The Nature of a Vow: Karma, Ritual, Lineage, and the Three Vows

by

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List of Abbreviations

Collected Works (CW 2006)	*The Collected Works of Shākya Chokden* (*Gsung ’bum Shākya mchog ldan*). 24 vols. Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006.
Collected Works (CW 1975)	*The Collected Works of Shākya Chokden* (*Gsung ’bum Shākya mchog ldan*). 24 vols. Thimphu, Bhutan: Kunzang Tobgey, 1975. (Reprint, Delhi: Nagwang Topgyel, 1995)
“Prātimokṣa Vow Chapter” (PVC)	Shākya Chokden. “Explanation of the First Stage, the Prātimokṣa” (*So sor thar pa’i rim pa dang po rnam par bshad pa*). In *Presentation of the Three Vows* (*Sdom gsum gyi rnam par bzhag pa rgya cher bshad pa las so sor thar pa’i rim pa dang po rnam par bshad pa*), [actual chapter on prātimokṣa: 341–409]. In *Gsung ’bum Shākya mchog ldan*, vol. 6, 341–496. Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006.
“Śrāvaka Discipline Chapter” (SDC)	Shākya Chokden. “Śrāvaka Discipline: From the *Presentation of the Disciplines of the Three Vehicles*” (*Theg pa gsum gyi ’dul ba rnam par bzhag pa las nyan thos kyi ’dul ba*). In *Gsung ’bum Shākya mchog ldan*, vol. 6, 1–275. Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006.
“Bodhisattva Discipline Chapter” (BDC)	Shākya Chokden. “Bodhisattva Discipline, from the ‘Presentation of the Discipline of the Three Vehicles’” *Theg pa gsum gyi ’dul ba rnam par bzhag pa las byang chub sems dpa’i ’dul ba*). In *Sdom gsum gyi rnam par bzhag pa rgya cher bshad pa las so sor thar pa’i rim pa dang po rnam par bshad pa*, 409–45. In *Gsung ’bum Shākya mchog ldan*, vol. 6, 341–496. Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006.
“Vidyādhara Discipline Chapter” (VDC)	Shākya Chokden. “Engaging in Vidyādhara Discipline, from the ‘Presentation of the Disciplines of the Three Vehicles’” (*Theg pa gsum gyi ’dul ba rnam par bzhag pa las rig pa ’dzin pa’i ’dul ba la ’jug pa*). In *Sdom gsum gyi rnam par bzhag pa rgya cher bshad pa las so sor thar pa’i rim pa dang po rnam par bshad pa*, 445–96. In *Gsung ’bum Shākya mchog ldan*, vol. 6, 341–496. Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006.
Good Questions (*GQ*)	Śākya Chokden. *Good Questions on [Sakya Paṇḍita’s] “Differentiating the Three Vows”* (*Sdom gsum rab dbye la dri ba legs pa*). In *Gsung ’bum Shākya mchog ldan*, vol. 17, 496–512. Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006.
Golden Lancet (*GL*)	Shākya Chokden. *Golden Lancet*: *An Eloquent and Certain Discussion Issuing from the Treatise called, “Differentiating the Three Vows.”* (*Sdom pa gsum gyi rab tu dbye ba’i bstan bcos las brtsams pa’i ’bel gtam rnam*

	par nges pa legs bshad gser gyi thur ma.) In *Gsung ’bum Shākya mchog ldan*, vol. 6, 525–748. Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006.
Golden Lancet, Chapter Three (*GL3*)	Shākya Chokden. *Chapter Three: A Certain Discussion on the Topic of the Vidyādhara Vows* (*Le’u gsum pa rig ’dzin sdom pa’i skabs kyi ’bel gtam rnam par nges pa*). In *Gsung ’bum Shākya mchog ldan*, vol. 7, 1–237. Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006.
AKB-E	Leo Pruden, trans. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam of Vasubandhu*. Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1991.
AKK-T	Vasubandhu. *Abhidharmakośakārikā*. *Chos mngon pa’i mdzod kyi tshig le’ur byas pa*. Dg.T. 4089.
AKB-T	Vasubandhu. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. *Chos mngon pa’i mdzod kyi bshad pa*. Dg.T. 4090.
AKB-S	P. Pradhan, ed. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam of Vasubandhu.* Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1975.
BSV-T	Candragomin. *Bodhisattvasaṃvaraviṃśaka*. *Byang chub sems dpa’i sdom pa nyi shu pa*. Dg.T. 4081.
Dg.T.	Derge Tengyur
T.Pd.	Tengyur Pedurma

Abstract

What is ritually produced when vows are conferred? Indian Buddhist scholars analyzed a vow as as a discrete entity, a component of the person, to be defined and categorized in and of itself. This perspective on the vow as part of the mind-body continuum, referred to as the "vow holder," instigated diverse lines of analysis across Buddhist traditions outside of India, including as a foundational concept found in Tibetan three-vow theory. In Tibetan Buddhist discourse, "three vows" (*sdom gsum*) refers to the prātimokṣa (monastic and lay vows), the cittotpāda (or bodhisattva, or bodhicitta, vows), and the vidyādhara (or secret mantra) vows. Here, in its most technical sense, a vow (*sdom pa*) is not a mere promise; it is not commensurate with what is to be relinquished (*spang bya*) or what is to be trained in (*bslab bya*), where these three vows both overlap and conflict. The nature of the vow is not a code of conduct or an abstract notion of disciplined behavior. It is, according to the fifteenth-century exegete Shākya Chokden, a mental factor (*sems byung*), a ritually created, stable and continuous, merit-producing mental factor of intention.

The material for this dissertation is primarily drawn from texts commenting on or responding to a famous work by one of the five Sakya patriarchs: Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen's *Differentiating the Three Vows* (*Sdom gsum rab dbye*), written in 1232. Shākya Chokden did not write a traditional commentary on this text, as many did. Instead, he composed a series of questions called *Good Questions on "Differentiating the Three Vows"* and solicited others' responses. Dissatisfied with the results, he wrote answers to his own questions in the

form of the text titled *Golden Lancet,* with a separate third chapter that answers questions on the vidyādhara, or secret mantra, vows. The *Golden Lancet,* like *Differentiating the Three Vows,* addresses subtle points of doctrine and theory across the extensive map of Tibetan philosophical dilemmas and finer points of ritual practices. In addition to the *Good Questions* and its answers in the *Golden Lancet,* Shākya Chokden wrote, or intended to write, two other texts on the topic of vows: *A Presentation of the Disciplines of the Three Vehicles* (*Theg pa gsum gyi 'dul ba rnam par bzhag pa*) and *An Extensive Presentation of the Three Vows* (*Sdom gsum gyi rnam par bzhag pa rgya cher bshad pa*). Of these two texts, the first contains only a single chapter, and the second does not appear as a single unified text in his Collected Works. It is in these latter two texts that Shākya Chokden explains the nature of each vow and how the vows interrelate in terms of three-vow theory.

The first chapter of this dissertation, "The Ritual Production of a Prātimokṣa Vow: Perceptible and Imperceptible Karma and the Arising of a Vow in the Karmic Process," addresses abhidharma discussions on the ontological status of a vow and how it is situated within categories of action (as discussed in chapter 4, on karma, of Vasubandhu's fourth-century *Abhidharmakośa*) and within categories of nature (as discussed in chapter 1 on the constituents of the persons, or *dhātus,* of the same text). In his *Golden Lancet,* Shākya Chokden clarifies the Vaibhāṣika view of the nature of the vows as only avijñaptirūpa (imperceptible form).

The second chapter, "The Intention to Train: The Nature of the Vow in the Two Cittotpāda Vow Lineages," addresses how Shākya Chokden uses the concept of the nature of the cittotpāda vow to differentiate the two vow lineages of Cittamātra and Madhyamaka. He distinguishes them based on the two types of bodhicitta, and their respective rituals and

downfalls. He particularly addresses the problems that arise from assuming that the philosophical views of these two schools are relevant to the preceptee.

The third chapter, "Vidyādhara Vows and Shākya Chokden's Three-Vow Theory," departs from the *Golden Lancet* and addresses Shākya Chokden's analysis of how all three vows are held within a single practitioner, as discussed in his two three-vow treatises. Whether the three vows are of the same or different natures (*ngo bo gcig 'am tha dad*) is central to the three-vow realm of exegesis. Here, Shākya Chokden conceptualizes the three vows in terms of their upward progression (*yar ldan*), in that the higher include and transcend the former, defining the vow's transformation of state (*gnas 'gyur*) based on progressive ritually generated motivations that each outshine or suppress the lesser motivations of the prior vows.

Each chapter addresses a different set of concepts that Shākya Chokden mobilizes in order to clarify the ritual production of vows. In each of these contexts, larger networks of interrelated doctrinal categories are connected to definitions of the nature of each of the three vows as, at the relative level, "intention together with its seeds." What differentiates the three vows is the content of that intention.

Introduction

Vows are fundamental to Buddhist practice, not only as a code of ethics to be followed by virtue-driven, liberation-seeking practitioners but also as a soteriological technology identified as part of the person, a technology that in some cases even remains from samsaric to enlightened states. The standard scholarly approach to the topic of vows in Tibetan and Indian Buddhism is that it represents a mode of external behavior and that the vow is a promise to uphold that behavior. Buddhist vows are commonly discussed as abstract principles pointing toward an act or a restraint that is of primary importance; that is, it is the behavior that is endowed with moral weight. Yet, vows are also discussed in Tibetan literature in a doctrinal, rather than a social, framework: that a vow can be located and defined. Viewing a vow as something that bears its own nature disrupts the presumed relationship between vows and morality. Rather than the vow merely ensuring an act or a restraint, the vow itself is virtue-producing, with behavior protecting or damaging the otherwise continuous and dynamic vow. Buddhist morality is often discussed in Western scholarship as a system of confession and punishment, and the vinaya as a "legal code" with its own "case law."[1] In contrast to this, discussions on the nature of the vow in Buddhist sources do not point to a social or legal dimension of the religion. They point rather to a time in early Indian Buddhist intellectual history when all phenomena were being categorized into

[1] See for example Rebecca Redwood French, and Mark A. Nathan, eds. *Buddhism and Law: An Introduction*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

discrete classes, and within these, a vow had to be classified within the elaborate taxonomy of all components of a person. In the development of the idea of the nature of the vow in Tibetan Buddhist scholasticism, the significance of how that vow was conceptualized encountered and disrupted various other theoretical categories. While rooted in abhidharma, the topic was elaborated further to signify the very resultant state of the enlightened mind itself.

Throughout centuries of Buddhism's doctrinal, doxographical, and ritual development and expansion in India, the importance and centrality of vows as markers of practice and identity did not appear to wane. It was this Buddhism that was transmitted and retransmitted to Tibet over the course of several centuries. While there are many types and categories of vows in the realms of gods and humans conceptualized across Buddhist traditions, Tibetan Buddhist literature refers to three primary vows that increase in subtlety, profundity, secrecy, and urgency. The honorific epithet used for senior Tibetan monks and teachers "endowed with the three vows" (*sdom gsum ldan*) refers to these three: prātimokṣa, cittotpāda, and vidyādhara vows. They represent institutional belonging, the final goal of the path, and adherence to secret esoteric practice methods.

Among these three vows, the first, the prātimokṣa, restrict nonvirtues of body and speech for lay and monastic practitioners. They are associated with the śrāvaka tradition, the non-Mahāyāna path that, from the Mahāyāna perspective, leads either to an inferior or a false state of enlightenment. Yet, as the basis for monastic institutional belonging these vows remain indispensable. It is often asserted that an authentic Buddhist tradition must include an ordained monastic sangha, or "community of monks and nuns," and for that sangha to be authentic, there must be the observation of three ceremonial elements—vārṣaka, pravaraṇa, and poṣadha—practiced according to an authentic scriptural tradition of the vinaya with an unbroken lineage

back to India and to Śākyamuni Buddha. The first, vārṣaka,[2] is the annual rains retreat with additional restrictions on the community; the second, pravaraṇa, is the ceremonial lifting of those restrictions; and the third, poṣadha, is the ceremonial biweekly "confession"[3] of broken and compromised prātimokṣa vows (*sdom pa*, *saṃvara*) for monks or nuns. Its ritual liturgy is the *Prātimokṣa Sūtra*, a narrative enactment of Śākyamuni Buddha presiding over such a ritual, and a concise and commonly cited source for the list of what a fully ordained monk must do or not do.[4] Prātimokṣa vows are often referred to as "monastic vows," though they also include two levels of vows for laymen and laywomen, though those latter terms are also contested.[5] Vow-conferral ceremonies for lay vows, including the one-day *upavāsa* (*bsnyen gnas*) and longer *upāsaka*, (*dge bsnyen*),[6] are also found in the vinaya, and Tibetans also composed their own.[7]

There are three prātimokṣa vow lineages recognized in Tibet that are traced back to India, the distinctions between which are based on the Indian preceptor who instituted the lineage in

[2] Gregory Schopen, "Counting the Buddha and the Local Spirits In: A Monastic Ritual of Inclusion for the Rain Retreat," in *Buddhist Nuns, Monks, and Other Worldly Matters*: *Recent Papers on Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 194–223.

[3] While sojong is commonly referred to as a confession ceremony, this sūtra practically speaking appears more like a ceremonial declaration that vows have not been broken, rather than a public confessional where particular misdeeds are revealed. Charles Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline: The Sanskrit Prātimokṣa Sūtras of the Mahāsāṃghikas and Mūlasarvāstivādins* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1996), 17.

[4] Gregory Schopen, "Making Men into Monks," in *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters*: *Still More Papers on Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 175–96.

[5] For example, Berthe Jansen, in her *Monastery Rules* (3), glosses prātimokṣa as "monk's vows," even while she complicates what is indicated by "monk" (3) and "layman" (189n29). See also Kishino Ryōji, "The Concept of sdom pa in the Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya: On Possible Misunderstandings of the Brahmacaryopasthāna-saṃvṛtti," *The Bulletin of the Association of Buddhist Studies Bukkyō University* 20 (2015): 147–92. Mari Jyväsjärvi, "Paribrākika and Parivrajitā: Categories of Ascetic Women in Dharmaśāstra and Vinaya Commentaries," *Indologica Taurienenria* 33 (2007): 73–92.

[6] The term *genyen* is also used in contemporary Tibetan monasteries for a pre-novice level of aspiring monk, who lives in a monastery and wears robes, but is not old enough yet to take novice vows. See Jansen, *Monastery Rules*, 189n29 and Seyfort Ruegg, "Aspects of the Study of the (Earlier) Indian Mahāyāna," 24.

[7] One example is Terdak Lingpa's vow-conferral ceremony for the one-day upavāsa vow. Terdak Lingpa Gyurme Dorje (gTer bdag gling pa 'gyur med rdo rje), *Khyim pa rjes su 'dzin pa so so thar pa'i sdom pa'i cho ga thar lam rab gsal*, in *bKa' ma rgyas pa*, edited by bDud 'joms 'jigs bral ye shes rdo rje, 1:233–56. (Kalimpong: Dupjung Lama, 1982–1987). Additionally, both Jamgön Kongtrul and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo composed bodhisattva vow rituals, included in the former's *Treasury of Precious Instructions* series. See *Kadam: Texts, Advice, and Instructions, Part One*. Treasury of Precious Instructions, vol. 3. Translated by Artemus B. Engle. (Boulder: Shambhala, forthcoming).

Tibet. Tibetan histories present the vinaya's history as threefold. The vinaya lineage that traces the lineage descent of its preceptors back to the Imperial period and Śāntarakṣita's ordination of the first seven monks (*sad mi bdun*) at the founding of Samye under the rule of King Trisong Detsen is known as Lowland Vinaya (*smad 'dul ba*). The lineage tracing its descent from the Indian monk Dharmapāla invited to Western Tibet sometime between the late tenth and early eleventh centuries by the king Lha Lama Yeshe Ö is known as Highland Vinaya (*stod 'dul ba*), which some claim to be the true beginning of the so-called later spread of the doctrine (*phyi dar*) within Tibetan periodization. The third is the ordination lineage traced back to the Kashmiri Śākyaśrībhadra, known as the Kashmiri or Middle Vinaya (*kha che 'dul ba or bar 'dul ba*). These labels reflect geographical identity, in that Tibet's altitude decreases as one moves East.[8]

There are seven types of prātimokṣa vows divided based on gender and ranging from lay to monastic: (1) the one-day lay fasting vow (*upavāsa*), (2, 3) five lay vows (*upāsaka*, *upasika*), (4, 5) ten or thirty-six novice monastic vows (*śramaṇera*, *śramaṇerika*), and (6, 7) two hundred and fifty-three (three hundred and fifty-four for nuns, rare in Tibet) vows of full ordination (*bhikṣu*, *bhikṣuṇi*). They are counted as eight when an interim, or probationary, level of vows for nuns (*śikṣamāṇa*) is counted, though Shākya Chokden rejects this as a prātimokṣa vow, which he defines as being held either for one-day (in the case of the lay fasting vow) or for one's entire life.[9]

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[8] On this topic, see Dan Martin, "The Highland Vinaya Lineage," in *Tibet After Empire: Culture, Society and Religions between 850-1000*, ed. Christoph Cüppers, Robert Mayer, and Michael Walter, 239–65 (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2013). See Heather Stoddard, "Rekindling the Flame: A Note on Royal Patronage in Tenth Century Tibet," in *The Relationship between Religion and State (chos srid zung 'brel) in Traditional Tibet*, ed. Cristoph Cüppers, 49–104 (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2004). On the Kashmiri Vinaya, also Jeorg Heimbel, "The Jo gdan tshogs sde bzhi: An Investigation into the History of the Four Monastic Communities in Śākyaśrībhadra's Vinaya Tradition," in *Nepalica-Tibetica: Festgabe for Christoph Cüppers. vol. 1*, ed. Franz-Karl Ehrhard and Petra Maurer (Andiast: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies GmbH), 193.

[9] "Śrāvaka Discipline Chapter," 2. *dge slob ma ni so thar gyi sdom pa mtshan nyid par mi rung ste/ de'i bslab byar bshad pa rnams ji srid 'tsho dang nyin zhag mtha' pa gang du yang mi rung ba'i phyir*

The emergence and development of Mahāyāna modes of practice in India did not reject these prātimokṣa vows;[10] they were included unchanged into a larger framework for practice that included new vows, with their own specific liturgies for ritual conferral, infractions, and trainings. In foundational canonical scriptures, for a person to enter a path to become a buddha, he (and sometimes she) must take a vow in the presence of a previous buddha[11] and receive from them a prophecy of that vow's fulfillment. This vow signifies a place within broad and diverse classification systems of types of practitioners, grouped according to their aims and capacities.

The field of Buddhist studies has reoriented several times in its theories of the origins of the Mahāyāna and has most recently turned to the region of Gandhāra, in present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan. Recent archeological encounters there with stupa complexes and the discoveries of texts, some unknown in any other language apart from Gandhari Prakrit, have made new inroads into understanding the earliest evidence of distinct Mahāyāna themes. These manuscripts have evidence of belonging to, among the eighteen traditionally recognized early Buddhist schools, the Dharmaguptaka. One such text shows the Buddha Śākyamuni offering a prediction to buddhahood to eighty-four thousand gods.[12] Thus, already in the some of the earliest extant Mahāyāna scriptures, dated to the first or second century C.E., we see the expansion of the availability of the path to buddhahood.

In Mahāyāna practice when there is no buddha in the world to bestow the vow and make the prophecy of the future buddhahood of the aspirant, this vow is taken rather in the presence of a preceptor or master who themselves hold the vow. Several cittotpāda vow ritual texts are found

[10] For a discussion of the lay theory of the origins of the Mahāyāna, see David Drewes, "Early Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism I: Recent Scholarship," *Religion Compass* 4, no. 2 (2010): 55–56.
[11] Prebish (*Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, 18–20) notes that six previous buddhas beginning with Vipaśyin are mentioned in the *Mahāpadāna Sutta* (within the Dīgha Nikāya), an early source for the verses appended to several schools' redactions of the *Prātimokṣa Sūtra*, with a speculation that each verse represented "a prātimokṣa," meaning a set of rules, related to each previous buddha.
[12] Skilling, "Vaidalya, Mahāyāna and Bodhisattva in India," 73.

in the Tengyur written by Indian monastic authors from Vikramaśīla Monastery of the tenth to twelfth centuries, and Tibetans followed this practice of also composing their own ritual texts, borrowing language and structures from diverse scriptural sources.[13] The origins of such ritual acts are obscure, though their very possibility fits into the history of the expansion of the path to buddhahood to a larger number of individuals. Such cittotpāda vows were either a ritual enactment of the buddha's own promise to become a buddha when in a previous lifetime he received a prophecy from a former buddha, or they were a confirmation that such an act had taken place eons before, or they were a ritual act serving as an aspirational precursor to a binding and stable vow that would be made in the presence of a future buddha.[14] In any case, they bound the practitioner to a superior motivation for a goal superior in power and wisdom. In fact, the very origins of the term Mahāyāna has been linked to the phonetically similar Mahājñāna—"superior wisdom."[15]

This vow to become a buddha is doctrinally reliant on the concept of bodhicitta (*byang chub kyi sems*), which in its relative form is the wish or intention to become a buddha and in its ultimate form is the enlightened mind itself. Vows in this context function to join the practitioner with the production (*utpāda*, *bskyed*) of the mind, intention, or resolution (*sems*, *citta*) to attain

[13] The practice of Tibetan masters writing their own bodhisattva vow ritual texts, albeit compiled to a certain degree from Indian sources, would be a rich topic for future study. Tibetan authors as early as Gyalse Thokme Zangpo (1297–1371) composed such ritual texts, as did some as late as both Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (1829–1870); the former composed a ritual for the Madhyamaka lineage and the latter the Cittamātra lineage. The lineages are referred to, however, in the rituals' titles as the lineage of profound view (*zab mo lta brgyud lugs*) and the vast Mahāyāna (*theg chen shin tu rgyas pa*). (Translations of both are forthcoming from Shambhala Publications in the first *Kadam* volume of The Treasury of Precious Instructions series translated by Artemus B. Engle.) Terdak Lingpa (1646–1714) also composed a bodhisattva vow ritual text. See his *Khyim pa rjes su 'dzin pa so so thar pa'i sdom pa'i cho ga thar lam rab gsal*. in *bKa' ma rgyas pa*, 1:233–56 (Kalimpong: Dupjung Lama, 1982–1987). A more detailed study of the sources and structures of these ritual texts would be an interesting study in the evolution of the ritual form, including awareness of the required components.

[14] See David Drewes, "The Problem of Becoming a Bodhisattva and the Emergence of Mahāyāna," *History of Religions* 61, no. 2 (2021): 145–72.

[15] This connection was made by Seishi Karashima and is cited in Skilling, "Vaidalya, Mahāyāna and Bodhisattva in India," 77.

enlightenment (*bodhi, byang chub,*)—hence, *bodhicittotpāda* (*byang chub sems bskyed*). While commonly referred to in English language sources as "bodhisattva vows" (*byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa*), the Tibetan texts attended to in this study more often use the term *cittotpāda* (*sems bskyed*) for these vows, a shortened form of *bodhicittotpāda*, making them thus, "the vows for the production of bodhicitta."[16] In Tibet as well, this vow did not supplant the monastic institutions and identities constructed around the prātimokṣa vow rituals and lineages; rather, it both incorporated and transcended them, identifying itself as an integral and superior ethical framework developed across sūtra, śāstra (commentarial), and ritual literature. Infractions and trainings that respectively compromise, underscore, or repair the cittotpāda vows mirror and reference prātimokṣa vow literature. These specific deeds that are prohibited, discussed in more detail in chapter 2, are counted as four, ten, fourteen, seventeen, nineteen, twenty, and so on, depending on the tradition and scriptural source.

Third, the development of the Buddhist tantras in India over the course of the seventh to eleventh centuries duplicated this development of a new set of behavioral proscriptions and prescriptions founded on the integration of new doctrinal forms and soteriological methods. Vows in a tantric context—called "secret mantra vows" (*gsang sngags gi sdom pa*) or "vidyādhara vows" (*rig pa 'dzin pa'i sdom pa*),[17] and sometimes interchangeable with "samaya" (*dam tshig*)—circumscribe one's relationship with the guru, deity, consort, and cohort; establish

[16] The phrase "cittotpāda vow" when retrotranslated to Sanskrit would be *cittotpādasaṃvara*. This phrase is not attested in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (Art Engle, personal correspondence), which uses rather bodhisattva vow (*bodhisattvasaṃvara, byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa*) and once Mahāyāna vow (*mahāyānasaṃvara, rdo rje theg pa'i sdom pa*). I use cittotpāda vow throughout, following Shākya Chokden's frequent use of *sems skyed kyi sdom pa*.

[17] Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Taye, *Buddhist Ethics* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1998), 448n12. Here, vidyādhara (*rig pa 'dzin pa,*) is euphemistic for the tantric practitioner, used often by Shākya Chokden. Among texts in the Tengyur, Vibhūticandra uses the phrase in his controversial three-vow text, as does Amoghapāda in his *Maṇḍala Ritual of the Secret Tantra of Mañjuśrī*, (*Āryamañjuśrīguhyatantrasyamaṇḍalavdhi,'Phags pa 'jam dpal gsang ba'i rgyud kyi dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga*, Dg.T. 2667, 174a3).

the essential secrecy of tantric practices; and orient the tantric practitioner in relation to the "lower" sets of vows and their ethical frameworks. These vows represent the parameters around which a practitioner might engage in the same relationship as, from the tantric perspective, the Buddha on the night of his enlightenment when his consciousness (but, notably, not his body, which remained on the bank of the Narañjana river) was transported to Akaniṣṭa heaven where he engaged in ritual sex with a woman named Tilottamā, a daughter of gods, under the tutelage of "all buddhas that exist," an act they insisted was the final and indispensable step toward complete enlightenment.[18] The language of these vows, like the bodhisattva's vows, also both incorporate and transcend the two lower vows, that of monk and bodhisattva, mirroring their terminology while also reframing expectations for practice and behavior.

Tantric practice and doctrine utilize purposefully subversive methods and are hence referred to frequently in scholarship as "antinomian,"[19] a term from the Christian tradition meaning that one is released from the obligations of an ethical code by virtue of grace. If in the Buddhist context, "grace" is rather understood as the power of blessings from a guru or deity, the elevating force of meditative realization and soteriological progress, or just a personal motivation that supplants the letter of the law of a particular rule, the "antinomian" can be identified within each individual set of vow literature. In fact, it could be argued that when considered within the confines of its own vow system apart from prātimokṣa and cittotpāda, the tantra vows may be the

[18] For a Tibetan telling of this story see, Ferdinand Lessing and Alex Wayman, *Khedrup rje's Fundamentals of the Buddhist Tantras* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968), 36n23. For Tillotama as a female figure in Indian Sanskrit literature and in the *Hevajratantra*, see Max Nihom, "On Attracting Women and Tantric Initiation: Tilottamā and Hevajratantra," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 58, no. 3 (1995), 521–31.

[19] Chapter 3 presents Gampopa's notion of the "weighing up" of the three vows, meaning the permission to dismiss lesser vows based on the superior wisdom (*ye shes*) of the practitioner, which could be understood as antinomianism in a three-vow context. Sobisch, *Three-Vow Theories in Tibetan Buddhism*, 306. See also Gyurme Dorje's translation of the fourteenth-century Longchenpa's three-vow theory that prioritizes the intention over the acts, in "The rNying-ma Interpretation of Commitment and Vow," in *The Buddhist Forum* 2, ed. T. Skorupski (London: SOAS, 1991), 92: "It is mind-control and purity of vision with respect to the conflicting emotions which enable the yogin to gather and integrate all these levels of training."

only context that does *not* have an antinomian spirit. One finds permissions for monks to have sex[20] and for bodhisattvas to kill,[21] but it may be argued that while a tantric adept subverts cultural norms of purity and may or must break the five essential vows of mainstream Buddhism,[22] there is no such permission for him to break his own secret mantra vows by, for example, committing a root downfall particular to his tantric ethical schema. Thus, it does not appear to be at all

the case that vows, rules, and downfalls are less important in the tantric sphere. Rather, it could be argued that the opposite is the case: the stakes are greater in this context, and the consequences more dire, with its own unique "vajra hell" fashioned for those for fail in their commitments.[23] An oft-repeated warning for Vajrayāna practitioners is the metaphor of the snake in a bamboo tube, that a tantric practitioner has only two possible directions to go: buddhahood or the lower realms.[24] The actions that break these vidyādhara vows (as discussed in chapter 3) vary widely across scriptural sources, sects, and classes of tantra but are in this context, divided

[20] See Benjamin Wood, "Coming to Terms with a Monk's Seduction: Speculations on the Conduct of Sgra tshad pa Rin chen rnam rgyal (1318–1388)," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 45, no 2 (April 2017): 207–34.
[21] See Jan-Ulrich Sobisch, "'Compassionate Killing' Revisited: The Making and Unmaking of the Killing Bodhisattva," *The Eastern Buddhist* 49, no. 1&2 (2021): 147–79.
[22] Christian Wedemeyer locates this permission in the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, the *Laghusamvara*, the *Saṃputa Tantra*, and others. See his *Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism: History, Semiology, and Transgression in the Indian Traditions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 144. These five essential transgressions are killing, lying, stealing, becoming intoxicated, and sexual misconduct.
[23] For example, in the Avalokiteśvara empowerment ritual, "A River of Great Compassion," among many others, while the master confers the vows, he pours water and says, "This is the water of your hell: / If you transgress the commitments, it will burn you up." See Jamgön Kongtrul, comp., *Mahāsiddha Practice*: *From Mitrayogin and Other Masters*, Treasury of Precious Instructions, vol. 16, trans. Padmakara Translation Group (Boulder: Shambhala, 2020), 226.
[24] Patrul Rinpoche, *Words of My Perfect Teacher: A Complete Translation of a Classic Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, trans. Padmakara Translation Group (Boston: Shambhala, 1998), 277. I have not found a scriptural source for this analogy. Patrul Rinpoche (1808–1887) cites another early modern Tibetan source, Jigme Lingpa's (1730–1798) multivolume *Treasury of Precious Qualities* (*Yon tan rin po che mdzod*). Another description of the torment that awaits those who break the secret mantra vows is in the manuscript found at Dunhuang, IOL Tib J 718, which includes smelling bad, vomiting blood, and being attacked and escorted from this life by demons. This is translated in Sam van Schaik, "The Limits of Transgression: The Samaya Vows of Mahāyoga," in *Esoteric Buddhism at Dunhuang: Rites and Teachings for This Life and Beyond*, ed. Matthew Kapstein and Sam van Schaik (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 63.

into root downfalls (*rtsa ltung*) numbered as fourteen,[25] and secondary (*yan lag*) downfalls numbered at four, eight, or twenty-eight.

There is a sort of trading up, a borrowing and redefining, of terminology across the three sets of literature specific to each of the three sets of vows. For example, the cittotpāda vow in the Cittamātra tradition in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* uses ritual liturgy for vow-taking that borrows both language and acts from the prātimokṣa confession ceremony; in both rituals, preceptees kneel or crouch, place their robes over one shoulder, and announce themselves by name to be fit to receive the vows. Further, the bodhisattva downfalls are divided into two, one more severe and one less. The heavier of the two are referred to as those that are similar to the "defeats" (*pārājika*), the first type of downfall for monks, of which there are four, that result in a separation from the rest of the community. This has often been described as losing one's vows or monastic status or being expelled from the monastery for life, but Shane Clarke has shown from the Sanskrit material that this consequence means something more like a temporary separation from the community of monks but still living in common.[26] In the context of the bodhisattva vows, a defeat-like downfall (*pham pa lta bu'i ltung ba*) may be of light, medium, or heavy infraction, motivated by varying afflictive mental states. Another example of borrowing of vow terminology from one set to another is in the tantric literature, where *bodhicitta* is a term used for semen, also known by other euphemistic terms such as jasmine-like (Skt. *kunda*, transliterated phonetically into Tibetan) and bindu (the "drop"). "Loss of bodhicitta" in bodhisattva vow literature is indicative of a failure to maintain the unbroken aspiration and intention to engage on

[25] Tibetan texts often cite as the classic presentation of fourteen root downfalls the *Vajrayānamūlāpattisaṃgraha*. *Rdo rje theg pa rtsa ba'i ltung ba bsdus pa* (Dg.T. 2478). This text is attributed to the second-century Aśvaghoṣa but is certainly much later.
[26] Shayne Clarke, "Monks Who Have Sex: Pārājika Penance in Indian Buddhist Monasticisms," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 37, no. 1 (2009):1–43.

the bodhisattva path, which can be damaged by certain behaviors (the downfalls) and by generating a motivation toward a lesser liberation. In a tantric context it is descriptive of a literal failure to retain the physical semen during tantric consort practice, which contains the bindu of the subtle body serving in that doctrinal context as the actual cause for awakening, making it thus not euphemistic, but quite literal.

While there are many other sets of vows in various doctrinal contexts within Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, it is these three vows—the prātimokṣa, cittotpāda, and vidyādhara—that are referred to as the "three vows" that constitute the three-vow genre of Tibetan literature and that are to be held altogether by an ideal Tibetan Buddhist practitioner. Here, I purposefully resist calling the various behaviors, rules, or downfalls that are enumerated in relation to each of the three vows as *vows* themselves. In many contexts, including within many areas of traditional Tibetan discourse, it is not incorrect to refer to these enumerations as vows. For example, if one asks "How many vows does a bhikṣu have?" a reasonably correct answer would be two hundred and fifty-three, based on the Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya tradition. Yet, in the context of discussing a vow's nature or entity (*svabhāva* or *dharmatva*, *ngo bo*),[27] there is another answer: one—the intention of restraint (*spong ba'i sems pa*). The lists of prescriptions and proscriptions are what support, compromise, or break the vow, but they are not the vow itself; they are not the nature of the vow (*sdom pa'i ngo bo*). This is at the heart of what the initial abhidharma discussions mean when determining what in the person can be identified as the vow. It is not a mere lack;[28] it must be constant, functioning even when specific trainings are not being engaged in and even when

[27] For the use of *dharmatva* in this context, retrotranslated from the Chinese, see Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma* (Hong Kong: Buddha-Dharma Centre of Hong Kong, 2015), 431.
[28] Although this is an attack leveled against the Sautrāntikas, if the nature of the vow is taken as a fundamental category of karmic theory, the Sautrāntika view would be that, according to many presentations, the same as Shākya Chokden's. See Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma* (Hong Kong: Buddha-Dharma Centre of Hong Kong, 2015), 431.

specific temptations are not present to be actively avoided. While vows entail "trainings," or "what is to be trained in" (*bslab bya*), and "relinquishments," or "what is to be relinquished" (*spang bya*), in its most technical sense the vow itself is not the active positive deed nor the mere lack of action, which would be identical in a person without vows who also restrains from the same action.[29] Rather, from the earliest Indian abhidharma literature through to early modern Tibetan scholarship and contemporary informal discourse, the actual vow is a continuous stream (*anubandha*, *rgyun*) that endures as a component of the person (*dhātu*, *khams*) and can be defined in terms of its own nature (*ngo bo*). Analyzing vows from this angle—that the injunction is not the vow—poses particular problems of translation in the use of the singular and plural. It is customary to refer to them in the plural, though each of these three vows in its nature is singular. The urge to refer to each of the three vows as plural inevitably draws one back to referencing, purposefully or not, the behavior rather than the vow. However, the plural has been difficult to avoid, herein, and so it has been retained to refer, at the very least, to the fact that even if by nature each is singular, vows are possessed by many, and so are plural.

While the phrase "three vows" (*sdom gsum*) has several referents across Indian Buddhist scripture, in this context it refers to the prātimokṣa (monastic), cittotpāda (or bodhisattva or bodhicitta vows), and vidyādhara (or secret mantra) vows, which is relevant only from the late perspective of the tantras, the latest historically and highest doctrinally.[30] Outside of a tantric context, there were several other sets of three vows and other attempts to reconcile the relationship among them. The *Great Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary* gives both definitions of "three vow" (*sdom gsum*), that in tantric and in non-tantric contexts: "(1) mantra vows, cittotpāda vows,

[29] Berthe Jansen notes that in common parlance, *bslab bya* and *sdom pa* are used interchangeably. *Monastery Rules*, 201n13.
[30] See also Sam van Shaik, "The Limits of Transgression: The Samaya Vows of Mahāyoga," in *Esoteric Buddhism at Dunhuang*, edited by Matthew Kapstein and Sam Van Shaik (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

and prātimokṣa vows and (2) prātimokṣa vows in the Desire Realm, meditation (*dhyāna*) vows in the form realm, and stainless (*anāsrava*) vows in the realms that are noble and beyond the three realms."[31] In the abhidharma, and which Shākya Chokden also engages, there is a third meaning to the phrase "three vows" that pertains only to the prātimokṣa vows: the lay, novice, and full ordination of a monk.[32] There is also a text in the Tibetan canon composed by the twelfth-century Saṃvarabhadra that constitutes a threefold vow-conferral ceremony for nonmonastic tantric practitioners, and there, as the title suggestions, the three are: refuge,[33] bodhisattva, and the four tantric empowerments.[34]

The single English word "vow" translates four different Sanskrit terms which were in turn translated into four different Tibetan terms during the early and later mass translation periods (*snga dar* and *phyi dar*). As it relates to prātimokṣa literature in the vinaya and abhidharma, "vow" translates the Sanskrit, *saṃvara* or *saṃvṛtti*, meaning "to bind or restrain" and translates into the Tibetan term *sdom pa*. In Mahāyāna sūtra narratives, the cittotpāda vow, as a narrative event in the life of a buddha, is not referred to as a *saṃvara*, but rather as a *praṇidhāna* and translated into Tibetan as *monlam* (*smon lam*), meaning aspiration, one of the twofold bodhicittotpāda: the aspirational mind (*praṇidhicitta*, *smon sems*) and the active mind (*prasthānacitta*, *'jug sems*). In its ritual form, this "praṇidhāna" becomes a conferral of the cittotpāda vow and is mapped onto similar rituals for monastic ordination and the taking of lay precepts; it is then that it is primarily referred to as a "saṃvara," although in some cases neither

[31] Yisun Zhang, *Great Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary*, s.v. "sdom gsum." *sngags kyi sdom pa/ byang sems kyi sdom pa/ so thar gyi sdom pa ste gsum/ 2) 'dod pa'i sas bsdus pa so thar gyi sdom pa/ gzugs kyi sas bsdus pa bsam gtan gyi sdom pa/ khams gsum las 'das shing 'phags pa'i sas bsdus pa zag med kyi sdom pa ste gsum/*
[32] Shākya Chokden, "Śrāvaka Discipline Chapter," 2a3.
[33] The refuge vow is also in some contexts considered a prātimokṣa vow. See Sobisch, 39.
[34] Samvarabhadra, **Śaranaṃgatacittotpādacatuḥsekāvavāda*, *Skyabs 'gro sems bskyed dbang bzhi'i gdams pa bzhugs*, in T.Pd. 25: 486–98. (Dg.T. 2111)

term is used and the liturgy only announces itself as a ritual for generating bodhicitta.[35] In tantra treatises, the concept of the vow is discussed in one of two ways. It is sometimes described in positive terms, with the word, *samaya*, meaning "convention" or "regulation," and translated into Tibetan as *dam tshig*, which has many meanings, including "binding word." The initial phoneme *dam* is lexically connected to *sdom pa*, to bind. However, in short texts in list format, tantric morality is discussed in negative terms; rather than a list of vows, sanctioned behavior is described by listing acts that break one's vows; these downfalls (*ltung ba*) are commonly listed as fourteen root and eight secondary acts, though other texts in the tantra section of the Tengyur list five, fifteen or fifty acts. [36] At other times translators favor "pledges" for *samaya* (*dam tshig*) and "aspiration" for *praṇidhāna* (*smon lam*).

In Tibetan three-vow literature, *saṃvara* (*sdom pa), praṇidhāna* (*smon lam*), and *samaya* (*dam tshig*) are all sometimes synonymous and thus all become, in English translations, "vows," though the second and third are only sometimes referred to as *dompa* (*sdom pa*) in Tibetan literature that treats them individually. The early modern great compiler of texts and teachings across the many sects of Tibetan Buddhism, Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Taye, notes that some scholars used *sdom pa* (*saṃvara*) to indicate prescriptions and *dam tshig* (*samaya)* to indicate proscriptions, while others used these terms in the reverse, and yet others used them interchangeably.[37] The late Western scholar and translator Gyurme Dorje, speaking within the Nyingma tradition and relying primarily on the usage by fourteenth-century Longchenpa, differentiates the two as follows: "Vows depend on individual mental control, whereas

[35] For example, Nāgārjuna's *Ritual for Generating Bodhicitta*, (*Bodhicittotpādavidhi, Byang chub tu sems bskyed pa'i cho ga*) (T.Pd. vol. 65, 673–79).
[36] Schaik, "The Limits of Transgression," 61–84.
[37] Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye, *The Treasury of Knowledge, Book Five: Buddhist Ethics*, trans. Kalu Rinpoche Translation Committee. (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 2003), 249.

commitments (*samaya, dam tshig*) are held by maintaining the Buddha-body, speech, and mind without degeneration."[38] This distinction does not seem to be recognized in Tibetan three-vow literature as falling along the boundary of the usage of *sdom pa* and *dam tshig*, though it does more clearly fall along the distinction made between relative and ultimate dimensions of the vidyādhara vow (discussed in chapter 3), as well as the difference between proscriptive behavior and the nature of the vow itself.

In his *Before Religion*, Brett Ngombri describes his approach to the term *religion* as "an explicitly second-order or redescriptive concept," which nonetheless "has a place in the study of antiquity."[39] It is indispensable; if we were to avoid the term for the sake of defamiliarizing ourselves with its modern implications, any term used to replace it would entail the same effects. Following this, it is thus important to acknowledge that "vow" is not a native term but neither were the Sanskrit terms (*saṃvara, saṃvṛtti, samaya*) that Tibetans grappled with. In that sense, the English "vow" is used with an awareness that it is one in an imperfect line of translation. If not always clear in its referent, it is both necessary to use and also productive as a "second-order category" that reveals a tension and a need for definition and redefinition, a need that diverse Tibetans writing on vows felt as well.

To speak of a vow as a part of a person rather than a behavior is inherently defamiliarizing, and yet there was a doctrinal necessity to continue to do so. It is clear that the use of the English term *vow* for this specific Tibetan Buddhist context encompasses more types of things than in its usage in a Christian tradition, which distinguishes a vow (chastity, poverty, obedience) with a rule (how one comports oneself and lives in common). That is, in the

[38] Gyurme Dorje, "The rNying-ma Interpretation of Commitment and Vow." In The Buddhist Forum 2, edited by T. Skorupski. (London: SOAS, 1991), 73.
[39] Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (Princeton: Yale University Press, 2013), 158.

Benedictine tradition in particular, a monk's behavior, including daily lifestyle choices and minutia, are dictated in a list form, not unlike the prātimokṣa vows as listed in the vinaya. However, specific behavioral prescriptions such as these are commonly called "vows" in the Tibetan tradition, while in the Christian tradition, they are "rules." In the latter, vows are reserved for something more abstract, larger esoteric goals rather than measurable ones.[40] Here, we might actually find a commonality where a divergence was expected. If the nature of the vow is something abstract, higher-order, and immeasurable, the rules that make or break the vow are not. Though not expressed in the Tibetan terminology (in that both are referred to as vows), it is revealed in the analysis of a vow's nature, which is elevated above something like the prātimokṣa rule not to make the "surusuru sound" (presumably, slurping) when eating alms food.[41]

The practice and behavior of monks is a social question; the nature of a vow is a doctrinal one. Analysis of vows can be seen both through the lens of each individual vow and by taking them as a triad; different problems arise depending on whether they are taken in isolation or made to coexist with one another. Once they were seen as a threefold schema, Tibetan exegetes superimposed various doxographical categories onto these vows and arranged them according to several different sets of doctrinal elements, although doing so often served to disrupt the placement of each vow as much as to order them clearly. Such doctrinal schemas encountered in three-vow discussions include the three vehicles (śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva), the two vehicles (Hīna- and Mahā-), the four tenet systems, the two types of wrongdoing (vowed and natural), and the two truths (relative and ultimate). Some of these frameworks, their applications, and their analytic outcomes are rooted in Indian materials, representing varying layers of Tibetan

[40] Benedict and Timothy Fry, *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes*, (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1981).
[41] Prebish, 100. This is rule number thirty-nine among the group of vows known as śaikṣya dharmas.

interpretation. These various sets of interpretive taxonomies are applied to each vow set regardless of the other two, and constitute an analysis and set of concepts about vows akin to but wholly apart from what would become, in Tibet, three-vow literature and "three-vow theory."[42] Analyzing the literature in translation of each set of vows separately, and apart from Tibetan three-vow works, thus allows each to be seen as a doctrinal element that developed in some fashion, in some regions, and for some length of time, in isolation. At the same time, this method reveals ruptures in any attempt to view each ethical system as a single unit because the vows are sometimes placed to face one or both of the other two.

These three vows are foundational to the complex Tibetan network of practice and doctrine, but their interpretation and interrelation are essentially unstable, attested by frequent defensive statements across Indian and Tibetan works on vows that they "do not contradict" (*'gal ba med*) each other, accompanied by strategic maneuvers to fit them together into a path for a single individual. The three sets of vows taken by Tibetan Buddhists constitute a complex system of ethical codes; rather than entirely absorbing or rejecting one another, they each repositioned the very notion of ethics in the face of historically unique combinations and developments of doctrinal forms. Vows are a location of tension in that they appear to be the result of a history of doctrinal layering and amassing, the result of extreme inclusion rather than selection and rejection. Vows abide in a place of constant interchange of apparent contradiction and efforts toward harmony, exactly in that in-between place where fields of distinct collections of doctrinal material touch each other. Vows appear to be a particularly productive category of doctrine to witness contradictions across a spectrum of methods for organizing the overwhelming and

[42] Jan-Ulrich Sobisch, *Three-Vow Theories in Tibetan Buddhism; A Comparative Study of Major Traditions from the Twelfth through Nineteenth Centuries* (Weisbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichart Verlag, 2002).

unwieldy amount of scripture that is the Tibetan canon to create hierarchies of meaning and practices, all without leaving anything behind.

The Nature of a Vow

The phrase "nature of a vow" (*sdom pa'i ngo bo*) is used in several different ways in Tibetan texts on the three vows (*sdom gsum gyi bstan bcos*). Beginning with Indian abhidharma texts, a vow is presented as a specific constituent (*dhātu*) of a person that is ritually produced and then maintained or broken and repaired. The discussions that arise from this are at once highly obscure features of contested ideological systems that only ever concerned the most educated classes of Buddhists and at the same time constitute the very substructure of lineage integrity as well as various types of membership status for a range of Buddhist individuals.

The connection between the nature of a vow and Sarvāstivāda abhidharma karma theory was presented by Akira Hirakawa in his 1964 text translated from the Japanese by Paul Groner in 1990 as *History of Indian Buddhism*.[43] In scholarship on East Asian Buddhism, the English term "precepts" translates both the vinaya rules and a set of ethical codes for bodhisattvas from the apocryphal **Brahmajāla Sūtra* (*Fanwang jing*) as well as Asaṅga's *Chapter on Ethics* (*Śīlapaṭala*) of the *Yogācārabhūmi* corpus, and other texts. The *Brahmajāla Sūtra* was not important in Tibet; Asaṅga's text was. Additionally, the *Lotus Sutra*, which does not include a ritual or list of downfalls, was a source for the "perfect precepts,"[44] something perhaps akin to the ultimate nature of the vows in the Tibetan context. Discussions and debates on what is commonly translated as the "essence of the precepts," from the Chinese *jieti* and Japanese *kaitai*,

[43] Hirakawa, Akira. *A History of Indian Buddhism: From Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna*, trans. and ed. Paul Groner (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 191–93.
[44] Paul Groner, "The 'Lotus Sutra' and the Perfect-Sudden Precepts," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 41, no. 1 (2014): 103–31.

are found in Buddhist writings hundreds of years before Tibet's three-vow theory, and Western scholarship on these contexts far outweighs its mention in scholarship on the Tibetan tradition. The doctrinal category of "the essence of the precepts" was relevant for the Chinese monk Daoxuan in the sixth to seventh centuries,[45] Japanese Tendai monks of the seventh and eighth centuries such as Saichō,[46] medieval Japanese Zen monks of the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries such as the Rinzai monk Kokan Shiren,[47] and for the Jōdoshū Japanese Pure Land tradition.[48]

The relationship between this nature, or essence, internal to the preceptee on the one hand and the content of injunctions on the other remains ambiguous across traditions. William Bodiford describes *jieti* as "an inner purity that, theoretically at least, finds outward expression in proper behavior,"[49] and states that in the Japanese Zen context, while precepts "declined in status as codes governing moral behavior, their importance as an abstract concept grew to an almost absolute degree."[50] James Dobbins writes, "In the end, the meaning of the precepts in the Jōdoshū lies not in successful observance of them in every detail, but in the adherent's commitment to them as an ideal. That is, their symbolic value is just as important as their moral value."[51] In the Japanese Tendai and Jōdoshū contexts, there is a split between the ideal precepts (*rikai*) and the specific precepts (*jikai*),[52] also translated as the "precepts of principle" and the

[45] Thomas Newhall, "A Study of the Concept of Jieti 'The Essence of the Precepts' in Daoxuan's (596–667) Vinaya Commentaries," *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* 27 (2014): 181–208; and "Doctrinal Debate in Tang-dynasty Vinaya Commentaries: The 'Substance of the Precepts' in the Works of Fali, Daoxuan, and Huaisu," *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 66, no. 3 (2018): 183–87.
[46] Paul Groner, *Saichō: The Establishment of the Japanese Tendai School* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 206–210.
[47] William Bodiford, "Bodhidharma's Precepts in Japan," in *Going Forth: Visions of Buddhist Vinaya*, ed. William Bodiford, 185–209 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005).
[48] Dobbins, James C. "Precepts in Japanese Pure Land Buddhism: The Jōdoshū." In *Going Forth: Visions of Buddhist Vinaya*, edited by William Bodiford, 236–254 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005).
[49] William Bodiford, "Introduction," in *Going Forth: Visions of Buddhist Vinaya*, ed. William Bodiford (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 3.
[50] Bodiford, "Bodhidharma's Precepts in Japan," 186.
[51] Dobbins, "Precepts in Japanese Pure Land Buddhism," 253.
[52] Dobbins, 254n4.

"precepts of phenomena."[53] The latter are agreed upon as the specific injunctions, while the former are equated with the nature of the precepts and depend on the specific tradition's approach to the ultimate state. This split is similar to the distinction between relative and ultimate aspects of the vows in the Tibetan context. However, in the Tibetan context, the nature of the vow has both ultimate and relative aspects and so the very idea of a nature is not necessarily associated only with the ultimate.

Writers within the East Asian and Tibetan traditions approach the concept of the nature of the vow within the complexity of their own doctrinal landscape, though the very concept seems to be grounded in the abhidharma for all of them. Hirakawa and others have argued that the concept developed in China and has no clear source translation in Indian Buddhism.[54] The Tibetan *sdom pa'i ngo bo*, the Chinese *jieti*, and the Japanese *kaitai*, while being translation equivalents, do not appear to have an obvious single Sanskrit source. These three terms vary in their significance to the tradition that uses them, their relationship with the abhidharma, and their relationship to an ultimate or enlightened state. The obvious Sanskrit source *saṃvara-svabhāva* does not appear in the Sanskrit abhidharma materials,[55] yet there are several other terms that express something similar, such as the terms *saṃvararūpa* and *asaṃvararūpa*, meaning the "vow form" and the "negative-vow form" found in the *Yogācārabhūmi*.[56] The usage of this concept has many similarities across Tibetan and East Asian traditions: it can bolster the importance of

[53] Paul Groner, "The 'Lotus Sutra' and the Perfect-Sudden Precepts," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 41, no. 1 (2014): 110.
[54] Thomas Newhall, "Daoxuan's Theory of 'Essence of the Precepts' in his *Jiemo shu* and the 'Twilight of the Shelun School,'" unpublished manuscript, 4n4.
[55] Thomas Newhall notes that the term *jieti* appears in the Chinese translation of the *Mahāvibhāsaśāstra*, though unfortunately the Sanskrit for this text is no longer extant and so the translation source term is unknown. Newhall, "A Study of the Concept of Jieti," 187.
[56] Kritzer, *Vasubandhu and the Yogācarabhūmi*: *Yogācāra Elements in the Abhidharmakośabhāsyạ* (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies, 2005) 5 and 187.

ritual or bypass it, be used to elevate monastic vows or disregard them, and maintain or abandon a focus on outward comportment. The concept also allows for a tradition to either reject or absorb a "Hīnayāna" prātimokṣa. Yet, there are also diverse influences that have shaped the concept.

Across traditions, the "nature of a vow" concept touches on several major topics of discussion and debate, including the primacy of lineage, the functionality of karmic causes and results (*las rgyu 'bras*), and the requirements for an efficacious ritual to produce it. In a tradition primarily focused on determining a view of the nature of reality and a soteriological project to access it, the term *nature* is central and multivalent. The Tibetan for the word *nature* in this context is wholly different from its usage in other Buddhist exegetical contexts, in which it can refer both to something to be ultimately realized, as in the nature (*gnas lugs*) of mind in Mahāmudrā and Dzogchen practice traditions, as well as something to be ultimately negated, as in the nature of phenomena in Madhyamaka, the final view of which is articulated as "lack of nature" (*niḥsvabhāva*, *ngo bo med pa*). In this context of exegesis on vows, *nature* refers to neither of these but is rather more mundane, more pedestrian, and for the most part, firmly in the relative. Closer to this context of nature would be the abhidharma commentary, the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, which defines a "nature" as an entity's most innate characteristics.[57] In East Asia, Paul Groner notes the Daoist influence on the concept of this essence, in their distinction between an essence and a function.[58] Yet, the Tibetan context as well distinguishes between a vow's nature and characteristics; the primary notion of a nature seems to come from the

[57] Dhammajoti, (in Oxford Research Encyclopedias, s.v. "Sarvasivada Abhidharma") cites the *Mahavibhasa*: "Its intrinsic being (**svarūpa*,) and intrinsic characteristic (*svalakṣaṇa*) are none other than its intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*). Thus, it is said, 'intrinsic natures of dharmas are their very intrinsic characteristics; their homogenous nature is their common characteristic (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*).'"
[58] Groner, *Saicho*, 226n44.

abhidharma distinction between a category that is merely conceptually imputed, or provisional, (*brtags, prajñapti*) and something with a real, or substantial (*dravya*), nature.

The nature of a vow is differentiated from its characteristics in Tibetan three-vow theory. It is rather something to be identified in a very particular context: the dhātus, or constituents of the person, the specific and contested taxonomies of physical matter and dimensions of mind. From this perspective, and at the relative level, "What is the nature of a vow?" simply seems to mean, "Which abhidharma category should be it placed in?", "Which dhātu is it?"

In the Tibetan context, the nature of a vow changes based on the tenet system that asserts it, as that nature relies on a particular model of mind. In terms of relative and ultimate teachings, when grounded in abhidharma language, discussions of the nature of a vow fall squarely into the realm of the relative, and nature here does not carry the ontological weight of the truly established or truly existent. Rather it is in some places a synonym for *definition* (*mtshan nyid*), elsewhere it is referred to as *substance* (*rdzas*).[59]

The question of the nature of a vow is associated originally with the continuity of certain functionalities of karma during inaction. A vow is obtained (*lābha*, *thob pa*,) at a certain time, naturally or in a particular moment within a ritual, and lost (*tyāga*, *gtong ba*,) by equally particular causes. It is productive of merit, binding (*saṃvṛtti*, *sdom pa*,) the body, speech, and mind to relinquish (*virati*, *spang ba*,) nonvirtue and propel one toward training (*śikṣa*, *bslab pa*) in virtue. If the vow continues to function in this way in a person who has gone through an authentic ritual, it must remain with that person, being something continuous and not

[59] The identification of the vow as a substance, using this term (*rdzas*), is found in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, in which the dhātu that is identified as the vow is described as a substance. "The Vaibhāṣikas say that there is a certain substance (*dravya*, *rdzas*) that is avijñaptirūpa." AKB-E, 2:567. *AKB-T* 172a2. *bye brag tu smra ba rnams na re rnam par rig byed ma yin pa'i gzugs rdzas gzhan kho nar yod do zhes zer ro* This could also be translated as saying " . . . that there is something real that is avijñaptirūpa," if *dravya* is taken as the opposite of something merely conceptually designated (*prajñapti*).

intermittent, what K. L. Dhammajoti describes as "necessarily ever re-arising."[60] Constituents of the person in their many enumerations (the eighteen dhātus, twelve āyatanas, and five skandhas) can all be subsumed into two primary categories: mind (or consciousness) and form (or matter). The vow being constitutive of the person, a dhātu, there are thus the two possible answers to the question: "What is the nature of a vow?" —mind or matter? Or might it be some third thing, in between the two?

While this dichotomy becomes central to later analyses of the vow, there were other options and other maneuvers to avoid taking one particular side. It is also not always agreed upon whether the vow has such a real nature. In fact, the *Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī* from Asaṅga's *Yogācārabhūmi* states that the vow form and the negative-vow form (**saṃvararūpa* and **asaṃvararūpa*, notably also retrotranslations) are merely provisional, or *prajñapti*.[61] The third- or fourth-century Sautrāntika Harivarman places the vow in yet a third category, "conditioned factors unconnected to mind" (*cittaviprayuktisaṃskara*), which are also not material form.[62] The fourth patriarch of the Chinese Tientai school, Zhiyi (538–597 CE), in one text writes of the vows as being form and in another writes of them as mind.[63] Arguments have been made within Japanese scholarship that there is no contradiction between these two views.[64] While early theories of the vow's nature hinge on whether it was mind or matter, the definition of the type of matter that it was created a liminal space between the two that in fact allowed for it to be, for some, both. The avijñaptirūpa as a concept was not really form but also not mind, having an inextricable, but adjacent, relationship with its cause, the four material elements (*mahābhūta*).[65]

[60] K. L. Dhammajoti, "Saṃvara, Avijñapti, and Karmic Retribution," *Journal of Buddhist Studies* 17 (2020): 157.
[61] Kritzer, *Vasubandhu and the Yogācarabhūmi*: *Yogācāra Elements in the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, 5 and 187.
[62] See Dhammajoti, "Karmic Role of the Avijñapti of the Sarvāstivāda," 72.
[63] Thomas Newhall, "A Study of the Concept of Jieti 'The Essence of the Precepts' in Daoxuan's (596–667) Vinaya Commentaries," *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* 27 (2014): 197.
[64] Groner, *Saicho*, 226n45.
[65] These are earth, water, fire, and wind. *AKB-E*, 69 (ch. 1, v. 12).

Thus, as will be discussed further below, even traditions that asserted the vow to be form did so with a great caveat, and yet the idea appears to have persisted in Tibet that the vows were form in its more traditional sense, meaning something material, composed of atoms (*dul phran*, *paramāṇu*).

The origin of the concept of the nature of the vow is not entirely clear from the Tibetan sources. Some version of a statement on the nature of a vow is found in the writing of several prominent Tibetan exegetes across a long historical span, the earliest perhaps being Gampopa (1079–1153) and the Indian visitor to Tibet, Vibhūticandra (1170–1230). Vibhūticandra identifies the nature of the vows as "restraint from harm of primarily body and speech together with its basis."[66] Another early and simple formulation is found in Gampopa's text fragment on the three vows that Jan-Ulrich Sobisch calls *Work A*. There he cites a short line identifying the natures of the prātimokṣa and cittotpāda vows that he notes as being extracted from the *Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhi Tantra*, yet no such citation has been located in that text.[67] Thus, one of the strangest things about the nature of a vow concept is that it has no true scriptural basis in the sūtras, something typically required to consider a concept to be authoritative.[68] Later, Karma Trinlepa (1456–1539) cites this same verse in his *Replies to Gyaton* as does Lochen Dharmaśrī (1654–1717) in his *Commentary on the "Clear Comprehension."*[69] It is not clear, though, whether those who do not reference this text believe the nature of the vow concept to be sourced from the sūtras and tantras, or whether it was sufficient for it to be an abhidharma concern. The verse falsely attributed to the *Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhi Tantra* reads, "The

[66] Sobisch, *Three Vow Theories*, 36. Vibhūticandra, *Sdom gsum 'od kyi phreng ba*, T.Pd., vol. 41, 721: *gnod pa gzhi dang bcas pa las/ gtso cher lus ngag sdom pa te nyan thos bye brag smra ba'i sdom/* Gorampa agrees with this in his commentary, at Sobisch, 133.
[67] Sobisch, *Three-Vow Theory*, 187–88.
[68] The avijñaptirūpa category, however, does appear in lists of doctrines in Mahāyāna sūtras.
[69] Sobisch, *Three Vow Theories*, 187n508.

nature of the prātimokṣa vows is to altogether refrain from harming others together with its basis; and the nature of the bodhisattva vows is, in addition to that, to benefit sentient beings."[70]

Yet, Sobisch points out, in his *Work A*, Gampopa also defines the bodhisattva vows as "to refrain from harming others together with its basis," and yet then constructs a theory of the difference of natures of the three vows, mentioned further in chapter 3 below, that would bely such a claim to similarity. [71] Gampopa describes the nature of the secret mantra vows after citing a short quote from the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, although the quote itself does not contain a reference to the nature of the vows, leaving us once again without a located scriptural basis. After the tantra citation, he says, "The nature of the secret mantra vows is the inseparability of these three: aspects appearing as deities, experience as bliss, and the nature of nonconceptuality."[72]And so it seems the aim for the earliest writers was not to link the nature of a vow with the constituent of the person, even though Gampopa would appear to do just this, but rather to generally describe a quality or function of the vows, with some degree of doctrinal grounding—more so for the secret mantra vows than the former two—with more specific classifications, analyses, and reflection of abhidharma language coming only later.[73]

The nature of the vow changes based on the model of mind and theories of karma held by each of the four progressive tenet systems in Tibetan doxography, each considered more accurate than the last: the Vaibhāṣikas assert the vows to be avijñaptirūpa, Sautrāntikas assert the vows to be the virtue that is an intention to relinquish; and the Cittamātra tradition asserts them to be the

[70] The Tibetan for this verse, as it appears in Gampopa's *Work A*, as reconstructed by Sobisch (202) is as follows: *so so thar pa'i bsdom pa'i ngo bo ni gzhan la gnod pa gzhi dang bcas pa rnam pa thams cad du log pa yin la byang chub sems dpa'i ngo bo ni de'i steng du sems can la phan 'dogs pa'o/*
[71] Sobisch, 188.
[72] Sobisch, 202. *gsang snags kyi sdom pa'i ngo bo ni / rmam pa lhar gsal ba / nyams myong bde ba / rang bzhin mi rtog pa gsum dbyer med pa'o/*
[73] This reflects Sobish's statement that what can be considered early three-vow theory is that which is relatively simple and undeveloped. See Sobish, *Three Vow Theories*, 305–6.

virtue that is the intention to relinquish together with its seeds.[74] The Madhyamaka perspective, which as Mahāyāna (hence, correct), should be considered the most correct, alongside its superior philosophical system, and yet assertions of the supposed "highest" are sometimes not mentioned at all, as with Mikyo Dorje, discussed below, and oddly that of the "lowest" system, the Vaibhāṣika, continued to be asserted.

