

## Article

# Theory and Practice of Tranquil Abiding Meditation in Tibet: The Pith Instructions of Yeshe Gyaltzen (1713–1793) and His Predecessors

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**Abstract:** Tranquil Abiding is an advanced meditative state of mind that is attained through gradual meditative training focusing on the cultivation of mindfulness and meta-awareness. This paper will focus on the eighteenth-century Tibetan scholar Yeshe Gyaltzen's manual on Tranquil Abiding. It involves introduction and analysis of the themes of Tranquil Abiding, such as the significance and objects of Tranquil Abiding, its relevance to Special Insight, mental hindrances, and factors which counter them. Illustrated will be how Yeshe Gyaltzen's point of view, which he calls the Ganden tradition, is influenced by exceptional Indian Mahāyāna masters such as Nāgārjuna, Aśaṅga, Śāntideva, Kamalaśīla, Atīśa Dipaṅkaraśrījñāna, and Tsongkhapa. Included will be a discussion of his understanding of *amanasikāra*.

**Keywords:** Tranquil Abiding; Special Insight; mindfulness; meta-awareness; luminous nature of mind; focal object; discursive thought; *amanasikāra*



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“The way to cultivate proper meditative concentration is to practice mindfulness”.

-Yeshe Gyaltzen

## 1. Introduction

In Tibet, religious doctrine training is structured in three successive aspects: listening, reflection, and meditative cultivation, the last being the deepest integration of the meaning understood via the first two. A more condensed classification could be made into two aspects: study and practice, with study including both listening (and reading), and reflection. (See Table 1 on page 2). In either case, textbooks related to the subjects are instrumental in progressing from one aspect of learning to the next. Typically, a student of religious discipline will first listen to a lecture to understand the content of a textbook, then reflect on the meaning with reasoned analysis, and finally try to cultivate an inner experience based on repeated internalization of their conceptual knowledge.

Generally speaking, theoretical textbooks are extensive and not easy to comprehend. However, meditation manuals are usually more succinct and accessible to understanding. That is why it is meditational manuals that are often instrumental in advancing from one aspect of learning to the next. Among many examples, here I present Yeshe Gyaltzen's (Yeshe rgyal mtshan) manual on Tranquil Abiding (Tib. *zhi gnas*, Skt. *śamatha*) meditation. It is evident from Yeshe Gyaltzen's long biography that he was not only a scholar, but also a veteran meditator, and the latter for long periods of time. As testimony to that, his meditational manual is in fact a synthesis combining explanation of his study (Tib. *bshad pa*) and practice (Tib. *sgrub pa*). In addition, his manual incorporates many pith instructions from historic Indian and Tibetan scholars presenting ideas from Buddhist sūtra and tantra. Thus, his manual provides a crucial link in the transition between learning through listening and reflection, to learning through meditative cultivation.

**Table 1.** Summarizing Buddhist doctrine training as union of Study and Practice as quoted from Vasubandhu's (320–400 A.D.) *Abhidharmakośa*.<sup>1</sup>

Stages of Training in Buddhist Doctrine	(a.) Listening ( <i>thos pa</i> )	Study ( <i>bshad pa</i> )
	(b.) Reflection ( <i>bsam pa</i> )	
	(c.) Meditative cultivation ( <i>sgom pa</i> )	Practice of Meditative cultivation ( <i>sgrub pa</i> )

Tranquil Abiding<sup>2</sup> is a highly focused meditative experience developed through training in single pointed meditative concentration<sup>3</sup> (Tib. *ting nge 'dzin*) which originated in ancient India. According to Asaṅga, Kamalaśīla, Tsongkhapa, and Yeshe Gyaltsen, this meditative state is an emergent experience that arises only after cultivating all nine levels of meditative concentration as a method for stilling the mind (Tib. *sems gnas thabs kyi ting nge 'dzin dgu*). Thus, Tranquil Abiding is an optimal result attained by progression through nine levels of meditative concentration. Although Asaṅga in *Compendium of Abhidharma*<sup>4</sup> presented all these nine levels of concentration as classifications of Tranquil Abiding<sup>5</sup>, they cannot be equated with Tranquil Abiding.

In the context of Ganden<sup>6</sup> (*dGa' ldan*) mahāmudrā (hereafter; Great Seal) practice, the goal of cultivating Tranquil Abiding is to attain the realization of Great Seal, i.e., realization of emptiness<sup>7</sup>, which is synonymous with Special Insight<sup>8</sup> (Tib. *lhag thong*; Skt. *vipaśyanā*). We can understand that Tranquil Abiding and Special Insight share a cause-effect relationship by Yeshe Gyaltsen's description of Special Insight. He says that once Tranquil Abiding is achieved, within that firm meditative stability, analytical wisdom is developed to sustain intellectual analysis. When the power of this analysis induces pliancy, such level of analytical wisdom is called Special Insight<sup>9</sup>. This description of Special Insight illustrates that the prior development of Tranquil Abiding supports one's mind in retaining a state of the meditative stillness wherein Special Insight is later developed. All Ganden scholars including Yeshe Gyaltsen<sup>10</sup> assert that it is not possible to attain such Special Insight without prior development of Tranquil Abiding.

It should be pointed out that, as Roger Jackson (2019) has discussed, and as Michael Sheehy (2022) further draws attention to in his review of the book, Special Insight is not a single, monolithic practice. The Gelug presentation of Special Insight adheres to a specifically Middle Way (Skt. *Madhyamaka*) Prāsaṅgika mode of analysis among the various types of Special Insight practice which exist. This is a complex topic in itself, worthy of consideration for future research.

For more detail about the significance and nature of Tranquil Abiding, see the following discussion on 'significance of Tranquil Abiding' and 'the nature of Tranquil Abiding'. To understand the relationship between Tranquil Abiding and Special Insight through an analogy, see the description of 'the relevance of Tranquil Abiding to Insight,' in which Kamalaśīla provides his explanation.

After the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet in the seventh century it was systematically established by the eighth century under the royal patronage of Tibetan emperor, Trisong Detsen (*Khri srong lde btsan*). Over the centuries up to the present Tranquil Abiding meditation based on Tibetan texts has been taught and practiced throughout Asia. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, many in Western countries which are historically Judeo-Christian have also begun to pay serious attention to the practice of Tranquil Abiding, as much as to any other form of meditative training.

Masters throughout history from the 'four major lineages' of Tibetan Buddhism, Nyingma (*rNying ma*), Sakya (*Sa skya*), Kagyu (*bKa' rgyud*), and Gelug (*dGe lugs*), have written manuals on the cultivation of Tranquil Abiding. Yeshe Gyaltsen is of the Gelug lineage, most recent of the four.

Although modern works (Jackson 2019, p. 644) on Yeshe Gyaltsen (1713–1793) vary in naming his birthplace, according to a typeset edition based on original wooden printing

blocks, he was born in the town of Zar,<sup>11</sup> under the jurisdiction of the Tingkye (*sTing skyes*)<sup>12</sup> district of Tsang (*gTsang*). He received novice monastic vows from Paṅ chen Lobsang Yeshe (*Blo bzang ye shes*, 1663–1737)<sup>13</sup> along with the name, Yeshe Gyaltzen, ‘Victory Banner of Transcendent Wisdom’. In his early twenties he received full monastic ordination from Drubwang Lobsang Namgyal (*Grub dbang Blo bzang rnam rgyal*, 1670–1741).<sup>14</sup> Initially, he lived a modest monastic lifestyle in the central and south-western regions of Tibet, ütsang (*dbus gtsang*). Academically trained in Tashi Lhunpo (*bKra shis lhun po*) monastery under the guidance of teachers such as Yeshe Tokmey (*Ye shes thogs med*), Tseten Gyaltzen (*Tshe brtan rgyal mtshan*), and Drubwang Lobsang Namgyal, his fame as a scholar spread beyond his own monastic community. In addition to study, he engaged in long solitary meditation retreats from an early age; this influenced many people throughout Tibet. At the age of forty-four,<sup>15</sup> in 1756, he established the monastery hermitage of Tashi Samten Ling (*bKra shis bsam gtan gling*) in the Kyirong area of south-west Tibet near the border with Nepal. He traveled twice to Nepal and explored its pilgrimage sites.<sup>16</sup> From the age of sixty-nine to eighty (1782–1793) he took the position of teacher to the eighth Dalai Lama, despite favoring living in modesty and solitude, himself. At the age of seventy-seven, in 1790, he was requested by the Eighth Dalai Lama to be the spiritual head for the Lhasa area Tsechok Tashi Samten Ling (*Tshe mchog bKra shis gsam gtan gling*) monastery. Although initially he refused the position, later he accepted it after repeated requests.<sup>17</sup> He made vast contributions to the religious studies, philosophy, and yogic practice of Tibet and is regarded as one of the important custodians<sup>18</sup> of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism of the eighteenth century.

Yeshe Gyaltzen wrote on more than two hundred topics<sup>19</sup> in twenty-five volumes of collected works. His work on the *dGa’ ldan phyag rgya chen po’i khrid yig snyan brgyud lam bzang gsal ba’i sgron me*<sup>20</sup> (hereafter, *GPLG*) *Bright Lamp of the Excellent Path of Oral Transmission: An Instruction Manual of Ganden Great Seal*<sup>21</sup>, is in volume twenty-two; it has a hundred and twenty-two folios. His manual on Tranquil Abiding is a part of his Great Seal meditation manual, which consists of twenty folios, 49b–69b. The original Tibetan woodblock print of his entire collected works can be found at the website of the Buddhist Digital Resource Center.<sup>22</sup>

Although there are numerous manuals on the cultivation of Tranquil Abiding written by Indian and Tibetan masters, we shall explore the work of Yeshe Gyaltzen that focuses on certain themes of Tranquil Abiding meditation. Yeshe Gyaltzen’s Tranquil Abiding manual in *GPLG* indicates reducing reliance upon pre-Ganden Tibetan masters’ descriptions, while his own predecessor, Paṅchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyaltzen’s (*Paṅ chen Blo bsang chos kyi rgyal mtshan* 1570–1662)<sup>23</sup> manual quoted many Kagyu masters’ texts. Yeshe Gyaltzen,<sup>24</sup> in fact, particularly aligns with the texts of Nāgārjuna (c. 150–250 A.D.), Asaṅga (c. 310–390), Śāntideva (c. 650–750), Kamalaśīla (c. 740–795), Atīśa Dipaṃkaraśrījñāna (c. 982), and other key Indian scholars of the classical period as clarified by Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) in *Lam rim chen mo*<sup>25</sup> (hereafter, *LRC*). As Jackson (2019, p. 278) points out,<sup>26</sup> Yeshe Gyaltzen typically describes Tranquil Abiding meditation according to the traditional stages, obstacles, and antidotes established by Asaṅga and endorsed by Tsongkhapa in *LRC*.

Yeshe Gyaltzen, in *GPLG*, unlike *LRC*, suggests ‘luminous nature of mind’ as a meditative object of Tranquil Abiding. He praises it in his manual<sup>27</sup> as a method for attaining mental placement, along with the ‘six ways of settling the mind’ as taught by Saraha and other great adepts. He says that there is a method of integrating the nine levels of meditative concentration with the six ways of settling the mind, but this must be received directly from a master’s instructions in accordance with the needs of the individual trainee. This topic will be further discussed in one of my forthcoming papers.

Unlike Paṅchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyaltzen, Yeshe Gyaltzen explicitly calls<sup>28</sup> for integrating Great Seal with Tsongkhapa’s instructions on the stages of the path in *LRC*. According to Yeshe Gyaltzen, one feature of integrating these two is a placement of emphasis on the above-mentioned Indian scholars’ intentions. Why would Yeshe Gyaltzen

emphasize relying on mainstream Indian scholars? He says that if the source of an instruction is not rooted in Buddha's Words, it is seen as less beneficial to the overall doctrine. Thus, he emphasizes relying on a master who gives instructions that have been passed down in succession from Buddha himself.<sup>29</sup> He quotes Tsongkhapa:

In general, in Tibet there are currently limitless instructions of secret mantra and dialectics. All these teachings are transmitted through buddhas and bodhisattvas. If one makes assertions based solely on a meditational deity's words, however, without other sources, it may be suited to thought processes of the listener at that moment, but there will be no means by which to correctly ascertain whether it is an unerring path. For this reason, if an objective person wishes to seek a faultless path the instruction should not contradict valid teachings of sūtra and tantra. Even instructions which reference undisputed teachings should be correctly distinguished as to whether they are provisional or definitive instructions by following one of the intellectual systems of the great trailblazers. It is indispensable for the instructions not to be disproved by logical reasoning, so that the instructions do not lead to alternate conclusions [which makes them provisional and not definitive].

Thus, Yeshe Gyaltsen's insistence that the Great Seal instructions be practiced in the context of the entire path including Tranquil Abiding relies heavily on the key Indian masters. Given this, our research here focuses on the following:

How is Yeshe Gyaltsen's perspective on Tranquil Abiding influenced by Indian scholars of the classical period; and by Tsongkhapa? What are the points that Yeshe Gyaltsen emphasizes? What are some of the challenges to the attainment of Tranquil Abiding? The questions begin with central queries and proceed to subsidiary ones. In exploring Yeshe Gyaltsen's manual we shall consider the following list of themes to give the reader a glimpse of the paper's contents before going on to the discussion:

1. 2. the significance of Tranquil Abiding
3. the nature of Tranquil Abiding
4. the relevance of Tranquil Abiding to Insight
5. focal objects in Tranquil Abiding
6. luminous nature of mind as a meditative object
7. the first mental fault and its countering factors
8. identifying and establishing the focal object
9. the second mental fault and its countering factors
10. other countering factors: the six settlings of mind
11. challenges of Tranquil Abiding training

## 2. The Significance of Tranquil Abiding

Before discussing Tranquil Abiding let us first look at the traditional sources and what they attribute to Tranquil Abiding. Tsongkhapa quotes the following line from the *Ārya-saṃdhi-nirmocana-sūtra*:<sup>30</sup>

Maitreya, you should know that all mundane and supramundane virtuous qualities, whether of śrāvakas, bodhisattvas, or tathāgatas, are the result of Tranquil Abiding and Insight<sup>31</sup>

Although the above passage is quoted from a sūtra attributed to Buddha it is not literally acceptable, as Tsongkhapa has stated in *LRC*. Hypothetically speaking, if this were literally true, all virtuous mental qualities would result from the state of Tranquil Abiding and Special Insight. This implies that any virtuous mental quality possessed by anyone presupposes attainment of Tranquil Abiding and Special Insight. Then everyone endowed with a virtuous mental quality would have attained advanced stages of meditation. This is because, as Tsongkhapa claims, Tranquil Abiding and Special Insight are mental qualities derived from a higher state of meditation. Therefore, all virtuous mental qualities are not a result of Tranquil Abiding and Special Insight.<sup>32</sup>

In *Great Treatise on Stages of Path to Awakening*, (hereafter *GTSP*), Tsongkhapa clarifies the underlying intent of the passage, by saying that *all virtuous qualities* refers to the meditative concentrations [one set of virtuous qualities] developed from single pointed mind focusing upon a virtuous object, which are subsumed within the category of Tranquil Abiding; and to the virtuous wisdoms [another set of virtuous qualities] which analyze the meaning of relative and ultimate reality, which are, respectively, subsumed within the category of Special Insight. In this context, the sūtra statement that all virtuous qualities developed on the path of the three vehicles result from Tranquil Abiding and Special Insight is *not* a false statement.<sup>33</sup>

The sūtra quotation implies the scope of Tranquil Abiding and Special Insight. This is indicated by Tsongkhapa's interpretation of the sūtra: that all single pointedly focused meditative concentrations depend on training in Tranquil Abiding and training in Special Insight (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 14).<sup>34</sup> How does Tsongkhapa's interpretation illustrate the scope of Tranquil Abiding and Special Insight? Tranquil Abiding meditation is a bigger category of focus training which includes all other subsidiary meditative focus skills, and not vice versa. The same is true for training in Special Insight because it subsumes all virtuous wisdoms that analytically discern relative or ultimate truth, inclusive of all subsidiary analytic skills. This can be understood from another passage in *GTSP*:

Thus, you must achieve all good qualities of the two vehicles through both (1) sustained analysis with discerning wisdom and (2) one-pointed focus on the object of meditation. You do not achieve them through one-sided practice of either analytical meditation or stabilizing meditation (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 14).<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, Kamalaśīla<sup>36</sup> in *Bhāvanākrama*<sup>37</sup> II (hereafter, *BK*) has also said:

Since those two [Tranquil Abiding and Special Insight] include all states of meditative concentration, all yogis should at all times definitely rely upon Tranquil Abiding and Special Insight.<sup>38</sup>

In addition, Atīśa mentioned in *Bodhipathapradīpa* (hereafter, *BPP*):

Just as bird without wings,  
Cannot fly through the sky.  
One without power of higher perception,  
Cannot accomplish the welfare of sentient beings.

etc.

One not accomplished in Tranquil Abiding,  
Will not attain the higher perception.

