bsgom bsgrub sngags bzlas rang gi sems yin te
 yi dam lha dang⁸⁷ rang gi sems yi pas
 de phyir mkha' 'gro lung ston la sogs rang gi sems
 sems ni dran pa cir yang snang bar ston //56//

ma dran pa la⁸⁸ thams cad dmigs su med
 245. phyag rgya chen po rang las gzhan med phyir
 sangs rgyas chos dang dge 'dun la sogs te
 pha ma dkon mchog rang bzhin byang chub sems
 mchod dang bsnyen bkur byas na dran pa'i rgyu //57//

tha dad med na skye med rang sar grol
 250. blo las 'das na⁸⁹ bya dang mi bya med
 sangs rgyas sems can mtshon tshul so so yang
 lhan cig dag tu skyes te rig ma rig //58//

⁸³ P: rigs

⁸⁴ P: khrog

⁸⁵ P, N: 'gron

⁸⁶ P, N: bsgom

⁸⁷ M: 'ang; P, N: yang

⁸⁸ P, N: ste

⁸⁹ P, N: la

gang zhig snang yang dran par mi rtog⁹⁰ na
 sems can nyid ni 'bras bu skye ba med
 255. gang zhig mi snang dran par rtog ce na⁹¹
 sangs rgyas nyid kyang khams gsum 'khor pa'i rgyu //59//

gang zhig dran med yid la 'chang byed ci
 sems can snang yang sangs rgyas dag dang mtshungs
 gang zhig dran pa sangs rgyas rtogs 'dod na
 260. sangs rgyas snang yang sems can⁹² khyed par med //60//

des na snang brtags gnyis la brtag tu⁹³ med de bor
 bor yang rang las gzhan med 'gro rgyan 'chad
 rang las yod snyam rtog ge⁹⁴ dran pas bsalad
 snang ba gsal⁹⁵ la mi rtog ma⁹⁶ zhen sems //61//

265. de phyir yod dang med pa'i rtog pa gnyis bral te
 gnyug mar gnas na gang ltar byas kyang bde
 dran pa 'od gsal 'dzin pai' snying po can
 zhen pa gnyis dang bral⁹⁷ te rang bzhin gnyug mar gzhag //62//

des na phyag rgya chen po zung du rab 'jug ste
 270. dran pa dran med skye med zung du 'jug
 dran med mi rtog pa yi rang⁹⁸ bzhin dang
 rten 'brel glo bur skye ba'i dran pa gnyis

⁹⁰ P, N: rtogs

⁹¹ P, N: after this line, extra two lines. The first repeats 254 and the second is similar to but differs from 255: sems can nyid ni 'bras bu skye ba med / gang zhig mi snang rten pa rtog ge pa// As it does not change the meaning of the stanza but only adds some redundancy, I have opted to leave it out.

⁹² N: sen (*instead of* sems can)

⁹³ P, N: du

⁹⁴ D: gi

⁹⁵ P, N: bsal

⁹⁶ P, N: mi

⁹⁷ M: phral

⁹⁸ C: rad

skye ba med pa'i ngang⁹⁹ du ro gcig phyir
des na skye dang skye ba blo las 'das //63//

275. 'od gsal stong dang zung du 'jug la sogs
ma bcos ma byas skye med rang sar grol
de la sku gsum chos sku longs sku dang
sna tshogs snang ba sprul sku zhes su bshad //64//

280. gnyug ma ngo bo nyid kyi sku yin te
snying rje stong dang¹⁰⁰ dbyer med skye ba med
las kyi phyag rgya la brten nyams myong ni
bcos¹⁰¹ ma yin phyir rkyen gyi¹⁰² stobs las byung //65//

285. gzhan la ltos¹⁰³ phyir kho na nyid ma yin
chos kyi phyag rgya bcos ma ma yin kyang
nyams su myong bas ma grub nyid mi mthong
phyag rgya chen po nyams su myong 'gyur na
dran pa sna tshogs skye ba med par shes //66//

290. dngos por snang ba ngo bo nyid kyis stong
sems can skye ba med dang dbyer med don
snying rje thabs kyis mtshon bya dpe¹⁰⁴ yis bstan //67//

sna tshogs snang yang blo 'das yul mi g.yo
bdag nyid mal 'byor de nyid rtag tu blta
spyod lam thams cad phyag rgya che la gnas
dngos po'i gnas lugs skye med ngang du gzhag //68//

⁹⁹ D, C, M: dang

¹⁰⁰ C: dad

¹⁰¹ D: btsos

¹⁰² P, N: gyis

¹⁰³ P, N: bltos

¹⁰⁴ N: pa

295. rlung gi rkyen bcas rgya mtsho dang pa las¹⁰⁵
 dba¹⁰⁶ rlabs chu yi¹⁰⁷ gnyer ma glo bur skye
 de nyid rgya mtsho dag dang dbyer med do
 dran pas rkyen byas rtog pa glo bur skye
 de nyid sngar gyi dran pa med dang ni
 300. skye med blo 'das dag gis¹⁰⁸ ngo mtshar mtshungs //69//

- de ltar phyag rgya che la skyes pa sngar med bzhin
 phyis kyang rkyen gyi¹⁰⁹ stobs kyis¹¹⁰ skyes srid kyang
 skye ba med pa de dag¹¹¹ dbyer med do
 gzugs can ma yin kun la khyab pa dang
 305. mi 'gyur ba dang dus rnams thams cad¹¹² pa'o //70//

 nam mkha lta bur skye 'gag med pa dang
 thag¹¹³ pa sbrul bzung sbrul gyi¹¹⁴ stong pa dang
 chos sku longs sku sprul sku dbyer med de
 ngo bo nyid ni blo yi yul las 'das //71//

310. phyag rgya chen po skad cig mngon sangs rgyas
 de nyid sems can don du gzugs skur byung
 rgyu mthun¹¹⁵ 'bras bu rnam smin 'bras bu dang
 dri ma med pa'i 'bras bu gzhan don byed
 go 'phang khyad par brjod las 'das par bshad //72//

¹⁰⁵ D, C: bral; M: pa la; P,N: dngas pa la

¹⁰⁶ P, N: rba

¹⁰⁷ P, N: la

¹⁰⁸ P, N: gi

¹⁰⁹ P, N: gyis

¹¹⁰ P, N: gyis

¹¹¹ P, N: dang

¹¹² N: thad (*instead of* thams cad)

¹¹³ D: theg

¹¹⁴ P, N: de nyid sbrul gyis (*instead of* sbrul bzung sbrul gyi)

¹¹⁵ P, N: 'thun

315. kye ho¹¹⁶ ma bcos phyag rgya bde ba che
bran med klong du rang shar ba
skye med nam mkha lta bur khyab
blo las 'das pa'i ngang la gnas //73//

snang¹¹⁷ ba spros bral ba de ba che
320. dran med cir yang mi rtog pa
dran pa sna tshogs sems su gsal
brtag cing¹¹⁸ btsal na dmigs su med //74//

skye ba med pa 'dzin dang bral
'dzin dang bral ba'i¹¹⁹ rgyu ba med
325. dran pa sgyu ma rang rig tsam
sgyu med thar med dran med gsal //75//

skye med don dam kun gsal bas
thams cad blo las 'das par snang
khams gsum blo 'das ye shes nyid
330. lhan cig skyes pa de kho na
dran pa'i rtsa ba ma lus thag bcad do¹²⁰ //76//

dran med skye ba med pa'i dbyings la dgod
de nyid ma bcos blo yi yul las 'das
dran rig sems kyi rang 'bar nyid du gsal
335. gsal bas rnam rtog 'khor ba'i grogs su 'gyur //77//

thar pa'i lam ni kho na nyid shes nas

¹¹⁶ P, N: kyi 'o

¹¹⁷ P: snat

¹¹⁸ P, N: shing

¹¹⁹ P, N: phyir

¹²⁰ P, N: de

rang 'byung ji bzhin bsam bral ngang¹²¹ la gnas
dran pa rang gsal dngos por grub pa med //78//

- bcos med dgongs pa skye med bde chen 'di
340. mngon sum snang bas ngos¹²² gzung gang yang med
dran med yul du cir yang mthong ba med
rten dang bral bas slob pa gang yang med //79//

- gang la yid la byar med phyag rgya che
mtshan ma'i dran rig sna tshogs ji snyed pa
345. de nyid phyag rgya che la dbye ba med
rtogs dang mi rtogs gnyi ga so so min //80//

- rtag chad mtha' la mi gnas skyon dang bral
rang gi de¹²³ nyid rtogs na gzhan las min
rten 'brel mya ngan 'das lam bstan pa dang
350. kye ba med par rtogs na phyag rgya che //81//

- de nyid mi shes las kyi phyag rgya dang
dam tshig chos la sogs pa rtsol 'dod pa
de nyid mtshon ba'i dpe tsam don mi nus
gzung 'dzin bral ba'i phyag rgya che brten pa
355. shes pa rang lugs so ma nyid la byung //82//

'dod med rang gzhan¹²⁴ gnyug ma'i ngo bor gnas
tha mal snang ba'i shes pa 'di nyid blo
yin min dran pa'i sems la rang gzhag¹²⁵ yin
yid ches rin chen gdams ngag yid bzhin gter

¹²¹ C: dad; P, N: dang

¹²² D: ngos *omitted*

¹²³ P: di

¹²⁴ P, N: gzhag

¹²⁵ P: bzhag

360. yid la bya dang mi bya med par¹²⁶ gzhag //83//

rang rig phyag rgya chen po nyid yin pas
phyag rgya chen po nyid la nyid kyis bstan
dran pa sna tshogs don la sems ma 'jug //84//

365. phyi nang bral bas rtsod med phyag rgya dang
phyag rgya chen po srog ldan 'dod pa med
'dod pa byung na de yang dran pa'i rgyu //85//

rang sems phyag rgya chen po la
dran dang¹²⁷ ma dran tha dad¹²⁸ skye ba med
'khrul dang ma 'khrul blo yi yul las 'das
370. dran pa'i zhen rtog brtas pas 'khor ba'i rgyu //86//

'od gsal phyag rgya chen po gnyug ma'i ngo bo nyid
gang yang 'gyur med byang chub sems su gcig
kho na nyid la gzung 'dzin ngo bo bral
snang ba don ldan ye shes nyid du mthong //87//

375. bsam pas brtags pas dran pa'i tshogs su rgyus
snang ba skye ba log pa'i stobs kyis mthong
dran pa dran med ngang¹²⁹ la shes 'jug pa
lus ngag¹³⁰ yid kyis 'bad kyang dran rgyu med
gnyis su med na 'khor ba'i rang bzhin med //88//

380. dran pa sna tshogs 'gyu ba'i rang bzhin 'di
sna rtse'i phyag rgya dag la ye nas med

¹²⁶ P, N: rang bzhing (*between* par and gzhag/)

¹²⁷ P, N: pa

¹²⁸ D: dang

¹²⁹ D, C, P: dang

¹³⁰ C, M, P, N: dag

des na phyag rgya chen po bsam med blang dor gzhag //89//

- kye ho¹³¹ phyi nang zab dang mi zab bskyed rim dang
yongs grub ngo bo nyid dang dbugs dbyung dang
385. rgyas gdab las dang chos kyi phyag rgya ni
mal 'byor yongs su rdzogs pa'i rim pa¹³² ste //90//

- phyag rgya chen po ngo bo nyid kyi rim
dam tshig phyag rgya yongs su grub pa'i rim
kun brtags yongs su grub pa'i rgya
390. las kyi phyag rgya dbang gi ngo bo dang //91//

- dga' ba bzhi ldan thabs kyi rang bzhin can
chos kyi phyag rgya sna tshogs snang ba ste
dga' bzhi'i lhan cig skyes pa nyid
phyag rgya chen po skye ba med pa la
395. gzung 'dzin dran bral ngo bo blo las 'das //92//

- dri ma med pa'i 'bras bu mngon¹³³ sangs rgyas
dam tshig phyag rgya mtsan ma'i rnal 'byor te
'bras bu lha yid kyil 'khor 'gro ba'i don
rje btsun pha ma thabs dang shes rab mtshon //93//

400. dga' ba bzhi ldan dam tshig phyag rgya che
de ltar thabs kyi sbyor ba kun 'dul yang
zab mo chos kyi phyag rgyas gtan la dbab
sems nyid phyag rgya chen po rang la bstan //94//

dga' bas gzung pa'i¹³⁴ dran pa bkar¹³⁵ pa dang

¹³¹ P, N: kye 'o

¹³² P: damaged

¹³³ P: mdon

405. mchog dgas 'dzin pa'i dran phyed¹³⁶ gtang ba dang
 lhan cig skyes dgas dran pa bkar bas dang
 dga' bral snang ba skye med dran pa gsal
 de bzhin zab mo'i chos kyi phyag rgya bstan //95//

dga' bzhi ye shes gang du skyes pa dang
 410. tha mi dad cing yongs su thim par gnas
 rtog pa'i nyams myong dag la gnas pa dang
 yid la ma dran rtog pa tha mi dad
 dpe dang lam ste tha snyad 'dul bar bstan //96//

sems nyid phyag rgya chen po 'char ba ni
 415. skye med skye ba'i cho 'phrul cir yang 'char
 blo las 'das pas ma skyes ngo bor bstan
 ma¹³⁷ skyes pa dang skyes pa'i dngos po gnyis
 tha dad med de gnyug ma'i ngo bor gzhag //97//

dran pa sna tshogs gang la rgyu ba 'di
 420. dran med 'jug pas rtog pa mi 'gag pa
 shes pa¹³⁸ rang lugs bzhag na gnas par 'gyur
 snang dang stong dang gnyis 'dzin skye ba'i rgyu
 tha mi dad par kho na bde ba che //98//

nyams myong shar bas mi mthun 'dzin pa bral
 425. dran pa med de 'di 'dra'i yul med pa
 dran pa med dang snang stong tha mi dad //99//

ma skyes mtshan ma¹³⁹ med pa'i rnal 'byor la

¹³⁴ P, N: ba'i

¹³⁵ P, N: gar

¹³⁶ M: byed

¹³⁷ C: me

¹³⁸ P, N: pas

- mnyam gzhag rjes thob med de rgyun gyi mal 'byor la
 snang dang skye ba dran pa gang skyes kyang
 430. de nyid stong pa dran pa med gnas pas
 dran pa yid la byar med snang stong dbyer mi phyed //100//
- de nyid thug phrad skye med nyams myong la
 snang ba'i ngo bo stong pa bde chen shar
 cha ba¹⁴⁰ rom chur bzhu btung du btu ba bzhin du
 435. gang snang skye med bde ba chen por chor //101//
- btang snyoms dran pa med de rtog pa ma bkag kyang
 blo las 'das pas rmongs pa sgom¹⁴¹ dang bral
 'di la gnas na bde chen nyams 'byung ste
 dang por snang ba stong pa'i¹⁴² nyams myong 'byung //102//
440. chab rom snang yang chu ngo shes bzhin du
 gnyis pa¹⁴³ dran pa'i snang ba ma 'gag¹⁴⁴ par
 stong pa bde dang tha mi dad par 'byung
 chab rom chu ru bzhu ba'i gnas skabs bzhin
 dran pa dran med skye ba med la thim //103//
445. thams cad tha mi dad pas bde ba chen por gcig
 de nyid chab rom chu ru bzhu ba bzhin
 thams cad rang bzhin thug phrad shes gyur na
 bcing bkrol dag gis ma bzung¹⁴⁵ dran pa'i rjes ma 'brang //104//
- 'jur bus bcings pa bzhin du sems mi sgrib¹⁴⁶

¹³⁹ N: mi

¹⁴⁰ D: pa

¹⁴¹ P, N: bsgoms

¹⁴² P, N: par; myong ba'i *inserted between par and nyams*

¹⁴³ P, N: gnyis pa *omitted*.