Shākya Chokden on the Nature of a Vow

While the question of the nature of a vow and the sameness or difference of that nature across the three vows is found in each of the four main traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, I focus here on one prominent commentarial tradition. In the Sakya tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, there are two well-known groups of thinkers. The first is the original five founding fathers of the Khön ('khon) clan of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries: Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (Sa chen Kun dga' snying po, 1092–1158), and his sons Loppon Sönam Tsemo (Slob dpon Bsod nams rtse mo, 1142–1182) and Jetsun Drakpa Gyaltsen (Rje btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan, 1147–1216), together referred to as the "three white ones"; and Sachen Kunga Nyingpo's grandson (and hence nephew of the latter two) Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen (Sa skya paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, 1182–1251) and his nephew Chogyal Phakpa Lodrö Gyaltsen (Chos rgyal 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan, 1235–1280), the "two red ones." These epithets are based on the white and red color of clothing

[74] Eighth Karmapa, Mikyo Dorje, *So sor thar pa'i mdo yi grel pa rin chen 'byung gnas* (Dehradun: Songtsen Library, n.d.), 11. *'o na so thar gyi sdom pa rang gi ngo bo ni/ gzhan la gnod pa gzhi bcas las bzlog pa ste/ de yang bye smra ltar na/ rnam rig byed min gyi gzugs bstan med thogs med kyi chos kyi skye mched dang chos kyi khams su bsdus [. . .] mdo sde pas spong sems dge bar 'dod/ sems tsam pas spong sems dge ba sa bon dang bcas par 'dod/* See also Jamgön Kongtrul, *Buddhist Ethics*, 85–86, and Sobisch, *Three-Vow Theories*, 42–43. Dorje Sherab's twelfth-century commentary on Jigten Sumgön's *Single Intention* (*Dgongs gcig*) also presents a similar hierarchy of views on the nature of the vow. See Sobisch, *Buddha's Single Intention*, 272.

worn by, respectively, laymen and monks.[75] This family of practitioners would produce an extraordinary amount of both exegetical and liturgical writing on the Buddhist path, collected in fifteen volumes of the Sakya Kabum (Collected Works of the Sakya),[76] and two volumes of Jamgön Kongtrul's *Treasury of Precious Instructions.*[77] The texts composed by these forefathers relevant to the theme of vows in general and three-vow theory in particular include Drakpa Gyaltsen's *Eliminating Errors on the Fourteen Root Downfalls*[78] referring to one of several sets of downfalls of the vidyādhara, or secret mantra, vows as well as his commentary on the seventh-century Indian author Candragomin's *Twenty Verses on the Bodhisattva Vow* (addressed in chapter 2)[79] and Sakya Paṇḍita's *Differentiating the Three Vows* and *Cittotpāda Ritual of the Madhyamaka Tradition.*[80] Sönam Tsemo's *River of Empowerments* (*Dbang gi chu bo*) is also a source for understanding the vidyādhara vows.[81] The impact of these five family members was not only doctrinal and textual, but political and global, with far-reaching activity in Khotan, Mongolia, and China, as well as in hosting Indian masters at home in Tibet. Notably, of the five forefathers listed above, the latter three were active at Sakya monastery during the visit of the Indian abbot Śākyaśrībhadra (1127–1225) and his retinue, who instituted vinaya reform, established new communities of monks, and transmitted the cittotpāda vow to Tibetans.

[75] For more on the myths of the ancestry and genesis of the Khön clan and more on the five founders, see Volker Caumanns, "The Sa Skya School's Five Forefathers," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism Online*, edited by Jonathan A. Silk, Oskar von Hinüber, and Vincent Eltschinger. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2467-9666_enbo_COM_2189.
[76] *Sa skya bka' 'bum* (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006).
[77] Jamgön Kongtrul, *Gdams ngag mdzod*, 18 vols.
[78] Rje btsun grags pa rgyal mtshan, *Rtsa ba'i ltung ba bcu bzhi pa'i 'grel pa gsal byed 'khrul spong*, in *Sakya Kabum, Sa skya bka' 'bum* (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006), 7:275–410.
[79] Rje btsun grags pa rgyal mtshan, *Byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa gsal bar ston pa shlo ka nyi shu pa'i rnam par bshad pa*, in *Sakya Kabum, Sa skya bka' 'bum* (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006), 9:547–604.
[80] Sakya Paṇḍita, *Dbu ma lugs kyi sems bskyed kyi cho ga* (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006).
[81] Slob dpon Bsod nams rtse mo, *Dpal kyai rdo rje'i dkyil 'khor du slob ma smin par byed pa'i cho ga dbang gi chu bo chen mo*, in *Sa skya bka' 'bum*, (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006), 5:77–190.

The second group of prominent Sakya scholars is a group of three scholars active in the fifteenth century whose writings either formed the core of Sakya orthodoxy or were lost to obscurity or suppression. They are known as "Go Shāk Tak," a shorthand for Gorampa Sönam Senge (Go rams pa Bsod nams seng ge, 1429–1489), Shākya Chokden Trime Lekpe Lodrö (Shākya mchog ldan Dris med legs pa'i blo gros, 1428–1507), and Taktshang Lotsāwa Sherab Rinchen (Stag tshang lo tsā ba shes rab rin chen, 1405–1477). Of these three, Gorampa's extensive writings serve as the foundation for Sakya orthodoxy and, as David Jackson writes, are the "central pillar of modern Sakyapa scholarship."[82] Taktshang Lotsāwa is likewise revered as a prolific scholar across doctrinal subjects, though his works are less studied and only recently, and partially, made widely available.[83] Shākya Chokden, though revered for his erudition, was marginalized for his critiques of Sakya Paṇḍita and thus did not remain a source for Sakya orthodoxy studied in scholastic institutions. It was not until the eighteenth century that focus and appreciation of Shākya Chokden emerged, when the ninth Je Khenpo Shākya Rinchen printed and preserved his works in Bhutan, as well as reintroduced them as monastic curricula.[84] His works have since brought the attention of several Western scholars, but none yet on his works on vows and his stance on their nature.

Across his several works on vows, Shākya Chokden offers succinct statements of the specific natures of each of the three vows. Most often, he identifies the nature of a vow generally as "intention (*sems pa*, *cetanā*) together with its seeds (*sa bon*, *bīja*)." Despite his very public

[82] David Jackson, "Commentaries on the Writings of Sakya Paṇḍita," *The Tibet Journal* 8, no. 3 (1983): 9.
[83] Jackson, "Commentaries." While Jackson writes that few of his forty-three commentaries across twelve volumes were extant, the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC) now holds a two-volume and a seven-volume Collected Works. This is especially unfortunate in that Jamgön Kongtrul cites Taktshang Lotsāwa as asserting the nature of the vows as avijñaptirūpa. I could not locate a text in what remains of his *Collected Works* in which this topic would have come up.
[84] Anne Burchardi, "Śākya mchog ldan's Literary Heritage in Bhutan," in *Written Treasures of Bhutan: Mirror of the Past and Bridge to the Future*, ed. John A. Ardussi and Sönam Tobgay, 25–74 (Bhutan: National Library of Bhutan, 2008).

and well documented animosity toward the teachings of Tsongkhapa, this definition is shared by both scholars. In his vinaya commentary, Tsongkhapa presents two perspectives on the nature of the vows: that they are karma of body and speech and that they are the continuous intention to relinquish, together with its seeds.[85] Thus, the vow as intention was an idea that had already been in circulation for at least a century by Shākya Chokden's time. Each of the three vows taken in a tantric context—prātimokṣa, bodhisattva, and vidyādhara—is specified and differentiated in terms of the content of that intention. He thus relies on a specific model of mind to posit the enduring nature of the vow as a mental factor (*sems byung*, *caitta*), in stated opposition to the Vaibhāṣika view[86] that the vows belong to the category of form. Thus, among the Indian Buddhist tenet systems as understood by Tibetans, Shākya Chokden's position reflects a model

[85] Tsongkhapa Losang Drakpa (Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa). *'Dul ba rgya mtsho'i snying po. So sor thar ba'i sdom pa gtan la dbab pa 'dul ba rgya mtsho'i snying po*, in *Gsung 'bum Tsong kha pa*, vol. 2, 359–62 (Dharamsala: Bkras lhun par rnying dha sar bskyar par brgyab pa, 1997), 72a3. *nges 'byung bsam pa'i rgyu byas nas/ gzhan gnod gzhi dang bcas pa las/ ldog pa de yang lus ngag las/ gzugs can yin zhes 'dod pa dang/ spong ba'i sems pa rgyun chags pa/ sa bon dang bcas pa yin no zhes/ 'dod pa'i tshul ni rnam pa gnyis* This is cited in Jampa Tsedroen, "Buddhist Nuns' Ordination in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya Tradition: Two Possible Approaches," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 23 (2016): 200n61.

[86] Of course, in the abhidharma (being non-Mahāyāna and non-tantric) "vow" refers, among the three vows, to only the prātimokṣa. There are two other vows discussed in the *Abhidharmakośa* (ch. 4, v. 13cd): the anāsrava vows (stainless vows) and the dhyāna vows (meditation vows) of the form realms, discussed below. Additionally, even in Asaṅga's Mahāyāna abhidharma treatise, the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, there is no mention of bodhicitta using that term. Wangchuk, *The Resolve to Become a Bodhisattva: A Study of the Bodhicitta Concept in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism* (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies, 2007), 266. See also Bayer, *The Theory of Karman in the "Abhidharmasammucaya*" (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2010), 23. The text's main commentary, the *Abhidharmasammucayabhāṣya* (of contested authorship, including Jinaputra, Sthiramati, and Buddhasiṃha, and likely a compilation), though, does mention an "aspiration for great awakening" (*mahābodhipraṇidhāna*, *byang chub chen por smon lam btab pa*) as an example of a karmic act considered "strong" (*balavat*, *stob dang ldan pa*) in terms of its "mental volition" (*cittābhisaṃskāra*, *sems kyi mngon par 'du byed pa*) (Bayer, *Theory of Karman*, 195), and the bodhisattva's control over aspirations (*praṇidhāna*) along the path are also mentioned among his ten powers, although such powers would not be in the context of an average practitioner but rather the path of a rarefied buddha-to-be, and so would not meet friction in a non-Mahāyāna context (Bayer, 30). As well, the commentary discusses other methods for generating bodhicitta, yet still does not mention a ritually produced vow (*saṃvara*) that accompanies or supports these methods.

of mind beginning from the Sautrāntika view of the abhidharma and developed with more complexity within the Yogācāra tradition.[87]

Shākya Chokden presents the nature of a prātimokṣa vow several times across different texts, with several variations. In the first three answers of the *Golden Lancet*, Shākya Chokden discusses the avijñaptirūpa category and rejects it as the categorical nature of the prātimokṣa vows. In his "Prātimokṣa Vow Chapter" (the only extant chapter of the *Explanation of the Three Vows*), he also explicitly asserts their natures to be instances of mind as opposed to matter. He writes, "The nature of the prātimokṣa vows of the śrāvakas is asserted by the Vaibhāṣikas to be material, but they [actually] abide as the nature of a mental factor of intention within anyone ascertained as a suitable basis, a man or woman of the three continents,[88] having been obtained through the causes for obtainment and lost through the causes for loss."[89] He then presents an example of the vows of a bhikṣu, a fully ordained monk, from among the seven types of prātimokṣa: "the nature of a bhikṣu vow is a serial continuity of intention that is ascertained to be obtained from its cause, which is the authoritative ritual of the four recitations, and lost immediately at death."[90] When discussing all three vows together, he words this slightly

[87] Hartmut Buescher writes that "the available indications clearly point to a close similarity, up to identity, of the Sautrāntika and the Early Yogācāra views on *bīja*, *indriya*, and *vijnana*/*citta*." *The Inception of Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008), 66.
[88] In Buddhist cosmology, four continents (*gling bzhi*) surround a central mountain, Mount Meru. These four are Pūrvavideha (in the East; *lus 'phags pa*), Jambudvīpa (in the South; *dzam bu'i gling*), Aparagodaniya (in the West; *ba lang spyod*), and Uttarakuru (in the North; *sgra mi snyan*). It is said that moral discipline can only be practiced in three of these continents, all but Uttarakuru. *AKB-E*, 660 (ch. 4, v. 79d).
[89] "Prātimokṣa Vow Chapter," CW 1975, 288. *de la nyan thos kyis* [reading: *kyi*] *so thar sdom pa'i ngo bo ni/ bye brag tu smra bas gzugs can du 'dod kyang/ rang rang gi thob rgyus thob cing gtong rgyus gtong ba'i gling gsum gyi skyes pa dang bud med gang rung gi rten can du nges pa'i sems byung sems dpa'* [reading: *sems pa*] *cig gi ngo bor gnas pa yin no/* Page numbers from note 42 to 54 are from the 1975 edition of the Collected Works.
[90] "PVC," 288. *dge slong gi sdom pa'i ngo bo ni/ rgyu gsol bzhi'i cho ga mtshan nyid dang ldan pa las thob cing/ shi 'phos ma thag tu gtong bar nges pa'i sems pa rgyun chags pa cig yin no/*

differently, saying, “Bhikṣu vows are the discipline of relinquishing what is to be relinquished concerning body and speech, together with their associated factors, for as long as one lives.”[91]

In his answer to the first question within the third chapter of the *Golden Lancet*, Shākya Chokden rejects that there is a śrāvaka prātimokṣa vow that arises newly during the tantric empowerment for a practitioner that has not undergone the vinaya ordination of the śrāvaka tradition. He presents a definition of such a vow asserted by the opponent he refutes—that its nature is defined broadly as “the intention, together with its seeds, to relinquish harm to others, together with its basis.”[92] He uses this same definition in his “Prātimokṣa Vow Chapter” to define a bodhisattva prātimokṣa that does not rely on the śrāvaka ordination ritual, but rather arises during the ritual for taking cittotpāda vows.[93] It is thus clear that he does not refute that this definition applies to the nature of the bodhisattva prātimokṣa, but he rather rejects its conflation with the prātimokṣa vows of the śrāvaka tradition. He is clear to differentiate a bodhisattva’s prātimokṣa *vows* from the bodhisattva prātimokṣa (*byang chub sems dpa’i so thar*), also referred to as mere prātimokṣa (*so thar tsam*). He folds the latter into the cittotpāda vow. The cittotpāda is divided into three disciplines in terms of its nature: the discipline of guarding against negative actions (*saṃvaraśīla*, *nyes spyod sdom pa’i tshul khrims*), the discipline of gathering virtuous qualities (*kuśaladharmasaṃgrāhakaśīla*, *dge ba’i chos sdud pa’i tshul khrims*), and the discipline of accomplishing the benefit of beings (*sattvārthakriyāsīla* or *sattvānugrāhakaṃ śīlaṃ*, *sems can gyi don sgrub pa’i tshul khrims*). The first of those is considered the bodhisattva’s prātimokṣa, which Shākya Chokden states is the actual basis of the

[91] “Vidyādhara Discipline Chapter,” 412. *dge slong gi sdom pa ni lus ngag gi spang bya ’khor bcas spong ba’i tshul khrims tshe ji srid ’tsho ba zhig go/*
[92] *Golden Lancet, Chapter Three*, 4. *de’i ngo bo ni gzhan la gnod pa gzhi dang bcas pa spong ba’i sems pa sa bon dang bcas pa’o/*
[93] “PVC,” 287. *gzhan la gnod pa gzhi dang bcas pa spong bar ’dod pa’i sems byung sems pa*

cittotpāda vows that are related to active bodhicitta. While guarding against negative actions of body and speech is covered by the prātimokṣa vow that is common to the śrāvaka vehicle, the bodhisattva vow includes this particular bodhisattva prātimokṣa, which covers guarding against negative actions of the mind. He defines this bodhisattva prātimokṣa as "the intention, together with its seeds, to abandon the three [nonvirtues] of mind from among the ten nonvirtues."[94] He folds this definition into his broader definition of the cittotpāda vows, which is "in addition to the previous specific things to be relinquished, the principal relinquishment of the three nonvirtues of mind together with their associated factors, the specific collection of virtuous qualities that are the things to be taken up, and the specific active actions that are the discipline of accomplishing the benefit of beings, the specific time frame of which is until one attains enlightenment."[95] In the bodhisattva vow chapter of the *Golden Lancet*, the answer to the first question includes a statement on the nature of both vows of aspirational and active bodhicitta. He states, "The nature of both vows is—while undertaking the trainings of the two, aspirational and active—the intention, together with its seeds, to train in them."[96]

In the chapter on secret mantra vows from his *Explanation of the Disciplines of the Three Vehicles*, called "Engaging in Vidyādhara Discipline," he defines twice what he there refers to as vidyādhara vows (*rig pa 'dzin pa'i sdom pa*), though without using the word *nature* (*ngo bo*). First, he says, "The definition of a vidyādhara vow is either the wisdom that arises from the ritual empowerment that is the cause of one's attainment [of buddhahood] or the intention together

[94] *GL3*, 5. *mi dge ba bcu'i nang nas gtso bor yid kyi gsum spong ba'i sems pa sa bon dang bcas pa yin pa/*
[95] "VDC," 412. *sems bksyed kyi sdom pa ni/ spang bya'i khyad par snga ma'i steng du yid kyi mi dge ba gsum 'khor dang bcas pa gtso bor spong zhing/ blang bya'i khyad par dge ba'i chos bsdus pa dang/ byed las kyi khyad par sems can don byed pa'i tshul khrims dus kyi khyad par byang chub chen po ma thob kyi bar du blangs pa zhig go/*
[96] *Golden Lancet*, 587. *smon 'jug de gnyis kyi bslab pa bzung nas/ de la slob pa'i sems pa sa bon dang bcas pa ni sdom pa gnyis po'i ngo bo'o/*

with its seeds that is included within the samaya of that wisdom."[97] Later in the chapter, he states, "The vidyādhara vows are, on top of the prior features of relinquishment and acquisition, the discipline of relinquishing concepts regarding ordinary [appearances] and [concepts] of attachment to deities [of the visualized maṇḍala] (*tha mal dang lhar zhen*). The feature of method is the discipline of abiding in the two stages[98] and ensuring that the wisdom of great bliss[99] does not decline; the feature of time is [that they] abide as long as space endures."[100] In *Golden Lancet, Chapter Three*, when discussing the divisions of vows based on various empowerments and classes of tantra, he defines the nature of what he refers to there as "secret mantra vows" (*sngags sdom gyi ngo bo*) to be "the intention, together with its seeds, to protect the mind from the predisposition toward transmigration (*'pho ba'i bag chags*) and conceptuality [regarding] the attributes [of the visualized deity]."[101]

These statements of the nature of each vow clearly determine them to be the mental factor of intention, accounting for their continuity in the vow holder with the specification that such intention entails continuity by retaining a latent tendency or habituation as a seed, with the prātimokṣa vows ending at death and the other two, unless lost, continuing to the achievement of

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[97] "VDC," 372. *rig 'dzin sdom pa'i mtshan nyid ni/ rang 'thob byed kyi rgyu dbang gi cho ga las byung ba'i ye shes sam/ ye shes de'i dam tshig gis bsdus pa'i sems pa sa bon dang bcas pa'o/*

[98] The creation and completion stages (*bskyed rim dang rdzogs rim*).

[99] "Great bliss" (*bde ba chen po*) in the context of the vidyādhara vows, including a differentiation of the nature of what he calls there the samaya vows (*dam tshig sdom pa*) into relative and ultimate, is also discussed in "VDC," 374.

[100] "VDC," 412. *rig pa 'dzin pa'i sdom pa ni/ spang bya dang blang bya'i khyad par snga ma rnams kyi steng du/ tha mal dang lhar zhen gyi rnam par rtog pa yang spong zhing/ thabs kyi khyad par rim pa gnyis la gnas te/ bde chen gyi ye shes mi nyams par 'dzin pa'i tshul khrims dus kyi khyad par/ nam mkha' ma zhig gi bar du gnas pa zhig go/* The differences in the length of time the three vows persist is also found in Atiśa's *Sarvasamayasaṃgraha* (*Dam tshig thams cad bsdus pa*) Dg.T. 3725, 48b7–49a1: *yang dang po'i sdom pa ni ji srid 'tsho'i bar du gnas so/ bar ma'i sdom pa ni snying po byang chub kyis bar du'o/ phyi ma'i sdom pa ni nam mkha' ji srid gnas kyi bar du'o/* Gorampa asserts that the bodhisattva and mantra vows in fact have the same duration, which Sobisch (*Three-Vow Theories*, 54) assumes has the intended meaning that "until awakening" and "as long as space endures" are the same length of time. Shākya Chokden's analysis of the ultimate nature of the vidyādhara vows, discussed below in chapter 3, seems to reflect these vows persist even after awakening, as part of the enlightened mind.

[101] *GL3*, 9[5a2]: *sngags sdom gyi ngo bo ni/ spang bya 'pho ba'i bag chags dang/ mtshan rtog las yid skyob par byed pa'i sems pa sa bon dang bcas pa zhig yin.*

buddhahood. While the prātimokṣa is unequivocally asserted to be an instance of mind as opposed to matter, it still meets the qualifications established in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*: it is, reflecting the very definition of the avijñapti: a "serial continuity" produced based on the functionality of karma and its parameters. The definitions of the nature of each vow clearly show a progressive increase in their scope, with the cittotpāda vows including the bodhisattva's prātimokṣa in the form of the discipline of restraining from negative deeds, and the vidyādhara vows including relinquishing those nonvirtues that are to be relinquished in each prior context. This reveals Shākya Chokden's approach as a fundamental unification, yet with a progressive expansion. Even while he asserts the necessity to take each vow within its own scriptural and ritual context, he asserts their sameness of nature in terms of being the same mental factor of intention, yet with each of the latter two intentions transcending the former, and progressively transforming into the greater.

Shākya Chokden's Three-Vow Works

In his treatises on vows, of various genres, the monk and exegete Shākya Chokden, known as the Golden Paṇḍita (Gser ldog paṇ chen) for the monastery in Tsang he renamed when the abbotship was transferred to him by his teacher Donyö Pelwa in 1471, engages various meanings of the phrase "nature of a vow," from a strict abhidharma context to something more abstract that can be best described through analogy or example.[102] Shākya Chokden does not discuss the nature of

[102] It may be that "analogy" is not the right term for this. The practice of giving an example is foundational to Tibetan debate structure, as evidence of particular phenomena or members of certain categories. In this way, The Tibetan scholastic dialectical structure of positing one of the four relationships between phenomena (*mu gsum, mu bzhi, don cig* and *gal ba*) followed by being solicited for examples for each of the resultant categories could be the basic structure and precursor to three-vow theory. These are often introduced as "examples" (*dper na*) and that may be what they are in the strictest sense, being examples of other objects or situations in which there are shared

a vow concept at length as its own topic, though he often will address it initially and then return to it periodically throughout his major works on vows. He states that several major points of confusion, speaking specifically about the cittotpāda vows, are based on the fact that the teachings of the Sakya founding fathers (*gong ma'i gsung rab*) explained vow rituals but did not address the nature of a vow.[103]

In Tibetan periodization, Shākya Chokden's life falls in the eighth rabjung (*rab 'byung*) cycle, or sixty-year cycle, counted from the year 1027. Articulated in this way, the fifteenth century in Western calendrical measurement extended across the seventh and eighth rabjungs, the years 1387–1506.[104] In 1428, Shākya Chokden was born to an ex-nun who died when he was three years old; he did not seem to have known his father.[105]

The primary expert on the works of Shākya Chokden, Yaroslav Kamarovski has done extensive work on his life and thought, revealing a complex development of views on the relationship between Madhyamaka and Yogācāra philosophy, his approach to buddha nature, and in a forthcoming study, his approach to the concept of ultimate virtue as it relates to the dharmadhātu.[106] Volker Caumanns as well has three published studies in English, one that presents the history of the founding of Serdokchen monastery, Shākya Chokden's activities in

elements (a similarity or a singularity) as well as a dimension of difference. However, the relationship presented in three-vow theory is not one of the strictly defined four relationships of debate language, and the examples in this context are not meant to indicate existence of members in a particular category, but rather to touch upon something that is not as comfortable represented in them–a fuzzy ontological state of kind of existing as one and kind of existing as many. In three-vow analogies, there seems to be a greater degree of abstraction and almost a poeticism. The relationship in these "real world" examples read like figurative speech, however. They could simply be considered similes, as "like" (*bzhin*) typically follows them in the Tibetan.

[103] *Golden Lancet: An Eloquent and Certain Discussion on the Treatise called "Differentiating the Three Vows," Sdom pa gsum gyi rab tu dbye ba'i bstan bcos las brtsams pa'i 'bel gtam rnam par nges pa legs bshad gser gyi thur ma*, in *Gsung 'bum Shākya mchog ldan* (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006), 6:685.

[104] Volker Caumanns and Marta Sernesi, eds. *Fifteenth Century Tibet: Cultural Blossoming and Political Unrest.* (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2017), xi.

[105] Kamarovski, *Visions of Unity*, 25.

[106] Kamarovski, *Visions of Unity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011).

the monastery's art and architecture, and his activities and career as a teacher,[107] one that presents the history and redactions of his Collected Works,[108] and one that presents the Tibetan sources on his biographical narrative.[109] Philippe Turenne has engaged in extensive translation work to lay out Shākya Chokden's approach to the five treatises of Maitreya, in which texts he controversially found expressions of the ultimate view as it pertains to both tenet systems of False-Aspectarian Yogācāra and Madhyamaka.[110]

Jan-Ulrich Sobisch mentions Shākya Chokden in his *Three-Vow Theories in Tibetan Buddhism*, particularly in the context of his responses to Tsongkhapa's criticisms of Drakpa Gyaltsen and Gorampa's answers to his *Good Questions,* a line of discussion that would be fruitful to future scholarship for understanding his three-vow theory.[111] Specifically on Shākya Chokden's works on vows, Sobisch also notes that two Kagyu figures central to constructing the sects three-vow theory, Karma Trinlepa and Ngotro, both studied with Shākya Chokden at Serdogchen. Sobisch does not, however, present Shākya Chokden's own specific three-vow theory. Shākya Chokden's two texts on vows—*An Extensive Explanation on the Three Vows* (*Sdom gsum gyi rnam par bzhag pa rgya cher bshad pa*) and *A Presentation of the Disciplines of the Three Vehicles* (*Theg pa gsum gyi 'dul ba rnam par bzhag pa*)—are the primary works,

[107] Volker Caumanns, "Paṇ chen Shākya mchog ldan's Monastic Seat Thub bstan gSer mdog can (Part I): The History of its Foundation" In *Nepalica-Tibetica: Festgabe for Christoph Cüppers*, ed. Franz-Karl Ehrhard and Petra Maurer (Andiast: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 2013), 1:64–88.
[108] Volker Caumanns, "The Collected Works of gSer mdog Pan chen Shākya mchog ldan: The Formation and Early Transmission of a 15th-Century Literary Corpus," in *Fifteenth Century Tibet: Cultural Blossoming and Political Unrest*, ed. Volker Caumanns and Marta Sernesi (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2017).
[109] Volker Caumanns, "Tibetan Sources on the Life of Serdog Panchen Shākya Chogden (1428–1507)," in *Lives Lived, Lives Imagined: Biography in the Buddhist Traditions*, edited by Linda Covill, Ulrike Rossler, and Sarah Shaw, 205–39 (Somerville, MA: Wisdom, 2009).
[110] Philippe Turenne, "Interpretations of Unity: Hermeneutics in Śākya mchog ldan's Interpretation of the Five Treatises of Maitreya," (PhD diss., McGill University, 2010). See also Kamarovski, *Visions of Unity*, 38.
[111] Jan-Ulrich Sobisch, *Three-Vow Theories*, 17.

though only partially extant, that present a systematic three-vow theory and define a nature of each of the three vows.

In Tibetan practice, and likewise for Shākya Chokden, all three vows are necessary and while the former are certainly considered lesser in some contexts, and their significance may change with the adoption of the later, they still must be protected "as if they were [one's] eyeball."[112] Yet, how could seemingly contradictory ethics be simultaneously applied, and with such stakes? Shākya Chokden's ideologies stand out as contrary to orthodox views in his Sakya tradition and the tradition broadly. This is primarily seen in his reconciliation of what he understood as Indian philosophical systems that propound lack of essence (*niḥsvabhāvavāda*) and those that purport ultimate reality to be solely consciousness, whose apprehended aspect is not truly established (*alīkākāravāda*, *rnam rdzun pa*), the same categorical split that creates Tibetan Buddhism's two separate cittotpāda vow lineages back to India. Sakya orthodoxy followed the Tibetan tradition as a whole, as it remains today, to privilege the former over the latter and would not have afforded any Yogācāra system the status of Madhyamaka in terms of its ability to arrive at ultimate truth. Yet, the threat to Shākya Chokden's recognition as a Sakya insider, the near complete erasure of his works from contemporary Sakya curriculum, and the lack of any contemporary lineage of study of his works,[113] is not based solely on these views on the tenet systems but also on his approach to vows and, in particular, to his interpretation of Sakya Paṇḍita's *Differentiating the Three Vows* (*Sdom gsum rab dbye*).

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[112] Shākya Chokden, "Vidyādhara Discipline Chapter," 78a1/493: *mig 'bras bzhin du bsrung dgos*. The same was said about Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo, who was Shākya Chokden's monastic preceptor, though with slightly different wording (*spyan gyi 'bras bu ltar*). See Jeorg Heimbel, *Vajradhara in Human Form: The Life and Times of Ngor Chen Kun Dga' Bzang Po* (Nepal: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2017), 103.

[113] There are of course political as well as doctrinal reasons for this, as Caummans points out, including the suppression of works by the later Ganden Potrang government, due in part to Shākya Chokden's affiliation with the Rinpung Lords, "who were not remembered by the Ganden Potrang government as being benefactors of the Gelug." (Caumanns, 207; see also 207n9 for the source of this claim in his biography).

It is not clear whether the controversy surrounding Shākya Chokden's views on vows were due to informed disagreement with the content of his position, to an anxiety born from interpreting his clarification as criticism of the untouchable ideologies of Sakya Paṇḍita, or to personal antagonisms, as seen for example in a discourteous correspondence with his colleague Lowo Khenchen, a colleague and interlocutor on vows. Jowita Kramer identifies this latter as a primary source of discord between Shākya Chokden and Lowo Khenchen, and Yaroslav Kamarovski points to Shākya Chokden's public teaching on the three vows as central to the intra-sectarian rift that "changed the course of his life forever."[114] Yet, no scholarly work has yet analyzed the content of Shākya Chokden's position on vows, his diversion, purposeful or not, from Sakya Paṇḍita's ideology, or the points that Shākya Chokden's detractors specifically target and refute. This dissertation takes a small step in this direction, presenting Shākya Chokden's own views, while future studies might focus on his detractors and the larger network of conversation within which this is one small piece.

Shākya Chokden was not only criticized for his approach to Sakya Paṇḍita's vow text, but he was also criticized for his own policies regarding vows. In his article on the establishment of Shākya Chokden's monastic seat Serdokchen, Volker Caumanns identifies two points on which Shākya Chokden was criticized by the later Sakya figure Ngawang Chodrak (1572–1641). Caumanns points out that his biographies present Shākya Chokden as a conservative adherent of monastic discipline in Serdokchen and a lifetime adherent of *vārṣaka*, the "rains' retreat" mandated in the vinaya. The question of how much this had to do with pressure from patrons looms over many discussions and claims of monastic conservatism in general. Caumanns himself

[114] Yaroslav Kamarovski, *Visions of Unity: The Golden Paṇḍita Shākya Chokden's New Interpretation of Yogācāra and Madhyamaka* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011), 37. See also Jowita Kramer, *A Noble Abbot from Mustang: Life and Works of gLo-bo mKhan-chen* (Wein: Arbeitskreis fur Tibetische une Buddhistische Studien, 2008), 66–67, 159–64.

cites personal correspondence as evidence of choices related to monastic discipline being urged on him by donors, or done to please them, rather than representing either canonical mandates or a preceptor's own personal opinion or style or approach. The two points that Shākya Chokden was later criticized for are his willingness to offer, though only one time, full ordination to women[115] and the ordination procedure for fully ordained monks. It is unfortunate that more has not been written by him on these two topics. While prātimokṣa vows are the first and "lowest" of the three vows, they are also the only that are socially visible. They are the only vows that relate to administrative organization and, being institutional in their nature, relate to the mundane workings of a monastery, which are the most easily wielded as a scale or standard for the quality of a religious community.

Although Shākya Chokden's two texts on vows mentioned above might be considered his standard three-vow texts, they did not seem to garner the attention or inspire the debate in the same way as his *Golden Lancet*, perhaps because their style was not as confrontational, their inception not as public, or because they are not structured in terms of genre as commentarial literature elucidating the views of Sakya Paṇḍita, an approach sure to elicit the scrutiny of contemporaneous Sakya literati.

While residing in Lowo in 1475 at the age of forty-eight at the invitation of his patron, local ruler Tashigon (Blo bo sde pa bkra shis dgon po), Shākya Chokden posed a series of questions to a group of monks visiting from the newly established Sakya monastery of Dreyul Kyetsel in

[115] While I have not found any claim of a philosophical basis to the validity (or not) of female full ordination in his writings, in several places he does specify "men and women" (*skyes pa'am bud med*) when referring to the prātimokṣa vows in general, though he does not remark specifically about female ordination. One exception, mentioned above, is found in his "Śrāvaka Discipline Chapter," in which he remarks that the intermediary, or trial, monastic vows given to nuns (*dge slob ma*, *śikṣamāṇa*) does not qualify for the definition of prātimokṣa vows, because a prātimokṣa vow must either be taken for one's lifetime. For a brief account of his officiating at a ceremony for a full ordination of a nun, see Fan Wu, "Fully Ordained Nuns in Fourteenth-to-Seventeenth Tibetan Hagiographical Narratives, *Religions* 13, no 11 (2022), 4.

order to clarify key points within Sakya Paṇḍita's *Distinguishing the Three Vows* and *Treasury of Valid Cognition* (*Tshad ma rigs gter*).[116] Shākya Chokden was disappointed that these monks were unable to answer his questions and was particularly irritated at a habit they displayed of responding to his questions with only "Yes, yes."[117] That year, again at the request of the ruler Tashigon, he wrote out these questions in the form of a text, *Good Questions on "Differentiating the Three Vows"* (*Sdom gsum rab dbye la dri ba legs pa*).[118] The question-and-answer style of combining a root text with commentary is not a common Tibetan exegetical form for the three-vow genre, though it was one that Shākya Chokden employed several times in other fields of study. In addition to these one hundred and eight "good questions" on vows, he composed the same number of questions on Medicine Buddha practice, a set of questions and answers on Sakya Paṇḍita's *Entrance to Knowledge* (*Mkhas pa la 'jug pa*), and others that were addressed to specific people or entire monastic communities.[119] These formulations of questions read in some ways as purposefully provocative, in that they include a stated intention that others be invited to compose their own texts in the form of researched and contemplated answers. Though Shākya Chokden directed his questions on the three vows specifically to Jamchen Rabjampa, abbot of Dreyul Kyetshel monastery, whose monks he had interrogated and likely embarrassed, this act

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[116] Kamarovski, *Visions of Unity*, 37.

[117] Kunga Drolchok, *Detailed Analysis on the Life of the Great Pāṇḍita, Shākya Chokden, Paṇḍi ta chen po, Shākya mchog ldan gyi rnam par thar pa zhib mo rnam par 'byed pa*, in *Gsung 'bum Shākya mchog ldan*, vol. 16 (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006), 133. *'o na sdom gsum gyi 'di skabs ci gsung zhes dbu zhabs nas dri ma mang du gnang bas lags lags las tshig gcig zhu rgyu ma byung bas rkyen byas/ chos rgyal bkra shis mgon pas ched kyis gsol ba btab ste/ sdom gsum la dri ba brgya rtsa zhig gnang ba'i sgo dbye mdzad pas/ de ltar nag sung thog mar sman bla'i mdo brgyad brgya pa dang/ de rjes sdom gsum gyi dri ba brgya rtsa brgyad/ rigs gter la yang mtshon tsam gyi dri mal rnams mdzad nas/ sdom gsum gyi dri yul thog mar dus der sang gi bstan pa'i mes po yin pas gsung/ kun mkhyen sangs rgyas 'phel ba'i spyan sngar 'bul sdud pa de rnams rang la phul zhing/ gzhan byang tshor chos rgyal rnam rgyal grags bzang pa'i drung sogs rongs su khyab par mdzad ces gtam du gleng ngo/* See also Kamarovski, *Visions of Unity*, 37.

[118] Shākya Chokden, *Good Questions on "Differentiating the Three Vows*," *Sdom gsum rab dbye la dri ba legs pa*, in *Gsung 'bum Shākya mchog ldan* 17 (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006).

[119] Such as his *Gzi bsam 'grub gling pa'i dge 'dun spyi'i dris lan ya mtshan bcu bdun pa*, in *Gsung 'gum Shākya mchog ldan* 23 (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006).

did not inspire a dialogue across the two communities, as his addressee never composed a response. Response texts to Shākya Chokden's *Good Questions* are listed as eleven, according to David Jackson,[120] or twelve, according to Shākya Chokden's biographer, Kunga Drolchok, cited by Kamarovski.[121] Further bibliographic exploration on how many textual responses to his questions exist, who wrote them, when, and why, and moreover, how many textual responses to Sakya Paṇḍita's *Differentiating the Three Vows* were composed, would be a fruitful line of future research.

Shākya Chokden did not provide his own answers for seven years after the questions were composed when, in 1481, he completed the *Golden Lancet*, a text in three chapters and two parts, the first part responding to questions pertaining to the prātimokṣa and cittotpāda vows and the second responding to his questions relating to the vidyādhara vows. He does not answer all of his own questions, and their numbering varies across commentaries.[122]

Kunga Drolchok's biography of him states that Shākya Chokden studied Sakya Paṇḍita's *Differentiating the Three Vows* at age twenty (in 1447) based on a commentary by the fourteenth-century master Lhatsun Samye[123] and later based on a commentary written by the contemporaneous Sakya master Zhonnu Senge (Rdo rje 'chang gi gcung po Gzhon nu seng ge), a younger brother of Ngorchen Kunga Sangpo, with whom Shākya Chokden took full ordination.[124] Shākya Chokden's *Good Questions* follows the progression of topics found in

[120] Jackson, "Commentaries on the Writings of Sakya Paṇḍita," 17.
[121] Kamarovski, *Visions of Unity*, 42.
[122] A more detailed presentation of the questions and their various enumerations across the various answer texts will appear in Yaroslav Kamarovski's forthcoming work on ultimate virtue.
[123] On Lhatsun Samye, see also Jonathan Silk, "The Indian Buddhist Mahādeva in Tibetan Sources," *Studies in Indian Philosophy and Buddhism* 15 (2008): 40n41. David Jackson also notes that Shākya Chokden studied his commentary in 1447.
[124] Kunga Drolchok, 23a6 and 64a2. For more on Zhonnu Senge, see Jeorg Heimbel, *Vajradhara in Human Form: The Life and Times of Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po* (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2017), 78–79. For the detail that Ngorchen was the preceptor in Shākya Chokden's full monastic ordination, see Treasury of Lives, "Shākya Chokden," https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Shākya-Chokden/6351.

Sakya Paṇḍita's *Differentiating the Three Vows* and, in doing so, includes doctrinal topics seemingly far removed from issues pertaining specifically to the three vows, spanning abhidharma categories, Indian history, and the extent of ultimate truth. Throughout the text, Shākya Chokden frequently returns to the themes of differentiating śrāvaka and bodhisattva practice as regards the prātimokṣa vows, dedications of merit, and definitions of virtue.

Dissertation Summary

In this dissertation, the first chapter, "The Ritual Production of a Prātimokṣa Vow: Perceptible and Imperceptible Karma and the Arising of a Vow in the Karmic Process," addresses abhidharma discussions on the ontological status of a vow and how it is situated within categories of action (as discussed in chapter four, on karma, of Vasubandhu's fourth-century *Abhidharmakośa*) and within categories of nature (as discussed in chapter 1 on the constituents of the persons, or *dhātus*, of the same text). Given these categories, Shākya Chokden clarifies the Vaibhāṣika view on the moment when vows arise in terms of the threefold process of a karmic path. This chapter's focus is the first question of the *Golden Lancet*, which clarifies Vasubandhu's presentation of how vijñapti and avijñapti aspects of karma are mapped onto the karmic process with its introduction, main part, and conclusion (*sbyor dngos mjug*), to show that from the Vaibhāṣika perspective, a vow persists as only the avijñapti (imperceptible). Shākya Chokden's approach to the contested category of imperceptible form (*avijñaptirūpa*, *rnam par rig byed ma yin pa'i gzugs*) is specifically investigated in this chapter with regard to how recent

scholarship on the topic wrestles with the category, the impetus for its initial formulation, and the consequences of materializing virtue.[125]

It has been stated in Western scholarship that the Sakyas accept the category of avijñaptirūpa as the nature of the prātimokṣa vows,[126] though it is clear that such assertions do not fall along sectarian lines. Shākya Chokden rejects it, and one could argue Sakya Paṇḍita never actually outright accepts it either. This hinges on the difference between saying the nature of the śrāvaka (that is, prātimokṣa) vows are avijñaptirūpa and saying that the śrāvakas (in this context, the Vaibhāṣikas in particular) say that vows (which in that context would still refer only to the prātimokṣa) are avijñaptirūpa. The topic touches on whether the vows are lost at death, what kind of being can hold the vows, and how the vows persist in visible and invisible forms during and after the karmic act of the ordination ceremony. This chapter covers the Vaibhāṣika view on avijñapti as the eleventh type of the form dhātu presented in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* and the role of avijñapti in the karmic process. Shākya Chokden states that the nature of the prātimokṣa vows is not material but rather is a mental factor (*sems 'byung*), broadly the "intention to relinquish, together with its seeds" (*spong ba'i sems sa bon dang bcas pa*), which then allows for his three-vow theory by standardizing the natures of all three of the vows on this basis.

The assertion or rejection of the avijñaptirūpa as a valid category for the nature of the vows does not fall neatly along sectarian lines. Nor does it appear to adhere to the standard hierarchies of Tibetan doxography. As mentioned above, the early modern polymath Jamgön

[125] In addition to the opening questions within the *Good Questions* and *Golden Lancet*, a future study would compare this discussion with how Shākya Chokden analyzes these issues in his commentary on the *Abhidharmakośa*, as well as clarify his answer to the second question, which refutes Lhatsun Samye, Pökhangpa, and Godongpa, on specifying the causal relationship between the vijñapti and avijñapti.
[126] Sobisch, *Buddha's Single Intention*, 273.

Kongtrul in his *Treasury of Knowledge* (*Shes bya mdzod*) presents each tenet system in increasing order of accuracy according to the Tibetan tradition broadly, presenting the first (Vaibhāṣika) as accepting the vows as material, ascribing to each subsequent tenet system a more refined view based on their particular, also increasingly sophisticated, models of mind. And yet, he then acknowledges that Candrakīrti, the Madhyamaka scholar par excellence, himself appears to accept the avijñaptirūpa and ends his discussion noting other scholars who still support the category. Thus, despite the fact that the concept derives from the "lowest" of the tenet systems and was rejected by Vasubandhu himself in the primary scholastic text on abhidharma in Tibetan centers of learning, Jamgön Kongtrul notes that some thinkers remain on the fringe of such orthodox claims and still uphold some degree of ontological status to the avijñaptirūpa category. He states that Taktsang Lotsāwa and Jigten Sumgön "are mostly in agreement that the vows of the Desire Realm have form."[127] The avijñaptirūpa category—despite being a claim of the lowest tenet system and despite being refuted by Vasubandhu himself in the very source in which Tibetans would have first encountered it—remained in a sort of in-between space, not entirely accepted but not entirely eschewed either, just "mostly asserted" and "emphasized."[128]

The second chapter, "The Intention to Train: The Nature of the Vow in the Two Cittotpāda Vow Lineages (*sems tsam* and *dbu ma*)," addresses Shākya Chokden's views on the

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[127] Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Taye, *Shes bya kun khyab*, vol. 3 (Peking: Mi rigs pe skrun khang, 1982), 37. *zla grags kyis dbu ma phung po lnga par rnam par rig min gyi gzugs su mdzad la/ rje 'bri gung pa stag tshang lo tsa rnams kyis kyang de ltar rtsal du gton nas bshad do/ mdor na nges 'byung gi bsam pas zin pa'i nyes spyod sdom pa'i tshul khrims bsdus pa'i sdom pa gzugs can du phal cher bzhed pa mthun no/*

[128] This reading, thanks to the corrections by Yaroslav Kamarovski, is at odds with that in *Buddhist Ethics* (87), which states that "most scholars are of the opinion that the vows at the Desire Realm level . . . have form." Reading *phal cher* as mostly, an adverb connected to "assert" rather than "most scholars" gives the reading that this was a fringe belief that even these scholars did not entirely adhere to. Also, the 1998 translation reads *rtsal du bton* as "clever arguments," implying a positive approval on the part of Jamgön Kongtrul for their positions. The question of which, if any, Tibetan exegetes on vows, hold the prātimokṣa vows, as their own final view, to be avijñaptirūpa, without simply claiming this as the Vaibhāṣika view, would be an important topic of further study. The eighteenth-century Karma Ngelek, citing as his source the third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje, states that an issue with claiming the same nature of all three vows is that the prātimokṣa vows "arise from the elements," a clear referent to avijñaptirūpa, while the mantra vows are the inseparability of bliss and emptiness. Sobisch, *Three-vow Theories*, 280.

ritual generation of the cittotpāda vow with respect to its relationship to the generation of bodhicitta, its ritual, downfalls, separation into Yogācāra and Madhyamaka lineage strands, its classification into relative and ultimate forms, and its relationship with prātimokṣa vows as prerequisite or support.[129] While the arising and sustaining of prātimokṣa vows were shown in the first chapter to be reliant on the motivation of the vow holder, the production and integrity of cittotpāda vows here are discussed in terms of their relationship with philosophical view and lineage history, arriving back at an inception point in either the bodhisattva Maitreya (via the "Cittamātra"[130] lineage of Asaṅga) or Mañjuśrī (the Madhyamaka of Nāgārjuna, Śāntideva, and Candragomin).

The nature of the vow in the context of the cittotpāda vow relates to the separation between aspirational and active bodhicitta: the mind aspiring toward enlightenment and the mind that engages in bodhisattva practices. This has implications for the specific distinctions between the two traditions, which differ in their sets of downfalls and rituals. It also has implications related to the distinction between cittotpāda itself and its vows, both of which are instances of mind, but are not one and the same. On the two traditions, he also seeks to clarify Sakya Paṇḍita's statement that because the views are different, the vows are different, which Tsongkhapa had wholly rejected. Shākya Chokden agrees that one need not have the particular

[129] David Jackson, "Several Works of Unusual Provenance Ascribed to Sakya Paṇḍita," in *Tibetan History and Language: Studies Dedicated to Uray Geza on his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ernst Steinkellner (Wein: Arbeitskreis fur Tibetische une Buddhistische Studien, 1991), 236n11.

[130] The translation of the two lineages poses several problems, and there seems to be no entirely accurate or comfortable way to render them. I use the term "Cittamātra" here to translate the Tibetan "sems tsam," with awareness that it does not correlate to an Indian scholastic or sectarian self-identity but was used by some Tibetans (not Shākya Chokden) who did perceive it as such, not differentiating it from Yogācāra. Shākya Chokden in particular differentiated Cittamātra from a more exalted Yogācāra system on par with Madhyamaka, and so it seems that Dorje Wangchuk's use of "Yogācāra lineage," though understandable given contemporary Western efforts to differentiate the two, is inaccurate in this context, being neither a direct translation of *sems tsam* nor equivalent in Shākya Chokden's doxography. Such a translation overdetermines what the category as vow lineage would have referenced. Rhoton uses "Mind Only" but retains the Sanskrit for "Madhyamaka."

view of the tradition to hold the vow of that tradition; he asserts that this is not what Sakya Paṇḍita himself intended. Rather, the vows are different because their natures are different. The nature of the aspirational and active cittotpāda vows are the intention, together with its seeds, to train in their respective trainings" (*smon 'jug de gnyis kyi bslab pa bzung nas / de la slob pa'i sems pa sa bon dang bcas pa ni sdom pa gnyis po'i ngo bo*), and whether a vow conferral offers one or both determines the scope (*rgya che chung*) of the vow's nature. While he agrees with Tsongkhapa that the vow holder need not have the view associated with the vow lineage, he does not accept that view has nothing to do with taking and holding the vow, and specifies which views make the vow easier or more difficult to hold. In addition, he defines a special cittotpāda vow in the tantras, apart from the two lineages.[131]

The third chapter, "Shākya Chokden's Three-Vow Theory," departs from the first *Golden Lancet* text and addresses Shākya Chokden's analysis of how all three vows are held within a single practitioner. Whether the three vows are of the same or different natures (*ngo bo gcig 'am tha dad*) is central to the three-vow realm of exegesis. This discussion appears as an addendum within the "Vidyādhara Discipline Chapter" of his *Presentation on the Disciplines of the Three Vehicles*; it is not included in the internal outline (*sa bcas*) for that chapter but it rather a stand-alone topic. Here, Shākya Chokden conceptualizes the three vows in terms of upward progression (*yar ldan*), in that the higher include and transcend the former, defining the vow's transformation (*gnas 'gyur*) based on the ritually generated motivation, in such a way that differentiates these two technical terms from their usage by Kagyu authors including Gampopa and Karma Trinlepa (1456–1539), as well as the latter term's usage by the thirteenth-century Vibhūticandra (1170–1230), author of the only extant three-vow treatise composed by an Indian

[131] Future study on this topic would explore what it could mean to ritually produce ultimate bodhicitta, by closely looking at the answer to his seventh question on cittotpāda vows.

scholar (though composed in Tibet and in Tibetan language, and of contested authorship).[132] Here, the location of vows within the five skandhas and eighteen dhātus, or constituents of the person, is interrogated from a different angle, in that the key distinction between Kagyu and Sakya conceptions of transformation is the question of whether the person holding the vows is transformed or whether the vows themselves are transformed, as entities abiding within the person as integral yet adventitious elements. In addition, this chapter includes a question and answer in the secret mantra section of Shākya Chokden's *Good Question* and answered in his *Golden Lancet, Chapter Three* regarding the production of the former vows in the ritual ceremony for producing the secret mantra vows. He asks: "Are the three vows obtained or not from empowerments other than the ripening empowerment? If they are not, how are they obtained?"[133] It is here that he defines, within the complex spectrum of referents within each of the three vows, what is actually intended from each when taken together; that is, in the context of three-vow theory and labeling a person as "endowed with the three vows," exactly which three are meant?

Each chapter of the dissertation addresses a different set of concepts that Shākya Chokden mobilizes in order to clarify the ritual production of vows, how that production undergirds the very concept of vow lineage, and how the integrity of lineage is embedded in karma theory. He defines the vow itself in terms of its nature, in both relative and ultimate

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[132] Sobisch, *Three-Vow* Theory, 23. Tāranātha claimed it was a forgery as it had the features of a Tibetan composition, and also that it was suspected to have been written down within a polemical context, to highlight the Sakya view as opposed to the Drikung. The former would not preclude its being originally composed in Tibetan by the pandita, who it was shown, did have the ability to compose in the Tibetan medium. Sobisch also notes that its contents do not reflect it being a Drikung composition.

[133] Shākya Chokden, *Chapter Three: A Certain Discussion on the Topic of the Knowledge Holder Vows*, *Le'u gsum pa rig 'dzin sdom pa'i skabs kyi 'bel gtam rnam par nges pa* [*The third chapter of: Sdom pa gsum gyi rab tu dbye ba'i bstan bcos las brtsams pa'i 'bel gtam rnam par nges pa legs bshad gser gyi thur ma*] (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006). *smin byed min pa'i dbang bskur las/ sdom gsum thob pa yod dam med/ med na de las gang zhig thob/ yod na de yang smin byed du/ thal bar 'gyur ba ma yin nam/*

dimensions, to differentiate between what arises, is sustained, and is lost, during the ritual procedure and the outward behaviors that each such phases may entail.

Chapter 1

The Ritual Production of a Prātimokṣa Vow

Perceptible and Imperceptible Karma and the Arising of a Vow in the Karmic Process

Introduction

Shākya Chokden defines the nature of a vow several times as "intention, together with its seeds" (*sems pa sa bon dang bcas pa*) in opposition to a claim that it is material (*gzugs can*, *bem po*, or *rdzas*). This dichotomy of the mind-versus-matter distinction in the disagreements over what constitutes the nature of the vow was set up within early Indian Buddhist discussions, both of the constituents of the person and of karma. Central to both contexts is a highly specific subcategory of form, whose functions are not easily subsumed under the category of mind. In this context, "form" does not necessarily mean "physical matter," but rather something derived from matter, following it and hovering over it, like in the relationship of a tree and its shadow, the glimmer of a jewel and the jewel,[134] or the fire that engulfs a forest.[135] Although such technical taxonomies of Tibetan scholasticism would not be known by any average monk, that a vow also exists and persists along with the person who holds it in some kind of tangible way has had an impact on

[134] Robert Kritzer, *Vasubandhu and the Yogācarabhūmi*, 10.

[135] This last example is found in the interlinear notes to the thirteenth-century Chim Jampaiyang's commentary on the *Abhidharmakośa*, as an example of the Vaibhāṣika notion that is disputed since the avijñaptirūpa "does not exist in any place." See *Ornament of Abhidharma*: *A Commentary on Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakośa*, translated by Ian Coughlin. The Library of Tibetan Classics, vol. 23 (Somerville, MA: Wisdom, 2018), 93. Notably, since this commentary is of the root verses and not Vasubandhu's autocommentary, there is no discussion of whether the avijñapti exists or not.

Tibetan discourse and practice to the present day.[136] Further, Thomas Newhall's suggestion of *bhikkubhāva*—literally, "being a monk"—as a translation source for "essence of the precepts" underscores its importance as a concept that defines and elevates vowed practice.

The category of form that Shākya Chokden argues against in his statements that deny a vow's existence as "form" is avijñaptirūpa, or "imperceptible form," an abhidharma category held by a Northern Indian Sarvāstivāda Buddhist subsect called the Vaibhāṣikas (proponents of the *Mahavibhāṣa*) and refuted by the Sautrāntikas (upholders of the sūtras). Tibetan monastic education includes the study of the fourth-century *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, written by the monk scholar Vasubandhu who summarized in verse, and then criticized in prose, the Vaibhāṣika view, and referred to positions that he supported as those of the Sautrāntika. Thus, Tibetans who studied the *Bhāṣya*, the autocommentary, would have initially encountered the avijñaptirūpa as a contested category. Its very definition in the first chapter is also a defense for its existence, despite the fact that it has none of the characteristics of the other ten types of form: it does not obstruct (*apratigha*),[137] it is invisible, (*anidarśana*) and it does not extend through space, or "is exempt from mass" (*amūrta*).[138] One reason for its existence found in Vasubandhu's autocommentary is that if it did not exist, the prātimokṣa vow could not exist.[139] That is, a monk does not have to be a good person all of the time; he still has his vows even "when his mind is bad or neutral."[140] The refutation by the Sautrāntika opponent (along with, we can assume,

[136] It is not uncommon to hear Tibetan lamas speak of the vow as something "real," even having a felt sense in the body. In some ordination ceremonies, the preceptor must move anything that lies between him or her and the preceptees, such as a book or table, so as not to obstruct the transfer of the quasi-material vow.
[137] Leo Pruden, trans., *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam of Vasubandhu* (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1991) (hereafter, *AKB-E*), vol. 1, ch. 1, v. 29b. See the commentary on that verse for a definition of its opposite, *sapratigha*, capable of obstructing, or "being struck."
[138] *AKB-E*, 569.
[139] *AKB-E*, 562. This is the seventh of eight arguments found in *AKB-E*, 560–68.
[140] *AKB-E*, 562.

Vasubandhu) states that a prātimokṣa vow exists "by making a state out of the force of intention."[141] Vasubandhu goes on to explain in his commentary that a Vaibhāṣika objection to this is that if the monk has any other conscious thought apart from this particular volition, he would no longer have the vows. Vasubandhu's counterargument does not use the term "seeds," but uses a closely related concept: that the volition that is the vow "perfumes" the mind continually so that a memory of restraint is produced in the vow holder. The sixth-century Sthiramati, in his commentary on Vasubandhu's *Pañcaskandha*, also states that the vows persist as volition, a mental factor, together with its seeds in the foundation conscious.[142]

In his "Śrāvaka Discipline Chapter," Shākya Chokden states:

> One might ask, "Do these three vows abide as matter (*bem po*) or consciousness and how are they possessed in the continuum of one person?" The Vaibhāṣikas assert that these three vows abide as avijñaptirūpa, and they are possessed as different substances in the continuum of one person who take the three sequentially. The *Kośa* says, "[Vows] exist separately; they do not contradict."[143] According to the shared vehicle, the nature of all three are asserted to be, in general, consciousness and specifically, mental events (*sems byung*), and among those, they are what is called "intention" (*sems pa*).[144]

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[141] *AKB-E*, 567.
[142] Engle, Artemus B., trans., *The Inner Science of Buddhist Practice: Vasubandhu's Summary of the Five Heaps with Commentary by Sthiramati* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 2009), 262–65.
[143] Vasubandhu, *Abhidharmakośakārikā, Chos mngon pa'i mdzod kyi tshig le'ur byas pa*, 4:14, (D 4089, vol. 140), 11a7.
[144] SDC, 4. *gal te 'o na sdom pa gsum po 'di'i ngo bo bem po'am shes par gnas/ gang zag gcig gi rgyud la ldan pa'i tshul ji lta bu zhe na/ bye brag tu smra ba ni/ sdom pa 'di gsum ga'i ngo bo rig byed ma yin pa'i gzugs su gnas shing/ gsum po rim par mnos pa'i gang zag gcig gi rgyud la rdzas tha dad du ldan par khas len pa yin te/ mdzod du/ tha dad de dag 'gal ba med/ ces so/ theg pa thun mong ba ltar na/ gsum ga'i ngo bo spyir shes pa dang/ bye brag tu sems byung dang/ de'i nang nas kyang sems pa zhes bya ba der khas len pa yin te/*

In Shākya Chokden's "Prātimokṣa Vow Chapter," he says:

> As for what the śrāvakas say regarding the nature of the prātimokṣa vows, the Vaibhāṣikas assert they are material (*gzugs can*), but they [actually] abide as the single nature of definitive primary mind and mental events of any suitable support, a man or woman of the three continents, [where vows can be] obtained through the cause for obtainment and lost through the causes for loss.[145]

Both the perspective that the vows are form and that they are mind happen here in an abhidharma framework. Further, the avijñapti category itself has an integral relationship with the mental factor of intention (*cetanā*). Vasubandhu explains the Vaibhāṣika view that intention brings about the avijñapti.[146] These two—mental states and material states—are intricately linked already in the explanation of the karma series; this is part of what the scholar K. L. Dhammajoti refers to when he describes the "ever re-arising" avijñapti as "dynamically interacting with the person's mental status,"[147] or "dynamically impacting the doer's mental series."[148] Both assertions that the vow is mind and that the vow is matter retain an emphasis on the vow as

[145] PVC, 344–45. *de la nyan thos kyis so thar sdom pa'i ngo bo ni/ bye brag tu smra bas gzugs can du 'dod kyang/ rang rang gi thob rgyus thob cing gtong rgyus gtong ba'i gling gsum gyi skyes pa dang bud med gang rung gi rten can du nges pa'i sems byung sems dpa' gcig gi ngo bor gnas pa yin no/*

[146] Leo Pruden explains the relationship between avijñapti and cetanā in his annotation to *AKB*, chapter 4, verse 2: "The person who commits a murder or takes the vows of a bhikṣu produces after his volition (*cetanā*) a bodily or vocal 'information'—an action or a word—and, at the same time, an invisible action, nevertheless material and made up of the primary elements, which continues to exist in him and to increase, by reason of which he is either a murderer or a bhikṣu. This invisible action, created by certain visible or audible actions and which 'informs,' is called *avijñapti*, 'non-information'; it is considered to be either bodily or vocal accordingly as it is created by an action or by a word." *AKB*, 709n5.

[147] Dhammajoti, "Saṃvara, Avijñapti and Karmic Retribution," Journal of Buddhist Studies 17 (2020): 157.

[148] Dhammajoti, 180.

persisting and functioning in a way that requires the interworking of karma to maintain its doctrinal viability.

Yet, the mind-matter distinction was not the first or only oppositional pair to be debated in this context. This chapter presents Shākya Chokden's first question in his *Golden Lancet*, which seeks to clarify the Vaibhāṣika position on the relationship with the prātimokṣa vows and two types of form, first, that which has the official definition of "form," (*rūpa*) in that it is the object of sense consciousness and can be perceived (*vijñapti*-) and second, that which cannot be perceived (*avijñapti*-). He does not argue against the avijñaptirūpa category, but rather speaks within Vasubandhu's doctrinal world of the *Abhidharmakośa* and seeks to clarify Vasubandhu's own perspective against the false interpretations of Pökhangpa Rinchen Gyeltsen (Spos khang pa Rin chen rgyal mtshan, 1348–1430), who wrote an extensive commentary on Sakya Paṇḍita's *Differentiating the Three Vows*,[149] and Lhatsum Samye (fl. fourteenth century). Jonathan Silk notes that Shākya Chokden listed Lhatsun Samye's commentary as one of four best commentaries on Sakya Paṇḍita's text.[150] It does appear however that he did not agree on all topics. Here, the disagreement centers around the reading of several verses and their commentary in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa.* Thus, central to understanding the arguments and their significance is an understanding of the abhidharma, as a component of the canon that is shared across tradition and a scholastic curricular subject in Tibet.

[149] This is the commentary that was used as a basis for the only translation of Sakya Paṇḍita's text into English, Rhoton's *Clear Differentiation of the Three Vows.*

[150] On Lhatsun Samye, see also Jonathan Silk, "The Indian Buddhist Mahādeva in Tibetan Sources," *Studies in Indian Philosophy and Buddhism* 15 (2008): 40n41. David Jackson also notes that Shākya Chokden studied his commentary in 1447.

Abhidharma

The Sarvāstivāda Buddhist tradition was established in the third century B.C.E. among a scholastic community that spread across Central Asia from the North Central Indian city of Mathura, connected to Gandhāra (present-day Northwest Pakistan) along the highway to Takṣaśilā, and to Bactria (northwest Afghanistan and Tajikistan) through the highway to the Hindu Kush. In the words of Dhammajoti, the "effective founder" of the abhidharma tradition was Katyayaniputra, whose *Aṣṭagrantha* was composed or compiled around the first century B.C.E. When the Kuṣāṇas came to power in North Central India in the first century C.E., the Kashmiri Sarvāstivāda school established itself as a prominent system of scholastic Buddhism.

By that first century, Sarvāstivāda abhidharma treatises were counted as one central work plus six additional texts: the *Aṣṭagrantha* was reorganized and renamed the *Jñānaprasthāna*, and the six ancillary texts are the *Dharmaskandha*, *Saṃgītiparyāya*, *Prajñapti*, *Vijñānakāya*, *Prakaraṇa*, and *Dhātukāya*. The first is said by the sixth-century abhidharma scholar Yaśomitra to be like the body, and the latter six to be the feet.[151] All are preserved in Chinese translation, and the *Prajñapti* only is preserved in Tibetan translation. A commentary on the *Jñānaprasthāna*, the *Abhidharma Mahāvibhāṣā*, or *Great Commentary*, was composed over the course of decades and completed in 150 C.E. Followers of this commentary, called Vaibhāṣikas (after *vibhāṣā*), were a school of orthodox Sarvāstivādins based in Kaśmīr. The *Jñānaprasthāna* and this commentary was retranslated into Tibetan in the twentieth century from the Chinese by the monk Fazun, but it was unknown in premodern Tibet, and scholars did not have access to the more nuanced Vaibhāṣika canon apart from Vasubandhu's root verses of the *Abhidharmakośa*.

[151] Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 93.

It is said that Vasubandhu traveled from his birthplace of Gandhāra to Kaśmīr to study with Vaibhāṣika masters there, after which he wrote the main verses of the *Abhidharmakośa*.[152] The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* was translated into Chinese in 563 C.E. by Paramārtha, and translated into Tibetan in the ninth century by Jinamitra and Kawa Paltsek (Dpal brtsegs rakṣita), one of the famous first seven Tibetans whom Śāntarakṣita ordained at Samye monastery, and who also translated many sūtras and tantras, as well as one of several editions of Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. The abhidharma texts preserved in Tibetan canons are thus from the scholarship of the Sarvāstivāda of the first century B.C.E. to the second century C.E. within a network of scholars tied to scholastic centers across Indian cultural routes between Gandhāra, Bactria, and Kushana, scholars who produced multifaceted, problematic, and much contested terms.