Therefore, Tranquil Abiding must be developed,

Put forth the effort again and again (Atīśa Dipaṃkaraśrījñāna 1800).<sup>39</sup>

While the above Indian masters mention the significance of Tranquil Abiding and Special Insight, Tsongkhapa emphasizes them by presenting the analogy of a tree. In *GTSP*:

The branches, leaves, flowers, and fruit of a tree are limitless, yet the core point at which they all come together is the root. Likewise, Tranquil Abiding and Special Insight are the sublime core at which gathers all that Buddha says about the limitless states of meditative concentration in Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 15).<sup>40</sup>

The *Ārya-saṃdhi-nirmocana-sūtra* states:

Know that Serenity [Tranquil Abiding] and Insight [Special Insight] include all of the many aspects of the states of meditative concentration which I have taught for śrāvakas, bodhisattvas and tathāgatas (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 15).<sup>41</sup>

In emphasizing the significance of Tranquil Abiding and Special Insight, Yeshe Gyaltzen in *GPLG* states that the main goal of cultivating Tranquil Abiding is to eliminate the root of cyclic existence. His text presents two ways to do this: (a) seeking an understanding of view<sup>42</sup> and, once it is found, cultivating meditative stability focusing on that understanding;

and (b) cultivating meditative stability first, and then seeking an understanding of the view. Yeshe Gyaltsen does not comment on the first way, and Tsongkhapa rejects it in *LRC* (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 548).<sup>43</sup> The following explains why Yeshe Gyaltsen chooses the second way, endorsing cultivation of meditative stability before seeking an understanding of the view.

With regard to the viability of first seeking an understanding of the view and then cultivating meditative stability,<sup>44</sup> Tsongkhapa does assert that one need not have attained fully qualified Tranquil Abiding in order to develop some understanding of the view; and even without Tranquil Abiding one can be transformed by this view through repeated analysis performed by discerning wisdom (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 548). However, Tsongkhapa, in *LRC*, raises the question, 'If one could first develop understanding of the view and then cultivate stability, it should be possible to cultivate both simultaneously. Then, why is it said to first seek Tranquil Abiding and then cultivate Special Insight?'

The reason is that Tranquil Abiding is a prerequisite for *fully qualified* Special Insight. The way in which Tranquil Abiding precedes Special Insight is as follows: Without Tranquil Abiding, no amount of analysis by discerning wisdom can give rise to the physical and mental pliancy intrinsic to the actual realization of Special Insight. Pañchen Sonam Drakpa (*Pañ chen Bsod rnam grags pa* 1478–1554) in *Lamp Illuminating Meaning of the Great Mother* (*Yum don gsal ba'i sgron me*)<sup>45</sup> says:

When Bodhisattvas who have not previously traversed Śrāvaka or Pratyekabuddha paths, who are abiding on the highest stage of the path of accumulation, attain Special Insight focused on emptiness, they simultaneously ascend to the heat stage [the first stage] of the path of preparation. Achievement of Special Insight focused on emptiness must be preceded by attainment of Tranquil Abiding focused on emptiness.<sup>46</sup>

Hence, Tranquil Abiding is required as a cause of Special Insight. And Special Insight involves inducing a pliancy<sup>47</sup> within discursive analysis of the view. Inducing pliancy is not possible within a state of analysis without Tranquil Abiding as a precondition (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 549).<sup>48</sup> Yeshe Gyaltsen says that no matter how much one engages in discursive analysis of the view, without Tranquil Abiding, analysis will not be able to induce pliancy by its own power. Furthermore, he says that once meditative stability of Tranquil Abiding is developed, one can sustain discursive analysis coupled with pliancy, and that is the moment actual Special Insight is generated (Yeshe Gyaltsen 1974–1977, 49b–50a).<sup>49</sup>

Yeshe Gyaltsen in *GPLG* points out that development of the Middle Way view requires understanding the meaning of the view after carefully seeking it. To achieve this one must put effort into accumulating merit in preliminary stages of training. The firm faith and determination to pursue this arises from being captivated by seeing the qualities of the Middle Way. One first contemplates the benefits of realizing the actual way things exist.<sup>50</sup> Here, Special Insight is understood as the profound view, clearly indicating the Middle Way view. The process of seeking such a view begins with an intellectual inquiry into the ontological status of the self.

Through the Middle Way Special Insight one may eliminate the root of cyclic existence. Yeshe Gyaltsen cites Tsongkhapa's verses from the *Lam rim nyams mgur ma*;<sup>51</sup> (hereafter, *LRG*):

I do not see that the root of cyclic existence can be severed  
by engaging in single-pointed meditation alone.  
Neither will wisdom, without realization of Tranquil Abiding,  
eliminate delusion, no matter how much analysis is applied.  
Yet, wisdom that has thoroughly cognized the nature of existence,  
mounted upon the horse of unmoving Tranquil Abiding,  
with the sharp weapon of Middle Way reasoning, free from extremes,  
destroys all fixations conceiving of extreme views.  
By examining properly with expansive wisdom,

May intelligence cognizing reality grow and flourish! (Tsongkhapa 1979–1981, f. 3b [p. 68])<sup>52</sup>

In brief, the above discussion reveals the significance of Tranquil Abiding to Special Insight, and how these two share a cause-and-effect relationship. This entails that without cultivating Tranquil Abiding there is no way to sever the root of cyclic existence and all its suffering.

### 3. What Is the Nature of Tranquil Abiding?

When describing the meaning of Tranquil Abiding Tsongkhapa quotes the following passage from the *BK*:<sup>53</sup>

It is an ‘extremely pliant’ (Tib. *shin tu sbyangs pa dang ldan pa’i sems*) and ‘blissful mind’ (Tib. *dga’ ba’i sems*) which naturally and continuously engages an internal object of meditation, after having quelled distraction to outside [all other] objects. This is an etymological meaning of Tranquil Abiding but not the standard definition. It does, however, reveal three components of Tranquil Abiding. These are: (1) having pliancy and bliss; (2) continuously engaging an internal object; and (3) having quelled distraction to outside objects. (Kamalaśīla 2011)<sup>54</sup>

This statement describing Tranquil Abiding is not a standard definition<sup>55</sup> because the description is too narrow to characterize the defined object,<sup>56</sup> Tranquil Abiding. We could say that it describes the nature of Tranquil Abiding but does not define it. In Buddhist epistemology, a definition and definiendum must ‘overlap’ each other completely; they must be coextensive. This description does not cover the entire meaning of Tranquil Abiding sufficiently to be considered a definition; the proposed meaning is narrower than Tranquil Abiding itself. All Tranquil Abiding does not necessarily entail the above description.<sup>57</sup> For example, since the description has a component called ‘blissful and extremely pliant,’ this implies that all Tranquil Abiding must be blissful, which is not true. In the Buddhist cosmology ‘higher realms or worlds’ (Tib. *mkhams gong ma*) are of eight types, four of which have form and four of which are formless. All of them are attributed to Tranquil Abiding. Beings who abide in these realms are characterized by their respective states of concentration. The first of these states (Skt. *dhyāna*) is of two varieties. One is endowed with bliss, but the other is not; it is endowed with mere equipoise, a neutral sensation, and Tranquil Abiding. It is called the ‘first actual concentration with extraordinary equipoise’.<sup>58</sup>

In the following we shall see how various definitions of ‘actual concentration’ compare with the extraordinary actual concentration mentioned above; and we shall refute that the above description could be its definition, proving that it does not apply to all cases of Tranquil Abiding. The discussion also illustrates that Tranquil Abiding is accessed, not only in the human realm, but in multiple higher dimensions as well.

As said in the first chapter analysis in Pañchen Sonam Drakpa’s *Re-Illuminating the Lamp of Meaning of the Great Mother*:<sup>59</sup>

In our own system, from objects and branches: the definition of an actual concentration equipoise is a type of virtue which transcends the level below it (i.e., the desire realm level). An equipoise of actual concentration distinguished by being completely free of desire realm attachment is the definition of the first actual concentration equipoise. When divided there are two types: a first actual concentration equipoise of a type with feeling of mental pleasure, which is the definition of an ordinary first actual concentration equipoise; and a first actual concentration equipoise of a type with neutral feeling, which is the definition of an extraordinary first actual concentration equipoise (Pañchen 2015b, pp. 336–337).<sup>60</sup>

This description of Tranquil Abiding, quoted from *Bhāvanākrama II*, does hold true for attributes of meditative concentration (Tib. *ting nge ’dzin*; Skt. *samādhi*) in the human realm of existence.

According to Asaṅga and Kamalaśīla the process of cultivating Tranquil Abiding involves development through nine stages of mental placement.<sup>61</sup> Beginning with the first stage of mental placement, progress is made through the rest of the stages. At each stage, mental placement addresses hindrances to attaining the next higher stage until the ninth stage is reached. When mental placement transcends the ninth stage, to reach the post-stage mental placement, it first induces physical pliancy and then mental pliancy. The moment mental pliancy is induced Tranquil Abiding has been attained. This informs us that, even having reached the ninth stage of mental placement with meditative concentration effortlessly focused on its object, having abandoned both laxity and excitement, the pliant and blissful mind of Tranquil Abiding has still not been attained. Hence, although the process of developing Tranquil Abiding involves perfecting attention on a focal object, it also involves the impact of that attention on our being. Among the three components of Tranquil Abiding in Kamalaśīla's description, (1) being endowed with pliancy and bliss is a major factor which determines whether one's meditative concentration has reached the level of Tranquil Abiding or not.

(2) 'Being continuously engaged in an internal object' is included in the meaning of Tranquil Abiding because it removes speculation that an external object could be used. It is clearly mentioned in Yeshe Gyaltsen's *GPLG* and in the work of his predecessors such as Tsongkhapa's *GTSP* that meditative concentration cannot be developed by engaging external objects because meditative concentration is generated in the mind. Mental factors generated in the mind will not directly engage an external object. Yeshe Gyaltsen says:

Thus, the object we shall meditate upon here is our own mind. We can cultivate meditative concentration and it has a special purpose. Furthermore, we must seek an object that is not just for stilling or stabilizing the mind. Not understanding this essential point, focusing on a stone or piece of wood, clearly illustrates that one is ignorant of the instructions in the scriptures of Buddha or the great trailblazers<sup>62</sup> of the Mahāyāna. Putting a piece of wood in front of you and visually meditating on it shows a lack of understanding of what meditative concentration is. Mental concentration<sup>63</sup> is one of the five types of ascertaining or determining mental factors; it is generated through internal familiarization within mental consciousness; it is not generated in sense consciousness.<sup>64</sup>

Tsongkhapa also says:

Some set a statue or image of Buddha before themselves and do gazing meditation, staring at it. The master Yeshe De's (*Ye shes sde*) rejection of this practice is excellent. He says that concentration is not achieved in the sensory consciousnesses, but in the mental consciousness; thus, the actual object of meditation of a concentration is the actual object of a mental consciousness. Therefore, you must pay attention to this. He also states what I explained above: that you must focus your mind on the appearance of the actual concept, or mental image, of the object of meditation.<sup>65</sup>

Since external objects are only accessed by sensory consciousnesses, this entails that mental consciousness cannot engage an external object directly. Hypothetically speaking if mental concentration could engage an external object, then visual cognition, while absorbed in its object should be able to evolve into a factor of mental consciousness. If this were possible it would mean that sensory cognition could become a mental factor, which contradicts the dynamics of mind and mental factors taught in Buddhist psychology. A sensory consciousness cannot become a factor of mental consciousness because sensory and mental consciousness do not share the same substrata. Buddhist psychology asserts that sensory consciousness engages the world by associating with a real object, while mental consciousness engages the world by associating with a mental image. Thus, external objects or objects of the real world cannot be directly engaged to train in meditative concentration. This discussion may be relevant to contemporary mindfulness training as well, if that training is to go beyond a gross, rudimentary level. The claim being made, and taken as

an axiom in Ganden, is that an object of sensory consciousness cannot be the object of fully qualified Tranquil Abiding. While sensory consciousness can provide data about the nature of an object to be engaged, the direct engagement with that object in fully qualified Tranquil Abiding is solely through mental consciousness, and the object, solely an object of mental consciousness; only images or concepts held in the ‘mind’s eye’ are appropriate. Some lineages of Tranquil Abiding training start by utilizing sense objects, but Ganden lineage emphasizes training with an object of mental consciousness from the beginning, with concentration being refined in relation to that object of mental consciousness. While mental consciousness is ordinarily conceptual, as progress is made towards single-pointed concentration it transforms into direct perception of its object.

(3) ‘Having quelled distraction to external objects’ is the third component in the meaning of Tranquil Abiding. This has already been discussed in the context of the second component. There does exist meditation with a straight-forward direct gaze (Tib. *har sgom*). If such gaze involves looking at an external object, it will seem to contradict the second and third component of Tranquil Abiding according to Kamalaśīla. Learning about these components can contextualize our understanding of basic tools for meditation. It can also help us to learn what constitutes Tranquil Abiding in a traditional practice setting.

Next, we have the standard definition of Tranquil Abiding. Pañchen Sonam Drakpa says:

In our system [the definition of Tranquil Abiding is] a meditative concentration which engages its object effortlessly and spontaneously, sustained by extreme pliancy. Why is it called Tranquil Abiding? Because the mind abides on an internal object, having quelled mental engagement with external objects. For this reason, it is called Tranquil Abiding. (Pañchen 2015b, p. 330)<sup>66</sup>

The Tibetan word for Tranquil Abiding is *zhi gnas*. *Zhi* has two connotations: peace or tranquility; and quelled or eliminated. *Gnas* means abiding. For this reason, Pañchen Sonam Drakpa describes Tranquil Abiding as a mind which abides on an internal object, having eliminated a mind engaged in external objects. The definition he has asserted can be applied to all levels of Tranquil Abiding. This description is coextensive with Tranquil Abiding; it overlaps it completely. Hence, it is a standard definition for Tranquil Abiding.

What is the significance of knowing the definition of a concept? The definition can help us understand the role of the concept and how it impacts other experiences when there is a correlation between them. Every concept has its limits or boundaries. Establishing the definition of a concept can help us understand the fullest scope of the concept, and what is contrary to it; what its limits or boundaries are. Having discussed an etymological description of Tranquil Abiding and its standard definition, we will now discuss its relevance to Great Seal.

#### 4. What Is the Relevance of Tranquil Abiding to Insight?

In the soteriological dimension, achieving freedom from unenlightened existence has always been the vital impetus behind the Indo-Tibetan philosophical traditions (Jinpa 2002, p. ix). Here we see Yeshe Gyaltzen describe what Tranquil Abiding can do for a person. He says:

If Tranquil Abiding is accomplished, one’s body and mind will be pervaded by bliss of pliancy which will abide in all phenomena one sees. One will have control of one’s own mind; if placed on an object it remains like a mountain. (53a1) When used it can engage any desired virtuous object at will. In particular, by analyzing ultimate reality from a state of stable Tranquil Abiding one will attain Special Insight and be able to swiftly abandon affliction. And by meditating on suchness<sup>67</sup> with skillful means, even the predisposition for dualistic appearances can be eliminated; and so on, the qualities are inconceivable.<sup>68</sup>

This makes it obvious that achievement of Tranquil Abiding accounts for a process in which mental concentration is developed to get a desired result. Concentration is a mental

factor whose role is to retain single pointedness on a chosen focal object. In the following citation we will understand the benefit of mastering mental concentration. Tsongkhapa writes in *LRG*:

Contemplation is the king that rules the mind;  
 When settled it is like the king of mountains, unmoving;  
 When released it engages all objects of virtue;  
 inducing great bliss of serviceability of body and mind.  
 Knowing this the powerful yogis always  
 destroy the enemy, distraction, and remain in meditative concentration.  
 I, a yogi, have practiced like that.  
 You who seek liberation, please do likewise! (Tsongkhapa 1979–1981, f. 3a  
 [p. 67])<sup>69</sup>

From Yeshe Gyaltsen's above quote we understand how effective Tranquil Abiding and Special Insight can be for eliminating the ignorance (Tib. *ma rig pa*; Skt. *avidyā*) which Āryadeva, in *Catuhśataka*,<sup>70</sup> calls the root of afflictive emotions (Tib. *nyon mongs*; Skt. *kleśa*). This is where Tranquil Abiding functions as single pointed concentration helping the mind to maintain a stable focus. After attaining Tranquil Abiding, within that state of stable focus, the mind analyzes ultimate reality, finally inducing actual Special Insight. Tranquil Abiding serves to provide undisturbed focus, while Special Insight serves as the wisdom which dispels the darkness of ignorance, source of all afflictions. Tsong kha pa says:

If you light an oil-lamp for the purpose of viewing a picture in the middle of the night, you will see the depictions very clearly if the lamp is both very bright and undisturbed by wind. If the lamp is not bright, or is bright but flickering in the wind, then you will not see the images clearly. Likewise, when looking for the profound meaning, you will clearly see reality if you have both the wisdom that unerringly discerns the meaning of reality and an unmoving attention that stays at will on the object of meditation. However, if you do not have wisdom that knows how things are—even if you have a non-discursive concentration in which your mind is stable and does not scatter to other objects—then you lack the eyes which see reality (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 19).<sup>71</sup>

We can understand that the wisdom developed in Special Insight is for discerning the meaning of reality—the nature of things and events, wisdom of which dispels misconceptions about reality. These misconceptions are generated in the minds of untrained or ordinary beings under the impact of how things and events appear to them: as if they existed intrinsically, in their own right. This misconception is innately synced with the untrained mind when it perceives objects. The wisdom cultivated in Special Insight sees how things and events actually exist, which contradicts and eventually overrides misconceptions. Special Insight is a view which realizes everything is empty by nature. There is no objective essence in things and events. When one realizes this there is nothing to grasp. When grasping ceases, clinging ceases. This is fundamental to understanding the Middle Way philosophy regarding how deluded mind is brought to an end.

This absence of objective essence in things is sūtra-based Great Seal; the ultimate truth of phenomena. Realizing this ultimate attribute of all phenomena and strengthening that realization requires an undistracted state of mind. Thus, Tranquil Abiding is necessary to generating the highest levels of meditative concentration. Next, I will discuss the focal objects for Tranquil Abiding presented in Indian and Tibetan classical texts; and what Yeshe Gyaltsen has to say about it.