¹⁴⁴ P, N: 'gags

¹⁴⁵ P, N: gzung

450. 'jur bu klod na grol zhing sems nyid gar¹⁴⁷ dgar btang
ldog pas¹⁴⁸ gzings la 'phur ba'i bya rog bzhin
de nyid shes na snang ba longs spyod yin //105//

lcags kyus btab pas glang chen thul ba¹⁴⁹ bzhin
bya bral bzhag pas glang chen lom¹⁵⁰ pa bzhin

455. dran pa dran med ngo shes gnod pa med
snang dang stong pa shes pas rtog dang bral //106//

skye bar gnas pas dbyer med dran mi rgyu
de nyid khyab bdag dgra kun¹⁵¹ ngo shes bzhin
snang pa stong par thim pas lan tshva chur thim bzhin

460. dran pa dran med thim pa de kho na
skye ba mam pa gnyis la skye rgyu¹⁵² med //107//

thug phrad skye med ye shes shar bas na
dran pa blo yi yul med phyogs med ye shes 'char
spra ba me mched rab¹⁵³ 'bar me bzhin du

465. nyams myong smrar mi¹⁵⁴ btub¹⁵⁵ pa gzhon nu'i bde ba bzhin //108//

sna tshogs snang yang dran par mi 'gyur ba¹⁵⁶
dal ba'i 'bab chus dba'¹⁵⁷ rlab mi 'gyur bas
rang gi ngo bo gsal bas mar me dran //109//

¹⁴⁶ P, N: bsgri

¹⁴⁷ P, N: gang

¹⁴⁸ P, N: ldog pas *omitted*

¹⁴⁹ D, C, M: thim pa

¹⁵⁰ M: lon

¹⁵¹ P, N: rkun

¹⁵² P, N: rgyun

¹⁵³ D, C, M: rang

¹⁵⁴ P, N: ma

¹⁵⁵ C: btab

¹⁵⁶ D: pa

¹⁵⁷ P, N: rba

- de ltar phyag rgya chen po gang la mi bstan pas
470. bya sar ko ne mkha' la gnas bzhin du¹⁵⁸
 rtogs pa'i sbyod pas blang dor mi byed ba
 srog chags pa ta ri bzhin zhen chags med
 blo 'das 'bras bu 'dod na med grub pa
 sman mchog¹⁵⁹ nang na be¹⁶⁰ ta ji bzhin nyid //110//
475. kye ho¹⁶¹ de ltar mkhas pa thabs zin dag gis ni
 dran pa med la skye med rgyas btab ste
 brad pa med pas dran med rgya yis btab
 snang bas stong pa la rgyas gdab
 stong¹⁶² pas snang ba la rgyas gdab //111//
480. dran dang snang ba bde ba'i ror shar na
 stong dang dran med rgya yis¹⁶³ thebs pa yin
 snang dang dran pa stong ba'i rgya dang ni
 dran med gnas ba dag gis¹⁶⁴ rgyas gdab na
 snang dang dran pa bde ba'i ror shar nas
485. mtshan ma'i bsgom pas ma dpyad¹⁶⁵ mtshan ma'i blo las 'das //112//
- dran dang snang ba dag la skye med rgyas btab¹⁶⁶ pa
 skye med dag la blo 'das rgya yis thebs
 dran pas dran med bde ba'i rgyas thebs pas
 stong par ma song chad pa'i mthar ma lhung //113//

¹⁵⁸ P, N: lines 469 and 470 are conflated as: de ltar phyag rgya chen po mkha' la gnas bzhin du //

¹⁵⁹ D: ma chog (instead of mchog)

¹⁶⁰ P, N: pre

¹⁶¹ P, N: kye 'o

¹⁶² P, N: stongs

¹⁶³ P, N: yi

¹⁶⁴ P, N: gi

¹⁶⁵ C: dbyad

¹⁶⁶ N: gdab

490. gnas pa skye ba dag la rgyas thebs pas
 dngos por ma song rtag ba'i mthar ma lhung
 thams cad blo las 'das shing skye ba med
 thams cad bde ba chen po'i rgyud dang ldan
 de ltar shes pas btang snyoms mthar ma lhung //114//

495. dran pa 'khor ba'i dngos po dang
 dran pa med pa'i rtogs¹⁶⁷ pa la
 btang snyoms lam du khyer bar byed pa dang
 rig pas gzahigs nas stong pa btang snyoms dang
 gzung 'dzin bral ba'i rang rig btang snyoms pas
 500. bden pa gnyis bral gnyis med btang snyoms bsgom¹⁶⁸
 gang du ma dran bsam gtan btang snyoms mchog
 lung du ma bstan btang snyoms sgom ma yin //115//

shes pa sor gzahag dran med nyams 'phro¹⁶⁹ ba
 dran pa'i mtshan ma dran med lam du khyer //116//

505. bde ba lam khyer blo 'das ma dmigs pa
 gnyis la mi rtog bde ba¹⁷⁰ rgyun mi 'chad //117//

kye ho¹⁷¹ nyams dang bral bas gzung 'dzin gnyis las grol
 de nyid phyag rgya chen po'i don mthong 'gyur
 'bras bu mthar¹⁷² thug rin chen gter chen la

510. phyag rgya che la gnas 'dod gang
 dri med 'bras bu rtogs par shog //118//

¹⁶⁷ P, N: rtog

¹⁶⁸ P, N: bsgoms

¹⁶⁹ P, N: 'tsho

¹⁷⁰ M: pa

¹⁷¹ P, N: kye 'o

¹⁷² D: mzar

sa ra ha'i zhal snga nas gsungs pa
sku'i mdzod 'chi med rdo rje'i glu zhes bya ba rdzogs so

rgya gar skad du / bāk koṣa rucira svāra vajra-gīti¹

bod skad du / gsung gi mdzod 'jam dbyangs rdo rje'i glu

1. 'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa la phyag 'tshal lo

kye ho² ting 'dzin rtse gcig ro snyoms spyod pa khyad par can

dngos dang dngos med yid rtogs 'khor bar rgyu bas btang bar bya³

snang dang stong pa⁴ bzung du 'jug pa dbyer med de kho na

5. chos kyi dbyings kyi rang bzhin thams cad 'byung zhing thim par gnas //1//

bdag dang gzhan don gnyis med dran med gsal ba'i dang⁵

phyag rgya chen po'i mnam grangs dpag med brjod las 'das

dngos dang dngos med yongs su btang na 'khor 'das med

rdzing⁶ bu gla gab med na phyogs bzhir 'khor lo spangs⁷ //2//

10. byis pa ma shes rten 'brel 'khor bar 'jug pa'i rgyu

shes rab zhan pas dngos 'dzin bdag gzhan don mi 'grub

mar me spar⁸ yang dmus⁹ long dag la snang mi srid

bdag gzhan don 'dod dngos 'dzin rang gis rang la 'dzin //3//

rtog pa yin phyir btang mi btang la brtag par bya

¹ P, N: tsi ta

² P, N: kye 'o

³ D, C, M: bya is omitted

⁴ D: stong (pa omitted)

⁵ M, P: ngang //

⁶ M: rjing

⁷ D, C: sbangs; P, N: yangs

⁸ M: sbar

⁹ P, N: dmun

15. snang med rang rig rtog pa'i tha snyad kun dang bral
thabs dang bral phyir bdag don mi 'grub mtshan mar 'gyur
dbyer med don la gnas pas de nyid ston pa dang
chos kyi dbyings la 'jug pa'i mtshan nyid bstan pa'o //4//

20. bla ma las¹⁰ bstan lung¹¹ 'brel¹² gdams ngag rjes su ston
lung dang rigs pas rang gi mtshan nyid rtogs 'dod pa
bla ma la brten¹³ gdams ngag ldan pa dag las rnyed
bsnyen bkur byas na lhan cig bde ba mchog thob 'gyur //5//

dri ma dang bral bya phyir bla ma'i zhabs la 'dud
mchod na byin rlabs¹⁴ chen po 'byung bar rgyal bas bshad //6//

25. kye ho¹⁵ grong khyer tsam o ngan¹⁶ kus nam¹⁷ mkhar stong¹⁸ bzhin du
thar pas 'bad na rgyal ba'i sa la gdon mi za
brjod bya rjod byed dbang bskur byin rlabs¹⁹ skye zhing 'phel ba'i gnas //7//

- sngon du lsob mas bya dang slob dpon bya ba'i rim pa dang
rjes su slob mas bya dang zab mo dbang bskur ba
30. phyag rgya mchod dang bstod pa dag gis gsol ba gdab
snyan pa'i tshig gis gsol gdab rig pa rtsal dbang²⁰ dang //8//

phyag rgya brten gsang ba'i dbang bskur²¹ sdom sbyin dang

¹⁰ P, N: la

¹¹ D: sung

¹² M: 'grel

¹³ P, N: bsten

¹⁴ P, N: brlabs

¹⁵ P, N: kye 'o

¹⁶ P, N: sham

¹⁷ P, N: su

¹⁸ C, M, P, N: song

¹⁹ P, N: brlabs

²⁰ D: dpang

- gnang ba sbyin dang rjes su sbro²² ba bstan²³ pa ste
slob mas rjes dbul zab mo'i dbang bskur dam bca' dang //9//
35. bskyed pa'i rim pa la sogs bstan pa ni
ngo bo nyid kyi rim pa bstan pa dang
nyams myong bsgom par bya ba'i brjod bya la sogs kun
gang la mi gnas bya sar ko ne gang la rten mi 'cha' //10//
- 'dod pa med pa'i bde ba dag la mi gnas te
40. ya zung med phyir gang la rten dang rten byed bral
gnyis med rnal 'byor rang la 'char ba'i nyams myong bde
bdag tu rtog pa'i dngos bo btang²⁴ na nam mkha'i mtha' ltar yangs //11//
- mya²⁵ ngan 'das pa'i grong khyer²⁶ dag tu 'jug 'dod na
tshogs drug thug phrad char pa rgyun gyi rnal 'byor che
45. snang ba stong pa skye med thug phrad rkyen la rag ma lus
gnyis med goms pas lam myur zung du 'jug mi ldog //12//
- sems can sangs rgyas rang bzhin yin par shes na rtsol ba med
gang gi ro snyoms sbyong pa dag la brten nas 'bras bu thob
sbyong pa byas na 'gro ba 'khor ba dag las thar bar the tshom med
50. bdud dang mi mthun phyogs las rnams par rgyal bar 'gyur //13//
- mtshan ma'i rnal 'byor mi bya btang snyoms rnal 'byor min
mkhas pa'i ye shes myur du thob cing sgrib pa zab
mtshan ma'i spyod²⁷ pas drang don mkhas kyang rmongs rnams 'ching
ro snyoms phyag rgya chen po la brten nam mkhar 'gro //14//

²¹ C: bsur

²² M: spro

²³ P, N: brtan

²⁴ C: thtang (C is damaged – may read gtang)

²⁵ D: ma

²⁶ D: khyar

²⁷ D, C: sbyod

55. gnyis med sbyod lam rgyun du brten²⁸ na tshe 'dir thob
snang ba sgyu ma'i yul la mi gnas²⁹ rtog³⁰ yul med
'jig rten chos brgyad 'ching par mi nus brtul zhugs mchog //15//

- snying rje thabs brin sbyod pa chags med mkha' ltar yangs
phyag rgya chen po yan lag bzhi ldan thabs kyi mchog
60. bzhir³¹ ldan phyag rgya gcig gi cho 'phrul 'cig gi ngang³²
gnyis med ngang la phyag rgya chen po glod de gzhag //16//

byang chub sems ldan btang gzhag med na glang chen 'dra
rtog pa'i ngo bos ba³³ mo rta ltar snang 'dod na
rtog med snang med don la 'bad de mal 'byor bya //17//

65. sku bzhi mthar phyin 'bras bu bde ba chen po'i ngang
skye bar snang ba lam gyi lus mams ni
sku gsum mthur³⁴ ldan rtog pa rnam par bral
shes dang shes bya rang rgyud dag pa'i yul //18//

- dngos po'i rang bzhin skye ba'i rkyen³⁵ snang yang
70. ma skyes pa yi³⁶ yul las 'das ma myong
dngos po dngos med btang snyoms la sogs kun
'byed pa med de dran med skye med yul //19//

²⁸ D, C, M: bstan

²⁹ P, N: nub

³⁰ P, N: btul

³¹ D: bzhi ra (*instead of* bzhir)

³² P, N: dang

³³ P, N: sab

³⁴ N: mthar

³⁵ C: rkyon

³⁶ P, N: pa'i (*instead of* pa yi)