Early lists of classifications based on the doctrines found in the sūtras evolved into what would become the abhidharma, the third basket (*piṭaka*) of the Indian canon, as well as the Tibetan curricular topic. The seed of this full-fledged set of canonical texts was much more humble; it developed out of matrices (*mātṛkā*), or lists of phenomena and doctrinal terminologies found in the sūtras and the vinaya. This is clear from the terms for early holders of knowledge (that is, reciters of the portions of the canon), known as *vinayadhara, sūtradhara, mātṛkādhara*—"holders" (*dhara*) respectively of the vinaya, sūtra, and mātṛkā. Accounts of the origins of the abhidharma vary within the tradition. The classic origin story is that the abhidharma was a teaching given by the Buddha first to his own mother, who had died shortly after his birth. The site of these teachings are in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three. After this, he passed these teachings to a disciple, either Upāli or Śāriputra.

[152] Jonathan Gold, *Paving the Great Way*, 2.

Vasubandhu's brother Asaṅga's *Abhidharmasamuccaya*[153] is considered in the Tibetan context to be the higher abhidharma, considered to provide a Mahāyāna perspective. Vasubandhu's own personal philosophical position is difficult to narrow down, as he was a proponent and author of major works within the Yogācāra Mahāyāna system as well as the author of the work of significance here, the *Abhidharmakośakarika*, said to have been composed before his supposed conversion to the Mahāyāna. Because Vasubandhu's own views are therefore not clear, especially given his Mahāyāna works, it is not uncommon to refer to the author of this text merely as the *kośakara*, "the author of the *kośa*." The traditional Buddhist view is that Vasubandhu began as a Hīnayāna adherent of Sautrāntika persuasion, only to be converted by his brother, Asaṅga. However, because of his divergent philosophical positions as well as the difficulty of pinning down his dates, a two-Vasubandhu theory was upheld for a time in mid-twentieth century Western scholarship.[154] Further, what the label "Sautrāntika" ("sūtra follower") represented at the time of Vasubandhu and prior is an open question. Robert Kritzer points out that it appears in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* approximately twenty times, always representing a position affirmed by the author. He also presents Yaśomitra's definition of the Sautrāntikas as, "those who take sūtra as their authority, not śāstra."[155] Yet it is not clear at that time whether this is descriptive of a type of scholarship. That is, was Vasubandhu just saying that since the abhidharma contains doctrines found in sūtras anyway, this exegesis determines what is correct by whether or not it appears in the sūtras? Krtizer states, "Primarily on the basis of a

[153] Asaṅga, *Compendium of Abhidharma* (*Abhidharmasamuccaya*, *Chos mngon btus pa*); Dg.T. 4049. Asaṅga, *Abhidharmasamuccaya: The Compendium of the Higher Teaching (Philosophy)*, trans. Sarah Boin-Webb (Fremont, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 2001).
[154] Padmanabh S. Jaini, "On the Theory of Two Vasubandhus," Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 21, no. 1/3 (1958): 48–53.
[155] "Sautrāntika in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 26, vol. 2 (2003): 383.

handful of attributions by Vasubandhu, scholars beginning with Vasubandhu's contemporary, Saṅghabhadra, and continuing up until the present, have assumed that a group of thinkers called "Sautrāntikas" preceded Vasubandhu."[156] And yet, this is not necessarily known to be the case, despite the assumptions of Tibetan doxographers. This is significant in this context for determining the use of the term *bija,* or seed, which Vasubandhu uses to replace much of the entire Sarvāstivāda mechanism of karma and the continuity of mind. Would this be a seed in the all-base consciousness, the ālayavijñana, a purely Yogācāra doctrine? Or is Vasubandhu arguing against one non-Mahāyāna system, the Vaibhāṣika, from the perspective of another, the Sautrāntika, as it has been understood by Tibetans?

The first three questions of Shākya Chokden's *Golden Lancet* clarify, respectively, the Vaibhāṣika category of the nature of the vow as avijñaptirūpa and its place in the karmic process, clarifying the causal relationship between the vijñapti and avijñapti, and the materiality of the dhyāna and anāsrava vows. This first question will be discussed here: Shākya Chokden's clarification of the avijñaptirūpa category and its relationship to the prātimokṣa vows. While it is clear that Shākya Chokden does not accept this category, he does not spend time refuting it but rather clarifying the context within which it is asserted. He refutes other scholars' misunderstandings of Vasubandhu's presentation on the karmic process of vijñapti (perceptible) and avijñapti (imperceptible) aspects, and which of the two constitutes the nature of the vow, according to the Vaibhāṣikas. In other words, he is clarifying a category he does not assert based on its description by an exegete who also does not assert it. Still, it is clearly important to him to get the original, rejected, Vaibhāṣika concept correct. But, why? There is little in Shākya Chokden's own discussion that would explain why he wishes to clarify a concept he does not

[156] Kritzer, 368.

agree with. This chapter, thus, is not what Shākya Chokden thought the nature of the vows is, but how he made clear what it is not. This is important because in the Tibetan tradition, the application of the tenet systems to the idea of the nature of the vow is applied more extensively, with perspectives ascribed to all four tenet systems.

Vows and the Tenet Systems

The vows referred to in this chapter refer only to the prātimokṣa vows taken in the ordination ceremony (*pravrajya*) of the Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya, the sole tradition propagated in Tibet.[157] The history of this vinaya tradition in Tibet, and the lineages of prātimokṣa vows that it entailed, is characterized by two seemingly opposing factors: an uncompromising fidelity to this particular redaction on the one hand and persistent cycles of decline and revival on the other hand. There was a consistent loyalty to this vinaya as opposed to other vinaya redactions, even when significant Indian masters in Tibet, such as the revered Atiśa, ordained in the Mahāsāṃghika tradition, technically could have but did not introduce another vinaya literature together with its vow lineages to Tibetan communities. While the cittotpāda vows have two lineages that extend separately back to two ritual and liturgical sources in India, all of the branches of prātimokṣa vow ordination (albeit, only one small facet of the vinaya texts and topics) derive from the same textual source, with at least three lineages of the same vinaya's ordination proceedings introduced anew from India, with lineage awareness proliferating out from these three historical moments.

[157] Shizuka Sasaki, "Who Used the *Sarvāstivāda Vinaya* and the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*?" in *Reading Slowly, A Festschrft for Jens E. Braavig*, ed. Lutz Edzard, Jens Borgland, Ute Hüsken (Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018), 357–73.

Among the various answers to the question, "What is produced during a successful vow conferral or ordination ceremony?" we find the construction of the avijñaptirūpa category. Disrupting the symmetry of the tenfold category of the form aggregate (*skandha*), an eleventh type of form was proposed in order to solve a problem, a category that itself would prove to be a problem. Both of Shākya Chokden's statements quoted above clearly show a statement of assertion that the vows are not avijñaptirūpa. Indeed, avijñaptirūpa becomes a sort of failed, lower category only held by the lesser of the two non-Mahāyāna tenet systems. And yet, much of the abhidharma discussion around the nature of the vow remains significant in later treatments of the topic: that they are active, that they are not mutually exclusive with other vows, and that they remain even in states of distraction and other adverse states in the conscious mind. The *Mahāvibhāṣaśastra* in fact does not, as Dhammajoti puts it, "allude to the ontological status of *saṃvara* as *avijñapti*,"[158] but it still offers an explanation of the vows that is similar to Vasubandhu's explanation:

> The *prātimokṣa-saṃvara*, from the first moment of its projection by the informative *karma*, is present at all times in the ordainee who is endowed (*samanvāgata*) with it: whether he is asleep, drunk, mentally derailed, fainted; whether he is having a volition or not; whether he is having a defiled of neutral thought, or is thoughtless (*acittaka*)—in all states it is present, existing as an uninterrupted serial continuity. Accordingly, it can form the basis for the distinctive establishment of the seven assemblies.[159]

[158] Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 442.
[159] Dhammajoti, 442.

Although in this context, "vow" refers only to the prātimokṣa vows, the topics of discussion and the scriptural material being elucidated are the foundational sites of the very notion that a vow has a nature. They also provide the type of language that develops into three-vow theories in the tantric contexts. For example, the rejection of the vow as a type of form and the assertion of it as intention within a complex system of karmic acts and results within an abhidharma context leads to the possibility of positing the latter two vows also as the mental factor of intention, creating the possibility for the discussion of such questions as the sameness or difference of the three, whether they are mutually lost, and whether taking new vows causes the previous to be lost or transformed. That a vow must be some*thing*, and persist in a certain way regardless of the avijñapti category, helps clarify Shākya Chokden's efforts here to establish the right way to understand a wrong category.

In Tibetan texts, the doxography of the tenet systems is overlaid onto the concept of the nature of the vow with some variation, with the vow presented according to the models of mind and karma presented within each of the four tenet systems.[160] In his early modern compendium on the three vows, Jamgön Kongtrul presents a comprehensive approach to each tenet systems' definition of the nature of the vow: for the Vaibhāṣikas, vows arise as both avijñaptirūpa and vijñaptirūpa in the first moment and then abide thereafter as only avijñaptirūpa (precisely what Shākya Chokden refutes); the Sautrāntikas[161] assert that the vows consist of a transformation of

[160] As for doxography and the vows in the Chinese context, Thomas Newhall explains in detail that the seventh-century monk Daoxuan also takes a doxographic approach to various natures of the vows (or "essence of the precepts") based on his "three views and three doctrines" schema. See "A Study of the Concept of Jieti 'The Essence of the Precepts' in Daoxuan's (596–667) Vinaya Commentaries," *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* 27 (2014): 201–3.

[161] For the development of understanding of the Sautrāntika as a term, or not, of Indian sectarian self-identity, see Kritzer, *Vasubandhu and the Yogācarabhūmi*, xxvi; and "Sautrāntika in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 26, vol. 2 (2003): 201–24. Here, I use it following Kritzer to refer to a position antagonistic to the Vaibhāṣika view, and representative of views supported by Vasubandhu in the context of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*.

mental state; Cittamātra, or Vijñānavāda (*rnam rig smra ba*), as Kongtrul refers to them there, assert that the vow is the intention to restrain, together with its seeds in the ālayavijñana; and for the Madhyamaka system, they are the intention to restrain together with its associated mental factors.[162] The eighth Karmapa, Mikyo Dorje (1507–1554), presents in his commentary on the *Prātimokṣa Sūtra* a general definition of the vow's nature: "turning away from harming others, together with its basis." He then identifies each tenet system's specific assertion of what this "turning away" could be, within the constituent of the person. He states that the Vaibhāṣikas assert the vows to be avijñaptirūpa, Sautrāntikas assert the vows to be the virtue that is an intention to relinquish, and the Cittamātra tradition asserts them to be the virtue that is the intention to relinquish together with its seeds.[163] The omission of any assertion of the Madhyamaka tradition is noteworthy.

The nature of the vow relies on the model of mind, because for the Sautrāntika tenet system and above, karmic functioning is fundamentally a project of the mind. The Sautrāntika and Yogācāra systems assert that karmic acts deposit predispositions or latencies in the form of seeds that endure continuously until such time as they ripen into a karmic result. In the *Abhidharmakośakārikā* (ch. 1, v. 11), Vasubandhu presents the opposing view of the Vaibhāṣika, who maintain a quasi-material category of avijñaptirūpa which accounts for this same process of connecting a karmic act with its result.[164] Such a type of form is not perceptible (*avijñapti*) to any

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[162] Jamgön Kongtrul, *Buddhist Ethics*, 86–87.

[163] Eighth Karmapa, Mikyo Dorje, *So sor thar pa'i mdo yi grel pa rin chen 'byung gnas* (Dehradun: Songtsen Library, n.d.), 11. BDRC MW1KG14648. *'o na so thar gyi sdom pa rang gi ngo bo ni/ gzhan la gnod pa gzhi bcas las bzlog pa ste/ de yang bye smra ltar na/ rnam rig byed min gyi gzugs bstan med thogs med kyi chos kyi skye mched dang chos kyi khams su bsdus [. . .] mdo sde pas spong sems dge bar 'dod/ sems tsam pas spong sems dge ba sa bon dang bcas par 'dod/*

[164] Vasubandhu, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam of Vasubandhu*, ed. P. Pradhan (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1975), 8 (hereafter, *AKB-S*): *vikṣiptācittakasyāpi yo 'nubandhaḥ śubhāśubhaḥ / mahābhūtānyupādāya sa hy avijñaptirucyate* (ch. 1, v. 11). *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam of Vasubandhu* (hereafter *AKB-E*), 67. The Tibetan for this

sense faculty other than the mental sense faculty (being part of the *dharmāyatana*) and as such accounts for other difficult-to-categorize dharmas including images witnessed in meditation and the productive mere lack of action that is the prātimokṣa vow.[165] This category is only *quasi*-material because it does not possess all of the characteristics of the other ten types of form, the five sense faculties and five sense objects,[166] which becomes one basis, among others, for Vasubandhu to refute the very category itself in his autocommentary.[167]

Vasubandhu never directly states that the Vaibhāṣika view is that the nature of a vow is avijñaptirūpa; he in fact never uses the phrase "nature of a vow" at all.[168] Rather, this topic appears to be the outgrowth of several overlapping discussions[169] on the unseen element of

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verse is found at Vasubandhu, *Abhidharmakośakārikā*, *Chos mngon pa'i mdzod kyi tshig le'ur byas pa* (Dg.T. 4089), 2a5 (Hereafter, *AKK-T*): *g.yengs dang sems med pa yi yang/ dge dang mi dge rjes 'brel gang/ 'byung ba che rnams rgyur byas pa/ de ni rnam rig byed min brjod*. On this, see also V. V. Gokhale, "What is Avijñaptirūpa? (Concealed Form of Activity)" *New Indian Antiquary* 1 (1938): 69–73; Dhammajoti, "Karmic Role of the Avijñapti of the Sarvāstivāda," *Buddhist Studies* 31 (2003): 69–90; and Dhammajoti, "Saṃvara, Avijñapti and Karmic Retribution," 157–86.

[165] For other categories of the avijñapti, see Engle, *Inner Science of Buddhist Practice*, 265.

[166] *AKB-E,* 1:63. "*Rūpa*, or matter, is the five sense organs, five objects, and *avijñapti*" (ch. 1, v. 9ab).

[167] The fifth-century scholar Saṅghabhadra denied that Vasubandhu's definition was in accordance with the actual Vaibhāṣika view, discussed further below.

[168] Two later Indian commentators on the *AKB* do use this phrase, the sixth-century Yaśomitra and ninth-century Pūrṇavardana, although not when speaking of the prātimokṣa vows, but rather only when speaking of the dhyāna vows and anāsrava vows, of the form realms. Yaśomitra writes, "That which arises from contaminated samādhi is the nature of the dhyāna vow, while that which arises from uncontaminated samādhi is the nature of the anāsrava vow. It should be understood that [this is] the nature of derivative form and not the nature of mind and mental events, and so on" (*zag pa dang bcas pa'i ting nge 'dzin las byung ba ni bsam gtan gyi sdom pa'i ngo bo nyid yin la/ zag pa med pa'i ting nge 'dzin las byung ba ni zag pa med pa'i sdom pa'i ngo bo nyid yin te rgyur byas pa'i gzugs kyi ngo bo nyid yin gyi sems dang sems las byung ba la sogs pa'i ngo bo nyid ni ma yin no zhes bya bar khong du chud par bya'o*) in *Abhidharmakośasphuṭārthā*, *Chos mngon pa'i mdzod kyi 'grel bshad*, Dg.T. 4092, 26a7. Pūrṇavardana writes, "The nature of the [dhyāna] vow is [what is described in Vasubandhu's] statement, 'all of the virtue included within dhyāna'" (*bsam gtan du gtogs pa'i dge ba thams cad ces bya ba ni sdom pa'i ngo bo*) in *Abhidharmakośaṭīkālakṣaṇānusāriṇī, Chos mngon pa'i mdzod kyi 'grel bshad mtshan nyid kyi rjes su 'brang ba* (Dg.T. 4093), 41b7.The seventh-century Candrakīrti also uses the phrase *sdom pa'i ngo bo* in his *Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa*, *Phung po lnga'i rab tu byed pa* (Dg.T. 3866) 242b6, discussed further in Chapter One.

[169] K. L. Dhammajoti writes, "The *avijñapti* ('non-informing,' 'non-information') has been from the beginning primarily a *karma* doctrine in the Sarvāstivāda. The notion of '*saṃvara*' came to be associated with it at a very early stage, and underwent development until the form we find in the relatively later abhidharma texts, with its various divisions together with the specific conditions for their *lābha* ('obtainment') and *tyāga* ('relinquishment'). I shall argue that *saṃvara* has never been conceived of purely as an ethically restraining force generated within the ordained, to the exclusion of its karmic significance. This will lead us on to an examination of the nature of *avijñapti* not only as a medium of preserving karmic efficacy, but also a necessarily ever re-arising force dynamically

karma both within Sarvāstivāda abhidharma circles and across abhidharma and Yogācāra systems,[170] including whether the avijñapti is form and whether the avijñapti (form or not) is itself a viable category, being replaced variously with both intention (*cetanā*) and the idea of a transformation of the mental continuum (*saṃtatipariṇāmaviśeṣa*),[171] two notions that foreshadow essential terminology of later Tibetan three-vow theories.

In the first chapter of the *Kośa*, on the elements (*dhātus*) the primary topic of discussion on the avijñaptirūpa category is not whether the vows are material (as it comes to be in Tibetan discussions). Rather, it is whether the avijñapti—the unseen aspect of karmic actions of body and speech—is material (*rūpa*). It is in chapter 4, on the topic of karma, that Vasubandhu discusses the prātimokṣa vows at length, analyzing the causal series within the ordination process that give rise to both avijñapti and vijñapti aspects, though notably not affixing the term *-rūpa*.[172] These abhidharma analyses of karma then have implications for how such categories determine the production and functioning of vows (*saṃvara*, *sdom pa*,) and negative vows (*asaṃvara*, *sdom min*,)—that is, both the commitments of the monk and, for example, of an executioner committed to his unvirtuous vocation.

Vaibhāṣika phenomenology as presented by Vasubandhu did not have recourse to a model of mind that included a foundational "unconscious" (*ālayavijñana*, *kun gzhi rnam par shes pa*,), and so the modality of karmic efficacy during the inactive period between the act and

interacting with the person's mental status until its flow comes to be interrupted. . . ." ("Saṃvara, Avijñapti and Karmic Retribution," 157). In this article, Dhammajoti elucidates key studies in Japanese scholarship on the topic not available to those of us who cannot read the original, including Norisato Aohara's "Avijñapti and Saṃvara in the Early Sarvāstivāda Texts," *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 53, no. 2 (2005): 129–33; and "On the So-Called 'Misunderstanding of the *Avijñapti-karma*,'" *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 65, no. 2 (2017): 191–98.

[170] For the Yogācāra categorization of avijñapti as a mere provisional phenomenological category (*prajñapti*), see Kritzer, *Vasubandhu and the Yogācarabhūmi*, 5.

[171] Kritzer, *Vasubandhu and the Yogācarabhūmi*, 198.

[172] See *AKB*, 2:584. "The prātimokṣa is the first vijñapti and the first avijñapti," (ch. 4, v. 16cd) and "He who is in prātimokṣa always possesses avijñapti of the present moment, as long as he does not reject the avijñapti." (ch. 4, v. 19abc.)

its result, and thus also a vow—which endured uninterrupted throughout a lifetime even in states of syncope and distraction—had to be posited within the category of form (*rūpa*, *gzugs*,). The problematics presented in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, which led to the positing of vows as avijñaptirūpa in the first place, are solved without requiring the category of form to support the vow as an entity of its own. These requirements included being posited as a serial continuity (*anubandha*, *rgyun chags pa*,); being counted among the components (*skandha*, *phung po*) of the person who is the vow holder; being derivative, or caused by, but not constitutive of the four elements; and being lost at death.[173]

It is not enough simply to overlay a doxographical framework onto the various approaches, to arrive at a highest and final view that would have found scholarly consensus in Tibet. Though Vasubandhu himself rejected that the unseen aspect of karma (*avijñapti*) is form (*rūpa*),[174] eleventh and twelfth-century Tibetan discussions of vows that reference their seen and unseen aspects revitalized the avijñaptirūpa category, which reappears with surprising frequency as potentially viable. Despite its status in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* as a failed phenomenological category, it persisted and was subject to various reinterpretations. That prātimokṣa vows are avijñaptirūpa was accepted at least provisionally by Tibetan scholars potentially as early as Gampopa,[175] whose teaching includes that "the nature of the prātimokṣa

[173] In Mahāyāna and tantric contexts, the cittotpāda vows persist until enlightenment and the vidyādhara vows persist, according to Shākya Chokden, "as long as space endures." Having always been conceived of as instances of mind, these time periods pose no analytical problem, but once the prātimokṣa vows are also conceived of as mind, the exegete must then resolve this with the qualification that they are lost at death. This is the topic of Shākya Chokden's third question, relating it to the two other vows in the abhidharma context, dhyāna and anāsrava vows, answered in *Golden Lancet*, 450. For the time frame of the vidyādhara vows, see "Vidyādhara Discipline," 412: *nam mkha' ma zhig gi bar du gnas pa zhig go/*

[174] *AKB*, 1:71.

[175] Sobisch, 204, does not translate this line of Gampopa's text fragment he calls *Work A*: *so so thar pa'i bsdom pa'i ngo bo ni sems ma yin te / sems las byung ba yul dang dbang po lnga dang bca ste rnam par rig pa'i gzugs ma yin pa la rnam par rig byed ma yin pa gzugs bstan du med cing thogs pa med pa'i gzugs su 'dod pa/* Of these lines, all that appears in Sobisch's translation is "it is explained that the nature of the prātimokṣa vows are not mind."

vow is not mind; it is arisen from mind. It is not perceptible form like the five objects and faculties. It is asserted to be imperceptible form that is invisible and does not obstruct." A hint that Gampopa (or the scribe or later compiler of these teachings) was not merely presenting the Vaibhāṣika view but was presenting this as a valid description of the prātimokṣa vows is that he uses it to refute that it is also the nature of the other two vows. It also appears to be accepted as late as Karma Ngelek (Karma nges legs bstan 'dzin 'phrin las rab rgyas, b. 1700), who says that vows are "made of the four elements."[176] Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Taye (1813–1899) cites without refutation Naktso Lotsāwa's assertion that the prātimokṣa vows consist of a "substance" (*rdzas*).[177] The category appears sometimes with caveats and explanations that transform the meaning of the word "form," moving it more towards the usage of an "intention," although without using the word.[178] This could be why Jamgön Kongtrul, when summarizing such perspectives, says that the twelfth-century Jigten Sumgön, the fifteenth-century Taktshang Lotsāwa, and others only "mostly" (*phal cher*) accepted the category. This would be contrary to Jigten Sumgön (1143–1217), who at first seems to assert the nature of prātimokṣa vows as avijñaptirūpa unequivocally. In Sobisch's translation: "There are many who claim that the opinion that the essence of the vows is the mind of abandonment together with its seed and so forth is correct." And his "vajra statement" (*rdo rje tshig*), or definitive teaching, is: "The essence of the vows is imperceptible form."[179] His commentary on this statement is supported by

[176] Sobisch, 280.
[177] This appears in Jamgön Kongtrul's commentary on Atiśa's *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* (*Bodhipathapradīpa*). *Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma'i 'grel pa snying por bsdus pa byang chub lam gyi snang ba rab tu gsal ba*, in *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 3 (Shechen edition), pp. 15–61. Translation forthcoming in *Kadam: Texts, Advice, and Instructions, Part One*, Treasury of Precious Instructions, vol. 3, translated by Artemus B. Engle (Boulder: Shambhala, forthcoming). If this citation is in fact from a text by Naktso, it could be counted as a three-vow discussion that predates Gampopa.
[178] Sobisch explains Jigten Sumgön's usage as something more like the "embodiment of a thought." Sobisch, *Buddha's Single Intention*, 273.
[179] Sobisch, *Buddha's Single Intention*, 269.

citations from the *Abhidharmakośa* and yet he glosses imperceptible form (*avijñaptirūpa*) as "mental form," noting that it belongs to the dharmāyatana (*chos kyi bskyed ched*), the category of phenomena only identified by the mental consciousness. His example for such mental forms is the mental conceptualization of the vows in terms of the thought, "these vows are full monk vows and so on through the condition that is the gathering of the ten things to be actualized."[180] The ten things to be actualized are the ten sources from which the vow arises: the teacher, the buddha, the dharma, the preceptor, the master, the wish to be ordained, the ritual implements, authenticity, the request to be ordained, and karma.[181] Thus, even those who asserted that the vows are avijñaptirūpa were not necessarily asserting it as form in a strict sense, as mutually exclusive with mind.

When seeking to locate these views in Indian textual traditions, the classifications and language needed to explain these terms of the debate are themselves essentially unstable, as they are represented by a series of exegetes who did not agree with one another. This is made yet more complicated by trends in modern scholarship and efforts to right those trends. For example, is Sautrāntika a viable category of self-identified Indian tradition? Was Vasubandhu correcting the Vaibhāṣika abhidharma from the perspective of another non-Mahāyāna system or perspective, the Sautrāntikas, or was he incorporating his Yogācāra influence by introducing concepts like seeds (*bīja*) to replace Sarvāstivāda karma theory? Thus, when seeking to examine Shākya Chokden's use of the term "seeds" in his nature of the vow, it is uncertain whether he is using it in a non-Mahāyāna abhidharma context (in the sense of the avijñapti vs. seeds debate on

[180] Sobisch, 270.
[181] Sobisch, 334n514. This is also referenced in Shākya Chokden's *Good Questions*, question #2, though he does not list these in his answer, but rather clarifies statements made by Lhatun Samye, Pökhangpa, and Godongpa. See appendix 2.

karma within the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*) or whether is he engaging a decidedly Yogācāra model of mind, in that the seeds are deposited in a foundation consciousness (*ālayavijñana*), despite the fact that this latter concept is never mentioned in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*.[182] At least in the answer to his first question in the *Golden Lancet*, Shākya Chokden is speaking within a specifically abhidharma framework.

Avijñaptirūpa and Karma

There are two separate discussions of the avijñapti category in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*—in the first chapter, situated within the dhātus, or constituents of the person, and in the fourth chapter, presented as indispensable for the very process of karmic functioning (*upacaya*). The name of the tradition, Sarvāstivāda, is literally "everything exists," and in this context "everything" means past, present, and future phenomena. For karmic efficacy to function, what is past cannot be entirely past, since it has to produce a morally charged result, or effect or fruition (*phala, 'bras bu*), at some point in the future.

It is an uncontroversial and pan-Buddhist presentation that at least at the relative level the person is made up of mind and matter. These are elaborated on in the presentation of the skandhas, a fivefold organization of the person, beginning with form (*rūpa, gzugs*) which presents mind as actually four things: feelings (*vedanā, tshor ba*), perceptions (*saṃjñā, 'du shes*), mental formations (*saṃskāra, 'du byed*), and consciousness (*vijñāna, rnam shes*). The first chapter of the *Abhidharmakośa* presents an expansion of the form category to include the five

[182] See Robert Kritzer, "Sautrāntika in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 26, vol. 2 (2003): 224. See also Jaini, P. S., "The Sautrāntika Theory of Bīja," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 22, no. 2 (1959): 236–49. And, for "seeds" for liberation in the *Abhidharmakośa* and *Mahāvibhāṣa*, see Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 493.

sense faculties, consisting of a subtle materiality that are located in but separate from the gross organs of the eye, ear, and so on, and five sense objects, that which each of the faculties interacts with and makes known. Then, there is an eleventh type of form, avijñaptirūpa (literally, form that does not make itself known) which is uninvolved in this entire process of sense perception, making nothing known to the sense objects, but existing only in the dharmāyatana, the strata of phenomena that can only be known by the mind. This presentation of ten symmetrical and orderly aspects of the skandha of form is disrupted by one clear outlier, which bears no characteristics of the category itself and thus, unsurprisingly, attracted considerable critique.

The definition of avijñaptirūpa is based on the fourth chapter of the *Jñānaprasthāna*, where it is described as "that immediate consequence of manifest action that conditions the arising of the action's eventual effect."[183] It is the very mechanism of karma, the link between action and result, that is needed in a system that does not posit an operative or storehouse unconscious. It is a category that does not make a great deal of sense; it was clearly an ontological category that was formulated not because it was witnessed (like material form, for instance), but rather because it was deduced. It is a category invented to solve a problem. Some would say, it is a category invented because more categories were needed in order to round out or extend a particular kind of scholastic presentation of phenomena that was found in other doctrinal systems, but not yet in Buddhism, even a "a case of systematic thought gone awry."[184]

The Sanskrit word *avijñaptirūpa* has been translated into English as nonindicative form,[185] imperceptible form, non-expressible form, non-revelatory form, non-revelatory matter,

[183] Charles Willemen, Bart Dassein, and Collet Cox, *Sarvāstivāda Buddhist Scholasticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 226.
[184] For this presentation see Alexis Sanderson, "The Sarvāstivāda and Its Critics: Anātmavāda and the Theory of Karma," in *Buddhism into the Year 2000: International Conference Proceedings*, 33–48. And, for a clear summary of this view, see Greene, "Seeing Avijñapti-rūpa," 110.
[185] Chim Jampaiyang, *Ornament of Abhidharma*, 90.

concealed form of activity,[186] non-communicator,[187] noninformative matter, unexpressed matter,[188] and simply non-information.[189] The category is defined variously across Indian abhidharma literature, both canonical root texts and commentaries. It is a fundamentally unstable category as it does not fit neatly into either the categories of mind (*citta*, *caita*; *sems, sems 'byung*) or matter (*rūpa*, *gzugs*) or even what is neither mind or matter, those "conditioned factors unconnected to mind" (*cittaviprayuktisaṃskara*, *ldan min 'du byed*), a category containing such abstractions as acquisition (*prāpti*) and a life force (*jīvitendriya*).[190]

The concept of the material sense faculty that must function in addition to a sense consciousness is an abhidharma construction that accounts for the successful functionality of the sensory process without recourse to placing that function solely within the category of consciousness and without equating it to the visible sensory organ. That is, a person may have an eyeball (the visible organ) but not be able to see due, not to the eyeball, but to the absence of the subtle material of the eye sense faculty. Thus, in the first Vaibhāṣika argument in favor of the existence of avijñaptirūpa there is a claim that form is threefold: there is form that is visible form that can be destroyed, invisible form that can be destroyed, and invisible form that cannot be destroyed. The sense objects are the first, the sense faculties are the second, and avijñapti is the third.[191]

Vasubandhu defines it in verse 11 of the first chapter of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, on the dhātus:

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[186] V.V. Gokhale, "What Is Avijñaptirūpa (Concealed Form of Activity)?" *Indian Antiquary* 1 (1938): 69–73.
[187] Sanderson, "Sarvāstivāda and Its Critics," 33.
[188] Thomas Newhall, "A Study of the Concept of Jieti 'The Essence of the Precepts' in Daoxuan's (596–667) Vinaya Commentaries," Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies 27 (2014): 181–208.
[189] *AKB-E*, 1:136n57.
[190] *AKB-E*, 206 (ch. 2, v. 35–36a).
[191] *AKB-E*, 560.

There is a serial continuity

also in a person whose mind is distracted,

or who is without primary mind, pure or impure, in dependence on the primary elements;

this is called the avijñapti.[192]

In the very definition of the term we see the problem of continuity in a system that does not have a model of the unconscious. Virtuous and unvirtuous acts must propel a result despite intermediary states which would contradict it. The advantage in terms of the karmic system of putting an element of the karmic series in the category of form is that first, it is destroyed at death, and second, that it can coexist despite what the conscious mental state is doing.

In Yaśomitra's commentary, he quotes the Kashmiri scholar Saṅghabhadra, a proponent of the Vaibhāṣika view, and a contemporary and teacher of Vasubandhu. According to Butön's history, Vasubandhu sent Saṅghabhadra the verses of his *Abhidharmakośakārikā*, which he approved of, and then requested Vasubandhu to write a commentary. The result, the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*,[193] which rejected many of the topics put forth in the original verses, was not accepted by Saṅghabhadra, who wrote two of his own commentaries, refuting it on many points.[194] Thus, Saṅghabhadra defends the concept of the avijñaptirūpa, disagreeing with Vasubandhu's definition, and offering his own. The only extant portions of Saṅghabhadra's text, the *Nyāyānusāra*, are found in citations, and so we find his reply as quoted in Yaśomitra's

[192] *AKB-E*, 67. *AKK-T*, 2a5. *g.yengs dang sems med pa yi yang / dge dang mi dge rjes 'brel gang / 'byung ba che rnams rgyur byas pa / de ni rnam rig byed min brjod / AKB-S, vikṣiptācittakasyāpi yo 'nubandhaḥ śubhāśubhaḥ / mahābhūtāny upādāya sā hy avijñaptir ucyate /*

[193] Willemen, et al., *Sarvāstivāda Buddhist Scholasticism*, 243.

[194] Butön's version of the story ends sadly, with Vasubandhu fleeing from Nālandā to Nepal to avoid debating his former teacher. Saṅghabadra travels to Nālandā and soon after, dies. Willemen, et al., 243.

commentary, which is favorable to Vasubandhu's positions, the *Spuṭhārthā*. The issue at hand is the notion of the series (*rgyun chags*, *anubandha* or *pravāha*) or continuous stream, which shows up again in Sakya Paṇḍita's and some of Shākya Chokden's definitions of the vow. Saṅghabhadra's position is that if it were defined as a stream, the first moment of the avijñapti would not be able to be considered an avijñapti, since a single instance is not a stream. Saṅghabhadra's redefinition removes the word, "stream." It is, as translated by K.L. Dhammajoti:

> That [morally] defined, non-resistant matter, which exists in the thought at the time of the action as well [as subsequently], which is of a dissimilar as well [as similar moral] species, and also in the thoughtless state—this is conceded as the non-informative [matter].[195]

Yaśomitra's commentary rejects this reformulation and reintroduces the notion of the stream, which remains as part of the definition of the vow, long after the avijñapti itself is a rejected category.[196]

Based on the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, *Nyāyānusāra*, and *Abhidharmakośa*, Dhammajoti recognizes two separate rationale for the construction of the avijñaptirūpa concept. These are first, to account for such karmic series as that instigated by a murder-for-hire situation. That is, if a person has the intention to kill but does not carry out the act himself, he will still face the result of that intention at the moment when the act actually takes place, even though he does not carry

[195] K. L. Dhammajoti, "Karmic Role of the Avijñapti of the Sarvāstivāda," *Buddhist Studies* 31 (2003): 71.
[196] Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 426.

out the act himself and likely will not even be present for it. This is the fourth of the eight arguments on the status of the avijñaptirūpa between Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas in the *Abhidharmakośa.* The link between his intention to kill and the karmic retribution of killing had to be conceived of in a way that was apart from just the intention to kill in the mind of the hirer and apart from the physical act of killing by the hired murderer. The seventh of the eight arguments for the construction of the avijñaptirūpa category was to account for the "distinction" of the monks and nuns who hold vows over those laity who do not. That is, the "restraint" must be accounted for by a phenomenon in the person that is the continuation of a vow and its functionality to produce a stream of merit even in states where the monks and nuns are engaging in other types of intentions or actions. Other categories were then developed from this, including the opposite category of negative vows (*sdom min*, *asaṃvara*), or a vow-like commitment to enact nonvirtue, as well as categories of pure and meditative forms of restraint. Dhammajoti notes a "shift of emphasis" from the former use of the category to the latter but privileges the essential role of the category as primarily a karmic force.[197]

In the Sarvāstivāda tradition, karma is organized into categories of two and three. First, there is the intention to do something (*cetanā*), and then there is the act that has been willed (*cetanayitvā*). The classification into three are acts of body, speech, and mind. The first two are considered *vijñapti*, perceptible to the senses. The latter is not, and constitutes the intention behind what was done, the *cetanā*.[198] When something is intended, or willed in this process, it produces not only the visible act that is done, but also this stream, or continuum, of avijñapti,

[197] Dhammajoti, "Karmic Role of the Avijñapti of the Sarvāstivāda," 87.
[198] Dhammajoti notes that the concept of a mental avijñapti, which was not absorbed into later karma theories, was mentioned in the **Śariputrabhidharma*, an early abhidharma text available only in Chinese translation thought to be similar content as the Pāli *Vibhaṅga* and the Sarvāstivādin *Dharmaskandha.* K. L. Dhammajoti, "Saṃvara, Avijñapti and Karmic Retribution," 158.

which is unseen, unheard, and unknowable by the coarse senses and only through the mental sense faculty. Dhammajoti writes that "the avijñapti doctrine is undoubtedly a karmic doctrine. Its 'karmic role' is both as a medium of preservation of the karmic efficacy originated from a specific *cetanā* [intention] and bodily or vocal *vijñapti-karma*, and as a dynamic serial interaction with the mental status of the sentient being."[199] And, still, what would this have to do with a vow? Dhammajoti states that it is because the vow itself is a positive karmic action ("A *saṃvara* is essentially a *sucarita*").[200]

There is also a broader theme that seems to include both its usage in karma theory and its usage as the nature of the vow. Shākya Chokden later uses the term substance (*rdzas*, *dravya*) sometimes interchangeably with "nature" (*ngo bo*) and sometimes interchangeably with form (*gzugs*). In this abhidharma context, the term is used to mean "reality" or "something real"—and differentiates dharmas, phenomena, that are viable categories from those that are not, or those that are only provisional. Taking the avijñaptirūpa category as real (*dravya*) allows other things, which might not be, to be taken as real as well. This includes the mere lack that is the inaction in between a karmic act and its result. It also includes the mere lack that is the "restraint" that is the nature of the vow. The vow itself is not something that occurs once and is over, like the ordination process. It has to endure for a certain amount of time. And it has to endure, sometimes, regardless of what the vow holder is thinking about, doing, or thinking about doing.

[199] K. L. Dhammajoti, 181.
[200] Dhammajoti, 181.

Western Scholarship in Avijñaptirūpa

On the two key areas of the use of the avijñaptirūpa concept pointed out by K. L. Dhammajoti—as karmic efficacy and as the restraint of a vow (*saṃvara*)—two perspectives have formed among contemporary scholars, one which asserts that the former to be primary and another which asserts that the latter is primary. While most of this scholarship has been in Japanese,[201] three articles written in English represent the current conversation on avijñaptirūpa in the abhidharma and span this divide: Eric Greene's 2016 "Seeing Avijñaptirūpa," Daniel Stuart's 2017 "Unmanifest Perceptions," which directly argues with the former, and Dhammajoti's 2020 "Saṃvara, Avijñapti and Karmic Retribution." In his 2003 article, "Karmic Role of the Avijñapti in Sarvāstivāda," Dhammajoti presented the two primary uses of the concept in progressive order, writing, "It appears that the monastic abhidharma scholiasts gradually shifted their focus of discussion on the avijñapti as restraint and its related categories."[202] Greene presents the opposite order of development, saying that the category served, "most fundamentally, to explain the ontology of the disciplinary restraints of precepts taken on by monks, nuns, and certain lay followers."[203] And again, "the original motivation for *avijñapti-karma*, and the most important area where it was discussed in later sources, was as an explanation of the power of *saṃvara*, or moral restraint."[204] Representing the opposite view, Dhammajoti writes, "the Sarvāstivāda *avijñapti* doctrine is undoubtedly a *karma* doctrine. Its 'karmic role' is both as a medium of preservation of the karmic efficacy originated from a specific cetanā and bodily or vocal vijñapti-

[201] See Dhammajoti's discussion of Norisato Aohara's demonstration that the terms *saṃvara* and *avijñapti-karma* appear in the Sarvāstivādin *Dharmaskandha* as synonyms, although the term *avijñaptirūpa* does not appear there at all. Dhammajoti, "Saṃvara, Avijñapti and Karmic Retribution," 158.
[202] K. L. Dhammajoti, "Karmic Role of the Avijñapti of the Sarvāstivāda," Buddhist Studies 31 (2003): 87.
[203] Greene, "Seeing Avijñapti-rūpa," 111.
[204] Greene, 114.

karma, and as a dynamic serial interaction with the mental status of the sentient being."[205] That is, even if the notion of saṃvara was there in the discussion early on, it "was never conceived of purely as an ethically restraining force generated within the ordinand, to the exclusion of its karmic significance."[206] There are thus two related issues at hand: whether, in terms of Sarvāstivāda abhidharma, the role of avijñaptirūpa in terms of vows was always simply the most useful karmic feature, among many, to describe the karmic act of ordination and not originally formulated as specifically the dhātu in which vows could be placed (that is, their nature); and second, whether this means that it does or does not have significance for a theory of ritual efficacy that bypasses intention.

The former two articles, while dealing with much of the same textual content, take opposing theoretical stances on how avijñaptirūpa should be understood in terms of ritual efficacy and whether "native" or Western theories of ritual and its separation of sincere intention and insincere ritual acts are engaged. Daniel Stuart contextualizes the avijñaptirūpa category as a problematic that arises from a practice context, in terms of its usage as a category to hold both meditative objects and the intermediate state. He says, "The key problematic of how mind and matter interact within a framework of mind-matter interdependence drove Buddhist tradition to posit a range of liminal forms of materiality."[207]

It seems that the creation of something out of a lack, without recourse to a Yogācāra concept of ālayavijñana, is the primary function of the avijñapti, no matter where one falls on the other debated issues and regardless of what came first—the chicken or egg problem of vows and

[205] Dhammajoti, "Saṃvara, Avijñapti and Karmic Retribution," 181.
[206] Dhammajoti, 157.
[207] Daniel M. Stuart, "Unmanifest Perceptions: Mind-Matter Interdependence and Its Consequences in Buddhist Thought and Practice." *In Śrāvakabhūmi and Buddhist Manuscripts*, ed. Jundo Nagashima and Seongcheol Kim (Tokyo: Nombre Publications, 2017), 164.

karma. Yet, accounting for this lack without recourse to mind, allowing it to persist in all sorts of mental states, does not remove the importance of the mind either for the karmic process nor the persistence of vows. So, Greene's perspective that avijñaptirūpa allows for, in Stuart's reading, a ritual without sincerity, falls apart easily when viewed in the context of the primacy of the original *cetanā,* the intention that instigates the entire karmic cycle and leads to one being ordained (or taking lay vows) in the first place. Yet, as is seen especially in Shākya Chokden's analysis below, the question of avijñaptirūpa and when it begins has more to bear on the continuation of the vow rather than the ordination proceedings as ritual themselves. The sincerity of intention is entwined in the ritual act, making Stuart's criticism about taking into account "native ritual" noteworthy, if we consider "native ritual" the canonical explanation of the ordination, the *pravajya.* Speaking alongside Robert Sharf, Greene acknowledges the normative rather than descriptive foundation of early Indian Buddhist commentarial path literature, in that the writing seeks to anchor doctrinal themes in reason and tradition already established by the authority of unbroken lineage rather than reflecting individualized, new, or inchoate experiences. Yet, he pushes against this, suggesting that meditative experiences could also be motivating and causal for higher level presentations of phenomenological categories, significant not only within scholastic circles. This also takes an opposite position to Alexis Sanderson, who saw categories for the sake of categories.[208] Greene rather presents avijñaptirūpa as exemplary of a category rooted in meditative experience by showing its usage in Vasubandhu's works and Chinese meditation manuals as the larger category or dharma within which certain meditative visions are included.

[208] Robert Sharf, "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience," *Numen* 42, no. 3 (1995): 228–83.

Stuart intervenes by stating that Greene is relying entirely on a modern scholarly rather than a Buddhist concept of ritual. The modern scholarly concept would separate out activities into the sincere, or intentional, act from the work of ritual, about which the only thing that matters is that it is done correctly, regardless of current mental workings. The authors of *Ritual and Its Consequences*, Stuart's referent for the modern notions of ritual Greene holds, state that "ritual is not necessarily—or even primarily—something one thinks about."[209] "One" in this case refers not to the later abhidharma scholiasts, but rather to the one performing the ritual at the time of its "active and endless, work."[210]

However, it does not seem that the avijñaptirūpa category eschews the necessity of intention in the mind of the beholder, an assertion that persists in Vasubandhu and is expanded upon by Tibetan commentators. In fact, the mental factors activated in the preceptee define the type of morality that is produced. This is not only based on the quality of the intentions of preceptees but also on their personal philosophical view of reality. In his autocommentary, when answering the question of whether a non-Buddhist can hold vows, Vasubandhu states that a preceptee with a view of existence (*bhavasaṃniśrita*) will not possess the vow because their faults (*pāpa*) will not be properly bound (*prātimokṣana*). [211] The view of existence is explained as the view held by non-Buddhists, who either have a goal of a higher rebirth or a false liberation that they treat as some kind of existence, and is not a true liberation. Here, it is clear not that he

[209] Seligman, Adam B., Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Puett, and Bennett Simon. *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 27.
[210] Seligman, et al., 27.
[211] *AKB-S*, 208 (ch. 4 v. 17). *kim khalu bāhyakānām samādānaśilaṃ nāsti/ asti na tu prātimokṣasaṃvarah / kiṃ kāraṇam / nahi tadatyantaṃ pāpasya pratimokaṇāya saṃvartate/ bhavasamnisritatvāt /. AKB-T*, 177b7. *yang phyi rol pa rnams la yang dag par blangs pa'i tshul khrims med dam zhe na/ yod med kyi so sor thar ba'i sdom pa ni ma yin no/ ci'i phyir zhe na de ni srid pa la brten pa'i phyir gtan du sdig pa las so sor thar par byed pa ma yin no/*

rejects their status as quasi-form, but that Vasubandhu's vow theory necessitates that mental states and philosophical views interfere with the mechanics of vow production.

Thus, avijñaptirūpa has in fact been situated in multiple ways, depending on the literature relied on and the relative dating of such scripture: as an ad hoc category to solve problems that the similar and simultaneous series of acquisition (*prāpti*) could not account for (Greene), a category primarily and originally associated with karma and indispensable to the Sarvāstivāda theory of karma (Dhammajoti), a category devised at a time when the very project of classifying phenomena proliferated categories that did not make much sense (Sanderson), and finally a concept closely and originally connected to account for the active qualities of the restraint of a vow, that such restraint is not a mere lack, but a real (*dravya*) entity, a constituent of the person (*dhātu*).

The karmic significance of the ritual act that is the vow-conferral ordination meant that as the models of karma were being sorted out, the idea of the vow had to evolve alongside it. That is, the avijñapti category did not necessarily imply a greater association with abhidharma ideas, since the idea of the vow as mind is at least there by the time of Vasubandhu. By extension, the notion of the vow as a mental factor together with an enduring unconscious element, such as seeds or "perfuming" (*vāsana*) do not have to necessarily be referencing a Yogācāra philosophical system.

Shākya Chokden on Avijñaptirūpa

Shākya Chokden's clarification of the concept of avijñaptirūpa does not contextualize it among other definitions of the nature of a vow that he might consider correct, such as the mental factor of intention (*bsam pa*). Rather he seeks to clarify the Vaibhāṣika view within the terms of its own

system. Whether the prātimokṣa vows are avijñapti or vijñapti, according to Vasubandhu, is determined by presenting the three phases of a karmic act—preparation, actual deed, and conclusion (*sbyor dngos 'jug*)—and showing how these are mapped on to the two categories of the unseen and seen aspects within the karmic process, and hence aspects of the ordination process that produces the vows. In his first section, on representing the confusion around the reading of the *Abhidharmakośa*, he focuses only on the fourth chapter, on the topic of karma, explaining a series of stanzas out of order of the text. He treats the stanzas and their commentary in this order: 18, 13, 2, 3, 122. In his actual answer, he focuses on stanzas 4, 13, 67, 68, 69, and 16, then returns to 68, returns to 4, and then concludes with 72. Rather than following the text in order, he is selective in his citing of Vasubandhu in order to clarify specific points of confusion over the karmic process.

Shākya Chokden begins by clarifying that he is not necessarily offering his own view, or a final ultimately true statement, but rather that his project is to clarify a verse from Sakya Paṇḍita's *Differentiating the Three Vows.* He states, "There are three questions that issue from [Sakya Paṇḍita's verse]," and cites that verse as follows:

> [The reason for the vows being lost at death]
> is that it is asserted that śrāvaka vows are avijñapti,
> arising from body and speech.
> Because the vows are material,
> the vows are lost at death.[212]

[212] GL, 527. *de yang/ ji skad du/ nyan thos sdom pa rnam rig min/ lus ngag las ni skye bar 'dod/ sdom pa gzugs can yin pa'i phyir/ shi ba'i tshe na sdom pa gtong/ zhes pa las brtsams pa'i dri ba ni / gsum ste/* Sakya Paṇḍita, *A Clear*

The three questions that begin the *Golden Lancet,* which are asked in order to clarify this verse are: [1] "Where is the explanation that the prātimokṣa vows in the śrāvaka tradition are only avijñaptirūpa? Is it not also explained that they are also vijñaptirūpa?"[213] [2] "If the intent of the treatises is that 'the śrāvaka prātimokṣa vows arise from the body and speech of the upādhyāya [preceptor] and ācārya [teacher],' are there not ten causes for obtaining the vows?"[214] [3] "If vows are lost through death due to the reason of their being material, does this not pertain to the dhyāna and anāsrava vows?"[215] The answer to the first question will be addressed here. As in many of his answers, he organizes it into two parts, "demonstrating contemplation of the question and the actual answer," also dividing the first of these two into two parts, "the question's purpose and the fault that exists if one does not ask."

Part of the question's purpose is to clarify the word *śrāvaka,* which he identifies as including more than just the Vaibhāṣika view, but also the Sautrāntika view. He states,

> With the inclusive word śrāvaka [used in *Differentiating the Three Vows*],[216] there is a basis for confusion of thinking, "Are the [vows] also like that [considered material] even in the Sautrāntika tradition?"[217]

Differentiation of the Three Codes: Essential Distinctions among the Individual Liberation, Great Vehicle, and Tantric System, trans. Jared Rhoton (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), 41 and 278 (ch. 1, v. 4).

[213] *GL,* 527. *nyan thos lugs la sor thar gyi/ sdom pa rig byed min pa'i gzugs/ kho nar bshad pa gang na yod/* [*rig byed gzugs kyang ma bshad dam/*] *ces dang/*

[214] *GL,* 527. *nyan thos sor thar mkhan slob kyi/ lus ngag las ni skye zhes pa/ gzhung gi dgongs pa yin na ni/ sdom pa'i 'thob rgyu bcu med dam/ zhes dang/*

[215] *GL,* 527. *gzugs can yin pa'i rgyu mtshan gyis/ shi bas gtong na bsam gtan dang/ zag med gnyis la'ang mi thal lam/ zhes pa'o/*

[216] Sakya Paṇḍita, *A Clear Differentiation of the Three* Codes, 41 and 278 (ch. 1, v. 4).

[217] *GL,* 527. *'di la gsum las/ dang po la/ 'dri ba'i bsam pa bstan pa dang/ de'i dngos lan no/ dang po la/ 'dri dgos pa'i rgyu mtshan dang/ ma dris na skyon yod pa'o/ dang po ni/ nyan thos zhes pa'i tshig sboms pas/ mdo sde pa'i lugs la yang de ltar yod dam snyam pa'i 'khrul gzhi yod pa dang/*

Since śrāvaka refers to both Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika systems, he seeks here just to broaden what the term refers to and point to a multiplicity of perspectives and assertions across the two tenet systems, as they are understood by Tibetans.[218] After clarifying this, he specifically names who he is arguing against in this context. He does not name contemporary scholars despite the fact that it is clear that Gorampa and Lowo Khenchen disagreed with him on this point, both arguing for the perspective that śrāvaka vows are both vijñapti and avijñapti.[219] Rather, he names two scholars who wrote prominent commentaries on Sakya Paṇḍita's *Differentiating the Three Vows*: the fourteenth-century exegetes Lhatsun Samye and Pökhangpa.[220] Shākya Chokden writes:

> When adopting the Vaibhāṣika system itself as the basis [of discussion], Lhatsun Samye, an author of a commentary on this text, explained that the nature of the prātimokṣa vows is both vijñaptirūpa and avijñaptirūpa. And the exegete [on this text] Pökhangpa apparently explained that in the first moment, the prātimokṣa vows arise as vijñaptirūpa and from the second moment onward, they arise as avijñaptirūpa. Therefore, since these days also it is possible that there are people who make such assertions, I demonstrate [such opponents'] assertions and present their refutation.

After presenting the two points of view that he deems to be incorrect, that the vows are both

[218] Jigten Sumgön makes this same point in his *Single Intention.* See Sobish's translation, 270.
[219] *Sdom pa gsum gyi bstan bcos la dris shing rtsod pa'i lan sdom gsum 'khrul spong* in *Gsung 'bum* (Rdzong sar khams bye'i slob gling, 2004–2014), 632–33.
[220] Spos khang pa Rin chen rgyal mtshan, 1348–1430. His commentary was written in 1427. Rhoton, *A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes*, 30n24.

avijñaptirūpa and vijñaptirūpa together or in progressive order, Shākya Chokden then presents his own assertion of what the Vaibhāṣika system maintains:

> Furthermore, the reason [for the question] is the need for understanding scriptures and reasoning that indicate that [prātimokṣa vows] must be explained to be only avijñaptirūpa.[221]

In his next section, "The fault that exists if one does not ask" (*ma dris na skyon yod pa ni*), he differentiates two approaches to understanding the term *avijñapti.* He states:

> When explaining the meaning of *avijñapti*, some explain it as "not consciousness" and others explain it as only primarily avijñaptirūpa.[222]

There are two ways to understand his statement that some explain avijñapti to refer to what is not consciousness (*shes pa ma yin pa*). One is that in the twofold karmic process mentioned above—the intention and what is intended, with the intention (*cetanā*) being the actual karma and the actions thereafter being the karmic path (*karmapatha, las kyi lam*)—there is no avijñapti at the level of the mere intention. The avijñapti as mechanism is not propelled by mere intentions

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[221] GL, 527–28. *bye brag tu smra ba nyid kyi lugs gzhir gzhag pa la'ang/ gzhung 'di'i rnam bshad mdzad pa po lha btsun bsam yas pas/ so thar sdom pa'i ngo bo la rig byed kyi gzugs dang/ rig byed ma yin pa'i gzugs gnyis ka yod par 'chad pa dang/ rnam bshad mdzad pa spos khang pa/ so thar sdom pa skad cig dang po rnam par rig byed kyi gzugs can du skye zhing/ skad cig gnyis pa phan chad rig byed ma yin pa'i gzugs su skye zhes 'chad par snang* [527] *bas/ dus 'dir yang de ltar khas len pa dag yod srid pas/ de ltar khas len du bcug nas/ de la gnod byed ston pa dang/ de nas/ rig byed ma yin pa'i gzugs kho nar 'chad dgos pa'i shes byed kyi lung rigs rtogs dgos pa'i rgyu mtshan gyis so/*

[222] *GL*, 528. *ma dris na skyon yod pa ni/ rnam rig min/ zhes pa'i don 'chad pa na/ la la dag shes pa ma yin pa la 'chad pa dang/ gzhan dag rig byed ma yin pa'i gzugs gtso che ba tsam la 'chad pa dang/*

alone; there must be actions of body and speech that intervene in between the intention and the results produced.[223] Thus, avijñapti accounts for the karmically efficacious series after and not including the initial karmic element that is consciousness. The second way to understand his statement is simply etymological. In Sanskrit the primary meaning of *vijñapti* is "consciousness" and the initial *a-* is a negating suffix. Thus, avijñapti can be understood as a simple negation meaning not just "what does not make itself known," as the term is usually glossed in this abhidharma context, but simply as "what is not consciousness." The second option he presents is that some think of avijñapti as intending only avijñaptirūpa, that is, the eleventh type of form of the form dhātu, where it is explained primarily as the nature of restraint and not analyzed in terms of its place in the karmic process. These two are presented by Shākya Chokden as limiting understandings of the term, which his later elaboration on its place in the karmic process seeks to remedy.

The next fault in thinking that he seeks to remedy is in the meaning of "śrāvaka vows." According to the general Tibetan doxography, the hierarchy of tenet systems presents "śrāvakas" as those who follow the two lower tenet systems, do not take bodhisattva vows, and do not practice tantra. So, the use of the term *śrāvaka* can indicate this particular group and their philosophical perspectives exclusively. Yet, what complicates the term is that in the Tibetan context, as was the case in India, many if not most adherents of the Mahāyāna and of tantra were also monks who took the prātimokṣa vows. In Tibet, they were taken by means of the Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya tradition, which is the only tradition considered legitimate. That is, because, unlike in East Asia, there is no exclusively Mahāyāna ordination procedure to ordain Mahāyāna monks, the śrāvaka tradition remains the sole mode for ordaining monks and nuns.

[223] Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 421.

So, any statement made about śrāvaka *vows* could be inclusive of the Tibetan tradition writ large, as well, despite not being a śrāvaka *tradition* or school of tenets. Shākya Chokden writes:

> As for the meaning of "śrāvaka vows," some do not explain it as [solely pertaining to] the dharma tenets of the śrāvakas but rather assert that it is all prātimokṣa vows that are taken through the śrāvaka ritual tradition, whose mode of abiding is that they persist as material.[224]

This statement implies that the notion of the vows being broadly material—in both avijñapti and vijñapti forms—persisted in Tibet in reference not only to others' vows, but to the Tibetans' own monastic vows that came from a śrāvaka ritual system.

Shākya Chokden's next point is the primary viewpoint he takes aim at in this section. In clarifying the perspective of the Vaibhāṣikas, he shows that even for them, the vows are not both avijñapti and vijñapti, and furthermore, not all vows are avijñapti. Indeed, he argues that some vows, when understood as the nature of restraint, exist as instances of mind, even for the Vaibhāṣikas. He writes:

> Also, it appears that some others explain that the Vaibhāṣika tradition asserts that vows are necessarily material. The following explains that, if that is accepted, it is incorrect and scholarly treatises will be wasted.[225]

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[224] *GL,* 528. *nyan thos sdom pa/ zhes pa'i don yang/ kha cig nyan chos kyi grub mtha' la mi 'chad par/ nyan thos kyi lugs kyi cho gas blangs pa'i so thar gyi sdom pa gang yin thams cad/ gnas tshod la gzugs can du gnas par 'dod pa dang/*

[225] *GL,* 528. *yang la la dag/ bye brag smra ba'i lugs kyis/ sdom pa la gzugs can gyis khyab par 'dod do/ zhes 'chad pa dag snang bas so/ de ltar khas blangs na skyon dang bcas shing/ mkhas pa'i bstan bcos chud gson pa'i shes byed ni/*

In his explanation of why this is the case, he cites verse 18 of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, which explains two types of vows, dhyāna and anāsrava, those vows arisen from meditative states of the Form Realm and of noble beings. These two are considered "abandoning vows" (*prahāṇnasaṃvara*), in that they relinquish immoral or defiled states. The last line of verse 18 states that there are disciplines of the mind, concentration (*saṃprajāna*) and mindfulness (*smṛti*) that "bind" (*sdom*) the mind, and these are active in the process of restraining the mind from the three mental nonvirtues: greed, harmful intent, and wrong view. This engages the literal meaning of vow (*saṃvara, sdom pa*) as meaning "to bind," and so it is not the case that whatever binds, even according to the Vaibhāṣikas, is included in the form dhātu. Shākya Chokden writes:

> If the Vaibhāṣika tradition, [due to] the mere fact [that they are] vows, [holds that they] are necessarily material, then it would follow that [the tradition] would not accept that, as it was said, "Awareness and mindfulness are what bind the mind and the faculties."[226] And, it would follow that they would not accept vows that abandon, from among the ten nonvirtues, the three pertaining to mind. And it would follow that relinquishment that serves as the nature of the dhyāna and anāsrava vows would be necessarily included in any of the sevenfold relinquishments. And it would follow that those [two vows], being similar to the prātimokṣa vows, would be vows that correspond to the sevenfold relinquishment, together with their accompanying factors.[227]

[226] Vasubandhu, *Abhidharmakośakārikā, Chos mngon pa'i mdzod kyi tshig le'ur byas pa*, Dg.T. 4089 (hereafter *AKK-T*), 11b2 (ch. 4, v. 18cd). *AKB-E*, 2:586. *AKB-S*, 209. *saṃprajñānasmṛtī dve tu manindriyasaṃvarau*.
[227] *GL*, 528–29. *bye brag tu smra ba'i lugs la/ sdom pa tsam la gzugs can gyi khyab na/ ji skad du/ shes bzhin dang ni dran dag gnyis/ yid dang dbang po'i sdom pa yin/ zhes bshad pa de khas mi len par thal ba dang/ mi dge ba bcu las yid kyi gsum po spong ba'i sdom pa mi 'dod par thal ba dang/ bsam gtan dang zag med kyi sdom pa'i ngo bor*

He shows here that even in the Vaibhāṣika tradition, vows cross the spectrum of both what is material and immaterial. That is, if vows were only material, they could not serve to restrain one from the nonvitures that have to do with mind, and it would also follow that the dhyāna and anāsrava vows would have to also serve to restrain one from the seven things to be relinquished pertaining to the three body and the four of speech, which is the purview specifically of the prātimokṣa vows.

After this opening, Shākya Chokden turns to the topic that is the primary focus of his answer: the two main errors of those who explain how and whether vows exist as vijñaptirūpa (the first ten types of form) or avijñaptirūpa (an eleventh). He states that there are two mistakes, one that is entirely unreasonable and has no basis in Vasubandhu's text itself and one that is reasonable, based on an understandable misreading of certain passages. He states:

> In particular, regarding the statement that the prātimokṣa vows arise first as vijñaptirūpa, it goes without saying that there are no pure scriptural statements that testify to that. There does not exist even a mere scriptural statement that is a cause for such a basis for confusion to arise. Thus, [such confusion] is only due to engaging in analysis without knowing the textual tradition of the Vaibhāṣikas. There is, however, a textual basis for confusion regarding the statement that both vijñapti- and avijñaptirūpa serve as the nature of the prātimokṣa vows. But this is not the noble Vasubandhu's explanation of the intention of the Vaibhāṣikas, and it is not the intention of the author of this treatise

gyur pa'i spong pa la/ spong ba bdun po gang rung gis khyab par thal ba dang/ de lta na de dag kyang so sor thar pa'i sdom pa dang 'dra bar/ spong bdun 'khor bcas kyi sdom pa nyid du thal bar 'gyur ro/

[Sakya Paṇḍita].[228]

The confusion that is unreasonable is the claim that the vows arise in the first moment as vijñaptirūpa and thereafter are avijñaptirūpa. The confusion that is reasonable is that they arise as both together, though he shows through citing extensively from the text that this is not the case. He will show that those physical and vocal acts that are the visible or audible parts of the karmic act are not the vow itself, even in the very moment of its production. He then identifies the statements in the *Abhidharmakośa* that are the basis for such confusion. He writes:

> There are two statements: "The body vijñapti is asserted to be shape,"[229] and "the speech vijñapti is the sound of speech."[230] [These] are explained respectively as referring to the dhātus of form and sound, but in general if something is a vow, it is contradictory for it to be those. And, if vows existed as having the nature of those [two dhātus], it would be necessary to accept that the vijñapti body and speech of the one taking [vows] are those [vows]. From that, there is a great [unwanted] consequence. If the vijñapti speech at the time that the novice vows first arise were accepted as novice vows, one would have then accepted the common locus between the ritual for taking vows and the vows. If it is not accepted as that, one would not be able to find the vijñaptirūpa of speech that serves as

[228] *GL*, 529. *bye brag tu so thar gyi sdom pa thog mar rnam par rig byed kyi gzugs su skye zhes pa la ni/ shes byed kyi lung rnam par dag pa lta ci smos/ 'khrul gzhi skyed byed kyi lung tsam yang med pas/ bye smra'i gzhung lugs ma mkhyen pas/ brtags par zad la/ so thar gyi sdom pa'i ngo bor gyur pa'i rig byed dang/ rig byed ma yin pa'i gzugs gnyis ka yod do zhes zer ba la ni/ lung gi 'khrul gzhi yod kyang/ bye smra'i dgongs pa dbyig gnyen zhabs kyi bshad pa de ma yin pa dang/ bstan bcos mdzad pa 'di'i dgongs pa yang ma yin no/*
[229] *AKK-T*, 10b7 (ch. 4, v. 2b). *AKB-E*, 2:552. *AKB-S*, 192 *kāyavijñaptiriyate saṃsthānaṃ*.
[230] *GL*, 529. *ji ltar zhe na/ ji skad du/ lus rnam rig byed dbyibs su 'dod/ ces dang/ ngag rnam rig byed ni ngag sgra/ zhes gnyis po go rim bzhin du/ AKK-T*, 11a1 (ch. 4, v. 3d). *AKB-E*, 2:560. *AKB-S*, 196. *vāgvijñaptis tu vāgdhvaniḥ*.

the nature [of those vows].[231]

In the series of the karmic process, an intention (*cetanā*, an action of mind) gives rise to what is intended (*cetayitvā*). What is intended consists of two types of actions, those of the body and those speech. Actions of body and speech each themselves consist of two series: there is bodily vijñapti and avijñapti and there is speech vijñapti and avijñapti. That is, when an action of the body takes place, there is the activity that can be seen and there is the connection to a future karmic result that cannot be seen. In a system such as that of the Vaibhāṣikas, who present phenomena as existing in a series of moments (*kṣanika*, *skad cig*), in which each moment "perishes immediately after having acquired its being,"[232] there is no valid concept of movement. And so an act done by the body that is visible to the eye is the shape of such an action, not a movement that extends through space and has a duration. This is because once one moment (*kṣana*) of a movement has ceased, the next moment of such movement is a new and different moment of that phenomenon, as "a conditioned thing does not exist beyond the acquisition of its being; it perishes on the spot where it arises; it cannot go from this spot to another."[233] This view is not held by all abhidharma systems,[234] but the essential momentariness of the entire doctrinal system dictates that karma happens in moments and each aspect of the karmic process also extends through time as a series.