## 5. Focal Objects for Tranquil Abiding Meditation

In first discussing types and characteristics of meditative objects, a difference of opinion should be noted: Dakpo Tashi Namgyal (*Dwags po Bkra shis rnam gyal*, 1513–1587) in *Phyag chen zla ba'i 'od zer*<sup>72</sup> asserts that the object of Tranquil Abiding meditation is related with both sensorial and mental consciousness, whereas others assert that the object

of Tranquil Abiding is only related to mental consciousness. Tsongkhapa strongly asserts the latter view, making it a key point that the actual object of meditative concentration must be a direct object of mental consciousness. According to this, Tranquil Abiding practice must focus on a direct object of mental consciousness, implying that the object be a mental image or idea. Wallace, too, argues (Wallace 2005, p. 216) that to attain Tranquil Abiding it is necessary for mindfulness to be focused on a mental object; that meditative concentration is accomplished with mental, not sensory consciousness. In addition, in the above discussion of the nature of Tranquil Abiding, the citation from Kamalaśīla's *BK* indicates that one of the three components of Tranquil Abiding is 'continuously engaging an internal object'. Given that, Dakpo and Tsongkhapa have apparently contradictory opinions on whether a sensory object can be taken as an object of Tranquil Abiding. In my view, Dakpo's presentation, that sensory objects may be taken as objects of Tranquil Abiding, could be suitable during preliminary sessions of meditation but not during actual Tranquil Abiding training. Tsongkhapa and Kamalaśīla both assert that sensory objects like pebbles and twigs are not to be taken as objects of Tranquil Abiding during its actual training. Thus, in Ganden tradition, during actual Tranquil Abiding training, only mental objects are taken as focal objects, although objects of sense consciousness are perhaps not rejected as objects that could be used during preliminary sessions.

Apart from 'luminous nature of mind' being taken as an object of Tranquil Abiding in the context of Great Seal meditation, mainstream Indian Mahāyāna exegesis<sup>73</sup> presents various focal objects in four categories. Tsongkhapa and Yeshe Gyaltsen present these as well (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 560; Yeshe Gyaltsen 1974–1977, f. 54a6).<sup>74</sup> They are (1) pervasive objects for meditation, (2) objects of meditation for purifying behavior, (3) objects of meditation for expertise, and (4) objects of meditation for purifying mental afflictions. Yeshe Gyaltsen says the first one is pervasive because it includes all meditative objects. The first category of meditative objects for Tranquil Abiding and Special Insight are universal because their subjective agent can take any object as their meditative object (Yeshe Gyaltsen 1974–1977, 54ba).<sup>75</sup> Next, ugliness, loving-kindness and dependent-arising are examples of objects of meditation for purifying behavior because focusing on these can purify attachment, hatred, and pride.<sup>76</sup> The third category of objects involves expertise in the aggregates, constituents, sources, twelve links of dependent origination, and cause-effect relationships (Tsongkhapa 2015, pp. 561–63).<sup>77</sup> Fourthly, objects of meditation for purifying mental afflictions are divided into two: one for reducing the strength of the seeds of the afflictions and the other for eradicating the seeds of the afflictions. An example of the former is when a person of the desire realm views his or her realm as unpleasant and the higher realm as pleasant. This reduces attachment to the desire realm but does not eradicate it from its seeds. The latter case is when a person focuses on impermanence and all sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths. This can eradicate afflictions from their seeds (Tsongkhapa 2015, pp. 563–564).<sup>78</sup> Tsongkhapa further says that he has explained the purpose of the various types of objects and advises us to be skilled in choosing.<sup>79</sup> The fact that there is a variety of objects for cultivating meditative concentration implies and confirms that there is no single object that suits all meditators. For this reason, Kamalaśīla in his *BK*, says:

There is not one definite object for [cultivating] Tranquil Abiding<sup>80</sup>

While quoting Kamalaśīla and agreeing that there is not just one fixed object for Tranquil Abiding meditation, Tsongkhapa in fact emphasizes the importance of choosing just one object to cultivate Tranquil Abiding. Tsongkhapa cites [Ārya-Śūra<sup>81</sup>'s] *Pāramitāsamāsa*:

Solidify your mind's reflection

By being firm on one object of meditation;

Letting it flow to many objects

Leads to a mind disturbed by afflictions (Asvaghosa 1982–1985).<sup>82</sup>

Tsongkhapa also quotes Atīśa's *BPP*<sup>83</sup> which states:

### Settle your mind in virtue

On any single object of meditation (Atiśa Dipamkaraśrijñāna 1800).<sup>84</sup>

These indicate that, although there are many varied objects of meditation, we need to settle on a single one. Tsongkhapa makes the point with his phrase ‘on any single object of meditation,’ so that we will not make the mistake of shifting from one focal object to another when attempting to practice Tranquil Abiding. Zahler, referencing Gedun Lodro, (Zahler 2009, p. 84) says that Atiśa’s quote given above is sometimes mistranslated as “any comfortable object of meditation is suitable”, which leads to erroneous interpretations.<sup>85</sup> In carefully reading Tsongkhapa’s comments on Atiśa’s statement, he is not suggesting that we should randomly select any object.<sup>86</sup> Rather, he means that we should not just shift from one object to another. Another reading of Atiśa’s statement implies that when choosing a meditative object, we ought to have an extraordinary reason; not just to cultivate meditative concentration.

As for extraordinary reasons for choosing a meditative object, in the following discussion Asaṅga presents a categorization of four types of individuals determined by whether they are more affected by attachment, hatred, or ignorance, or by all three equally. Based on these differing dispositions he then recommends what type of object to meditate upon. Asaṅga’s *Śrāvaka Bhūmi* (hereafter, *ŚB*) also cites Buddha’s response to a question of Revata in *Nam gru’i zhus pa’i mdo*.<sup>87</sup>

Revata, if attachment uniquely dominates the behavior of a monk-yogi, a practitioner of yoga, then he focuses his mind on the object of meditation of ugliness<sup>88</sup>. If hatred dominates his behavior, he meditates on love; if ignorance dominates his behavior, then he meditates on the dependent arising of this condition; if pride dominates his behavior, he focuses his mind on the differentiation of the constituents. And: If discursiveness uniquely dominates his behavior, then he focuses his mind on an awareness of the exhalation and inhalation of the breath. In this way, he focuses his mind on an appropriate object of meditation (Aśanga 1724).<sup>89</sup>

Tsongkhapa in *GTSP* also cites Asaṅga, aligning with choosing the object of meditation based on a person’s emotional and mental disposition.

Now, from among the many objects of meditation I have explained, on which object of meditation should you base yourself so as to achieve Tranquil Abiding? As stated in the sūtra passage cited above, there is no single, definite object; individuals require their particular object of meditation. Specifically, if you are determined to achieve Tranquil Abiding at the least, and if your behavior is dominated by attachment or another affliction, then you need to use a certain type of object of meditation (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 42).<sup>90</sup>

Zahler, on how to choose an object of meditation, also discusses the significance of dealing with the five predominant afflictive emotions—desire, hatred, obscuration, pride, and discursiveness. She says (Zahler 2009, p. 85) that one must pacify the predominant afflictive emotion; otherwise, one will not be able to use any other object of meditation.<sup>91</sup> This suggests that, to sustain our main focal object of meditation, we must first address the distracting factor that stems from our predominant afflictive emotion and then bring attention to our main object. Such an explanation aligns with the instructions of the Indian and Tibetan masters. By working with a meditative object that counters our predominant afflictive emotion we cultivate meditative concentration and are aided in abandoning that afflictive emotion as well; this is one special reason for choosing such an object.

The above-mentioned quotes by Asaṅga, Kamalaśīla, and Atiśa also indicate that choosing one definite object for all types of people is not possible. Tsongkhapa and Yeshe Gyaltsen both give similar explanations of the four categories of meditative objects, and both maintain that there should be an extraordinary reason for the choice of object. Given all this, Tsongkhapa nevertheless recommends a mental image of Buddha as an object of meditation. He thinks this is an appropriate focal object for a beginning meditator and explains the special reasons in *GTSP*:

In this regard, to keep your attention on the physical form of the Buddha is to recall the Buddha, so it gives rise to limitless merit. When your image of that body is clear and firm, then there is a special intensification of your meditative focus on the field in relation to which you amass merit through prostration, offering, aspirational prayer, etc., as well as on the field in relation to which you purify obscurations through confession, restraint, etc. This kind of meditation serves many purposes. As stated earlier in the extract from the *King of Concentrations Sūtra*, it has advantages such as you are not losing your mindfulness of the Buddha as you die. And when you cultivate the mantra path, it heightens deity yoga, etc. *The Sūtra on the Concentration Which Perceives the Buddha of the Present Face to Face* gives a very clear and detailed treatment of these benefits, as well as the method for directing your mind toward the Buddha. Therefore, you should definitely come to know them from there, as Kamalāsīla states in his *Stages of Meditation III*. Fearing verbosity, I do not write of them here. Consequently, it is skill in means when you seek an object of meditation by which you achieve concentration and also fulfill, along the way, some other special purpose (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 43).<sup>92</sup>

Tsongkhapa's recommendation of the mental image of a Buddha as the focal object for a 'beginning meditator,' means something quite different from the 'beginning meditator' of modern times. A current-day beginner might come from any background or walk-of-life, whereas Tsongkhapa's audience was predominantly monastic and lay people who were thoroughly steeped in Buddhist principles of karma, interdependence, non-violence, compassion and so on, and who had already developed admiration and devotion towards those teachings and towards their teacher, Buddha. For such a person, sustaining the image of a Buddha could raise their devotion higher, as well as strengthen their focus. Such a visualization might also be sustained during practices of taking refuge, bowing in homage, making offerings, confessing, rejoicing, and so on, amplifying an 'accumulation of merit' in the presence of a 'merit field,' as a visualized Buddha or an assembly of awakened beings is known. In *LRC*, Tsongkhapa says that such merit is a factor in accomplishing the physical body of an awakened being, whereas accumulation of wisdom is a factor in accomplishing the liberated mental body of an awakened being. Candrakīrti in his *Madhyamakāvatāra*<sup>93</sup> (hereafter, *MA*) says:

Enthusiastic effort precedes all mental qualities.

Merit and wisdom are causes of the two bodies.<sup>94</sup>

For Buddhist practitioners, or someone inclined towards Buddhism, visualizing a Buddha increases positive energy. It is considered 'virtuous' because it creates causes of happiness, peace, fulfillment, etc. A further precision in identifying Tsongkhapa's 'beginning meditator' is that they are probably a practitioner who does not as yet have experience of more advanced meditative techniques such as those involved in generation and completion stage meditation of Highest Yoga Tantra. Such meditation would ideally be based on prior fundamental knowledge of the sūtra aspects of meditation such as that found in Tranquil Abiding practice.

A modern day 'beginning meditator,' on the other hand, might not have as much enthusiasm for holding and sustaining a visualized image of a Buddha. Such a person might want to focus on another object that brings them positive energy. They might also choose a neutral object, for example, an orb of light; such an object would probably not be considered virtuous or non-virtuous, for either Buddhists or non-Buddhists. Thus, the term 'beginning meditator,' while frequently used in both classical and contemporary meditation instructions, means something different in the two contexts. This, in turn, could influence the advisability of using an image of Buddha as the focal object of Tranquil Abiding training.

Yeshe Gyaltzen, in *GPLG*, recommends the 'luminous nature of mind' as the focal object for other special reasons. Before we discuss this, let us speculate a bit as to why there are both flexible and restrictive presentations in historical texts regarding choosing an object

of meditation. In my view, Asaṅga and Kamalaśīla are more flexible in giving objects for cultivation of Tranquil Abiding—varying from neutral to virtuous. Perhaps this flexibility can serve the interests of both Buddhists and non-Buddhists. Atiśa, in his *BPP*<sup>95</sup> restricts the choice to virtuous objects. He advises looking carefully for the virtuous qualities in an object of meditation and allowing the mind to rest in virtue as one starts to focus on it. Tsongkhapa in *GTSP*, although presenting the varied range of objects, recommends Buddha’s image, a virtuous object for someone inclined towards a specifically Buddhist practice.

Zahler does not explicitly say why there are flexible and restrictive presentations with regard to choosing a meditative object, but she describes (Zahler 2009, p. 84) a multitude of meditative objects that the meditator may investigate among various objects such as a Buddha image to see what works well. The meditator may read texts to see what objects of observation are recommended and try them out; or seek the advice of a virtuous spiritual friend (Tib. *dge ba’i bshes gnyen*, Skt. *kalyāṇamitra*). In suggesting how to choose a meditative object she cites Gedun Lodro, a scholar who she consults throughout her text. According to him, although meditators of sharp faculties can choose an object of observation by studying the texts and trying out the objects of observation set forth in them, most people need to rely on a teacher. She further describes the purpose of the meditative object from the point of view of Gelugpa (*dGe lugs pa*).<sup>96</sup> She says that Gelugpa reject the idea that any object of observation that seems easy or comfortable will do. Rather, the object of observation has to be one that will pacify the mind. Therefore, an object that arouses attachment or hatred is not suitable. This assertion places a certain restriction on the choice of meditative object; that it should be an object which pacifies or calms the mind rather than one which disturbs it. After consulting texts or a spiritual guide, one chooses an object which serves the purpose of the meditation.

Wallace presents a parallel discussion of this topic. He lays out (Wallace 2005, p. 146) a presentation of meditative objects, appropriate objects for specific individuals, and settling on an object. He asks, (Wallace 2005, p. 149) “on the basis of which object is quiescence [Tranquil Abiding] practiced in this context?” In response, he begins with the general list of meditative objects for various individuals as previously explained. He diverges, however, by recommending (ibid., p. 149) that people who are dominated by ideation [*rnam rtog*, discursive thought] should meditate on inhalation and exhalation of the breath. Then, referring to the classical texts, *Pratyupanna-buddha-sammukhāvasthita-sūtra*, the *Samādhirājasūtra*, and the middle and final *Bhāvanākrama*, he notes that these texts promote the practice of meditation focusing on a mental image of Buddha’s body. He further refers to Bodhibhadra’s instructions, as quoted by Atiśa in *BPP*, saying that this master also promotes meditation focusing on a Buddha’s body. Wallace similarly indicates that, in spite of the presentation of various objects, the consensus among scholars is that a single object should be chosen.

## 6. Taking Luminous Nature of Mind as a Meditative Object

Yeshe Gyaltzen in *GPLG* recommends the ‘luminous nature of mind’ as the focal object for Tranquil Abiding; this is in the context of Great Seal meditation. He says, “We must seek an object that is not just for stilling or stabilizing the mind”. Why is luminous nature of mind taken as a focal object, what is the nature of that object, and how does mind take it as an object of meditation? He declares:

(55a1) There is an extremely important reason to take our own mind as the object of meditative concentration. We have been controlled by our mind since beginningless time. Not being able to control our own mind, it leads us everywhere, wandering without choice in the three realms of cyclic existence<sup>97</sup> (Skt. *saṃsāra*), controlled by mental afflictions and experiencing ceaseless suffering. If we want to free ourselves from this sea of suffering, we must get control of our own mind. Therefore, it is very important to identify the nature of our mind, focus on it, and meditate on it with single-pointed concentration.

He also cites the Mahāyāna philosopher, Nāgārjuna, in his *Suhṛllekha*,<sup>98</sup> as to why, according to Buddha, luminous nature of mind is taken as a focal object, which says that it is for the purpose of subduing one's own mind, Buddha has proclaimed that mind as the basis for transformation. Furthermore, Yeshe Gyaltsen quotes Śāntideva in *Bodhicaryāvatāra*<sup>99</sup> (55b1) as to why mind is the root of transformation. This citation consists of twenty-five lines in Tibetan, grouped in five main themes: (1) The first four lines use the image of a mad elephant to illustrate an untamed mind; mind that is not under one's own control. He asserts that there is no enemy worse than an unsubdued mind because it can harm us during this life and cause us to suffer in future lives; this is much more damage than a mad elephant can do. (2) The second four lines correspond to a tamed elephant, illustrating a subdued mind. The image is that of a wild elephant subdued by the rope of mindfulness. Once mind is subdued, fear comes to an end, and all virtue, or positive factors, come into one's hand. This verse indicates what subdues the mind, as well as the benefits of doing so. (3) The next six lines correspond to images of different kinds of animals and spirits that could potentially disturb us. This symbolizes harm created, essentially, by our own mind's labelling. The assertion is that all fear and external harm is caused by the labelling done by an unsubdued mind. (4) The next six lines explain that when one's mind is subdued, all outer sources of fear and harm are subdued. Thus, he points out Buddha's assertion that all fear and sufferings derive from one's own mind, and that mind is also the source for the transcendence of suffering. (5) The following five lines inform us that, if we do not understand the mode of being of our mind, we shall not be able to accomplish our wish to achieve happiness and avoid suffering; and we will be lost in wandering. The implication is that we must handle our mind properly and carefully protect it. In conclusion, the significance of knowing the mode of being of our mind is that this will enable us to protect ourselves from misery and aimless wandering. These citations explain why mind is taken as the object of meditative concentration for cultivating Tranquil Abiding in the practice of Great Seal.

From a sūtra point of view, taking luminous nature of mind as an object of meditation helps us to cognize the mind's lack of material form. It is a first stage towards gradually helping us see how we grasp mind's inherent existence and consequently synthesize a self-grasping sense of 'I'. According to Buddhist Mahāyāna philosophical doctrine, until we see how this grasping takes hold and eliminate it, there is no other means to remove the source of beginningless suffering. Therefore, although there is no difference in subtlety between emptiness of self and external phenomena, Candrakīrti, in *MA*, recommends first meditating on the emptiness of our inner self rather than the emptiness of external phenomena.

Wisdom realizes that all faults and afflictions  
arise from this view of a transitory collection;  
and realizing that self is the object of those [incorrect] projections,  
the yogi [first] puts a stop to the view of self.<sup>100</sup>

It is easier to identify our grasping of self at first, than it is to recognize our grasping of external phenomena. One reason for this is that the attribution of self is singular and does not change, whereas the attribution of external phenomena is plural and keeps changing.