- phyag rgya che la rtag tu mtshan nyid bral
 phung po dag pas gsang ba'i yul las 'das
 75. dga' ba bzhi yi mtshan nyid phyag rgya'i yul
 rang rgyud ma yin shes rab thabs dang bral //20//
- sna rtse la sogs de nyid ma zin na
 de nyid dag la sbyor yang don dam min
 rang rig rdo rje gnas te sems dpa'i mal 'byor ni
 80. thams cad mkhyen pa'i³⁷ ngo bo 'di 'drar med //21//
- rgya mtsho'i dba'³⁸ rlabs brag³⁹ ca'i ngo bor mtshungs
 grangs tsam⁴⁰ nyid na gang du'ang slebs pa med
 dam tshig bsgrub dang 'bras bu mam sbyar ba
 mtshon bya mtshon byed tshig⁴¹ gi tha snyad lam //22//
85. dam tshig nyams na thabs sogs nyams gang na
 blo las 'das pa'i yul du slob pa med
 brtul⁴² zhugs spyod⁴³ pas phyi dang nang 'gyur ba
 kho na nyid dang ldan na khyad par can
 de nyid mi ldan dud 'gro dag dang mtshungs //23//
90. de nyid sbas pas lhan cig⁴⁴ skyes bsgoms pa
 thabs bral dam tshig 'gal yang nyes pa med
 'di dang pha rol grangs la mi ltos⁴⁵ par

³⁷ P, N: pa

³⁸ P, N: rba

³⁹ C: phrag

⁴⁰ D: grang sa tsam (*instead of* grangs tsam); P, N: grag tsam

⁴¹ N: tshi

⁴² M: brtu la

⁴³ D, C: sbyod

⁴⁴ P, N: ye shes (*instead of* lhan cig)

⁴⁵ P, N: bltos

da lta nyid du mngon gyur phyag rgya che
de nyid spangs na nam yang phrad mi 'gyur //24//

95. phyag rgya chen po skad cig thos pas kyang
snod⁴⁶ dang ldan mi ldan la mi ltos par
bstan pa tsam gyis rtse⁴⁷ gcig 'di yis thob //25//

- gang zhig dran pa dag la ma yengs pa'i
lhan cig skyes don bsgom dang ldan pas thob
100. de nyid rang yin gzhan gyi chos mi tshol
dur khrod wa sogs tshol phyir 'brangs te phung⁴⁸ //26//

- kye ho⁴⁹ bram ze rigs ngan⁵⁰ khyim 'dres 'tshol slong bzhin
bzang ngan 'dres pa gcig la gcig gnod de
mtshan ma'i rnal 'byor mtshan med don mi⁵¹ reg
105. mtshan ma med la bltas pa nam yang med
mtshan ma dus dang grangs la ltos⁵² par 'gyur //27//

- bskyed dang rdzogs ma'i rim pa khyad par bas ma⁵³ mi bya
gnyis med 'dus pa rnal 'byor mchog ldan gang
gang yang ma shes dran med yengs pa'i yul
110. dran pa'i rgyud spangs⁵⁴ de la goms par bya //28//

thun mong ma yin gsang sngags khyad par can

⁴⁶ P, N: smod

⁴⁷ D: rtsa

⁴⁸ P, N: 'phung

⁴⁹ P, N: kye 'o

⁵⁰ C: dan

⁵¹ P, N: mtshan mar reg // (*instead of* mtshan med don mi reg)

⁵² P, N: bltos

⁵³ C, M, P, N: bsam

⁵⁴ D: rgyun sbangs

thog ma nyid nas bden ba'i ngo bor gnas
 dngos grub bsdu pas⁵⁵ lhan cig skyes la thug
 de nyid khyad par rang rig yul las 'das //29//

115. de nyid bde ba'i gnas dang dngos po stong
 chos mams dag pas rang bzhin bde ba'i don
 gang la mi gnas blo yi yul las 'das
 yul med gnas med rten dang bral bas stong //30//

- e wam⁵⁶ dngos drub ngo bo nyid kyi rgyu
 120. rdo rje 'chang dang rang rig bla ma'i bka'
 'dus pa'i rgyud du dri med phyag rgya che
 kun rdzob las kyi phyag rgya la sogs kun
 'khor las sgyur rgyal dmangs kyi 'khor dang mtshungs //31//

- phyi nang zab mo bskyed pa'i rim pa kun⁵⁷
 125. rdzogs pa'i⁵⁸ phyag rgya nyi zla'i skar phran bzhin
 dga' bral dga' ba mchog tu dga' la sogs
 lhan cig skyes dga' 'khor lo'i rtsa ba nyid
 dri ma med par dag byed de yi dgongs par gsal //32//

- de nyid ldan pas rtag tu ye shes myong
 130. dbyer med thugs⁵⁹ kyi stong nyid go 'phang⁶⁰ yangs
 lus ngag thabs ldan thabs la brten bsgom pa
 dran pa skyed byed rgyu rkyen 'bras bu smin //33//

⁵⁵ C: was

⁵⁶ P: bam; N: bam (*nasal written as anusvara*)

⁵⁷ P, N: *this line is omitted*

⁵⁸ P, N: pa

⁵⁹ D: dphyer med thu gas

⁶⁰ P, N: 'phangs

- las can drang phyir grol ba'i thabs su⁶¹ sbyor
 las kyi phyag rgya nyams myong brod pa skyed
135. de nyid ldan goms nyams myong grol ba'i lam
 padma rdo rjer sbyor ba mthong 'dod dang
 chags can lam gis de nyid grol mi 'gyur //34//
- gzhan yang las kyi phyag rgya nyams myong dag brten⁶² la
 tha mal rang lus⁶³ phyag rgya chen po⁶⁴ sbar⁶⁵
140. byag rgya chen po kun du khyab pa'i dpe
 rin po che dang nam mkha' lha bur mtshungs //35//
- phung po lnga sogs gsang ba mchog tu 'gyur
 'jig rten 'jig rten 'das pa lhan cig gnas⁶⁶
 kho na nyid ni bla ma'i bka' brin gyis
145. mtshon cing bsgrub mi dgos par rang la rnyed //36//
- phyag rgya chen po mchog nyid dri ma bral
 go 'phang thob par bya phyir spyad⁶⁷ par bya
 rtag chad gyis med mnyam sbyor gcig nyid gzhag⁶⁸
 lung dang man ngag rig⁶⁹ pas shes par bya //37//
150. kho na nyid ni bsgrubs⁷⁰ na gdon mi za
 phyag rgya chen po gsal te shes goms⁷¹ na

⁶¹ P: su *omitted*

⁶² P, N: bsten

⁶³ P, N: lus la

⁶⁴ M: por

⁶⁵ N: sbang

⁶⁶ P: 'das

⁶⁷ M: sbyad

⁶⁸ P, N: bzhag

⁶⁹ P, N: *before rig insert* dag gis

⁷⁰ P: sgrub; N: bsgrub

⁷¹ P, N: sgom

kho na nyid ni rtogs par the tshom⁷² med
de nyid shes na goms pa'i stobs kyis spyod //38//

- de nyid ma shes steng sgo 'og sgo dang
155. rig ma la brten gsum po⁷³ gtsor byed dang
chu bya la sogs nya dang dud 'gror ma mtshungs //39//

rang rig rgyud la tha snyad 'jal byed dang
phyi nang gzhigs⁷⁴ nas rang bzhin med 'dod na
'jig rten ca co yin mod khyad⁷⁵ med mtshungs //40//

160. bden dang rten 'brel sgo nas thar 'dod dang
dbang po bsdams⁷⁶ pas thar lam 'dren 'dod dang
byis pa chang⁷⁷ pa stong bas 'brid dga' ste
des na bya ba byed 'dod thar med brdzun gyis bslus
grangs can rigs sogs gcer bu bye brag 'dod
165. byed dang rgyud⁷⁸ lta la slogs gyi⁷⁹ na 'khyam //41//

kye ho⁸⁰ de nas 'khor ba ji ltar gtang⁸¹ bar 'gyur
rgyu rkyen med pas rtogs⁸² yul ma yin pa'i
sems kyis⁸³ de nyid phyag rgya che la gnas
de nyid stobs kyi mtshan ma dang bral zhing

⁷² N: tsom

⁷³ M: bo

⁷⁴ P, N: gzhig

⁷⁵ C: byad

⁷⁶ P, N: gsubs

⁷⁷ C, M: chad

⁷⁸ D, C, P, N: rgyur

⁷⁹ M: kyi

⁸⁰ P, N: kye 'o

⁸¹ P, N: btang

⁸² P, N: rtags

⁸³ D, C, M: kyi

170. tshe gcig phyag rgya chen po thob par 'gyur //42//

kye ho ngo mtshar gsang ba'i sbyod yul 'di
sman pa'i rgyal po rtogs⁸⁴ las skye med 'char
ye shes lnga sogs mtshan nyid rang la ldan
dang po'i las can rigs kyis kho na mthong //43//

175. mtshan ma la brten⁸⁵ dran pas g.yeng⁸⁶ pa'i rgyu
kho na nyid la phyi rol ma dmigs na
mtshan ma'i spyod yul dran med ngang⁸⁷ la thim //44//

mtshan ma'i rnal 'byor khams gsum 'khor ba'i lam
mtshan ma'i dngos po bag med sa bon bcas

180. dran med rnal 'byor nam mkha'i dkyil dang mtshungs //45//

so sor med na ngo bo ma skyes phyir
skye bo gzhan gyi blo yi spyod yul min
de nyid lta la mkhas pas spyad⁸⁸ byar 'byung //46//

dran pa rnam rtog⁸⁹ gzugs su gnas pa dang

185. dran med khams gsum dag pa'i gnas su spangs
de nyid ma skyes dngos grub kun gyi gnas
phyi dang nang rol ma dmigs thams cad 'grub //47//

kye ho⁹⁰ phyag rgya chen po yon ten mchog ldan gang
bla ma mnyes par bya phyir dngos grub kun gyi gzhi

⁸⁴ P, N: rtog

⁸⁵ P, N: bsten

⁸⁶ M: g.yengs

⁸⁷ C: dang

⁸⁸ D: sbyad

⁸⁹ M: rtogs

⁹⁰ P, N: 'o

190. bla ma dkon mchog mi spang⁹¹ yon tan 'byung
gang zhig dad pa'i sems ldan brgya lam na
rnal 'byor rnams kyis gzhung 'di rtogs par shog⁹² //48//

gsung gi mdzod 'jam dbyangs rdo rje'i glu sa ra has gsungs brdzogs so

⁹¹ M: spods; D, C: spongs

⁹² P, N: *significant differences throughout this line* – rnal 'byor gzungs kyi gzhung 'di
rtog par shog

rgya gar skad du / tsi tta koṣa aja vajra-gīti¹

bod skad du / thugs kyi mdzod skye med rdo rje'i glu²

1. 'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa la phyag 'tshal lo

skye 'o³ lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes ni

rang gi⁴ nyams su myong ba de kho na

rig dang ma rig rang rig gsal be de kho na

5. mar me mun gsal rang gi⁵ rang gsal rang la sad⁶ //1//

'dam gyi⁷ padma 'dam⁸ la ma zhen kho dog legs

gzung 'dzin dri ma ma spangs snying po gsal⁹ //2//

nags khrod gnas pa'i ri dags gcig pur rgyu

rgyu la ma zhen 'bras bu de kho na

10. snang dang mi snang yul med zhen med¹⁰ gsal

dngos stong ma dran dran med brjed¹¹ pa med

lhan cig skyes pa rnam¹² gsum nyams¹³ su bde //3//

zhen pa med phyir rtog ge'i yul las 'das

sna tshogs dran phyir rjes su 'brang ba med

¹ P, N: tse ta

² Preceding this poem, the N edition has an entire title page and the P edition has a title 'line'. Both read as follows: thugs skye med rdo rje'i glu sa ra has mdzod pa bzhugs so

³ D, C, M: kye bo

⁴ P, N: gyis

⁵ P, N: gis

⁶ N: sang

⁷ P: gyis

⁸ N: 'daM (anusvara 'ma')

⁹ P, N: bsal

¹⁰ P, N: "zhen med" is omitted

¹¹ D, C, M: brjed

¹² P, N: rnam

¹³ N: nyam

15. gsal dang mi mnyam¹⁴ ye shes snying po nyid
mun sel nyi ma sgron me'i kha dog ltar
rang rig rang la 'bar¹⁵ na 'dzin rtog zad //4//

- sgrib pa zad phyir dran med yengs ba med
gnyis dang yod dang med dang¹⁶ tha snyad ma skyed cig
20. phyag rgya chen po bsam med blo las 'das
rang rig rdo rje 'dzin pa rnal 'byor pa //5//

'da' dka' lhan cig skyes pa'i mar me ni
thabs dang shes rab zung du 'jug pa'i don
skye med stong pa 'od gsal¹⁷ ris dang bral //6//

25. khyad par can gyi ye shes kho na nyid
gnyis la mi ltos bde ba rgyun mi 'chad
rang 'byung rtog med bag chags rtsad¹⁸ nas gcod //7//

- sems can sangs rgyas khyad par bsam yas kyang
spyod lam dag na rgyun gyi rnal 'byor che
30. dran pa'i rang bzhin bsam kyis mi khyab kyang
gdod nas dag pas dran med dbyings la thim //8//

rang don skye med gnyis bral rtogs pa'i don
'bras bu dag pas blo 'das yul med bral
rtogs pa'i thabs rgyun rang¹⁹ bzhin kun la kyab //9//

35. thabs kyi 'gro don snying rje bsam yas kyang

¹⁴ P, N: mnyam pa'i (*instead of* mi mnyam)

¹⁵ M: 'dan

¹⁶ D, C, M: *simply reads* yod med

¹⁷ M: gsar (*this is obviously an error*); P, N: ... 'od gsal **stong par** ris...