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[231] *GL*, 529. *gzugs dang sgra'i skye mched du bshad la/ spyir sdom pa yin na de dang der 'gal ba'i rgyu mtshan gyis dang/ de'i ngo bor gyur pa'i de yod na/ len pa po'i lus ngag gi rnam par rig byed der khas len dgos pa las/ de yang ha cang thal ba'i phyir dang/ dge tshul gyi sdom pa dang por skyes dus kyi ngag gi rig byed dge tshul gyi sdom par khas blangs na/ sdom pa len pa'i cho ga dang sdom pa'i gzhi mthun khas blangs par song ba'i phyir dang/ de der khas mi len na ni/ de'i ngo bor gyur pa'i ngag gi rnam par rig byed kyi gzugs mi rnyed pa'i phyir/*

[232] *AKB-E*, 2:553. Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 423. This is the basis for Sanghabhadra's rejection of Vasubandhu's definition of the avijñaptirūpa.

[233] *AKB-E*, 2:553.

[234] See Dhammajoti, 423 for the perspective of the Sāṃmitīya, who say that the bodily vijñapti is movement.

Of the ten types of form that are vijñapti—the five sense faculties and the five sense objects—bodily vijñapti, here defined as shape, and speech vijñapti, here defined as sound, are the two that are propelled by intention. Of the latter five, this excludes the more passive senses: the tangible (the object of the body sense faculty), taste (the object of the tongue sense faculty), and smell (the object of the nose sense faculty). The sixth, the object of the mental sense faculty, includes the avijñapti, as it is within the *dharmāyatana*, the realm of what is known by the mental sense faculty alone. The unwanted consequence that Shākya Chokden points out here, is that if the vows were the vijñapti aspect of the karmic process, they would be bodily or vocal vijñapti, which means they would be shape or sound. Thus there would be a common locus—that is, something that is both categories—between the actual ritual for producing vows and the vows themselves—that is, there would be something that is both the vow itself and the cause for producing the vows, which is illogical. The vows therefore cannot be both vijñapti and avijñapti.

Shākya Chokden then presents another statement made in the *Abhidharmakośa* that would cause reasonable confusion around whether the vows are both vijñapti and avijñapti. He states:

> One might say, "Well then, does [the *Abhidharmakośa*] not say, 'Renouncing that [negative discipline] is discipline. It is twofold.'"?[235]

Here, he is citing verse 122, in which the larger category of discipline, or morality (*śīla*), is defined in terms of both vijñapti and avijñapti, the former being the perceptible activity by which

[235] *GL*, 529.*'o na ji skad du/ de spong tshul khrims rnam gnyis so/ zhes bshad pa ma yin nam zhe na/ AKK-T*, 15b4 (ch. 4, v. 122ab). *AKB-E*, 2:703. *AKB-S*, 273. [*dauḥśīlyamaśubhaṃ rūpaṃ śīlaṃ*] *tadviratiḥ dvidhā*.

one refrains from negative actions (meaning, the positive action) and the latter being the mere "fact of abstaining."[236] Shākya Chokden accepts this division, with a caveat; he says, "That may be said, but discipline is not necessarily vows."[237] He follows this with his definitions—in terms of the karma series—of vow (*saṃvara*) and the broader category of discipline (*śīla*):

> A vow is necessarily what arises as the nature of a given actual basis of a path of action or the conclusion that issues from that. In contrast, it is explained that discipline pertains also to that for which there is a preparation and conclusion, with the actual part of the path of action being incomplete. For example, negative vows do not include broken discipline.[238]

Here, he presents the Sarvāstivādin karmic series as consisting of three parts, which is the essential framework he engages in his actual answer to the question below. After the initial intention, which is the actual karma, which propels vijñapti and avijñapti series of body and/or speech, the activities that follow consist of the karmic path (*karmapatha*, *las kyi lam*). These can be divided into three parts: the preparation for the act (*prayoga* or *sāmantaka*, *sbyor*), the actual part, or the act itself (*maula*, *dngos*), and the conclusion (*pṛṣṭham*, *mjug*).[239] He states that a vow must be the actual act or the conclusion within the three-part process, while mere discipline is something in which there is preparation or conclusion but no actual act. He states:

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[236] *AKB-E,* 2:704.
[237] *GL,* 529. *bshad mod/ tshul khrims la sdom pas khyab pa ma yin te/*
[238] *GL,* 529–30. *sdom pa yin na las lam dngos gzhi dang/ des drangs pa'i mjug gang rung gi ngo bor skyes pas khyab la/ tshul khrims ni las lam gyi sbyor ba dang mjug dngos gzhi ma tshang ba dag la yang bshad pa'i phyir/ dper na 'chal tshul la sdom min gyis ma khyab pa bzhin no/*
[239] For examples see Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma,* 464.

> Because that is the case, intermediate virtue and nonvirtue have the complete characteristics of discipline and broken discipline, but they cannot be posited as vows and negative vows.[240]

Here, negative vows (*asaṃvara*, *sdom min*) is a rough translation for a category that is not non-vows, as the etymology would suggest, but rather what Dhammajoti calls a "vow-conditioned mentality,"[241] that arises from an unvirtuous (*akuśala*) state by those especially who are bound to certain misdeeds by their profession, such as "butchers, hunters, robbers, prison-wardens, and executioners."[242] Thus, "intermediate virtue," refers to just doing good things without a strong will or vow associated with it and mere acts of nonvirtue that are more intermittent or minor than the daily killing done by a butcher or executioner. It can also mean the mere preparatory karmic phase of nonvirtue that is thinking of killing but not doing so. His next example is that of a non-Buddhist who may engage in good conduct but is also likewise not bound by vows. He states:

> For example, although those with the view and conduct of a non-Buddhist may have the discipline of [proper] conduct within the Desire Realm, it is not the case that they have its vows.[243]

He then declares his final position, the one he will elaborate on in his actual answer:

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[240] *GL*, 530. *de ltar yin pa de'i phyir/ bar ma dge ba dang mi dge ba la ni/ tshul khrims dang 'chal ba'i tshul khrims kyi mtshan nyid tshang yang/ sdom pa dang sdom min du gzhag nus pa ma yin te/*
[241] Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 430.
[242] Dhammajoti, 431.
[243] *GL*, 530. *dper na/ mu stegs byed kyi lta spyod can la 'dod pa na spyod pa'i tshul khrims yod kyang/ de'i sdom pa yod pa ma yin pa bzhin no/*

> To divide [vows] into two [avijñapti and vijñapti] is not the intention of the author of this treatise [Sakya Paṇḍita].[244] As he unequivocally explained: "śrāvaka vows are avijñapti."[245]

The emphasis on "unequivocally" (*'tha' gcig tu*) evokes the language of Gorampa's answer to this question, which does not extensively cite the *Abhidharmakośa* in this same way but rather uses scriptural examples of stating one thing and also intending something else—that is, he essentially states that saying vows are avijñaptirūpa does not imply that they are not also vijñaptirūpa. His two examples are when Śākyaprabha states in his *Śrāmaṇerakārikā*[246] that a monk must not touch gold, it also means he should not touch silver, and, second, just because the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*[247] mentions leading śrāvakas to liberation, this does not mean that the other non-Mahāyāna category of practitioner, pratyekabuddhas, are not also intended.[248]

It is in what follows that Shākya Chokden begins his "actual answer" (*dngos lan*), with the point he is about to support with extensive quotations from the *Abhidharmakośa*, beginning with chapter 4, verse 13. He writes:

> The Vaibhāṣika tradition [asserts] that prātimokṣa vows are necessarily avijñaptirūpa. As it was said:
>
> > It is said that avijñapti is threefold:

[244] *GL,* 530. *de ltar gnyis su 'byed pa/ bstan bcos mdzad pa 'di'i dgongs pa yang ma yin te/*
[245] *GL,* 530. *ji skad du/ nyan thos sdom pa rnam rig min/ zhes 'tha' gcig tu bshad pa'i phyir ro/* Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation*, 41 and 278 (ch. 1, v. 4).
[246] Dg.T. 4124, 63b1.
[247] Dg.T. 3786, 1b2.
[248] See his *Sdom pa gsum gyi bstan bcos la dris shing rtsod pa'i lan sdom gsum 'khrul spong*, 633–34.

vows, negative vows, and other.[249]

He then continues with the autocommentary on these lines:

> [These are] vows, negative vows, and other [actions] that are not vows and are also not negative vows. Because it restrains and restricts the continuum of broken discipline, it is a *vow*.
>
> The vows are prātimokṣa, anāsrava,
> and those arisen from dhyāna. [250]
>
> Vows are threefold: the prātimokṣa vows are the discipline of conduct of these [beings here] in the Desire Realm; the dhyāna vows are the discipline of conduct in the Form Realm; the anāsrava vows are stainless discipline.[251]

This is the presentation, explained above, of the prātimokṣa vows specifically as those vows of the Desire Realm, in addition to the Form Realm gods in various states of meditative equipoise,

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[249] *GL*, 530. *gnyis pa dngos lan ni/ bye smra'i lugs kyis so sor thar pa'i sdom pa la rig byed ma yin pa'i gzugs kyis khyab pa yin te/ ji skad du/ rnam rig min rnam gsum zhes bya/ sdom dang sdom pa min dang gzhan/ AKK-T*, 11a6 (ch. 4, v. 13ab). *AKB-E*, 580. *AKB-S*, 205. *avijñaptistridhā jñeyā saṃvarāsaṃvaretarā*

[250] *GL*, 530. *sdom pa dang sdom pa ma yin pa dang/ de las gzhan pa sdom pa yang ma yin/ sdom pa ma yin pa yang ma yin pa ste/ 'chal pa'i tshul khrims kyi rgyun sdom zhing 'gog pas na sdom pa'o/de la/ sdom pa so sor thar ces bya/ de bzhin zag med bsam gtan skyes/ AKK-T*, 11a7 (ch. 4, v. 13cd). *AKB-E*, 2:580. *AKB-S*, 205. *saṃvaraścaraśca / tābhāṃ cetaro naivasaṃvaro nāsaṃvaraḥ / dauḥśīlyaprasarasya saṃvaraṇaṃ saṃrodhaḥ saṃvaraḥ / tatra punaḥ / saṃvaraḥ prātimokṣākhyo dhyānajo 'nāsravastathā*

[251] *GL*, 530–31. *sdom pa rnam pa gsum ste/ so sor thar pa'i sdom pa ni 'di pa rnams kyi 'dod pa na spyod pa'i tshul khrims so/ bsam gtan gyi sdom pa ni gzugs na spyod pa'i tshul khrims so/ zag pa med pa'i sdom pa ni zag pa med pa'i tshul khrims so/ zhes gsungs so/* Vasubandhu, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, *Chos mngon pa'i mdzod kyi bshad pa*, Dg.T. 4090 (hereafter, *AKB-T*), 176a6. *AKB-E*, 2:581. *AKB-S*, 205. *trividhaḥ saṃvaraḥ / prātimokṣasaṃvara iha ityānām kāmāvacaraṃ śīlam / dyānasaṃvaro rūpāvacaraṃ śīlam / anāsravasaṃvaro 'nāsvavaṃ śīlam / tatra punaḥ*

and those who have achieved certain levels of the path. This is a restrictive classification of what is specifically meant by the term "vow." He goes on to offer a reasonable objection of someone who bases their understanding on the text. He states:

> One might ask, "Well, when it is said, 'the seven virtues divided into two parts' is this not explained as the vijñapti, which serves as the nature of the actual path of action of the seven virtues of body and speech?"[252]

The seven virtues of body and speech are the opposite of the seven things to be relinquished. These are said to be the actual part of the path of action and also consist of the vijñapti, which if accepted appears to contradict the statement above that mere virtue or mere discipline that is not propelled by vows (and the same for its evil opposite) does not serve as an actual path of action. There may be preparation for good deeds, or later rejoicing in a good deed, but the deed itself is not strong enough to be considered an actual path of action. He answers this qualm as follows:

> That text teaches that vijñapti exists at the time of the actual part of the path of action of those seven [virtues], but that very vijñapti at that time is not explained as the actual part of the path of action,[253] since the commentary on that line, ["the seven virtues divided into two parts"] says:

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[252] *GL,* 530–31. *'o na ji skad du/ dge ba bdun rnam gnyis/ zhes lus ngag gi dge ba bdun po'i las lam dngos gzhi'i ngo bor gyur pa'i rig byed bshad pa ma yin nam/ zhe na/ AKK-T,* 13b. *AKB-E,* 2:641 (ch. 4, v. 67c). *AKB-S,* 238. *dvividhāḥ sapta kuśalāḥ*

[253] *GL,* 531. *gzhung des ni/ bdun po'i las lam dngos gzhi'i dus su rig byed yod par ston pa yin gyi/ de dus kyi rig byed de nyis/ las lam dngos gzhir 'chad pa ma yin te/*

> Discipline that is properly adopted depends upon the vijñapti. Therefore, the seven material paths of action are without question both vijñapti and avijñapti.[254]

Here, the point seems to be that avijñapti is also things that are not vows, the third category of "other," or neither vows nor negative vows (*naivasaṃvaranāsaṃvara*), that there are things that are at once vijñapti and avijñapti, but not a vow. And, during the actions, positive or negative, that are complete with preparation, main part, and conclusion, the main part consists of a moment of avijñapti even while the vijñapti actions (a vow ritual, making a donation to the saṅgha, killing an animal) persist.[255] He continues:

> One might ask, well then, what is the definitive scriptural source that states that the vijñapti at that time is only preparation and conclusion?[256] The continuation of that commentary says:
>
> > As was said, the preparation of the paths of action are doubtlessly the vijñapti by nature.[257]

[254] *GL*, 531. *de nyid kyi 'grel pa las/ yang dag par blangs pa'i tshul khrims ni rnam par rig byed la rag las pa'i phyir/ las kyi lam gzugs can bdun ni gdon mi za bar rnam par rig byed dang rig byed ma yin pa gnyis ka yin no/ zhes gsungs pas so/ AKB-T*, 200a1. *AKB-E*, 2:641 (commentary to v. 67c). *AKB-S*, 238. *kuzalāḥ sapta rūpiṇah karmapathā avaśyaṃ dviprakārā vijñaptiravijñaptiśca / vijñaptyadhīnatvātsamādānaśīlasya*

[255] Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 430.

[256] *GL*, 531. *'o na de dus kyi rig byed de sbyor ba dang mjug kho nar nges pa'i shes byed ci zhe na/*

[257] *GL*, 531.*'grel pa de'i 'phro nyid las/ ji skad du/ las lam gyi nyer bsdogs rnams ni gdon mi za bar rig byed kyi rang bzhin yin no/ zhes dang/ AKB-T*, 200a3 (commentary to v. 68a). *AKB-E*, 2:642. *AKB-S*, 239. *karmapathasāmantakāstu vijñaptisvabhāvā avaśyam*

He then finally offers examples of what actions constitute the preparation, main part, and conclusion of both an unvirtuous deed and the virtuous act of taking a vow. He continues with citing the commentary to verse 68:

> Also, one might ask how the preparation, the actual part, and the conclusion are presented? . . . For however long the act of killing takes place [before the animal dies], for that long is the preparation. The avijñapti at that moment is the actual path of action.[258]

He then jumps to the commentary to verse 69, stating:

> And, the commentary on the line "Virtue, together with its preparation and conclusion [arises from non-desire, non-hatred, and non-ignorance]"[259] is as follows:
>
> > Relinquishing the preparation of an unvirtuous path of action is the preparation of a virtuous path of action. Relinquishing the actual basis [of nonvirtue] is the actual basis [of virtue]. Relinquishing the conclusion [of nonvirtue] is the conclusion [of virtue]. For example, when a novice is ordained, the preparation lasts while he goes to the altar (*nānāvāsa*),[260] prostrates to the saṅgha, supplicates

[258] *GL,* 531. *yang ji tsam gyis na/ sbyor ba dang/ dngos dang/ mjug 'di dag rnam par gzhag ce na/ 'di ltar/ ji srid srog gcog par byed pa de srid du ni sbyor ba yin no/ de'i skad cig gi rnam par rig byed ma yin pa gang yin pa de ni las kyi lam dngos yin no/ zhes gsungs pa dang/ AKB-T,* 200a6. *AKB-E,* 2:642. *AKB-S,* 239. *atha kuto yāvadeṣām prayogamaulapṛṣṭhānāṃ vyavathānam / [. . .] yena tu prahāreṇa jīvitāddyaparopayati tatra yā vijñaptistatkṣaṇikā vā 'vijñaptiray maulaḥ karmapathaḥ /*

[259] *AKK-T,* 13b2. *AKB-E,* 2:647 (v. 69cd). *AKB-S,* 241 *kuśalāḥ saprayogāntā [alobhadveṣamohajāḥ].*

[260] See *AKB-E,* 2:737n304.

> the preceptor (*mkhan po*, *upādhyāya*), and recites the liturgy (*karmavācana*) once and then twice. When he recites the liturgy the third time, this avijñapti at the moment of that vijñapti is the actual path of action.[261]

He then differentiates the moment of taking the vows with the vows that continue to persist after the ritual, citing the line that is most easily used to support the claim that the vows are both vijñapti and avijñapti, verse 16, which states that the prātimokṣa is the path of action (*prātimokṣakriyāpathaḥ*). He states,

> One might object, "Is the following not said in the commentary on the line 'The first vijñapti and avijñapti [are the prātimokṣa, the path of action]'?"[262]
>
> The first vijñapti and avijñapti of taking on the vows are known as "prātimokṣa." They are designated as such because they liberate (*pratimokṣana*) one from wrongdoing and because they relinquish.

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[261] *GL*, 531–32. *ji skad du/ dge ba sbyor dang mjug bcas rnams/ zhes pa'i 'grel par/ de la mi dge ba'i las lam gyi sbyor ba spong ba ni dge ba'i las lam gyi sbyor ba yin no/ dngos gzhi spong ba ni dngos gzhi yin no/ mjug spong ba ni mjug yin te/ 'di ltar dge tshul bsnyen par rdzogs par byed pa'i tshe/ gnas sna tshogs su 'jug par byed/ dge* [531] *'dun la phyag 'tshal bar byed/ mkhan por gsol ba 'debs par byed/ las lan gcig brjod pa dang/ lan gnyis brjod pa'i bar 'di ni sbyor ba yin no/ las gsum pa brjod pa'i tshe/ rnam par rig byed de'i skad cig gi rnam par rig byed ma yin pa 'di ni las kyi lam dngos yin no/ zhes gsungs pas so/ AKB-T*, 202b2. *AKB-E*, 2:647. *AKB-S*, 241. *tatrākuśalakarmapathaprayogādviratiḥ kuśalakarmapathaprayogaḥ / maulādviratiḥ maulaḥ / prṣṭhād viratiḥ pṛṣṭhaḥ / tadyathā śrāmaṇera upasaṃpādyamāno nānāvāsaṃ pravizati bhikṣūnvandate upādyāyaṃ yācate yāvadekaṃ karmavācanaṃ kyiyate dvitīyaṃ ca / ayaṃ prayogaḥ / tṛtīyakarmavācane yāvijñaptistatkṣaṇikā cāvijñaptirayaṃ maulaḥ karmapathaḥ /*

[262] *GL*, 532. *gal te 'o na/ ji skad du/ dang po'i rnam rig rnam rig min/ AKK-T*, 11b1 (v. 16cd). *AKB-E*, 2:584. *AKB-S*, 207. *ādye vijñaptyavijñapto [prātimokṣakriyāpathaḥ]*

Here there is evidence in the *Abhidharmakośa* that prātimokṣa is both vijñapti and avijñapti, and yet what is significant here is that the word "vow" is not used. There is an event that consists of both vijñapti and avijñapti and this serves to separate one from wrongdoing and also to serve as a positive formulation to account for the karmic efficacy of the mere lack, but this act itself is not the vows. The definition of the vow (*sdom pa*) itself as that which restrains (*sdom pa*) follows:

> [They are] also known as "prātimokṣa *vows*" because they restrain (*sdom pa*) body and speech.
>
> [They are] referred to as paths of action.

Here, we see something that will be reflected again in chapter 2 below and its description of the bodhisattva prātimokṣa. This is entirely outside of the context of the abhidharma but represents a similar singling out of something that is prātimokṣa but not vows. Here, the prātimokṣa, or *prātimokṣaṇa*, is a verb, an event that takes place in a moment of the ritual, after which vows related to it come into being and persist. The prātimokṣaṇa itself is of the nature of the ritual and the vijñapti acts of the preceptor and the preceptee who perform the physical acts required of the liturgical and formal process. The vows, though, are not the process. They are not the shape of the hand of the preceptor or the sound of the preceptor stating "That is the method"[263] followed by the vow-taking responding, "It is excellent,"[264] at which time the ritual concludes. Shākya

[263] *thabs yin no /*
[264] *legs so /*

Chokden specifies that while the avijñapti is a result of these vijñapti forms, it alone is the actual vow, and being the result, it is only the concluding action. He writes:

> In the second moment and onward, there is only the prātimokṣa vow. Because there is no prātimokṣa, there is only concluding action and no actual path of action.[265]

Thus, at the moment that the avijñapti arises, this serves as the actual path at the same time as the vijñapti actions are continuing. But, since the first moment is only prātimokṣa and not the vow, during the time of the actual path of action, there are certainly both avijñapti and vijñapti occurring simultaneously, but there is not yet any vow. The vow itself, being only avijñapti, arises only in the second moment, having been caused by the act of the prātimokṣaṇa. Thus, the vow is the conclusion of such an action. "There is no prātimokṣa" means that there is no act; it does not mean there is no vow. In fact, the opposite is the case. By that time, there is only the vow and though the vijñapti forms continue on, they are not the vow.

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[265] *GL,* 532. *zhes pa'i 'grel par/ sdom pa yang dag par blangs pa'i rnam par rig byed dang/ rig byed ma yin pa dang po dag ni so sor thar pa zhes bya ste/ des sdig pa las so sor thar pa'i phyir te/ spangs pa'i phyir zhes bya ba'i tha tshig go/ so sor thar pa'i sdom pa zhes kyang bya ste/ lus dang ngag sdom pa'i phyir ro/ las kyi lam zhes kyang bya la/ skad cig ma gnyis pa la sogs pa ni so sor thar pa'i sdom pa kho na yin gyi/ so sor thar pa ni ma yin pas mjug yin gyi/ las kyi lam dngos ni ma yin no/ AKB-T,* 177b5–6. *AKB-E,* 2:584. *AKB-S,* 207. *saṃvarasamādānasya prathame vijñaptyavijñaptī prātimokṣa ityucyate / pāpasya tena prātimokṣaṇādutsarjanādityarthaḥ svārthe vṛddhividhānādvaikṛtavaizasavat / prātimokṣasaṃcara ityapi kāyavāksaṃvaraṇāt karmapatha ityucyate / maulasaṃgṛhītatvāt / dvitīyādiṣu kṣaṇeṣu prātimokṣasaṃvara eva na prātimokṣaḥ / pṛṣṭhaṃ ca na maulaḥ karmapathaḥ /*

> Even though it is thus said, the first vijñapti at that time is [at] the time of preparation. But it is not certain that the first avijñapti arises at the time of preparation, and it necessarily arises at the time of the actual part.

It is then that he makes the clearest statement of the actual relationship between the vow, the vijñapti and avijñapti, and the threefold path of action:

> Because of that, the first moment of avijñaptirūpa is both prātimokṣa and its vows. From its second moment onward, [avijñaptirūpa] is only the vows of prātimokṣa. The first [moment of] vijñaptirūpa is only prātimokṣa and its second moment and so on are neither.[266]
>
> It is also said:
>
> The preparation (*sāmantakas*) are vijñapti
> and may or may not be avijñapti.
> The opposite [is the case for] the conclusion.[267]

[266] *GL,* 532. *zhes gsungs pa ma yin nam zhe na/ de ltar gsungs mod/ de dus kyi rig byed dang po ni sbyor ba'i skabs yin la/ rig byed ma yin pa dang po ni sbyor ba'i dus su 'byung ba'i nges pa med cing/ dngos gzhi'i dus su ni nges par skye bas khyab pa de nyid kyi phyir/ rig byed ma yin pa'i gzugs skad cig dang po ni/ so sor thar pa dang/ de'i sdom pa gnyis ka dang/ de'i skad cig gnyis pa phan chad ni so thar gyi sdom pa kho na dang/ rig byed kyi gzugs dang po ni so sor thar pa kho na dang/ de'i skad cig gnyis pa sogs ni gnyis ka ma yin pa'o/*

[267] *GL,* 532–33. *de skad du yang/ nyer bsdogs rnams ni rnam rig byed/ rnam rig byed min 'gyur ba'am/ ma yin bzlog pa mjug yin no/ zhes so/ AKK*, 13b2 (v. 68abc). *AKB-E*, 2:642. *AKB-S*, 239. *sāmantakāstu vijñaptiḥ avijñaptirbhavenna vā / viparyayeṇa pṛṣṭhāni*

> If it were otherwise, if the first vijñapti of discipline that was completely taken on were necessarily vows, then the very [unwanted] consequence would follow that at the time of the preparation, a vow would arise.[268]

The unwanted consequence here is that it would negate the necessity of the ritual if the vow arose during the preparatory period, or just by wishing for it or planning for ordination.[269] He continues:

> If what is "known as [prātimokṣa] *vows*"[270] also included vijñapti, then it would also in the same manner include "the second moment" and so on. By the very statement that says that restraining the continuum of broken discipline is vows, it is established that [the vows are] contradictory to vijñaptirūpa. This is because the commentary [to the line "rūpa] is threefold [and there is a] pure [rūpa],"[271] says, "If there were no avijñapti, there would also be no prātimokṣa"[272] and "If [a sūtra] teaches that restraint is a dam that blocks broken discipline, it would also not be suitable for the absence of avijñaptirūpa to be [such] a dam, and thus avijñaptirūpa indeed exists."[273]

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[268] *GL*, 533. *de las gzhan du/ yang dag par blangs pa'i tshul khrims kyi rig byed dang po la sdom pas khyab na/ sbyor ba'i dus su sdom pa skyes par ha cang thal lo/*
[269] See Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 443, for a presentation from the *Mahāvibhāṣa*
[270] *GL*, 533. *AKB-T*, 177b5. *sdom pa zhes kyang bya*
[271] *AKK-T*, 11a1 (v. 4ab). *AKB-E*, 2:560. *AKB-S*, 196. *trividhāmalarūpoktavṛddhyakurvatpathādibhiḥ*
[272] *GL*, 533. *sdom pa zhes kyang bya ste/ zhes par rig byed kyang bsdud na/ skad cig gnyis pa zhes sogs su'ang de bsdud par mtshungs so/ 'chal tshul gyi rgyun sdom par gsungs pa nyid kyis/ rig byed kyi gzugs su 'gal bar grub pa yin te/ ji skad du/ rnam gsum dri med/ ces pa'i 'grel bar/ rnam par rig byed ma yin pa med na so sor thar pa'i sdom pa yang med par 'gyur te/ zhes dang/ AKB-T*, 169b6. *AKB-E*, 2:562. *AKB-S*, 196. *prātimokṣasaṃvarazcāpi na syādasatyāmavijñaptau*
[273] *GL*, 533. *[mdo las] spong ba ni 'chal ba'i tshul khrims kyi gegs byed pa'i chu lon du yang gsungs na* [reading original: *te*]/ [Shakchok inserts: *rig byed ma yin pa'i gzugs*] *med pa ni chu lon yin par 'os pa yang ma yin pas/ rnam par rig byed ma yin pa ni yod pa kho na'o/ zhes gsungs pas so/ AKB-T*, 169b6–7. *AKB-E*, 2:562. *AKB-S*, 197. *setuśca sūtre viraktiruktā / dauḥzīlyavibandhatvāt / na vā bhavantī seturbhavitum arhatītyastyevāvijñaptiḥ/* Without

What he quotes here are from among the eight reasons for the existence for the avijñaptirūpa presented by the imputed Vaibhāṣika and refuted by Vasubandhu. Of these eight, the first, second, and fifth have to do with scriptural bases for types of form that avijñapti must fit into. The seventh and eighth pertain to the prātimokṣa vows: that without the avijñapti there would be no vows and that the avijñapti ensures functionality of restricting negative deeds, like a dam.[274] He then moves on to

> After concluding in that way the explanation of the passages [that demonstrate] that the vijñaptirūpa that serves as the actual path of action of vows and negative vows is not possible, the reasonings that appear in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* are like this: Because there are no options other than the two—accepting as constituting the bhikṣu vows the vijñapti of the body and speech at the time when the bhikṣu vows are [still] arising, or accepting as constituting those [vows] the vijñapti of the body and speech at the time when they have arisen—which of the two is it? It is not the first, because if you assert the vijñapti to occur at the time before the vows are completed arising, there would be the consequence that at that time it would have completed its arising.[275]

Shākya Chokden's insertion of "avijñaptirūpa," this, also following the Sanskrit, would read, "A mere absence is not suitable to be a dam." For the sūtra passages that refer to the dam, *AKB-E*, 2:711n24.

[274] Dhammajoti, *Sarvastivada Abhidharma*, 436. *AKB-E*, 560–65.

[275] *GL*, 533. *de ltar sdom pa dang/ sdom min gyi las lam dngos gzhir gyur pa'i rig byed kyi gzugs mi srid pa'i lung gi sgrub byed bshad zin nas/ mdzod 'grel las 'byung ba'i rigs pa ni 'di ltar/ dge slong gi sdom pa skye bzhin pa'i dus kyi lus ngag gi rig byed/ dge slong gi sdom par khas len nam/ de skyes zin pa'i dus kyi de der khas len pa gnyis las gzhan ni med pas/ gnyis po gang yin/ dang po ni ma yin te/ sdom pa skyes ma zin pa'i dus kyi rig byed der khas len na/ dus der de skyes zin par thal bas so/*

> The second is also not correct because the vijñapti at the time of having already arisen, due to it serving as the conclusion of the path of action, is not suitable [to serve as] the actual basis.
>
> This is also because it would follow that in such a case, after the avijñapti that serves as the nature of the vow is finished arising, the vijñapti that serves as its nature would [also] have to arise. Also, is that vijñapti at the time of killing the object of killing the actual path of action or is it asserted as that at the time when [that object] has died?[276]

Here, the moment when the vow arises would be the same as its opposite example—the moment when the actual part of the karmic act of killing is complete. The Sarvāstivāda system would not accept that if a person dies at the same moment as the one he kills, he would still incur the karmic result of having killed. He writes:

> If it were the first, it would contradict the statement, "If one dies before or at the same time, there is no actual [path of action] because a different body has arisen."[277]

"A different body has arisen" refers to the fact that a new body in the intermediate state, or bardo, would have arisen after the death of the killer, and that body would not incur the fault that

[276] *GL,* 533–34. *gnyis pa ltar yang mi rigs te/ skyes zin pa'i dus kyi rig byed ni/ las lam gyi mjug nyid du song bas/ dngos gzhir mi rigs la/ de lta yin pa de'i tshe/ sdom pa'i ngo bor gyur pa'i rig byed ma yin pa skyes zin pa'i 'og tu/ de'i ngo bor gyur pa'i rig byed skye dgos par thal ba'i phyi ro/ yang gsad bya gsod bzhin pa'i dus kyi rig byed de/ las lam dngos yin nam/ shi zin pa'i dus kyi de der khas len/*

[277] *GL,* 534. *dang po ltar na/ ji skad du/ snga dang mnyam du zhi ba la/ dngos med lus gzhan skyes phyir ro/ zhes bya ba'i don dang 'gal lo/ AKK-T,* 13b4 (ch. 4, v. 72ab). *AKB-E,* 2:648. *AKB-S,* 242. *samaṃ prāk ca mṛtasyāsti na maulaḥ*

was completed in the previous body. At the exact moment of the death of both, there is no person to incur the fault.

> If it were like the second, that is also incorrect because there is no preparation of killing at the time that killing has been completed, because the vijñapti of body and speech of striking the corpse is not correct as the vijñapti of killing, and because it is clear from the [auto]commentary itself that the explanation that vijñapti at that time is the conclusion of the path of action, but it is called by the name "preparation" is an assertion of the Vaibhāṣikas.[278]

To clarify this, he cites the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* as parsing out the various moments of the karmic act of killing an animal:

> One might object, at the time when an animal is dying (*maraṇabhava*), is it vijñapti or avijñapti that is the path of action? Or is it at the time when the animal has already died (*mṛta*)? This should be explained. What [is the consequence] that comes from that? If it is when an animal is dying (*maraṇabhava*), then even if [the killer] dies at the same time [as the animal that is killed], [that killer] would be endowed with the fault of killing, and this assertion is not in your tenet system. If it were when the animal has already died, then it

[278] *GL*, 534. *gnyis pa ltar yang mi rigs te/ srog bcad zin pa'i dus su srog gcod kyi sbyor ba med pa'i phyir dang/ ro la snun pa'i lus ngag gi rig byed ni/ srog gcod kyi rig byed du mi rigs pa'i phyir dang/ de dus kyi rig byed de las lam gyi mjug yin pa la/ sbyor ba'i ming gis btags so zhes 'chad pa de/ bye brag tu smra ba'i 'dod pa yin par 'grel pa nyid na gsal ba'i phyir*/ This is explained at *AKB-E*, 2:644.

> should not be said that at the time of killing the animal with a blow, the vijñapti and the avijñapti of the same moment are the actual path of action.[279]

Finally, he summarizes his perspective as follows:

> In summary, what is established [by that passage is the following]: since the vijñapti that produces the actual part of the path of action is the preparation, it is not suitable to be the actual part. The vijñapti at the same time as the actual part must be posited as the vijñapti that serves as the conclusion of the path of action. This is similar to striking a corpse that is already dead, which is not suitable to be an actual part of the path of action.[280]

Shākya Chokden's main point seems to be that some commentators on Sakya Paṇḍita understood his statement that "śrāvaka vows are avijñapti" to not be excluding that they are also vijñapti form. Thus, the Vaibhāṣika position would be understood as asserting that there is some aspect of the actual vow, the vow itself, at the time of the ordination or enduring afterward, and that it persists in a way that can be perceptible by the five sense consciousness. He does this by

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[279] *GL*, 533–34. *de skad du yang mdzod 'grel las/ je [ci] re shig srog chags de 'chi ba'i srid pa la gnas pa de'i tshe/ rnam par rig byed dang rig byed ma yin pa gang dag yin pa de dag las kyi lam yin nam/ 'on te shi ba'i srid pa la gnas pa de'i tshe/ yin pa zhes bya ba 'di brjod par bya'o/ de las cir 'gyur/ re shig gal te/ 'chi ba'i srid pa la gnas pa yin na ni/ lhan cig shi ba yang srog gcod pa'i kha na ma tho ba dang ldan par 'gyur te/ grub pa'i mtha' las ni de skad mi 'gyur ro/ 'on te shi ba yin na ni/ bsnun pa gang gis srog gcod par byed pa de'i tshe/ rnam par rig byed dang/ de'i skad cig gi rnam par rig byed ma yin pa gang yin pa de las kyi lam dngos yin no/ zhes gang smras pa de brjod par mi bya'o/ zhes gsungs pas so/ AKB-T*, 200b4. *AKB-E*, 2:643. *AKB-S*, 239. *idamatra vaktavyam/ kiṃ tāvat maraṇabhavasthe tasmin prāṇini ye vijñaptyavijñapī ye karmapatha āhosvinmṛte/ / kiṃ cātaḥ / yadi tāvanmaraṇabhavasthe saha mṛtasyāpi hanturdhatayiturvā / prāṇātipātāvadyena yogaḥ prāpnoti/ na ceṣa siddhāntaḥ / atha mṛte / yaduktaṃ yena tu prahāreṇa jīvitāddyaparopayati tatra yā vijñaptistatkṣaṇikā vā 'vijñaptirayaṃ maulaḥ karmapatha iti tatnna vaktavyam*

[280] *GL*, 534. *mdor na/ las lam dngos gzhi'i skyed byed kyi rig byed ni sbyor ba yin pas/ dngos gzhir mi rung/ dngos gzhi dang dus gcig pa'i rig byed ni/ las lam gyi mjug tu gyur pa'i rig byed du 'jog dgos pa yin te/ shi zin pa'i ro la bsnun pa las lam dngos gzhir mi rung ba bzhin no/ zhes bya ba ni grub pa'i don no/*

mapping the avijñapti and vijñapti aspects of the karmic process onto the threefold process of preparation, main part, and conclusion.

Shākya Chokden thus clarifies the Vaibhāṣika view of avijñapti according to Vasubandhu, although in this answer he leaves the reader without a clear explanation of what a vow is and whether or not it conforms to this karmic process and endures as avijñapti, which we know from his other works that, according to him, it does not. In Lowo Khenchen's response to this same question, he concludes his discussion of avijñapti with a more detailed presentation of how the vows arise according to the Mahāyāna tradition, using "seeds" and the ālaya-consciousness. Though Shākya Chokden and Lowo Khenchen's reading of Vasubandhu appears to be at odds, with Lowo Khenchen supporting a view that represents the vows as both vijñapti and avijñapti,[281] it appears that they would agree on the correct presentation of the vows from the Mahāyāna perspective. After explaining the avijñapti, Lowo Khenchen states that what was just explained "is the assertion of the Vaibhāṣikas, but our masters do not make such assertions."[282] He explains in one short line what the ordination ceremony does in terms of producing the vow itself: "That intention which is the vow, through restricting actions of body and speech, because it arises as the same type as that, deposits a seed in the foundation consciousness, and after that a memory arises that one has fully adopted [a vow such as], 'I will not take life,' and so on. After that arises, wherever there is memory, one is not separate from the training. Thus, a vow is

[281] Lowo Khenchen Sönam Lhundrup, *Sdom pa gsum gyi rab tu dbye ba'i dris lan lung gi tshad ma 'khrul spong dgongs rgyan*, in Gsung 'bum, vol. 7 (no publication data), 212. BDRC MW00KG0166. *'dir nyan thos bye brag tu smra ba'i lugs la/ so sor thar pa'i sdom pa spyi ldog nas rnam par rig byed ma yin pa'i gzugs su bshad pa dang/ rnam par rig byed kyi gzugs su bshad pa dang/ zhib tu phye na rnam par rig byed dang/ rnam par rig byed ma yin pa'i gzugs gnyis ka yod pa'i tshul gsum 'byung ngo/* "Here, in the Vaibhāṣika tradition, there appear three ways that the prātimokṣa vows exist: an explanation of [vows] as avijñaptirūpa, an explanation of [vows] as vijñaptirūpa, and if one analyzes in detail, an explanation of [vows] as both avijñapti and vijñapti."

[282] Lowo Khenchen, 9b2. *nyan thos bye brag tu smra ba'i 'dod pa ni de ltar yin la/ slob dpon rang nyid ni de ltar mi bzhed de/*

taught to be an intention to properly adopt [such trainings], together with a continuous stream. This teaching is asserted by the Mahāyānists."[283] Here, he uses "continuous stream" instead of Shākya Chokden's "seeds." But this definition is useful for understanding how Shākya Chokden engages the nature of a vow in opposition to avijñaptirūpa.

Dhammajoti states, "The ancient Dārṣṭāntika as well as the Sautrāntika deny the ontological status of both the informative and noninformative karmas. All karmas are none other than volition: The sūtra reference to *cetanā* and *cetayitvā* karmas corresponds to two types of volition. First, at the preparatory stage, the volition of intention (*saṃkalpacetanā*) arises. Next, a volition of action (*kriyācetanā*) arises, moving the body or emitting the speech—bodily or vocal action."[284] Yet, despite the Sautrāntika replacement of the avijñapti category with intention, as Shākya Chokden does with the nature of the vow, this does not mean that he holds a Sautrāntika view of the nature of the vow as presented in their own texts. Dhammajoti specifies the Sautrāntika view of the nature of the vow as the mere abstention from wrongdoing, and if this is case, it also does not coincide with Shākya Chokden's interpretation of the category.

Conclusion

Dhammajoti's explanation of the Sarvāstivāda position is that it "cannot be acquired by a mere vowing. It is a distinct dharma (*dharmāntara*) with a distinctive nature (**viśiṣṭo dharmatva*) whose acquisition requires very specific conditions and ecclesiastical procedure."[285]

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[283] Lowo Khenchen, 9b2. *sems pa gang gis lus dang ngag gi las bkag pa las sdom pa'i sems pa des ma 'ongs pa na de dang rigs gcig par skyed pa'i phyir kun gzhi'i rnam par shes pa la sa bon btab nas/ de'i 'og tu bdag ni srog gcod pa la sogs pa spangs pa'o zhes yang dag par blangs ba'i dran pa 'byung ste/ de byung nas gang 'dzem pa de bslab pa mi 'dral lo/ de ltar na yang dag par blangs pa'i sems pa rgyun chags pa dang bcas pa ni sdom pa bstan pa zhes yin no zhes gsungs pa 'di theg pa chen po pa rnams kyang bzhed do/*

[284] Dhammajoti, *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*, 422.

[285] Dhammajoti, 431.

Avijñaptirūpa is a category of constituents of the person (*khams*, *dhātu*) that is key to the mechanism of karma, the moral cause and effect that determines the place and characteristics of one's continued rebirth in saṃsāra. In other words, it determines the connection between an unvirtuous or virtuous act and its resultant state of suffering or its opposite, which are far apart in time, and interrupted by many intervening physical and mental states. Rejecting the avijñaptirūpa category (as well as the related concept of prāpti, or "acquisition," which serves as the link between the virtuous or unvirtuous karmic force and the person) to account for this connection, Vasubandhu rather upholds the Sautrāntika concept of an ongoing unconscious process, a metaphor found across sūtra literature that takes shape as a technical category in Yogācāra theories of a foundation consciousness into which latencies are deposited and out of which they ripen as experience. Without a concept of an all-base consciousness, or receptacle unconscious, abhidharma systems of karma could not resort to the category of mind to connect actions and results. Rather, a new category of form was devised, which met none of the tradition's own characteristics of form: avijñaptirūpa is not only imperceptible by any sense consciousness, it is not composed of atoms. For the Vaibhāṣikas, this category did not only account for the workings of karma, it also accounted for the body in the bardo, the state between lifetimes; images in meditation; and the nature of a prātimokṣa vow.

The avijñaptirūpa concept—or in other words, the placement of the avijñapti aspect of karma in the category of form, which accounts for the continuation of the vow from the conclusion of the ordination ceremony until the point of death or vow breakage—disrupts the symmetry of the tenfold form category of the abhidharma and was the subject of much criticism and debate. It is a category that continues to have significance in Tibetan exegeses on vows, which could not absorb it and yet could not abandon it, and rather dragged it back into assertions

about vows, reprinting it and its necessity onto later developments of vow theory. Whether it is a real (*dravya*) entity has direct implications for how a vow is lost at death and the nature of the prātimokṣa vow. Like the cittotpāda vow distinction discussed in the next chapter, Sakya Paṇḍita's opening verses on the prātimokṣa vow motivate analyses on how the material, or physical body, factors into the functioning of a vow-propelled virtue (as opposed to natural virtue).

While the category of avijñaptirūpa was rejected in the fourth century by Vasubandhu, this did not signal the end of Buddhist commentators' project of grappling with the category, producing competing definitions, or formulating new ways to reject it anew. So, why did Shākya Chokden spend this much analytical energy on clarifying a concept that he would ultimately not assert? There are two things here: clarifying what Tibetans thought and said, and clarifying what Tibetans thought and said about what the Indian Vaibhāṣikas thought and said. One perspective could be that the avijñaptirūpa idea had crept into some level of common dialogue in Tibetan circles, and because it was circulating as a viable idea, he at least wanted to make sure that it was understood according to the actual treatises. The primary wrong idea that he wanted to eschew was that the vow could be both a type of form that is not really form, as well as the type of form that very much is form, something seen or felt or encountered by any of the senses. He is clear that the vows, according to the Vaibhāṣikas, despite some passages that could cause reasonable confusion, are only avijñaptirūpa.

Another answer, though, could be that there are elements in the avijñaptirūpa category that remain in the theory of a vow as intention, together with its seeds. There were requirements for the prātimokṣa vows to be ontological entities that did not go away and had their origins in exactly this textual realm of the abhidharma. There had to be a serial continuity (*anubandha*,

rgyun chags), meaning that a vow is not intermittent, it is constant. There had to be a functionality that occurred despite distraction. And there had to be a reason it was no longer there upon death, lest people come into this world unwittingly breaking vows that they do not remember taking. Not least, this failed ontological category is the exact context where there arose the indispensable notion that a vow is real (*dravya*, *rdzas*).

Chapter 2

The Intention to Train

The Nature of the Vow in the Two Cittotpāda Vow Lineages

Introduction

Buddhahood, or to become a buddha, is not the only stated aim of the Buddhist path. Many possible aims are put forth in Pāli and Sanskrit sūtra and commentarial literature in terms of the capacity or disposition (*gotra*, *rigs*) of the individual, the aspiration (*pranidhāna*, *smon lam*) of the individual, and the paths (*yāna*, *theg pa*) taken toward these aims.[286] The bodhisattva, or cittotpāda, vow is taken by someone on the path to buddhahood in opposition to other defined paths, which are lesser or are taught for merely provisional or expedient purposes. Aspirations and views associated with inferior aims threaten the cittotpāda vow, and the vow itself protects against such aspirations and views, ensuring that the vow holder remain on the most exalted path. The first chapter above explained the debates around the mind-matter distinction in the assertion of the nature of a prātimokṣa vow based on the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika distinction. The cittotpāda vow encounters the fourfold tenet system in its own way; it is used as a hermeneutic overlaid on the concept of the nature of the vow. Here, most relevant are the two Mahāyāna tenet systems: the Cittamātra and Madhyamaka. While the debates presented in

[286] Karl Brunnhölzl (*Compendium of the Mahāyāna*, vol. 3, Boulder: Snow Lion, 2018) points out that the word for disposition (*gotta*/*gotra*) in Pāli sources (as well as the vinaya and Vaibhāṣika sources) is used to differentiate an ordinary person from a noble one, or one who has reached a certain level of the path.

Shākya Chokden's work on the prātimokṣa vows center around subcategories of form, the nature of the bodhisattva vow, as indisputably mind, is clarified by its difference from and relationship to the arousal of bodhicitta, the aspiration toward highest enlightenment, the starting point of the path to buddhahood. Being in the category of mind, this vow then dynamically interacts with other doctrinal issues related to mind, including the degree of commitment of the vow holder as well as their philosophical views. As mind, it is also thus linked causally to the final resultant state of enlightenment.

Mahāyāna Buddhist commentarial literature disagrees as to whether all beings have the capacity to become buddhas. This concept is based on the idea of an individual's disposition (*gotra*). There is also not agreement on whether this disposition is a conditioned, or cultivated, phenomena, whether the many dispositions are progressive to one final goal or are final in themselves, and whether and when such a disposition might transform to a greater one or fall to a lower.[287] When defining this notion of a disposition, language similar to that used to discuss vows is borrowed from abhidharma terminology. A Pāli treatise even equates this disposition with a seed (*bīja*).[288] This disposition is also discussed several times in both Asaṅga's *Śrāvakabhūmi* and *Bodhisattvabhūmi* in terms of the language of "seeds." Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* defines the disposition, which in that doctrinal framework differentiates noble ones from ordinary beings, as a "positive mental factor of nonattachment."[289] Asaṅga's *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, the source literature for one of the two lineages of cittotpāda vows, focuses on the disposition of bodhisattva discipline while also mentioning the śrāvakas,

[287] See Brunnhölzl, *Compendium of the Mahāyāna*, vol. 3, 1517–64. Brunnhölzl remarks that despite the fact that most Tibetan and Western generalize the Yogācāra tradition as asserting that there are three vehicles ultimately (*thar thug theg pa gsum*), in fact the majority of texts considered Yogācāra assert a single path to buddhahood. The exception to this is the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*.
[288] Brunnhölzl, *Compendium of the Mahāyāna*, vol. 3, 1517.
[289] *AKB* (ch. 6, v. 7cd). Brunnhölzl, *Compendium of the Mahāyāna*, vol. 3, 1519.

pratyekabuddhas, and those without any disposition. The cittotpāda vows, presented in the "Śīlapatala" chapter of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi,* are a part of the bodhisattva path as it is understood as distinct from lesser paths and commitments. The aspiration to this highest path of the bodhisattvas is ritually affirmed by means of the cittotpāda, or bodhisattva, vow ritual. That is, the ritual elevates the practitioner to the highest path, while solidifying the aspiration with a continuous mental intention, which is the vow.

In the context of the prātimokṣa vows in the abhidharma context, the concept of the nature of a vow accounts for a positive productivity issuing from something that could be conceptualized as a mere lack, the nondoing of negative actions—that is, not lying, not stealing, and so on. The prātimokṣa vow is the "intention to restrain" (*spang ba'i sems pa*). Positing intention as its nature means that it is not just a mere lack, a mere absence of bad deeds that could occur for anyone, vow holder or not. The cittotpāda, or bodhisattva, vow is generally understood in positive terms—in the sense that it is the aspiration to the path to buddhahood and a commitment to the actions and practices that entails. In the same way that the nature of the prātimokṣa vows is not mere restraint, the nature of the cittotpāda vows is neither the mere wish nor mere practice, it is the intention that underpins both of these—the "intention to train" (*bslab pa'i sems pa*). The concept of the nature of the vow underscores the primacy of proper ritual, accounts for the merit generated after the ritual regardless of visible behavior, and bridges unenlightened to enlightened states.

The concept of the nature of a vow factors into discussions of the cittotpāda vows in two contexts: in the differentiation between the generation of bodhicitta and the resulting vows and in the application to the two categories of bodhicitta, aspirational and active (*praṇidhicitta, smon pa'i sems*) and (*prasthānacitta, 'jug pa'i sems*). The latter topic also touches on the difference

between the two vow lineages because of their difference in nature, which itself is based on whether or not the vows pertaining to active, aspirational, or both are conferred via the given lineage's ritual. It is commonly the active form of enlightenment that are solely associated with the cittotpāda vows, yet Shākya Chokden states in the third chapter of the *Golden Lancet* that essentially cittotpāda vows are those that are related to aspirational bodhicitta (or *pranidhānacittotpada*).[290] This not only excludes ultimate bodhicitta, it also excludes the elaborate downfalls taught in Asaṅga's fourth-century *Bodhisattvabhūmi* and Śāntideva's eighth-century *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, which are the two primary sources for the rituals, downfalls, and paths of training related to, respectively, the two lineages of vows that were transmitted from India to Tibet, the former considered the Cittamātra lineage and the latter the Madhyamaka lineage.

Although Shākya Chokden asserts that only, or at the bare minimnum, the vow related to aspirational bodhicitta is required to be a holder of the three vows, he still presents a complex analysis of the vows as a puzzle of several dimensions of adherence to the path to becoming a buddha, as opposed to other paths, Buddhist and non-Buddhist. The vows are a link joining the practitioner's mindstream with the production (*bskyed*, *utpāda*) of the mind, intention, or resolution (*sems*, *citta*) to attain a buddha's enlightenment (*byang chub*, *bodhi*)—hence, *bodhicittotpāda* (*byang chub sems bskyed*) and the "cittotpāda" vow. As the second of the three vows, this vow is the hinge that connects the prātimokṣa to the tantras—that is, it connects the pedestrian rules of outer comportment of body and speech to the esoteric teachings on the

[290] *GL3*, in *Collected Works*, vol 7 (Kathmandu, Sachen International, 2006), 9. *de yang sdom pa gsum ldan du 'jog pa la/ rang rang so so'i sdom pa yongs su rdzogs par thob dgos pa ni ma yin te/ dge bsnyen gyi sdom pa tsam dang/ smon sems kyi sdom pa rkyang pa dang/ bla med kyi bum dbang tsam zhig bskur bas sdom pa gsum ldan du 'jog nus pa'i phyir ro/* This minimalistic approach to the three vows, and the basic requirements for the other two vows (the upāsaka vows, for the prātimokṣa, and the vase empowerment of Highest Yoga Tantra, for the vidyādhara vows) are discussed further in chapter 3.

transformation of the subtle body by taking the final result as the path. In terms of the relationship between the prātimokṣa and the cittotpāda vow, the first category of the vows' division into three, restraining from misdeeds, connects the cittotpāda vows back to either the prātimokṣa vows themselves or to the complex category of the "mere prātimokṣa" (which is not the prātimokṣa *vows* and rather are of the nature of the cittotpāda vows). As for the hinge from the cittotpāda to the tantra vows, Shākya Chokden is clear to differentiate the two lineages of the production of vows in relation to relative bodhicitta with those taken within the context of a tantric empowerment.

Cittotpāda itself is the production of a certain type of mind, and the vows themselves are mind. And yet central to Shākya Chokden's, and the general Sakya view, is that the two are not the same. The vows continuously underpin the mental state that is the wish to attain buddhahood and the commitment to pursue that path toward it. In his "Bodhisattva Discipline Chapter," Shākya Chokden separates bodhicitta itself from the vows; he says, "The arising of the mind toward supreme enlightenment and its vows are separated into two. . . . The vow is the intention, together with its seeds, to relinquish the discordant factors that are adverse conditions that cause that cittotpāda to decline; and it is the intention to consent to train in what is to be trained in, the concordant factors that increase it further."[291] Thus, there is both the element of relinquishment, similar to the prātimokṣa vows, and an adoption of a path (superior to the prātimokṣa) in the very definition of the vow itself. In his "Vidyādhara Discipline," the cittotpāda vows are explained to be "in addition to the previous specific things to be relinquished, the principal relinquishment of the three nonvirtues of mind together with their associated factors, the specific collection of

[291] "Bodhisattva Discipline Chapter," 442. *sdom pa ni sems bskyed de dang de dag nyams par byed pa'i 'gal rkyen mi mthun pa'i phyogs spong zhing/ gong du 'phel ba'i mthun rkyen bslab bya la slob par khas blangs pa'i sems pa sa bon dang bcas pa'o/*

virtuous qualities that are the things to be taken up, and the specific actions that are the discipline of accomplishing the benefit of beings, the specific time frame of which is until one obtains enlightenment."[292] In the bodhisattva vow chapter of the *Golden Lancet*, the answer to the first question includes a statement on the nature of both vows of aspirational and active bodhicitta. He states, "The nature of both vows is—while undertaking the trainings of the two, aspirational and active—the intention, together with its seeds, to train in them."[293] The nature of the vows is thus at the center of the puzzle that Shākya Chokden puts together across his several works that deal with bodhisattva vows.

The cittotpāda vows are discussed in terms of three sets of two and one set of three. These layers of enumerations of categories fit together to create a multidimensional picture of the vows as central to a continuity from the ordinary, or unenlightened, mind to the ultimate state. The sets of two are the bifurcation into Madhyamaka (*dbu ma*) and Cittamātra (*sems tsam*) lineages, into relative (*kun rdzob*) and ultimate (*don dam*) forms of bodhicitta, and into vows that relate specifically to aspirational (*smon*) and active (*'jug*) forms of relative bodhicitta. These latter two are defined in Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* as the difference between desiring to go somewhere and setting out on the journey.[294] The set of three is the three types of discipline that compose the vow as taught in Asaṅga's *Bodhisattvabhūmi*: guarding against negative actions, the discipline of gathering virtuous qualities, and the discipline of accomplishing the benefit of beings. The first of these three is considered the "mere prātimokṣa" (*so thar tsam*) or the

[292] "Vidyādhara Discipline Chapter," 412. *sems bksyed kyi sdom pa ni/ spang bya'i khyad par snga ma'i steng du yid kyi mi dge ba gsum 'khor dang bcas pa gtso bor spong zhing/ blang bya'i khyad par dge ba'i chos bsdus pa dang/ byed las kyi khyad par sems can don byed pa'i tshul khrims dus kyi khyad par byang chub chen po ma thob kyi bar du blangs pa zhig go/*
[293] *Golden Lancet*, 587. *smon 'jug de gnyis kyi bslab pa bzung nas/ de la slob pa'i sems pa sa bon dang bcas pa ni sdom pa gnyis po'i ngo bo'o/*
[294] *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 2b5. *'gro bar 'dod dang 'gro ba yi / bye brag ji ltar shes pa ltar*

"bodhisattva's prātimokṣa" (*byang chub sems dpa'i so thar*). In his *Cittotpāda Ritual of the Madhyamaka Tradition,* Sakya Paṇḍita defines these three in terms of their nature (*so so ngo bo ngos gzung ba*), each as an instance of "mind," reflecting three-vow terminology, discussed further in chapter 3 below:

> First, a mind that relinquishes nonvirtue together with its basis is the discipline of restraint. A mind that accomplishes all virtuous dharmas is gathering virtuous dharma. A mind that endeavors without fail for the benefit of others is accomplishing the benefit of beings.[295]

The three forms of discipline that compose the vow found in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* are explained just prior to the description of the ceremony. They are asserted by Michael Zimmerman in his study of the chapter on morality to be a new invention of the compiler, as a "new vision of categories of moral behavior."[296] In this way, these three aspects of the cittotpāda vow can be seen in terms of their natures as consciousness that perform functions for the vow holder, with the actual external behavior and comportment deriving from them.

While these analytic categories framed the discussions on the vows' lineage authenticity and underpinned the very possibility of the soteriological efficacy of the path to buddhahood, they also created new problems of their own. Because the two lineages of vow conferral going

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[295] Sakya Paṇḍita, *dBu ma lugs kyi sems bskyed kyi cho ga* (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006), 470. *dang po ni mi dge ba gzhi dang bcas pa spong ba sems ni sdom pa tshul khrims/ dge ba chos mtha' dag bsgrub pa sems ni dge ba chos sdud/ gzhan gyi don phyin ci ma log par brtson pa sems ni sems can don byed do/* Liu's translation of this passage, using "an attitude that" unfortunately buries the significance here of instances of consciousness, much like three-vow theory defines vows not in the abstract, but as a constituent of the person.

[296] Michael Zimmerman, "The Chapter on Right Conduct in the Bodhisattvabhūmi," in *The Foundation for Yoga Practitioners: The Buddhist Yogācārabhūmi Treatise and Its Adaptation in India, East Asia, and Tibet*, ed. by Ulrich Timme Kragh (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 873, 874.

back to India are traced to arguably the two most famous Indian philosophers, the founding philosophers of the two Mahāyāna tenet systems, Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga, this led to debate around the relationship between the vow-takers' philosophical views and the lineage in which they formally took the cittotpāda vow through ritual. Shākya Chokden rejects the assumption that the particular view associated with each of the two tenet systems is so significant that it must be the philosophical view held in the mind of the vow taker. Here, he is in complete agreement with Tsongkhapa, who contradicted Sakya Paṇḍita on this very point. Rather than directly contradicting Sakya Paṇḍita, Shākya Chokden reframes his perspective and seeks to identify his original intent. He does not reject the significance of the vow holder's views and its relationship with keeping vows particular to each of the two lineages, in that certain views make the vows of one or the other lineage easier or more difficult to hold. While the view of the vow holder is significant in the ability to keep the vow, and wrong views of certain types can break the vow, this is not what distinguishes the two traditions.

The two traditions have different source material, differ in the number and types of downfalls, differ in whether they produce vows in relation to aspirational, active, or both types of bodhicitta, and whether loss of bodhicitta is explicitly stated as a loss of the vows. Thus, in the answer to his first question in the *Golden Lancet*, Shākya Chokden says:

> First, the rituals for initially taking [the vows] are different, and there is a difference in the greater and lesser extent of the nature of the vows obtained from them. There is a

> difference in the greater and lesser extent in what is entailed by those means, and there is a difference in the heaviness of and in greater and lesser numbers of the root downfalls.[297]

In his "Bodhisattva Discipline Chapter," Shākya Chokden states the centrality of the nature of the vow more explicitly:

> The root of those many differences between the two traditions—such as the difference in the quantity of root downfalls and the difference in the range of [various types of] person who are the basis for taking them—derives from the assertion of the extent of the nature of the vow.[298]

In the first question within the bodhisattva vow section of his *Golden Lancet*, he states the difference between bodhicitta itself and the cittotpāda vows within the Madhyamaka tradition:

> One might ask, in this tradition what is the difference between bodhicitta and its vows? Aspirational and active [bodhi]citta are to endeavor toward both complete enlightenment and engaging in benefiting others, which is the cause [of that enlightenment]; taking on

[297] *Golden Lancet*, 685. *dang por len pa'i cho ga mi 'dra zhing/ des thob pa'i sdom pa'i ngo bo la rgya che chung gi khyad par yod la/ de'i stobs kyis bcas pa la rgya che chung gi khyad par byung zhing/ de las rtsa ba'i ltung ba la lci yang dang/ grangs mang nyung gi khyad par byung ba yin no/*

[298] "Bodhisattva Discipline Chapter," 438. *dang po ni/ lugs gnyis po'i rtsa ba'i ltung ba la mang nyung gi khyad par dang/ len pa'i rten gyi gang zag la rgya che chung gi khyad par sogs mang po pa de dag gi rtsa ba ni sdom pa'i ngo bo la rgya che chung gi khyad par bzhed pas rab tu phye ba yin la/*

> the trainings of both aspirational and active [bodhicitta], the intention to train in them, together with its seeds, is the nature of both vows.[299]

In the Cittamātra tradition as well, bodhicitta is separated from its vows. Shākya Chokden states,

> Second, in the Cittamātra tradition, in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, bodhicitta and its vows are separated into two. The first is the mind generated toward complete enlightenment. The second is only the vows of active [bodhicitta], and that has three distinguishing features (*ldog cha*), which are restraining from negative deeds, accumulating virtuous qualities, and benefiting beings.[300]

Despite the many differences in descriptions of downfalls and other outward-facing aspects of the vow traditions, such as their lineages and ritual structure, the fundamental source of those differences is in the vow itself, in other words, in what these ritual activities produce in the vow holder and how they persist. The vow itself, what arises during the ritual, is the center around which the various other categories are arranged.