Identifying how the mind grasps for inherent existence of self and external phenomena must precede realization of the emptiness of self and external phenomena. Focusing on the luminous nature of mind is key to realizing that mind is empty of shape, color, all physicality, and conceptual thought. This meditation is meant to develop to a second stage, wherein one realizes that not only is the mind empty of the above-mentioned attributes, but is empty of something more subtle: an imagined inherent existence to which the untrained mind desperately clings.

In the following we will explore the nature of this object and how the mind takes it as the object of meditation. Yeshe Gyaltsen says:

First identify the nature of the gross mind, focus on it, single-pointedly and bring it under control. Having done that, once it is serviceable to focus on any object one wishes, seek the profound view, and get experience of suchness. Once one has this experience, within a state of stable Deity yoga, one should penetrate the vital points of the subtle body and strive in the methods to bring the extremely subtle wind-mind under control. When the extremely subtle wind-mind manifests and is controlled, the subtle concepts and their moving winds automatically stop and the transcendent wisdom of innate clear light dawns. That [timeless] wisdom is the cause of omniscience, like a fertile seed. Without having to gather accumulations over countless eons of lifetimes, based on this single clear light mind, the accumulations can be quickly completed. This is the ultimate swift path to awakening; you should understand the ultimate meaning of these profound instructions (Yeshe Gyaltzen 1974–1977, f. 55b6).<sup>101</sup>

*GPLG* being a treatise that combines sūtra and mantra systems, there is reference to both gross and subtle minds, the latter being elucidated exclusively in the mantra system. The terms relate to the gross and subtle wind-energies which are co-operating factors of those minds, whose function influences those minds. Just as gross minds and wind-energies operate in conjunction with each other, so do subtle minds and winds. In fact, they are of one nature. According to the mantra system only gross minds and wind-energies operate while a person is alive and awake, while subtle minds and energies manifest during sleep and during the death process. Attributes of gross and subtle minds are taught extensively in Nāgārjuna's *Pañcakrama*;<sup>102</sup> Āryadeva's *Caryāmelāpakapradīpa*;<sup>103</sup> and Nāropā's *Pañcakramasaṃgrahaprabhāva*.<sup>104</sup> In sūtra context, although there is no explicit description of gross and subtle minds in terms of their associated wind energies, they are distinguished in relation to sense and mental consciousnesses, the former being grosser than the latter. Then, within mental consciousness, degrees of subtlety are distinguished in terms of how well the mind can focus single-pointedly on its object; focus improves as the mind becomes subtler.

Yeshe Gyaltzen calls the conceptual, language-based mind, gross mind, and asks us to cease all thoughts of past and future. When all thought ceases, we find an absence of thought fluctuation, just the empty space of our mind without conceptual content. In this empty space all thoughts arise and dissolve. When we recognize this state free of concepts and movement of thought we see the nature of gross mind. This is how the conventional, luminous nature of mind is understood. We will further discuss how to meditate on it.

Holding this empty state of mind single pointedly, we keep the mind from conceptual elaboration. When we control fluctuating thoughts of the gross mind, we can bring mind under our own control: mind becomes malleable and serviceable to our wishes. Yeshe Gyaltzen in *GPLG* explains how to begin this meditation.

When you have identified the focal object and begin to meditate on it, adjust your physical posture well. Make prayers to your master with faith and devotion so strong that tears come to your eyes and you get goosebumps, as explained above. After that the master dissolves into you. Firmly feeling that the master's mind and your mind have mixed together inseparably, meditate on your mind's clear and knowing nature, totally empty like space, without any form at all. With sharp awareness identifying whatever appearance is arising, with strong aspiration, think, "I shall mentally hold this object, and hold it single-pointedly" (Yeshe Gyaltzen 1974–1977, f.56b3).<sup>105</sup>

At this time, Yeshe Gyaltzen says to mentally hold just that focal object, no activities of the past, present, or future, no hopes or fears. Not letting yourself be carried away by any thought whatsoever, he says to focus on your mind's clear and knowing nature, holding it single-pointedly (Yeshe Gyaltzen 1974–1977, f.57a1).<sup>106</sup>

Gungthang Tenpai Drönmé (*Gung thang bstan pa'i sgron me*, 1762–1823), in his *Notes on Great Seal*, poses the following query and quotes the response of Pañchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyaltzen:<sup>107</sup>

Query: As a result, what happens after having meditated [primarily with the means to settling the mind]?

Response: In meditative equipoise the nature of the mind is seen to be empty, vivid, and clear. (Pañchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyaltzen n.d. a, f.73a5)

Gungthang further explains that the nature of mind is not obscured by any thought. It must be vivid and clear, as if it can reflect all the particles in a wall. While focusing on the object, the mind should be in a completely wakeful state such that it can hold the different aspects of the object; there is nothing the mind could not perceive regarding its object. Seen with such a state of mind directly, mind is seen to be empty of any shape, form, or color: this is a recognition of the nature of the mind,<sup>108</sup> its conventional reality; and a method to obtain a settling of the mind. It is praised as an unexcelled instruction which places awakening in our hands as easily as giving a glass of beer to another person.

In the system of Ganden scholars such as Gungthang Tenpai Drönmé, when Tranquil Abiding is attained using luminous nature of mind as the object, what is recognized is the conventional nature of the mind; however, the Tranquil Abiding thus attained is identified as being extraordinary compared to Tranquil Abiding attained focusing on other objects. Gungthang Tenpai Drönmé says,

In our system, this amounts to seeing the conventional nature of the mind and is a system for developing mental stability. Even so, if one develops fully qualified mental stability on the nature of mind, it is the basis for development of all qualities of Tranquil Abiding and Special Insight including the actual concentrations and approaches to the concentrations; it is therefore very important. Thus, these instructions on how to cultivate Tranquil Abiding on the luminous nature of mind are not just for acquiring knowledge of others' systems. Luminous-nature-of-mind-based Tranquil Abiding is the basis for easily realizing the ultimate nature of the mind, which is the *next* topic to be discussed. In order to develop Special Insight [into the ultimate nature of mind], one must first cultivate extraordinary Tranquil Abiding [focused on the conventional nature of the mind].<sup>109</sup>

This statement clearly reveals why mind is taken as the focal object for cultivating Tranquil Abiding. Gungthang Tenpai Drönmé says that it makes it easier to realize the ultimate nature of the mind, which is sūtra-based Great Seal. Changkya Rölpa Dorjé (*Lcang skya Rol pa'i rdor rje*, 1717–1786) also describes why recognizing the nature of mind and focusing on it is significant. Gungthang cites Changkya Rölpa Dorjé in *Notes on Great Seal*.

Thus, it is something ineffable yet, if mind is left in its normal state without analysis, all sorts of things appear. It is the creator of all that is pleasant or painful, good, or faulty, from the peak of cyclic existence to the worst hell. Up to now we have been under our mind's control. Now we need to make it something we control. That is the reason recognizing and focusing on mind is given primary emphasis.<sup>110</sup>

Thus, we have discussed the significance of taking a Buddha's image as the focal object according to Tsongkhapa and taking mind as the focal object according to Yeshe Gyaltzen and Gungthang Tenpai Drönmé in the context of Great Seal practice. Next, we will discuss some of the mental faults that prevent cultivation of meditative concentration.

## 7. Analyzing the First Mental Fault and Its Countering Factors

In both sūtra and tantra tradition, as a general structure, teachings on meditative concentration identify nine stages of mental placement leading to Tranquil Abiding. During the training eight antidotes are applied to counteract five faults. Tsongkhapa quotes the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālamkāra*<sup>111</sup> and *Madhyānta-vibhāga-kārikā*.<sup>112</sup>

Maitreya, as well, taught nine stages of mental placement and eight applications for abandoning mental faults. <sup>113</sup>

The general structure of meditative concentration mentioned in the great scriptures is very consistent with that mentioned in the mantra system. In particular, regarding meditative concentration, five faults and how to eliminate them is explained in great detail in the teachings of the sūtra piṭaka. <sup>114</sup>

Tsongkhapa also states:

Where cultivating stages of meditation is concerned, most texts on *Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* teach cultivation of Tranquil Abiding according to *Distinguishing the Middle and the Extremes*. Such descriptions involve cultivating Tranquil Abiding by means of eight antidotes to five faults. <sup>115</sup>

Yeshe Gyaltsen in *GPLG*<sup>116</sup> says that the three *Great Mother Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* and the Anuttarayoga Tantras are the authoritative sources for Great Seal. The *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* have two aspects of knowledge: a wisdom aspect and a conduct aspect. Both were passed down through a successive line of masters. While the explicit content of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* is the philosophy of emptiness, its implicit or hidden content, the conduct aspect, is the ‘stages of realization’ to full awakening. According to Paṅchen Sonam Drakpa, the only two trailblazers of Buddha’s doctrine are Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga. To establish the emptiness teachings of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*, Nāgārjuna composed *Rigs tshogs drug*; <sup>117</sup> and to establish the stages of realization to full awakening taught in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*, Maitreya composed *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*<sup>118</sup> and so forth. Buddha prophesied that Asaṅga would systematize the mind-only philosophy and clarify the meaning of the conduct aspect of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* in this world. Akyā Yongzin Lobsang Dondrub (*A kya’ yongs ’dzin blo bzang don grub* 1740–1827) cites the Great Commentary<sup>119</sup> of *Manjuśrī-mūla-tantra*<sup>120</sup> in his *Shing rta’i srol byed kyi rnam gzhas skal bzang mgul rgyan* (1971a, p. 557):<sup>121</sup>

After my passing away,  
 nine hundred years later,  
 an ordained monk named Asaṅga  
 will become expert on the meaning of the treatises.  
 He will delineate the definitive meaning  
 and the interpretive meaning of the sūtras in many ways.  
 He is one whose true nature is to teach insight in the world  
 and he will be one who has realized the knowledge of the treatises.  
 The one who realizes this is called Śāladhūti <sup>122</sup>

Tsongkhapa, Paṅchen Sonam Drakpa, Akyā Yongzin Lobsang Dondrub and many other Ganden masters do not seem to agree on Maitreya being a trailblazer of the Buddha’s doctrine. Jetsün Chökyi Gyaltsen (*Rje btsun chos kyi rgyal mtshan*, 1469–1544)<sup>123</sup> asserts<sup>124</sup> that Maitreya trailblazed the meaning of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* in Tuṣita. Akyā Yongzin responds to this by clarifying that Maitreya, by composing *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* and other treatises in Tuṣita, did indeed clarify the hidden meaning of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*, but that he was not its trailblazer because (a) the system elucidating the hidden meaning of the Sūtra predates Maitreya, so he did not trailblaze it; (b) trailblazers of the Buddha’s doctrine must be a human, which excludes celestial beings such as Maitreya; and (c) Maitreya, was not prophesied by Buddha as a trailblazer of his doctrine.

This is the context in which we find that Maitreya was not a trailblazer. However, according to traditional sources, Buddha did pass the hidden meaning, the conduct aspect of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*, first to Maitreya; and then Maitreya transmitted it to Asaṅga. It is maintained that an unbroken line of masters carried the instructions from Asaṅga up to the present day. Hence, Tibetan classical authors such as Yeshe Gyaltsen quote Maitreya and Asaṅga and their successors to support the presentation of Ganden Great Seal Tranquil Abiding training, thus aligning themselves with what they consider to be authoritative

sources. The attribution of *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* and the other four treatises’ authorship to Maitreya is disputed in the academic world where authorship tends to be attributed to Asaṅga.

It is evident that Yeshe Gyaltsen also aligns himself with Tsongkhapa regarding application of eight antidotes to counteract five mental faults and he cites the same sources that Tsongkhapa does. Yeshe Gyaltsen says, if one wishes to cultivate meditative concentration correctly one must cultivate eight antidotes to remove the five faults just as taught by Maitreya.<sup>125</sup> See Table 2. for the corresponding link between five mental faults and their eight antidotes.

**Table 2.** Five mental faults and their eight antidotes described in Tsongkhapa’s *LRC* (Tsongkhapa 2015, pp. 600–2) quoting Asaṅga, Maitreya and Kamalaśīla’s texts.

	1. Faith
	2. Aspiration
1. Laziness (mental sloth)	3. Enthusiasm
	4. Pliancy
2. Forgetting instruction	5. Mindfulness
3. Mental excitement and Laxity	6. Meta-awareness
4. Not applying antidote when mental fault arises	7. Application which involves concerted effort
5. Applying antidote when mental fault does not arise	8. Application of Equanimity

Yeshe Gyaltsen identifies the following five faults: (1) laziness<sup>126</sup> [mental sloth], (2) forgetfulness of instruction,<sup>127</sup> (3) laxity and mental excitement,<sup>128</sup> (4) non-application,<sup>129</sup> (5) and [over] application.<sup>130</sup>

Out of these five, laziness prevents engaging in concentration training and hinders engagement in the training. Thus, it is described as an impediment during the preliminary stage of training. The two main elements of laziness in this context are not being enthusiastic to engage in the training; and being enthusiastic to engage in activities that go against the training. If we are not capable of eliminating laziness it will not allow us to engage in the training from the very start. Or, although we start, we cannot sustain it so that our training easily declines.

Therefore, both Yeshe Gyaltsen and Tsongkhapa emphasize countering laziness first. To eliminate laziness, they prescribe internalizing the benefits of meditative concentration and developing enthusiasm based on firm conviction in those benefits. Then, inspiration for developing meditative concentration will arise from within, and this will help to develop concentration more quickly. In addition, both authors have pointed to the sequential process for removing laziness.<sup>131</sup> Yeshe Gyaltsen outlines it in reverse order: If one attains the bliss-endowed mental and physical pliancies and a controlled functionality of the mind, laziness is reversed from the root. To attain this one must be able to take delight in making continuous effort. For this to happen one must have a great liking for meditative concentration without any hesitation. For that to happen one must develop a strong aspiration seeking to attain meditative concentration. For that to happen one must develop a stable faith captivated by seeing the qualities of meditative concentration. Therefore, one should first train in faith by contemplating the good qualities of meditative concentration.

Regarding how to develop yearning for meditative concentration, Tsongkhapa quotes *Madhyānta-vibhāga-kārikā*.<sup>132</sup>

The basis and what is based upon it

Are the cause and its result.

The basis is yearning which is the source of effort. That which is based upon it is perseverance. The cause of yearning aspiration is faith convinced of the beneficial qualities [of concentration]. The result of effort is pliancy. The benefits of meditative concentration-

based<sup>133</sup> meditation are as follows. If Tranquil Abiding is accomplished mental joy and physical bliss increase so one immediately becomes very comfortable; and finding extreme pliancy of body and mind, mind can be applied just as one wishes to any virtuous object. Involuntary distraction to mistaken objects is eliminated so that faulty conduct does not much occur; and virtuous conduct undertaken becomes more powerful. Realized qualities of higher perceptions and miraculous abilities can be attained in dependence upon Tranquil Abiding. By realizing Special Insight of the view in dependence upon Tranquil Abiding one may swiftly sever *samsāra*<sup>134</sup> from the root. Thinking about such qualities increases ones enthusiasm for meditative concentration. This will make it easier to accomplish and, once accomplished, to cultivate repeatedly, making it difficult for it to degenerate.<sup>135</sup> Once one has addressed laziness and procrastination, in the actual training one needs to identify and establish the focal object.

### 8. Identifying and Establishing the Focal Object of Tranquil Abiding

In this context the focal object is the pure sphere of awareness of one's own mind. Once the focal object is identified, all thoughts of past and future are reduced. Without forgetting the focal object, one pays attention to the current state of pure consciousness, focusing on it for some time without losing it. Yeshe Gyaltsen already explained above in *GPLG* how to begin this meditation. Now, let us see what Yeshe Gyaltsen has said about identifying the focal object.

At this time mentally hold just that focal object; (57a1) no activities of the past, present, or future, no hopes or fears. Not letting yourself be carried away by any thought whatsoever, focus on your mind's clear and knowing nature, holding it single-pointedly. Not making it very long at first, still your mind for a little while (Yeshe Gyaltsen 1974–1977, f.57a1).<sup>136</sup>

Next, we will discuss the criterion for determining that the focal object has been found. Here, Maitreya and Kamalaśīla's instructions on the nine stages of mental placement become relevant. At the first stage of mental placement, one must attempt to focus on the focal object only vaguely; not clearly in all its detail. This is because one must start with what short-term memory is capable of holding. As a beginner, one should not make the sessions of meditation too long, but shorter and more frequent. This is asserted by both Yeshe Gyaltsen in *GPLG* and Tsongkhapa in *GTSP*. Thus, when this focal object vaguely appears to one's mind one identifies it, thinking, 'This is the focal object'. At this point one has established the focal object.

Yeshe Gyaltsen mentions in *GPLG* that when one focuses on the image of the pure sphere of consciousness all gross conceptual thought ceases; but this does not mean one goes into a sleep-like state. If one goes into a sleep-like state without gross conceptual thought, but without identifying the focal object or remembering it, and without the necessary mental monitoring, it does not align with the components of Tranquil Abiding training taught by Maitreya, Asaṅga and Kamalaśīla. The skills of identifying, remembering, and monitoring will be explained below.

We will now look at what Yeshe Gyaltsen further says about the focal object in his text *GPLG*.