¹⁸ P, N: brtsad

¹⁹ M: babs rgyun ngang bzhin...

ye shes rang bzhin skye 'gag²⁰ med par rtogs
thabs kyi bde ba skyes kyang de med ma zin 'ching
grol ba'i ye shes rang la lhan cig 'byung //10//

40. bsgom bya sgom²¹ byed dmigs pa'i blo las'das
sangs rgyas sems can bsam gyis mi khyab pa
skye med rtogs pa'i yul na blur mi snang
de nyid sad pas bde ba stong pas mtshon //11//

45. bsgom bya'i ngo bo snang ba'i rkyen las byung
mi rtog rtogs pas kun rdzob tha snyad 'grub
gnyis su med pa'i snang ba rkyen med la
rang bzhin dag pa skye ba'i nam 'phrul shar //12//

50. bral dang ma bral mi rtog blo las 'das
gnyis med rtogs byar skye med yul du 'gyur
stong par smra bas de nyid rtogs mi 'gyur
blo las 'das pas mno bsam yul ma yin //13//

mtha' gsum rtag 'dod dag gis rnyed par bka'²²
dga' bzhi dag la dmigs kyang de nyid dka'
tshogs drug rang chas ye shes mchog ldan pas
gnyis med bcud kyi snang ba rang la 'char²³ //14//

55. kye ho²⁴ phyag rgya chen po rtogs²⁵ bral kun gyi gzhi
dngos grub 'byung²⁶ pas ngo²⁷ mtshar rmad du che

²⁰ D: 'ggra

²¹ P, N: bsgom

²² D, C: dga'

²³ D, C, M: 'chad

²⁴ P, N: 'o

²⁵ M: rtog

²⁶ M: 'gyung

²⁷ P: do

gnyis med bag chags sad nas rang rig bral //15//

- gzung 'dzin bral²⁸ ba'i phyag rgya chen po ni
mtshan nyid bstan pas nyan thos la sogs skrag
60. rtse gcig bltas na yon tan mthar thug ldan
rtse gcig byas kyang cung zad bsgom du med //16//

- mam rtog rang 'bar dran med gsos²⁹ su zhi
dran med snang med me long gzugs brnyan 'dra
tha snyad bral bas skye med blo 'das lam
65. mtshan ma'i dran pa dri med bag chags bstan
thog mtha'i bral zhing snga³⁰ phyi'i dus mi dmigs //17//

kye ho³¹ de phir dngos med ye shes rtogs pa'i lam
ji ltar bag chags bral ba'i tshul zhen
gnyis su ma gzung gdod mtha' bral bas zhi //18//

70. bag chags bral bas phyogs med rgyu ba stong
zung du 'jug pa sangs rgyas ngo bo nyid
shes rab nam gsum yul dang thabs³² su gsungs
dpe dang bral bas mtshon pa'i yul las 'das //19//

- skye ba 'di la dam pa'i snying po min
75. thabs kyi sbyor bas tshogs drug rang sar zhi
phung po lnga sogs yon tan dag pa'i zhin
kun mkhyen gnyis med snang yul zhen dang bral //20//

don dam smra med kun rdzob rtog ge³³ tsam

²⁸ M: bal

²⁹ N: gso

³⁰ D, C: sda

³¹ P, N: 'o

³² N: thab

- mya ngan 'das lam 'khor ba'i snang ba nyid
 80. bla ma dam pa'i dgongs pa thug phrad du
 myed nas 'khor ba'i lam las grol bar 'gyur //21//
- mal 'byor dgongs pa'i nyams rnyed rdzogs sangs rgyas
 mnor lam du lhan cig khon yin³⁴ //22//
- kye ho³⁵ gnyis med don du gsang sngags brda yis bkrol
 85. yon tan mi zad rgya mtsho nor bu mtshungs
 thabs mchog zin na bcu bzhi'i³⁶ sa la gnas
 gang du gnas kyang ye shes rang las rnyed //23//
- gter rnyed bdag gzhan gnyis ka'i don la rmongs
 snying gi ga'u padma'i³⁷ me tog dkyil
 90. thabs dang ldan pa sbyor ba de nas 'gyed //24//
- 'khor lo'i phyogs kyi rtsa gnas gang du yang
 'dod dang bral bas chags med nam mkha' la
 gyen thur 'dren dang 'khor lo bskor ba yang
 thabs kyi 'dren tshul don gyi gting mi rnyed
 95. gzung dang 'phang³⁸ dang sbyar dang sbor ba yang
 blun po dbugs mi bde dang khyad med mtshungs //25//
- rtogs par 'dod pas de nyid rtag tu blta
 gus dang dang bas bla ma dkon mchog brten
 gsang ba'i yon tan bla ma mchog las 'byung
 100. don ldan mtshan nyid nyon mongs gyul las rgyal //26//

³³ P, N: rtse

³⁴ P, N: yi

³⁵ P, N: 'o

³⁶ P, N: bzhi

³⁷ P, N: padma

³⁸ P, N: gzungs dang 'phangs

gsang ba'i don nyid don dang rab ldan pa'i

bla ma slob dpon lung dang rab ldan nas

mi gnyis sgo nas 'gro ba grol 'gyur shog

thugs kyi mdzod skye med rdo rje'i blu snying po gsang ba'i don //27//

105. dpal sa ra ha pa'i zhal nas gsungs pa rdzogs so

Body Treasury

In the Indian Language: A Body Treasury Called the Immortal Adamantine Song

In the Tibetan Language: A Body Treasury Called the Immortal Adamantine Song

Hommage to Manjuśrī!

Oh! The long-haired ones who grasp at self and agent,

The Brahmins, Jainas, Dagapas¹,

The materialists who accept a real basis for things -

5. Claiming to be omniscient, they lack self-knowledge.

You will be deceived by this, and will be distant from the path of liberation. //1//

Vaibhāśikas and *Sautrāntikas*,

Yogācārins and *Mādhyamikas*², etc.

Criticize each other and argue;

10. Ignorant of suchness, the space-like equality of appearance and emptiness,

They turn their backs on the innate. //2//

Body, speech and mind are resplendent like cotton and oil in a lamp,

Endowed with such nature, they are self-illuminating³.

[In this way] illuminating apperception pervades all beings

15. In an indivisible manner; that is the unborn nature. //3//

Due to the mind grasping at self, various thoughts fluctuate.

¹ The meaning of 'Dagapa' is unclear. It could be a corruption of a *Carvaka*, the materialist school referred to on the next line; or it could be a reference to people who believe in the doctrine of momentariness (*da ga* means moment). P and N provide the alternative reading '*Sang ga pa*' but that has no meanings at all.

² Four schools of Buddhist thought, each of which holds its own theory of what really exists (if anything) and how it is perceived.

³ The Tibetan text includes the redundant closing phrase "like a lamp." The metaphor being drawn is rather striking: the body is like the substantial, container part of a lamp, speech and mind are like cotton (the wick) and oil (fuel). Together they embody the potential for illumination.

In this nature, diverse appearances arise⁴.

Although all beings abide in stasis-like darkness

The lamp of yoga, finding the suchness, burns. //4//

20. The meaning of the essence is beyond any object of reasoning;
It is not evident and is obscured by the power of thought.
It is the path of bliss, non-conceptual, ascertainment free of thought.
Free of passage, the result which appears is beyond the intellect. //5//

From the treasury of innate,

25. Pure and impure arise as Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa.
Although appearing in the unborn nature⁵ they are one,
Even though immutable suchness is labelled 'absence of inherent existence'. //6//

The Great Seal is unchangeable great bliss and,

Not dependent on a cause, the result is beyond the scope of the intellect.

30. The Great Seal is the complete result.
Conventionally, it is illustrated as the content of the path. //7//

The essential meaning is devoid of language and its content,

The sphere of awareness is devoid of thought and is the subject matter of all.

Although there is duality in what conceptual thought cognizes,

35. Can it be that there is falsity in this non-thought state? //8//

"Because of the exertions on the path, the results are distinct."

Can there ever be truth in this thought?

By the power of meditative equipoise, the mind is placed in meditation
occasionally⁶.

⁴ A parallel is being drawn here between inner and outer experience: thoughts are akin to diverse appearances, while the ego-grasping mind is akin to unenlightened nature.

⁵ In other words, although they arise as appearance...

⁶ In other words, the mind is at times in meditation and at times not.

Is there ever duality in this unborn nature?

40. Although we apply such terms as 'to bring to mind' and 'not to bring to mind',⁷

In this beyond-the-intellect can there ever be exertion? //9//

Although thoughts (*dran pa*) originate as a result of appearances,
They do not go beyond the conditionality which is the voidness of non-
thought.

In this non-conceptual point there is no activity and no viewing.

45. How deluded are those who search for themselves from others! //10//

Oh! The adamantine suchness is difficult to realize.

Not understanding this, by exertion of mind following after language,

It is difficult to contact that point which is free of activity.

If the nature of action, which is non-action, is understood,

50. You have found the sole intention of the Buddhas which is beyond objects
of the intellect. //11//

His body is the unchanging *Dharmatā*⁸ and it is non-corporeal.

It does not reside in the body and is free from action and agency.

The contaminated path cannot see the result of the path,

In the sphere of the unborn nature, the enlightened mind does not
discriminate. //12//

55. In the sphere of non-thought, meditative equipoise is great bliss;
In the sphere of great bliss, one abides in non-conceptual continuity⁹.
Not engaging the mind, appearances are purified in their own place.
The condition is thought, which is clear, unobstructed wisdom. //13//

⁷ A reference to specific instructions on meditation.

⁸ The truth nature, the true nature of things as they are.

⁹ P and N have an alternative rendering of this line which translates as: Abide in the self, in the blissful continuity of non-conceptuality.

It has one root, expanding like the faultless lotus¹⁰.

60. The Great Seal exists as the innate within sentient beings¹¹.

Although one is tainted by the power of the existence of 'other,'

It is like the aforementioned lotus flower¹².

The power of the immutable Great Seal is unshakable in its perfect sight. //14//

Although it becomes tainted by the film of subject and object,

65. The root is the great embodiment, unchangeable in the three times¹³.

Primordially free from activities of consciousness, subtle wind¹⁴, the lower doors¹⁵, mantra, etc.,

Free from self and other, accepting and rejecting. //15//

One should neither think of *Samsara* nor yearn for *Nirvana*,

Three times, three worlds¹⁶ contained in body, speech and mind.

70. No effort in anything, no views, nothing to accept and reject,

Not differentiating centre and parameter, the middle way is the straight path. //16//

When free of artificiality, it is the perfect path of the heart.

The Perfection of Wisdom path, which is passage, engagement, stages¹⁷, etc.

Is the cause for the longer cycle by discarding the quick path.

75. The innate and the remedy are without rival. //17//

¹⁰ A typical poetic image used to describe something that emerges from filth (and is rooted in filth) but is never stained by it

¹¹ Here the innate appears to be akin to the Buddha Nature.

¹² In other words, the innate can never really be stained by it.

¹³ The three times are past, present and future.

¹⁴ ie. *prana* – the energy that moves through the subtle body in Tantric practice.

¹⁵ the 'lower doors' is a reference to practices that entail using the generative organs (ie. union practice) or substances that emerge from them.

¹⁶ the three worlds are the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*), form realm (*rūpadhātu*) and formless realm (*arūpadhātu*).

¹⁷ This a reference to the 'standard' Mahayana path that entails the 5 paths and 10 (or 14) *bhūmis*, etc.. Also referred to as the 'Sutra' path.

In this suchness, the four *kāyas*¹⁸, the five wisdoms¹⁹, the afflictions, etc. are gathered.

Therefore, on the path which is *Samsara*,

One does not partake in whatever arises as the object, the object is not seen.

There is no joy or non-joy in the true nature. //18//

80. Two types of grasping at concepts is the uncontrived truth body²⁰ (*chos sku*).
The sense faculties do not apprehend on their own, they abide in emptiness.

That which is experienced and is beyond expression is uninterrupted.

One should understand by referring to one's own experience. //19//

In this faultless point, the Great Seal

85. Will be experienced as ocean and space.

When the sense faculties are free of sense objects²¹, there is no abyss to fall into;

You became attached because of grasping at thoughts. //20//

By leaving objects in their natural place, concepts are again reversed.

Without rising and setting, the darkness of conceptuality will cease.

90. *Dharmatā* has one taste (*ro snyam*), the same as flowers for bees;
The faults and virtues are themselves equal in the indivisible nature.
Amazing though it is, the experience cannot be expressed. //21//

¹⁸ The three *kayas* – transformation, enjoyment and truth – are discussed at length in chapter 3. The fourth *kaya* is the essence body (*svabhavikakaya*), the union and common nature of the first three.

¹⁹ The five wisdoms are the transformations of the five afflictions: mirror-like wisdom (*adarsajnana*; *me long ye shes*), which is the transformation of anger; equalizing wisdom (*samatajnana*; *mnyam nyid ye shes*) which is the transformation of desire; discriminating wisdom (*pratyaveksanajnana*; *sor rtogs ye shes*) which is the transformation of pride; all-accomplishing wisdom (*krtyanusthanajnana*; *bya grub ye shes*) which is the transformation of envy; and finally the all-pervasive wisdom (*dharmadhatujnana*; *chos dbyings ye shes*) which is the transformation of ignorance.

²⁰ This is an excellent example of how Saraha uses apparent contradiction to force his reader/listener to retrain his/her thoughts.

²¹ 'Free' here does not mean that nothing appears to the sense faculties, but rather that there is not attachment to what does appear, and no illusions about the nature of what appears.

Bliss²² indivisible like water into water,

The innate and that activity are inseparable.

95. Although one sees the arising of one thing in many thoughts,

Non-thought is one thing, in itself it is many.

Those who engage in the practice of *yoga* - the innate that is bliss
and emptiness - do so in a manner beyond the intellect. //22//

If you wish to engage in the path of desire²³, the everpresent object,

100. Do not perceive inner or outer, self or other.

To understand this in itself, it has been presented as natural liberation.

Although in the truth body the three *kāyas* are inseparable,

If you practice, distinct results arise. //23//

Oh! When you realize their inseparability, wrong views are quickly
destroyed.

105. If you understand the unborn emptiness as indivisible and the point of
contact,

The forest and leaves have no basis²⁴.

Dualistic compassion, which is not understanding contact,

Is a cause for pollution, leading one to undergo the experience of *Samsara*²⁵.

//24//

Emptiness and compassion are inseparable and devoid of arising.

110. Whoever is free from hope and fear of *Nirvana* and *Samsara*,

Not finding body and mind, rests naturally in non-thought.