Vows and the Origins of the Mahāyāna

The cittotpāda vow can be seen as a ritual practice that mirrors the narrative element in the life of

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[299] *GL,* 686–87. *'o na lugs 'dir sems bskyed dang/ de'i sdom pa'i khyad par gang zhig/ gang zhe na/ rdzogs pa'i byang chub dang/ de'i rgyu gzhan don du jug pa gnyis don du gnyer ba ni smon 'jug gi sems so/ smon 'jug de gnyis kyi bslab pa bzung nas/ de la slob pa'i sems pa sa bon dang bcas pa ni sdom pa gnyis po'i ngo bo/*

[300] *GL,* 686–87. *gnyis pa sems tsam pa'i lugs ni/ byang sa las/ sems bskyed dang de'i sdom pa gnyis su phye nas/ dang po ni byang chub don gnyer gyi sems skyed do/ gnyis pa ni 'jug pa'i sdom pa kho na ste/ de la nyes spyod sdom pa dang dge ba chos bsdud dang/ sems can don byed kyi dbye bas ldog cha gsum du 'gyur ro/*

Śākyamuni Buddha of his initial aspiration toward enlightenment. The language of vows was already present in descriptions of the lives of Śākyamuni Buddha, whose countless lifetimes as a bodhisattva accumulating the requisite merit and wisdom in order to become a complete buddha are recounted in the jātaka corpus of literature, which dates to the fourth century B.C.E. and constitutes some of the earliest known Buddhist stories. The values and deeds of these stories were extended by the new and diverse forms of Mahāyāna literature to define the primary path of practice not only for the buddha, but for his disciples as well. The cittotpāda vow, then, can be seen as merely a ritualization for each practitioner of the moment when Śākyamuni Buddha, during his lifetime as the yogin Sumedha (or Sumegha), vowed not to become an arhat and enter into nirvāṇa, but rather to become the next buddha.[301] In early Buddhism, making this vow is requisite for becoming a buddha, who was both a human and super-human creature who would appear once per eon according to non-Mahāyāna cosmology. These elite few were male.[302] Mahāyāna cosmology as established in Mahāyāna scriptures, such as the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (*Lotus Sūtra*), subverts this one-buddha-per eon-rule to make buddhahood the normative outcome of the Buddhist path.

The connections and chronologies are still obscure between the first occurrences of the declarations of buddhahood as an acceptable goal among Indian Buddhist practitioners and Mahāyāna sūtra declarations of universal buddhahood or a buddhahood by classificatory family-type, or disposition. Yet, at some point, a narrative element of the Buddha's life was transformed into a liturgical formulation that allowed the practitioner to fulfill one of the five requirements of a buddha-to-be without requiring the physical presence of a living buddha within that particular

[301] T. W. Rhys Davids, trans., *Buddhist Birth Stories: or, Jātaka Tales: The Oldest Collection of Folk-lore Extant, Being the Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* (London: Trübner, 1880), 95.
[302] Wangchuk, *Resolve to Become a Buddha*, 87.

lifetime.[303] Among the many rituals propagated by and/or arisen from the early Mahāyāna sūtras, the ritual conferral of the cittotpāda vow extends the language of text-based narrative tropes of buddhahood.

In Ulrich Pagel's extensive work on the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*, he notes that the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛccha*[304] and *Akṣayamatiparipṛccha*,[305] two texts in the forty-nine-text collection of Mahāyāna sūtras, the *Ratnakuṭa*, in both Chinese and Tibetan canons, contain some of the earliest and simplest formulations of cittotpāda vow, as a vocalized aspiration to save all beings. Ulrich Pagel's translation of the relevant line in *Questions of Rāṣṭrapāla* is:

> There is no protection, refuge, or shelter for someone who wanders in the conditioned destinies of the world. Thus, I formulate my resolution for the sake of highest enlightenment, saying, I must liberate all sentient beings.[306]

There is a range of detail across these early formulations, and other simple formations appear in tantras including, as Shākya Chokden mentions, the *Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi*[307] and the *Trisamayavyūharājanāma Tantra.*[308] The *Ākāśagarbha Sūtra* offers a detailed ritual for

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[303] The five requirements being: to be a man, to be human, to be able to attain arhat-ship but refuse it, to receive a prophecy from a previous buddha, to make a vow in the presence of that buddha.

[304] *Āryarāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchānāmamahāyānasūtra*, *'Phags pa yul 'khor skyong gis zhus pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*, (D 62) dkon brtsegs, *nga*, 227a7–257a7. This has been translated several times; in 1901 by Luis Finot, in 2008 by Daniel Boucher, and by the Vienna Buddhist Translation Studies Group in 2021 for 84,000: Translating the Words of the Buddha. https://read.84000.co/translation/toh62.html.

[305] *Āryākṣayamatiparipṛcchānāmamahāyānasūtra*, *Phags pa blo gros mi zad pas zhus pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*, (D 89) dkon brtsegs, *cha*, 175b2–182b6.

[306] Pagel, *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*, 106.

[307] *Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi*, *Rnam par snang mdzad chen po mngon par rdzogs par byang chub pa rnam par sprul pa byin gyis rlob pa shin tu rgyas pa mdo sde'i dbang po'i rgyal po zhes bya ba'i chos kyi rnam grangs* (*Rnam snang mngon byang*) (H 462). For more on this, see Stephen Hodge, *The Mahā-Vairocana-Abhisambodhi Tantra* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2013).

[308] *Trisamayavyūharājanāmatantra*, *Dam tshig gsum bkod pa'i rgyal po zhes bya ba'i rgyud*, (D 502) rgyud, *da*, 181a2–247a7.

confessing downfalls of the bodhisattva vows by visualizing the bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha as confessor, who will appear in the form of a brahmin or a little girl, the form depending on the karmic makeup of the confessor. If one fails to evoke a complete manifestation of the bodhisattva, there are instructions on how to manifest him in a dream and carry out the confession there. In the dream state only the bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha's messenger, Aruṇa, will be there; one then supplicates him to bring the confession to the bodhisattva. The sūtra's instructions include a Mahāyāna ritual invocation of dhāraṇīs, or formulations of powerful utterances or spells. The ritual efficacy of these dhāraṇīs is asserted across Indian literature on bodhisattva practice, with its meaning shifting in various contexts, used for worldly as well as ultimate goals.[309]

While it is compelling to assume such rituals were utilized at an individual level, defining those on the bodhisattva path in opposition to those that remained among a śrāvaka doctrinal scheme, there is no evidence that the bodhisattva ideal arose newly as a "vocational alternative," in Jan Nattier's words,[310] at the origins of the Mahāyāna. Rather, even the earliest scriptures offered three paths, the most exalted of which was left lacking in concrete details on how to follow it. The creative proliferation of Mahāyāna sūtras offered details on such a soteriology and cosmology to fill this lacuna.[311]

Western scholarship has changed its mind several times on the nature of the origins of the Mahāyāna. The Mahāyāna was not a distinct tradition, not one or many cohesive communities, nor did it represent either an institutional or doctrinal rift with whatever came before and

[309] Ronald Davidson, "Studies in Dhāraṇī Literature I: Revisiting the Meaning of the Term 'Dhāraṇī,'" *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 37, no. 2 (April 2009): 97–147. See also Paul Copp, "Dhāraṇī Scriptures," in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, edited by Orzech, Charles, Richard Payne, and Henrik Sørensen, 176–80 (Leiden: Brill, 2011).
[310] *A Few Good Men*, 8 and 175n6.
[311] Drewes, "Early Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism I," 67.

remained alongside it. Rather, the function of these sūtras was to fill in a doctrinal gap in a tradition that always promoted three vehicles but only ever offered a path to one of them.[312] Barring for now the glaring exception of the *Lotus Sūtra* and the single-vehicle doctrine, the śrāvakayāna and pratyekabuddhayāna remained viable paths that the Mahāyāna sūtras not only acknowledged as liberative vehicles (*yānas*) but offered methods and promises to accomplish those paths even more swiftly. If the śrāvakayāna is essentially the path taught in detail in the scriptures of the nikāyas, and a pratyekabuddhayāna by definition needed no teacher or doctrine at all, this left the path of the bodhisattva, an exalted ideal from the start, as a fruitful avenue for creative doctrinal development. The Buddha of the earliest scriptures knew much more than he was teaching, allowing for the vast proliferation of creative doctrines and practices that developed over the course of centuries in India and beyond. This proliferation was for the most part not at the expense of anything that came before it. Thus, if the Mahāyāna sūtras filled the doctrinal gap left open by the exalted but as-yet-untaught bodhisattva path, the bodhisattva vow fulfilled it ritually. In other words, if the Mahāyāna sūtras' role was to elaborate on the bodhisattva path articulated in the nikāyas, the bodhisattva vow literature codified such a path into law.

Because the bodhisattva path for a living person emulates in some ways the bodhisattva path of Śākyamuni Buddha's life stories, it makes sense to assume the actual practices advocated on the ground would have also been modeled on the extreme practices of the narratives of the Buddha's long and difficult journey over lifetimes toward enlightenment. This is what Jan Nattier asserts in her *A Few Good Men,* which was bolstered by the forest hypothesis of other

[312] For this idea as the driving force of the composition of the Mahāyāna sūtras, see David Drewes, "Early Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism II: New Perspectives," *Religion Compass* 4, no. 2 (2010): 66–74.

scholars—that the bodhisattva path originated with small groups of monks practicing extreme austerities in the forest.[313] Among its many problems, this perspective relies on the assumption that from the beginning, Buddhists were concerned primarily with the quest for an inward experience.[314] In disagreement with this ascetic or forest origin of the early Mahāyāna, David Drewes points out that Mahāyāna sūtras offer quite the opposite—various simple practices to proceed on a bodhisattva path, such as reciting and copying the sūtras themselves. The bodhisattva vow ritual is not mentioned as one of these many easy practices but appears as easily adoptable when understood alongside them. If the Mahāyāna sūtras express that what you have to do to be a bodhisattva is to recite or copy a text, the bodhisattva vow ritual material, especially as presented in later Mahāyāna commentaries, implies that all you have to do is want it.

In speaking of origins of the development of the bodhisattva ideal and the generation of bodhicitta as central to a path toward buddhahood, some scholars seek to connect such a development with a lifetime of a historical figure, and the anxiety of the loss of a traditions' founder.[315] Yet, as compelling as it is to view the bodhisattva vow ritual act as a workaround for the problem of requiring a present buddha, it in fact still appears to presuppose a previous vow

[313] See Jan Nattier, *A Few Good Men: The Bodhisattva Path according to "The Inquiry of Ugra (Ugraparipṛcchā)* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003). Paul Harrison describes early adherents of a bodhisattva path as "hard-core ascetics, members of the forest dwelling (*araṇyavāsin*) wing of the Buddhist Order." See his "Mediums and Messages: Reflections on the Production of the Mahāyāna Sūtras," *Eastern Buddhist* 35, nos. 1/2 129.

[314] David Drewes, "The Forest Hypothesis," in *Setting Out on the Great Way: Essays on Early Mahāyāna Buddhism,* ed. Paul Harrison, (Sheffield: Equinox, 2018): 73–93. There, he refutes the use by both Gregory Schopen and Paul Harrison that seeking enlightenment can be viable historical motive for the development of doctrine and practice, noting that aspiring to become a buddha and belief in the Mahāyāna sūtras were separate and in some ways unrelated phenomena.

[315] Wangchuk writes, "The psychological need of the Buddhists to make up in one way or another for the demise of the historical Buddha may have been one of the principal internal factors that contributed to the formation of the idea of the resolve to become a buddha." (*Resolve to Become a Buddha*, 22) Malcolm David Eckel similarly writes, "The ritual of vow-taking, a ritual that replicates in individual experience the previous vow (*purva-pranidhlna*) . . . in Bhavaviveka's words, allowed the silent Buddha to speak." On Bhāviveka and the bodhisattva vow, see his "The Power of the Buddha's Absence: On the Foundations of Mahāyāna Buddhist Ritual," *Journal of Ritual* Studies 4, no. 2 (1990): 78.

made in a past lifetime in the presence of an actual buddha or a continued necessity to do so in the future. The vow ritual thus does not seem to have replaced the requirement that a bodhisattva make an initial vow in front of a buddha.[316] There is also no agreement across even early texts on the life of the Buddha on the positioning of this promise or aspiration within his lifetime and its relationship to when exactly he became a bodhisattva.[317]

While the use of the term "bodhisattva" in non-Mahāyāna contexts is largely assumed to refer only to the previous lives of the buddha before he was enlightened, the works of David Drewes and Trent Walker show that accepting the legitimacy of the Mahāyāna sūtras is not in fact a requirement for accepting the bodhisattva ideal for a contemporaneous living person.[318] Rather than asserting entirely different paths to an entirely different form of liberation (arhatship vs. complete buddhahood), the distinction between Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna doctrinal systems seems to rather be about how three different viable paths were negotiated, and a matter of emphasis on what the ideal for most people should be. While the *Lotus Sūtra* rejects the viability of the two lower paths, remarking that they were mere provisional teachings meant to skillfully (if dishonestly) guide followers to the real goal, many other Mahāyāna sūtras remained committed to teaching all three yānas, allowing and remaining within what Drewes calls, "the facticity of the early Buddhist world."[319] He writes, "When Mahāyāna sūtras present stories of Buddhas and bodhisattvas' first arising of the thought of attaining Buddhahood, they invariably depict it as taking place in the presence of a Buddha, suggesting that they shared with all known nikāya traditions the understanding that this is a necessary condition for entering the path."[320]

[316] Drewes, "The Problem of Becoming a Bodhisattva," 171.
[317] Drewes, 149–52.
[318] Drewes, "The Problem of Becoming a Bodhisattva," #
[319] Drewes, "Early Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism I," 66.
[320] Drewes, "The Problem of Becoming a Bodhisattva," 160.

It is clear that non-Mahāyāna traditions retained elements of the cittotpāda vow, with evidence of bodhisattva identity for individuals in Southeast Asia. David Drewes has shown the persistence of a bodhisattva identity in Thailand among kings and monks. He cites an instance in which a modern Thai monk, frustrated with his practice, suspects a bodhisattva vow made in a previous life is hindering his path toward arhatship, and so he renounces it. The capacity to renounce the vow and its weakness is surmised to be due to his not having yet taken the vow in the presence of a buddha.[321] Trent Walker writes of a similar situation in Cambodia: "Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, many Cambodian Buddhists left records of their 'truthful aspirations' (Khmer: *satyapraṇidhān*) to awaken as buddhas in the future. This does not mean they were Mahāyāna Buddhists, but rather that they were inspired by the path of the bodhisattva in Pāli Buddhist contexts."[322] This approach of disassociating a Mahāyāna orientation and the bodhisattva path, identifying it (if not as an ideal) in non-Mahāyāna contexts, is also found in the Tibetan tradition.

In Sakya Paṇḍita's *Differentiation of the Three Vows*, he starts his chapter on cittotpāda vows with the statement that non-Mahāyāna traditions also have cittotpāda vows.[323] He writes:

> There are two traditions of *cittotpāda*:
>
> the śrāvaka and Mahāyāna.

[321] In "The Problem of Becoming a Bodhisattva," 154. See also Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets: A Study in Charisma, Hagiography, Sectarianism, and Millennial Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 99–100.
[322] Walker, *Until Nirvana's Time* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2022).
[323] Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation*, 81.

Sakya Paṇḍita's own view expressed in the opening lines of his chapter on cittotpāda vows, implies that equating the Mahāyāna with the bodhisattva path was faulty even for Tibetans, if the śrāvakas as well have a tradition of conferring cittotpāda vows as a rite on the path to buddhahood. He reframes this broad sectarian split by implying that the śrāvakas are not those who have not heard of, or were not taught, the key philosophical and practice principles of the Mahāyāna. Rather, his point is that what he refers to as the śrāvaka (*nyan thos*) tradition, meaning non-Mahāyāna, once did have an optional path to buddhahood; but it degenerated, and the lineage was lost. This in fact reframes a fundamental assumption about the development of the Mahāyāna and the history of Buddhist sects and practices, and it affords authority to the Mahāyāna. Rather than being a later development, a new invention, or itself a corruption through accretion and syncretism with tantric elements, this view actually places the Mahāyāna at the origin and the śrāvaka as an unfortunate offshoot, which was once also whole but lost some fundamental practices.

It is compelling to assume that the cittotpāda vow must have been central to the transition from non-Mahāyāna doctrines, with its single buddha per eon and central aim for common practitioners of the state of an arhat, to the Mahāyāna ideal of buddhahood for all, or at least more, practitioners. If the early Mahāyāna arose within monastic communities, all of whom took the same vinaya ordination, it would be convenient to assume that only some of these, the ones who believed in the veracity of the Mahāyāna sūtras, took the bodhisattva vow ritual as a separate ceremony. Yet, there is little evidence from both the earlier Mahāyāna sūtras and the bodhisattva vow ritual material itself, that such a separate ceremony existed. Still, the ritual liturgy itself does appear to be a combination of vinaya ordination structure and language, and language from the narratives of buddhas' aspirations from the Mahāyāna sūtras.

Source Materials for the Vow

The cittotpāda vow literature in the Tibetan canon falls across several genres of scripture and commentary and falls generally into two classes of written material: ritual liturgies (together with commentary and instruction) and narratives of the vow as it was taken during the lifetime of Śākyamuni and other buddhas. Examining these two types of literature together reveals a development of the cittotpāda vow as a subjective and personal aspiration to a ritual enactment. General references to the vow appear across both sections of the Tibetan canon: the translations of the speech of the Buddha, the Kangyur (*bka' 'gyur*, literally "translation of speech") and the translation of the treatises inspired by that speech, the Tengyur, (*bstan 'gyur*, literally "translation of teachings"), which include commentarial literature, grammar, poetry, astrology, medicine, and other topics. Tibetan and Western scholarship on the cittotpāda vow has tended to locate the source of the cittotpāda vow in the works of three Indian authors, Asaṅga (c. fourth century), Candragomin (c. seventh century), and Śāntideva (c. eighth century). Both the Kangyur and Tengyur contain references to, and entire works on, the cittotpāda vow that offer more complex insights into the vow as a ritual practice and its relationship to monastic and tantric elements. The cittotpāda vow ritual texts in the Tengyur are mostly a snapshot of monastic practice in tenth-to-eleventh-century Vikramaśīla, a monastery in Northern India. A small group of short texts in the Tibetan Tengyur suggests that at least some Indian masters brought their own cittotpāda vow ritual texts for use in Tibet, or they composed them on arrival.

Authorship is also an unclear category in relation to these texts, as they differ among themselves and show features unique to each author and at the same time consist of liturgical staples with strict rules about what must be said and when. They are creative redactions and

organizations of sections of text that can be filled out or moved around by an "author," so that authorship is attributed to these individuals in the Tengyur editions. That is, cittotpāda vow conferral was not done with just excerpts from the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* or the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, which could have also worked. The act of "composing" unique cittotpāda vow texts occurred in India and continued in Tibet.

The history of ritual conferral of the cittotpāda vow as a practice in Indian Buddhism is thus a series of fragmented pictures and a clear chronology of development has only been surmised. While these texts are similar in structure, and contain stock phrases and standard scriptural forms, they also display unique features such as the inclusion of mantras, tantric empowerments, lay and fasting vows, and various versions of the standard seven-branch ritual format,[324] which itself is traced to the earlier *triskandha* (threefold) ritual structure.[325] The sevenfold ritual (*saptapuja* or *saptavidhānuttarapūjā* or *ānuttarapūjā*) was not a one-time vow conferral, but rather was meant to be repeated, even several times a day.

In the Tibetan Tengyur, there are eight stand-alone texts that announce themselves as ritual liturgies for either conferral of the cittotpāda vow, generation of bodhicitta, or use some combination of both terminologies. These are attributed to Nāgārjuna,[326] Jetāri,[327]

[324] *The Bodhicaryāvatāra*, trans. Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton, 9–13. The sevenfold rite in Chinese Buddhist traditions and especially its use in ritual practices connected to the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, see Daniel Stevenson, "The T'ien-t'ai Four Forms of Samadhi and late North-South Dynasties, Sui, and Early T'ang Buddhist Devotionalism" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1987), 441–55.
[325] Nancy J. Barnes, "The Triskandha, Practice in Three Parts: Study of an Early Mahāyāna Ritual," in *Studies on Buddhism in Honour of Professor A.K. Warder* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1993), 1–10.
[326] *Ritual for Generating the Mind of Enlightenment, Byang chub tu sems bskyed pa'i cho ga*, T.Pd, vol. 65, 673–79.
[327] *Ritual for Generating the Mind of Enlightenment and the Deity, Bodhicittotpādasamadanavidhi, Byang chub kyi sems bskyed pa dang yi dam blang ba'i cho ga*, T.PD., vol 65, 657–66.

Bodhibhadra,[328] Atiśa,[329] Abhayākaragupta,[330] Mañjuśrīmitra,[331] Niṣkalaṅkavajra,[332] Saṃvarabhadra.[333] Four of these come from tenth to early twelfth-century monks from Vikramaśīla and Nālandā monasteries. Three of these authors are in teacher-student relationships with one another (Jetāri, Bodhibhadra, and Atiśa), while Abhayākaragupta (d. c. 1125), lived a generation later. Each of these liturgies was translated by a different Tibetan translator under the guidance of different Indian masters in Tibet. The oldest of these texts, if the authorship is to be believed, is attributed to Nāgārjuna[334] and was translated in the early ninth century by Surendrabodhi and Bande Yeshe De (Ban de ye shes sde). Abhayākaragupta's text was translated into Tibetan by Śākyaśrībhadra during his later travels to Tibet in the early thirteen century. These texts repeat and overlap much of the same material, which also extends to the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* and *Bodhisattva Prātimokṣa Sūtra*.[335] Bodhibhadra's ritual text has been shown to be a combination of Nāgārjuna's ritual text and the *Bodhisattva Prātimokṣa Sūtra.*[336] Three start with seven-syllable verses, and one begins with a four-syllable verse, while the others have no verses. Even the opening prostration is different; two open with a statement of homage

[328] *Ritual for the Bodhisattva Vow, Bodhisattvasaṃvaravidhi, Byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa'i cho ga,* T.Pd., vol. 65, 649–56. This text was translated into Tibetan by the Indian Punyaśrimitra and the Tibetan Darma Drak (Dar ma brag).
[329] *Ritual for the Cittotpāda Vows, Cittotpādasaṃvaravidhikrama, Sems bskyed pa dang sdom pa'i cho ga'i rim pa,* T.Pd., vol. 65, 667–76.
[330] *Ritual for Taking the Bodhisattva Vow, Bodhisattvasaṃvaragrahanavidhi, Byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa gzung ba'i cho ga,* T.PD. vol. 65 (Dg.T. 3970).
[331] *Cittotpada Ritual*, *Cittotpādavidhi*, *Sems skyed kyi cho ga*, T.PD. vol. 33, 94–96.
[332] *The Stages of the Three Vows, Trisaṃvarakrama, Sdom pa gsum gyi rim pa,* T.Pd. vol. 65, 712–15.
[333] *Instructions on Refuge, Bodhicitta, and the Four Empowerments, Śaranaṃgatacittotpādacatuḥsekāvavāda, Skyabs 'gro sems bskyed dbang bzhi'i gdams pa*, T.Pd. vol. 25, 486–98.
[334] Christian Lindtner places this text in the category of uncertain but likely to have been actually composed by Nāgārjuna. See *Nagarjuniana*: *Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nāgārjuna* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1982).
[335] Giuliana Martini, "Bodhisattva Texts, Ideologies and Rituals in Khotan in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries," in *Multilingualism and the History of Knowledge, vol. I: Buddhism Among the Iranian Peoples of Central Asia,* ed. Matteo de Chiara, Mauro Maggi, and Giuliana Martini (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2013), 34.
[336] Yamabe Nobuyoshi, "Visionary Repentance and Visionary Ordination in the *Brahmā Net Sūtra*," in *Going Forth: Visions of Buddhist Vinaya,* ed. W. M. Bodiford (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 30.

to “buddhas and bodhisattvas,” and the rest have unique objects of homage: “Youthful Mañjuśrī,” “Noble Mañjuśrī,” “great compassion,” “the Buddha,” and “the three jewels.” Four use the word *vow* (*sdom pa*) in their titles, and five use “mind generation,” cittotpāda (*sems skyed*). Six are in the Madhyamaka (*dbu ma*) section of the Tengyur and three are in the tantra (*rgyud*) and tantra commentary (*rgyud ’grel*) sections. All three texts in these latter two sections use “mind generation,” *cittotpāda* in their title and not “vow,” *saṃvara*.

In Sakya Paṇḍita’s response to Chak Lotsāwa on the topic of the two lineages, he relates that Śākyaśrībhadra was asked by a group of Tibetans to confer the cittotpāda vow on them. Chak Lotsāwa assumes that Śākyaśrībhadra used Abhayākaragupta’s ritual text for vow conferral, and queries which of the two lineages it adheres to. Sakya Paṇḍita corrects him and provides a somewhat dramatic story of Śākyaśrībhadra’s irritation with the Tibetans’ desperation to receive the cittotpāda vow. He doubted they could keep the vows, as they were barely able to keep the prātimokṣa vows and expressed that they were not ready to take them. This story brings up many questions. It is clear from Sakya Paṇḍita’s story that the community at Sakya in 1207 already had a bodhisattva vow ritual lineage, including preceptors who could offer the vow, and yet Śākyaśrībhadra would not have seen them as legitimate. He then offers a vow mixing the two traditions, which some later Tibetans would not have seen as legitimate. It was perhaps the knowledge that Śākyaśrībhadra translated Abhayākaragupta’s text that caused Chak Lotsāwa to believe that it was the text he himself initially used to confer the vows, although this narrative of the paṇḍita’s time in Tibet indicates that he did not initially bring it with him. There is an interesting tension between Śākyaśrībhadra’s connection with the Sakya forefathers, and Shākya Chokden’s dismissal of Abhayākaragupta ritual text as authoritative.

The scriptural sources for the two lineages identified by Shākya Chokden as a primary basis for their designation derive from the two Mahāyāna tenet systems. The Cittamātra tradition is based in Asaṅga's *Śīlapaṭala*, "Chapter on Ethics," within his *Bodhisattvabhūmi,* itself within the large compendium, the *Yogācārabhūmi*. This is the source for both the ritual material and the enumerations of downfalls, as well as providing the distinction between aspirational and active bodhicitta and the threefold aspect of discipline. Based on this text, Candragomin, a layman, wrote a treatise called *Twenty Stanzas on the Cittotpāda Vow,* a highly influential text in Tibet. It is this latter work that is the cited source for the Cittamātra tradition's list of downfalls in Shākya Chokden's works.

The Madhyamaka tradition is transmitted in Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and *Śiksasamuccaya,* and traced back further by some (notably, not by Shākya Chokden, however) to Nāgārjuna's (second to third century, notably, the time of the composition of the Mahāyāna sūtras) *bodhicittotpāda* seven-branch ritual, structured as a seven-limbed prayer (*saptapūja*), which would be the hallmark of its ritual structure as well as supplant the need for the prātimokṣa vows as prerequisite, allowing it to be open to any being whatsoever, regardless of capacity or previous misdeed, and including nonhumans.

Shākya Chokden's Writing on Cittotpāda Vows

Shākya Chokden's work on the bodhisattva vows is found primarily in three texts. The first is the second part of *Good Questions*, a list of questions in verse clarifying topics on each of the three chapters of Sakya Paṇḍita's *Differentiating the Three Vows* (*Sdom gsum rab dbye*), which, though the questions are unnumbered and continuous without chapter breaks, covers the three

vows in order. His answers to those questions are found in in the second chapter of *Golden Lancet*, where they are numbered as eleven separate questions, answered individually. Third, covering much of the same content of the *Golden Lancet*, is the second chapter of his *Presentation of the Discipline of the Three Vehicles*, titled "Bodhisattva Discipline" though, as mentioned before, this chapter is misplaced in the text titled *Presentation of the Three Vows*[337] within both consulted editions of his Collected Works.

Shākya Chokden's questions on cittotpāda vows cover the relationship between cittotpāda vows and bodhicitta, the significance of the division of vow lineages based on Mahāyāna tenet systems, the vow as articulated in the tantras, whether ultimate bodhicitta is ritually inducible, and how the prātimokṣa vows serve as a support for them. Shākya Chokden's work on the cittotpāda vows reflects how the tenet-system structure interacts with the idea of vow lineage. It also includes a detailed treatment of the nature of the vows in dependence on the two traditions' rituals.

The main concerns in the *Good Questions* are to clarify the differences across the two vow lineages and differentiate those two from the cittotpāda vow conferral within tantric empowerments. Given that they are differentiated based on view, does the Cittamātra vow arise in the mind of someone with an Madhyamaka view? Further, he queries whether the root downfalls in Asaṅga's *Bodhisattvabhūmi* are included in Śāntideva's *Śikṣāsamuccaya*; which is to say, whether the root downfalls in the source text of the Cittamātra lineage are included in a source text for the Madhyamaka vows. The fourth through sixth questions deal with the relationship between the prātimokṣa vows and the Madhyamaka cittotpāda vow ritual. The fourth

[337] Actually titled after its first chapter, the only extant chapter of this work, *Explanation of the First Stage, the Prātimokṣa, from* "*Presentation of the Three Vows"* (*Sdom gsum gyi rnam par bzhag pa rgya cher bshad pa las so sor thar pa'i rim pa dang po rnam par bshad pa*).

and sixth deal with the way in which the prātimokṣa serve as a support, or do not serve as such, for the latter. The fifth question references Drakpa Gyaltsen's cittotpāda vow confession ritual (in the Madhyamaka lineage). Question seven deals with the historical origin of the vow, and whether or not a ritual for generating ultimate bodhicitta was taught by the Buddha. Question eight deals with at what point in the ritual the mind-generations are produced. Questions ten and eleven turn to the issue of dedication and how it operates, or does not, in a śrāvaka context, both in the sense of merit being dedicated on their behalf (question ten) and in the sense of merit being dedicated by them, as in the case of the jātaka story of Viśvantara (Pāli: Vessantara), (mentioned by Sakya Paṇḍita in chapter 2, verse 54 of his *Differentiating the Three Vows*) who, in a past life of the Buddha, gave away his possessions, children, and wife to an evil brahman, demonstrating perfect generosity.

Any analysis of the vows thus faces a complex series of hermeneutic devices that ahistorically arrange thousands of years of doctrinal development in a single practicable and coherent system. For Shākya Chokden these also include the alignment of tantra with forms of ritual, practice, and philosophy of the *pāramitā* tradition. Shākya Chokden's series of questions reveals that several major doctrinal elements hinge on a clear understanding of the vows: karma, virtue, and dedication of merit, and the distinction between Mahāyāna and śrāvaka conceptions of the path.

The foundation for the Sakyapa position on cittotpāda vows was laid out by its lay founding father Drakpa Gyaltsen (1147–1216) in his commentary on Candragomin's *Twenty Stanzas*.[338] In addition to the second chapter of his *Differentiation of the Three Vows*, Sakya

[338] This was translated by Mark Tatz as *Candragomin's Twenty Verses on the Bodhisattva Vow and Its Commentary by Sakya Dragpa Gyaltsen.* (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1982).

Paṇḍita also wrote a text on the cittotpāda vow and its ritual transmission within the Madhyamaka tradition. It is there, rather than the more famous *Differentiation of the Three Vows* that he presents what appears to be a formulation of a three-vow theory, using language that is the basis for Shākya Chokden's theory discussed in chapter 3 below.[339] Yet, despite using the terminology of the genre, here, his "three-vow theory" does not apply to the prātimokṣa, cittotpāda, and vidyādhara vows, but rather to the threefold cittotpāda vow. This—alongside Shākya Chokden's use of this terminology in discussing three levels of prātimokṣa vow—shows that the language and terminology of the three-vow genre was used widely across discussions of various other vows and were meant to apply not only to the three, but rather were part of a larger discourse on how any and all vows, when several were taken by one individual, fit together and operated within their mindstream.

A unique feature of vows and ordination for the twelfth-century Sakya community, and their Sakya and Geluk successors, is a flattening of the hierarchy of Tibetans and Indians, with mutual debate, disagreement, and interchange between them. In much the same way as the Indian master, Vibhūticandra, became a foil for the correct three-vow view, the senior paṇḍita with whom he traveled to Tibet in 1204, Śākyaśrībhadra, is also presented as having a disagreeable character with respect to his conferral of bodhisattva vows. There was thus tension at the start of the Sakya lineage surrounding the bodhisattva vow ritual and questions around its authentic transmission from a Sanskrit liturgy. One wonders whether Śākyaśrībhadra composed his ritual in Sanskrit, why he composed a new liturgy if there were already some in Tibetan, and

[339] Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen, *dBu ma lugs kyi sems bskyed kyi cho ga*, in *Sa skya bka' 'bum*, 11:467–503. (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006). Excerpts are also translated in Liu, "'Jig rten mgon po and the "Single Intention" (*Dgongs gcig*), and Rhoton, *Clear Differntiation*, 91n2.

what those Tibetan texts were and why they were incorrect, incomplete, or divergent in terms of the lineage through which he could bestow the vows.

Shākya Chokden's perspective on the difference between the two lineages according to the Sakya tradition is found in his "Bodhisattva Discipline Chapter," where after summarizing each of the two lineages' rituals and downfalls, he summarizes his perspective on the importance of differentiating the two in a section he titles, "my own logical analysis" (*rang gis brtags pa'i 'thad pa*). It is here that he explains the differences that "derive from the assertion of the extent of the nature of the vow."[340] When he says that there is a difference in scope, it means that the Madhyamaka tradition offers both vows related to aspirational and active bodhicitta and is able to be conferred on more people, as the prātimokṣa vows are not its prerequisite, and those who are only able to keep a small portion of the actual vow can still engage in the ritual procedure. The four downfalls of the Cittamātra tradition are included in the many different enumerations of downfalls of the Madhyamaka tradition, but the reverse is not the case, making the content of the vows more expansive in the Madhyamaka tradition. And yet, when discussing the downfalls of the Madhyamaka tradition, he prioritizes the intention in relation to the downfalls in such a way that all complex lists of various downfalls rely on the mind in the same as way as the vow. He states, "When those enumerations are classified, they are condensed into one because they have a singular motivation."[341] Further, the Cittamātra tradition does not present a set of vows that relate to aspirational bodhicitta. Yet, to lose the aspiration mind is considered a downfall for losing the vows of active bodhicitta. Additionally, in the Madhyamaka tradition according to Śāntideva's

[340] "BDC," 438. *dang po ni/ lugs gnyis po'i rtsa ba'i ltung ba la mang nyung gi khyad par dang/ len pa'i rten gyi gang zag la rgya che chung gi khyad par sogs mang po pa de dag gi rtsa ba ni sdom pa'i ngo bo la rgya che chung gi khyad par bzhed pas rab tu phye ba yin la/*
[341] BDC, 430. *rkang grangs kyi dbye bsdu yang kun slong gcig pa rnams gcig tu bsdus pa'o/*

Śikṣāsamuccaya, a downfall only occurs if a certain amount of time has lapsed without confession. Shākya Chokden presents the primary differences between the two traditions as follows:

> However, one might ask "What are those differences?" The earlier tradition [Cittamātra] does not explain the vows of aspirational [bodhicitta] in its texts, and due to that point, the downfalls with respect to those [vows of aspiration bodhicitta] and how to train in the specific trainings are not extensively taught [in that tradition]. [The fact that] to lose aspirational [bodhi]citta is explained as the cause for losing the vows but the [related] downfalls are not explained also comes down to that point. Whether the vows are lost through root downfalls or through losing bodhicitta, the explanation that [breaking the vows] depends on a certain amount of time having elapsed, as it appears in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, is not found in the earlier tradition.[342]

This distinction represents the leniency of the Madhyamaka tradition, in which there are more opportunities for vow holders and more options when wrongdoing occurs. There is even a grace period during which a bodhisattva can lose bodhicitta, or stop aspiring for enlightenment, and no downfall will have taken place. The question of the passage of time as it relates to a misdeed underscores the expansive and welcoming quality of the Madhyamaka tradition. Additionally, a

[342] BDC, 438. *khyad par de yang gang zhe na/ lugs snga mas ni smon pa'i sdom pa gzhung du ma bshad cing/ de'i don gyis de la ltos pa'i ltung ba dang khyad par gyi bslab bya la slob tshul rgyas par ma gsungs so/ smon sems btang ba sdom pa'i gtong rgyur bshad kyang ltung ba ma bshad pa yang don de la thug cing/ rtsa ba'i ltung ba dang byang chub sems gtong gang gis sdom pa gtong yang thun tshod 'das pa la ltos pa'i bshad pa bslab btus las 'byung ba ltar lugs snga ma la med do/*

distinction here is made between losing the vow and losing the aspiration toward enlightenment. He continues:

> Because of that, when a complete authentic motivated intention for one's own peace and happiness arises one time for a beginner bodhisattva who has vows, even if a certain amount of time has not elapsed, because [at that moment] the vow has already been lost, that person does not have the vow, but it does not mean that they are called a bodhisattva who has in their mindstream the downfall of losing cittotpāda.[343]
>
> In the latter [Madhyamaka] tradition, even after an aspiration to an inferior awakening, if the [requisite] amount of time has not passed, one is still posited as a bodhisattva endowed with vows. In that context, that fault of losing bodhicitta must be explained as a very heavy wrongdoing.[344] This is because one has abandoned limitless beings after having accepted oneself as a bodhisattva. This is also because the cause for losing the vows has not arisen on that basis, and so one is also explained as being endowed with vows. Thus, the former [Cittamātra] tradition does not assert that those beginner holders of bodhisattva vows who generate an aspiration to an inferior awakening accumulate wrongdoings and downfalls such as [those that cause] limitless lower realms. This is because it asserts that such a person manifests the nirvāṇa that

[343] BDC, 438–39. *de'i phyir sdom ldan gyi byang sems las dang po pa la rang nyid zhi bde don gnyer gyi bsam pa mtshan nyid yongs su rdzogs pa lan cig skyes pa na thun tshod ma 'das kyang sdom pa gtang zin pa nyid kyi phyir sdom pa dang mi ldan pa la sems gtong gi ltung ba rgyud la ldan pa'i byang chub sems dpa' zhes mi bya'o/*
[344] BDC, 439. *lugs phyi ma la ni dman pa'i byang chub tu sems bskyed nas kyang thun tshod ma 'das na byang chub sems dpa'i sdom ldan du bzhag pa de'i tshe byang chub kyi sems btang ba'i nyes pa de sdig pa shin tu lci bar 'chad dgos pa yin no/*

relinquishes saṃsāra particularly quickly.[345] Śāntideva asserted that the various explanations of whether or not one accumulates great heavy wrongdoings through merely relinquishing aspirational bodhicitta correspond to the intentions of different sūtras. [He said,]

> A person loses bodhicitta
> and from that achieves liberation.
> Only the omniscient one knows
> the incomprehensible way of karma.[346]

One might ask, "Well then, does the former tradition not accept the explanation, as it is said: 'Even if they engage in the ten virtuous paths of actions for many eons, if desire arises [for achieving the state of] an arhat or pratyekabuddha, that generation of aspiration [toward an inferior awakening] is a defeat (*pārājika*) and therefore very heavy'?"[347] That should be explained as an assertion made in terms of [those who] have perfectly taken on the aspirational vows. But the ritual for taking those vows is not taught in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*.[348]

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[345] BDC, 439. *byang chub sems dpar khas blangs nas mtha' yas pa'i sems can yal bar dor ba'i phyir dang/ rten de la sdom pa'i gtong rgyu ma byung bas sdom ldan du yang 'chad pa'i phyir/ des na lugs snga mas byang sems kyi sdom ldan las dang po pa dman par sems bskyed pa des ngan 'gro mu mtha' med pa la sogs pa'i sdig ltung bsags par mi bzhed de/ de 'dra des 'khor ba spangs pa'i myang 'das myur ba nyid kyis mngon du byed par bzhed pa'i phyir ro/*

[346] BDC, 439. *ji dkad du/ mi gang byang chub sems btang yang/ de las thar par mdzad pa ni/ las tshul bsam gyis mi khyab ste/ thams cad mkhyen pa kho nas mkhyen/ zhes gsungs so/* Śāntideva, *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 8a6 (ch. 4, v. 7).

[347] BDC, 439–40. *'o na lugs snga mas/ ji skad du/ bskal pa du mar dge ba'i las lam bcu/ spyad kyang dgra bcom rang rgyal nyid la 'dod bskyed na/ sems bskyed de ni phas pham pas kyang shin tu lci/ zhes bshad pa de khas mi len nam zhe na/*

[348] BDC, 440. *de ni smon pa'i sdom pa yang dag par blangs pa'i dbang du byas par bzhed ces 'chad dgos pa yin la/ byang sa las ni sdom pa de len pa'i cho ga ma gsungs so/*

It is widely said that Sakya Paṇḍita was the first Tibetan to explicitly state that there two cittotpāda vow lineages, using the names of the philosophical schools, one that traces back to Nāgārjuna (and Mañjuśrī) and one that traces back to Asaṅga (and Maitreya). A third lineage particular to the Sakya tradition is also mentioned in some sources. One of these is found Drakpa Gyaltsen's ritual text for taking refuge and arousing bodhicitta in which the two lineages he refers to are that of Nāgārjuna to Nāropa and Virūpa (the eighth- to ninth-century Indian mahāsiddha central to the lineage and Path with Its Result system of the Sakya tradition) to Gayadhara, who traveled to Tibet three times and was the teacher of Drokmi Lotsāwa.[349]

The Lineages

The two vow lineages, Cittamātra and Madhyamaka, do not fall along Tibetan sectarian lines, with some sects only transmitting the Madhyamaka ritual and others only relying on the Cittamātra, and many transmitting both. Shākya Chokden is himself found in lineage lists for both traditions. Among the Sakya founding fathers, the twelfth-century Sakya patriarch and layman Drakpa Gyaltsen wrote a commentary on Candragomin's *Twenty Stanzas* (which relates to the Cittamātra lineage) while Sakya Paṇḍita, Sakya patriarch and monk, composed a text on the Madhyamaka lineage's ritual. The disagreements over the traditions seemed to come from the purpose and significance of the distinction, whether the hierarchy of views between the two traditions carried any implications of superiority of one ritual lineage over another, whether it required such a view from its vow-holders, and finally, whether the two traditions could be

[349] Sakya Paṇḍita, 438. This is also cited by Wangchuk 171n12.

mixed (in the case of Abhayākaragupta ritual text) or whether they must be strictly transmitted individually.

Atiśa refers to the two lineages as those of Asaṅga and Nāgārjuna and does not use the words Cittamātra or Madhyamaka. Tsongkhapa notes that Atiśa states that his own ritual text is in the tradition of Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga, and Śāntideva. Tsongkhapa rejects that there is any "meaningful distinction" between the two lineages and states that there are only "technical dissimilarities."[350] Abhayākaragupta, Bodhibadra, and Atiśa are said to have combined the two lineages in their cittotpāda vow rituals.

The topic of vows in Tibetan Buddhism is intricately linked to the topic of lineage. Transmission from one legitimate vow holder to another within the confines of the proscribed ritual, its implements, and quorum of attendees, makes the continued establishment of a Buddhist institution possible. The reliance on lineage and an unbroken line back to India and the lineage awareness and identity this entails is as central to the cittotpāda vow as it is to the vinaya. The cittotpāda vow transmission lineages (*sdom rgyud*) do not actually originate with the first human vow conferrers, but with the primary bodhisattva associated with each, Maitreya and Mañjuśrī, and before those bodhisattvas, to Śākyamuni Buddha as the origin.

The multiple developments of the Mahāyāna over time in India and beyond saw doctrinal threads from earlier and contemporaneous traditions woven into new and alternate narratives, and particularly narrative self-identities. In Tibet from an early time, lineage lists in documentary forms (such as *thob yig*, *gsan yig*, *sdom rgyud*, or *sdom rgyun*) were structural to these narrative identities, doubling as declarations of authority based on unbroken connections back in time historically, back geographically to India, and back to a particular person, human or exalted, in

[350] Tatz, *Asaṅga's Chapter on Ethics*, 138.

the form of the text's author or a buddha or bodhisattva. Such lineage lists are most constructively read not as progressively recorded history, but as reconstructions of history that require an ahistorical level of perfection (no missing links or chronological gaps) in order to arrive, not at a documentarian reflection of events, but as a list attesting to present-day authority, a proof of a long history's underwriting the efficacy of a ritual ceremony in a present time. The cittotpāda vow ritual is traced back along two such historical-to-celestial lineages.

Shākya Chokden's Collected Works does not include a record of his own vows or a record of teachings he received (neither *thob yig*, *gsan yig*, nor *sdom rgyun*), though he does informally mention lineages of authentic vow transmissions in a minor work. From his biographies, it is known that he received intermediate ordination (*bar ma rab 'byung*) and novice ordination from Rongtön (1367–1449), and his full monastic ordination, or bhikṣu vows (*dge slong gi sdom pa*), from Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo (1382–1456). Ngorchen on the other hand does have a record of his teachings and vow lineages, called *Oceans of Teachings Received* (*Thob yig rgya mtsho*). There, he lists the ordination lineage that he received when taking bhikṣu vows and the lineage of the cittotpāda vow in the Madhyamaka tradition.[351] It is not as if a lineage must necessarily be superior to the others; it just has to be unbroken and authentic. Multiple lineages of vow conferral are done even within one community and are taken simultaneously by one person. The importance of the unbroken lineage is difficult to overstate: once a lineage stops being transmitted, it is gone forever. It is not permitted, across Tibet Buddhist culture, to pick up a liturgy and confer any kind of vow ceremony if that lineage does

[351] Ngor mkhan chen kun dga' bzang po, *Thob yig rgya mtsho*, in *E waṃ bka' 'bum*, 1:189–410 (Pe cin: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009–2010). For Ngorchen's full details on his ordination and lineages of each of the three vows, see Heimbel, *Vajradhara in Human Form*, 104–8.

not have present-day lineage holders.[352]

Ngorchen's lineage of transmission of these vows[353] in the Madhyamaka tradition begins with Mahāmuni [Śākyamuni Buddha], then passes to the bodhisattva Mañjughoṣa, after that to Nāgārjuna, the father, and his heir [Āryadeva], and Candrakīrti. There are then five Indian masters in the lineage, Śiṣyavajra,[354] Jetāri,[355] the Younger and Elder Vajrāsana,[356] and Paṇḍita Punyaśrī.[357] The transmission link from India to Tibet is Bari Lotsāwa, and from him to all five Sakya patriarchs: Lama Sachen [Kunga Nyingpo], Sönam Tsemo, Jetsunpa [Drakpa Gyaltsen], Chöje Sakya Paṇḍita, and Phakpa Rinpoche. From him the lineage moves to Jamyang Khöntön, Jangsem Rinchen Gon, Chöje Gyalsepa, Chöje Jangchub Tsemo, Chöje Yeshe Gyaltsenpa, who was also Ngorchen's preceptor when taking full ordination, and finally to Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo. As is customary within the genre, he finishes the list with "and him [to] me"). We do not know if Shākya Chokden took cittotpāda vows with Ngorchen, but since he was his preceptor for bhikṣu vows, it seems possible, especially since Ngorchen's biographies state that he

[352] This is at the center of the contemporary debate on female ordination, that a lineage that does not have contemporary holders cannot be started again. However, there have been suggestions made on ways to bypass this. On this, see Carola Roloff, "Buddhist Nuns' Ordination in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* Tradition: Two Possible Approaches," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 23 (2016): 165–246.

[353] Ngor mkhan chen kun dga' bzang po, *Thob yig rgya mtsho*, 167: *thub pa chen po/ 'jam dbyangs/ klu sgrub yab sras/ zla ba grags pa/ slob pa'i rdo rje/ slob pa'i dze tā ri/ rdo rje gdan pa che chung/ paṇḍita punyaśrī/ ba ri lo ts+tsha ba/ bla ma sa chen/ bsod nams rtse mo/ rje btsun pa/ chos rje sa skya paṇḍita/ 'phags pa rin po che/ 'jam dbyangs 'khon ston/ byang sems rin chen mgon/ chos rje rgyal sras pa/ chos rje byang chub rtse mo/ chos rje ye shes rgyal mtshan pa/ de bdag la'o/*

[354] Śiṣyavajra (Slob pa'i rdo rje) also appears in Gö Lotsāwa's Tibetan history the *Blue Annals* as a member of the primary lineage of transmission of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* beginning with Indrabhūti in Oḍḍiyāna. Gö Lotsāwa, *Blue Annals*, 360.

[355] Gö Lotsāwa, *Blue Annals*, 243.

[356] For these figures in two other Sakya lineage lists, see Jörg Heimbel, "The Ngor Branch Monastery of Go mig (sTeng rgyud) in Spiti: Its Foundation and Place Within the Religious History of Western Tibet" in *Beiträge zur politischen Geschichte von Spiti zwischen 1629 und 1842 und zur Geschichte der Sa-skya-pa-Schule im äußersten Westen des tibetischen Hochlandes: Rechtsdokumente aus dem Kloster Gog-mig (sTeng-rgyud) in Spiti*, ed. Jörg Heimbel and Dieter Schuh (Andiast, Switzerland: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 2019), 21, 38n130.

[357] Paṇḍita Punyaśrī was an eleventh-century master also in a Sakya transmission lineage of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*. See Choying Tobden Dorje, *The Complete Nyingma Tradition from Sūtra to Tantra, Book 13*, trans. Gyurme Dorje (Boulder: Snow Lion, 2014), 276.

immediately took these vows after receiving full ordination himself, given that Ngorchen was part of a tradition of taking the two, bhikṣu and cittotpāda vows, together, and then the cittotpāda vows again several times after that. Ngorchen states that took these vows five times,[358] so there is also a tradition of taking them not just once (like the bhikṣu vows in the case of the full ordination ceremony) but many times over one's lifetime together with tantric empowerments.[359]

A cittotpāda vow lineage of the Cittamātra tradition that mentions Shākya Chokden by name is found in Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo's "The Excellent Path of the Bodhisattvas: A Ritual for Generating Enlightenment Mind and Accepting the Bodhisattva Vow according to the Mahāyāna System of Great Vastness."[360] Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo lists three lineages that he holds, the second branching off at Sönam Drakpa to Butön Rinchen Drub and the third branching off at Gyalse Thokme Zangpo. Each of the three lineages begin with Śākyamuni Buddha, who confers it on Maitreya, who confers it on Ārya Asaṅga; each pass through Atiśa who transmits the Indian lineage to Tibetans. From Asaṅga, the third lineage list proceeds as follows: Vasubandhu, Ārya Vimuktisena, Bhadanta Vimuktisena, Paramasena, Vinitasena, Haribhadra, Kusāli the Elder, Kusāli the Younger, Dharmakīrti of Suvarṇadvīpa, Atiśa Dīpaṃkara (982–1054), the Victor Drom Tönpa (1005–1064), Chenga Tsultrim Bar (1038–1103), Geshe Jayulwa (1075–1138), Gyalse Charchenpa who is also known as Mumenpa, Dro Tön Dutsi Drak, Sangye

[358] Heimbel, *Vajradhara in Human Form*, 106. In his compendium of lineage lists (*Thob yig rgya mtsho*, 167), Ngor Khenchen Kunga Zango introduces this lineage list with the statement that he has taken the vows five times (*lan lnga bar du thob pa'i brgyud pa*).

[359] The nineteenth-century Sakya compendium of sādhanas and other texts edited by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and Jamyang Loter Wangpo, called the *Compendium of Sadhanas* also contains a lineage list of the cittotpāda vows. Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and Jamyang Loter Wangpo, ed., *Sgrub thabs kun btus*, (Kangara, H.P.: Indo-Tibetan Buddhist literature Publisher, Dzongsar Institute for Advanced Studies), 166–67. This is translated partly in I-Ling Chien, "The Life and Collected Works of Tibetan Lojong Master Tokmé Zangpo (1295–1369)" PhD diss. (University of Virginia, 2015), 146n276.

[360] *Theg chen shin tu rgyas pa'i sems bskyed dang sdom pa'i cho ga byang chub sems dpa'i lam bzang*, in *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 3 (Shechen edition): 323–75. Translation forthcoming from Shambhala Publications in vol. 3, the first of two *Kadam* volumes, of the Treasury of Precious Instructions series translated by Artemus B. Engle.)

Gompa Senge Kyab (1179–1250), Chim Namka Drak (1210–1285/9), Khenchen Senge Kyab (dates unknown), Khetsun Sönam Yeshe (dates unknown), Sönam Drakpa (dates unknown), and Gyalse Tokme Zangpo Pel (1295–1365), Lochen Jangchup Tsemo (1303–1380), Depön Lochen Drakgyal (1352–1405),[361] Bodong Panchen Chokle Namgyal (1376–1451), Jamling Panchen Sönam Namgyal (1401–1475), and Serdok Panchen Shākya Chokden. This list shows Shākya Chokden receiving the vows of this lineage from Jamling Panchen Sönam Namgyal, a student of Tsongkhapa and the author of a root text and autocommentary on the vidyādhara vows and Vajrayāna discipline.[362] Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo lists sixteen more lineage holders after Shākya Chokden, and then, in the style of the genre, completes the list with himself.

The Rituals

The first two sections of Shākya Chokden's "Bodhisattva Discipline Chapter" pertain respectively to the Cittamātra and Madhyamaka traditions of the cittotpāda vow, each in three parts: how to take the vows, how to guard them, and how to repair them if broken. The first of each includes a presentation of the actual ritual for taking the vows, as well as the qualities of the preceptor and vow taker that must be exhibited before taking them. The latter are discussed across many texts without a great deal of variation. The former, the rituals, are significant in that they must be complete and accurate for the vow itself to arise.

[361] Also known as Lotsāwa Drakpa Gyaltsen, he was Bodong Chokle Namgyal's uncle. See BDRC P10MS19659.
[362] *Rdo rje theg pa'i 'dul ba kun las btus pa'i rtsa ba'i md*. Woodblock. BDRC WA1CZ1059.

The Cittamātra Ritual

The ritual for the Cittamātra tradition has its basis in Asaṅga's *Bodhisattvabhūmi*[363] and is divided into three parts: the introduction, the main part, and the conclusion. The conclusion is also divided into three parts, the supplication, the intention, and making offerings and giving rise to delight. In the introduction, the student sits at the feet of the preceptor and says three times,

> "Son of good family, from you, I who am known by the name so-and-so, request to properly take the vows of bodhisattva discipline. If it causes no harm, please quickly consider me and bestow them out of love."[364]

The vow taker then expresses what is one of the earliest formulations of the vow, which in his translation of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, Artemus Engle notes is not in any of the Sanskrit versions of that text, but is inserted in the Tibetan version.[365] Shākya Chokden cites this as from the *Āvataṃsaka Sūtra*, but in a more elaborated version in order to "develop enthusiasm for the vows" (*sdom pa la spro ba bskyed bar)* The vow holder states:

> "Son of good family, listen. I will free those beings who have not been freed. I will liberate those beings who have not been liberated. I will comfort those who have not been

[363] Artemus B. Engle translates the entire *Bodhisattvabhūmi* published as *The Bodhisattva Path to Unsurpassed Enlightenment* (Snow Lion: Boulder, 2016) and the ritual act appears on pages 260–265. It is not divided into sections, like Shākya Chokden does here. The ritual material is translated at Wangchuk, *Resolve*, 169–94, and 357–90.

[364] BDC, 411. *rigs kyi bu khyod las bdag ming 'di zhes bgyi ba/ byang chub sems dpa'i tshul khrims kyi sdom pa yang dag par blang ba nod par 'tshal gyi/ de la gnod pa ma mchis na bdag la thugs brtse ba'i slad du cung zad cig gsan zhing bstsal ba'i rigs so*

[365] Engle, *Bodhisattva Path to Unsurpassed Enlightenment*, 261n737.

> comforted. I will bring beyond suffering those who are not beyond suffering, to confirm the unbroken lineage of buddhas (*buddhavaṃśānupaccheda*)."[366]

At this point offerings are made and visualized to the "sons of victors in the ten directions," and the vow taker places his robe on one shoulder and crouches on one knee, just as in the *pravrajya* ordination of the monk or nun, and the following exchange takes place. The student says, "Son of good family, please properly bestow on me the vows of bodhisattva discipline," and is told to think, in silence: "After such a long time, I have found an unsurpassable and inexhaustible great treasure of merit." Then, that teacher asks:

> "Son of good family, with the name so-and-so, are you a bodhisattva, [have you] made the aspiration for enlightenment, [have you] studied the bodhisattva piṭaka mātṛkā, do you have clarity of mind toward that study and have you not criticized it, has someone else forced you [to take] this vow, [are you taking the vow because] someone else has coerced you?"[367]

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[366] BDC, 411. *phal po che'i mdo las 'byung ba lta bu rgyas par brjod nas sdom pa la spro ba bskyed par bya'o/ de yang 'di ltar/ rigs kyi bu khyod nyon cig/ sems can ma sgral ba rnams bsgral ba dang/ ma grol ba rnams dgrol ba dang/ dbyugs ma phyung ba rnams dbyugs dbyung ba dang/ yongs su mya ngan las ma 'das pa rnams yongs su mya ngan las 'da' ba dang sangs rgyas kyi gdung mi gcod par 'dod dam/ de la khyod kyi sems bskyed pa bstan pa dang/ yi dam yang brtan par bya'o* Engle, 261n736 cites Abhayākaragupta's commentary in mapping these four types of people onto those of the Hīnayāna, who are bound by obscurations to knowledge; beings who are bound by both obscurations to knowledge and emotional obscurations, like the worldly god Brahmā; beings suffering in the lower realms; and finally all beings in saṃsāra.

[367] BDC, 412. *dge ba'i bshes gnyen de la 'di skad ces brjod par bya ste/ rigs kyi bu khyod kyis da ni bdag la byang chub sems dpa'i tshul khrims kyi sdom pa yang dag par blang ba stsal du gsol/ zhes lan gsum brjod nas/ yid la 'di ltar bsam pa ni/ da ni bdag gis ring po mi thogs par bsod nams kyi gter chen po bla na med pa zad mi shes pa rnyed par 'gyur ro zhes yid la byed cing cang mi smra bar 'dug go/ de nas dge ba'i bshes gnyen pa de/ stan la 'dug gam 'greng yang rung sems ma yengs par 'di skad ces brjod pa ni/ rigs kyi bu ming 'di zhes bgyi ba khyod byang chub sems dpa' yin nam/ byang chub tu smon lam btab bam/ byang chub sems dpa'i sde snod kyi ma mo thos sam/ thos pa de la sems rab tu dvang bar byed cing bskur pa 'debs par mi byed dam/ sdom pa 'di gzhan dag gis 'dzin du bcug pa'am/ pha rol po la 'gran pa'i phyir du ma yin nam/ zhes dri bar bya zhing/*

The student confirms this and the introductory part of the ritual is over, and the main part begins, which is rather short, but is the time when the actual vows arise.[368] The preceptor then asks whether the vow taker accepts the discipline of the bodhisattva, as all past bodhisattvas have done, and the vow is defined in its threefold form: the discipline of vows, the discipline of gathering virtuous qualities, and the discipline of acting for the benefit of sentient beings.

> Say this one time. Both teacher and student say three times, "Through that proof, I accept it." At that point, the teacher says, "That is the method," and the student says, "It is good." That should be known as the time the vows are obtained.[369]

The conclusion is also given in three parts: supplication, its intention, and making offerings and then giving rise to delight. The supplication is explained as follows:[370]

> Without getting up from their seats, the teacher prostrates and makes an offering of flowers at the feet of all buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions. Then, he says this three times: "From me, the bodhisattva who am known by the name so-and-so, the one

[368] BDC, 412. *sdom pa thob pa'i dus ngo shes pa'i ched du'o/*

[369] BDC, 412. *gnyis pa dngos gzhi la 'jug pa ni/ sbyor ba'i cho ga de ltar byas zin pa'i 'og tu slob dpon gyis 'di skad ces brjod par bya ste/ rigs kyi bu ming 'di zhes bya ba khyod/ 'das pa'i byang chub sems dpa' thams cad kyi bslab pa'i gzhir gyur pa gang yin pa rnams dang/ tshul khrims su gyur pa gang yin pa rnams dang/ ma 'ongs pa'i byang chub sems dpa' rnams kyi bslab pa'i gzhir gyur pa gang yin pa rnams dang/ gang dag phyogs bcu'i zhing na da ltar bzhugs pa'i byang chub sems dpa' thams cad kyi bslab pa'i gzhir gyur pa gang yin pa rnams dang/ tshul khrims gang yin pa dang/ bslab pa'i gzhi dang tshul khrims de dang de dag la 'das pa'i byang chub sems dpa' rnams kyis bslab par gyur pa dang/ ma 'ongs pa'i byang chub sems dpa' rnams kyis slob par 'gyur ba dang/ da ltar bzhugs pa'i byang chub sems dpa' thams cad kyis slob bzhin pa'i bslab pa'i gzhi thams cad tshul khrims thams cad ni 'di lta ste/ sdom pa'i tshul khrims dang/ dge ba'i chos bsdud pa'i tshul khrims dang sems can gyi don byed pa'i tshul khrims nga las nod dam/ zhes lan gcig brjod pa na/ bsgrub bya des kyang nod lags so zhes dpon slob gnyis kas lan gsum gyi bar du brjod do/ skabs der slob dpon gyis thabs yin no dang slob mas legs so zhes kyang brjod par bya ste/ sdom pa thob pa'i dus ngo shes pa'i ched du'o/*

[370] BDC, 413–14. *gsum pa 'jug gi cho ga la gsum ste/ mkhyen par gsol ba/ de'i dgongs pa yun phul nas spro ba bskyed pa'o/*

who is to become a bodhisattva by the name of so-and-so, has properly taken the vows of the bodhisattva discipline and has received them after the three [recitations]. For this one who has properly taken the vows of discipline of the one who is to become a bodhisattva by the name of so-and-so, I supplicate to act as witness in limitless realms of the worlds of the ten directions the hidden supreme noble ones and the manifest protectors of all sentient beings everywhere."[371]

Then, second, the intention is declared, using a quotation from Candragomin's *Twenty Verses*:

At that time, due to its virtue,
the buddhas with their heirs
with their firm heart of virtue,
consider you their beloved son.[372]

He then explains the instructions for the final step, making offerings:

[371] BDC, 414. *dang po ni/ slob ma de stan las ma langs par dge ba'i bshes gnyen des phyogs bcu'i sangs rgyas dang byang chub sems dpa' thams cad kyi zhabs la gtugs pa'i phyag byas shing me tog phul nas/ 'di skad ces brjod pa ni/ bdag byang chub sems dpa' ming 'di zhes bgyi ba las bang chub sems dpa' bsgrub bya ming 'di zhes bgyi bas/ byang chub sems dpa'i tshul khrims kyi sdom pa yang lag par blangs pa lan gsum gyi bar du mnos lags te/ bsgrub bya byang chub sems dpa' ming 'di zhes bgyi ba'i tshul khrims kyi sdom pa yang dag par blangs pa 'di la/ bdag dpang du gyur par phyogs bcu'i 'jig rten gyi khams mtha' yas mu med pa dag na 'phags pa'i mchog lkog tu gyur kyang/ thams cad du sems can thams cad lkog tu ma gyur pa'i thugs mnga' ba rnams la mkhyen par gsol lo zhes lan gsum du'o/*

[372] BDC, 414. *gnyis pa ni/ de ltar gsol nas bslab pa las mi 'da' ba dang/ de dag gis dgongs nas rjes su 'dzin par 'gyur ba ste/ ji skad du/ de tshe de la dge ba'i phyir sangs rgyas sras dang bcas rnams kyis/ dge ba'i thugs kyis rtag par yang /bu sdug 'dra bar dgongs par 'gyur/ zhes gsungs so/* Candragomin, *Bodhisattvasaṃvaraviṃśaka, Byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa nyi shu pa* (Dg.T. 4081, vol. 138) 166b3. This quote also appears in Atiśa, *Bodhimārgapradīpapañjikānāma, Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma'i dka' 'grel* (Dg.T. 3948, vol. 111) 267a3.