Even if your object does not appear very clearly and precisely as the master has introduced it, if it is only partial or general, be satisfied with that and think, "This is the object, I must hold it". Otherwise, striving to meditate and visualize, hoping for the object to immediately appear very clearly just as the master introduced it is the completely wrong approach; it shows a lack of understanding of the instructions on meditative concentration (Yeshe Gyaltsen 1974–1977, f.57a1-4).<sup>137</sup>

Such intensive effort can clear the mind slightly but does not help to develop meditative concentration; moreover, it causes mental excitement and big obstacles in developing meditative concentration. In that case the mind quickly becomes hardened and irritated, and apprehensive to meditate again. It is said that you can even become nauseous just

from seeing the meditation cushion! With these points in mind, Pañchen Lobsang Chökyi Gylatsen states:

One should settle in meditative equipoise for short durations (Pañchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyaltzen n.d. a, f.72b6).<sup>138</sup>

At this time, (Yeshe Gyaltzen 1974–1977, f.57b1) when the mind fastens on its object, the first mental placement is reached. With regard to this meaning, Pañchen Lobsang Chökyi Gylatsen states:

With the object vaguely appearing  
without altering it at all,  
without thoughts, such as of hope or fear,  
briefly settle in equipoise, unmoving (Pañchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyaltzen n.d. a, f.72b5).<sup>139</sup>

### 9. Analyzing the Second Mental Fault and Its Countering Factors

Once the mind can establish the focal object it is then held by one's memory or mindfulness. However, due to its limited capacity, the mind cannot hold the focal object for very long. When one loses the object from one's mind this is the second fault to be countered in Tranquil Abiding training.

In the general Tranquil Abiding training of the sūtra-based system there are two primary causes of losing the focal object: laxity and excitement. In the tantra system of Great Seal Tranquil Abiding, in addition to these two, mental wandering is also considered a hindrance to remembering the focal object. This implies that the tantra-based system also offers extraordinary means for counteracting these faults. There are, indeed, skills that are attributes of Tranquil Abiding training in the tantra-based system that are noted to be far more effective than the sūtra-based training. Gungthang asserts:

In the context of cultivating mental stability, the sūtra system does not eliminate subtle discursive thought; but the mantra system does. This essential point makes the tantra system more powerful for accomplishing Tranquil Abiding and so forth.<sup>140</sup>

We now know that laxity, gross movement of thought, and mental excitement can hinder holding of the focal object. Therefore, Ganden Great Seal system emphasizes mindfulness, a mental factor that can remember a phenomenon and remain undistracted while it focuses on its object. In addition, in James Apple's article (Apple 2015, p. 24) on mindfulness and meta-awareness in Tsongkhapa's *GTSP*, he describes mindfulness as the foundation of cultivating concentration, and that it primarily means not forgetting the object of meditation, and not becoming distracted while one is meditating. He further states that one apprehends an object of meditation with one's attention and stabilizes the attention on the object without analyzing anything new.

Also introduced at this point is meta-awareness, a mental factor that monitors whether mindfulness has lost its object or not; whether it is about to wander from its focal object or not.

The implementation of these mental factors is to sustain attention to the focal object, so that meditative concentration is enhanced to gradually become genuine Tranquil Abiding. Regarding these mental factors, Yeshe Gyaltzen quotes Asaṅga on the nature of mindfulness (Tib. *dran pa*; Skt. *smṛti*) from his *Abhidharma-samuccaya*:

What is mindfulness? Non-forgetfulness of an object with which the mind is familiar, which functions to prevent wandering (Yeshe Gyaltzen 1974–1977, f.57b5).<sup>141</sup>

In addition to its nature, both Tsongkhapa in *GTSP* and Yeshe Gyaltzen in *GPLG* emphasize three characteristics of mindfulness: (a) The object characteristic: It must be a familiar object, that very object pointed out by the teacher's instructions. Familiarize oneself with it again and again. (b) The cognitive characteristic: This is cultivating just that object without forgetting it. As for this non-forgetfulness, it is not sufficient just to be able

to remember it when someone asks you about it or when you think about it. It must be focused on single-pointedly, without losing it even slightly, remembering it uninterruptedly. (c) The function characteristic: Once there is such a cognitive characteristic there will be no distraction to anything other than the object (Yeshe Gyaltsen 1974–1977, f.57b6).<sup>142</sup>

The key to such extraordinary mindfulness lies in keeping the flow of focus uninterruptedly on the object, like water streaming uninterruptedly through a pipe. It is not just remembering the object when someone asks about it, rather it is keeping a flow of the memory of that object; this is a second characteristic of mindfulness.

Next, we will discuss the role of meta-awareness (Tib. *shes bzhin*; Skt. *saṃprajanya*) in Tranquil Abiding training. Meta-awareness arises as a result of sustaining mindfulness. Yeshe Gyaltsen also points out that, without sustaining mindfulness, cultivating an agent to monitor it is not possible.

Since meta-awareness arises as a result of mindfulness, there is no way to sustain meta-awareness without knowing the key points for sustaining mindfulness (Yeshe Gyaltsen 1974–1977, f.57b4).<sup>143</sup>

Another key point that both Tsongkhapa and Yeshe Gyaltsen emphasize is that there is no way to cultivate genuine meditative concentration other than by cultivating and sustaining mindfulness. Yeshe Gyatsen quotes Mañjuśrī's instruction to Tsongkhapa:

Having meditated on renunciation and bodhicitta,  
in the presence of the great flame of mindfulness, unceasing,  
the kindling of the six objects is definitely burnt up (Yeshe Gyaltsen 1974–1977, 58a6).<sup>144</sup>

What Tsongkhapa says regarding maintaining focus on the object is that there is a method for the mind not to wander from its object; and another method to recognize whether the mind is wandering or about to wander, or not. The former is the function of mindfulness, and the latter is the function of meta-awareness. Tsongkha pa quotes the following lines from Vasubandhu's *Mahāyāna-sutrālaṅkāra-bhāṣya*.<sup>145</sup>

Mindfulness and meta-awareness bring about close mental focus because the former prevents your attention from wandering from its focal object; and the latter clearly recognizes if your attention is wandering.<sup>146</sup>

The role of meta-awareness is to monitor whether attention, while fastened to its focal object, is wandering to other objects or not. Having noted this, application of meta-awareness and how it arises from mindfulness will now be explained. Yeshe Gyaltsen says that meta-awareness is intermittently applied, checking up on one's focus without losing mindfulness single-pointedly focused on the object; it checks if attention has wandered from the focal object or not; checks whether laxity, mental excitement and so forth have interfered or not. He clearly asserts that, if meta-awareness is performed in separation from a state of mindfulness, one has not understood how to train in focusing the mind. In fact, practicing meta-awareness independent of the flowing focus of mindfulness will ruin the training. Yeshe Gyaltsen says:

As for meta-awareness, it is within a state of not losing the mode of apprehension of mindfulness holding its object single-pointedly that meta-awareness checks whether the mind is remaining on its object or not; whether obstacles such as mental excitement and laxity are occurring or not. Furthermore, after releasing hold on an object, if a new watchful mind is generated, this is an example of the fault of not knowing how to meditate [in Tranquil Abiding]. Checking like that with a new watchful mind will not help to develop meditative concentration; furthermore, it will harm it greatly.<sup>147</sup>

The above description of the role of meta-awareness suggests that meta-awareness must be generated while mindfulness is focused on the object. While mindful cognitive awareness is flowing uninterruptedly, a part of the mind gently checks. As an analogy Yeshe Gyaltsen describes two friends strolling along together. Both are aware of the street

ahead and simultaneously aware of the behavior of their friend out of the corner of their eye. This is how meta-awareness must be cultivated while in the state of mindfulness. Meta-awareness arises as a result of mindfulness and requires a sustained flow of mindfulness, not just an instant of short-lived mindfulness. Therefore, Yeshe Gyaltzen says one needs to check whether laxity or mental excitement has interfered, while not wandering from the focal object.

There are two methods to cultivate meta-awareness. One way is to keep the mind single pointedly focused on the focal object with a continuous flow of mindfulness. This is the main cause of generating meta-awareness. He quotes from *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra*:<sup>148</sup>

When mindfulness guards  
the gate of the mind,  
Meta-awareness arrives;  
Even if it is gone, it will return. <sup>149</sup>

Another way of cultivating meta-awareness is, *while* in a state of sustained attention to the focal object, checking intermittently whether laxity or excitement has occurred, or is on the verge of occurring. He again quotes *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra*:

Examining repeatedly  
the state of one's body and mind.  
This alone is, in brief,  
the definition of guarding meta-awareness. <sup>150</sup>

Thus, meta-awareness arises within a state of sustained mindfulness; not by cultivating meta-awareness after the focal object has been lost. Mindfulness and meta-awareness share a cause-effect relationship like a crop growing in a field. Both mindfulness and meta-awareness function to guard the mind by directing attention to the desired object. Yeshe Gyaltzen says that a person's skill in training the mind is a matter of how well he or she masters mindfulness and meta-awareness.

Before concluding this section, let us look at some points other contemporary authors have made about mindfulness and meta-awareness. Apple (2015, p. 31) asserts that one cannot be sure that one's meditative session is free of laxity and excitement until one develops a potent level of meta-awareness that recognizes when subtle laxity and excitement are about to take place. Wallace (2005, p. 171) also attributes to meta-awareness<sup>151</sup> the ability to recognize laxity and excitation as soon as they arise, as well as to recognize when they are on the verge of occurring. Dunne (2015, p. 252) presents a chart for traditional sources of mindfulness, based on geographical origin. He classifies the sources into two main categories, namely (a) classical and (b) non-dual. He says that (a) classical mindfulness is drawn from the following practices: (1) vipassanā practice emerging from mainstream Theravāda in Thailand, Burma, and Sri Lanka; (2) śamatha<sup>152</sup> and (3) Mind Training;<sup>153</sup> whereas (b) non-dual mindfulness is drawn from the following practices: Chan (China), Zen (Japan), Seon (Korea), Mahāmudrā (Tibetan), Dzogchen (Tibetan), and Thai Forest Tradition.<sup>154</sup> Dunne states that according to abhidharma, mindfulness is a mental factor that prevents the mind from losing track of its object; and that it occurs in the context of subject-object duality. He says that this duality is the source of delusion, and that mindfulness based in this duality can be a source of delusion. Furthermore, he asserts that those who cultivate non-dual experience should not seek to cultivate 'mindfulness,' but instead should cultivate 'non-mindfulness' which he says is, 'often conceptualized as an objectless mindfulness of mere non-distraction' (Tib. *ma yengs tsam gyi dran pa*). Likewise, Deroche (2021, p. 875), regarding mindfulness in Dzogchen, discusses another classification of mindfulness: 'deliberate mindfulness' (Tib. '*jur dran*'), which he describes as effortful mindfulness; a second type related to 'open-expanse' (Tib. *klong*) which he describes as 'effortless mindfulness;' and a third type, 'non-mindfulness' (Tib. *dran med*), described as 'forming the level of fruit'. These terms which Dunne and Deroche employ in description of mindfulness: mindfulness of mere non-distraction, effortful mindfulness, and effortless

mindfulness; were employed in pre-Ganden texts but not in the Ganden tradition. However, even though these terms are not used by Tsongkhapa, Pañchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyaltzen, and Yeshe Gyaltzen, roughly equivalent roles of mindfulness are, in fact, presented in the Ganden Tranquil Abiding manuals.<sup>155</sup>

These three progressive stages of mindfulness are presented in the following verse by Patrul Ugyen Jigmé Chökyi Wangpo (*dPal sprul O rgyan 'Jigs med Chos kyi dbang po* 1808–1887):

Mindfulness is the only base  
Of all the means to taming the mind  
First, it is deliberate mindfulness and then it is open expanse  
Finally, it is non-mindfulness within the clear light  
Only mindfulness abandons all moral wrong doing<sup>156</sup>

A mental factor with the role of remembering anything, events, places, persons, etc, seems similar in meaning to deliberate mindfulness (*'jur dran'*) if not identical. The role of such mindfulness is frequently mentioned in the Ganden manuals. For example, those manuals say that one must first address one's laziness toward Tranquil Abiding training, which is described as a lack of enthusiasm or a will to meditate. The countermeasures involve generating enthusiasm by learning and then repeatedly contemplating many benefits of meditative concentration. This gives rise to a deliberate intention to practice mindfulness.

Roles similar to the latter two kinds of mindfulness are often associated with mindfulness in the practice of Tantra in the Ganden tradition. The term, mindfulness of 'open-expanse' (*klong*), might be compared to Ganden manual instructions regarding the experience of mind's space-like emptiness of inherent existence. The term *'dran med'* may correspond with clear light training of anuttarayoga tantra (Tib. *rnal 'byor bla med kyi rgyud*) in the Ganden tradition. In that training, no gross mindfulness can be sustained; only a subtle mindfulness which might suggest a 'mindfulness of mere non-distraction'. In the state of clear light, gross levels of subject-object conceptuality have dissolved. Meditation on emptiness at that level is known as equipoise in clear light. According to the Ganden master, A kya Yongzin Lobsang Dondrub, there are two types of clear light: 1. Objective clear light, which is the subtle level of emptiness and 2. Subjective clear light which is wisdom realizing the subtle level of emptiness. Another term used is clear light of death (Tib. *'chi ba'i 'od gsal*), which refers to the primordial mind (*gnyug ma'i sems*), also called mother clear light (Tib. *ma'i 'od gsal*), that naturally manifests in beings at the end of the dissolution process of death. This is not a qualified clear light, yet it is called clear light because at that moment any gross level of subject-object duality has ceased. When a practitioner on the path trains in clear light meditation during the waking and sleep states, this is called child clear light (Tib. *bu'i 'od gsal*). This training in the child clear light enables the practitioner to recognize the mother clear light. Untrained individuals experience the primordial mind of mother clear light, but they do not ascertain or recognize it. When, based on their practice of child clear light, the practitioner recognizes mother clear light, this is called mixing of the clear lights and leads to qualified clear light realization (A kya Yongzin 1971b, pp. 314–15).<sup>157</sup> One might call this *dran med* or *ma yengs tsam gi dran pa*, in which 'deliberate mindfulness' is no longer operative.

## 10. Other Countering Factors: Six Settlements of Mind

Yeshe Gyaltzen in *GPLG* briefly lists Six Settlements of Mind. He says that trainees of his day could more easily attain the stages of Tranquil Abiding if they were to practice by means of six modes of settling: (1) Settling like the sun free from clouds. (2) Settling like a great condor sailing through the sky. (3) Settling like an ocean free of waves. (4) Settling like a young child looking at the temple. (5) Settling like the tracks of a bird in space. (6) Settling like soft wool spreading out. These come from the teachings of many great adepts such as Saraha. Their individual meanings are explained in the *Extended Bright*

*Lamp* by Pañchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyaltsen, so Yeshe Gyaltsen does not set them forth in *GPLG*.<sup>158</sup> However, he points out that “settling like a young child looking at the temple” is an especially good precept for beginners and is repeatedly praised by the great adepts of India. Milarepa (*Mi la ras pa*) highly praised the practice of the essential points of the Six Settling of mind. In my view, the reason these Six Settling of mind are praised is that they include instructions on dealing with the presence of distracting thoughts during Tranquil Abiding training; whereas in mainstream Tranquil Abiding training the main focus is on counteracting such thoughts immediately once they are detected by meta-awareness. In *GPLG*, Yeshe Gyaltsen simply advises that, while thus focusing single-pointedly on the object, if, although one tries, one is unable to stop the proliferation of thought, then, within a state of mindfulness not wandering from single-pointed focus, look directly at the face of whatever thought arises. To what object does thought wander? In what manner does it wander? One need to check.<sup>159</sup>

### 11. Some Challenges of Tranquil Abiding Meditation

Both types of training manuals, whether based on luminous nature of mind or other meditative objects, describe the same prerequisites and application of eight factors to counter five faults, and may require the same level of knowledge and effort for attainment of fully qualified Tranquil Abiding. However, the recommendations of Kamalaśīla, Āryaśūra, and Atiśa to choose an appropriate meditative object based on one’s mental disposition; and Asaṅga’s instruction to choose a meditative object based on one’s predominate afflictive emotion, may make it easier to achieve Tranquil Abiding.

One challenge with regard to Tranquil Abiding focused on luminous nature of mind is that there have been various interpretations of assertions made by past adepts about the Sanskrit term *amanasikāra* (Tib. *yiḍ la mi byed pa*). Jackson has variably translated the term as ‘non-mentation,’ ‘non-mental engagement,’ ‘inattention,’ and ‘mental non-engagement.’<sup>160</sup> It is generally agreed by scholars that the term is not meant to be taken literally. This leads to questions of how it has been interpreted, some aspects of which will emerge in the following discussion.

First, as to the historical setting, Higgins ([2006] 2008) has written that the *sBa bzhed* records *amanasikāra* as being associated with a debate that probably took place in Tibet during the eighth century, also known as the *bSam yas* debate, named after the first monastery, established in Tibet under the patronage of King Trisong Detsen. Higgins notes that, in that context, *amanasikāra* is seen as representative of the instantaneous doctrine,<sup>161</sup> attributed to the Chinese Ch’an Buddhist, Hwa shang. In opposition was the Indian Buddhist, Kamalaśīla, who represented the gradualist doctrine (*rim gyis pa*). Karmay, Samten, in his book, *The Great Perfection (rDzogs chen)* says that the debate lasted three years, from 792 through 794, and that historians are not sure which side ‘won,’ but that Tibetan tradition claims it ended in favor of the Indian Buddhism (Karmay 1988).<sup>162</sup> Higgins (2016) lists writings by historical Tibetan authors contesting this claim, and suggests that the reality is more nuanced.<sup>163</sup>

One of the central points of debate was *amanasikāra*. In his survey of interpretations of the term, Higgins summarizes Kamalaśīla’s position in *BK*:

The gist of his [Kamalaśīla’s] critique is that *amanasikāra* does not imply the suppression or cessation of mental activity but rather its progressive refinement through the gradual elimination of subjective distortions (Higgins [2006] 2008).<sup>164</sup>

Yeshe Gyaltsen also advises against taking the term literally, and gives his interpretation as follows:

Some scriptures speak of ‘not paying attention to anything,’ ‘not thinking of anything,’ being ‘non-discursive’; the scriptures of the great adepts, in particular, have many words to that effect. Some who are deceived by this, teach that you must cease all mental activity and go unconscious. They are making a huge mistake and do not understand Tranquil Abiding practice even partially; those

with intelligence should not trust such advice. (59b1) What these scriptures are saying is that when practicing Tranquil Abiding one's mind must not move to anything *other* than the focal object. This is extremely important.<sup>165</sup>

Thus, Yeshe Gyaltsen, in his discussion of *amanasikāra*, asserts that a cessation of all mental activity is not the desired goal. He cautions against taking *amanasikāra* in its literal sense of thoughtlessness because thought, including meta-awareness, is useful in countering laxity and mental wandering.