Suchness is not found by the intellect; it is self-arising. //25//

²² If we follow the P and N versions, this would read "Truth indivisible..."

²³ ie. using consort practice – *karmamudra* / *las kyi phyag rgya*.

²⁴ In other words, distinctions made on the basis of the variegated nature of appearances.

²⁵ Dualistic compassion is compassion grounded in the belief that 'self' and 'other' really exist and are distinct.

- The characteristics of that genuine calm-abiding (*śamātha*),
which is meditative equipoise and post-meditation, is
Not ultimate, it is practiced by mind not in meditation.
115. Form, etc²⁶, is made clear without effort by body, speech and mind.
Without the use of 'tip of the nose', etc., shape and space, channel and
contact²⁷, you will abide in the everpresent nature. //26//

- All appearances do not bring forth bliss,
[But] the mere knowledge of the appearance of thoughts as illusion illuminates.
120. The reflection of the moon is devoid of parts and devoid of object-hood;
Even when searched for, it does not exist. Even when looked at, one
cannot see. //27//

- Call to mind that thought which appeared as illusion,
There is nothing to learn from this absence of thought.
Although appearing as thoughts, there is no grasping.
125. Although touched by thought, it is free from the thought of contact. //28//

- Because it is beyond conceptualization, it is free and devoid of arising.
Even though a thought arises, it does not engage with the object.
Leave it naturally in emptiness, non-existence.
Whatever you may do, the Seal is uninterrupted. //29//

130. The four Great Seals have four branches:
The branch of realization of the unborn nature; and
The branch of non-distinction of the Two Truths, and
Realization of contact of the unborn nature and appearance; //30//

The branch of non-grasping thought and

²⁶ This presumably is meant to indicate that the list of the aggregates follows. Awareness of consisting of merely these five aggregates is part of the intended outcome of 'regular' calm-abiding meditation.

²⁷ These are all references to specific meditation practices, many of which are Tantric.

135. Emptiness devoid of conditions and thought, beyond the intellect;
The branch of not accepting or rejecting things. //31//

‘Possessing this suchness as the basis’, ‘devoid of attachment’, and
‘Possessing investigation and analysis’,
‘Joy and bliss’, and ‘residing in the wilderness’, etc.²⁸

These have been taught as the object illustrating this convention. //32//

140. The texts mention the high, middling and low capacities of beings.
For the benefit of the weak-minded, the learned ones thoroughly explained:
“The Great Seal does not abide in anything whatever.”
It is explained like this in order to be free from moral structures.

145. Whatever appears, don’t separate pure and impure, accept it all as *siddhis*²⁹. //33//

The innate and the blazing of inner fire on an object of perception, etc.

Commitment (*samaya*), nature of self, *yoga*³⁰...

In the Great Seal, the equanimity of all phenomena, how could
conceptualization be abandoned and non-conceptualization be practiced? //34//

150. In one’s reverence to the Guru, the vows and precepts of the secret
vehicle are complete.

Each has the characteristics of the outer, inner, and secret initiations.

The vase, secret and wisdom initiations,

All essences, categories, definitions, etc.

The mundane *siddhis* arising from all these things could not come into
contact with the Great Seal³¹. //35//

155. Oh! In the Great Seal are present body, speech and mind, the epitome of

²⁸ These are all references to specific practices.

²⁹ ie. accomplishments, evidence of attainment or awakening.

³⁰ Again, these are all references to elements of practice and the Tantric path.

³¹ All these levels of vows and empowerment (and their necessity or lack thereof for the practice of the Great Seal) are discussed in detail in chapter 4.

fruition.

The result of the Great Seal is only suitable for the essential point, but not for ultimate and relative.

The essence of the heart of all path and fruition are gathered there.

The authentic highest *Mahayana* and the distinctness of the vehicles. //36//

Because of becoming the essence of all, the secret vehicle is unsurpassed.

160. The characteristics by which one ascertains the Great Seal are:

Thought and non-thought are unborn, non-dual,

Why would it not remain like space, beyond the intellect? //37//

The map which is the action (*karma, las*) seal, and the path of the *dharma* seal,
And the Great Seal which is the result, and the commitment (*samaya*) seal which
is the altruistic act -

165. By relying on seals below the *dharma*-seal, one will not reach the end,
One falls into extremes of hope and fear, and becomes damaged by engaging
in frivolous activities³². //38//

In Thatness, there is no distinction of antidotes, one leaves it in its natural
place.

Whatever concepts arise, they arise in true freedom.

From the natural liberation of thought, non-thought arises freely.

170. Recognizing whatever arises as mere appearances, non-thought is trained. //39//

Possessing the natural state itself, unborn and pure,

Pervading all sentient beings it abides like moisture in water,

In continuity which is like the uninterruptedness of the water of a flowing
stream.

It is the *bodhicitta*³³, self revealing like an illuminating lamp.

³² All these seals are discussed in detail in chapter 4. An additional comment: Saraha is here claiming that practitioners of the action seal (or union practice – as the only seal ‘below’ the *dharma* seal) will not actually progress spiritually.

175. While unceasing, thoughts are empty of themselves. //40//

What is this perfect suchness?

If it exists elsewhere, it should be seen by all.

Even though you possess it yourself, it will be concealed like the face of a guru.

Mind itself is Buddhahood itself,

180. But contaminated by thought, suchness is imputed to be something else. //41//

For if it is the Buddha, what are its enlightened qualities?

The qualities are like the whiteness and the cotton cloth³⁴.

The qualities of Thatness are the Great Seal;

The nature and its qualities are not distinct and various. //42//

185. The Great Seal and the fourth³⁵, etc., and all the lower practices,

The qualities are not distinct, are not various.

Without stirring the ocean of thought-free attributes,

There are no thoughts, just as there are no waves in [still] water. //43//

The unborn qualities are unchanging, like a rock.

190. They do not follow after, the way echoes arise.

Beyond the intellect and not an object for the senses,

The qualities of the Great Seal are like the sky. //44//

Thoughts arise from the minds of beings,

Therefore, emptiness need not be sought elsewhere.

195. Although appearing as four, why is it indicated that the attributes of one appears as four seals?

The aforementioned specifications came into being as four. //45//

³³ The mind of awakening, generated on the basis of Great Compassion.

³⁴ In other words, impossible to separate or distinguish.

³⁵ This is a reference to the fourth joy (dga' ba), the innate. It is synonymous with the Great Bliss, and thus closely related (if not interchangeable) with the Great Seal.

- The Great Seal should not be conceived as three³⁶.
 Do not abide in anything and practice without attachment³⁷,
 200. Like a bee drinking honey from a flower. //46//
- The wisdom of discriminating awareness is skillful means.
 When one encounters a corpse, there is no clinging to it³⁸.
 This, however, will not be known by all.
 Although the essential point pervades all six realms of beings³⁹ in an instant,
 205. Sentient beings are fettered by thoughts like the threads of an endless knot. //47//
- Since thoughts arise from mind, it is the cause of delusion,
 But if you know the absence of mental engagement, that is Buddhahood.
 In that delusion there is not wisdom and methods.
 Oh! When you know their inseparability, that alone is the supreme method. //48//
210. All Buddhas, sentient beings and *dharma*s,
 Arise simultaneously as mind itself.
 When the absence of engagement is born in mind,
 Appearance of thought ceases, and there is no truth and falsehood.
 Therefore it is not the object of suchness alone. //49//
215. Just as sound does not manifest as a sense object of the eye,
 Non-conceptuality is not an object of thought.
 When, due to emptiness, thoughts shine,
 The glow of thoughts disappears and cannot be seen. //50//

³⁶ Basis, path and fruition.

³⁷ If we take the P and N reading of this, it would translate as "Do not abide in anything, practice the Great Seal"

³⁸ This is another illustration of non-attachment.

³⁹ Buddhist cosmology holds that there are six possible realms of rebirth: hell, hungry ghost, animal, human, demi-god, and god realms.

Pristine cognition cannot become deaf, blind and mute;
220. In that which is devoid of thought, there is no ground for deafness,
blindness or muteness.
It is free of all such conventions as 'matter'.
As for the expression, "cessation of dualistic appearances,"
[It refers to] the sweeping away of thoughts and the gathering of non-
thought as nourishment. //51//

In suchness, which is unborn, beyond the intellect,
225. Subject and object are burned and purified
By the fire of non-thought and unborn wisdom.
By offering that [suchness] and
By the power of wishing prayers, subsequent births do not continue. //52//

Because of that, the Great Seal is primary,
It is not dependent on someone, it does not rely on anything
230. Like entering into water, joining an assembly, sharing a feast,
The Vedas, or disturbing a town⁴⁰. //53//

Since the Great Seal resides in the self, not elsewhere,
By receiving offering articles, thoughts, guests and objects of veneration as
yourself,
You make the offering to your own freedom from thought
235. [And] are absorbed in the unborn assembly which is beyond the intellect. //54//

Since the Great Seal is not dependent on an 'other',
The object of meditation is yourself and the meditator your mind.
Beyond the intellect, it is devoid of focusing on yourself.
Because suchness is the fruition, it is not dependent on other factors. //55//

⁴⁰ These are all references to practices, mainly non-Buddhist (mostly belonging to Brahmanical Hinduism), which he is using as illustrations of what won't lead to awakening.

240. The practice of meditation and recitation of mantras are but your mind,
Even meditational deities are your own mind.
Due to that, *dākinis*, making prophecies⁴¹, etc., are your own mind:
Mind displays itself in diverse thoughts. //56//

In non-thought nothing can be observed.

245. Since the Great Seal is from nothing other than self,
Offering to and relying upon
Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, etc.
Parents, precious ones and natural *bodhicitta*
Is the cause of thought⁴². //57//

250. If you transcend the intellect, then there is no action or non-action.
Although the manner of illustrating Buddhas and sentient beings is different,
Arising simultaneously, it is a question of knowledge and ignorance. //58//

Even though something appears, if it is not conceptualized in thought,
Sentient beings themselves are the unborn result.

255. If something does not appear, but there is conceptualization in thought,
The Buddhas themselves also become a cause of the cycle of three realms. //59//

Why should you uphold non-thought in your mind?
Although sentient beings appear, they are the same as Buddhas.
If you want to cognize thoughts as Buddhas,

260. Though Buddhas appear, they are not different from sentient beings. //60//

Therefore the duality of what is perceived and what is imputed should be

⁴¹ *dakinis / mkha' 'gro ma* are female celestial beings who often help (and sometimes hinder) advanced practitioners. 'Making prophecies' is of course a practice common to many religions – here Saraha is saying that it is all one's own mind.

⁴² Saraha is becoming extremely radical here – suggesting that going for refuge in the three jewels (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha), etc. is a cause of thought.

discarded as it is beyond analysis.

Although it is discarded, it is not other than self, therefore the continuity of being ceases.

It is tainted by the conceptual thought, "It comes from something other than self."

Mind's appearance is luminous, it is non-conceptual and non-grasping. //61//

265. Therefore, freed of dualistic notions of existence and non-existence,
If you abide in this innate nature, whatever you do is blissful.
One who sustains the essence, the clear light of thought,
Free of the two clings⁴³, will always abide in the natural state. //62//

Therefore, the Great Seal is the highest union⁴⁴:

270. Thought and non-thought are united with the unborn nature.
Absence of thought, which is the nature of non-conceptuality, and
The adventitious arising of thoughts, which is dependent origination,
As these two have one taste in the unborn nature,
That which is coming into being and the act of coming into being are beyond
the intellect. //63//

275. Clear light, emptiness and union, etc.
Uncontrived, uncreated, unborn and naturally self-liberated,
That is explained as the three *kāyas*: Truth Body, Enjoyment Body and
Transformation Body - the diverse appearances: //64//

The innate nature is the Essence Body (*svabhāvikakāya*),

280. Compassion and emptiness, indivisible and unborn.
The experience based on the action seal,
Is contrived. As such, it arises through the power of conditions.

⁴³ existence (eternalism) and non-existence (nihilism).

⁴⁴ as opposed to the action seal (union practice).

Since it depends on something else, it is not Thatness. //65//

Although the Dharma-seal is uncontrived,

285. You will not perceive this suchness, for it is not actualized.

If the Great Seal is experienced,

You will recognize the diversity of thoughts as the unborn nature. //66//

That which appears as substantially real is devoid of own-nature.

Sentient beings, the unborn nature and the indivisible meaning,

290. Compassion and means; [all] are presented by means of metaphors. //67//

Though appearing in diversity, they are beyond the intellect and do not deviate as objects.

You should constantly observe that *yoga* of self-embodiment.

All deeds abide in the Great Seal.

The mode of being of things is left in the unborn sphere. //68//

295. With the condition of wind, from a clear ocean

The ripples of water and waves suddenly arise.

However, they are indivisible from the ocean.

Conditioned by thoughts, conceptualization suddenly arises.

That is the thoughtlessness of the previous⁴⁵.

300. It is unborn, beyond the intellect. By means of these they are equally wondrous. //69//

Thus, as origination was absent in the past in the Great Seal,

[It is] absent in the future, too. Although origination may occur due to the force of conditions,

The unborn nature is indivisible from them.

[Although] not material, [it] pervades everything,

⁴⁵ of that which was previously mentioned, ie. the Great Seal.

305. Is unchanging, and present at all times. //70//

Like space, it is devoid of origination and cessation.

Just as the rope that is grasped as a snake is devoid of snake,

The Truth Body, Enjoyment Body and the Transformation Body are indivisible.

The essential nature is beyond the object of the intellect. //71//

310. The Great Seal is instantaneous full awakening.

Thatness arises as the *rūpakāya*⁴⁶ for the sake of sentient beings.

[Based on the understanding of] “Results corresponding to their cause” and “The ripening results”...

The pure result is that you will engage in altruistic acts.

The characteristics of the state are said to be beyond expression. //72//

315. Oh! The uncontrived Seal is great bliss.

In the expanse of thought-free-ness, it is self-illuminating.

It is unborn and, like space, pervades everything.

[It] abides in the realm which is beyond the intellect. //73//

Appearance free of elaboration is great bliss.

320. Free of thought, you will not conceptualize it in any way.

Diverse thoughts appear as mental events,

But when examined and sought, they cannot be found. //74//

The unborn nature is free from grasping.

As it is free of grasping, it is without activity.