> Then, the student makes offerings of gratitude and makes offerings to the victors and their heirs in the ten directions, and then both student and teacher stand up from their seats and throw flowers in the ten directions. After that, they give rise to delight by saying this: "This proper taking of the vows of the bodhisattva discipline is superior to all vows of discipline. As it is said, 'Others do not approach it a hundredfold, a thousandfold.'" Having said that, and so on, declare that with expansive delight. [373]

That "the bodhisattva discipline is superior to all vows of discipline" indicates a superiority of this discipline over merely the prātimokṣa. It also represents this type of ritual as belonging not in a tantric context, such as Jetāri's ritual text, which includes deity visualization. When listing ten topics taught in the Mahāyāna and not in the Śrāvakayāna, Asaṅga's *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* states that the bodhisattva vow is the superior discipline.[374] The assertion that the bodhisattva discipline is superior appears across Mahāyāna sūtras and commentaries as part of the self-descriptive narrative of Mahāyāna superiority.

The Madhyamaka Ritual

The ritual in the Madhyamaka tradition is taken from the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and is also presented by Shākya Chokden as in three parts: introduction, main part, and conclusion.[375] The introduction consists of the seven branches of the *saptapūja*, or sevenfold rite, which is an

[373] BDC, 414–15. *gsum pa ni/ de nas slob mas gtang rag gi yon dang/ phyogs bcu'i rgyal ba sras bcas la mchod pa byas nas/ slob dpon gnyis ka yang stan las langs te/ phyogs bcur phyogs byas te me tog 'thor bar bya'o/ de nas spro ba bskyed pa ni/ 'di skad ces byang chub sems dpa'i tshul khrims kyi sdom pa yang dag par blangs pa 'di ni/ tshul khrims kyi sdom pa thams cad las khyad par du 'phags pa yin te/ gzhan dag gis ni 'di'i brgya'i char yang nye bar mi 'gro/ stong gi char yang zhes sogs rgyas par spros nas brjod par bya'o/*
[374] Brunnhölzl, trans. and ed., *A Compendium of the Mahāyāna, vol. 1*, 154.
[375] BDC, 424. *gsum pa la/ sbyor ba dang/ dngos gzhi rjes so/*

expansion of the early threefold, or *triskandha*, ritual, by which a bodhisattva expresses a series of aspirations and commits to the path to buddhahood; the three parts of the threefold ritual are confession, rejoicing in merit, and requesting the buddhas to teach.[376] Various scriptural sources for these seven are presented differently across different scriptures. The prayer known as *Samantabhadra's Aspiration to Good Conduct* (*Samantabhadracāripraṇidhāna*, *Spyod pa bzang po*), among other names, within the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, lists the seven branches as praise, offering, confession, rejoicing, requesting the buddhas to teach, exhorting them to remain in the world, and dedication of merit.[377] The three rites of the *triskandha* correspond to the third, fourth, and fifth of this presentation of the seven. The Mahāyāna sūtra, the *Upāliparipṛccha*, possibly composed in the first century C.E. or earlier (though Drewes argues for a much later date)[378] contains a different formulation of these seven: refuge, praise, confession, dedication of merit, rejoicing in merit, requesting the buddhas to teach, and generating bodhicitta.[379]

The seven branches that Shākya Chokden lists as the introductory liturgy are found in verses of Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, though not consecutive verses. For him, the seven branches are: prostration, offering, confession, rejoicing, requesting the buddhas to teach,

[376] Nancy J. Barnes, "The Triskandha, Practice in Three Parts: Study of an Early Mahāyāna Ritual," in *Studies on Buddhism in Honour of Professor A.K. Warder* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1993), 2. See also Nattier, *A Few Good Men*, 117–71.
[377] Stevenson, "T'ien-t'ai Four Forms of Samadhi," 442. For its relationship with the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, see Crosby and Skilton, 9–13. See also Yael Bentor, "Consecration of Images and Stupas" (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 96n2.
[378] Drewes, "Problem of Becoming a Bodhisattva," 169n76.
[379] Barnes, "The Triskandha," 2. Note that Barnes and Jan Nattier, in her *A Few Good Men* (7), present the early bodhisattva path as particularly difficult and this prayer as a way to continually recommit to an exceedingly difficult path. In contrast, David Drewes, in his "Problem of Becoming a Bodhisattva," says, "Nattier argues that Mahāyāna emerged from a small number of dedicated, primarily male, ascetics, who decided to undertake the "grueling" bodhisattva path from the beginning." In opposition, Drewes (171) states that, "Mahāyāna sūtra authors accounted for the introduction of all of their new ideas, perspectives, and practices by claiming that they represented the Buddha's previously unknown teachings intended primarily for bodhisattvas. Since these new teachings would be irrelevant without audiences who could identify as bodhisattvas, authors were predisposed to make it as easy as possible for their listeners to do so in order to expand the reach of their texts."

supplicating them to remain, and dedication. The verses to be recited for the first branch are verse 24 from chapter 2, and verse 36 from chapter 1:

> Bowing with as many bodies as there are atoms in the realms,
> I prostrate to all buddhas of the three times,
> the dharma, and the supreme assembly.

And:

> I prostrate to the body
> in whom the jewel of the mind has arisen,
> and take refuge in the one who is happy even when harmed
> and who is the source of happiness.[380]

He notes that the second branch, offering, can be done in condensed or expanded forms, and the liturgy is the first verse of chapter 2:

> In order to hold that jewel mind,
> I make offerings to the tathāgatas, the holy dharma,
> the stainless jewel, and the buddha and sons
> who have oceans of qualities.[381]

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[380] BDC, 425. *dang po la/ yan lag rnam pa bdun las/ dang por phyag 'tshal ba ni/ dus gsum gshegs pa'i sangs rgyas kun/ chos dang tshogs ki mchog bcas la/ zhing rdul kun gyi grangs snyed kyi/ lus btud nas ni bdag phyag 'tshal/ gang la sems kyi dam pa rin chen de/ skyes pa de yi sku la phyag 'tshal zhing/ gang la gnod pa byas kyang bder 'brel ba/ bde ba'i 'byung gnas de la skyabs su mchi/ zhes sogs rgyas bsdus ci rigs par bya'o/ Bodhicaryāvatāra*, *Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa* (Dg.T. 3871, vol. 105), 4b7 and 3b3 (ch. 2, v. 24 and ch. 1, v. 36).
[381] BDC, 425. *gnyis pa mchod pa'i yan lag ni/ rin chen sems de bzung bar bya ba'i phyir/ de bzhin gshegs pa rnams dang dam pa'i chos/ dkon mchog dri ma med dang sangs rgyas sras/ yon tan rgya mtsho rnams la legs par mchod/ ces sogs rgyas bsdud ci rigs par bya'o. Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 3b4 (ch. 2, v. 1).

Third, the branch of confessing sins is particularly important in this context given that he states that this ritual offers the vows of aspirational bodhicitta to what he calls "lower supports," which includes evil kings and butchers. Yet, the possibility of the vow arising for evil people is reliant on their actually desiring liberation for all beings, and that desire rests on their regret. He writes, "it is very important as a prerequisite to extensively confess sins, because if those are not confessed, the mind that desires liberation for all will not arise, and thus the vows of aspirational [bodhicitta] will not arise at all." He then uses verses 26 and 66 of chapter 2 for the confession ritual:

> Until I reach the heart of enlightenment,
> I take refuge in the buddhas.
> I take refuge likewise in the dharma
> and the assemblies of bodhisattvas.
> To the buddhas and bodhisattvas
> in all directions,
> to the ones with great compassion,
> I join my palms and supplicate:
>
> From beginningless saṃsāra,
> in this life or others,
> whatever I have done or made others do,
> out of ignorance or my own error,

whatever I have rejoiced in having done,

I look upon with misery and with that intention,

I directly confess it.

After those verses, one is prompted to say, "This is not good, and so I will not do it again."[382] Fourth, the branch of rejoicing, through which he states that the fault of jealousy is particularly purified, is done using verses 1 and 2 of chapter 3:

I rejoice with joy at the virtue

that relieves the suffering of all beings of the lower realms,

and at those who suffer abiding in happiness.

I rejoice with joy in the generations of mind

that are an ocean of virtue bringing happiness to all beings,

and bring benefit to beings.[383]

[382] BDC, 425–26. *gsum pa sdig pa bshags pa'i yan lag 'di ni/ rgyal po sdig can dang shan pa sogs rten dman pa la skye zhing ster bar yang bshad la/ de'i tshe sdig bshags rgyas par sngon du 'gro ba gal che ba yin te/ de ma bshags par ni mtha dag bsgral 'dod kyi blo mi 'byung bas smon pa'i sdom pa tsam yang mi skye ba'i phyir ro/ des na 'di ltar/ byang chub snying por mchis kyi bar/ sangs rgyas rnams la skyabs su mchi/ chos dang byang chub sems dpa' yi/ tshogs la'ang de bzhin skyabs su mchi/ phyogs rnams kun na bzhugs pa yi/ rdzogs sangs rgyas dang byang chub sems/ thugs rje chen po mnga' rnams la/ thal mo sbyar te gsol ba ni/ thog ma med ldan 'khor ba nas/ tshe rabs 'di'am gzhan dag tu/ bdag gis ma 'tshal bgyis pa'am/ bgyid du stsal ba nyid dang ni/ gti mug 'khrul pas bdag nor te/ rjes su yi rang gang bgyis pa/ nongs pa de ni mthong bgyis nas/ bsam pa dag pas mgon la bshags/ zhes pa nas/ 'di ni bzang po ma lags pas/ slan chad bdag ni yongs mi bgyid/ ces pa'i bar gyi don rgyas par bshad nas blo sbyong bar bya'o/ Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 5a1 and 6b3 (ch 2, v. 26 and 66).

[383] BDC, 426. *bzhi pa rjes su yi rang ba'i yan lag ni/ sems can kun gyi ngan song gi/ sdug bsngal ngal bso'i dge ba dang/ sdug bsngal can dag bder gnas la/ dga' bas rjes su yi rang ngo/ zhes pa nas/ sems can thams cad bde mdzad pa'i/ thugs bskyed dge ba rgya mtsho dang/ sems can phan par mdzad pa la/ dga' bas rjes su yi rang ngo/ zhes bsam pa dag pa nas brjod do/ des ni bye brag tu phrag dog gi sgrib pa 'dag par 'gyur ro/ Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 6b4, 6b5 (ch. 3, v. 1 and 2).

The fifth branch is to supplicate the buddhas to remain, which he states is done in order to eliminate the fault of abandoning the dharma. The verse 4 of chapter 3 is recited:

> With my palms together,
> I supplicate the buddhas of all directions,
> please light the lamp of the dharma
> for sentient beings confused in the darkness of suffering.[384]

The sixth branch eliminates any lack of faith in the buddhas, which is to supplicate the buddhas to remain in the world, using chapter 3, verse 5:

> With my palms together,
> I supplicate the victors who wish to pass into nirvāṇa,
> please stay for countless eons,
> not letting these beings remain blind.[385]

Finally, the seventh branch is dedication chapter 3, verses 7 and 21:

> Having done all of this in this way
> and accumulating this virtue,

[384] BDC, 426. *yan lag lnga pa ni/ phyogs rnams kun gyi sangs rgyas la/ thal mo sbyar te gsol ba ni/ sems can sdug bsngal mun 'thoms la/ chos kyi sgron ma sbar du gsol/ zhes brjod pas ni chos spong gi nyes pa 'dag par byed do/ Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 6b6 (ch. 3, v 4).
[385] BDC, 426–27. *yan lag drug pa ni/ rgyal ba mya ngan 'da' bzhed la/ thal mo sbyar te gsol ba ni/ 'gro 'di longs par mi 'god cing/ bskal pa grangs med bzhugs su gsol/ zhes brjod pa ni sangs rgyas la ma dad pa'i byes pa sel bar byed do/ Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 6b6 (ch. 3, v. 5).

through that, may I clear away all of the suffering

of all sentient beings.

May I be the basis of sustenance

for everyone until they attain nirvāṇa.[386]

Here, he makes a statement regarding the final "branch of dedication." After stating that "these three, [dedication], prostrations, and offering, manifest vast accumulations of merit," he states "Although in the *Āryabhadracarīpraṇidhānarāja* (*Aspirational Prayer of Excellent Conduct, Bzang spyod smon lam*), the branch of dedication is explained as the aspirational bodhicitta, here the aspirational prayer related to active bodhicitta is made. What attests to that is that the aspiration serving as the nature of the vow is intended."[387] Here, the notion of aspiration that is the vow collides with the notion of aspirational bodhicitta, which is distinct from the vow.

Then, the main part of the ritual, in which the vows of engagement are conferred, "In the state of recollection of the meaning of the seven branches, in front of either a teacher with the characteristics as they were explained or three supports [or representations of the body, speech, and mind of the Buddha], array the mind-generated offerings in accordance with one's own collection of wealth and say the following." He then uses verses 22 and 23 from chapter 3 of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* as the primary vow:

[386] BDC, 427. *yan lag bdun pa ni/ de ltar 'di dag kun byas te/ dge ba 'di dag bsags pa gang/ des ni sems can thams cad kyi/ sdug bsngal thams cad sel bar shog/ ces pa nas/ thams cad mya ngan 'das bar du/ bdag ni nyer mtsho'i* [reading *'tsho'i*] *gzhir yang shog/ ces pa ni bsngo ba'i yan lag te/*

[387] BDC, 427.*'di dang phyag mchod gsum gyis ni bsod nams kyi tshogs rgya chen po mngon par 'du byed do/ bzang spyod du bsngo ba'i yan lag smon sems la bshad kyang 'dir ni 'jug pa'i phyogs kyi smon lam btab pa'o/ de'i shes byed kyang smon pa ni sdom pa'i ngo bo nyid du 'gyur ba la dgongs pa'o/ Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 6b7 and 7b2 (ch. 3, v. 7 and 21).

> Just as the sugatas of the past
> generated the mind of enlightenment,
> just as they engaged progressively in
> the trainings of a bodhisattva,
>
> so too will I, for the benefit of beings,
> generate bodhicitta,
> and train progressively in the trainings, in the same way.[388]

This is the moment in the ritual when the vows arise, and their arising depends on the quality of mind of the aspirant, being either only vows related to aspirational mind for the lesser, and both vows arising for the more qualified preceptees. He writes:

> When you say this three times, the ordinary vows arise, but for those of excellent faculties, the vows of both aspirational and active [bodhicitta] arise at the same time, and it must be explained that for those with relatively lesser minds, [only] the vow of aspiration cittotpāda arises.[389]

[388] *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 7b2 (ch. 3, v. 22 and 23).
[389] BDC, 427–28. *gnyis pa dngos gzhi ni/ ji skad bshad pa'i mtshan nyid can gyi dge ba'i bshes gnyen nam rten gsum gyi spyan sngar yan lag bdun po'i don dran bzhin pa'i ngang nas/ rang gi 'byor tshogs dang mthun par yid 'khul nges kyi mchod pa bshams nas tshig 'di skad du/ ji ltar sngon gyi bder gshegs kyis/ byang chub thugs ni bskyed pa dang/ byang chub sems dpa'i bslab pa la/ de dag rim bzhin gnas pa ltar/ de bzhin 'gro la phan don du/ byang chub sems ni bskyed bgyi zhing/ de bzhin du ni bslab pa la/ rim pa bzhin du bslab par bgyi/ zhes lan gsum brjod pa na tha mal sdom pa skyes pa yin la/ de yang dbang po rab tu gyur pa la/ smon 'jug gnyis ka'i sdom pa cig char du skyes shing/ blo ji ltar dma' yang smon pa sems bskyed kyi sdom pa pa skyes par 'chad dgos pa yin no/*

Finally, the conclusion to the ritual has two parts, meditating on our own joy and meditation on others joy.[390] The first is done through reciting verse 25 of chapter 3 of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*:

> Today my life has borne fruit.
> I have obtained a good existence as a human.
> Today, I am an heir of the buddhas.[391]

The second is done through reciting verse 33 or chapter 3 of the same text:

> In the presence of all the protectors,
> today I summon all beings to the state of a sugata
> and, until then, to happiness.
> Gods and demigods rejoice.[392]

In explaining the rituals for the two lineages, Shākya Chokden uses the original source material of the Indian texts. He notes specifically when the vows arise within each ritual, and he emphasizes the importance of confession for the Madhyamaka ritual, as it is offered for a greater number of beings and is less restrictive than the Cittamātra ritual in terms of who can take the vow. The Cittamātra ritual from the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* mirrors the monastic ordination ritual in a

[390] BDC, 428. *gsum pa 'jug gi bya ba la/ gnyis te/ rang dga' ba sgom pa dang/ gzhan dga' ba sgom du 'jug pa'o/*
[391] BDC, 428. *dang po ni/ deng du bdag tshe 'bras bu yod/ mi'i srid pa legs par thob/ sangs rgyas sras su deng bdag gyur/ zhes brjod do/ Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 7b3 (ch. 3, v. 25acd). The third line is missing: *de ring sangs rgyas rigs su skyes* ("Today I am born into the family of buddhas").
[392] BDC, 428. *gnyis pa ni/ bdag gis de ring skyob pa thams cad kyi/ spyan sngar 'gro ba bder gshegs nyid dang ni/ bar du bde la mgron du bos zin gyis/ lha dang lha min la sogs dga' bar gyis/ zhes pa'o/ Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 8a1 (ch. 3, v. 33).

way that the Madhyamaka ritual does not; in the latter, there is no crouching down, saying "I who am known as so-and-so," or placing the robe on the left shoulder. Given the monastic vows are not a prerequisite for the Madhyamaka ritual, there would be not necessarily be a robe to place on the shoulder. The Cittamātra tradition also models the monastic ordination by first requiring the one requesting vows to prove his worthiness and qualification for taking the vow, while the Madhyamaka tradition allows even "evil kings." In the answer to the first question of his *Golden Lancet*, he states:

> If [the vow] is taken with the ritual of the Madhyamaka tradition, in general, it arises as having the nature of the vow wherein both aspirational and active [bodhicitta] are brought together, and however lowly the taker is, it is definite that aspirational bodhicitta arises. Intending that, a greater range of persons are presented as the basis [for taking the vow]. In this tradition, both aspirational and active bodhicitta are taken together and both vows are taken at the same time.[393]

He also cites there the two verses that represent each of the two vows taken in this ritual, which is what makes it more expansive in terms of the nature of the vow that is generated. Vows related to aspirational bodhicitta are taken with the lines, "For the benefit of beings, / I will give rise to bodhicitta" and the vows of active bodhicitta are taken during the recitation of the promise to

[393] *GL*, 685. *dbu ma'i lugs kyi cho gas blangs na/ spyir btang du smon 'jug gnyis po chabs gcig tu bsdoms pa'i sdom pa'i ngo bor skye la/ len pa po ji ltar dman yang/ smon pa'i sems skyed pa tsam zhig nges par skye ba la dgongs nas/ rten gyi gang zag rgya che ba nyid du rnam par gzhag go/ lugs 'di la/ smon 'jug gi sems bskyed gnyis phyogs gcig tu len par byed cing/ de dang dus mtshungs par de gnyis ka'i sdom pa len par byed pa yin te/*

"train progressively in the bodhisattva trainings" (*byang chub sems dpa'i bslab pa la / rim pa bzhin du bslab par bgyi*).[394]

The Bodhisattva Vow in Tantra as a Third Lineage

In his "Bodhisattva Discipline Chapter," after presenting the two lineages of the cittotpāda vow; differentiating them based on ritual structure and downfalls; differentiating them based on aspirational and active bodhicitta; determining whether and how vow conferral relates to philosophical view; determining whether the prātimokṣa serve as the support (*rten*) for the cittotpāda vows; and differentiating the vows from the generation of bodhicitta, or cittotpāda, itself, two elements of the vows remain unincorporated into Shākya Chokden's presentation, which he must deal with separately. First, having determined that the two bodhisattva vow lineages transmit relative bodhicitta, he must address where ultimate bodhicitta and its scriptural references fit into the picture. Finally, and related to the first, he must address the vow ritual in the tantric empowerments and whether that fits the characteristics of one of the two lineages or if it is an entirely separate, or third, type of ritual generation of bodhicitta.

He addresses a similar topic in his answer to his first question on cittotpāda vows in his *Golden Lancet*. There, he seeks to clarify confusion around whether when Sakya Paṇḍita explains that there are two lineages, that of the Madhyamaka and Cittamātra, he intends there to be only those two, with the exclusion of any other lineages. He clarifies that Sakya Paṇḍita was

[394] He also cites the text *Mañjuśrībuddhakṣetraguṇavyūha* (*Array of Qualities of Mañjuśrī's Buddha Field*) as a representation that this tradition gives rise to both aspirational and active bodhicitta together. GL, 686. *'jam dpal gyis sems bskyed pa'i tshul yang/ 'jam dpal gyi zhing bkod las/ des sngon gyi dus su smon 'jug gnyis ka chabs gcig tu blangs par bshad do/ Mañjuśrībuddhakṣetraguṇavyūha, 'Jam dpal gyi sangs rgyas kyi zhing gi yon tan bkod pa* (D 59, vol. 41) dkon brtsegs, *ga*, 248b1–297a3. Goodman, 16.

there only speaking of relative bodhicitta. Apart from these two ritual lineages, he asserts that there is a ritual lineage in the tantras. He states:

> Also, one might ask this: Which of the two [traditions] do those cittotpāda rituals that are taught from the mantra [tradition] accord with? In general, within the mantra [tradition], cittotpāda and its vows are separated into two. The first, [cittotpāda,] is also divided into two, the mind of enlightenment (*bodhicitta*) and its production (*utpāda*).[395]
>
> The first, [bodhicitta,] is also divided into two: relative bodhicitta and ultimate bodhicitta. The first, [relative bodhicitta,] has two explanations: the unshared explanation of mantra is that the relative [bodhicitta] is the waterlily [or night-lotus]-like [seminal essence],[396] and the explanation that is shared with the pāramitās is that it is explained as the mind that strives toward complete enlightenment for the benefit of others. As for ultimate bodhicitta, the explanation is also twofold: the unshared explanation of the mantra [tradition] is that it is the vajra mind, and the shared explanation is that it is the wisdom that directly realizes emptiness.[397]
>
> As for [the second], its production, there is the production of relative bodhicitta and the production of ultimate bodhicitta. As for the first, [the production of relative

[395] BDC, 442. *gsum pa ni/ yang 'di snyam du sngags nas gsungs pa'i sems bskyed kyi cho ga de dag gnyis po gang dang mthun zhe na/ spyir sngags nas sems bskyed dang de'i sdom pa gnyis su 'byed/ dang po la yang byang chub kyi sems dang de skyed pa zhes bya ba gnyis su 'byed/* This is a feature of the Sakya perspective according to Jamgön Kongtrul. See also Wangchuk, *Resolve*, 180.
[396] The white flower (*kunda*, *kumuda*) symbolizes the moon that in turn symbolizes the seminal essence or semen.
[397] BDC, 442. *dang po la/ kun rdzob byang chub kyi sems dang don dam byang chub kyi sems gnyis su 'chad/ dang po la yang sngags kyi thun mong ma yin pa'i bshad pa kun rdzob kunda lta bu dang/ phar phyin dang thun mong gi bshad pa gzhan don du rdzogs byang don gnyer gyi blo gnyis 'chad/ don dam byang sems la yang sngags kyi thun mong ma yin pa'i bshad pa sems kyi rdo rje la dang/ thun mong ba stong nyid mngon sum du rtogs pa'i ye shes la 'chad pa gnyis su 'byed/*

bodhicitta], there are two: in mantra, it refers to holding [not emitting] the night-lotus-like [semen], as the basis for stainless bliss, and in the pāramitā [tradition], it is the arising of aspiration bodhicitta. The second, [the production of ultimate bodhicitta], is also two: in mantra it is held in the manner of being pointed out newly, even though it abides clearly from the level of the basis, the vajra mind, and by pāramitā [followers], the [initial] limit of producing ultimate bodhicitta is identified as [starting] from the first bhūmi.[398]

Second is the way to identify the cittotpāda vows. In general, within most of the scriptural traditions, the arising of the mind toward supreme enlightenment and its vows are separated into two. The first is included in what was just explained, while the vow is the intention, together with its seeds, to relinquish the nonconcordant factors that are adverse conditions that cause those cittotpādas to decline, and [the intention] to consent to train in what is to be trained in, the concordant factors that increase them further.[399]

Also regarding that, one trains in what is to be trained in having generated relative bodhicitta, and one trains in what is to be trained in having generated ultimate bodhicitta. Although cittotpāda is separated into two, relative and ultimate, the vows are included entirely within active cittotpāda. Within active [bodhicitta], there are also two: that of the unshared mantra [tradition] and that which is shared with the pāramitā [tradition].[400]

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[398] BDC, 442–43. *de skyed pa la yang kun rdzob byang chub kyi sems bskyed pa dang don dam byang chub kyi sems bskyed pa'o/ dang po la sngags nas kunda lta bu zag med kyi bde ba'i rten du 'dzin pa dang/ phar phyin nas smon pa byang chub tu sems bskyed pa gnyis su 'byed/ gnyis pa la yang/ sngags nas sems kyi rdo rje gzhi'i dus nas gsal bar bzhugs kyang gsar du ngo 'phrod pa'i tshul gyis 'dzin pa dang/ phar phyin pas sa dang po nas don dam sems bskyed kyi mtha'i sa mtshams ngos 'dzin pa gnyis su yod do/*

[399] BDC, 443. *gnyis pa sems bskyed kyi sdom pa ngos 'dzin tshul la/ spyir gzhung lugs phal che ba'i nang nas byang chub mchog gi sems bskyed dang de'i sdom pa gnyis su phye nas/ dang po ni bshad ma thag pa de dag tu 'dus la/ sdom pa ni sems bskyed de dang de dag nyams par byed pa'i 'gal rkyen mi mthun pa'i phyogs spong zhing/ gong du 'phel ba'i mthun rkyen bslab bya la slob par khas blangs pa'i sems pa sa bon dang bcas pa'o/*

[400] BDC, 443. *de la'ang kun rdzob tu sems bskyed nas de'i bslab bya la slob pa dang don dam pa'i sems bskyed nas de'i bslab bya la slob pa'o/ sems bskyed la kun rdzob dang don dam gnyis su 'byed kyang sdom pa ni mtha' dag 'jug pa sems bskyed du 'dus la/ 'jug pa la sngags kyi thun mong ma yin pa dang pha rol tu phyin pa dang thun mong ba gnyis so/*

As for the first, [the vows of the unshared mantra tradition of active bodhicitta] is enjoying all of the trainings of the bodhisattva, if blessed by the foremost deity and the aspect of primordial wisdom. The second, [the vows of the shared pāramitā tradition of active bodhicitta], are those that appear in the shared sūtra piṭaka. When explained like that, in the mantra [tradition], although vows of aspirational [bodhicitta] are asserted, it is clear that first one generates bodhicitta and after that upholds the vows. As it is said,

> Bodhicitta is unsurpassable and supreme
> and holy. I give rise to it and,
> for the sake of all beings hold the vows without exception.

There are many [such] statements that for the most part accord with what comes from the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*.[401]

Ācārya Śāntarakṣita asserted vows in relation to both aspirational and active [bodhicitta], and further, although he asserted taking them together, he did not assert [the possibility of] an active [bodhicitta] that is not held by vows, but he did assert [such for] an aspirational [bodhicitta]. As it was said:

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[401] BDC, 443–44. *dang po ni/ byang chub sems dpa'i bslab bya mtha' dag lhag pa'i lha dang ye shes kyi rnam pas byin gyis brlabs na longs spyod pa yin la/ gnyis pa ni/ thun mong gi mdo sde las 'byung ba rnams so/ de ltar bshad pa na sngags su ni smon pa'i sdom pa bzhed kyang thog mar sems bskyed nas sdom pa de'i 'og tu 'dzin par mngon te/ ji skad du/ byang chub sems ni bla med mchog/ dam pa bdag gis bskyed bgyis nas/ sems can kun gyi don gyi phyir/ bdag gis sdom pa ma lus bzung/ zhes byang sa nas 'byung ba dang phal cher mthun par gsungs pa mang ngo/* The first two lines are found in the *Saṃpūṭanāmamahātantra*, *Yang dag par sbyor ba zhes bya ba'i rgyud chen po* (H 396, vol. 81) 389a7. This four line stanza appears in several sādhanas including Prajñendraruci, *Ratnajvālanāmasādhana*, *Rin chen 'bar ba zhes bya ba'i sgrub pa'i thabs* (Dg.T. 1251), 222a3; and Buddhaguhya, *Tantrārthāvatāra*, *Rgyud kyi don la 'jug pa* (Dg.T. 2501), 34b3.

Great results emerge in saṃsāra from

the mind aspiring to enlightenment.

Nevertheless, the merits do not emerge continuously

as is the case of the active bodhicitta

for the sake of freeing limitless realms of beings, from today forth . . .[402]

Some say it is not possible that this vow is taken until enlightenment, because one would not remember that they had taken it properly, and so it would be easy to be corrupted by faults. But in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* it is through following the aspiration of Akṣobhya that one makes the aspiration to never forget bodhicitta in all lifetimes. Accordingly, though it is difficult to know and protect the trainings, since they are vast, it is sufficient for beginners to just train knowing the key points regarding downfalls not arising.[403] The *Śikṣāsamuccaya* says:

Some might ask, since those, like me, of lesser minds, have difficulty

understanding the bodhisattva vow, what type of behavior is suitable?

One should know these key points

[402] BDC, 444. *slob dpon zhi ba lha ni smon 'jug gnyis ka la sdom pa bzhed cing/ de yang lhan chig tu len par bzhed mod/ sdom pas ma zin pa'i 'jug pa mi bzhed kyang smon pa ni bzhed de/ ji skad du/ byang chub smon pa'i sems la ni/ 'khor tshe 'bras bu che 'byung yang/ ji ltar 'jug pa'i sems bzhin du/ bsod nams rgyun chags 'byung ba min/ deng nas bzung ste sems can khams/ mtha' yas rab tu bsgral ba'i phyir/ zhes gungs so/*

[403] BDC, 444. *gal te sdom pa 'di byang chub kyi bar du len par mi rigs te/ tshe rabs gzhan du yang dag par blangs pa mi dran pas na nyes pas nyams par byed sla ba'i phyir zhes pa la/ bslab btus su/ byang chub sems dpa' mi 'khrugs pa'i smon lam rjes su gnang bas na tshe rabs thams cad du byang chub kyi sems mi brjed pa'i smon lam gdab par bya'o/ de bzhin du bslab bya rgya ches pas shes pa dang bsrung bar dka' yang/ las dang po pas ltung ba mi 'byung ba'i gnad shes par byas nas bslab pa tsam gyis chog pa yin te/*

that prevent downfalls.

What are those points of points?

They are giving to all beings

our own body, wealth, and virtue

that arise in the three times, and

guarding, purifying, and increasing those.[404]

When that is explained extensively, how to protect, how to purify, and how to increase each of the three, body, riches, and virtue, are taught.[405]

In this lengthy section, Shākya Chokden shows that, given that the cittotpāda vows are a directive towards one of the three paths to a liberation—śrāvaka the connection between a vow and the enlightened mind is linked. The types of bodhicitta reflect the mind and its relationship to enlightenment, and these underpin the gradations of the vow—from a mere wish that is aspirational bodhicitta, to active bodhicitta that is the mind working with the pāramitās, to a direct relationship with enlightened mind itself, which is ultimate bodhicitta.

The Downfalls

Shākya Chokden's third question in his *Golden Lancet* relates to the relationship between the

[404] BDC, 444. *bslab btus las/ ji skad du/ bdag lta bu blo zhan pas byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa shes par dka' bas de la ji ltar bya ba'i rigs [SC's reading follows Peking Tengyur; Derge Tengyur: ji ltar byang chub rigs] she na/ gang gis ltung bar mi 'gyur ba'i/ gnad kyi gnad rnams 'dir rig bya/ gnad kyi gnad de gang zhe na/ bdag gi lus dang longs spyod dang/ dge ba dus gsum skyes pa rnams/ sems can kun la btang ba dang/ de bsrung dag pa spel ba'o/ zhes gsungs shing/* Śāntideva, *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (Dg.T. 3940), 13a2. Goodman, 20, 363nxliii.

[405] BDC, 444–45. *de nyid rgyas par 'chad pa na/ lus dang longs spyod dang dge ba gsum po re re la yang bsrung ba'i tshul dang dag par bya ba'i tshul dang spel bar bya ba'i tshul rgyas par gsungs pa yin no/*

downfalls specific to each of the two lineages: "Is it taught in the *Śikṣasamuccaya*, itself, that the root downfalls that are taught in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* are included in the root downfalls that are taught in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*?"[406] His answer to the first question also addresses how the downfalls from the two lineages fit together. Within that question, there are four mistaken perspectives he wishes to clarify: the correct way to understand how the view matters in the distinction between the two lineages, whether taking the vow in one of the two lineages means that the vow holder must also guard against the downfalls in the other lineage, and the two mistaken views on the cittotpāda vows taken in the context of the tantras, just explained above.

As for the actual acts that cause the vow to be lost, there are four primary downfalls in the Cittamātra tradition and fourteen in the Madhyamaka tradition. Shākya Chokden shows that the four are included within the fourteen, and not the other way around. The two sūtra sources for the bodhisattva downfalls are two Mahāyāna sūtras: Shākya Chokden says that fourteen or twenty are found in the *Akaśagarbha Sūtra*,[407] and that the *Upāyakauśalya Sūtra* teaches a single root downfall, which is losing the aspirational bodhicitta.[408] Shākya Chokden's chapter on cittotpāda vows, "Bodhisattva Discipline" is organized into three main topics. The first two topics constitute discussions of the two vow lineages, which he refers to in that context as "the stages of taking [the vows] by Noble Asaṅga at the feet of lord Ajita [Maitreya]" and "the stages of taking [the vows] by Śāntideva at the feet of lord Mañjughoṣa." The third topic is a summary of the different features of these two traditions. Each tradition is explained based on three topics: the ritual for taking vows, methods for keeping them, and methods for repairing them.

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[406] (3) *bslab btus las gsungs rtsa ba yi/ ltung bar byang sa las gsungs pa'i/ rtsa ba'i ltung bar 'dus so zhes/ bslab btus nyid las gsungs de ci/*

[407] (Dg.K. 260) Drakpa Gyaltsen mentions the *Akaśagarbha Sūtra*, with its list of twenty misdeeds, states that those twenty are not entirely included in the four from Candragomin's text, and he dismisses it as a different tradition, though he does not name it. Tatz, *Candragomin's Twenty Verses*, 42, 66n45.

[408] (Dg.K 261)

The ritual for the Cittamātra tradition is taken from Asaṅga's *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, which itself takes the language of the vow-conferral process from the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra.* The list of downfalls for this tradition are taken from Candragomin's *Twenty Verses on the Bodhisattva Vow*. There, four primary downfalls are taught, which progressively are motivated by attachment, aggression, and ignorance. The four downfalls, as taught by Candragomin are:

> Attachment to gain and honor, while
> praising oneself and denigrating others;
> not offering dharma and wealth
> to the suffering and protectorless;
> instead of listening to others' confessions,
> hitting them out of anger; and
> rejecting the Mahāyāna
> and teaching a facsimile of the holy dharma.[409]

On top of these four, there are forty secondary downfalls listed from Candragomin's *Twenty Verses*, but in his analysis of how the downfalls relate to one another, Shākya Chokden does not address these.

[409] BDC, 428. *gnyis pa ni/ ji skad du/ rnyed dang bkur stir chags pa yis/ bdag bstod gzhan la smod pa dang/ sdug bsngal mgon med gyur pa la/ ser snas chos nor mi ster dang/ gzhan gyis bshags kyang mi nyan par/ khros nas gzhan la 'tshog pa dang/ theg pa chen po spong byed cing/ dam chos 'drar snang ston pa'o/ zhes pa ste/* This is the sixth and seventh verses of Candragomin's *Twenty Verses on the Bodhisattva Vow.* See *Bodhisattvasaṃvaraviṃśaka*, *Byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa nyi shu pa* (Dg.T. 4081, vol. 138), 166b4. See Mark Tatz, *Candragomin's Twenty Verses on the Bodhisattva Vow and Its Commentary by Sakya Drakpa Gyaltsen* (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1982), 15.

The ritual and downfalls for the Madhyamaka tradition are taken from Śāntideva's *Śikṣāsamuccaya*. The downfalls are listed there as follows:

> Stealing the wealth of the three jewels
> is asserted to be a defeating downfall.
> Rejecting the holy dharma
> the sage asserted to be the second.
> Even for the bhikṣu with broken discipline,
> to steal his robe or hit him,
> to put him in prison or
> make him leave monkhood,
> to do the five acts of immediate retribution,
> to hold wrong views,
> to cause division in a town,[410]
> the Victor taught to be the root downfalls.
> Teaching emptiness to beings
> whose minds are not trained,
> those who approach buddhahood and
> turn away from perfect enlightenment,
> to [cause one to] completely relinquish prātimokṣa vows in order

[410] While the Tibetan *'jig* in this line is commonly translated as "destroy" rather than "cause division," I follow Charles Goodman here in choosing the latter. Śāntideva's gloss is unfortunately unhelpful in understanding the term: "Alternately, causing division in a village, causing division in a region, causing division in a city, causing division in a country." See Charles Goodman, trans., *Training Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 71, 74.

to engage in the great vehicle,

to claim that the vehicle of students

does not relinquish attachment, and so on,

being attached to and announcing to others

one's own qualities,

for gain, and honor, and glory,

denigrating others and telling the lie,

"I can endure profound [emptiness],"

To punish spiritual practitioners,

to trade property of the three jewels,

to cause someone to reject śamatha,

to give the belongings of someone who rests purely

to someone who [only] recites [the scriptures],

those are root downfalls,

causes for beings to go to the great hells.

When noble Ākāśagarbha is in front of you in a dream,

confess them.

To completely give up bodhicitta,

with intense attachment and jealousy,

to not give to the poor,

working to please some,

while having no patience for beings,

to beat sentient beings out of anger,

from affliction or fitting in with others,

to teach a false dharma.[411]

In the third question within the *Golden Lancet*, Shākya Chokden says that he seeks to clarify the line in Sakya Pandita's *Differentiating the Three Codes*, "The downfalls, their repair,/ and what is to be trained in exist separately."[412] He writes,

> Misunderstanding its explicit meaning, doubts [arise] of wondering whether those endowed with the cittotpāda vows arisen from the Madhyamaka tradition ritual do not have to guard [themselves against] the root downfalls taught in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* and wondering whether for those endowed with the vows as taught in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, all nineteen root downfalls taught in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* serve as causes for the loss of the vows.

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[411] BDC, 428–30. *dang po no/ bslab btus las/ ji skad du/ rtsa ba'i ltung ba 'di dag bde blag tu bzung ba dang/ 'ga' zhig gi lugs gnas par bya ba'i phyir tshig le'ur byas pa dag brjod par bya'o/ dkon mchog gsum gyi dkor 'phrog pa/ phas pham pa yi ltung bar 'dod/ dam pa'i chos ni spong byed pa/ gnyis par thub pas gsungs pa yin/ tshul khrims 'chal pa'i dge slong la'ang/ ngur smrig 'phrog dang rdeg pa dang/ btson rar 'jug par byed pa dang/ rab tu byung las 'bebs pa dang/ mtshams med lnga po byed pa dang/ log par lta ba 'dzin pa dang/ grong la sogs pa 'jig pa yang/ rtsa ba'i ltung bar rgyal bas gsungs/ blo sbyongs ma byas sems can la/ stong pa nyid ni brjod pa dang/ sangs rgyas nyid la zhugs pa dang/ rdzogs pa'i byang chub zlog pa dang/ so sor thar pa yongs spangs te/ theg pa che la sbyor ba dang/ slob ma'i theg pas chags la sogs/ spong bar 'gyur ba min zhes 'dzin/ pha rol dag kyang 'dzin 'jug dang/ rang gi yon tan brjod pa dang/ rnyed pa dang ni bkur sti dang/ tshigs bcad rgyu yis gzhan smod dang/ bdag ni zab mo bzod pa'o zhes/logs pa nyid ni smra ba dang/ dge sbyong chad pas gcod 'jug dang/ dkon mchog gsum gyi sbyin byed dang/ sbyin pa len par byed pa dang/ zhi gnas 'dor bar byed pa dang/ yang dag 'jog gi longs spyod ni/ kha bton byed la sbyin pa rnams/ de dag rtsa ba'i ltung ba ste/ sems can dmyal ba chen po'i rgyu/ rmi lam 'phags pa nam snying po'i/ mdun du 'dug ste bshags par bya/ byang chub sems ni yongs 'dor dang/ chags dang ser sna slong la sbyin par mi byed dang/ sgrims te dga' bar byed pa ni/ sems can la ni mi bzod par/ khros pas sems can rdeg pa dang/ nyon mongs pa dang gzhan mthun pas/ chos ltar bcos pa brjod pa'o/ zhes gsungs so/* Śāntideva, *Śikṣāsamuccaya, Bslab pa kun las btus pa* (Dg.T. 3940, vol. 111), 43a5–43b4. Goodman, trans., *Training Anthology of Śāntideva*, 70–71.

[412] Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation*, 81 and 291 (ch. 2, v. 3cd).

In particular, he states that some claim that it is Sakya Pandita's intention that the root downfalls of the two traditions are mutually inclusive, identifying a "Kumāra" as one who espouses this particular view.[413] He also identifies Abhayākaragupta as someone who mixed the two traditions, and states that others add the Madhyamaka ritual introduction, which would be the sevenfold offering, with the main part of the ritual from the Cittamātra tradition. Shākya Chokden locates in a line of the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, an awareness on the part of Śāntideva of the existence of the Cittamātra tradition. He cites the text stating, "In order to easily remember these root downfalls, and also because of the existence of another tradition, I will express these summary verses."[414] He states that in all *Śikṣāsamuccaya* commentaries, "another tradition" refers to Asaṅga's tradition. The implication is that the summary verses in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* encompass the other tradition, since they were also composed for those "others" who follow that system.

In the third answer of the *Golden Lancet*, Shākya Chokden rejects Kumāra's presentation, relying on Abhayākaragupta, of how the fourteen downfalls of the Madhyamaka tradition fit into the Cittamātra downfalls, and in his first answer, he presents how they actually fit together. He shows that the first defeat taught in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* and in the *Śikṣāsammucaya* are the same, which, citing the latter version, says, "To announce one's own qualities/ for gain, and honor, and glory,/ and denigrate others."[415] The second downfall of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* is

[413] It seems this Kumāra (Gzhon nu) must be Lechen Zhönu Senge (Las chen gzhon nu seng ge). See Jackson, "Commentaries," 14, 15.

[414] *GL*, 696. *ji ltar zhe na/ de nyid las/ ji skad du/ rtsa ba'i ltung ba 'di dag bde blag tu bzung ba dang/ 'ga' zhig gi lugs gnas par ba'i phyir bsdu ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa dag brjod par bya'o/ zhes gsungs la/ der 'ga' zhig gi lugs shes pa/ 'phags pa thogs med kyi lugs la bya bar/ sngon gyi bslab btus 'chad pa po kun gyis 'chad kyin snang ba ltar rigs pa'i phyir ro/ Śikṣāsamuccaya*, 43a5. Goodman, 70. (Goodman's translation does not include an equivalent to the phrase "in some traditions."

[415] *GL*, 688. *byang sa nas gsungs pa'i pham pa dang po ni/ bslab btus las kyang/ rnyed pa dang ni bkur sti dang/ tshig bcad rgyu yis gzhan smod dang/ rang gi yon tan brjod pa dang/ zhes pas bsdus la/* Śāntideva, *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, 43b1. Charles Goodman, trans., *Training Anthology of Śāntideva*: *Translation of the Śikṣā-samuccaya* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 66. The final line here comes before the first two in the original.

included in Śāntideva's line, "with intense attachment and jealousy,/ to not give to the poor."[416] The third is included in his line, "working to please some,/ while having no patience for beings,/ to beat beings out of anger."[417] The fourth downfall is included within, "from affliction or fitting in with others,/ to teach a false dharma."[418]

This is how Shākya Chokden shows that the downfalls of the Cittamātra tradition are found within the Madhyamaka tradition, but not the other way around. In particular, the fact that the Madhyamaka tradition includes even the lowest qualifications in terms of virtuous conduct or intention and was devised to allow everyone in, even those who could only take an attenuated version of the vows could not be held to the higher standards of the Cittamātra tradition. He states:

> There is also no certainty [with respect to that] for those who hold the vow of only aspiration that is taught in the *Śikṣāsammucaya*, and those who hold as a vow a single restriction [i.e., to just restrict one thing], taught in the *Guhyasamāja*. By these, refuting the faults [ascribed by the opponents] is easy. They can also be refuted by [the analogy with] the following consequence: according to the tradition of this treatise, it follows that regarding the subject, a monk in the tradition of śrāvakas that asserts that killing one who

[416] *GL*, 688. *pham pa gnyis pa ni/ chags dang ser sna mi zad pas/ slong la sbying par mi byed dang/ zhes pas bsdus shing/*
[417] *GL*, 688–89. *pham pa lta bu'i chos gsum pa ni/ sgrims te dga' bar byed pa na[original : ni]/ sems can la ni mi bzod par/ khros pas sems can rdeg pa dang/ zhes pas bsdus la*
[418] *GL*, 689. *pham pa bzhi pa yang/ nyon mongs pa dang gzhan mthun pas/ chos ltar bcos pa brjod pa'o/ zhes pas bsdus par gsal ba'i phyir ro/*

is to become human is not a defeat, the defeat of killing one who is to become human is for him a root downfall, because he is a monk who possesses [that vow].[419]

Here, he ends his discussion of this topic in the first *Golden Lancet* question with a related scenario in the vinaya context of the first prātimokṣa vow not to kill. While the Mahāsāṃghika tradition's *Prātimokṣa Sūtra* states only that the vow not to kill includes those who are human, the Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya tradition states that the breakage of the vow is to kill one who is human or one who will become human (*mir chags pa*), interpreted by some to be a fetus in the womb. [420] He states that monks who take vows in these two different vinaya traditions only have to keep the vows as they are articulated there.

The View and the Problem of the Tenet Systems

The relationship between the four tenet systems of Tibetan Buddhism and the nature of the vows, the cittotpāda vow in particular, has two quite distinct contexts. One, the nature of the vow, and the number of vow sets required to produce the resultant state, are viewed differently within the soteriological projects of each tenet system, as mentioned in the first chapter. As discussed further in the next chapter, when the lower two systems address the nature of vows and the

[419] *GL*, 689–90. *yang/ gzhan dag gis 'phangs pa'i ha cang thal ba'i klan ka de la khyab pa ma nges pa'i don yang/ 'di ltar/ byang sa nas gsungs pa'i sems skyed kyi sdom ldan las dang po pa de la/ smon sems btang ba rtsa ltung du thal bas ma nges pa dang/ blab btus nas gsungs pa'i smon pa rkyang pa'i sdom ldan dang/ 'dus pa'i dbang du byas pa'i sna gcig gcod pa'i sdom ldan gyis ma nges pas/ nyes pa de spang bar sla ba yin la/ bstan bcos 'di'i lugs ltar na/ mir chags pa bsad pa la pham pa mi 'byung ba'i 'dod pa'i nyan thos sde pa de pa'i lugs kyi dge slong de chos can/ mir chags bsad [689] pa'i pham pa de khyod la ltos pa'i rtsa ltung yin par thal/ khyod bcas ldan dge slong yin pa'i phyir/ zhes pa lta bu'i thal bas kyang bzlog par nus so/*

[420] See Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, 50–51 for this distinction in the first pārājika side by side, and Giulio Agostini, "Buddhist Sources on Feticide as Distinct from Homicide," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 27, no. 1 (2004): 82n48 and 83n49 for the Tibetan of these vows.

relationship among them, this concerns the seven categories of prātimokṣa vow. In the higher tenet systems, the cittotpāda vows and secret mantra vows are added to this. As discussed further below, the nature of the vows changes based on the model of the mind of the tenet system, and how that system posits a model for the continuous production of the merit produced by the vows with or without a model of the unconscious that can store the vow's effects in the form of perfuming (*vasana*) or seeds (*bīja*).

Beginning in the early dissemination of Buddhism to Tibet, a progressive fourfold system of tenets was presented that both reflected a historic development and an increasing subtlety of positions on the nature of mind and external phenomena. The fourfold list includes two that are not considered Mahāyāna—Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika—and two that are considered Mahāyāna systems: Cittamātra and Madhyamaka.

Shākya Chokden accepts the fundamental premise of the fourfold system as they occur across the Tibetan sects but rearranges the subdivisions of the two Mahāyāna systems. His unique approach to the tenet systems reflects a move toward reconciliation, as well as an individuation of the result of each system. He treats the lower systems as not entirely mistaken but actually fully capable to affect a certain resultant state. The Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika systems bring about the result of the nirvāṇa of the śrāvaka; Cittamātra, that of a pratyekabuddha; and the Madhyamaka alone, that of a full buddha. Further, even though in the traditional Tibetan presentation, the systems become increasingly correct in arriving at a view of the nature of reality, Shākya Chokden affords each of the four a complete program for realizing the selflessness of persons, through which each of their respective fruitions become possible.[421] There is no contradiction in terms of what each tenet system negates; what they posit, on the

[421] Kamarovski, *Visions of Unity*, 112.

other hand, is disputed by higher systems. But what each negates is accepted and expanded by each higher tenet system. [422] This extends to the assertion that the Cittamātra system has a complete refutation of external objects. It is with system that Shākya Chokden's view of the tenet systems is particularly noteworthy: he holds the Cittamātra system to be inferior to Madhyamaka but does not categorize its purported Indian founder, Asaṅga, as holding the Cittamātra view, but rather a special level of Yogācāra, which he held to be at the same level as Madhyamaka. This is discussed in more detail below in the context of the views' relationships to the two lineages.

The second of the final three topics discussed in Shākya Chokden's "Bodhisattva Discipline" is "Considering the Intended Meaning of Separating [the Two Traditions] Based on [Their] Different Views." He opens this discussion of the two cittotpāda vow lineages relationship with the view with a citation from Sakya Paṇḍita's *Differentiating the Three Vows*:

> Someone might ask, what is the meaning of the explanation that the ritual is different because of having different views? As [Sakya Paṇḍita] says:
>
> Because those two have different views,
> the ritual is also different.[423]

In his reply to the translator of Lowo, Sakya Paṇḍita criticizes those who do not properly discern the two lineages and mistakenly add the confession portion of the ritual from the Madhyamaka

[422] Kamarovski, 113.
[423] *GL*, 440–41. *gnyis pa ni/ yang ji skad du/ theg pa chen po'i sems bskyed la/ dbu ma sems tsam lugs gnyis yod/ de gnyis /lta ba tha dad pas/ cho ga yang ni tha dad yin/ zhes lta ba'i khyad par las cho ga mi 'dra bar bshad pa de'i don ci zhe na*/ Sakya Paṇḍita, *Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes*, 81, 291 (ch. 2, v 3ab). Translated by Rhoton (81) as: "However, as the two differ / in philosophical theory, their rites also vary, . . ."

lineage to the Cittamātra lineage ritual.[424] This recalls the story told above of Śākyaśrībhadra's begrudging willingness to cobble together a ritual liturgy, while criticizing its construction. Despite Śākyaśrībhadra's prominence in the Sakya tradition, and lasting legacies in commentarial, translation, and vinaya traditions, the concern persisted that certain cittotpāda vow lineages (even the one he transmitted himself) were faulty, and Tibetans were at risk of being the bearers of only this faulty lineage. From this anxiety about Abhayākaragupta's unification of the two tradition's liturgies, Sakya Paṇḍita makes a firm statement that the two must be separated.[425] Gorampa, as well, stresses the importance of separating the two lineages, saying, "those who do not differentiate between these two systems invent their own rituals in order to deceive the poorly educated and to please the ignorant," which when paired with Sakya Paṇḍita's story of Śākyaśrībhadra's reluctance to offer vows to the inferior Tibetans, reads as a strangely pointed criticism of the Indian paṇḍita.[426]

Shākya Chokden addresses the significance of the view to the two traditions in three places: the third of three sections of his "Bodhisattva Discipline Chapter," and in his *Golden Lancet*, in the first part of his answer to his first question, and in the second question, which, while brief, is entirely devoted to the topic. This second question is: "(2) If the rituals are differentiated by view, then would the cittotpāda vows not arise by means of the ritual of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* for one who is endowed with the Madhyamaka view?"[427] He had already presented this question in a modified form within his answer to his first question, as a potential flawed perspective held when one does not understand how to differentiate the views properly.

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[424] Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation*, 226.
[425] Rhoton, 216
[426] Paraphrased by Sobish on page 52. Gorampa, *Detailed Exposition*, 169.
[427] *GL*, 694. *lta bas cho ga khyad 'byed na/ dbu ma'i lta ba dang ldan pa/ de la byang sa'i cho ga yis/ sems bskyed sdom pa mi skye'am/*

He states, "One might [wrongly] think that it follows that the difference between the two is that the view separates them. And if that is the case, it is thought that it follows that one must realize the views of Madhyamaka and Cittamātra as branches of each of the two cittotpādas."[428] Rather than specifically refuting why aligning the view with the vow lineage is faulty, he rather makes a positive case for how one should view the differentiation of the two lineages; this is discussed further below.

His answer to the second question is presented in two topics: the reason for the question (*'dri ba'i rgyu mtshan*) and the actual answer (*dngos lan gdab pa*). The reason for the question is simply that such an association between the view and the vow holder had not been properly explained by either Sakya Paṇḍita or those who wrote commentaries on his works:

> The reason is that according to the explicit teachings of [Sakya Paṇḍita's text], it was explained as if the reason for treating separately the rituals of the two [systems] depended on their different views; and the commentators [on Sakya Paṇḍita's text] did not provide sufficiently detailed explanations [of that].

He then states the fault, or confusion, that would arise if one were to not ask such a question (the one he poses at the outset). The faulty views potentially held by those who do not properly analyze such a question are phrased as questions by hypothetical confused opponents. These opponents ask two questions, the first of which is: "If you consider the division of the features of the two [traditions] to be based on [their respective philosophical] views, then when cittotpāda is

[428] *GL*, 694. *gnyis po'i khyad par lta bas 'byed par thal lo snyam pa dang/ de yang de lta na/ sems skyed gnyis po so so'i yan lag tu dbu sems kyi lta ba rtogs dgos par thal lo snyam pa dang/*

conferred through those rituals, would those taking [the vows] need to have that separate view? Or is there a lineage of vows that does not involve either of those two options, which was transmitted to individual masters?"[429] His response to the first question is, "If the first is the case, there are the unwanted consequences that the vows of active [bodhicitta] that are explained in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* would not arise in one endowed with the Madhyamaka view, and the cittotpāda vows that are taught in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* would not arise in one with a Cittamātra view."[430]

He then points out the absurd consequence of the latter (that one with a Cittamātra view would not be able to confer the vows of Śāntideva's lineage):

> If the second is the case, it would not be suitable for the venerable Maitreya, the noble Asaṅga, and the lord Atiśa to confer the cittotpāda vows of the Cittamātra traditions, and it would not be suitable for the lord [Atiśa's] lama Dharmarakṣita to confer the vows of the Madhyamaka tradition. And it would not be suitable for those masters who are not endowed with either of the two views to confer the cittotpāda vows of either tradition.[431]

The first consequence is a glimpse into Shākya Chokden's unique ordering of traditional Tibetan doxography. Shākya Chokden would hold Maitreya and Asaṅga not as holders of a Cittamātra

[429] *GL*, 694. *gnyis po'i khyad par lta bas 'byed pa de lta na/ cho ga de dang des sems skyed 'bogs pa'i tshe/ len pa po la lta ba logs pa dgos pa yin nam/'bogs pa po la dgos pa yin nam/ de gnyis gang yang ma yin par/ sdom pa'i rgyud pa dbu sems kyi slob dpon so so ba la brgyud pa'i rgyu mthsan gyis yin/*

[430] *GL*, 694. *dang po ltar na/dbu ma'i lta ba dang ldan pa la byang sa nas bshad pa'i 'jug sdom mi skye bar 'gyur zhing/ sems tsam gyi lta ba can la spyod 'jug nas gsungs pa'i sems skyed kyi sdom pa de mi skye bar ha cang thal lo/*

[431] *GL*, 694–95. *gnyis pa ltar na/ rje btsun byams pa dang/ 'phags pa thogs med dang/ jo bo A ti sha rnams/ sems tsam lugs kyi sems skyed kyi sdom pa 'bogs pa por mi rung bar 'gyur zhing/ jo bo'i bla ma dha rma rakSi ta lta bu dbu ma lugs kyi sdom pa 'bogs pa po nyid du mi rung bar 'gyur ba dang/ lta ba de gnyis gang dang yang mi ldan pa'i dge ba'i bshes gnyen dag gis/ lugs gnyis kyi sems skyed kyi sdom pa 'bogs pa po nyid du mi rung bar 'gyur ro/*

view, despite being the bearers of the Cittamātra lineage of vows. Rather, he viewed them as holders of the False-Aspectarian Yogācāra view, which he held to be equal to that of the proponents of lack of nature (*nihsvabhāvavāda*) view of the Madhyamaka tradition. The second consequence uses a historical figure to identify an authentic lineage of transmission of the bodhisattva vows through one of the most celebrated Indian masters in Tibet, Atiśa. Of the three teachers said to have instructed Atiśa on bodhicitta and cittotpāda vows, Dharmarakṣita, author of the widely known mind training text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons Returning* (*Blo sbyong mtshon cha 'khor lo*), was said to hold a Cittamātra view.[432] Atiśa himself described Dharmarakṣita as having an inferior view, and Thubten Jinpa in fact assigns Dharmarakṣita the view of Vaibhāṣika, as one tradition recounts that he also taught Atiśa the tenets of the Vaibhāṣika school.[433] In any case, the consequence is that Dharmarakṣita would not have been able to transmit the cittotpāda vow in the Madhyamaka lineage if the view of the lineage were a requirement to transmit the vows and teachings.

In the next section, the actual answer, Shākya Chokden makes three short points, each of which aim to provide his own view. The section begins with, "None of those three reasons are accepted, but one might ask, "What is [accepted]?"[434] First, he departs from Sakya Paṇḍita in stating directly his opinion of the final philosophical view held by Asaṅga and taught in his *Bodhisattvabhūmi*. Second, he states that the reason why the Madhyamaka tradition gets its name is entirely based on the source literature that it derives from. Third, he separates out the bodhisattva vow ritual text of Nāgārjuna, claiming that it falls in neither Madhyamaka nor

[432] Translated by Thupten Jinpa in his *Mind Training: The Great Collection* (Boston: Wisdom, 2005), 133–53. Thubten Jinpa states that Dharmarakṣita is said to have cut off a piece of his own thigh as a bodhisattva act.
[433] See his *Essential Mind Training* (Boston: Wisdom, 2011), 14. See also Thupten Jinpa, *Mind Training,* 8, and 577n11.
[434] *GL,* 695. *brtag pa gsum po de dag gang du yang khas mi len gyi/ 'o na ci zhe na/ bstan*

Cittamātra traditions.

The first point he makes implies a departure from Sakya Paṇḍita's doxography, a controversial position to take as a Sakya exegete. He states:

> Because the author of this treatise [Sakya Paṇḍita] asserts the view of False-Aspectarian is also a Cittamātra view, [his position is as follows:] Since this treatise called *Bodhisattvabhūmi* teaches that same False-Aspectarian Cittamātra view to be the ultimate view, it is a Cittamātra treatise. As for the cittotpāda ritual explained there, it is known as the Cittamātra tradition because the tradition of explaining its ritual was initiated exclusively in Cittamātra treatises.[435]

Here, Shākya Chokden would not posit a False-Aspectarian view as a Cittamātra view but rather a Madhyamaka view, which itself has the capacity to lead one to a complete liberation. The division between False-Aspectarian and True-Aspectarian models of mind are rooted in the way that the mind perceives external objects. According to the coarse presentation found in Tibetan monastic seminaries, in its simplest form, from among the four tenet systems' models of perception, the lowest, the Vaibhāṣika view, asserts the coarse and easily refutable model that mind contacts external objects directly. The second of the four, Sautrāntika,[436] asserts that the

[435] *GL*, 695. *bcos mdzad pa po 'dis ni/ rnam rdzun gyi lta ba yang sems tsam pa'i lta bar bzhed pas/ byang chub sems dpa'i sa zhes bya ba'i bstan bcos 'dis ni/sems tsam rnam rdzun gyi lta ba gang yin pa de nyid/ mthar thug gi lta bar ston pa'i phyir na/ sems tsam gyi bstan bcos yin la/ de nas bshad pa'i sems skyed kyi cho ga de la ni sems tsam gyi lugs zhes bya ste/ cho ga de'i bshad pa'i srol thog mar 'byed pa ni sems tsam gyi bstan bcos kho na yin pa'i phyir/*

[436] For a more nuanced and historical view of the philosophical system of the Sautrāntikas and what might have constituted the tradition in India and Indian abhidharma, see Robert Kritzer, "Dārṣṭāntika and Sautrāntika in the *Abhidharmadīpa*," in *Aspects of Research into Central Asian Buddhism: In memoriam Kōgi Kudara*, ed. Peter Zieme, 115–42 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2008).

mind does not directly encounter an external object, but rather an aspect (*ākāra*) in the form of the external object, both object and mental aspect being truly existent, though impermanent in the sense of being composed of particles or indivisible moments of mind. The Cittamātra (Mind Only) view is so-named as it adheres to this view of mental aspects, rejecting the existence of the external objects. It is thus traditionally split into two traditions, those who, while denying the existence of the objects, affirm the veracity of the aspect, called True-Aspectarian (*Satyākaravāda*, *rnam bden pa*) and those who do not afford the aspect veracity, called False-Aspectarian (*Alīkākāravāda*, *rnam rdzun pa*). Shākya Chokden here departs from the traditional presentation by drawing a distinction between these two. The True-Aspectarian is the only view he would afford the title Cittamātra: external objects being unreal, the mental aspect being real, this would be a true "mind only" view. The False-Aspectarian view, he affords the label Yogācāra, and places this at the same level as the highest tenet system, Madhyamaka. Thus, Shākya Chokden affords Asaṅga the view, not of a Cittamātra, but a False-Aspectarian Yogācāra, aligning him rather with a Madhyamaka view than a Cittamātra view. Sakya Paṇḍita on the other hand, would count both as Cittamātra, and it is thus, Shākya Chokden explains, that Asaṅga's *Bodhisattvabhūmi* tradition came to be understood by Sakya Paṇḍita as the Cittamātra vow lineage.

Shākya Chokden's second point is a reiteration of the first, but for the Madhyamaka tradition. The ritual liturgy for transmitting cittotpāda vows composed by the tenth-century master Jetāri, himself a scholar of logic and Madhyamaka, is based on the ritual structure of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, a Madhyamaka treatise. Again, he ties the significance of the vow lineage to the source material and not the philosophical view. The fact that he identifies Jetāri rather than Nāgārjuna, as the source ritual liturgy for the Madhyamaka tradition is noteworthy, as it departs

not only from Tsongkhapa, as one would expect, but also from the Sakya tradition's own Sakya Paṇḍita and Gorampa Sönam Senge. In both of his commentaries on *Differentiating the Three Vows*, Gorampa identifies Nāgārjuna's ritual lineage as belonging to the Madhyamaka tradition. Gorampa lists Nāgārjuna, Jetāri, and Śāntideva as representing the ritual liturgy of the Madhyamaka tradition.[437] Tsongkhapa, who rejects a meaningful distinction between the lineages, lists Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga, and Śāntideva, as being of the lineage of Atiśa's ritual text.[438] Sakya Paṇḍita, in his *Madhyamaka Ritual for Generating Bodhicitta*, states that the Cittamātra tradition is in the lineage of Maitreya, passed to Asaṅga, to Candragomin, and then Atiśa, being practiced primarily in the Kadampa tradition. He explains the Madhyamaka tradition in accordance with the traditional lineage lists (*gsan yig*) that pass through Mañjuśrī, Nāgārjuna, Śāntideva, Jetāri, and Punyaśrī.[439]

So, in contrast to these three prominent thinkers, how could it be that Shākya Chokden does not assert that the universally accepted founder of Madhyamaka philosophy, Nāgārjuna, is in the lineage of the Madhyamaka tradition of vow conferral? Why would Shākya Chokden extract Nāgārjuna from these clear lineage lists into a category separate from the one he most obviously fits within? This is the topic of his third point here, explained as follows:

> The cittotpāda ritual written by Nāgārjuna appears implicitly as being explained as the Madhyamaka tradition, but it is not included in the separate presentations of the two traditions by the author of this treatise [Sakya Paṇḍita], because within it different features that were explained here [in Sakya Paṇḍita's treatise] are not complete, and also

[437] Sobisch, *Three-Vow Theories*, 51.
[438] Tatz, *Asaṅga's Chapter on* Ethics, 138
[439] Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation*, 91n2.