Tsongkhapa in *LRC* also criticized taking *amanasikāra* literally, asserting that there are untenable consequences of holding such a view (Tsongkhapa 2015, pp. 394–395).<sup>166</sup> Tsongkhapa put Hva shang's assertions as follows: If thought is involved, let alone bad thoughts, good thoughts will also bind us to uncontrolled cyclic suffering. For instance, whether someone is bound by a golden chain or a rope they are still bound; whether the sky is obscured by white or dark clouds they still block the sky; whether one is bit by a black dog or a white dog, they do not differ in producing pain. Therefore, placing the mind in thoughtlessness is the path to awakening. Once the definitive meaning is realized, engaging in other training such as moral ethics is like demoting a king to the status of an ordinary citizen; or like searching for a bull's footprint after having already found the bull itself! These other trainings are only meant for dull-minded people who cannot meditate on the definitive meaning.

Tsongkhapa makes his rebuttal, saying that once one has generated an altruistic heart of *bodhicitta*, one must first understand the necessity of practicing the six perfections.<sup>167</sup> Then, he points out that, in order to do that, wisdom and skillful means must not be practiced singly, but that both are needed for attainment of awakening. Finally, having understood these points, one must know the order in which to practice the six perfections and train accordingly. Tsongkhapa asserts that Hva shang's position undermines the training in generosity, moral ethics and so forth. Tsongkhapa maintains that such assertions deny that relative conventions, including all aspects of skillful means, are a part of a genuine path of awakening; and that they reject discerning wisdom's investigation into selflessness, which is the essence of Buddha's teachings. Tsongkhapa does mention that Hva shang has eighty different sources from *Sūtra* in praise of *amanasikāra* to support his position. He also admits that Hva shang's standpoint is slightly similar to the practice of Tranquil Abiding, in which one settles without discursive thought; (Tib. *sems tsom 'jog*) but that to hold this to be the highest path of awakening is one of the worst wrong views. Tsongkhapa notes that Kamalaśīla rejects it through reasoning and scriptural citation.

Another aspect of this challenge is that Yeshe Gyaltsen makes restrictions in relation to tantra-based Great Seal training, saying, 'in particular, only those who have received the four highest yoga tantra initiations, who comply with its related ethical rules<sup>168</sup> should be taught to identify the ultimate subjective [clear light] mind, and focus on it single pointedly. Otherwise, they should be given the common instructions on luminous nature of mind' (Yeshe Gyaltsen 1974–1977, f.55b).<sup>169</sup> Thus, in the Ganden tradition, access to the complete instructions of Great Seal is not a simple matter; this can present another challenge to aspirants.

## Conclusion

I have discussed the main themes of Yeshe Gyaltsen's Tranquil Abiding manual, drawing from exegetical sources of prominent Indian and Tibetan philosophers that offer clarity. I have noted that Tranquil Abiding training is not a uniformly identical practice but rather a personalized training which must be suited to an individual's mental disposition and predominate mental affliction. It is not just a technique for stilling the mind; it is meant to facilitate the development of liberating insight leading to an elimination of mental affliction.

Yeshe Gyaltsen is influenced by Tsongkhapa's approach to Tranquil Abiding in keeping his views aligned with the highly regarded Indian scriptural masters, only occasionally quoting some great adepts<sup>170</sup> such as in the case of the 'six settlements of mind'. For beginners

focusing on the mind as their meditative object, Yeshe Gyaltsen praised the fourth settling of the mind, 'like a young child looking at a temple'. He quotes Saraha a few times but does not cite as many pre-Ganden Tibetan masters as his predecessor, Pañchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyaltsen, did.

It would seem that Yeshe Gyaltsen wanted his text on Great Seal to reveal a synthesis of the views of Indian mainstream masters with the instructions of Tsongkhapa and Pañchen Lobsang Chokyi Gyaltsen. First, just by reading the author's title to the text, *Bright Lamp of the Excellent Path of Oral Transmission: An Instruction Manual of Ganden Great Seal*, he wanted it to be just that, a guide to Great Seal in the Ganden lineage. Next, when he lays out his thesis, he says that he will not align with all the instructions of the great adepts because those instructions, taught in specific individual contexts, may not be universally applicable. He mentions the use of words like *gang yang yid la mi byed pa*, (*amanasikāra*) which can cause confusion and be a basis for mistaken views. Third, he often directs his instruction to a larger audience, especially beginners. Thus, he avoids using words that are ambiguous or difficult for a beginner to penetrate. Finally, he sets the course of his approach, aligning with Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga who, in Mahāyāna Buddhism, were predicted by Buddha himself to be trailblazers of his teachings after his passing. In brief, I think Yeshe Gyaltsen's treatment of this contemplative training was done to make it accessible to his audience, while avoiding some citations from great adepts that were meant for more advanced practitioners.

I have attempted to highlight some of Yeshe Gyaltsen's themes pertaining to Tranquil Abiding and how they align with Tsongkhapa and the Indian Mahāyāna masters and have centered my discussion on the description of mindfulness, meta-awareness, and focal objects, attempting to define them as clearly as possible. In particular I have noted how mindfulness works in connection with intermittent application of meta-awareness in order to focus one's mind on a meditative object. In this way, a person who aspires to learn about mindfulness and meta-awareness may first get an intellectual understanding of the roles that these mental factors play.

Learning to regulate one's everyday cognitive processes may contribute to better human wellbeing. Soteriologically speaking, the shared aim of all Buddhists is freedom from suffering. To free oneself from all aspects of suffering one follows an ethical lifestyle in order to have a foundation for mental development. For this, all the great historical masters, including Yeshe Gyaltsen, have emphasized strengthening mindfulness and meta-awareness so that these mental factors can direct one's faculties in order to arrive at cognitive, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. As Yeshe Gyaltsen said, 'The way to cultivate proper meditative concentration is to practice mindfulness, this is very important'.

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## Abbreviations

BK	(Kamalaśīla 2011), <i>Bhāvanākrama</i>
BPP	(Atīśa Dipaṃkaraśrījñāna 1800), <i>Bodhipathapradīpa</i>
GPLG	(Yeshe Gyaltsen 1974–1977), <i>dGa' ldan phyag rgya chen po'i khrid yig snyan brgyud lam bzang gsal ba'i sgron me</i>
GTSP	(Tsongkhapa 2002), <i>Great Treatise on the Stages of Path to Awakening</i>
MA	(Candrakīrti n.d.) <i>Madhyamakāvātāra</i>
PCZL	(Pañchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyaltsen n.d. a), <i>dGe ldan bka' brgyud rin po che' phyag chen rtsa ba rgyal ba'i gzhung lam</i>
LRC	(Tsongkhapa 2015), <i>Lam rim chen mo</i>
LRG	(Tsongkhapa 1979–1981), <i>Lam rim nyam mgur ma</i>
ŚB	(Aśāṅga 1724), <i>Śrāvaka-bhūmi</i>
YSGM	(Pañchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyaltsen n.d. b), <i>dGe ldan bka' brgyud rin po che'i bka' srol phyag rgya chen po'i rtsa ba rgyas par</i>

## Notes

- See Vasubandhu (1987, p. 249): *de 'dzin byed dang smra byed pa / sgrub pa byed pa kho na yin /*; “The Buddha’s doctrine is upheld only by means of study and practice”.
- Tib. *zhi gnas*; Skt. *śamatha*; Eng. Tranquil abiding. An advanced meditative state in which the meditator has attained a physical and mental pliancy derived from focusing the mind. It is characterized by stable single-pointed attention to a chosen object with all mental distractions calmed (Jinpa 2006, p. 663).
- I have here translated the Tibetan term, *ting nge 'dzin*, as meditative concentration, meaning one-pointed mind deriving from meditation. In the context of its broader role in all cognitive states in general, it is listed as one of the five object-ascertaining mental factors; in that context I translate it as ‘mental’ concentration.
- Skt. *Abhidharma-samuccaya*.
- Namgyal (2005, p. 54): *Kun las btus las/zhi gnas gang zhe na / 'di lta ste / nang nyid la sems 'jog pa dang/rgyun du 'jog pa dang/blan te 'jog pa dang/nye bar 'jog pa dang/'dul bar byed pa dang/zhi bar byed pa dang/rnam par zhi bar byed pa dang/rtse gcig tu byed pa dang/mnyam par 'jog pa'o/zhes sems dgu bshad la/de dag gi ngos 'dzin ni zhi gnas kyi skabs su bshad do//*.
- Here, the term, Ganden (*dGa' ldan*) Geden, and Gelug (*dGe lugs*) refers to one of the four Buddhist lineages of Tibet which were established by Tsongkhapa.
- According to Pañchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyaltsen, sūtra-based Great Seal, emptiness of inherent existence, and ultimate nature of reality are interchangeable in their meaning (Pañchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyaltsen n.d. b, p. 273).
- In this context of Great Seal, Special Insight is a realization that is cognizant of emptiness.
- GPLG (50a1): *de yang lhag thong ni zhi gnas grub zin pa'i rjes su gnas cha brtan po de'i ngang nas so sor rtog pa'i shes rab kyi dpyad cing bskangs pas shin sbyangs 'dren thub pa zhig yin la/*.
- GPLG (50a1): *zhi gnas sngon du ma song bar lhag mthong skye ba mi srid pas so//*.
- Jackson (2019, p. 257) and Buddhist Digital Resource Center, and Skrun sku bod rig pa dpe skrun khang (2011, pp. 7–9) mentioned that Yeshe Gyaltsen is a native of Kyirong (*sKyid grong*). However, Yeshe Gyaltsen’s long biography authored by the Gyalwang Jampal Gyatso quotes the direct statement of Yeshe Gyaltsen: “My birthplace is Zar, located in Tingkye (*sTing skyes*)”, which is far away from Kyirong (Gyatso 2009, p. 6).
- Willis (1995, p. 127) asserts that Yeshe Gyaltsen was born the illegitimate son of an outcast father and a village woman of Tingkye.
- Jackson (2019, p. 644) mentioned birth and death year of Pañchen Lobsang Yeshe (1663–1737) and Drubwang Lobsang Namgyal (1670–1741).
- (Ibid.)
- Gyatso (2009, p. 83) wrote details about the establishment of the monastery including funding source for the construction of the monastery.
- Willis (1995, p. 127) says, he [Yeshe Gyaltsen] remained primarily in Nepal from 1751 to 1782.
- My reading of Yeshe Gyaltsen’s biography says that the Dalai Lama made several requests to convince his teacher, Yeshe Gyaltsen, to be the spiritual head of the monastic institution which was to be built. When his teacher accepted the position, the Dalai Lama provided major funding towards the construction of this institution along with other donors including Yeshe Gyaltsen himself (Gyatso 2009, pp. 345–48). Willis (1995, p. 127) says, to please his new tutor, [Gyalwang Jampal Gyatso] and to ensure that he would comfortably remain in Lhasa, the Dalai Lama had a new monastery constructed in 1790. 1789, a different construction year of the monastery, is recorded in (Krang dbyi sun 1985, p. 3284).

- 18 Yeshe Gyaltsen is regarded as a lineage master of uncommon Gelug Oral Instruction. Visionary teachings received by Tsongkhapa  
 19 from Lord Mañjuśrī were passed down by Tsongkhapa to his successive disciples, including Yeshe Gyaltsen (Jackson 2019, p. 644).  
 20 (Buddhist Digital Resource Center, and Skrun sku bod rig pa dpe skrun khang 2011, p. 9): *lam rim bla brgyud sogs chos tshan nyis  
 21 brgya lhag yod.*  
 22 This Gelug Great Seal text is entitled, Tib. *dGa' ldan phyag rgya chen po'i khrid yig snyan rgyud lam bzang gsal ba'i sgron me*/It is  
 23 originally preserved in Tsechok Ling woodblock print, catalogued in Derge edition. Text number is D6217. Cf. TOH 6127 (Tsa,  
 24 ff. 122).  
 25 This is an English translation of the Tibetan title; however, there is no available English translation of the entire text so far. I have  
 26 translated the Tranquil Abiding meditation manual section to English. It is my plan to publish the meditation manual in my Ph.D.  
 27 dissertation.  
 28 For Yeshe Gyaltsen's collected works, visit the following site. <http://purl.bdrclio.org/resource/MW1022>. [BDRCLIO bdr:MW1022]. Last  
 29 Accessed 21 August 2022. Original publication, n.d. Reprint 1974–1977, 25 vols. See also GPLG in the reference list.  
 30 Pañchen wrote his manual (*Highway of Victorious Ones: Root text of Precious Lineage of Geden Great Seal*) much earlier than Yeshe  
 31 Gyaltsen's manual. Yeshe Gyaltsen was born fifty-one years after Pañchen's death.  
 32 GPLG (52.a3): *de ltar sbyor ba'i rim pa sngon du btang nas/dngos gzhi la ting nge 'dzin rnam par dag pa zhiig bsgom na/mgon po byams  
 33 pas/nyes pa lnga spong 'du byed brgyad// bsten pa'i rgyud las byung ba'o// zhes gsungs ba'o// zhes gsungs pa lta/nyes pa lnga spong ba'i  
 34 gnyen po 'du byed brgyad kyi sgo nas bsgrub dgos so//.*  
 35 English title, *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Awakening*.  
 36 See (Jackson 2019, p. 278).  
 37 GPLG (52.a3): *gzhan yang deng sang gi gdul bya rnam kyis sems gzhas thabs drugs kyi sgo nas bskyangs na sems gnas 'grub sla bar  
 38 gsungs ...*  
 39 GPLG (22a3): *byang chub lam rim la mi ltos pa'i gdams ngag logs par go na rje'i bstan pa'i snying po stor bar 'gyur bas/lam rim gyi steng du  
 40 gdams ngag 'd'i khrid byed pa yin no// gdams ngag 'di rang la yang lam rim gyi gnad rnam tsang bar byed dgos ... / (50a6): zhib par ni zhi  
 41 lhag so so'i ngo bo dang/go rims dang/rgyud la skye tshul sogs mtha' dag par 'jig rten gsum gyi sgron me gcig pu byang chub lam gyi rim pa  
 42 las shes par bya'o//.*  
 43 GPLG (5a1).  
 44 *The Sūtra Unraveling the Intended Meaning*.  
 45 (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 534): *'phags pa dgongs pa nges 'grel las/byams pa/ yang nyan thos rnam kyis am/byang chub sems pda' rnam  
 46 kyis am/de bzhin gshegs pa rnam kyis zhi gnas dang lhag mthong gi 'bras bu yin par rig par bya'o/zhes gsungs pa'i phyir ro// (Ibid.): gzhi  
 47 gnas dang lhag mthong ni bsgoms byung thob pa'i rgyud kyi yon tan ma yin nam/yon tan de thams cad de gnyis kyi 'bras bur ji lta  
 48 snyam na/gzhi gnas dang lhag mthong dngos ni 'chad par 'gyur pa lta/bsgoms byung thob pa'i rgyud kyi yon tan yin pas/theq pa che chung  
 49 gi yon tan thams cad de gnyis kyi 'bras bu ma yin kyang/ For translation, see (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 14).  
 50 (Tsongkhapa 2015, pp. 534–35): *dge ba'i dmigs pa la sems rtse gcig pa yan chad kyi ting nge 'dzin rnam zhi gnas kyi phyogs su 'du la/ji  
 51 lta ba'am ji snyed pa'i don so sor 'byed pa'i shes rab dge ba rnam lhag mthong gi phyogs su 'du bas/de la dgongs nas theq pa gsum gyi yon  
 52 tan thams cad zhi lhag gi 'bras bur gsungs pas 'gal ba med do/.*  
 53 (Tsongkhapa 2015, pp. 534–35): *dge ba'i dmigs pa la sems rtse gcig pa yan chad kyi ting nge 'dzin rnam zhi gnas kyi phyogs su 'du la/ji  
 54 lta ba'm ji snyed pa'i don so sor 'byed pa'i shes rab dge ba rnam lhag mthong gi phyogs su 'du bas/de la dgongs nas theq pa gsum gyi yon tan  
 55 thams cad zhi lhag gi 'bras bur gsungs pas 'gal ba med do/.*  
 56 (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 14).  
 57 (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 14).  
 58 The eighth century Indian philosopher, who is said to have visited Tibet and authored the *Stages of Meditation*.  
 59 *Middle Bhāvanākrama*.  
 60 (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 536): *de gnyis kyis ting nge 'dzin thams cad bsdu pa'i phyir/rnal 'byor pa thams cad kyi dus thams cad du nges par  
 61 zhi gnas dang lhag mthong bsten par bya ste/.*  
 62 BPP (p. 8 line 4): *ji lta 'dab shog ma skyes pa'i/bya ni mkha la 'phur mi nus/de bzhin mgon shes stobs bral bas/sems can don byed nus ma  
 63 yin/... (p. 8 line 5):/zhi gnas grub pa ma yin pas/mngon shes 'byung bar mi 'gyur la//de phyir zhi gnas bsgrub pa'i phyir/ yang dang yang  
 64 du 'bad bar bya/See also GPLG (53b).  
 65 (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 15).  
 66 (Ibid.)  
 67 Tib. *lta ba*; Skt. *dr̥ṣṭi*.  
 68 For English translation, see (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 24).  
 69 (Ibid.).  
 70 *Lamp Illuminating the Meaning of the Great Mother*. The 'mother' here is used as a literary device to illustrate the 'three exalted  
 71 realizations', (Tib. *mkhyen pa gsum*) which are taken as objects of salutation in composing the text, *Ornament of Realizations* (Skt.  
 72 *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*) attributed to Maitreya-Asaṅga. The 'three exalted realizations' are the omniscient state of Buddha (Tib. *rnam***

*mkhyen*), the exalted realization to be developed by Bodhisattvas (Tib. *lam shes*), and the exalted realization (Tib. *gzhi shes*) mainly developed by ‘Hearers’, (Tib. *nyan thos*; Skt. *śrāvaka*) and ‘Solitary Realizers’ (Tib. *rang rgyal*; Skt. *Pratyekabuddha*). See (Panchen 2015a, p. 15): *skabs ‘dir dngos su bstan pa’i mchod brjod yul du ‘gyur pa’i yum la mkyen pa gsum du grangs nges te*/The following are three reasons why the ‘three exalted realizations’ are called ‘mother’: (a) they give birth to the three types of exalted beings, (b) they nurture the exalted beings by increasing their knowledge, and (c) they provide support such as by leading them to the state of pacification of suffering and so forth. See also (Ibid., p. 16): *mchod brjod yul du ‘gyur pa’i yum ‘dis sras ‘phags pa bzhi ci rigs par skyed par byed/yon tan gong du spel ba’i sgo nas gso bar yang byed/nyer gzhir ‘khrid pa sogs kyi phan ‘dogs par yang byed pas yum du ‘jog par byed pa . . .* ) Panchen Sonam Drakpa was a tutor to the fourth Dalai Lama Sonam Gyatso (*Bsod nams rgya mtsho*).