325. Thoughts are illusory, a mere reflexive event.

It illuminates free of illusion, free of liberation and free of thought. //75//

⁴⁶ When the *kayas* are simply divided into two categories, they are Form Body (*rupakaya*, which could be said to include both the Transformation Body and the Enjoyment Body) and Truth Body (*dharmakaya*).

- Unborn, it illuminates the ultimate completely,
 Therefore, everything appears as beyond the intellect.
 That wisdom which is beyond the intellect in the three realms,
 330. Is that very innate nature.
 Determine this to be the root of all thought without exception. //76//
- Place non-thought in the realm of the unborn nature.
 Uncontrived thatness is beyond the object of the intellect.
 It arises as the self-burning of conceptual mind.
 335. Through this arising, thoughts, as compliments of Samsara, arise. //77//
- Having understood Suchness, which is the path of liberation,
 As though self-arisen, one abides in the sphere which is free from
 thought.
 Thoughts, which are self-illuminating, do not exist as entities. //78//
- This unborn great bliss is uncontrived enlightened intention.
 340. Since it appears directly to the senses, there is nothing to be grasped.
 In the domain of non-thought there is nothing to be seen.
 Since it is devoid of basis, there is nothing to train in. //79//
- In the Great Seal, nothing whatsoever can be taken into your mind.
 Whatever diverse thoughts are there, are of signs.
 345. In the Great Seal which is Thatness, there are no distinctions.
 To cognize and not - these are not distinct. //80//
- Not abiding in the extremes of eternalism and nihilism, it is free of faults.
 When your own nature is realized, it is not from elsewhere.
 When dependent origination, which is the path of Nirvana, is taught and
 350. realized as unborn, that is the Great Seal. //81//

Those ignorant of Thatness seek in the action seal, commitment seal, dharma seal, etc.

These are mere examples that signify Thatness but cannot access the meaning.

Relying on the Great Seal, which is free of dualistic thinking,

355. Cognition arises in its natural purity, at its own pace. //82//

Free of desire, it abides in the innate nature of self and others.

The cognition of ordinary appearances is itself the intellect.

It is naturally placed in the thoughts of existence and non-existence. //83//

Precious devotion is the wish-granting jewel of instruction,

360. Place it so you are free of mental engagement and non-engagement.

Since reflexive awareness is itself the Great Seal,

It is taught in the Great Seal itself.

Do not allow mind to engage in diverse matters. //84//

Free of 'inner' and 'outer', the seal is undisputed, and

365. One who is endowed with the life of the Great Seal is free of desire -

For when desire arises, this too is the cause of thought. //85//

In the Great Seal which is my own mind,

No distinctions of thought and absence of thought arise.

Delusion and non-delusion are beyond objects of intellect.

370. The proliferation of conceptualization and clinging of thought are the causes of *Samsara*. //86//

Clear light, which is the Great Seal, is the innate itself.

Unchanging in any way, it is one in the mind of enlightenment.

In suchness, subject and object are free of essence.

Meaningful appearance is seen in wisdom itself. //87//

375. When examined by thoughts, they move in the assembly of thoughts,
Therefore, the arising of appearance is seen by the power of distortion.
The engagement of mind, in the domain of thought and non-thought,
Cannot be conceived, even when endeavoured upon by means of body,
speech and mind.

When there is no duality, there is no nature of Samsara. //88//

380. This is the nature of ever-fluctuating various thoughts.
It does not exist at all in the 'tip of the nose' seal,
Therefore, discard ethics of the Great Seal, which is beyond conception. //89//

Oh! The inner and outer stages of cultivation are deep and not deep, and
The nature of ultimate reality and exhalation,

385. Sealing by action and dharma seals,
The whole *yoga* of the completion stage, and //90//

The stage of the essential nature of the Great Seal,
The stage of accomplishing the entire commitment seal,
The stage of the thorough accomplishment of all,

390. The action seal, the essence of empowerment, and //91//

Those that are endowed with the four joys⁴⁷, that are aspects of method,
They are the diverse appearances of the dharma seal;
Among the four joys, it is 'the innate'.

In the Great Seal, the unborn nature,

395. It is free of dualistic thought, and its nature is beyond the intellect. //92//

⁴⁷ The four joys are: joy (*ananda*, *dga' ba*); great joy (*paramananda*, *mchog dga'*); joylessness (*vilaksana*, *dga' bral*); and innate joy (*sahajananda*, *lhan cig skyas pa'i dga' ba*). They describe stages of bliss experienced in Tantric practice.

The fruition of the unstained is complete Buddhahood.

The commitment seal is a *yoga* of characteristics.

The noble parents⁴⁸ symbolize skillful means and wisdom. //93//

400. Endowed with the four joys, the seal of the vows is great.

Accordingly, although the application of skillful means may be harnessed,

The profound is established by means of the Dharma-seal.

Mind itself is revealed on its own as the Great Seal. //94//

By singling out thoughts that are flavoured by Joy, and

405. By dividing into half thoughts flavoured by Great Joy, and

By singling out thoughts that are the Innate Joy,

Thoughts which are the unborn, which are the Appearance of Joylessness

[of all that was before], become clear.

Thus the profound Dharma seal is shown. //95//

Where knowledge which is the four Joys arises, and

410. Is non-dual and abides in the manner of total absorption,

It abides in the experiences of conceptualization, and

Within the mind, non-thought and conceptualization are not distinct.

They are taught to tame the conventions: examples and the path. //96//

The arising of the Great Seal, the mind itself,

415. [Is] the miraculous display of unborn and born appearing in diverse forms.

Since it is beyond the intellect, it is shown to be the unborn nature.

The unborn and entities which are born,

The two are non-dual, when they are left in the natural state. //97//

This movement of diverse thoughts in whatever sphere,

⁴⁸ *Yab yum*: this refers to the union of awakened Buddha aspects, and symbolizes every possible form of (awakened) union: wisdom and compassion, wisdom and means; left and right channels, etc. The union of all these elements indicates full awakened.

420. As it engages with non-thought, conceptualization is unobstructed.
If the cognition is left in its own place, it will abide.
The cause is the generation of appearance and emptiness and grasping at
their duality;
But when understood that they are not distinct, that is the Great Bliss. //98//

Because the experience has dawned, one will be free of grasping at their
disharmony.

425. There are no thoughts; there are no such objects.
Non-thought and appearance and emptiness are indivisible. //99//

In the unborn yoga of signlessness,
In the daily yoga, it is devoid of distinguishing between meditative equipoise
and subsequent states.

Whatever thoughts of appearance and arising come into being,
430. Because you abide in the absence of thought, which is emptiness of
Thatness,
Appearance and emptiness are indivisible; there are no thoughts to be taken
into the mind. //100//

In the encounter with Thatness, the experience of the unborn,
Emptiness, which is the nature of appearance, arises as great bliss.
Just as melted ice can be drunk as water,
435. So, whatever appears arises richly as unborn great bliss. //101//

Equanimity is free of thoughts, although conceptualization is not obstructed.
By being beyond the intellect, it is free of meditation on delusion.
When resting in that, the experience of great bliss occurs.
First the experience of appearance and emptiness occurs,
440. Like recognizing water even when it appears as ice. //102//

Second, without obstructing the appearance of thought,
Emptiness arises as non-dual from the bliss.
Like the state of ice melting into water,
Thought and non-thought are dissolved in the unborn. //103//

445. Since everything is not distinguished, it is one in the great bliss.
This is like the ice being melted into water.
If you cognize the encountering of the nature of all,
You will not be held by bondage and freedom and will not follow after
thoughts. //104//

- The mind will not be observed as if it is tightly tied,
450. If the knot is undone, you will be freed and mind itself will be directed at
will.
As the crow returns to the ship⁴⁹,
When Thatness is known, appearance is richness. //105//

- Just as by using the hook the elephant is tamed,
When left free of action, it is like an elephant mastered.
455. Recognition of thought and non-thought is harmless.
One is free of conceptualization by knowing appearance and emptiness. //106//

- By resting in origination, you will be undifferentiated and thought will not
move.
Suchness, the all-pervasive Lord, is like the recognition of all enemies.
The dissolving of appearance into emptiness is like dissolving salt into
water.
460. The dissolving of thought and non-thought is suchness.
There is no origination in the two types of arising. //107//

⁴⁹ This is a reference to the practice of bringing a crow on board a sea-faring ship: when searching for land (for the purposes of our metaphor, this implies searching for something solid to grasp) the crow is released. If it finds land, it will not return; if there is no land, however, the crow will return to the ship.

- When the wisdom which does not arise from contact dawns,
 Free of objects of the intellect and direction,
 It blazes like fire spreads through tinder,
 465. Or like the experience of the unutterable bliss of a youth⁵⁰. //108//
- Though diversity appears, it does not become conceptualized,
 As a gently flowing stream does not change the waves.
 Since it illuminates its own nature, thought is like a lamp. //109//
- Just as the Great Seal is not revealed to anyone,
 470. It is like a *Sarkone*⁵¹ bird abiding in the sky.
 Not engaging in accepting and rejecting by means of conduct of the realized.
 Like *Patari*⁵² animals, you will be free from longing and attachment.
 When the result which is beyond the intellect is desired, it is not attained.
 Among the best medicines, it is the *Beta*⁵³ itself. //110//
475. Oh! Thus the wise, who are accomplished in skills,
 Will seal the absence of thought with the unborn.
 Because it is free of thought, it is sealed by non-thought.
 With appearance, emptiness is sealed.
 With emptiness, appearance is sealed. //111//
480. When thought and appearance arise as the taste of bliss,
 They are sealed by emptiness and non-thought.
 When appearance and thought
 Are sealed by abiding in non-thought and the seal of emptiness,

⁵⁰ From this we are meant to understand that it is like the unutterable, all-encompassing desire experienced by youths (virgin adolescents, presumably!).

⁵¹ I have not been able to figure out what kind of bird this is. In any case, the bird is used as a symbol of non-abiding.

⁵² Unfortunately, this is another reference I have not been able to find.

⁵³ A type of evergreen tree that bears fruit.

- Appearance and thought arise as the taste of bliss, and
485. They will not be analyzed by the contemplation of signs, and will remain
beyond the intellect of characterization. //112//

Thought and appearance are sealed by the unborn;
The unborn is sealed by the beyond the intellect.
Because thought is sealed by the bliss that is non-thought,
It has not turned into nothing, and has not fallen into the extreme of nihilism.

//113//

490. As the abiding and arising are sealed,
They are not turned into a thing, and do not fall into the extreme of
eternalism.
Everything is unborn and beyond the intellect;
Everything possesses the cause of great bliss;
Knowing this, one does not fall into the extreme of apathy. //114//

495. Thought is the substance of Samsara, and
In the realization of non-thought,
Take equanimity as the path.
Probed by awareness, emptiness is equanimity, and
Reflexive awareness, free of bias, is equanimity.
500. Free of the Two Truths, meditation on equanimity is non-dual.
Meditative absorption without thoughts of anything whatsoever is the best
equanimity.
Equanimity which is neutral is not meditation. //115//

Cognition in its natural place emanates from the experience of non-thought.
Characteristics of thought are taken as the path of non-thought. //116//

505. Carried on the path of bliss, it is not an object, it is beyond the intellect.

Not conceptualized as two, the bliss is uninterrupted. //117//

Oh! As it is free of experience, be released from dualistic grasping,

Then you will see Suchness, the meaning of the Great Seal.

In the great treasury of jewels which is the ultimate result,

510. Desiring to abide in the Great Seal,

May I realize the unsullied result! //118//

This was sung by Saraha.

The *Body Treasury called the Immortal Adamantine Song* is complete!

Speech Treasury

**In the Indian language : A Speech Treasury called the Mañjughoṣa Adamantine
Song**

**In the Tibetan language: A Speech Treasury called the Mañjughoṣa Adamantine
Song**

1. Hommage to Mañjughoṣa!

Oh! The highest *samādhi* pervading [all] practice with one taste,
Abandoning authentic and inauthentic thoughts is the cause of wandering in
Samsāra.

Thatness is immutable, beginning from grasping appearance and emptiness.

5. [Once] everything has arisen as the nature of the *Dharmadhātu*, one abides in
dissolution. //1//

Because of the illumination of non-thought, benefiting self and others is not two,
and

the aspects of the Great Seal are innumerable [and] unutterable,

When authentic and inauthentic are discarded completely, there is no *Samsāra*
and *Nirvāṇa*.

If the pool has no cover, the wheels of the four directions are abandoned¹. //2//

10. [Being] ignorant [as a] little child of dependent origination is the cause of entering
Samsāra.

Just as even a lit lamp cannot possibly appear to those who are blind,

¹ The roofed pool is a reference to a common element of a pleasure garden; it has been suggested that the wheels of the four directions are also part of the structure of such a pool, which would allow me to interpret this line as an illustration of how when you remove one part of something, the whole structure ceases to exist (in this case referring to how once duality is discarded, everything is experienced equally as the Great Seal).

Weak wisdom cannot accomplish the welfare of self and others [because] of clinging to self and other as real,
[and even] wishing to benefit self and others, because of clinging to the self as real, one [in fact] clings [only] to the self. //3//

- Since there is conceptualization, [you] examine abandoning and not abandoning.
15. [But] apperception, which is free of appearances, is free of all conceptual designations.
Because of being without skillful means, [it] becomes [mere] convention and you will not accomplish [even] your own welfare.
Abiding in the indivisible goal is the teaching itself, and
The essential sign, which is entering into the *Dharmadhātu*, is revealed. //4//

- The precepts and explanations are taught by the Lama; the essential instructions are revealed afterwards.
20. Because of having correct instructions, one desires [to] realize the essential sign of the self.
Depending on the Lama will you will find pure essential instructions,
If [you] worship [the Lama who has the pure essential instructions], you will accomplish spontaneous highest bliss. //5//

Bow at the Lama's feet, because [his] actions are free of defilement.
"If you/one worship [the Lama], great blessings will arise" declared the Conqueror². //6//

25. Oh! Even though one may have passed into the sky,???... like an illusory city³.
If effort is made with freedom, you will undoubtedly reach the level of the Conqueror,

² ie. Buddha

³ Despite seeking out the advice of many whose understanding of Tibetan is better than my own, this line remains indecipherable.