> because [Nāgārjuna] apparently provided the explanation of generating the mind [cittotpāda] toward supreme enlightenment of the mantra tradition together with taking the vows of active [bodhicitta].[440]

Nāgārjuna's ritual text is not in the Madhyamaka tradition because it does not include all of the ritual aspects required within either of the two lineages. Rather, it joins two separate ritual elements, the generation of bodhicitta as found in the tantras, as opposed to the vows of aspirational bodhicitta and the vows of active bodhicitta, two topics key to his definition and separation of the two lineages, which he takes up in later questions, discussed below.

Now, although here he thoroughly dismisses that the view of the preceptor or vow holder is significant in transmitting the lineage, he does not dismiss the significance of their distinction, nor the importance of the view of the vow-holders in their abilities to keep the vow. The second main work in which Shākya Chokden discusses the relationship between the view and the vow lineages is his "Bodhisattva Discipline Chapter." He states:

> If one takes the vow of aspiration via the ritual explained in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* while having no more than the mere view of the selflessness of apprehended phenomena, that vow does arise, but that vow will be difficult to keep. This is because they will be unable

[440] *GL*, 695–96. *klu grub zhabs kyis mdzad pa'i sems skyed kyi cho ga ni dbu ma'i lugs su 'chad pa don gyis thob pa lta bur snang yang/ bstan bcos mdzad pa 'dis lugs gnyis kyi rnam par gzhag pa so sor phye ba de'i khongs su mi gtogs te/ de la 'dir mi 'dra ba'i khyad par ji skad bshad pa de dag ma tshang ba dang/ sngags lugs kyi don dam pa byang chub kyi mchog tu sems skyed pa dang/ 'jug sdom 'brel chags su len pa zhig bshad snang bas so/*

to stop selfish mental activity because they have not transcended the view of a pratyekabuddha.[441]

Obstructions to enlightenment are divided into two categories, the afflictive obscurations (*kleśāvaraṇa*, *nyon sgrib*) and cognitive obscurations (*jñeyāvaraṇa*, *shes sgrib*). The former consists of the destructive emotions, or *kleśas* (*nyon mongs*), and include various enumerations of emotional states stemming from desire and aggression. The latter, cognitive obscurations, are the various forms of ignorance that mask the true nature of reality, lack of self and emptiness. The realization of the lack of self, or selflessness, is also divided into two types: that of the personal self and of phenomena. The *Mahāyanasaṃgraha*, attributed to Asaṅga, states that a śrāvaka realizes the selflessness of the self only and not of phenomena.[442] Inferior to the bodhisattva, the level of enlightenment of a pratyekabuddha constitutes a realization of only the selflessness of phenomena. The *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* does not mention this directly, this description of the pratyekabuddha is found in Maitreya's extensive commentary on the prajñāpāramitā sūtras, the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (ch. 2, v. 8).[443]

Shākya Chokden presents both Madhyamaka and Cittamātra traditions as difficult to keep. Given that in his view, there are no vows pertaining to the aspirational form of bodhicitta, he states, "Although it is difficult in that way, those who have the Cittamātra view should take

[441] BDC, 441. *gzung ba chos kyi bdag med pa'i lta ba tsam las med pa'i smon pa'i sdom pa spyod 'jug las bshad pa'i cho gas blangs na skye ba yin mod/ sdom pa de bsrung bar ni dka' ste / rang rgyal gyi lta ba las ma 'das pas rang don yid byed kyi bsam pa 'gog mi nus pa'i phyir/*
[442] Karl Brunnhölzl, trans., *A Compendium of the Mahāyāna: Asaṅga's Mahāyānasaṃgraha and Its Indian and Tibetan Commentaries*, vol. 1 (Boulder: Snow Lion, 2018), 233–34.
[443] Karl Brunnhölzl, trans., *The Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras, the Ornament of Clear Realization, and Its Commentaries in the Tibetan Kagyü Tradition, vol. 1*. (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 2010), 339–40.

the vow of active after training in the mind of aspiration for a long time."[444] His reasoning is as follows.

> This is because if one takes both aspirational and active vows from the very beginning, even if it is not the case that they do not arise, it will be difficult to defend selfish mental activity, which causes them both to be lost.[445] As for those who hold the view of the selflessness of phenomena of the apprehending consciousness, it is easy [for them] to hold the vow of aspiration from the beginning, because having realized the view of the Mahāyāna, it is difficult for the intention of selfish mental activity to arise. As it is said:
>
> > If one realizes the emptiness of all phenomena,
> > compassion for beings is continuous.[446]
>
> From one perspective, it is true that according to the texts that assert that ultimately there are three vehicles, beginner bodhisattvas turn away from complete enlightenment due to merely producing aspiration toward a lower [awakening].[447] However, [those texts] do not assert that [that person has thereby] made one's [future births in] saṃsāra limitless along the lines of [the statement in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*],

[444] BDC, 441. *de ltar dka' yang sems tsam gyi lta ba can smon sems yon ring du sbyangs nas 'jug pa'i sdom pa len dgos te/*
[445] BDC, 441. *thog ma nyid nas smon 'jug gnyis ka'i sdom pa blangs na mi skye ba ma yin mod kyang de gnyis ka'i gtong rgyu rang don yid byed kyi bsam pa bsrung dka' ba'i phyir/*
[446] BDC, 441. *'dzin pa chos kyi bdag med pa'i lta ba can la ni thog ma nyid nas smon pa'i sdom pa bsrung sla ba yin te/ theg chen gyi lta ba rtogs nas rang don yid byed kyi bsam pa skye dka' ba'i phyir/ ji skad du/ chos kun stong nyid rtogs pa na/ 'gro la snying rje rgyun mi 'chad/ ces pa ltar ro/* This quote is from Virūpa's *Suniṣprapañcatattvopadeśanāma*, *Shin tu spros pa med pa de kho na nyid kyi man ngag ces bya ba* (Dg.T. 2020), 82a2.
[447] BDC, 441, *rnam pa gcig tu na mthar thug theg pa gsum du 'dod pa'i gzhung ltar na byang sems las dang po pas dman par sems bskyed pa tsam gyis rdzogs byang las log pa yin mod/*

> "their [births in] lower realms are limitless."[448] This is because [according to those texts] that person generates aspiration to [one of the three] final nirvāṇas [śrāvaka arhat, pratyekabuddha arhat, and buddha]. According to the texts [asserting that those who have achieved] the lower [awakenings] do not have the actual nirvāṇa [that is, texts that assert one vehicle], such [a person] does make their [births in] saṃsāra limitless due to turning their back on actual liberation.[449] This is the meaning of the statement that, intending those points, the vows of aspirational [bodhicitta] are not explained in the Cittamātra tradition ritual, and the vows of aspirational [bodhicitta] are definitely asserted in the Madhyamaka tradition. It is not explained that the vows that are taught in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* must be taken only by a Cittamātrin or that the final view of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* is Cittamātra, because if it were explained in that way, it would be contradictory to the great treatises of sūtra and mantra.[450]

While Tsongkhapa criticized Sakya Pandita, Shākya Chokden reframes Sakya Pandita's intention, and both arrive at a similar conclusion, which is that the view of the vow holder does

[448] This refers to chapter 4, verses 7–9, quoted in part here and above: *gang mi byang chub sems btang yang/ de dag thar bar byed pa ni/ las tshul bsam gyis mi khyab ste/ thams cad mkhyen pa kho nas mkhyen/ de ni byang chub sems dpa' la/ ltung ba'i nang na lci ba ste/ 'di ltar de ni byung gyur na/ sems can kun gyi don la dman/ gang gzhan skad cig tsam yang 'di'i/ bsod nams bar chad gegs byed pa/ sems can don la dman gyur pas/ de yi ngan 'gro mu mtha' med/* "A man loses bodhicitta/ and from that achieves liberation./ Only the omniscient one knows/ the incomprehensible way of karma./ Among downfalls for bodhisattvas, this is heavy. If something like this happened for one, the benefit of all beings would be forsaken/ And anyone else for even a moment obstructs his merit, because they [also] forsake the benefit of beings, their [births in] lower realms are limitless."

[449] BDC, 441. *de yi ngan 'dro mu mtha' med/ ces pa lta bu'i sgo nas 'khor ba mtha' med du byas par mi 'dod de/ mthar thug gi myang 'das su sems bskyed pa'i phyir/ dman pa la myang 'das go chod po med pa'i gzhung ltar na de 'dra des 'khor ba mtha' med du byas pa yin te/ thar pa go chod po la rgyab kyis phyogs pa'i phyir/*

[450] BDC, 441–42. *don de la dgongs nas sems tsam lugs kyi cho ga la smon pa'i sdom pa ma bshad cing/ dbu ma pa'i lugs la smon pa'i sdom pa nges par bzhed pa yin no/ zhes bya ba'i don yin gyi/ byang sa nas gsungs pa'i sdom pa de sems tsam pa kho nas nod dgos pa dang / byang sa'i mthar thug gi lta ba sems tsam du gnas par 'chad pa ni ma yin te/ de ltar bshad na mdo sngags kyi gzhung chen po rnams dang 'gal bar 'gyur ba'i phyir ro/*

not determine which of the two lineages of vows to take and train in. And yet, the view does interact with the holder's ability to keep the vow.

Conclusion

The cittotpāda vows, being mind, dynamically interact with other categories of mind, in the process of their production and in the vow holder. This is the case also for the downfalls; Shākya Chokden follows Asaṅga's *Bodhisattvabhūmi* in citing an unnamed sūtra that states cittotpāda vows are largely broken by anger (*khro ba*) and not by desire or attachment (*chags pa*).[451] The nature of the cittotpāda vow is used to differentiate the two primary lineages of vows, based on the content of the vow that is generated by the respective rituals. The two lineages are differentiated by lineage, ritual, downfalls, the view (in one sense) of the vow holder, and prerequisites to the path. It is Shākya Chokden's perspective that aspirational bodhicitta, the mind that wants to set out on the path to enlightenment, is also bound by vows. That is, there is not only the wish to traverse a path, there is a wish to wish for it.

The ability of the two lineages to rest on the authenticity of the two philosophical systems resulted in unwanted consequences and confusion. From early in the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet, the two systems were presented in a hierarchical relationship. Wangchuk, in his comprehensive 2010 work on bodhicitta in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, refers at times to the two lineages as "Madhyamaka" and "Yogācāra" lineages. Although in Tibetan no lineage uses a translation equivalent for "Yogācāra," this did become a preferred name for Western scholars

[451] "Bodhisattva Discipline Chapter," 423. *mdo sde las/ byang chub sems dpa'i nyes pa ni phal cher zhe sdang las 'byung gi/ 'dod chags las 'byung ba ni ma yin pa shes par bya'o/ zhes gsungs la/* This is also quoted in Asaṅga, *Yogācārabhūmaubodhisattvabhūmiḥ, Rnal 'byor spyod pa'i sa las byang chub sems dpa'i sa* (D 4037, vol. 129), but without a source.

wishing to refortify and afford respect and complexity to the tradition itself rather than as a Tibetan straw man, one with a simple ontology of idealism, who saw all phenomena as only mind, thus Cittamātra. A Western scholarly tendency to copy the Tibetan conflation of the Cittamātra tenet system, inferior to Madhyamaka, led to the adoption of Yogācāra as a translation for *sems tsam,* further confusing the distinction.[452]

One resolution to the discomfort caused by joining the philosophical view of a tenet system with a vow lineage within the Tibetan tradition was, as Wangchuk notes, a key switch in terminology from the Madhyamaka tradition (*dbu ma'i lugs*) and Cittamātra tradition (*sems tsam pa'i lugs*) to the tradition of the profound view (*zab mo lta ba'i lugs*) and the path of vast practice (*rgya chen spyod pa'i srol*) by those who held the two traditions to be of equal status doctrinally and attempted to unify them ritually, neither of which Shākya Chokden asserted.

In keeping with the Tibetan authors he identifies, Wangchuk also chooses his terms for the traditions based on what he wants to emphasize. He does not use profound view and vast practice, nor the terms Cittamātra and Madhyamaka traditions, rather mostly using "Mañjuśrī-Nāgārjuna" and "Maitreya-Asaṅga," though it does not appear that these were general terms for the traditions in Tibetan texts.[453] He points out that the tenet-system designations were not used in the earliest texts that mention such a distinction: those of Drolungpa Lodrö Jungne and Gampopa. In addition, he seeks to separate the issue of philosophical views from the lineages of vow conferral, which, once presented as such, raised a host of theoretical issues for Tibetan exegetes to come. It entrenched the cittotpāda vow in a primary hermeneutic binary on which is staked a tradition's authenticity and claim to right view.

[452] For reasons behind this tendency, see Karl Brunnhölzl, *The Compendium of the Mahāyāna*, vol. 1 (Boulder: Snow Lion, 2018), xvi.
[453] Wangchuk, Resolve, 174.

The primary context in which the tenet systems are relevant to the question of the nature of cittotpāda vows is in the topic of lineage, and in defining and differentiating the two. As already noted, the integrity and authenticity of Buddhism in Tibet was rooted explicitly in its unbroken lineage of practices, teachings, texts, and vows from India. In the same way that the prātimokṣa vows are traced back in three different lineages to India, it is equally significant that the cittotpāda vows are likewise traced back to India in unbroken lines of transmission. These lineages represented different textual traditions of the vow; each over time became known by the name of the tenet system. In Sakya Paṇḍita's widely influential *Differentiating the Three Vows*, he consistently refers to the two lineages as Madhyamaka and Cittamātra and states that the division is based on a differentiation of their doctrinal views. This separation is based on a Tibetan notion of their mutual exclusion and respective cohesion as autonomous systems in India. Tibetans writing after Sakya Paṇḍita then had to tackle a host of problems with the vow lineages associated with the philosophical schools.

It is clear that Shākya Chokden uses the Cittamātra definition of the nature of the prātimokṣa vow for the cittotpāda vow as well, placing no significance on the relationship between the tenet system of the lineage and the tenet system's view of the nature of the vows, using what was shown here to be a Cittamātra definition not only for both cittotpāda lineages, but for all three vows. The nature of a vow is different for each tenet system because it relies on each tenet system's model of mind and theory of karma. But the split of the cittotpāda vow itself based on tenet systems, and the contested practice of using the two Mahāyāna systems' names to refer to those vow traditions, represents a different relationship between philosophical schools and vows; it does not reflect the school's perspective on vows but rather the origin of the lineage in India. The significance of the idea of a vow-holders view is not mapped on to the four tenet

systems, but rather onto the three possible paths to a liberation—śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha, and buddha.

It is unclear whether Sakya Paṇḍita is actually the first to put into writing the two primary cittotpāda vow lineages as known by the names of tenet systems, but he certainly set in motion a chain of discussion on the relative significance of such a distinction between the two and such an association with a philosophical system. Tsongkhapa rejected the implications of such a distinction, and there are differing narratives on Śākyaśrībhadra's position. Being forced to study the view of Tsongkhapa by government decree, it is assumed that Shākya Chokden would have learned of his criticism of Sakya Paṇḍita's hermeneutics and hierarchies applied to the two cittotpāda vow lineages, further wrestling with the problematics of imposing philosophical view onto ritual acts. Because the Tibetan textual and scholastic tradition does not reflect actual practice, there is little that can be said about how the bodhisattva vow was used. Nonetheless, the doctrinal context of the bodhisattva vow appears to have implications for the ritual lives of individuals as well as the ecclesiastical structures of institutions. The high importance of the accuracy of the outward visible ritual is contrasted with the invisibility of the vow. Bodhicitta is an aspiration toward a goal and commitment to engage in a path toward that goal (buddhahood). The vow locks down that aspiration, as a continuous dynamic force in the mental continuum of the vow holder.

Chapter 3

Establishing Sameness and Difference

Vidyādhara Vows and Shākya Chokden's Three-Vow Theory

Essential to Shākya Chokden's approach to how all three vows are held by one person is the assertion that each vow is the mental factor of intention, while the content and quality of those intentions differ and transform. The prātimokṣa vows, addressed in chapter 1, are the intention to relinquish negative actions of body and speech, and the cittotpāda vows, addressed in chapter 2, are the intention to train in the bodhisattva path. The vidyādhara vow, on the other hand, is always presented by Shākya Chokden as having two options: either an intention (which is consciousness, *shes pa*) or wisdom (*ye shes*). Since this vow abides "as long as space endures"—meaning, into an enlightened state—it cannot be merely consciousness at the relative level but must include or transform into an element of an enduring wisdom. He states that the nature of those vows are "the intention, together with its seeds, to protect the mind from predispositions toward transmigration (*'pho ba'i bag chags*) and conceptuality [regarding] the attributes [of the visualized deity],"[454] and also offers two possibilities, one causal and one resultant, either: "the wisdom that arises from the ritual empowerment that is the cause of one's attainment [of buddhahood] or the intention together with its seeds that is included within the samayas of that

[454] *GL3*, 9[5a2]: *sngags sdom gyi ngo bo ni/ spang bya 'pho ba'i bag chags dang/ mtshan rtog las yid skyob par byed pa'i sems pa sa bon dang bcas pa zhig yin.*

wisdom."[455] This notion of the vows as wisdom did not begin with Shākya Chokden but is in fact reminiscent of Gampopa's definition of the vidyādhara vows—that they are of the nature of coemergent wisdom (*lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes*). And yet, for Gampopa, this was a reason for the different natures of the vows, as he defined the prātimokṣa as material (*gzugs*) and only the cittotpāda vow as being a specific instance of mind (*sems kyi khyad par*).[456] The vow as wisdom (something that persists to the enlightened state and beyond, "as long as space endures") is further elaborated on in the first section of Shākya Chokden's "Vidyādhara Discipline Chapter" in which he distinguishes in greater detail the nature of the vow as it relates to various tantric classifications. The vows as intention, on the other hand, are relevant in his three-vow theory, which, contra Gampopa, asserts the three vows' sameness of nature.

"Three-Vow Theory" (*sdom gsum*) is an analytical topic in Tibetan exegesis on vows that addresses problematics resulting from adding the vidyādhara vows (knowledge holder vows, *rig pa 'dzin pa'i sdom pa*; also called secret mantra vows, *gsang sngags kyi sdom pa*) to the prātimokṣa (also referred to as vows of the śrāvakas, *nyan thos kyi sdom pa*) and cittotpāda vows (*sems bskyed kyi sdom pa*; also bodhisattva vows, *byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa*). Yet, the terms and stakes of the discussions are rooted in non-tantric, non-Mahāyāna Indian textual material. Three-vow theory essentially reflect abhidharma concerns. Three-vow-theory discussions appear in all four major sects of Tibetan Buddhism, taking as their opponents not only members of other sects but members of one's own lineage and even Indian authors as well.

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[455] VDC, 372. *rig 'dzin sdom pa'i mtshan nyid ni/ rang 'thob byed kyi rgyu dbang gi cho ga las byung ba'i ye shes sam/ ye shes de'i dam tshig gis bsdus pa'i sems pa sa bon dang bcas pa'o/*

[456] Sobisch, 190. Sobisch also points out other instances in which Gampopa made claims of the sameness of nature of the vows, and so his use of "nature" was somewhat fluid, or he changed his mind or took varying viewpoints in different teachings. The works that represent Gampopa's view are merely notes taken by his students, and not penned in his own hand, and so to pinpoint a particular three-vow theory belonging to Gampopa should be done only provisionally.

Not only do we see Indian masters disagreeing with Tibetans, but we see them disagreeing with particular Tibetans, whom they personally met and knew—for example, in the twelfth century, the Tibetan Drakpa Gyaltsen and the Indian master Vibhūticandra.

Sobisch defines three-vow theory as "the investigation of how the vows are maintained and lost."[457] His extensive text selection and analysis range historically from the Kagyu forefather Gampopa (1079–1153) to the early modern Nyingma polymath Jamgön Kongtrul (1813–1899).[458] Sobsich does not address or present a three-vow theory by Shākya Chokden, although he does include the perspectives of two Tibetan thinkers who studied with him, and a dialogue between the two: Karma Trinlepa and Ngotro.[459] Karma Trinlepa's response to Ngotro's questions, however, was written in 1209, after Shākya Chokden's passing.

The perspective that Shākya Chokden represents holds all three vows as equally important, and of primary importance is that they retain an unbroken lineage back to India. Shākya Chokden addresses these lineages of vow conferral in his *Seventeen Wonderous Answers to the Questions of the Whole Monastic Community of Zi Samdrupling*.[460] In this text, Shākya Chokden lists vow lineages that have a pure and unbroken line of transmission. For the

[457] Jan-Ulrich Sobisch, *Three-Vow Theories in Tibetan Buddhism: A Comparative Study of Major Traditions from the Twelfth through Nineteenth Centuries* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2002), 89.
[458] As for other three-vow texts of the modern period, Jamyang Khyentse Chokyi Lodrö (1893–1959) writes in his short *Clear Mirror: A Manual for the Sangha* for Dzongsar Monastery in Derge that the monks should follow an early modern three-vow text composed in 1855 by the Sakya scholar Ngor Ponlop Ngawang Lekdrup (*Ngor dpon slob ngag dbang legs grub*, b. 1811) referred to (in short form) *The Three Vows: An Ornament of the Intent of the Master Mañjughoṣa* (*Sdom gsum 'jam dbyangs bla ma'i dgongs rgyan*). This is actually a root text with autocommentary. See *Dge 'dun pa'i bca' yig rab gsal me long*, in *'Jam dbyangs chos kyi blo gros kyi gsung 'bum* 10, 397–405 (Bir: Khyentse Labrang, 2012). TBRC W1KG12986. Ngor Ponlop Ngawang Lekdrup's text also appears in a modern textbook published by Sakya College (Rajpur, Uttarkhand, India; founded 1972). *Dpal sa skya mtho slob rigs gzhung dpe tshogs* (n.d.) BDRC MW3CN540. David Jackson mentions this text briefly as well as a modern commentary by a then-living master on Sakya Paṇḍita's *Differentiating the Three Vows* ("Commentaries," 22–23). These texts would be fruitful sources for future studies.
[459] Sobisch, *Three-Vow Theories*, 225.
[460] Yaroslav Kamarovski, *Visions of Unity: The Golden Paṇḍita Shākya Chokden's New Interpretation of Yogācāra and Madhyamaka* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011), 92–93 and 339n91. See Śākya Chokden, *Gsung 'bum shākya mchog ldan*, 24 vols. (New Delhi: Nagwang Topgyel, 1995). BDRC MW23200.

prātimokṣa vow lineage, he interestingly does not name Śākyaśrībhadra but rather names the first vinaya lineage established by Śāntarakṣita in the eighth century. For cittotpāda vows, he names as an unbroken lineage the transmission line that came through Atiśa (972/982–1054). For an unbroken lineage of secret mantra vows, he lists the primary Sakya lines of transmission via the eleventh-century translators Drokmi Lotsāwa and Marpa Lotsāwa Chokyi Lodrö.[461]

While Tibetan authors writing about the three vows would fundamentally agree that an ideal practitioner takes all three of these vows at once, there is little consensus on how those three are simultaneously held, not in terms of how the behaviors are engaged and downfalls avoided but with an internal rather than external focus on how they are possessed (*ldan pa*) by one's mental continuum (*rgyud*). All Tibetans writing on the simultaneity of these vows seem to agree on two things—that the three abide in a practitioner in such a way that there is both sameness and difference, and that the vow's nature (*ngo bo* or *gnad*) could be distinguished from its aspects (*rnam pa* or *ldog pa*). Yet, there is not agreement on which (the nature or the aspects) are which (same or different). To determine which is which in this sense is a central project of three-vow theory.

That the three vows would have sameness and difference internally, as far as how they operate in a person, is a mirror of the very real sameness and difference in the behaviors that they prescribe and proscribe. These three vows are the fundamental framework of the Tibetan Buddhist path, though each arises from its own separate body of intertextual sources and each with their own specific historical and doctrinal foundations. This threefold schema represents a doctrinal and canonical presentation of Mahāyāna and tantric ethics and also represents a

[461] Shākya Chokden, *bSam 'grub gling pa'i dge 'dun spyi'i dris lan ya mtshan bcu bdun pa*, in Gsung 'bum shākya mchog ldan (Rdzong sar khams bye'i slob gling thub bstan dar rgyas gling, 2006–2007): 23:552.

historical development of amassing and transformation, rather than selectivity and rejection, that defines the history of Indian Buddhism. The basic structure of monastic belonging (via the ordination ritual process of *pravrajya*, *rab 'byung*) and institutional organization (according to the various vinaya redactions) did not change in India with the development of new codes of conduct (cittotpāda vows and tantric samayas), new doctrinal definitions of virtue (the pāramitās and nondual gnosis), or new soteriological systems (the universalization of the bodhisattva path with and without fully developed tantric ritual practices). Yet, both of the two additional vows (cittotpāda and vidyādhara) include both overt and veiled suggestions to eschew the monastic vows dictating pedestrian restrictions to body and speech, or at least new parameters in which to understand and relate to them. This developed into a tension across various types of Tibetan literature that vacillated between supporting a strict adherence to specific monastic rules and a defense of, even a command for, flouting them. These defenses of apparent bad behavior, or justifications of prātimokṣa vow violation, include claims of ultimate altruism (such as killing one to avoid the deaths of many or releasing a lust-ridden laywoman of her torturous desire) and claims that such behavior is a display for purely didactic purposes, using narrative mirrors from vinaya stories to reveal loopholes and reframing misdeeds to prove the lack of one's own consent in the behaviors.[462]

To deal with these tensions, and to situate seemingly or blatantly contradictory ethics, Tibetan authors engaged new types of exegetical forms to mitigate both overly rigid insistence on monastic comportment for beings who are "beyond" it and too-casual claims of the superiority of the "higher" vows without analytic clarity. Three-vow theory is thus a framework

[462] For an analysis of two very different narrative accounts of the same act (a monk breaking his celibacy vow) and evidence of each one of these tactics, see Wood, "Coming to Terms with a Monk's Seduction."

for the internal workings of an outwardly confusing tantric monastic ethics.[463] It is a uniquely Tibetan way to conceptualize a Vajrayāna soteriology within a vinaya-following institution.

The phrase "three-vow theory" is so newly in use in Western scholarship that it is not used even once in either of the translations of two prominent texts on the subject: Ngari Panchen's *Ascertaining the Three Vows* (first published in 1996) and Sakya Paṇḍita's *Differentiating the Three Vows* (first published in 2002).[464] Thus what exactly the phrase might refer to continues to require clarification. Tibetan texts on these three vows broadly engage many fine points of analysis including narrative elements; the characteristics of authentic preceptors and preceptees; details on their ritual processes, components, and efficacy; lists, descriptions, and levels of severity of downfalls; the parsing out of each potential downfall in terms of the four branches of a karmic act (*las kyi yan lag bzhi*)[465] (the object, motivation, application, and conclusion); and other doctrines and classifications. The phrase "three-vow theory" is sometimes used to encompass all of these concerns and sometimes refers to only a set of fairly minor topics among these that constitute ancillary, often very brief, analyses that address how exactly the

[463] Prātimokṣa vows, of course, include lay vows, and there were prominent exegetes on three-vow theory who were laymen, including Drakpa Gyaltsen and Ngari Panchen. Shākya Chokden himself, as discussed below, considered lay vows as a sufficient level of prātimokṣa vows for one to be considered a holder of the three vows. Yet, three-vow theory was also developed in a culture of the superiority of monastic practice and of institutional ordination, and I understand its urgencies within this context. How three-vow theory was used by nonmonastic lay masters and scholars to differentiate themselves from forms of illegitimate nonmonastic tantric practice, especially in the context of the eleventh-century Khön clan and the benefactor Khonrog Sherab Tsultrim's rejection of lax public tantric practices and resultant suppression of the tantric material of the early translation era, would be a fruitful study unfortunately outside the scope of this present work. The fact that the Sakya tradition, like the Nyingma, maintain lay successions of masters, and yet like the Kagyu and Geluk, practice new translation tantras, would also make for an interesting avenue of analysis in terms of the nuance in how monastic identity and approaches to lay levels of the prātimokṣa vows were engaged in early Sakya sect formation. On Khonrog Sherab Tsultrim, see Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation of the three Codes: Essential Distinctions among the Individual Liberation, Great Vehicle, and Tantric Systems by Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 10.

[464] These are Ngari Panchen Pema Wangi Gyalpo and Dudjom Rinpoche, *Perfect Conduct: Ascertaining the Three Vows*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Wisdom, 2003); and Jared Rhoton, trans., *A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes.*

[465] In his *Treasury of Knowledge*, Jamgön Kongtrul lists a ninefold schema: introduction, faults, result, intention, application, completion, remedy, freedom from downfalls, and training. Sobisch, *Three-Vow Theories*, 482.

three vows are held at once in one person, not from the perspective of their respective downfalls, but from their own side. It is this latter narrower usage that is employed here.

The aim of establishing a three-vow theory is from one perspective to maintain an unimpeachable model that maintains both sameness and difference across the three, in keeping with an oft-quoted line from Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośakarikā*, "[Vows are] separate; they do not contradict."[466] The three vows cannot be entirely the same, meaning one and the same entity, for they would therefore cease to be three; and they are not entirely separate either, for that could entail their being mutually exclusive, contradictory to one another, or unsuitable to be held at once as a triad. Each of these two possibilities entails unwanted consequences that complicate the Tibetan orthodox position that the authentic Buddhist path requires that an individual holds all three vows, taken in strict successive order, each endowed with an increasing relevance, import, and jurisdiction—and yet without the latter entirely supplanting the former.

Three-vow theory is in some ways a uniquely Tibetan realm of concern, an offshoot of the Tibetan project to classify the tantras and situate them within the larger soteriological systems that included monastic institutions and the bodhisattva ideal. The topic has a murky basis in Indian canonical material; tantras are cited, but unnamed. The great redactor of the Tibetan canon Butön Rinchen Drup (1290–1364) specifically criticized the three-vow-theory notions, central to the Sakya position, that the vows have the same nature and that the state of the vows transform when taken successively (*gnas 'gyur ngo bo gcig*) as having no reference in Indian scriptures (*lung khungs med*).[467] Yet, even given that these concepts are Tibetan

[466] *AKK-T,* 4:14, 11a7. The line from Vasubandhu is quoted in several three-vow texts, and Shākya Chokden quotes it in his "Śrāvaka Discipline Chapter" (4). *tha dad de dag 'gal ba med.*

[467] *Gtsang chu mig ring mo'i mkhan po dkon mchog dpal gyis zhus lan mdor bsdus pa,* in *Gsung 'bum rin chen grub,* vol. 26 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1965–1971), 26: 254. BDRC MW22106. I am grateful to Kuo-wei Liu for finding this statement within the miscellaneous writings section of Butön's Collected

elaborations, it does appear that there was general disagreement and uncertainty among Indian masters in Tibet across several historical moments. Chomden Rigpai Raltri, (1227–1305), a redactor of an earlier canon, mentions that whether previous vows were lost when later vows were taken was debated by Indians who traveled to Tibet, such as the Kashmiri translator Dānaśīla, an Indian translator who traveled to Tibet during the early Imperial period under the reign of King Ralpachen (r. 815–838) and translated one hundred and seven texts and composed seven. Together with Jinamitra, he compiled the great Tibetan-Sanskrit concordance, the *Mahāvyutpatti*.[468] If the core concept of three-vow theory was uncertain to even this most prominent and learned of Indian masters, it may be assumed that it was uncertain to many. And the transmission on the topic Tibetans received from the earliest translators would have been unstable from the start.

The few Indian compositions that touch on the topic are by Indian masters who spent a good deal of time in Tibet: Abhayākaragupta (d. 1125),[469] Jñānaśrībhadra,[470] and Vibhūticandra (b. late twelfth century). If we take Kim Su-Ah's periodization of Jñānaśrībhadra's life, basing it on the fact that his translations contributed to the Old Epistemology system, dated and periodized

Works. Kuo-wei Liu, "'Jig rten mgon po and the "Single Intention (Dgongs gcig): His View on Bodhisattva Vow and Its Influence on Medieval Tibetan Buddhism" (PhD Diss. Harvard University, 2002.), 202n75.

[468] Bcom ldan rig ral, *Sdom gsum 'od kyi phreng ba'i rgyan gyi me tog*, in *Gsung 'bum* (Lhasa: Khams sprul bsod nams don grub, 2006), 127. *bla ma dā na shī la la sogs pa bod du byon pa rnams ni mgo sgre'i rtsod pa byed do* "

[469] For more on Abhayākaragupta, see Gudrun Buhnemann, "Some Remarks on the Author Abhayākaragupta and His Works," in *Nispannayogava—Two Sanskrit Manuscripts from Nepal*, ed. Gudrun Buhnemann and Musashi Tachikawa (Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 1991), xiii-xx. See also Buhnemann's "Some Notes on the Date of Abhayākaragupta and the Chronology of his Works," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 142, no. 1 (1992): 120–27.

[470] The person Jñānaśrībhadra is mentioned in both Tāranātha's *History of Buddhism* and the *Blue Annals*, though his dates are difficult to determine. In a brief but thorough study of his life, Kim Su-ah estimates his birth to have been at some point after 1020, with his time in Tibet between 1076 and 1090, based on his relationships with other Tibetan figures, his time at Vikramaśīla monastery and Kashmir, and his contribution in Tibet to translations related to the New Epistemology school, using Leonard van der Kuijp's periodization of the developments of that tradition. Su-ah Kim, "Jñānaśrībhadra and Jñānavajra: Their Biographical Approaches," *Daegagsasang*, 5:202, 211.

in the scholarship of Leonard van der Kuijp,[471] then Jñānaśrībhadra would have been a writer of a three-vow-theory treatise in Tibet earlier than Vibhūticandra, possibly a contemporary of Abhayākaragupta, both then being in an older generation of Indian scholars in Tibet.[472] The perspective of Jñānaśrībhadra meets the description of simple, early three-vow discussions that do not engage in a complex way the terminology or arguments that present themselves in more developed treatises later. Nonetheless, the title of Jñānaśrībhadra's work implies a response to an anxiety and an answer to a question: *Discipline, Vows, and Samaya Do Not Contradict* (*Tshul khrims dang sdom pa dang dam tshig mi 'gal ba*).[473]

It may be said that these Indians in Tibet were responding primarily to Tibetan concerns or a Tibetan scholarly pursuit to be more specific in a certain way about how to "theorize" what it means for the vow holder when monastic administration meets the bodhisattva ideal and the advanced methods of the tantras. Yet, the word translated here as "theory" itself has no exact Tibetan language corollary. The phrase given to the genre of literature, "three vows" (*sdom gsum*), may itself be considered the Tibetan for "three-vow theory" as that phrase contains within it implications that there are problematics to be resolved and discrepancies to be reconciled, requiring the development of a rectifying "theory."

Which Three?

The scriptural source often quoted in three-vow texts that delineates the three vows referred to by "three-vow theory" is from the *Vajraśekhara Tantra*, which says:

[471] For more on this see van der Kuijp, "Gtsang-nag-pa's Tshad-ma rnam-par nges-pa'i wi-ka legs-bshad bsdus-pa. An Ancient Commentary on Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇaviniścaya*" (Kyoto: Ōtani University, 1989).
[472] Stearns, "Life and Tibetan Legacy," and Su-ah Kim, "Jñānaśrībhadra and Jñānavajra."
[473] *Śīlasaṃvarasamayāvirodhanāma*, Dg.T. 3724, 41a2–44a1.

If he is to be ordained,

he will abide well in the three vows;

the prātimokṣa, bodhicitta,

and vidyādhara mantra vows are supreme.[474]

Yet, these three are not the only set of three vows in Tibetan scripture and practice. Throughout Indian canonical literature, there are in fact several different sets of three referred to as the "three vows" apart from the prātimokṣa, cittotpāda, and vidyādhara vows of three-vow theory. These other sets of three derive from non-tantric contexts. These sets are also addressed in Shākya Chokden's works, and are treated similarly, with analyses on their interrelation and natures. This suggests that the conclusions drawn within three-vow theory do not exclusively refer to the prātimokṣa, cittotpāda, and vidyādhara, but rather arise from a context in which various sets of three describe how vows in general "behave" when multiple vows are taken by one person.

The first, primarily based in the vinaya but discussed also in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*, is a set spanning lay to monastic levels of prātimokṣa vows: lay (*upāsaka*), novice (*śrāmaṇera*), and full ordination (*bhikṣu*). Another set of three, also found in the *Abhidharmakośa*, and also mentioned by Shākya Chokden, is based on the realm in which vow-holders live; these are the prātimokṣa vows in the Desire Realm, meditation (*dhyāna*) vows in the Form Realm, and stainless (*anāsrava*) vows of the noble ones.[475]

[474] *Vajraśekharamahāguhyayogatantra, Gsang ba rnal 'byor chen po'i rgyud rdo rje rtse mo* (H 448, vol. 84) 409b1. *gal te de ni rab byung gyur/ sdom pa gsum la yang dag gnas/ so sor thar dang byang chub sems/ rig 'dzin sdom pa mchog yin no/*
[475] Sobisch, "Preliminary Remarks," 892n5.

Jñānaśrībhadra's *Discipline, Vows, and Samaya Do Not Contradict* approaches the three vows in a tantric context but refers to them with slightly different terminology than later three-vow theory: discipline (*tshul khrims*), vows (*sdom pa*), and samaya (*dam tshig*). Within the text, he uses the terms secret mantra (*gsang sngags*) and pāramitā vows (*phar phyin*) for the vidyādhara and cittotpāda vows. Additionally, a short text by Niṣkalaṅkavajra titled *Stages of the Three Vows* (*Sdom pa gsum gyi rim pa, Trisaṃvarakrama*) includes a cittotpāda vow liturgy for nonmonastic, or householder, practitioners: the levels of vows it refers to are the one-day lay fasting vow (*gnyan gnas, upavāsa*), the lay vows (*upsāsaka, dge bsnyen*), and cittotpāda vows. Saṃvarabhadra's *Instructions on Refuge, Cittotpāda, and the Four Empowerments*[476] offers an additional set of three that supplants the prātimokṣa vows with refuge vows.

Yet another set of three referred to as the three vows are the discipline of restraint, discipline of collecting virtuous dharmas, and discipline of benefiting beings, which Sakya Paṇḍita engages with three-vow language.[477] This formulation is used to discuss the cittotpāda vow in particular, with the first of the three referring to the bodhisattva's prātimokṣa vows of whichever of the seven types, including the lay levels; this is distinct from the bodhisattva prātimokṣa (that is not vows). This threefold division of vows appears also in Shākya Chokden's discussion of vidyādhara vows, in that they are included in what are considered relative

[477] For the Chinese textual history of these three terms, see Liu, "'Jig rten mgon po and the 'Single intention,'" 23n31.

vidyādhara vows. This set of three appears in both Asaṅga's *Bodhisattvabhūmi*[478] and Vasubandhu's *Sūtrālaṃkārabhāṣya*.[479]

Yet, hereafter and in Shākya Chokden's primary three-vow theory, the vows referred to are, progressively, the prātimokṣa, cittotpāda, and vidyādhara, and he specifies further which level of the three he intends and when and how they arise ritually. Three-vow theory can be seen as a source of anxiety about how the later vows may damage the former, but it may also be seen as a way to absorb the early vows into the rituals of the later. In other words, one way of approaching three-vow theory is to query how the higher vows are taken subsequent to the monastic vows, with an eye toward how they may compromise or subsist alongside the prātimokṣa vows. This also mirrors the way that bodhisattva, or cittotpāda, vows are repositioned in a tantric context, discussed in the previous chapter, in that there is a specifically and exclusively tantric context in which to understand the ritual production of ultimate bodhicitta.

In his *General Topics on the Three Vows*,[480] Gorampa lists several ways that the vows can be produced, including an empowerment ritual that produces all three vows at once.[481] This has an impact on the way the vows are held in one person, or one continuum: they have one nature, but do not have the aspect of difference that is the outcome of the separate rituals that produce them, the length of time one maintains them, and how they are lost. When taken at three different times and in three different rituals, they have an original nature that must be

[478] *Bodhisattvabhumi*: de la byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa'i tshul khrims ni so sor thar pa'i sdom pa yang dag par blangs pa ris bdun po dge slong dang/ dge slong ma dang/ dge tshul dang/ dge tshul ma dang/ dge bsnyen dang/ dge bsnyen ma'i tshul khrims gang yin pa ste/

[479] Vasubandhu, *Sūtrālaṃkārabhāṣya, Mdo sde'i rgyan gyi bshad pa* (Dg.T. 4026), 209a7. This has been argued by some to have not been written by the same author as the *Abhidharmakośa*, although it was attributed to one and the same Vasubandhu by Butön. See Kritzer, "Vasubandhu," in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism, vol. 2* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 494, 497.

[480] *Sdom gsum rab dbye'i spyi don yid bzhin nor bu*, in *Gsung 'bum Bsod nams seng ge* (Rdzong sar khams bye'i slob gling, 2004), 433–626.

[481] Sobisch, 141.

transformed during each higher vow conferral. If there was no prior vow, there would be nothing to be transformed. Shākya Chokden does not accept that one could take all three vows newly just through the tantric empowerment.

Thus, to determine how all three vows are ritually produced and then abide as an unbroken stream in an individual requires one to query whether the earlier vows, if they have not been taken previously by means of their own individual ceremonies, are taken during the rituals of the later. That is, how are the prātimokṣa and cittotpāda vows produced during Vajrayāna empowerment rituals that produce the secret mantra vows. This is a different type of maneuvering to absorb the virtues of the two earlier vow sets into the jurisdiction of the latter. There is no need to argue that the tantric rituals do not harm or negate the former vows if it can be argued instead that they in fact give rise to them. However, Shākya Chokden does not seem to accept, at least in his *Golden Lancet*, that the earlier two set of vows are taken newly during tantric empowerments. This is the topic of two of Shākya Chokden's questions in the *Golden Lancet*, chapter 2, question #1 and chapter 3, question #9. While in the latter he states that the three vows must be taken from each of the respective traditions' rituals, he appears to contradict this in chapter 2, question 1, when he shows that a full cittotpāda ritual is found in the tantras.

The first question in this text is, "If the three vows are obtained from taking the four empowerments, do you assert that the secret mantra vows are obtained from the higher empowerments and the prātimokṣa and cittotpāda vows are also obtained from empowerment?"[482] His answer has two topics: the intention of the question and the actual

[482] *GL3*, 2. *dbang bzhi blangs pas sdom pa gsum/ thob par 'gyur na dbang gong las/ thob pa'i gsang sngags sdom pa dang/ dbang las thob pa'i so thar dang/ sems skyed sdom pa bzhed lags sam*

answer. The former is divided into two topics: the reason for the question and the fault of "rendering the scriptures meaningless" by not asking it.

In the final section, his own answer, he states in greater detail what he means by the "three vows." It is not necessary in his opinion to take the complete set of each of the three sets of vows to be considered one who "holds the three vows." In fact, he states very specifically which three vows (among many enumerations of three vows) he is speaking of and which levels or aspects of each of the three are the threshold at which one can bear the description "holder of the three vows" (*sdom pa gsum ldan du 'jog pa*). He first presents which three vows he is referring to:

> Some might ask, what are the three vows that are the primary subject of this treatise? They are taking (*blangs pa*) the prātimokṣa vows in a way that is in accordance with the śrāvaka vinaya, obtaining (*thob pa*) the cittotpāda vows in a way that accords with either of the two lineages of Madhyamaka and Cittamātra, and taking the mantra vows (*sngags kyi sdom pa*) from the ritual of the highest secret mantra.[483]

This implies that the bodhisattva prātimokṣa category, by itself, discussed earlier, cannot serve as one of the three vows, as Shākya Chokden's perspective is that to be endowed with the three vows, the first level must be a vow arisen from a śrāvaka tradition, meaning in this case the Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya, the primary vinaya redaction practiced across Tibetan Buddhism in

[483] *GL3*, 9. *'o na/ bstan bcos 'di'i bstan bya'i gtso bor gyur pa'i sdom pa gsum po gang zhes na/ so thar gyi sdom pa nyan thos kyi 'dul ba dang mthun par blangs pa/ byang sems kyi sdom pa dbu sems kyi lugs gnyis po gang rung dang mthun par thob pa/ sngags kyi sdom pa gsang sngags bla med kyi cho gas blangs pa'o/ de yang sdom pa gsum ldan du 'jog pa la/ rang rang so so'i sdom pa yongs su rdzogs par thob dgos pa ni ma yin te/ dge bsnyen gyi sdom pa tsam dang/ smon sems kyi sdom pa rkyang pa dang/ bla med kyi bum dbang tsam zhig bskur bas sdom pa gsum ldan du 'jog nus pa'i phyir ro/*

which there are several possible levels of ordination or numbers of vows to hold, from a one-day lay fast (*upavāsa*, *gnyan gnas*) up to full monastic ordination with two hundred fifty-three downfalls for monks. He then goes on to specify which aspects of each vow are required to actually have all three. He states:

> To be considered one who holds the three vows, it is not necessary to obtain all the vows of each one; it is possible to be considered a three-vow-holder through just the upāsaka vows, just the vows of aspirational [bodhi]citta, and taking only the vase empowerment of Highest Yoga Tantra.[484]

Here, the prātimokṣa and cittotpāda vows are represented by the "lowest" or simplest level of the śrāvaka and bodhisattva vows, making them the least restrictive in terms of meeting the standard for holding all three at once. He very directly states that laymen can also hold all three vows, without having to take a monastic level of prātimokṣa. This implies that the vows related to active bodhicitta are not necessary to meet that standard either; the most basic level of the vow, taken through the Madhyamaka lineage's ritual related to the aspirational bodhicitta is sufficient. Yet, lastly, though he says "only" (*tsam*) for the level of vidyādhara vows that are required, mentioning the vase initiation, the first, and lowest, of the four empowerments in the Highest Yoga Tantra system, it is nonetheless only this last of the four tantra classes that constitutes the vidyādhara vows in the sense that they are considered one of the three. That is, he implies that

[484] *GL3*, 9: *de yang sdom pa gsum ldan du 'jog pa la/ rang rang so so'i sdom pa yongs su rdzogs par thob dgos pa ni ma yin te/ dge bsnyen gyi sdom pa tsam dang/ smon sems kyi sdom pa rkyang pa dang/ bla med kyi bum dbang tsam zhig bskur bas sdom pa gsum ldan du 'jog nus pa'i phyir/*

the vows conferred in the Action (*kriyā*), Performance (*caryā*), and Yoga tantras do not qualify as vidyādhara vows.

The Vidyādhara, or Secret Mantra, Vows

Shākya Chokden's three-vow theory relies on the claim that all three vows are not matter, but rather they are instances of mind. Among the classifications of mind, the vows are mental factors that are not just transient but are conjoined with seeds (*sa bon*, Skt. *bijas*) that root them as ongoing persistent habituations that persist even when not present at the forefront of consciousness. In accommodating both an aspect of sameness and a degree of difference for the three vows, their sameness is supported in Shākya Chokden's three-vow theory by the fact that, among the mental factors (*sems 'byung*), they are all the same mental factor, the mental factor of intention (*sems pa*). In this way, as has been noted, Shākya Chokden's entire three-vow theory rests on vows being intention. And yet, there is a context in which a vow is something other than intention—the ultimate nature of the vidyādhara vow.

Despite the intensity and frequency of the theme of transgression in the tantras, and the severity of punishment incurred when one breaks the vows, no two tantras actually present the same number or content of vidyādhara vows. In his "Limits of Transgression," Sam van Schaik presents thirteen manuscripts found at Dunhuang, each with their own presentations of samaya, representing a simultaneity of diverse approaches in the tenth century,[485] mostly passed down in an oral lineage from master to disciples.[486] Certain lists and presentations, however, do reappear

[485] Sam van Schaik, "The Limits of Transgression: The Samaya Vows of Mahāyoga," in *Esoteric Buddhism at Dunhuang: Rites and Teachings for This Life and Beyond*, ed. Matthew Kapstein and Sam van Schaik (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 73.
[486] van Schaik, "Limits of Transgression," 75.

with more frequency in commentarial literature, and by the early-thirteenth-century Sakya patriarch Drakpa Gyaltsen, an instigator of a Sakya three-vow theory, discussed below, declares the system of fourteen root downfalls to be the only valid presentation of tantric ethics.[487]

If we understand three-vow theory as arising from the addition of the vidyādhara (or secret mantra or a tantric) vows to the previous two, understanding three-vow theory first requires an understanding of the vidyādhara vows themselves. The nature of the vidyādhara vows are explained by Shākya Chokden in a variety of ways based on standard tantric classifications, discussed below. He does the same for the enumerations of downfalls. The classic presentation of the fourteen root downfalls and four, eight, or twenty-eight secondary downfalls only applies to the highest class of tantras as understood by New Translation era Tibetan tantric doxography, the Highest Yoga Tantra (**niruttarayogatantra*). While Tsongkhapa asserts that there are no vows or downfalls within the Kriyā or Caryā classes of tantras,[488] Shākya Chokden presents downfalls for each tantra class. For the Kriyā tantra class, he enumerates downfalls based on the *Mañjuśrīmūla Tantra* and the *Sarvamaṇḍalasāmānyavidhiguhya Tantra*.[489] For the Caryā class, he cites ten downfalls from the *Mahāvajravairocanābhisambodhi Tantra*. Yoga tantra is taught in terms of the samayas of the five families, primarily Vajrasattva, dubbed the lord of all five families. It is then in his explanation of Highest Yoga Tantra (from which only the vase empowerment is required to be considered one endowed with the three vows) where he explains the fourteen root downfalls, which are, in brief, (1) to disparage the siddhis, or supernatural results of tantric practice; (2) to transgress the commands of the sugatas (or buddhas); (3) to be mean to one's cohort of fellow practitioners in tantric practice; (4) to abandon

[487] van Schaik, 63.
[488] Tsongkhapa, *Tantric Ethics*, 5.
[489] VDC, 459.

love for sentient beings; (5) to lose bodhicitta; (6) to criticize one's own or others' tenet systems; (7) to divulge secrets to those who are not ready to hear them; (8) to show contempt for the components of the person, which are by nature the buddha; (9) to doubt the essential purity of phenomena; (10) to love the wicked; (11) to treat phenomena conceptually; (12) to offend the faithful; (13) to reject consecrated substances; and (14) to be hateful toward women, whose nature is wisdom.[490]

In the early Tibetan text on tantric classifications that Jacob Dalton translates in his article "Crisis of Doxography," titled IOL Tib J 656, different vows are listed according to the different classes of tantra as well. Kriyā tantra entails five tantric vows (there referred to as *dam tshig*) listed as: "not to abandon the three jewels; to regard and respect the vajrācarya [tantric master] as if he were a buddha; not to generate negative thoughts or criticisms about, and to remain harmonious with, one's vajra brothers and sisters; to perform the cleansings three times a day; and not to eat or drink meat, garlic, onions, and alcohol."[491] Here, the only similarity with the fourteen is that the third in the list of fourteen and the third in the list of five are both to get along with the other people practicing alongside you, emphasizing a kind of simple harmony within the community, a surprisingly pedestrian task in an otherwise transgressive esoteric

[490] VDC, 464. *ji skad du/ gang phyir rdo rje 'dzin pa yis/ dngos grub slob dpon rjes 'brang gsung/ de bas de la brnyas pa ni/ rtsa ba'i ltung ba dang por bshad/ bde gshegs bka' las 'das pa ni/ ltung ba gnyis pa yin par bshad/ rdo rje spun la khros na ni/ nyes pa brjod pa gsum pa yin/ sems can rnams la byams pa spong/ bzhi pa yin par rgyal bas gsungs/ chos kyi rtsa ba byang chub sems / de spong b ani lnga pa yin/ rang dang gzhan gyi grub pa'i mtha' chos la smod pa drug pa yin/ yongs su ma smin sems can la/ gsang bas grog pa bdun pa yin / phung po sangs rgyas lnga bdag nyid de la brnyas byed brgyad pa yin/ rang bzhin dag pa'i chos rnams la/ som nyi za ba dgu pa yin/ gdug la rtag tub yams ldan par/ byed pa de nib cu par 'dod/ ming sogs bral ba'i chos rnams la/ der rtogs pa nib cu gcug pa/ sems can dad dang ldan pa yi/ sems sun 'byin pa bcu gnyis pa/ dam tshig las ni ji bzhin rnyed/ mi bsten pa nib cu gsum pa/ shes rab rang bzhin byd med la/ smod par byed pa bcu bzhi pa/* The Sanskrit source for this list is found in Aśvaghoṣa, *Vajrayānamūlāpattisaṃgraha, Rdo rje theg pa rtsa ba'i ltung ba bsdus pa* (Dg.T. 2478, vol. 53), 179a7. They are explained in Mañjuśrīkīrti, *Vajrayānamūlāpattiṭīkā, Rdo rje theg ba'i rtsa ba'i ltung ba'i rgya cher bshad pa* (D 2488, vol. 53), 202b6. For another presentation of downfalls, see Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 325.

[491] Dalton, 169. In this same text, twenty vows (*sdom pa*) are mentioned for sūtra followers (non-tantric practitioner) but are not enumerated, though these could refer to the twenty of the *Ākāśagarbha Sūtra* mentioned in chapter 2.

system. The Yoga tantra entails seven vows; the first is the same as the second listed above, the second is the same as the third above, and the fourth is a promise of secrecy similar to the seventh of the fourteen. In this schema, Mahāyoga comes after Yoga tantra, and entails twenty-eight vows, none of which are listed. This text does not then present a "Highest Yoga Tantra," but rather Anuyoga and Atiyoga. The former entails four vows: "the vows of reality, compassion, equality, and the union of the sense faculties with their objects."[492] The latter entails only one, and this is the most cryptic yet the closest in spirit to the many versions of the nature of the vow Shākya Chokden supplies, as it is here a stand-in for the final result, and represents the enlightened state, or what is to be carried into the enlightened state. The text reads, in Dalton's translation, "The vow is singular; it is whatever. Because nothing exists beyond that, it is called 'non-existent.' Because there is only one vow in Atiyoga, it is called 'singular.' Why 'whatever?' Since [the vow] is maintained for the purpose of an accomplishment that is spontaneous, one who is not maintaining that accomplishment cannot be said to be not accomplished. . . . 'Vow' means something not to transgress."[493] There is much in this short description to unpack, and more than can be understood in this context. However, what is relevant here is that the vow is operative, it itself is the accomplishment, and it is not the mere lack of negative action but rather that which actively prevents the downfalls from occurring. This is at once an exalted and esoteric approach to the vows that no longer points to outward conduct and is also a reflection of the simplest abhidharma definitions of the vow as actively restraining,

[492] Dalton, 170. The connection between the idea of samaya as a vow and the samaya substances would also be an interesting topic for further study. This is particularly interesting given a narrative found in IOL TIB J 644. Within a description and classification of types of vidyādhara, that "vidyādhara who dwells on the levels" is described using a story about the deity Vajrapāṇi, who strikes a rock with his foot, which imprints the rock, as if it were the texture of dough. Out of that footprint, a substance referred to as samaya (*dam tshig*, translated by Dalton as sacrament) comes out and becomes a spring with eight rivulets. One who baths in this spring and gains accomplishments is called a "vidyādhara who dwells on the levels." Dalton, 165.
[493] Dalton, 170.

as a dam that prevents misdeeds, and not their mere lack. If the nature of the vidyādhara vow is the sturdy and continuous maintenance of an intention that upholds a tantric view, the fourteen acts are those behaviors that compromise such an intention. Yet, the nature of the vidyādhara vows are presented in various ways, and apart from this broad correlation appear to have little direct relevance to these oft-quoted fourteen downfalls.

The vidyādhara vows are embedded in a tantric framework that resists the vows only being intention. Given that essential to the defined nature of the vidyādhara vow is that it persists "as long as space endures," it cannot be merely an ordinary mental factor. In some ways mirroring the relative and ultimate bodhicitta split, there are also relative and ultimate samaya vows, the former being consciousness (the *sems pa*) and the latter being primordial wisdom (*ye shes*). Shākya Chokden's discussion of the nature of the mantra vows is supported by citations solely from the *Hevajra Tantra*, a so-called Mother Tantra emphasizing the completion phase (*rdzogs rim*). The "Vidyādhara Vow Chapter" of his *Discipline of the Three Vehicles* opens with a section titled, "Identifying the Nature of the Vows," in which those vows are analyzed within the doctrinal framework of the bliss experienced by the tantric practitioner, presenting a continuity from relative to ultimate, consciousness to primordial wisdom, resulting in a soteriological technology that, like the bodhisattva vows, persist on a continuum from a mere aspiration toward a goal to the very fact of a particularly defined enlightenment, itself. Thus, these tantric systems, as presented within intellectual monastic exegetical frameworks,[494] operate in a deeply inclusivist way, beyond mere transgressive practice.

[494] Christian Wedemeyer, *Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism*: *History, Semiology, and Transgression in the Indian Traditions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 13 and 181, and Ronald Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism Indian Esoteric Buddhism*: *A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 152 and 294.

In his "Vidyādhara Discipline Chapter," Shākya Chokden begins by offering a general definition of the vow as cited above:

> The definition of a vidyādhara vow is either the primordial wisdom that arises from the ritual empowerment that is the cause of its attainment, or it is the intention together with its seeds that subsumes the samayas of that wisdom.[495]

He then lists four, among many, different ways that the nature of those vows can be differentiated or classified: (1) differentiating them from the perspective of the classes of tantras, (2) from the perspective of empowerments, (3) from the perspective of provisional and definitive (4) and from the perspective of the person that is the basis for the vows.[496]

The first, differentiating the vows based on the four classes of tantra, is a key point that differentiates Shākya Chokden's position on the vidyādhara vows from that of Tsongkhapa, who maintains that there are no vows in the lower two classes of tantra, Kriyā and Caryā.[497] Shākya Chokden, on the other hand presents vows for these two classes based on the levels of desire brought onto the path. There is both an element of inclusivity and transgression in the key tantric concept of taking certain emotions onto the path, or as the path (*lam du byed*), to enlightenment, which is central to the definitions of the vows within each class of tantra. The first, the vows as differentiated from the perspective of the classes of tantra, is described as follows:

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[495] VDC, 446. *rig 'dzin sdom pa'i mtshan nyid ni/ rang 'thob byed kyi rgyu dbang gi cho ga las byung ba'i ye shes sam/ ye shes de'i dam tshig gis bsdus pa'i sems pa sa bon dang bcas pa'o/* Here and below, page numbers are from CW 1975.

[496] VDC, 446. *dbye ba'i sgo ni du mar 'gyur te/ rgyud sde'i sgo nas dbye ba/ dbang gi sgo nas dbye ba/ grangs nges kyi sgo nas dbye ba / rten gyi gang zag gi sgo nas dbye ba'o/*

[497] Tsongkhapa, *Tantric Ethics*, 7. For Gorampa on the vows of the lower classes of tantras, see Sobisch 60–61.

Due to the specific features of the four classes of tantra, there are four [types of vows]. From among [those], first, the vidyādhara vows based on Kriyā tantra arise from the ritual empowerment of the tantras that produce their attainment. [They are either] the primordial wisdom of great bliss that is taking onto the path the desire satisfied through laughing or the intention that is included in its samayas.[498]

The definition of the three, the vows that are based on Caryā tantra, and so on [that is, Caryā and the two higher tantras, Yoga and Highest Yoga], is as follows. They arise from the ritual empowerment relative to each individual class of tantra, which are the causes of their attainment, and they are the primordial wisdom of great bliss [that arises] through taking [in the case of Caryā] taking onto path "the desire that is satisfied through gazing"; [in Yoga Tantra] through taking onto the path "the desire that is satisfied through holding with hands"; and [in Highest Yoga Tantra] through taking onto the path "the path of desire satisfied through [sexual] embrace," and so on; or it is the same as earlier [that is, the intention together with its seeds].[499] Each of those are divided into two: vows of relative samaya and vows of ultimate great bliss. Between those, the

[498] VDC, 446. *dang po ni/ rgyud sde bzhi'i bye brag gis bzhir 'gyur ba las/ dang po bya rgyud kyi dbang du byas pa'i rig 'dzin gyi sdom pa ni/ rang thob byed pa'i rgyud kyi dbang gi cho ga las byung zhing/ rgod pas tshim pa'i chags pa lam du byed pa'i bde ba chen po'i ye shes sam de'i dam tshig gis bsdud pa'i sems pa'o/*

[499] VDC, 446–47. *spyod pa'i rgyud kyi dbang du byas pa'i sdom pa sogs gsum gyi mtshan nyid ni/ rang 'thob byed rgyud sde so so'i dbang gi cho ga las byung zhing/ bltas pas tshims pa'i chags pa lam byed kyi/ zhes dang/ lag bcangs kyis tshim pa'i chags pa lam byed kyi zhes dang/ gnyis gnyis 'khyud kyi chags pa lam byed kyis bde ba chen po'i ye shes sam/ zhes sogs snga ma bzhin no/* The same terminology, in a different order, is used for the increasing experience of Desire Realm gods in the *Abhidharmakośa*. Laughing and gazing follow the same order in both lists, but tantric writings begin with gazing and then laughter, while the god realm experiences end with laughter and then gazing, becoming more refined rather than more obscene. See Pruden, *AKB* (ch. 4, v. 69b–d), 465. For the Tibetan, Dg.T., vol. 140, f. 150b5 (Dg.T. 4090): *gnyis gnyis 'khyud dang lag bcangs dang/ dgod dang bltas pas 'khrig pa yin*. See also Cabezón, *Buddhism and Sexuality*, 41n69.

first ones are vows based on consciousness and the second ones are vows based on primordial wisdom.[500]

Classification of tantra into this fourfold division is a uniquely Tibetan doxography, with multiple variations over the course of its development.[501] These variations, as found in the earliest Tibetan texts on the topic did not translate into distinct self-aware traditions in India but rather functioned as after-the-fact classificatory systems without referents in the Indian history of Buddhist tantric groupings. While some scholars place their construction as early as the eighth century, locating the system as early as the texts that would come to be defined by them, it in fact appears they are rather a late, twelfth-century model that was distinctly Tibetan. The more developed tantric practices of sexual union, with complex bodily mapping of the subtle channels and winds, as well, do not seem to have been prominent in Tibet until the later dissemination of teachings (*phyi dar*), beginning in the tenth century, at which time also the Mahāyoga tantras were divided by genders, and came to be known as Mother, Father, or Neuter.[502]

Regardless of its history in India, the classificatory schema of Kriyā, Caryā, Yoga, and Highest Yoga Tantra is most significant in that it places Highest Yoga Tantra, unsurprisingly, at the top and it is the vows within this class that constitute the vidyādhara vows, or the secret mantra vows, when they are considered one among the three vows. Yet, as significant as Highest Yoga Tantra was as the ultimate soteriology, they did not come to substitute the earlier vows nor their ritual procedures.

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[500] VDC, 447. *de re re la yang kun rdzob dam tshig sdom pa dang/ don dam bde chen gyi sdom pa gnyis gnyis su 'byed pa las/ dang po rnams 'di rnam shes kyi dbang du byas pa yin la/ gnyis pa rnams ni ye shes kyi dbang du byas pa'i sdom pa'o/*
[501] See Dalton, "A Crisis of Doxography," especially 117–18.
[502] Dalton, 127n33.