46 (Panchen 2015a, p. 436): *dman lam sngon du ma song ba’i byang sems kyi tshogs lam chen po ba stong nyid la dmigs pa’i lhag mthong thob pa dang//theg chen gyi sbyor lam drod du ‘phos pa dus mnyam pa gang zhig//stong nyid la dmigs pa’i lhag mthong thob pa la//de la dmigs pa’i zhi gnas thob pa sngon du ‘gro dgos pa’i phyir ro/*.

47 Tib. *shin tu sbyangs pa*; Skt. *praśrabdhi*. The physical and mental pliancy are serviceability of body and mind to wholesome action which is free from body and mind dysfunction. (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 614): . . . *lus dang sems shin tu sbyang pa ni/lus sems kyi gnas nges len gnyis dang bral bas lus dang sems dge ba’i bya ba la bkol ba la shin tu las su rung ba’o//*.

48 (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 549).

49 GPLG (49b-50a).

50 GPLG (69b): *zab mo dbu ma’i lta ba rgyud la skye ba la sngon du de legs par btsal nas rnyed pa zhig dgos/de ‘ong ba la sngon ‘gro’i rgyu tshogs tshang ba la ‘bad dgos/zab mo dbu’i lta ba rnyed pa’i thabs sngon ‘gro’i rgyu tshogs la brtson pa chen pos ‘bad pa zhig yong ba la sngon du de’i yon tan mthong bas yid phros pa’i dad pa brtan po zhig dgos pas/thog mar gnas lugs rtogs pa’i yon tan rnam bsam par bya ‘o/*

51 Full title of the text: *Byang chub lam gyi rim pa’i nyams len bsod don gyi tshigs su bcad pa*. In English, *Spiritual Song of Gradual Path to Awakening*.

52 See also, GPLG (1969, f. 50a).

53 BK line quoted in (Tsongkhapa 2002, pp. 17–18): After you have quelled the distraction of external objects, you rest in a delighted and pliant mind which naturally and continuously engages an internal object of meditation. This is called meditative serenity. While you remain in serenity, any analysis of that very object is called insight.

54 (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 540): *sGom rim bar pa las kyang/phyi rol gyi yul la rnam par g.yeng ba zhi nas/nang du dmigs pa la rgyun du rang gyi ngang gis ‘jug pa la dga’ ba dang shin du sbyangs ba dang ldan pa’i sems nyid la gnas pa ni zhi gnas zhes bya’o//zhi gnas de nyid la gnas pa’i tsho de kho na la rnam par dpyod pa gang yin pa de ni lhag mthong yin . . . /*. See also, BK (Kamalaśīla 2011, p. 117).

55 *Definiens*, Tib. *msthan nyid*.

56 *Definiendum*, Tib. *mtshon bya*.

57 However, it is probably true that this description refers to Tranquil Abiding, which is first time attained in a human form.

58 Tib. *gsam gtan dang po’i dngos gzhi snyoms ‘jug kyad par can*.

59 Tib. *Yum don yang gsal dron me*.

60 See *Yum don yang gsal sgron me/skabs dang po’i mtha’ dpyod: rang lugs ni/dmigs pa dang yan lag gnyis las yan lag gi sgo nas rang gi ‘og sa [‘dod pa’i sa’am mkhams] las ‘das pa’i dge ba’i rig pa/gsam gtan gyi dngos gzhi snyoms ‘jug gi mtshan nyid/bsam gtan gyi dngos gzhi snyoms gang zhig/‘dod pa la ‘dod chags dang bral ba’i rab tu phyi ba’i rigs can/bsam gtan dang po’i dngos gzhi snyoms ‘jug gyi mtshan nyid/de la dbye na gnyis yod pa las/bsam gtan dang po’i dngos gzhi snyoms gang zhig/tshor ba yid bde’i sa pa’i rigs su gnas pa/bsam gtan dang po’i dngos gzhi snyoms ‘jug tsham po pa’i mtshan nyid/bsam gtan dang po’i dngos gzhi snyoms gang zhig/tshor ba btang snyoms ka yi sa pa’i rigs su gnas pa/bsam gtan dang po’i dngos gzhi snyoms ‘jug kyad par can gyi mtshan nyid/*.

61 (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 557): *rje btsun byams pas kyang mdo sde’i rgyan dang/dbus mthar sems gnas pa’i thabs dgu dang spong pa’i ‘du byed brgyad gsungs la/de rnam kyi rjes su ‘brangs nas slob dpon seng ge bzang po dang ka ma la shī la dang shān ti pa la sogs pa’i rgya gar gyi mkhas pa rnam kyi kyang ting nge ‘dzin bsgrub pa’i rim pa mang du mdzad . . . /*The venerable Maitreya discusses the methods of the nine mental states [placement] and the eight antidotes in his *Ornament for the Māhāyāna Sūtras* and *Distinguishing the Middle and the Extremes*. Following them, Haribhadra, Kamalaśīla, and Ratnākaraśānti wrote much about the process of achieving meditative concentration. See also (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 75): The names of the nine mental abidings are in accord with the lines in Kamalaśīla’s *First Stages of Meditation*: “This path of meditative serenity is explained in the *Perfection of Wisdom sūtras* and so on . . . ”.

62 *Asaṅga* and *Nāgārjuna*.

63 For description of *ting nge ‘dzin* or *Samādhi*, See (Walpole and Boin-Webb 2001, p. 9).

64 GPLG (54b6): *des na skabs ‘dir bsgom par bya ba’i ting nge ‘dzin gyi dmigs pa ni rang gi sems yin no/de yang ting nge ‘dzin kyang ‘grub la/dgos pa khyad par can gzhan yang yod pa’i dmigs rten zhig (55a1)’tshol dgos pa yin gyi/sems gnas pa gcig pus mi chog go/de’i gnad ma shes par rde’u dang shing bu sogs la dmigs nas sgom pa ni rgyal ba’i gsung rab dang shing rta chen po’i gzhang gi man ngag mi shes par gsal zhang/yang shing bu sogs mdun du bzhang ste/de la mig bltas te sgom par byed pa ni ting nge ‘dzin gang la zer ma shes pas nongs te/ting nge ‘dzin ni sems byung yul nges lnga’i nang tshan zhig yin pas nang du yid la bsgoms pas skye ba yin gyi/dbang shes la ting nge ‘dzin mi skye’o/*.

65 (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 572): *dmigs rten yang bris sku dang lugs ma sogs kyi rnam pa mi bya bar sangs rgyas ngos kyi rnam pa can du ‘char ba la bslab bo//kha cig sku gzugs mdun du bzhang pa la mig gis bltas nas har sgom byed pa/slob dpon ye shes sdes bkag pa ni shin tu legs te/ting*

- nge 'dzin dbang po'i shes pa la mi bsgrub kyi yid kyi shes pa la bsgrub pa yin pas/ting nge 'dzin gyi dgos kyi dmigs pa ni yid kyi shes pa'i dgos kyi yul yin pas/de la sems bzung dgos pa yin pa'i phyir dang/sngar bshad pa ltar dmigs yul dgos kyi don spyi'am gzugs brnyan (p. 573) byang chung lam rim chen mo) shar ba la dmigs dgos par gsungs pa'i phyir ro/. For English translation, see (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 44).
- 66 Yum don yang gsal sgron me/skabs dang po'i mtha' dpyod/: rang gi lugs ni/shin sbyangs kyis zin pas sgo nas rang gis dmigs pa la 'bad mad lhun grub tu 'jug pa'i ting nge 'dzin/zhi gnas kyi mtshan nyid/ci' phyir zhi gnas zhes bya zhe na/sems phyi rol gyi yul la 'jug pa de zhi nas/nang du dmigs pa la gnas pa na de skad ces bya'o/.
- 67 (Skt. *tattva*; *tathatā*; Eng. Reality). These two words have the same meaning; thus, they are synonyms.
- 68 GPLG (52b6): zhi gnas grub na lus sems shin sbyangs kyi bde bas khyab pas mthong chos la bde bar gnas pa dang/rang sems dbang du 'dus te bzhang na ri ltar gnas shing/btang na dge ba'i (f. 53a1) dmigs pa gang la' ci 'dod du 'jug pa dang/lhag par zhi gnas brtan po'i ngang nas gnas lugs kyi don la dpyad pas lhag mthong thob ste nyon mongs myur du spong nus pa dang/de nyid thabs dang bcas par bsgoms pas gnyis snang 'khrul pa'i bag chags kyang sbyong nus pa sogs phan yon bsam gyis mi khyab ste/.
- 69 See (Tsongkhapa 1979–1981, f. 3a [p. 67]): *bsam gtan sems la dbang bsgyur rgyal po ste//bzhang na g.yo med ri yi dbang po bzhiin//btang na dge ba'i dmigs pa kun la 'jug/lus sems las su rung ba'i bde chen 'dren//de ltar shes nas rnal 'byor dbang po rnams//rnam gyeng dgra 'joms ting 'dzin rgyun du bsten//rnal 'byor ngas kyang nyams len de ltar bgyis//thar 'dod khyed kyang de bzhiin bskyang 'tshal lo//*.
- 70 The following two verses indicate that ignorance is the root of all afflictions, and why realization of interdependent origination is necessary for the removal of all afflictions. 'Just as the body has the body faculty, ignorance abides in all afflictions. Therefore, by overcoming ignorance, all afflictions are destroyed as well. If interdependent origination is seen, ignorance will not arise. Therefore, with all your effort rely on just those teachings' (Āryadeva n.d., pp. 1–24). It is said that realization of interdependent origination precedes realization of sūtra-based Great Seal.
- 71 (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 19).
- 72 (Namgyal 2005, pp. 184–85). English title, *Moonbeams of Mahāmudra*.
- 73 Exegesis by Asaṅga, Bhāviveka, Kamalaśīla, Atīśa, Ratnākaraśānti (also known as Śāntipa), etc.
- 74 (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 560) and see GPLG (f. 54a6).
- 75 GPLG (54ba).
- 76 (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 561): *spyad pa rnam par sbyong ba ni/'dod chags sogs la shas cher spyad pa rnam par sbyong ba'i dmigs pa ste/*.
- 77 (Tsongkhapa 2015, pp. 561–63).
- 78 (Tsongkhapa 2015, pp. 563–64).
- 79 (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 566): *des na ting ting nge 'dzin bsgrub pa'i gzhung che ba rnams nas dmigs pa mang du bshad la/de dag gi dgos pa'ang sngar bshad pa ltar yin pas/sems 'jog pa'i dmigs rten la mkhas par bya'o/*.
- 80 (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 566): *sgom rim las/zhi gnas kyi dmigs pa la nges pa med par bshad la/*Quoted by Tsongkhapa in LRC.
- 81 Tsongkhapa in LRC only mentions the author's name (Tib. 'phags pa dpa' bo) and cites the verse, but not the title of the text. In GTSP Vol 3. (2002, p. 45) the title of text, *Compendium of the Perfections*. Skt. *Pāramitā-samāsa* is added. Ruegg (1981, p. 119) recognizes Ārya-Śūra as the author of the text, *Pāramitā-samāsa*. See also, (Apple 2017, p. 6).
- 82 See (Asvaghosa 1982–1985) for the text, *sher phyin bsdus pa*, which is tibetan translation of *Pāramitā-samāsa*. Asvaghosa and Ārya-Śūra are different names, but maybe they are names of same person. See also (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 573): *dmigs pa gcig la brtan thsul du//yid ki bsam pa brtan par bya//dmigs pa mang po brgyud pa las//yid ni nyon mongs 'khrugs par 'gyur//*.
- 83 Tib. *Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma*.
- 84 BPP (4b): *de phyir ting 'dzin tshogs le'u las//gsungs pa'i yan lag la legs gnas// dmigs pa gang rung gcig dag la//yid ni dge la bzhang par bya//*Additionally, see (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 573). For English translation, see (Rinchen 1997): "Thus maintaining well the conditions mentioned in the *Collection for Meditative Stabilization Chapter*, place the mind on any one, virtuous focal object".
- 85 (Zahler 2009, p. 84).
- 86 (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 566): *zhes gsungs pa ni dmigs pa bye brag pa zhig nges gzung du mi dgos zhes pa'i don yin gyi/dmigs pa gang 'dug tsad la ston pa min no//*.
- 87 English title, *The Buddha's Discourse with Revata*.
- 88 In this context, there are few English terms used for describing the Tibetan term "mi sduq pa", for example, "ugliness", and "impurity". I choose to use "ugliness" because the Tibetan term "mi sduq pa" refers to the unpleasant experience of the mind, while "impurity" refers to the object of unpleasant experience that consists of physically impure substances. The term for "impurity" used in Tibetan is "mi gtsang ba". Therefore, in Tibetan "impurity" and "ugliness" carry different meanings, so they are not interchangeable. Some translate "mi tsang ba" as "perishables".
- 89 See (Asaṅga 1724, f. 93): *nam gru/gal te dge slong rnal 'byor spyod pa de 'dod chags spyad pa kho na zhig yin na ni/dmigs pa mi sduq pa la sems nye bar gtod par byed do//zhe sdang spyad pa zhig yin na ni/byams pa la'o/gti mug spyad pa zhig yin na ni/rkyen 'di nyid kyi rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba la'o/nga rgyal syad pa zhig yin na ni/khams kyi rab tu dbye ba la sems nye bar gtod par byed do/zhes dang/nam gru/gal te dge slong rnal 'byor pa/rnal 'byor spyad pa de/rnam par rtog pa spyod pa kho na yin na ni/dbugs rngub dang/dbubs 'byungs ba dran pa la sems nye bar gtod par byed do//*.