Where the blessings that are the empowerment of word and content arise. //7//

First you act as a student with the stages of becoming a master,
Afterwards, the one who was a student is given the profound initiation.

30. Supplicate with *mudrās*⁴, offerings and praises,
Make a supplication through words of praise [for] the expression empowerment⁵.
//8//

The duty of the secret empowerment⁶ which relies on the Seal will be given;
Permission given, then afterwards the teachings spread out.

35. The student will offer what follows, and will be taught the deep initiation of vows,
stages of development, etc. //9//

The stages of the essential nature are taught, and
The expression, etc. of the experience of meditation, everything,
One does not abide in anything whatsoever, [like] the *Sarkone*⁷ bird [who does]
not construct a support in anything whatsoever. //10//

In the pure bliss of no-desire there is no abiding.

40. Not in many different ways, because with and without a basis in anything,
The non-dual Yoga, the blissful experience is arising in itself / in the self.
When you abandon the reality of concepts in the self, [self] becomes as wide as
the boundaries of space. //11//

If you wish to enter the pure city beyond suffering⁸,
The great uninterrupted yoga [will] meet the six consciousnesses⁹,

⁴ Here 'mudra' refers to ritualized hand gestures, not the seals as they have discussed until now.

⁵ this is the *tshig dbang* as discussed in chapter 4.

⁶ *sang dbang*

⁷ This is the same unidentifiable bird that appears in the Body Treasury. That we cannot decipher exactly what sort of bird it is does not here obstruct interpretation of the passage; using the image of a bird passing through the sky without leaving 'footprints' or a trail of any kind is a common analogy for being somewhere, in some experience, while at the same time being without support, or basis.

⁸ ie. *nirvāṇa*

45. [When] meeting the unborn, appearance and emptiness are not dependent on conditions.

[Having] entered the quick path by any means, non-dual meditation will not be reversed. //12//

When you know the true nature of sentient beings and Buddhas, you will not strive.

Whatever result is accomplished based on purification has one taste.

By means of purification, beings will certainly be liberated from Samsāra.

50. [You] will completely conquer Māra¹⁰ and enemies. //13//

Not practicing the dualistic *yoga*, there is no equanimous *yoga*.

Having quickly accomplished the pristine cognition of the wise, defilements come to an end.

Although by dualistic practice¹¹ fools are fettered by the ordinary sky¹²,

Those who go in the sky¹³ rely on the single taste of the Great Seal. //14//

55. If you rely on the path of continually putting non-duality into practice, it will be accomplished in this [very] life.

You do not abide in the meaning of illusory appearance, it is not an object of thought.

The fetters of the Eight Worldly Dharmas¹⁴ is without power [against] the most excellent vow¹⁵, //15//

⁹ visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory, tactile, mental.

¹⁰ or demons in general.

¹¹ literally, by using conventional signs.

¹² Here 'ordinary sky' is a conventional sign, representing ordinary experience of conventional, dualistic reality.

¹³ As far as I can tell, this is something of a *double entendre*: it both refers to those who no longer are limited by ordinary concepts, and is a reference to becoming a *dakini*, or 'sky-goer' (*mkha' dro ma*)

¹⁴ ('*jig rten chos brgyad*) they are: gain, loss, reputation, infamy, praise, degradation, pleasure and misery.

¹⁵ Presumably the bodhisattva's vow.

Practicing [the union of] compassion and means, your desirelessness will become expansive, like the sky.

Possessing the four branches of the Great Seal¹⁶ is the best method.

60. Possessing these four is the domain which is the one miracle of the one Seal.

Accepting that, you will liberate the Great Seal in the non-dual sphere. //16//

When you do not abandon or accept *bodhicitta*, you are like an elephant¹⁷.

Dependent on the nature of [the] cognition, if desired, a cow can appear as a horse.

Cultivating the goal which is free of cognition and free of appearances, that is the practice of Yoga. //17//

65. The result [of the] perfection/accomplishment of the four Kāyas is the realm of great bliss.

When the bodies (kāyas) of the path of appearances arise,

Possessing the power of the Three Kāyas, one is completely free of conceptualization.

Knowledge and what is knowable are the objects of pure independent reasoning.

//18//

Although the own-nature of the authentically real appears due to the conditions of arising,

70. The unborn is beyond [any] object [and is] not experienced.

Authentically real and unreal, meditative equipoise, etc. are all indivisible ('byed pa med from 72.)

¹⁶ This is a reference back to the four branches listed in the Body Treasury: 1. the branch of realization of the unborn nature (skye med don rtogs pa); 2. the branch of not distinguishing/inseparability of the two truths (bden gnyis tha mi dad) and realization of contact of unborn nature and appearance (snang ba skye med thug phrad nyid du rtogs); 3. the branch of non-grasping of thought (dran pa gzung du med pa) and emptiness devoid of conditions and thought (memory) and which is beyond the intellect (stong pa rkyen dang dran med blo las 'das); 4. the branch of not accepting or rejecting things (dngos po dgag sgrub med pa). (Body Treasury, verses 30-32)

¹⁷ ie. unshakeable.

That is the object which is non-thought, unborn:

The Great Seal is always free of essential characteristics. //19//

The purified aggregates¹⁸ are beyond [any] secret / object /which is secret.

75. The essential characteristic which is the Four Joys is the object of the Great Seal.

It is not independent reasoning; it is free of knowledge and means; //20//

Tip-of-the-nose meditation, etc; if Thatness is not completed,

Although [you may be] established in pure Thatness, it is not the ultimate goal.

Abiding [in] the adamantine apperception [is] the *sattva's* yoga:

80. The nature of omniscience is not like this. //21//

The ocean's waves are like the nature of echoes,

Just by counting you will not reach anywhere.

Joining together generation of appearance¹⁹ and various results²⁰,

[All these practices] will not bring you beyond the ordinary mind²¹,

//22//

85. In the thought 'vow', 'means' etc., where is the mind?

The object that is beyond the intellect is not learned.

Practicing Tantric discipline, you will transform outer and inner.

When you possess Suchness, you have a distinction,

Not possessing Thatness, [one is] similar to beasts²². //23//

90. By means of concealed Thatness, meditate on the innate nature.

Although vows without means is a mistake, it is not evil.

Not yearning for this and that,

¹⁸ In Abhidharma analysis, sentient beings (in our realm, at least) are understood to be composed of five aggregates: form, feeling, discrimination, conditioning factors, and consciousness.

¹⁹ a reference to *skye rim*, the generation phase of Tantric meditation.

²⁰ results of Tantric practice.

²¹ This was interpreted from the more literal, "the conventional path consisting of words – signifier and signified"

²² ie. experience still characterized by dualistic mind.

The Great Seal manifests instantly;
But when you abandon Thatness, contact will not occur. //24//

95. By hearing a word: “Great Seal”,
Although not attending to possessing or not possessing the *pitaka*²³,
Because it is just like the doctrines, [in] this one life it is attained. //25//

However, not being distracted whatsoever from pure thought,
By possessing the meaning of meditation, the innate nature arises.

100. It is Thatness itself; do not seek the Dharma of others.
Because of searching charnel grounds, gutters²⁴, etc. [what is] sought after is
ruined. //26//

Oh! Just as a Brahmin seeks out and asks marriage of one who is low-born,
When they mix together – lowly and good – they cause harm to one another;²⁵
The dualistic *yoga* will not penetrate the signless goal.

105. That which is signless can never be examined.
Signs come into being when [you] attend to number and time; //27//

Do not think the stages of generation and completion²⁶ are distinct.
The convergence of non-duality is the highest yoga:
[For] whoever is ignorant, non-thought is an object of distraction

110. Meditate on abandoning the stream of thought²⁷. //28//

It is not ordinary; it is the highest secret instruction:

²³ the formal collection of the Buddha’s teachings and other works considered canonical.

²⁴ a reference to Tantric

²⁵ They cause harm to one another only within the confines of ordinary thought. According to a commentary by H. H. Shamar Rinpoche, the Brahmin here can also represent the deity generated in meditation, which by extension means that Tantric practice engaged in by ‘ordinary’ dualistic mind (the dualistic yoga referred to in the following line) can be at best useless and at worst, even harmful.

²⁶ *rdzogs rim*: the completion phase where the generated deity dissolves into the meditator.

²⁷ Interestingly, if we take the D version, this line would read: “Meditative on the flowing continuity of thought.”

From the beginning you abide in the true nature.

Because of bringing together the accomplishments, you will meet the innate nature.

In the excellent Thatness, apperception is beyond objects. //29//

115. Thatness is the abode of bliss and empty of things.

By purifying all phenomena, the blissful own-nature is attained.

Not abiding in anything whatsoever, [you are] beyond mental objects.

Because of [being] without objects, without abiding, and without basis, it is empty. //30//

*Evam*²⁸ is the cause of accomplishing the essential nature.

120. The convergence ('*dus pa*) of Dorje Chang and the sacred instructions of the Lama which is apperception, is the unsullied Great Seal lineage (120-121)

The conventional Action-Seal, etc., everything...

They resemble the common subjects of a Universal Monarch. //31//

[In] the Seal of Completion, all stages of arising are profound – inner and outer.

125. [It is as rare as seeing] stars while the sun or moon [are shining].

transcendent joy, joy, supreme joy, etc.

[And] co-emergent joy are the root themselves of Samsāra.

Purified in the Unsullied, that is clear meditation. //32//

Possessing Thatness, you will perpetually enjoy pristine cognition.

130. Emptiness, which is the inseparable mind, is the vast state.

Possessing means of body and speech, meditation will be based on means.

The generation of thought is the cause and condition of the ripening result. //33//

²⁸ 'Evam' is a complex and multivalent term in the Tantric context. As the first word of all works ascribed to the Buddha (*evam maya srutam*, "thus have I heard") it has taken on an enormous range of meanings. 'E' and 'Vam' are separated as syllables held to represent everything from the left and right channels, to the *yogin* and his consort, to compassion (means) and wisdom, to (though solely in the context of the *Hevajra Tantra*) the navel and heart energy centers (cakras). In all these cases, E and VAM must be united for complete awakening and the Great Bliss. Thus, EVAM stands for that union.

Because of possessing righteous deeds, [you] can apply the method of liberation.
Experiencing the Action Seal, joy increases.

135. [Becoming] skilled at possessing Thatness, [you will] experience the path of liberation.

Through desiring to see the dorje in the padma²⁹, by means of the path of desire, that will not be bring about liberation. //34//

Although others rely on the experiences of the Action Seal,
In your own ordinary body, the Great Seal will be kindled.

140. The Great Seal is the simile which pervades everything
Like a Precious Jewel or a Sky Prince. //35//

The five aggregates, etc. become the highest secret.
Samsara and Nirvana abide innately [in each other].
In Suchness, which is due to the grace of the Lama,

145. You discover for yourself [that] accomplishments and illustrations are unnecessary, //36//

Because the highest, stainless Great Seal is to be the resulting state, it is to be practiced.
Like establishing the non-dual equality of existence and non-existence/ eternity and momentariness, it is itself established as one.
By understanding initiation/precepts and essential instructions, it will be known/ you will know. //37//

150. Suchness will no doubt be attained:
Illuminating the Great Seal, knowledge is mastered.
Suchness will certainly be realized:

²⁹ This refers to union practice – ‘dorje’ is a common epithet for the male generative organ, while ‘padma’ is a common epithet for the female generative organ.

By the power of training in the knowledge of Thatness, [it will be] accomplished.

//38//

155. By relying on the three vital points : upper doors, lower doors³⁰, and consort;
Thatness is not recognized.
One is just like a duck, etc. fish or beast. //39//

One who comprehends the designation which is the continuum of apperception,
and

Having investigated outer and inner, [one] asserts essencelessness.

Indeed, the worldly clamour is [itself] equal to non-distinction. //40//

160. Desiring to be liberated from the 'doors' of truth and dependent arising, and
By controlling one's sensory faculties, upholding the guided path of liberation;
But, because of being ignorant and empty handed, you are beguiled by joy.
Therefore, uphold the activities; [you will] not be liberated [if] seduced by
falsehood.
165. If [you] accept the Sāmkhya lineage, etc. Jainas, Vaiśeṣikas, views of action and
effects³¹, etc. [you] will wander. //41//

Oh! How then will Samsāra be abandoned?

Because causes and conditions do not exist [and] there is no object of
understanding,

Mind abides in Thatness, the Great Seal.

Thatness is free of wrong perception of power, and

170. In one life³² you will accomplish the Great Seal. //42//

Oh! That is the experience of the secret wonder.

³⁰ The 'upper doors' refer to the body, speech and mind; the 'lower doors' refer to the generative organs.

³¹ Samkhyas are a dualistic school of Brahmanical Hinduism; Vaisesikas are a Buddhist school holding to particular (wrong) views about the existence of certain elements. These are examples of 'falsehood' that will inhibit liberation.

³² could be read "in one moment"

From the realization of the King of Physicians³³ dawns the unborn.
The five wisdoms, etc. themselves possessing the essential characteristics,
The highest born class only sees. //43//

175. Thought which relies on characteristics is the cause of agitation.
[Something which is] beyond Suchness is not seen,
The experience of characteristics will dissolve into non-thought. //44//

The *yoga* of signs³⁴ is the path of the three realms of Samsāra³⁵.
[Believing in] the reality (svabhāva) of characteristics is the ground for seeds of
heedlessness.

180. The Yoga of non-thought is like the center of space, //45//

Because if you do not make distinctions, self-essence does not arise,
The minds of other sentient beings are not experienced.
For the learned ones who have a view of Thatness, practice arises. //46//

- Abiding in thought, conceptuality and form,
185. Is abandoned in abiding which is non-thought, the three realms purified.
Non-arising, which is Thatness, is the existence of all the *siddhis*.
Not seeing outer and inner is the accomplishment of all. //47//

- Oh! That which possesses the highest qualities is the Great Seal.
Pleasing/ Taking delight in the Lama is the basis of all *siddhis*.
190. Not abandoning the precious Lama, the qualities arise.
Whatever rare being has confidence,
May he/she realize this root text of the Yogis! //48//

³³ a common epithet of the Buddha.

³⁴ Again, this is a reference to the generation phase of meditation.

³⁵ In other words, it won't liberate you. The three realms are the desire realm, form realm and formless realm. All possible realms of rebirth fall into one of these three.

Thus ends the Adamantine Song “Mañjughoṣa Speech Treasury” sung by Saraha.

Mind Treasury

In the Indian language: Unborn Treasury of Mind Adamantine Song

In the Tibetan language: Unborn Treasury of Mind Adamantine Song

1. Homage to Mañjuḥṣa!

Oh! The pristine wisdom which is the innate nature,

That itself is the experience of self.

That itself is knowledge, ignorance, illuminating apperception;

5. [As a] lamp illuminates the dark, the self-illumination of the self is the discrimination of the self. //1//

The mud-lotus [which has a] good seed is not attached to the mud.

Without having abandoned the defilement which is dualistic views, the essence is illuminated. //2//

Animals in the forest roam alone;

Not being attached to the cause, that itself is the result.

10. Illuminating appearance and non-appearance, devoid of object, devoid of attachment;
Not thinking 'real' and 'empty', non-thought, it is not uttered,
[The] three aspects of the innate are the bliss state: //3//

Because free from attachment, dialectics has no object,

Do not follow after fluctuating thoughts.

15. The wisdom of clarity and equanimity is its¹ essence
Like the sun which is the colour of a burning lamp,
When apperception itself blazes, grasping thoughts are exhausted. //4//

¹ ie. the essence of the innate.

Because of exhausting the defilements, [one is] without thought, free from mental agitation.

Without dualism, existence and non-existence, conventional designations will not increase.

20. [For] the *yogin* [who has] grasped the diamond that is apperception,
The Great Seal is without thought, beyond the intellect. //5//

The lamp of the innate which is difficult to transcend
Is the truth that is the union of means and wisdom. //6//

25. Unborn, empty, free of differentiation of kinds, radiant,
Suchness is the superior wisdom.
Without depending on subject and object², the continuity of bliss
is unbroken.
Rooting out habits, non-conceptuality is self-arisen. //7//

- Although sentient beings and Buddhas are without distinction,
When there is pure conduct, [that is] continuous Great Yoga.
30. Although the nature of thought (*dran pa*) is not penetrated by thought (*bsam*),
Primordial purity is merged/absorbed in the realm of non-thought. //8//

The goal of correct perception is non-dual, unborn self-benefit.
The pure result is free of intellect and object.
The flow of correct perception pervades the whole, continuous nature. //9//

35. Although [accomplishing] the benefit of beings is skillful means,
compassion is without thought.
Correct perception is the unobstructed arising of the own-nature of wisdom.
Although the Bliss of Skillful Means arises, as it does not exist, do not
grasp it but be bound by it.

² literally 'two'

The natural wisdom of liberation spontaneously arises. //10//

The object of meditation, the subject who meditates and the visualization are beyond the intellect.

40. Buddhas are not pervaded by the thought of sentient beings,
When the unborn is the object of correct perception, [it] does not arise in the mind.
By examining That itself [there is] bliss; by [examining] emptiness, [there is] the sign. //11//

The 'substance' of the object of meditation arises from the conditions of appearance.

Correct perception, which is free from conceptualization, accomplishes conventional signs.

45. The condition for non-dual appearance does not exist.
Because of the appearance of pure own-nature, illusory form arises. //12//

Separate and not separate, non-conceptual and free of intellect,
The unborn, which is the non-dual content of correct perception,
will become the object.

By saying "empty" one will not know it itself!

50. By pondering "no object" one is not beyond the intellect! //13//

For those who accept the three extremes³ as permanent,

Even imagining the Four Joys is itself difficult.

Because the six sense consciousnesses⁴ possess the highest self-arising wisdom,

The appearance of 'essence' is non-dual; it will dawn on its own. //14//

³ This is difficult to decipher, as usually the extremes are listed as two: nihilism and eternalism. This may be a reference to a belief in the permanence of beginning, middle and end.

⁴ Visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile and mental sense consciousnesses.

55. Oh! The Great Seal, separate from realization, is basis of everything.
Because *siddhis* will arise, it is great, most wondrous.
From the habit of examining non-duality, you will be separated from
apperception. //15//

The Great Seal is free of grasping:

*Śravakas*⁵, etc. are terrified of essential-characteristic teachings.

60. If [you] look at one layer, [you will] possess the ultimate qualities.
Although by acting at one level [it] is not in even the slightest thought, //16//

Mental elaboration consumes itself like a fire; non-thought is pacified by
healing (*gsos su*).

Non-thought and non-arising are like reflections in a mirror.

Through freedom from conventional labels you enter the path which is unborn,
beyond the intellect.

65. The habit [of] unsullied thought (*dran pa*) of characteristics is taught.
Time is unimaginable, [totally] without beginning and end. //17//

Oh! Because of that, the unreal is the path of wisdom, correct perception.

Just as, if you are inclined [toward] the way which is without habits;

[You will be] pacified by not grasping at duality and freedom from beginning and
end. //18//

70. Free of habits, you are empty of coming and going and without direction.
True union is Buddhahood itself.
“The three kinds of wisdom are [both] goal and method” [Buddha] said.
By being without metaphors, it is free of objects that can be characterized. //19//

The Noble One’s heart is not in this arising⁶.

⁵ The ‘listener’ disciples of the Buddha, considered inferior because they are not motivated by great compassion.

75. By establishing skillful means, the six sense consciousnesses are pacified in their own place.

The five aggregates, etc. are the basis of the pure qualities.

The omniscient one is non-dual, without appearance and object. //20//

The highest meaning is not said, [the rest is] just so much conventional dialectics.

The path of *Nirvana* is the appearance itself of *Samsara*.

80. In whatever you encounter, think of the Holy Lama.

Accomplishing that, you will be liberated from the path of *Samsara*. //21//

Finding the state of meditative *yoga* [is the] perfect Buddha.

On the path of meditation, there is only spontaneity. //22//

Oh! In the non-dual goal you are liberated by mantras and symbols.

85. The virtues are not exhausted, like an ocean of jewels.

When the highest means is exhausted, you will reside in the 14 *bhūmis*⁷.

Although abiding wherever, wisdom is within yourself. //23//

Those who have found a [worldly] treasure are ignorant of affairs of both self and other⁸:

The heart amulet which is the central lotus flower⁹,

90. Conjoining by this method, from there it emanates into whatever loci of the channels (*rtsa*) and centers (*'khor lo*)¹⁰; //24//

In the sky of desirelessness, by means of freedom from attachment,

⁶ In other words, it is also that which is empty of coming and going, etc.

⁷ The first ten *bhūmis* are the same as the standard list of ten. To these add: the level without simile (*dpe med sa*); the level with wisdom (*ye shes ldan sa*); the thoroughly radiant level (*kun tu 'od sa*); and the adamant level (*rdo rje'i sa*),

⁸ The 'treasure' he refers to are the collection of Tantric practices working with the subtle body that do not actually help one to achieve full awakening.

⁹ Here he is beginning a description of various Tantric practices. The 'heart amulet which is the central lotus flower' is the heart center (*cakra*) of the central channel.

¹⁰ The process being described here is the spreading of subtle energy (*prana*, *rlung*) throughout the subtle body, after it has all been drawn into the heart center of the central channel.

Drawing [energies] up and down in the turning centers¹¹ (*'khor lo*),

[If you are] guided by those methods, the truth cannot found¹².

95. Although [you may] grasp and eject¹³ and unite and ignite¹⁴,
There is no difference between [these breath-control practices]¹⁵ and a fool
suffering from asthma¹⁶. //25//

By means of desiring correct perception, Thatness will always be seen.

With sincere devotion rely on the Precious Lama, [and]

From the highest Lama the secret qualities will arise.

100. Possessing the goal [and the] essential sign, you [will be] victorious in the battle
[against] the defilements. //26//

Possessing the highest and secret meaning,

(From) possessing the holy Lama's highest precepts,

May [whoever] goes through [this] non-dual door arrive at liberation! //27//

The secret essential meaning, the *Unborn Treasury of Mind Adamantine Song*,

Was composed by the Glorious Saraha.

¹¹ Drawing the energies up and down through the channels is again part of Tantric practice.

¹² literally, "the bottom of truth won't be found."

¹³ This is a reference to the *pho-ba* practice of ejecting the mind at the moment of death.

¹⁴ Presumably a reference to union practice, which is designed to result in the ignition of Great Bliss.

¹⁵ Controlling the breath is a key element of all the above-mentioned practices.

¹⁶ literally "breathing problem".

Conclusions

Any work devoted to the study of Saraha will naturally defy a conclusion, though a summary is certainly in order. The first part of this dissertation explored in detail the many traditions of Saraha through an examination of past work that has been done on him and the many ways in which he is present in contemporary Tibetan Buddhist traditions. Showing how historically accurate facts regarding his dates, location and language are all inaccessible, it has been my intention to shift the 'search' for Saraha into the multiple contexts in which he is used. It is therefore his presence and the means by which various schools of Buddhism *presence* him that must be viewed as the only 'truths' about him.

Chapter 2 explored the variety of antinomian traditions that flourished in South Asia during the range of dates ascribed to Saraha. While my discussion of other *siddha* traditions, such as the *Nāths*, *Nayanars*, and *Rasasiddhas* does not provide an in-depth study of those particular traditions, it was simply my aim to bring them into the fold of my discussion of Buddhist *siddhas* far enough that their close relationship should be apparent to the reader. From a basic discussion of the initial context of the *siddhas*, to a detailed examination of the doctrines and historical setting of the *siddhas* considered to be specifically Buddhist, it is my contention that by understanding some of the cultural and religious ambience that Saraha emerged in, his contours may become slightly more pronounced.

Following that, my discussion of the Great Seal began with a direct engagement with the work of Saraha. By demonstrating with concrete references to the Adamantine Songs and the *Dohā* trilogy how structure and content mirror Saraha's Great Seal as basis and fruition, I attempted to provide some road signs that will be useful in reading my translation of his songs. Chapter 4 was a broad and detailed survey of traditions, practices, definitions and classifications of the Great Seal in multiple Tibetan contexts. The principal focus of my analysis was the Karma Kagyü school.

Finally, Chapter 5 provided an introduction to the South Asian literary context out of which Saraha emerged in order to contextualize the genre and opaque language of his Adamantine Songs. By also providing a general introduction to Tibetan poetics I also allowed readers to glimpse the literary context his work was read in at the time of its transmission to Tibet, and gave some idea of how it may be read in contemporary Tibetan religious contexts as well. Chapter 5 concluded Part I of my dissertation.

Part II is the heart of my dissertation. In it I presented a critical edition of the Tibetan text of Saraha's Adamantine Songs, drawn from five sources. Following that was my translation – the fruit of many years' labour – which I will forever consider a work in progress.

What has been offered here is access to a root text of the Great Seal tradition, composed by a veritable legend of Vajrayāna Buddhism: Saraha. It will be of use to scholars of Tibetan language as I have composed a critical edition of the Tibetan text; and also of use

to scholars of Tibetan and Vajrayāna Buddhism in general as the English translation makes it newly accessible.

This work may serve also as a springboard for further research in a number of areas. Of interest to me are issues such as the relationship between doctrine and mysticism in religions; the complexities surrounding scholarship on mystical or esoteric traditions; and very broadly, how scholars must negotiate their position *vis-à-vis* subjects that defy description within the logocentric norms of Western-derived thought.

Glossary

Phonetic transliteration

Dadzin
 Danün
 Döndrup Gyal
 Drakpa Dorje Päl Sangpo
 Dramsé Chenpo
 Drikung Chöje Kunga Rinchen
 Drukpa Kunley
 Dusum Khyenpa
 Dudjom Lingpa Rinpoche

Gampopa
 Geluk
 Gö Lotsawa Shönupel
 Gorampa

Jamgön Ju Mipham Gyatso

Kadampa
 Kagyü
 Karma Trinlepa
 Khamtrul Tenpé Nyima
 Khedrup-je

Longchen Rabjampa
 Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen (Panchen)

Marpa Chökyi Lodrö

Wylie transliteration

Mda' 'dzin
 Mda' bsnun
 Don grub rgyal's
 Grags pa rdor-rje dpal bzang-po
 Bram-ze chen-po
 'Bri gung chos rje kun dga' rin chen
 'Brug-pa kun-legs
 Dus gsum mkhyen pa
 Bdud 'joms gling-pa rinpoche

Sgampopa
 Dge-lugs
 'Gos lo-twa-ba gzhon-nu-dpal
 Go-rams-pa

'Jam mgon 'ju Mi-pham-rgya-mtsho

Bka' gdams-pa
 Bka' brgyud
 Karma phrin las pa
 Khams sprul bstan pa'i nyi ma
 Mkhas -grub-rje

Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa
 Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan

Marpa chos-kyi blo-gros

Milarepa
Mipham Gelek Namgyal

Mi-la-ras-pa
Mi pham dge legs nam rgyal

Ngawang Losang Gyatso (5th Dalai Lama)
Nyingma

Nga-wang blo-bzang rgya-mtsho
Rnying-ma

Pamo Drubpa
Panchen Sönam Drakpa
Pawo Tsuglak Trengwa
Pema Karpo

Rje phag mo Grub pa
Pan-chen bsd-nams grags-pa
Dpa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba
Padma dkar-po

Rangjung Dorje

Rang-byung rdo-rje

Sakya
Sakya Pandita Kunga Gyaltsen
Sarma
Serdog Panchen Shakya Chokden
Shakya Chokden
Shang gyu Drakpa Tsöndru Drakpa
Shamar
Shamarpa Mipham Chökyi Lodrö

Sa skya
Sakyapandita kun dga' rgyal mtshan
Gsar-ma
Gser mdog pan chen sha kya mchog ldan
Sha-kya mchog-ldan
Zhang g.yu brag pa brtson 'grus grags pa
Zhwa-mar
Zhva-mar-pa rinpoche mipham chos-kyi
Blo-'gros

Shuchen Tsültrim Rinchen
Sumpa Yeshé Peljor

Zhu chen tshul khrims rin chen
Sum ba ye shes dpal 'byor

Takpo Tashi Namgyal
Tuken

Dwags-po bkra-shis nam-rgyal
Thu'u bkvan

Wangchuk Dorje

Dbang-phyug rdo-rje

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