- 90 (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 42).
- 91 (Zahler 2009, p. 85).
- 92 (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 43).
- 93 See Tibetan version of the text, *dBu ma 'jug pa*. English title, *Entering the Middle Way* in (Candrakīrti n.d., p. 63).
- 94 The two awakened bodies of a Buddha: *rūpakāya*, the perfected physical body of an awakened being, and *dharmakāya*, the perfected 'truth body' of an awakened being.
- 95 For Tibetan version of the text *Bodhipathapradīpa*, See BPP (p. 8).
- 96 Gelugpa, a proponent of Tsongkhapa's school.
- 97 Sentient beings take birth in the three realms of cyclic existence propelled by their karma and mental afflictions.
- 98 For Tibetan version of *Suḥrillekha; Letter to a Friend*, see (Nāgārjuna 2004, p. 19 line 8): *khyod kyi thugs dul mdzod cig bcom ldan 'das//sems ni chos kyi rtsa ba lags par gsungs*/English translation follows. "Subdue your mind! Buddha has proclaimed: Mind is the root of Dharma. Additionally, see (GPLG f. 55a.)
- 99 For Tibetan version of *Bodhicaryāvatāra, Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct*, see (Śāntideva n.d., pp. 3–70). Related verse lines are quoted by Yeshe Gyaltzen in (GPLG f. 55b1).
- 100 For Tibetan version of MA or *Entering the Middle Way*, see (Candrakīrti n.d., p. 93): *nyon mongs skyon rnams ma lus 'jig tshogs la//lta las byung bar blo yis mthong 'gyur cing//bdag ni 'di yis yul du rtogs byas nas//rnal 'byor pa yis bdag ni 'gog par byed//*
- 101 GPLG (f. 55b6).
- 102 Tib. *rim lnga*; Eng. *Five Stages*.
- 103 Tib. *spyod bsdu sgron me*; Eng. *Lamp that Integrates the Practices*.
- 104 Tib. *rim pa lnga bsdu pa gsal ba* Eng. *Compendium of Five Stages*.
- 105 GPLG (56b3).
- 106 GPLG (57a1).
- 107 PCZL (73a5).
- 108 See (Gungthang 2000, f.22a6). Title of the text, *phyag chen khrid kyi zin bris zhal lung bdud rtsi'i thigs phreng/*. English title, *Garland of Nectar Drops: Notes on an Oral Instruction on Mahāmudrā*.
- 109 (Gungthang 2000, f.22b3): *des na 'dir de lta bu'i gzhi gnas sgrub tshul gsungs pa'ang gzhan lugs shes pa tsam zhig min gyis/og tu 'chad rgyu'i sems kyis don dam pa'i ngo bo nyid la 'jug sla ba dang/de 'dra'i lhag mthong 'grub pa'i zhi'i zhi gnas khyad par can sngon tu grub pa'i phyir yin no//*.
- 110 (Gungthang 2000, f.24b4): *de ltar ngos bzung med pa zhig yin yang/rang 'gar ma brtags ma dpyad par bzhag na mi 'char dgu 'char pa/srid rtse nas mmar med kyi bar gyi bde sdug legs nyes thams cad kyi byed pa po yin pas/sngon chad rang cag phar sems kyi dbang du song ba yin/da ni sems de tshur rang gi dbang du 'dus pa zhig byed dgos pas/sems ngo sprod pa dang sems la dmigs pa zhes 'di nyid gtso bor rtsal du 'don pa'i rgyu mtshan yang de yin/*.
- 111 In English, *Adornment of Mahāyāna Sūtras*. According to Tibetan Buddhist Scholasticism, this text is one of the five works of Maitreya; however, modern scholars like D.S. Ruegg and S.K. Hookham find the authorship disputable.
- 112 In English, *Distinguishing the Middle and the Extremes*. According to Tibetan Buddhist Scholasticism, this text is one of the five works of Maitreya; however, modern scholars like D.S. Ruegg and S.K. Hookham find the authorship disputable.
- 113 (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 557): *rje btsun byams pas kyang mdo sde'i rgyan dang dbus mthar sems gnas pa'i thabs dgu dang spong pa'i 'du byed brgyad gsungs la/*.
- 114 These sūtras are one of the three sets of the Buddha's teachings. See (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 557): *ting nge 'dzin gyi spyi'i khog rnams ni/sngar gyi gzhung chen mo de dag nas bshad pa dang sngags nas bshad pa rnams shin tu mthun la/khyad par du ting nge 'dzin gyi nyes pa lnga la sogs pa'i skyon rnam dang de rnams ji ltar sel ba'i tshul rnams ni mdo sde'i phyogs rnams shin tu rgyas par snang ngo/*.
- 115 (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 556): *bsgom pa'i rim pa nyid bshad pa ni/lam rim phal mo cher dbus mtha' nas gsungs pa'i nyes pa lnga spong pa'i 'du byed brgyad ka'i sgo nas zhi gnas bsgrub par gsungs la/*.
- 116 GPLG (3b5): *des na gdams ngag 'di gang nas bshad pa'i khungs mthar mthug pa ni yum rgyas 'bring bsdu ssum dang/bla med kyi rgyud sde rin po che rnams yin no/*.
- 117 *Six Collections of Middle Way Reasonings*.
- 118 *Ornament of Realizations*.
- 119 Authored by the historical Chinese abbot, Wen tseg (*Rgya yi mkhan po Wen tseg*).
- 120 Attributed to Buddha.
- 121 English title, *Necklace of the Fortunate: Establishing the System of the Trailblazers*. A kya Yongzin (1971a, p. 557) says that, in other treatises, instead of nine years later, six hundred years later. In the encyclopedia of Sera Je Monastery (*se ra byes rig mdzod cen mo las*) it is stated that the above prophecy is cited in the *Great Commentary of Saṃdhi Nirmocana-Sūtra*. Bu ston, however, says that the first two lines are not mentioned in the *Saṃdhi Nirmocana-Sūtra* itself, but were later added by the Chinese abbot, Dzog sel (*rdzogs gsal*) in his commentary to *Saṃdhi Nirmocana-Sūtra*.

- 122 I added my own translation, making slight changes to Sparham's translation. (Sparham 1993, p. 46): *Dgongs 'grel gyi grell chen du drangs pa las/nga ni mya ngan 'das pa las//lo ni dgu brgya lon pa na//thogs med ces bya'i dge slong ni//bstan bcos de ni don la mkhas//mdo sde nges don grang ba'i don//rnam pa mang po rab tu 'byed//jig rten rig pa ston bdag nyid//gzhung byed ngang tshul can du 'gyur//de yi rig pa grub pa ni//sā la'i pho nya zhes brjod////.*
- 123 This author is also called Jetsün Chökyi Gyaltsen (*rje tsun chos kyi rgyal mtshan*). He composed monastic curriculum textbooks, mostly studied by the monastic members of dGa' ldan jang rtse and Se ra byes monastic colleges. In 1511, he became the abbot of Sera Je monastery and in 1537, he was appointed the abbot of Sera monastery. This is not Pañchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyaltsen (1469–1544) who was tutor of the 5th Dalai Lama.
- 124 In *Shing rta'i srol byed kyi rnam gzhas skal bzang mgul rgyan See* (A kya Yongzin 1971a, p. 534).
- 125 GPLG (52a3): *de ltar sbyor ba'i rim pa sngon du btang nas/dngos gzhi la ting nge 'dzin rnam par dag pa zhis bsgom na/nyes pa lnga spong 'du byed brgyad//bsten pa'i rgyu las byung ba'o//zhes gsungs pa ltar/nyes pa lnga spong ba'i gnyen po 'du byed brgyad kyi sgo nas bsgrub dgos so//*Following is English translation: Having begun with the preliminaries mentioned above, with regard to the actual practice for development of meditative concentration, Protector Maitreya [or Asaṅga] in *Distinguishing the Middle and the Extremes*, states that it arises from the causes: abandoning the five faults by relying upon the eight antidotes.
- 126 Skt. *kauśīdyā*; Tib. *le lo* Eng. Laziness [mental sloth]. Here, I use the term “laziness” in the sense of mental sloth which lacks enthusiastic attitude toward a relevant action or goal. Thus, the term “laziness” here takes two elements into consideration: (a) not being enthusiastic of performing the relevant act, and (b) being enthusiastic of doing irrelevant acts that hinder doing the relevant action. Laziness essentially points out what keeps someone away from the relevant virtuous goal or activity. Tsongkhapa (2015, p. 558) asserts, *dang po ni/ting nge 'dzin bsgom pa mi spro zhing de'i mi mthun phyogs la dga' ba'i le lo 'gog ma nus na//dang po nas ting nge 'dzin la 'jug tu mi ster zhing/lan cig thob kyang rgyun tu mi nus pas myur du nyams par 'gyur ro//de'i thog mar le lo 'gog par gnad du che'o//*English translation follows: (a) What to do prior to focusing the attention on an object of meditation: If you cannot stop the laziness of being disinclined to cultivate concentration and of enjoying things that are not conducive to it, from the outset you will not gain entry into concentration; even if you do attain it once, you will be unable to sustain it, so it will quickly deteriorate. Therefore, it is most crucial to stop laziness in the beginning . . . (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 33). Wallace (2005, p. 140) says, “In terms of the immediate preparations for cultivating quiescence [Tranquil Abiding], Tsongkhapa first addresses the obstacle of spiritual sloth”. He claims that the notion of spiritual sloth is directly related to the practice of Dharma, it is thus misleading to render this term, Skt. *kauśīdyā*; Tib. *le lo* simply as ‘laziness’.
- 127 Skt. *avaśādasammōṣā*; Tib. *gdams ngag brjed pa*. Although the Tibetan term is literally translated as “forgetfulness of instruction”, it essentially means “forgetfulness of focal object” of meditative concentration.
- 128 Skt. *laya*, Tib. *bying ba* and Skt. *auddhatya*; Tib. *rgod pa*.
- 129 Skt. *anabhisamkāra*; Tib. *'du mi-byed pa*.
- 130 Skt. *abhisamkāra*; Tib. *'du byed-pa*.
- 131 (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 33) Additionally, see GPLG (52a6).
- 132 English title, *Distinguishing the Middle and the Extremes*.
- 133 Stable and single-pointed focus.
- 134 Cycle of suffering states effected by one's own action and afflictive emotion.
- 135 (Tsongkhapa 2015, pp. 559–60): *dbus mtha' las/gnas dang de la gnas pa dang//rgyu dang 'bras bu nyid du'o//de la gnas ni 'dun pa ste rtsol ba'i gnas so//gnas pa ni rtsol pa'am brtson 'grus so//dun pa'i rgyu ni yon tan la yid ches pa'i dad pa'o//rtsol ba'i 'bras bu ni shin tu sbyangs pa'o//dir sgom par bya ba'i ting nge 'dzin gyi yon ton ni/zhi gnas grub na sems la dga' ba dang lus la bde ba rgyas pas mthong chos la bde bar gnas pa dang/lus sems shin tu sbyangs pa rnyed pas sems dge ba'i dmigs pa la gang 'dod du bkol du rung ba dang/rang dbang med par phyin ci log gyi yul g.yeng ba zhi bas nyas spyod mang po mi 'byung zhing dge ba gang byed stobs che ba dang/zhi gnas la brten nas mngon shes dang rdzu 'phrul la sogs kyi yon tan rnam sgrub nus pa dang/khyad par du de la brten nas ji lta ba rtogs pa'i lhag mthong gi rtogs pa skyes bas 'khor ba'i rtsa ba myur du gcod nus sogs kyi yon tan gang bsams na ting nge 'dzin bsgom pa la spro shugs 'phel bar 'gyur bar rnam shes par byas la bsgom ste//di skyes na nang nas ting nge 'dzin bsgom pa la rgyun du bskul bas ting nge 'dzin thob par sla zhing thob zin nas kyang yang yang bsgom pa la 'jug pas nyams par dka' ba yin no//.* For English translation, see (Tsongkhapa 2002, p. 34).
- 136 GPLG (57a1).
- 137 GPLG (57a1-4).
- 138 PCZL (72b6).
- 139 PCZL (72b5).
- 140 (Gungthang 2000, f.23a6): *sems gnas sgrub pa'i skabs 'dir mdo lugs kyis rnam rtog phra mo mi 'gog kyang/sngag lugs la de 'gog pa'i gnad kyis zhi gnas sgrub pa sogs la nus pa che ba yin zhes yongs 'dzin gsung/.*
- 141 GPLG (57b5): *dran pa gang zhe na/'dris pa'i dgos po la sems kyi brjed pa med pa ste rnam par mi gyeng pa'i las can no//.*
- 142 GPLG (57b6).
- 143 GPLG (57b4).
- 144 GPLG (58a6).

- 145 Tib. *mdo sde rgyan gyi 'grel ba* Eng. *Commentary on the Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras*.
- 146 (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 577): *sems rtsa ba'i dmigs pa gang yin pa de la g.yeng bar mi byed pa'i thabs gcig dang/g.yengs mi g.yengs dang g.yeng bar 'gyur mi 'gyur ji lta ba bzhin shes pa gnyis dgos pa'i dang po ni/dran pa dang gnyis pa ni shes bzhin yin te/mdo sde rgyan gyi 'grel pa las/dran pa dang shes bzhin ni nye bar gtod par byed pa ste/gcig gis sems dmigs pa las mi 'phro bar byed pa'i phyir dang/gnyis pas sems 'phro ba rab tu shes pa'i phyir ro/.*
- 147 GPLG (58b1-3): *shes bzhin ni sems dmigs pa la rtse gcig tu 'dzin pa'i dran pa'i 'dzin stangs ma shor ba'i ngang nas dmigs pa de la gnas mi gnas dang/bying rgod sogs kyi gegs byung ma byung bya ra byed pa'o/de yang dmigs pa la sems 'dzin pa btang nas bya ra byed pa'i blo gsar pa zhis bskyed na ni skyong tshul mi shes pa'i skyon yin/de ltar bltas pas ting nge 'dzin la mi phan par ma mdzad gnod pa chen po byed do//.*
- 148 English title, *Guide to the Bodhisattva conduct*.
- 149 (Śāntideva n.d., f9b). Additionally, see GPLG (f. 65a4-6): *de yang dran pa ma yengs pa'i ngang nas sems la bying rgod byung ma byung rtog pa'i shes bzhin gyi bya ra 'jog dgos la/shes bzhin de bskyed pa'i thabs gnyis yod pa'i thabs gcig ni dmigs rten la sems rtse gcig tu dmigs nas dran pa thu re 'jog pa shes bzhin skye pa'i rgyu'i tso bo yin te/spyod 'jug las/gang tse dran pa yid sgo nas//bsrung ba'i don la gnas gyur pa//de tse shes bzhin 'ong 'gyur zhing//song ba'i dag kyang phyir 'ong gyur//zhes gsungs/.*
- 150 (Śāntideva n.d., f.12a6). Additionally, see GPLG (f. 65a6): *lus dang sems kyi gnas skabs la//yang dang yang du brtag bya ba//de de kho na mdor na ni//shes bzhin bsrung ba'i mtshan nyid do//.*
- 151 Wallace chooses the term introspection instead of meta-awareness for Tibetan term, *shes bzhin*.
- 152 Tibetan; especially Gelugpa approach.
- 153 Tibetan; as a formal practice.
- 154 Thailand; Nondual with classical features.
- 155 For further discussion of the relationship between mindfulness and meta-awareness, see (Deroche and Sheehy 2022).
- 156 (Wangpo 2003, pp. 272–89): *sems kyi 'dul thabs thams cad kyi//rtsa ba dran pa kho na ste//dang po 'jur dran bar du klong//tha ma dran med 'od gsal ngang//dran pa kho nas sdig kun spong//*The translation of the verse is slightly revised, based on Deroche 2021.
- 157 *gzhi'i sku gsum gyi rnam gzhab rab gsal sgron me zhes bya ba bzungso/English title, Brilliant Lamp: A Presentation of the Three Bodies of the Basic State*. See (A kya Yongzin 1971b, pp. 314–15).
- 158 GPLG (63a3): *gzhan yang deng sang gi gdul bya rnam kyis sems kyi gzhab thabs drug gi sgo nas bskyang na sems gnas 'grub sla bar gsungs te/drug ni/nyi ma sprin dang bral ba lta bur bzhab pa dang/khyung chen nam mkha' la lding ba bzhin du bzhab pa dang/rgya mthso rlab dang bral ba bzhin du bzhab pa dang/bu chung lha khang blta ba bzin du bzhab pa dang/bya nam mkha' la 'phur ba'i rjes bzhin du bzhab pa dang/ras bal brdal ba bzhin du bzhab pa rnamso//de dag ni sa ra ha la sogs pa'i grub chen gyi gzhung mang po las 'byung zhing/de dag gi nang nas kyang bu chung lha khang blta ba lta bur gzhab pa 'di las dang po pa la gnad shin tu che zhing/rgya gar grub chen rnam kyis kyang yang yang bsngags la/skyong tshul gyi gnad de dag la rje mi las kyang bsngags pa che bar mdzad do//de dag so so'i don ni yang gsal sgron mer gsungs zin pas 'dir ma bkod la/.*
- 159 GPLG (61b). *de ltar dmigs pa la sems rtse gcig tu 'dzin pa'i tse rnam rtog 'phro ba bkag kyang mi thub par yang yang 'phro na/dmigs rten la rtse gcig tu dmigs pa'i dran pa ma g.yengs ngang nas/phro ba'i rnam rtog gang dang gang skyes pa des ngo la cer gyis blta zhing/yul gang du 'phro/tshul ji ltar 'phro blta bar bya 'o/.*
- 160 Jackson (2019, p. 8) recounts: 'Very late in the history of Indian Buddhism, figures like Maitrepa's disciple Vajrapāni (b. 1017) began to group together different sets of texts that supposedly pertained to mahāmudrā, including the Seven Attainments Texts written by various mahāsiddhas and tantric commentators, three *Dohā* Treasuries attributed to Saraha, twenty-five texts on nonmentation associated with Maitrepa, and a number of other collections mostly drawn from the writings of Saraha and Maitrepa.' This citation mentions twenty-five texts associated with Maitrepa, that were, at that time, grouped as pertaining to nonmentation. Higgins ([2006] 2008, pp. 255–303) notes that these are known in Tibet as the 'corpus of twenty-five texts' on non-mentation (*Yid la mi byed pa'i chos skor nyi shu rtsa lnga*). Most of these texts are available in Sanskrit in the *Advayavajrasaṅgraha* which forms the main textual basis for this Great Seal tradition.
- 161 I would use the term 'simultaneist' for the Tibetan term *cig car ba*.
- 162 See (Karmay 1988).
- 163 See (Higgins 2016).
- 164 See (Higgins [2006] 2008).
- 165 GPLG (59a4): *gsung rab rnam nas gang yang yid la mi bya ba dang/cir yang mi bsam pa dang/rnam par mi rtog pa zhes gsungs pa dang/lhag par grub chen gyi gzhung mang po las de rigs kyi tshig mang du 'byung ba rnam kyis 'khrul gzhi byas nas yid byed thams cad bkag nas dran pa med par gnas dgos zhes smra ba ni rgyal bas gsung pa'i gzhi gnas sgrub tshul gyi phyogs tsam yang ma mthong ba'i nor ba chen po yin pas blo gros dang ldan pa rnam kyis yid brtan mi bya'o//gsung rab rnam las de ltar gsungs pa ni zhi gnas sgrub pa'i tse gang la dmigs rten de las gzhan du yul gang la yang sems ma 'phros par byed dgos pa'i don yin te/de ni shin tu gal che'o/.*
- 166 (Tsongkhapa 2015, pp. 394–95).
- 167 1. generosity, 2. moral ethics, 3. perseverance, 4. patience, 5. contemplation, and 6. wisdom.
- 168 Mantra and tantra are used here as interchangeable terms.
- 169 GPLG (55b).

170 Tib. grub chen; Skt. mahāsiddha.

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