Shākya Chokden establishes the superiority of the Highest Yoga Tantra based on bliss as follows:

> What is called "great bliss" is posited as "great" when contrasted with the bliss of ordinary desire because it is "great" when contrasted with the bliss of childish [beings] and the bliss of consciousness.
>
> The three [types of] bliss that are connected to the lower classes of tantra also must be posited as lesser when contrasted with the bliss of the higher empowerments [the latter three of the four empowerments of Highest Yoga Tantra] because there is a difference in quality in the methods that manifest that bliss and because it is asserted that these three [lower types of] bliss must be connected to the first three [of the four] joys.[503]

The second way of differentiating their nature is from the perspective of the four empowerments within the Highest Yoga Tantra. He writes that each empowerment generates vows that function to support a certain dimension of the final goal, a more complex doctrinal layer of attainment in a tantric soteriology. He writes:

> There are vows connected to the vase empowerment of relinquishing what is to be relinquished regarding external objects; vows connected to the secret empowerment of holding bodhicitta within the body so that it does not decline; vows connected to the third

[503] VDC, 446. *bde ba chen po zhes pa yang tha mal pa'i chags pa'i bde ba la ltos nas chen por bzhag pa yin te/ byis pa'i bde ba dang rnam shes kyi bde ba la ltos nas chen por gyur pa'i phyir/ rgyud sde 'og ma dang 'brel ba'i bde ba gsum ni dbang gong ma'i bde ba la ltos nas chung ngur yang bzhag dgos te/ bde ba de mngon du byed pa'i thabs la bzang ngan gyi khyad par yod pa'i phyir dang/ bde ba gsum po 'di ni dga' ba dang po gsum dang sbyor dgos par bzhed pa'i phyir/* That is, the great bliss that is connected with (or equal to) the highest of the four joys cannot be produced by means of the lower tantras.

empowerment of the unity of bliss and emptiness at the center of the dharma source [the vagina]; and vows connected to the fourth empowerment that prohibit signs of proliferations with respect to ultimate bodhicitta.

Each of these are divided into two: relative samaya vows and ultimate bliss vows. Bliss also is divided into the individual stages of the four joys. As it is said [in the *Hevajra Tantra*]:

> The four empowerments should be known in terms of
> the enumeration of the stages of joy, and so on.[504]

One might ask, what is the difference between the four joys of the four empowerments and the four joys of the four classes of tantra? [The answer is that] the stains of the four joys that are connected with the three lower classes of tantra are cleansed by the first three empowerments. As it is said,

> Smiling is the master [empowerment].
> Gazing is the secret [empowerment].
> Holding with the hand is the primordial wisdom [empowerment].

This section is where we find an identification of Shākya Chokden's statement in his *Golden Lancet, Chapter Three*, that the vidyādhara vows in the context of the three vows are only meant to indicate those taken in the vase empowerment of the Highest Yoga Tantra, which is here

[504] *Hevajratantrarājanāma, Kye'i rdo rje zhes bya ba rgyud kyi rgyal po* (H 378b, vol. 79), 358b5.

defined as that which is related to relinquishing outer objects, placing this level of the vow squarely in the relative dimension, which he then defines in the immediately succeeding section.

The third way of differentiating the nature of mantra vows are in terms of definitive and provisional and it is here that he specifically differentiates between vows that are consciousness by nature and vows that are wisdom. He writes:

> Between the two, relative vows of provisional meaning and ultimate vows of definitive meaning, the first are the intentions that promise to relinquish what is to be relinquished and train in the trainings, and [those intentions] are consciousness in terms of their nature. There are many other divisions of that, such as [the three elements of the cittotpāda vow:] restraining from negative deeds, gathering virtuous qualities, and working for the benefit of sentient beings.
>
> The second, [the ultimate vows of definitive meaning,] are the primordial wisdom that is the unity of bliss and emptiness manifested through the methods of the higher empowerments. As is said:
>
> > The vows of all buddhas
> > Perfectly abide as the aspect of *evaṃ*.
> > Great bliss as the aspect of *evaṃ*
> > should be perfectly known from the empowerments.[505]

[505] *Hevajratantrarājanāma*, *Kye'i rdo rje zhes bya ba rgyud kyi rgyal po* (H 378b, vol. 79), 358a5. Jamgön Kongtrul, *Buddhist Ethics*, 228, 454n48. David Snellgrove, *The Hevajra Tantra: A Critical Study* (London: OUP, 1959), 94

This quote from the *Hevajra Tantra* reflects the definition of vows as found both in IOL Tib J 656 and by Gampopa. The Sanskrit *evaṃ*, meaning "thus" begins the phrase that introduces Buddhist sūtras: *Evaṃ mayā śrutaṃ*, "Thus have I heard," Ānanda's words indicating he heard the teachings of the sūtra from the Buddha. Tantras as well begin with this phrase, including the *Hevajra Tantra* itself. This word takes on a special meaning in the tantric context as the unity of dualisms, first as appearance and emptiness as connate wisdom (*lhan cig skyes pa*), as Gampopa defines the vidyādhara vow, and also as means and wisdom.[506] In this section of the *Hevajra Tantra*, three elements of the vidyādhara vows that Shākya Chokden mentions here are brought together: the syllable *evaṃ*, the four joys, and the four gestures that bring about those joys.[507]

The fourth way that he differentiates the vows are from the perspective of the person who is the basis for those vows:

> There are the vows of the vast creation stage and the vows of the profound completion stage. Because in the context of the first, it is more important to protect the collection of samayas and of lesser importance to meditate on the primordial wisdom of bliss and emptiness, the person who is the basis [for the vows] is primarily a beginner and is worldly.
>
> In the context of the second, because [one] utilizes primarily the primordial wisdom of the unity of bliss and emptiness and the need to guard the samayas of the provisional meaning is of lesser importance, the person who is the basis [for the vows]

[506] Snellgrove, *The Hevajra Tantra*, 94n2.
[507] Snellgrove, 94.

> refers to one who has come to the time [when they are ready to] engage in [particular advanced completion stage] yogic practices and who is beyond the worldly.[508]

What are referred to as mantra vows here are not only a function of intention to produce virtue or refrain from negative deeds, but rather function to produce the final state. They arise from empowerment rituals and reflect the essential tantric approach of taking the result as the path, in that the vows that arise during the empowerment are defined in terms that reflect the final resultant state.

Shākya Chokden's Three-Vow Works

Three-vow theory essentially consists of two things: technical terms and analogies. Tibetan commentators on three-vow theory developed new technical terminology without clear translation equivalents to Sanskrit terms, the definitions of which were contested and transformed over time. The primary of these for the Sakya position discussed below are "transformation of state" (*gnas 'gyur*), "upward possession" (*yar ldan*), and "same or different natures" (*ngo bo gcig 'am tha dad*). These discussions and the technical vocabulary they spawned had two primary aims: to show how the three vows are the same as each other and to show how they are different from each other, being careful not to lean too far to either side. Commentators who adhered to difference in nature had to show sameness in another area; those who asserted sameness of nature likewise had to show difference of something else, such as a

[508]*gnyis pa de'i skabs su ni bde stong zung du 'jug pa'i ye shes la gtso bor spyod cing/ drang don gyi dam tshig bsrung dgos pa shas chung ba nyid kyi phyir na rten gyi gang zag spyod pa byed pa'i dus la bab pa dang 'jig rten las 'das pa'i dbang du byas pa'o/*

function or a quality or the vow holder. The primary position of the Sakya school is that the three vows are both the same in nature, and they also transform in an upward manner, although what that nature consists of and what it is that transforms are not agreed upon; a refinement in this position developed over time. The first presentation of a particularly Sakya view was initiated by Drakpa Gyaltsen in the eleventh century and, in the face of a refutation by Tsongkhapa, was refined by later commentators including Gorampa and Shākya Chokden. Sakya Paṇḍita does not directly address three-vow topics in his *Differentiating the Three Vows*, apart from stating that the śrāvaka vows are material and the bodhisattva vows are mind. He does, however, utilize terms and conventions of the genre in his work on the cittotpāda vow ritual.[509]

Within Tibetan exegesis on vows, there are texts that address all three vows, called three-vow treatises (*sdom gsum bstan bcos*), as well as texts devoted to one of the three individually. The editorial jumble of Shākya Chokden's three-vow texts within his multiple Collected Works may reveal that both approaches were adopted by him. Based on the main titles of his texts, it appears he wrote two three-vow treatises. Yet, each chapter of each of the two texts appears to have been printed separately. Within his multiple Collected Works, these two texts are titled by the name of the first chapter, though from these long misnomers, we can deduce that there were two texts: *Extensive Explanation of the Three Vows* (*Sdom gsum gyi rnam par bzhag pa rgya cher bshad pa*, hereafter referred to as the "three-vows text") and *Presentation on the Disciplines of the Three Vehicles* (*Theg pa gsum gyi 'dul ba rnam par bzhag pa*, hereafter referred to as the "three-vehicles text"). It is possible that the final two chapters of the three-vows text were never written, or they may have been lost. The final two chapters of the three-vehicles text were

[509] Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen, *dBu ma lugs kyi sems bskyed kyi cho ga*, in *Sa skya bka' 'bum*, 11:467–503. (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006).

appended onto the first chapter of the three-vows text, which can be viewed as an editorial creation of a complete three-vow text, with chapters of somewhat equal length. The first chapter of the three-vehicles text, on śrāvaka discipline, is 276 folio sides, while the second, the "Bodhisattva Discipline Chapter," is 37 folio sides, and third, the "Vidyādhara Discipline Chapter" is 50 folio sides. The first chapter of the three-vows text, on prātimokṣa vows, is 69 folio sides, making it fit better length-wise with those second and third chapters of the other text. This is only one possible reason such an editorial decision was made; mere error could certainly be another. One implication of the disordered placement of these chapters in the Collected Works is that the vows, at least sometimes, were studied individually, and hence the chapters on each vow, at least sometimes, were printed and circulated separately. The same is the case for his *Golden Lancet*, which appears in all available versions of his Collected Works as two texts, the first containing two chapters respectively answering questions from the *Good Questions* on prātimokṣa and cittotpāda vows, and the second titled *Golden Lancet, Third Chapter* (*Le'u gsum pa*) and containing answers to the questions from the *Good Questions* on vidyādhara vows. This approach tracks with the overall approach to vows in Tibetan seminary education across sects, in which vows are primarily studied individually, with vinaya studies coming last. This separateness of the chapters on vows also reflects the history of the reception of tantra in Tibet, in which anxiety over its transgressive elements led to diverse strategies to at once incorporate its methods and control its doctrinal interpretation and textual dissemination.

Vibhūticandra and Sakya Three-Vow Theory

The transmission and study of vows via three-vow texts was and is continuous in Sakya institutions, but there are two historical periods when particularly impactful texts were

composed, and something like a Sakya three-vow theory emerged. The earlier more nascent theory was open to attack by both Sakya Paṇḍita's Indian contemporary Vibhūticandra and later the widely read opponent Tsongkhapa, and the latter more developed theory was devised to shield itself from such attacks. The latter constituted what Sobisch calls the "refined Sakya view."[510] Another Indian master, Śākyaśrībhadra, had a considerable impact on central Tibetan religious culture in establishing new prātimokṣa vow lineages with vinaya standards previously absent from monastic culture in Tibet.[511] And yet, it was Vibhūticandra, a junior scholar in his retinue who composed the most influential three-vow treatise of the era, the only text with three-vow theory as its sole topic composed (in Tibetan) by an Indian master (with some possible exceptions addressed below). Sakya three-vow theory developed in opposition to Vibhūticandra and his verse text, *Garland of Light on the Three Vows*, in which he directly criticizes the Sakya patriarch Drakpa Gyaltsen.[512]

At the time Vibhūticandra and Drakpa Gyaltsen's texts were composed, Sakya three-vow theory was not particularly codified but was expressed through analogy which may have been transmitted orally in the specific terminology of transformation of state (*gnas 'gyur*) and single nature (*ngo bo gcig*), terms that Drakpa Gyaltsen himself did not use. These terms are the basis for what Vibhūticandra claims is the Sakya three-vow theory that he challenges, although no text from within the Sakya tradition at his time articulated a three-vow theory in those terms. Drakpa Gyaltsen used only *change* or *transform* (*'gyur*), not *transformation of state* (*gnas 'gyur*) in his *Eliminating Doubts: A Clarifying Commentary on the Fourteen Root Downfalls* (*Rtsa ba'i ltung*

[510] Sobisch, 71.
[511] David Jackson, *Two Biographies of Śākyaśrībhadra: The Eulogy by Khro-phu Lo-tsā-ba and its "Commentary" by bSod-nams-dpal-bzang-po* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990). See also Leonard van der Kuijp, "On the *Lives* of Śākyaśrībhadra (?–?1225)," *JAOS* 144, no. 4 (1994): 599–616.
[512] Vibhūticandra, *Trisaṃvaraprabhāmālānāma*, *Sdom gsum 'od kyi phreng ba zhes bya ba* (Dg.T. 3727), 54b2–56b7.

ba bcu bzhi pa'i 'grel pa gsal byed 'khrul spong).[513] As will be discussed below, Shākya Chokden's language and terminology is actually much closer to Sakya Paṇḍita's in his ritual text on cittotpāda vows in the Madhyamaka lineage.[514]

Drakpa Gyaltsen took lay vows at eight years old, and it has been said that despite a wish to take full ordination, he remained a lifelong layman.[515] He makes a few interesting remarks in his text *Ācārya Indrabhūti's Path Cycle of the Mudrā*, which presents comprehensive teachings on consort practice, or karmamudrā, based on instructions from the second Indrabhūti, king of Uddiyana, through whom a lineage of tantric empowerments in Tibet traces back. There is not a great deal explicitly written on the relationship between prātimokṣa vows and consort practice, and here only brief statements are made. Though Drakpa Gyaltsen was said to hold his lay vows devotedly and was referred to as the Sakya upāsaka (*dge bsnyen*, layman), he in fact states in this text that prātimokṣa refers just to refuge vows:

> The qualities obtained through training are possessing the prātimokṣa vow through going for refuge, the generation of aspirational and active bodhicitta and possessing the training of a bodhisattva, and receiving the complete four empowerments and possessing the Vajrayāna vows.[516]

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[513] Sobisch, 70.

[514] Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen, *Cittotpāda Ritual of the Madhyamaka Tradition*, *dBu ma lugs kyi sems bskyed kyi cho ga*, in *Sa skya bka' 'bum*, (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006), 11: 467–503. Sobisch (399) rightly notes that Sakya Paṇḍita never used the terms transformation, same nature, or distinctive aspect in his *Differentiating the Three Vows*, though he does certainly use the latter two (*ngo bo gcig ldog pa tha dad*) in his *Cittotpāda Ritual.*

[515] See Dominique Townsend, https://treasuryoflives.org, s.v. "Drakpa Gyaltsen."

[516] Grags pa rgyal mtshan, "sLob dpon indra bhūti'i mdzad pa'i phyag lam skor," in *Dam ngag mdzod* (*The Treasury of Precious Instructions*), edited by Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye, 119–36. Malcolm Smith, trans, *Sakya: The Path with Its Result, Part Two* (Boulder: Shambhala, forthcoming 2023).

Drakpa Gyaltsen also identifies the act of losing semen in the tantric context of consort practice as resulting in breakage of the prātimokṣa vows for a practitioner who holds all three vows. Later in the same text, Drakpa Gyaltsen says, "The person who abides on this last path is endowed with three vows: since the bindu abides in the body, he possesses the prātimokṣa vow."[517] Here, Drakpa Gyaltsen says explicitly that the prātimokṣa vows are not lost as long as the vow holder does not ejaculate. Of course, if the prātimokṣa vows here refers only to refuge vows, a greater number of monastic vows that include celibacy are not relevant. Bypassing any celibacy or sexual misconduct vows, Drakpa Gyaltsen himself composed a ritual for taking refuge and the cittotpāda vow together.[518]

Jamgön Kongtrul states that Sakya Paṇḍita's perspective on the three vows traces back to the translator Rinchen Zangpo, but no such source for a three-vow theory of Rinchen Zangpo (958–1055), or anyone of his era, has been found. If it were, it would predate the earliest extant texts on three-vow theory, and the earliest citations of such, including that of Naktso Lotsāwa, Tsultrim Gyalwa, whom Jamgön Kongtrul himself quotes as making two interesting claims: one, that the prātimokṣa vows are avijñaptirūpa, and that the prātimokṣa vows are the support for the bodhisattva vows in the way that a man uses a staff to hoist himself up. In his *Commentary That Summarizes the Essence of the "Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment,"* Jamgön Kongtrul quotes a commentary by Naktso Lotsāwa, seemingly no longer extant but possibly also a commentary

[517] Drakpa Gyaltsen, *Accomplishment of the Connate* (*dombi he ru ka mdzad pa'i lhan gcig skyes*) This is translated in the forthcoming Jamgön Kongtrul, ed. *Sakya: The Path with Its Result, Part Two* (Boulder, Shambhala, 2023). For the Tibetan see *Gdams ngag mdzod* (Delhi: Shechen, 1999), 9. *nang gi thig le mi nyams par lus la gnas pa nyid do.* The second quote is from his *Indrabhuti's Path Cycle of the Mudra* (*Slob dpon indra bhuti'i mdzad pa'i phyag lam skor*), in *Gdams ngag mdzod*, 122.

[518] rJe btsun grags pa rgyal mtshan, *Skyabs su 'gro ba dang sems bskyed pa'i cho ga*, in *Sa skya bka' 'bum*, 7:469–88. (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006). This idea that refuge is sufficient as the first of the three vows is also found in the vow-conferral ritual composed by Saṃvarabhadra called *Instructions on Refuge, Bodhicitta, and the Four Empowerments* (*Skyabs 'gro sems bskyed dbang bshi gdams pa*), a three-vow ritual text in which refuge is the first of the three vows, standing in as a lay form of prātimokṣa vows.

on Atiśa's *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, in his answer to whether the vows are the same or different. He says that they are both, but his explanation of how they are different implies that he affords the prātimokṣa the status of avijñaptirūpa. He does not use the term, however, but rather asserts them to be a "substance" (*rdzas*). He says, while they are the same in some way, the prātimokṣa and bodhisattva vows are "also different. The prātimokṣa is asserted to be a substance, and it is the non-causing of harm, having turned away from causing harm to others. The bodhisattva vow is not asserted to be substance, and it accomplishes benefit to others. Thus, they are also different."[519] That the prātimokṣa are a support in this way (although without this analogy or this author being quoted) is refuted as early as Vibhūticandra, and as late as fifteenth-century Gorampa. It is not surprising that early three-vow theories are simple and open to analytical attack; it often seems that authors of three-vow theories before Vibhūticandra were not aiming to devise a "theory" but rather to offer a pedagogic analogy and not an air-tight model.

The second era within the broad intertextual conversation on vows in which the Sakya three-vow theory is further refined is the late fifteenth century, when Gorampa and Shākya Chokden both wrote treatises on vows looking back directly at this earlier time period and commenting on the views that had by that time been established in monastic seminaries as orthodox views. While Shākya Chokden's (translated in full below) is short and direct and names no other texts or opponents, Gorampa's is pointed at Vibhūticandra, and composed in a polemical style. The fifteenth-century Sakya project of establishing a clear, written three-vow theory was perhaps enlivened by the rising Geluk dominance on orthodox practice, which they

[519] See *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 3, 39[13a7]–40[13b1]. *tha dad pa'ang yin te/ so sor thar pa rdzas su 'dod pa dang/ gzhan la gnod pa byed pa las log nas gnod pa mi byed pa dang/ byang sens kyi sdom pa rdzas su mi 'dod pa dang/ gzhan la phan pa snying sgrub pas tha dad pa'ang yin* Translation forthcoming in *Kadam: Texts, Advice, and Instructions, Part One*, Treasury of Precious Instructions, vol. 3, translated by Artemus B. Engle (Boulder: Shambhala, 2024).

and many other prominent thinkers of the time tried to resist in the arena of philosophical disputation. Shākya Chokden lived in a time when his own tradition's glory days had come and gone, in what Kamarovski calls "post-Sakya Tibet," after Sakya rulers lost political power in 1350 giving way to the approximately eighty-year rule of the Pagmodrupa and the approximately 135-year Rinpungpa government (which themselves overlapped).[520] Sectarian awareness was high, heightened by political elites who seem to have even involved themselves in monastic practice along sectarian lines.

Shākya Chokden began his life of study and practice at age seven at Kyormolung, founded as one of six leading scholastic monasteries in the eleventh century in the Kadam tradition and converted to Geluk, perhaps gradually, over the fourteenth or fifteenth.[521] In 1437 at the age of 19, Shākya Chokden first met his primary teacher Rongtön, who was visiting Kyormolung monastery. Rongtön recognized Shākya Chokden as a reincarnation of Rongtön's own teacher Bakton Zhonnu Gyaltsen (Bag ston gzhon nu rgyal mtshan), gave him his name, and ordained him. However, Rongtön was prevented from giving novice vows for possibly sectarian reasons and could only give him the intermediate level of ordination (*bar ma rab 'byung*) typically given to those not old enough to received higher levels of vows[522]—and was prohibited from conferring novice vows.[523] He took novice vows with Rongtön at the age of twenty-two in 1440 at Nalendra monastery and took full ordination with Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo in 1452.

[520] *Visions of Unity*, 19.
[521] Thubten Jinpa states that it was founded in the eleventh century and converted to Geluk in the fifteenth. See *Tsongkhapa: A Buddha in the Land of Snows* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2019), 44, 400n66. Kamarovski writes that it was "at least partially Geluk" in the fifteenth century. Kamarovski, *Visions of Unity*, 315n50.
[522] For more on this intermediate level of vows (*rab 'byung*) see José Ignacio Cabezón and Penpa Dorjee, *Sera Monastery*, (Somerville, MA: Wisdom, 2019), 33.
[523]Kamarovski, *Visions of Unity*, 315n50.

In the realm of Sakya three-vow theory, there is clearly a champion of an orthodox view and there is an opponent to be argued against. Gorampa, Shākya Chokden's rival within the tradition, wrote a three-vow text presenting a theory developed from Drakpa Gyaltsen's views in his text on secret mantra vows, *Eliminating Doubts*. Gorampa argues against the criticisms of Drakpa Gyalsten by Vibhūticandra, in his *Garland of Light*, of Drakpa Gyaltsen. Thus, Gorampa defends Drakpa Gyaltsen, a founding father of his own tradition, and clarifies his view to make it less vulnerable to attack. Thus, if Shākya Chokden's three-vow theory is to be understood in context, it could be understood in light of Gorampa's view as well as vis-à-vis the tradition's easy opponent, Vibhūticandra. It is noteworthy that Shākya Chokden does not mention either of them by name and also appears to be relying more on Sakya Paṇḍita's language in his cittotpāda vow ritual text of the Madhyamaka lineage of vows.

Vibhūticandra, like many Indian masters who traveled to Tibet during this time, studied at Vikramaśīla monastery in Magadha, as well as in Orissa and at Jagaddala in Bengal. Vibhūticandra visited Tibet three times, first as a junior paṇḍita particularly knowledgeable in the curricular topics of grammar and abhidharma, accompanying Śākyaśrībhadra (1127?–1225) from 1204 to 1214, who ordained Sakya Paṇḍita in 1208. His second visit was spent time at Drikung Ling and this is when he is said, by those who accept him as its author, to have composed the *Garland of Light on the Three Vows*.[524] By the time of his third visit, he was invited by Kodrakpa as an accomplished Kālacakra master who had established a lineage of practice and a reputation for himself as a master of the tradition.[525] It was on this third visit that he is said to have received teachings from Kodrakpa on the Sakya "Path with Its Result"

[524] Cyrus Stearns, "Life and Tibetan Legacy of the Indian Mahāpaṇḍita Vibhūticandra," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 19, no. 1 (1996): 139.
[525] Sobisch, *Three-Vow Theory*, 21. Cyrus Stearns, 141.

teachings, which Cyrus Stearns states is "one of the few instances in which an Indian master is known to have received extensive tantric teachings from a Tibetan."[526]

Vibhūticandra's time in Tibet turns on its head the picture of Indian experts coming into Tibet as primary authorities in transmitting the true teachings, which the Tibetans received as grateful students. Vibhūticandra's life events, though contradictory and questionable, paint a picture of a man making mistakes, making great efforts to atone, embarrassing himself, and insulting important people, then later in life returning to Tibet several times to become an established master. Tāranātha and Pema Garwang's accounts of his life paint very different pictures, the former representing him as a socially inept brute who insulted both Drakpa Gyaltsen and Jigten Sumgön and who was the only paṇḍita to whom Sakya Paṇḍita did not offer gifts and genuflections upon their departure from Sakya in 1209 or 1210.[527]

There is ample description of Vibhūticandra's time in Tibet as well as texts composed and scribed by him. In the early twentieth century, the Indian scholar Rahul Sankrityayan discovered palm leaf manuscripts in Vibhūticandra's own handwriting, including Sanskrit verses and annotations.[528] Tales abound of Śākyaśrībhadra's positive connection with Tibetans, including a story that he and Sakya Paṇḍita shared the same dream of the same song at the same time.[529] Vibhūticandra, however, had a more difficult time ingratiating himself with the Tibetan people, and at least during his time traveling as the most learned (and most petulant) among the junior scholars. Cyrus Stearns suggests these could be later accretions meant to discredit him socially in support of criticism of his views on vows.[530]

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[526] Stearns, "Life and Legacy," 145.
[527] Stearns, "Life and Legacy," 145.
[528] Cyrus Stearns, 134. Stearns specifically notes that some melancholy verses in his hand were found at Sakya monastery.
[529] Rhoton, trans., *Clear Differentiation*, 31n26.
[530] Stearns, "Life and Tibetan Legacy of the Indian Mahāpaṇḍita Vibhūticandra," 134.

It is debated whether Vibhūticandra was the actual author of *Garland of Light*. Birgit Kellner notes that when Vibhūticandra was first in Tibet, he was a scribe for Śākyaśrībhadra.[531] While she concedes that paper would have been available in Vibhūticandra's time, there is no evidence that he composed his three-vow work while in Tibet. Stearns goes so far as to say that the text "may have been forged by an unknown author with polemic motives."[532] However, Sobisch notes that Tibetan authors who referenced Vibhūticandra's work on the topic of the three vows did not express any doubt as to its authorship.[533] Butön Rinpoche Drup (1290–1364) translated and composed a commentary on another of Vibhūticandra's compositions, the tantra commentary *Piṇḍīkṛtasādhanapañjikā* (*Sgrub thabs mdor byas kyi dka' 'grel*).[534] Butön's knowledge of the canon as a historian, as well as his experience as a translator, author, and editor of the canon at Zhalu monastery in the fourteenth century, would presumably equip him to know a fake when he saw one. Had he believed it to be a later Tibetan composition, and not the teachings of Vibhūticandra, it is likely he would not have included the text in his edition of the canon with an authorship attribution to Vibhūticandra. Butön is also listed in a lineage of transmission of the six-branch Kālacakra (*ṣaḍaṅga*) practice originating with Vibhūticandra, who received empowerment and teachings miraculously from a vision of Śavaripa.[535] The first known source of his biographical narrative is Pema Garwang's 1538 lineage history of Kālachakra in Tibet.[536] The second is Tāranātha's mid-seventeenth-century history, which does not question whether the views espoused in the *Golden Rays* are the purported author's own. He does not

[531] Birgit Kellner, "Towards a Critical Edition of Dharmakīrti's Pramāṇavārttika," *Vienna Journal of South Asian Studies*52/53 (2009): 161–211.
[532] Stearns, "The Life and Tibetan Legacy of the Indian Mahāpaṇḍita Vibhūticandra," 127–28.
[533] Sobisch, *Three-Vow Theories*, 24.
[534] Vibhūticandra, *sGrub thabs mdor byas kyi dka' 'grel*, in T.Pd., 1346–59. Pe cin: Krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang, 1994–2008).
[535] Stearns, "The Life and Tibetan Legacy of the Indian Mahāpaṇḍita Vibhūticandra," 128n3.
[536] *Sbas pa mig 'byed.* For more on this, see Stearns 128n3.

claim that Vibhūticandra did not compose the text himself, but he suggests that it could have been a later (perhaps Drikung) forgery designed to underscore his difference with the Sakya community that he encountered on his first visit.

Vibhūticandra's impact on Tibetans at the time he was there is difficult to gauge, and it certainly changed over the years of his visits, from his time as a junior scholar lacking in social skills during his time traveling with Śākyaśrībhadra, to traveling as not only a senior scholar and monastic teacher in Nepal but also a Kālacakra initiation master with an authenticating story in his vision of Śavaripa. In an article by Cyrus Stearns on the master, which remains the primary scholarship on his life and works, Stearns notes that Vibhūticandra's biographical material includes a number of social humiliations by Jigten Sumgön as well as Sakya Paṇḍita's uncle, Drakpa Gyaltsen. Yet, Jigten Sumgön's work does not mention Vibhūticandra even once.[537] Support for Vibhūticandra's authorship of *Golden Rays* is also evident in the fact that the thirteenth-century Tibetan with connections both to a Kadam and Sakya lineage, Chomden Rigpe Raltri (1227–1305),[538] includes the text in his catalog of works translated into Tibetan, *The Flower Ornament of Spreading the Teachings*, a catalog dated by Cyrus Stearns to before 1283.[539] Not only that, Chomden Rigpe Raltri composed a commentary on *Garland of Rays* with clear support for the views expressed within it. This was during a time when it is not clear what biographical information would have been circulating about Vibhūticandra, his disrespect of Drakpa Gyaltsen, and Sakya Paṇḍita's choice not to make offerings to him, not to mention any question as to whether the text itself could have been a Drikung forgery. Chomden Rikpai

[537] Stearns, "The Life and Tibetan Legacy of the Indian Mahāpaṇḍita Vibhūticandra," 131n16.
[538] Leonard van der Kuijp, "The Lives of Bu ston Rin chen grub and the Date and Sources of His Chos 'byung, a Chronicle of Buddhism in India and Tibet," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 35 (2016): 262–66.
[539] Stearns, "The Life and Tibetan Legacy of the Indian Mahāpaṇḍita Vibhūticandra," 150, 151n83.

Raldri's life predates both of the primary Tibetan sources for Vibhūticandra's life and time in Tibet.

Regardless of his narrative biography, it is clear that before Vibhūticandra became an easily refuted target in three-vow texts by Gorampa and the Geluk scholar Khedrup Je Gelek Palzangpo (1385–1438), his work was representative at least to some of a correct view on three-vow theory. *The Flower Ornament of* [*Vibhūticandra's*] *"Garland of Light,"* composed by Chomden Rigpe Raltri[540] does not treat Vibhūticandra as an opponent, but rather supports his views and presents them as "the essential meaning of all sūtras and tantras."[541] However, it does seem that Chomden Rikpai Raltri was aware of disagreements concerning how to interpret Vibhūticandra's text and perhaps criticism of it as well. Chomden Rigpe Raltri introduces his commentary with praise for the text and sympathy for and defense of Vibhūticandra:

> I will explain this short text with a lot of meaning composed by the mine of knowledge, Vibhūticandra, mahāpaṇḍita from Varenda Jagada in the East, because it appears that it is not understood by everyone.[542]

Given other narrative details and perspectives on Vibhūticandra's approach to monastic practice, Chomden Rigpe Raltri's early analyses of Vibhūticandra's text underscores the hierarchy of

[540] Chomden Rigpe Raltri, *Sdom gsum 'od kyi phreng ba'i rgyan gyi me tog*, in *Gsung 'bum* (Lhasa: Khams sprul bsod nams don grub, 2006), 120–34. For more on his life and impact, see Leonard W.J. van der Kuijp and Arthur P. McKeown, *bCom ldan ral gri (1227–1305) On Indian Buddhistic Logic and Epistemology: His Commentary on Dignaga's Pramanasamuccaya* (Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 2013).
[541] Chomden Rigpe Raltri, *Sdom gsum 'od kyi phreng ba'i rgyan gyi me tog*, 1a1. *mdo rgyud kun gyi snying po'i don*
[542] Chomden Rigpe Raltri, 1a2–1a3. *rig pa'i 'byung gnas shar phyogs bā ren da'i dza ga ta la'i paṇḍita chen po bi bhu ti tsandras mdzad pa'i gzhung nyung la don mang ba 'di kun gyis mi shes par snang bas kho bos bshad par bya'o/*

monastic vows, fully ordained over novice, and novice over lay. For him, the natures of the vows are separate. Another formulation of a three-vow theory in Chomden Rikpa'i Raldri's works is found in his *Flower Ornament of the Three Trainings* (*Bslab pa gsum gyi rgyan gyi me tog*). He states clearly that the three vows do not exist as a single nature, since if you then had one downfall, you would lose all of your vows. He also states that the earlier do not transform (*gnas 'gyur*) into the higher ones, since that would mean that when you take the later vows (*phyi thob na*), you would not have to keep the earlier ones. He offers an analogy for this point as well: that when an ordinary person becomes a king, they no longer have to engage in the deeds of an ordinary person. Thus, given that the vows are not singular and do not transform, they in fact abide separately (*so sor gnas pa*).[543] He says that while there are a few scriptures that mention ideas such as "transformation," his own perspective follows reasoning because it does not accept scriptural meanings that are separate from reasoning. This is according to the explanations in two key texts. He first cites verse 83 in chapter 5 of Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, that the "great should never be abandoned for the lesser."[544] He then cites Candragomin's *Twenty Verses*: "[. . .] because it is endowed with compassionate love and loving kindness, there are no faults in the virtuous mind."[545] He cites Aśvaghoṣa's praise to the Buddha, the *Śatapañcāśatakanāmastotra* (*Brgya lnga bcu pa zhes bya ba'i bstod pa*): "Some say that in your teachings, permissions and

[543] Chomden Rigpe Raltri, *Bslab pa gsum gyi rgyan gyi me tog*), 307–8: *gal te sdom pa gsum po de rgyud gcig la ji ltar gnas zhe na/ smras pa/ gcig gtong gnas gyur mi 'thad phyir/ thams cad so sor gnas par 'dod/ gsum po de ngo bo gcig tu ni med de gcig gi ltung ba byung na kun nyams par 'gyur ba'i phyir ro/ phyi ma thob pas snga ma gtong ba'ang ma yin te de ni de'i gtong rgyur ma bshad pa'i phyir ro/ snga ma phyi mar gnas gyur pa'ang ma yin te phyi ma thob na snga ma'i bslab bya la bslab mi dgos par 'gyur te/ dmangs rgyal por gnas 'gyur na dmangs kyi bya ba bya mi dgos pa bzhin no/ des na rgyud gcig la gsum ka so sor gnas pa yin no/ gnas gyur pa la sogs pa'i lung cung zad yod na'ang rigs pas grub pa'i rjes su 'brangs te rigs pa dang bral ba'i lung gi don mi gnas pa'i phyir ro/ bslab bya 'gal ba rnams* [307] *ni/ dgag bya dang dgos pa brtsis te dman pa btang nas bzang po sgrub par bya ste /*

[544] Śāntideva, *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, *Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa* (Dg.T. 3871), 13b2. *spyod 'jug las/ chung ngu'i phyir ni che mi btang/ gtso cher gzhan gyi don bsam mo/ bya ba dang/*

[545] Chomden Rigpe Raltri, 308. *sdom pa nyi shu pa las/ snying brtser ldan zhing byams phyir dang/ sems dge ba la nyes pa med/ ces bya ba dang*

prohibitions are certain toward one object and say they are not certain to others, but they are also not mutually contradictory."[546] He finishes by saying: "Thus, even though they may appear to be mutually contradictory, for learned ones who know well what is to be rejected and accepted, there is not even the slightest downfall." And because of this, it is taught in the *Ratnamāla Tantra* that "a monk should hold the dorje,"[547] meaning that monks should practice tantric methods, using the ritual implements of the bell and dorje.

Three-Vow Analogies

Beginning in the eighteenth century and the composition of the late three-vow theory texts, there were several sets of six generally recognized perspectives on how the three vows persist in one person. The eighteenth-century Karma Ngelek presents in his *Good Vase* that there were six perspectives presented. These six are that the vows are different by nature; that they are individually entrusted; that when there is conflict between them, the higher is privileged; that the faults of the lower are outshone by the higher; that qualities of the higher are possessed upwardly; and that causes for their loss and obtainment are different.[548] Shākya Chokden would reject the first, accept the last, and provisionally accept the fourth and fifth.

The second set of six is taught in Karma Ngelek's *Good Vase* and appears in Jamgön Kongtrul's *Treasury of Knowledge* as well. These six are that each vow is supported by the

[546] Chomden Rigpe Raltri cites this as from Aśvaghoṣa/Mātṛceṭa, *Brgya lnga bcu pa zhes bya ba'i bstod pa.* (Dg.T. 1147), 110a3–116a5. This stanza actually seems to appear in *Varṇārhavarṇe bhagavato buddhasya stotre 'śakyastava-nāma, Sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das la bstod pa bsngags par 'os pa bsngags pa las bstod par mi nus par bstod pa zhes bya ba* (Dg.T. 1138), 90b5. Chomden Rigpe Raltri, 308. *bstod pa brgya lnga bcu pa las/ gnang ba dang ni dgag pa la/ khyod bka' la lar gcig tu nges/ la lar nges pa ma mchis la/ phan tshul 'gal ba'ang ma mchis so/ zhes bshad pa bzhin/*
[547] This is cited in Vibhūticandra's text as well.
[548] Sobisch, *Three-Vow Theories*, 277–78.

lower; that through obtaining the higher vows, the lower increase in purity; that each vow has outer, inner, and secret aspects;[549] that the vows become more complete with the higher vows, and are possessed upwardly; that the lower are transformed with the higher; and that each set of vows are complete and unmixed. Shākya Chokden would accept the fourth and fifth of this list, that they are possessed upwardly (*yar ldan*) and that they are transformed (*gnas 'gyur*).

Karma Ngelek also offers a set of six views that combines Indian perspectives with those held according to Tibetan sect: the vows are different (*ngo bo tha dad*), as taught by Abhayākaragupta; that the vows are different as held by Vibhūticandra, that they outshine (*zil gyi gnon*) one another and the lower remain dormant; that the vows are of the same nature but different aspects (*ngo bo gcig ldog pa tha dad*) and transform (*gnas 'gyur*), according to Drakpa Gyaltsen[550] and later Sakya commentators; there is a difference in nature in which the lower vows are branches of the higher, and the higher have the lower for their support, held by the Gandenpas (Geluk); the Kagyu perspective that the vows are different in nature; and the Nyingma perspective that the vows have unmixed aspects.[551] Shākya Chokden's view is here represented by the Sakya perspective, that the vows are the same in nature and have different distinguishing features.

Yet a different way to present diverging views on three-vow theories is to present them in terms of the analogies that authors have offered as ways to exemplify the theory set forth. These analogies could be presented in any number of ways, but one that may make sense here is that they fit into five categories. These analogies present an object or several objects, in a situation of

[549] This perspective is presented by Drakpa Gyaltsen. See note 536.
[550] Sobisch, 278. Karma Ngelek also attributes this to Sakya Pandita's *Differentiating the Three Vows*, though it is not mentioned there.
[551] Sobisch, 278.

ownership or function, and have different relationships with the owner or one another. All analogies can fit into one of these five: a single object with separate functions, separate objects that conflict, separate objects that transform, separate objects with a single owner, and a single owner of separate objects.

A standard element of the three-vow genre was to include an analogy; nearly every prominent three-vow text has one. This appears to have begun with Gampopa, who stated that the vows were mixed like milk and water. Also of this early period, Drakpa Gyaltsen's analogy of the alchemist is that vows transform in the same way that "specific types of minerals produce iron, copper, and silver through melting them."[552] Both Gorampa and Shākya Chokden, and several others, cite this same analogy, and it could be said that the entire development of Sakya three-vow theory is to clarify this analogy, and defend it from Vibhūticandra's attacks. [553] Shākya Chokden cites this same analogy in different wording:

> Because he is of the nature of being able to turn into gold—
> turning iron, copper, and even silver into gold—
> the vidyādhara is like that with the prātimokṣa and bodhisattva [vows].[554]

Vibhūticandra's analogy shows a definite superiority of the later vows, which are to be privileged over the lower:

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[552] Drakpa Gyaltsen, *Eliminating Doubts*, 758. *rdo'i rigs kyi bye brag gis/ bzhus pas lcags dang zangs dngul 'byung/ gser 'gyur rtsi yi dngos po yis/ kun kyang gser du sgyur bar byed/ de bzhin sems kyi bye brag gis/ rigs can gsum gyi sdom pa yang/ dkyil 'khor chen po 'dir zhugs na/ rdo rje 'dzin pa zhes bya'o/* See Sobisch, 107.
[553] Vibhūticandra's working of the metaphor is even different: *rdo yi rigs kyi bye brag bzhus/ lcags dang zangs dang dngul du 'byung/ gser 'gyur rtsi yi dngos po yis/ kun kyang gser du 'gyur ba bzhin/ de bzhin sems kyi bye brag gis/ rigs can gsum gyi sdom pa yang/ dkyil 'khor chen po 'dir zhugs na/ rdo rje 'dzin pa zhes bya'o/* Sobisch, 107
[554] VDC, 494. *de skad du yang rgyud las/ gser 'gyur nus pa'i rang bzhin gyis/ lcags dang zangs su gyur pa dang/ dngul yang gser du 'gyur ba bzhin/ so sor thar dang chang chub sems/ rig pa 'dzin pa de bzhin no*

For example, the arising of stars in the sky

may illuminate [the world] for a while.

but if the moon rises,

the light of the stars vanishes, and it [the moon] illuminates the world.

When the sun shines,

the moonlight vanishes and [the sun] illuminates the world.[555]

This metaphor is repeated several times in his *Golden Rays*. The three vows are like the sun, moon, and stars: When the sun is out (representing the higher vows), the moon and stars (the lower) are not visible. The lower abide in a dormant state, having been outshone (*zil gyi gnon*) by the higher vows. This analogy is at the center of Vibhūticandra's three-vow theory of hierarchy, separation, and overpowering. He presents his view as an alternative to Drakpa Gyaltsen's alchemist theory of transformation, inclusion, and unity. And in many ways, the resulting development of three-vow theory discussions can be seen as a movement between the two poles of inclusion and hierarchy, pivoting on how the lower vows of the prātimokṣa are understood to operate after the higher vows of the cittotpāda and vidyādhara are taken.

Another Indian text that addresses the three vows and was translated into Tibetan, and read and cited by Tibetans, is *The Ornament of the Sage's Intent* (*Muṇimatālaṃkāra*) by the tantric master and author Abhayākaragupta.[556] Though he does not extensively address the secret

[555] Sobisch, 117. *dper na mkha' la rgyu skar shar/ cung zad snang bar byas gyur mod / zla ba'i dkyil 'khor shar gyur na / skar 'od nyams mod 'jig rten snang / rta bdun tsha zer shar ba na / zla ba'i 'od nyams 'jig rten gsal/*
[556] For a rough chronology of his works, and a reconstruction of his dates, see Gudrun Buhnemann, "Some Remarks on the Date of Abhayākaragupta and the Chronology of His Works." Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft 142 (1992): 120–27.

mantra vows, declaring it to be a topic better learned elsewhere in another context,[557] he does offer an analogy for the three vows that is cited in later three-vow texts. He also makes a statement that could be considered a statement on the nature of the vow, although he does not use those words.[558] Vibhūticandra established study lineages of some of Abhayākaragupta's treatises including his *Ornament of the Sage's Intent* when he was the abbot of the monastery Stham Bihar in Kathmandu.[559] Tsongkhapa cites Abhayākaragupta (as well as Vibhūticandra) extensively in his text on tantric vows. In addition to composing a contested cittotpāda vow ritual, Abhayākaragupta presented an analogy for the three vows that Jigten Sumgön took up in his *Single Intention* and that then influenced Jamgön Kongtrul, who would develop the analogy in his eighteenth-century *Treasury of Knowledge*.[560] Abhayākaragupta's three-vow theory is also mentioned in Karma Ngelek's *Good Vase*[561] and is criticized by Gorampa and Karma Ngedon.[562] The analogy Abhayākaragupta sets forth is that of gold ornaments worn by the same person. He states that the vows "arise as something other and persist differently, like different ornaments on one support. Yet, in terms of what they relinquish, there is not even the slightest differentiation, such as in abandoning killing, and so on. They are of the same class, and so this is like having many golden ornaments that are of the same type."[563]

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[557] Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation*, 34n75.
[558] Tsongkhapa, *Tantric Ethics: An Explanation of the Precepts for Buddhist Vajrayana Practice*, trans. Gareth Sparham (Boston: Wisdom, 2005), 50. Sparham's translation is: "The production of bodhicitta is the vow of the three moralities, and just that with a special feature is the consecration vow." I was not able to find this quote in the original.
[559] Stearns, "The Life and Tibetan Legacy of the Indian Mahāpaṇḍita Vibhūticandra," 137.
[560] *Buddhist Ethics*, 302–3.
[561] Sobish, *Three-Vow Theory*, 18n52.
[562] Sobisch, 220.
[563] Abhayākaragupta, *Ornament of the Sage's Intent* (*Munimatālaṃkāra*, *Thub pa'i dgongs pa'i rgyan*) Dg.T. 3903. *sdom pa nyams pa'i rgyu mtshan ma yin pa'i phyir dang 'gal ba med pa'i phyir te grang ba'i khyad par gzhan skyes pa nag rang ba snga ma mi ldog ste 'gal ba med pa'i phyir ro/ bsags pa 'di kho na la tha snyad 'jug pa 'ba' zhig ste snga ma ma yin la gnyis pa ma yin no/ sdom pa gong ma gong ma mtha' dag nyid so sor yang dag par blangs pa las skye ba dang gnas pa'i phyir ro/ gal te de lta na de'i tshe srog gcod pa la sogs pa spong ba mang po*

Jigten Sumgön and later Jamgön Kongtrul borrow the analogy of the golden ornaments, and yet Jigten Sumgön transforms it into something with nearly opposite implications. Rather than one person having many golden ornaments, he states:

> It is like when a piece of turquoise of a gold amulet is hung around the neck of a common subject, it can be touched by everyone, and it becomes the ornament of a subject. If it is hung around the neck of a minister, it is not to be touched by common people and it becomes the ornament of a minister. If it is hung around the neck of a king, even though it will be looked at by others, it is not to be touched, and it becomes the ornament of a king. Therefore, there is no difference with regard to the nature of the ornament, but it occurs as three through the functioning of the three places where it is hung.[564]

Jigten Sumgön extends the metaphor of different functions of the vows via different carriers for the vows with the analogy that the same food generates the energy to do different tasks when eaten by different people. This almost borders on a transformation analogy, though his purpose appears to be quite the opposite. The amulet in the first analogy and the food in the latter analogy remain unchanged in and of themselves. They change only by virtue of the person taking the vow, thereby representing his essential three-vow theory, that there is a "transformation" in holding the three vows, but it is a transformation of the person, not of the vow itself, nor of the intention, which remains the vows' natures. Analogies that assert a single object with multiple functions include both Sakya Paṇḍita and Khedrup Je's analogies of the

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rnams la khyad par ram nye bar mkho ba ci yod ce na/ srog gcod pa la sogs pa spong ba nyid kyis na khyad par cung zad kyang med de rigs mtshungs pa'i phyir rigs mthun pa'i gser gyi rgyan du ma bzhin no/

[564] Sobisch, *Three-Vow Theories,* 365.

vows as a single jewel. While Sakya Paṇḍita's analogy focuses on function, Khedrup's focuses on the jewels' qualities changed by outward circumstances.

Khedrup offers an analogy that is immune to the attacks he levied against Vibhūticandra at the end of his three-vow text *Dusting Off the Sage's Teaching*. His analogy is that when a jewel, such as an emerald, is placed in clear water in a glass vessel, the color of the water turns the color of the jewel. The color of the water can be said to be an aspect of the color of the jewel, but "the water and jewel are not correlated, in the sense that when one is negated, the other is not negated."[565] For Khedrup, vows must be allowed to influence each other in some way, since the prātimokṣa vows are elevated above their original setting of the śrāvaka tradition by being included within the three-vow system. However, their acquisition must not be the cause for the others to be lost, and they can neither be conflated into a single vow. They must be distinct in order to allow for the loss of the prātimokṣa vows, but not the other two sets, at death. He rejects the terms "transform" (*gnas gyur*), outshine (*zil gyi gnon*), and pervader/pervaded (*khyab byed khyab bya*) and replaces them with the language of "branches" (*yan lag*) and an analogy that allows for independence, simultaneity, and interrelation.[566]

Sakya Paṇḍita's analysis of the cittotpāda vows uses an analogy that fits well in the three-

[565] Khedrup, *Thub bstan rin po che'i byi dor*, 513. *dper na snod dvangs shing dri ma med par chu shin tu dvangs pa'i nang du rin po che ma rdad la sogs pa bcug pa na de srid du chu'i mdog kyang rin po che'i kha dog gi yan lag tu 'gyur mod kyi chu dang rin po che de dag phan tshun gcig bkag kyang cig shos mi khegs pa bzhin no*/ Sönam Drakpa's (1478–1554) three-vow text by a very similar name, *Nor bu'i byi dor* (720–21), uses this same metaphor verbatim without attribution.

[566] Khedrup's discussion of the way the three vows interrelate appears immediately before his three-vow metaphor. "The correct position is this. The three vows in the continuum of one person who holds all three vows, [513] are determined to be separate. The manner of obtaining them is that they arise from different types of rituals that are dissimilar types of collections of individual initial causes. Based on that, the causes for their final loss are also determined to be separate. However, temporarily, while the lower vows are maintained, by the condition of being possessed by the special motivation of the higher ones, for as long as one is not disconnected from that temporary condition, the lower ones serve as branches of the higher ones, but when one is negated, it does not serve as a branch that negates the other, in the sense that they are inseparable and in a mutual stream." (*Thub bstan rin po che'i byi dor*, 512–13).

vow genre. He uses this exact terminology to analyze the natures and relationship of the threefold cittotpāda vow, divided into guarding against negative actions, the discipline of gathering virtuous qualities, and the discipline of accomplishing the benefit of beings.[567] After first defining each of the three as instances of mind with different functions, he then presents what is possibly the only place Sakya Paṇḍita expresses a three-vow theory, in relation to this specific set of three, complete with an analogy, in accordance with the three-vow genre. He considers whether they are one or the same (*gcig'am tha dad bsam pa*):

> Second, the consideration that they are separate is that for a consciousness (*shes pa*) that is singular in nature, there may be three distinguishing features (*ldog pa*), just as a single jewel can dispel darkness, accumulate wealth, and cure disease.[568]

In this way, it can be seen that Shākya Chokden borrows Sakya Paṇḍita's technical language in his own three-vow theory, though with a different analogy, in that a difference in function is a distinguishing feature (*ldog pa*) of the vows.

Three-vow theory thus becomes a battle of analogies, with authors approaching the details of a situation of mutual impact through analogous relationships between objects: the sun, moon, and stars; a jewel reflected in water; milk mixed with water; the transformation of metals by an alchemist; and many jewels worn by one king. These analogies seek to clarify the three-vow theory of how the vows exist and how they relate to language that is at once more abstract (as

[567] See note 253. *dge ba gzhi dang bcas pa spong ba'i sems ni sdom pa'i tshul khrims/ dge ba chos mtha' dag bsgrub pa'i sems ni dge ba chos sdud/ gzhan gyi don phyin ci ma log par bstson pa sems ni sems can don byed do/*
[568] Sakya Paṇḍita, *dBu ma lugs*, 470. *gnyis pa tha dad bsam pa ni shes pa ngo bo gcig la 'jug yul ldog pa gsum tha dad de/ dper na rin po che gcig nyid mun pa spong/ nor sdud/ rims nad sel ba bzhin no/*

there is no scriptural authority, logical argumentation, or technical terms in this figurative level of the discourse) and more concrete, as the examples used are meant to be specific and easily understood without jargon or overcomplexity. This move from engaging a set of technical relational terms to presenting a key relational analogy to show an ontology by analogy is a two-pronged attempt to clarify the relationship among vows, a technical discussion, followed up with a clarifying analogy, suggesting that both abhidharma and newly developed terminology were insufficient to get at the heart of the matter.

Shākya Chokden's Three-Vow Theory

Shākya Chokden presents a similar three-vow theory as his Sakya contemporary Gorampa, essentially presenting what Sobisch calls "the refined Sakya view,"[569] although with some noteworthy differences. His assertions of the natures of the three vows are different than Gorampa's, as he describes them using the terms "intention" and "seeds." The *Abhidharmakośa* defines intention (*cetanā*) as "that which conditions, informs, and shapes the mind." It is considered a *mahābhūmika*, a mental factor that exists in every moment of the mind.[570]

For Gorampa, the prātimokṣa vows are "to abstain from harming others," while for Shākya Chokden, they are "the *intention* to abstain," and not the mere abstinence. The bodhisattva vows for Gorampa (who uses *byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa*) is "the wish to benefit others," and the vidyādhara vow is "to maintain pure awareness," or "enjoyment after

[569] Sobisch, *Three-Vow Theories*, 71.
[570] *AKB-E*, 189. (ch. 2, v. 24)

blessing [the first two vows] with wisdom as the form of the deity."[571] This allows for his claim later that the mantra vows cause the first two vows to be pervaded with the "means of taking the fruit as the path" (*bras bu lam byed kyi thabs kyis zin pa*) and the claim that the bodhisattva vows are an instance of the prātimokṣa vows, in that benefiting others is an instance of restraint from harming them. Gorampa also asserts that the first of the three-vow scheme is the bodhisattva prātimokṣa, and not the prātimokṣa vows (as stated above, in contrast to Shākya Chokden's statement that they are the upāsaka vows and Drakpa Gyalsen's statement that they are the refuge vows), and that this can arise for one who takes the bodhisattva vows without the prātimokṣa vows prior to them.[572] Shākya Chokden's addition of the word "intention" attached to the nature of all three vows reflects Sakya Paṇḍita's definition of the bodhisattva vows as "a continuous intention to relinquish the nonconcordant factors to the special accomplishment of complete buddhahood."[573] This allowed Sakya Paṇḍita to differentiate the vow, as the continuous intention, with the bodhicitta itself. He states, "If there is a continuous stream of the intention to relinquish the nonconcordant factors to cittotpāda, it serves as a vow."[574]

Shākya Chokden also offers a new analogy for how three separate things can have a same nature, which is that three people can own a single thing in common. In Shākya Chokden's presentation in particular it can be seen how three-vow theory discussions mirror abhidharma

[571] Sobisch, *Three-Vow Theories*, 133 and 135, the first using *ngo bo* and the second using *rang bzhin*. Tibetan on p. 132: *spyir so sor that pa zhes bya ba'i rang gi ng obo ni gzhan la gnod pa gzhi dang bcas pa las ldog pa yin la/ de'i steng du phan dogs pa 'dod cing zhugs pa ni byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa yin cing/ de'i steng du rig pa 'dzin pa ni rig pa 'dzin pa'i sdom pa yin no/* The Tibetan of the second formulation appears on p. 134: *'dir so sor thar pa'i rang bzhin ni gzhan la gnod byed pa gzhi dang bcas pa las log par byed pa yin la/ byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa ni de'i steng du gzhan la phan 'dogs par zhugs pa yin cing rig pa 'dzin pa ni de dag kyang lha'i rnam par ye shes kyis byin gyis brlabs nas longs spyod pas na 'di la 'gal ba ci yang yod pa ma yin no/*

[572] Sobisch, 133.

[573] Sakya Paṇḍita, *Dbu ma lugs*, 469. *rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas kyi bsgrub pa khyad par ba/ mi mthun pa'i phyogs spong ba'i sems rgyun chags so/*

[574] Sakya Paṇḍita, 467–68. *de lta bu'i sems bskyed pa 'di la mi mthun pa'i phyogs spong ba'i sems rgyun chags yod na sdom par 'gyur bas/*

language. Particularly, the same language of how the three prātimokṣa vows are held in one person appear in in Shākya Chokden's "Śrāvaka Discipline Chapter" of his *Discipline of the Three Vehicles* (*Theg pa chen po'i 'dul ba*) as they do in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāsya*. This is seen particularly in the nature of a vow and its potential for transformation when gained or in the concern that when one is lost, another is also lost; its relevance in the relation among vows is again addressed in the context of laymen engaging in the upavāsa or one-day fasting vow. Here, as well as in his three-vow theory below, it is clear that for Shākya Chokden the question "What is the nature of a vow?" has two possible answers: matter or mind. Here he does not use the Tibetan term translated in this study as "nature" (*ngo bo*) but rather the word *rdzas*, translated as "substance." These two terms are contrasted in other three-vow works, but Shākya Chokden appears to use interchangeably.

He looks here not at taking progressively higher vows, but at someone with a higher vow taking a lower, although in fact in three-vow hierarchy, these would be the two lowest, constituting the two levels of lay vows of the prātimokṣa: upavāsa and upāsaka. The question essentially is, what happens when a layman with lifetime vows engages in a fast in which the vows are taken only for that day? The consequences of this are different whether one considers these vows to be matter (*gzugs*) or consciousness (*shes pa*). Shākya Chokden writes:

> One might ask, when this [one-day fast] is taken by a complete and celibate lay person, does a vow with a different substance (*rdzas*) arise? According to the Vaibhāṣikas, for the reason that [vows] arise as material, there is no contradiction with [the assertion that] a different substance would arise. However, in traditions that assert that the nature [of vows] is mind (*sems pa*), something like that does not arise because the intention to

> relinquish the four roots for as long as one lives [which the lay person takes] and the intention not to guard [those vows] for more than one day [which one takes during the *upavāsa* fast] are like hot and cold in that they cannot exist at the same time. Therefore, in something like that there is no such taking on vows with different roots.[575]

The explicit contrast between form and consciousness here, and the analysis of the nature of the vows in a context of their interrelation (the essential three-vow theory concern), suggests that when "intention" (*sems pa*) or "consciousness" (*shes pa*) are used in the description of the nature of a vow, it does not indicate an abstraction like an "attitude," as has been previously translated, but rather a specific instance of mind.

Shākya Chokden's three-vow theory hinges on two central concepts: "upward possession" (*yar ldan*) and "transformation of state" (*gnas 'gyur*). These are used to clarify his position that the vows have a single nature (*ngo bo*) but different isolates (*ldog pa*). He also engages a term first used in Vibhūticandra's *Garland of Rays*, "outshining" or "suppression" (*zil gi gnon*), although he does not cite him and uses the phrase rather differently. That is, as opposed to the vows themselves suppressing one another and causing the former to remain dormant in the foundation consciousness, as Vibhūticandra asserted in his *Garland of Rays*, what is suppressed is not the vows themselves but the inferior motivations of the earlier vows.

His views are not altogether different from Gorampa's presentation of a Sakya three-vow theory, although the latter provides much more detail in his disputes with Vibhūticandra and

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[575] "Śrāvaka Discipline Chapter," 7. *'di yongs rdzogs dang tshangs spyod dge bsnyen gyis blangs pa'i tshe/ sdom rdzas logs pa shig skye'am zhe na/ bye brag tu smra ba ltar na/ gzugs can du skye bai rgyu mtshan gyis rdzas logs par skye ba mi 'gal yang/ ngo bo sems par 'dod pa'i lugs la de ltar skye ba ma yin te/ rtsa ba bzhi ji srid 'tsho'i bar du spong ba'i sems pa dang/ nyin zhag gcig las lhag par mi srung ba'i sems pa ni tsha grang ltar lhan cig tu mi gnas pa'i phyir ro/ des na de 'dra de la sdom pa'i rtsa ba logs su blangs pa med do/*

elaboration on Drakpa Gyaltsen's view in his *General Topics*. Both assert the sameness of the vows in terms of nature, a transformation of state that is defined as a transformation of the previous motivations into the greater motivations of the later vows, and an upward possession that entails an inclusion of the former by the latter. They also both accept that an analysis cannot stop at "one nature," but there must also be a difference of the vows in another sense. They use different terms, however, to describe at what level that difference is enacted. Shākya Chokden uses isolate (*ldog pa*, from the Sanskrit *vyāvṛtti*), a term with many valences, notably a technical term in Tibetan scholastic debate to refer to an entity itself when isolated conceptually from all that is not it.[576] The phrase "one nature, separate isolates" (*ngo bo gcig ldog pa tha dad*) is a common phrase in philosophy of language to indicate something like a synonym, to imply that two different conceptual objects can be used for the same referent, such as *thing* (*dngos po*) and *impermanent* (*mi rtag pa*).[577] However, it does not seem that Shākya Chokden uses it in precisely this sense; the phrase, rather, is used in a way that is commonplace, their aspect or function.

Before analyzing Shākya Chokden's own three-vow theory further, it is presented here in its entirety, because it is short, condensed, and best understood initially as a piece:

[576] This is the fourth definition in the *Great Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary*, s.v. "ldog pa," "A phenomenon that appears to a conceptual [mind] as the opposite of [its] dissimilar category or [what is] different [from it]. For example, the mere aspect of being the opposite of not being a pot is the isolate (*ldog pa*) of a pot, that is, the form that appears to conceptual mind." *rtog pa la rigs mi mthun pa'am tha dad pa las log par snang ba'i chos/ dper na/ bum pa ma yin pa las log tsam gyi cha ni bum pa'i ldog pa yin pa ste rtog pa la snang ba'i gzugs lta bu'o*

[577] Another Tibetan scholastic context that engages the phrase "one nature, separate isolates" is in the Geluk assertion, rejected by Sakya Paṇḍita, that the phrase describes the relationship between a continuum and its parts. For more on *ldog pa*, see Dreyfus, *Recognizing Reality*, 96, 112, 172, 174. Dreyfus translates this as "distinct distinguishers having the same entity." A complete study of how this phrase as used in *Pramana* topics and its reception in Tibetan scholarship is beyond the scope of this study, and further, Shākya Chokden's usage appears to be using the phrase loosely, if provocatively, not intending to reference *apoha* theory in any systematic way. For the recent and accessible scholarship on *ldog pa* in this context, see Tom Tillemans, "Tibetan Developments in Buddhist Logic," in *A Handbook of Logical Thought in China*, ed. Liu Fenrong, Jeremy Seligman, Zhai Jincheng (Springer Verlag, forthcoming 2023) and Yōichi Fukuda, "On the Origin of ldog pa in Tibetan Logic," in *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 65, no. 1 (2016).

Now, one might ask, in the case of a fully ordained monk in the well-explained dharma vinaya who has properly taken the cittotpāda vows and is a vidyādhara endowed with the vows that arise from the four empowerments [of Highest Yoga Tantra], how is his mental continuum endowed with all three vows? Those three vows taken in such a context exist in that the earlier are possessed upwardly (*yar ldan*), in that the latter ones are respectively more extensive and the objects of relinquishment, the way of relinquishing, and the manifestation of qualities of the earlier are included in the later ones. One might ask, how are [the later ones] more extensive? As for the ones of equal extent, what are the divisions in terms of being better or worse, and in which way are their natures the same or different?[578]

Bhikṣu vows are the discipline of relinquishing what is to be relinquished concerning body and speech together with its associated factors (*'khor bcas*) for as long as one lives. The cittotpāda vows, in terms of the feature of the objects of relinquishment, are to abandon principally the three nonvirtues of mind[579] together with their associated factors; in terms of the feature of the things to be acquired, they are to collect virtuous qualities, and in terms of the feature of active action they are the discipline of accomplishing the benefit of sentient beings. In terms of their feature of time, they are upheld until one obtains the great enlightenment [of buddhahood].

[578] "Vidyādhara Discipline Chapter," 493. *da ni'o na legs par gsungs pa'i chos 'dul ba la bsnyen par rdzogs pa'i dge slong zhig gis byang chub kyi mchog tu sems bskyed pa'i sdom pa yang dag par blangs nas rdo rje theg pa'i dbang bzhi bskur ba las byung ba'i sdom pa dang ldan pa'i rig pa 'dzin pa de'i rgyud la sdom pa gsum po ldan pa'i tshul ji lta bu zhe na/ de ltar blangs pa'i dus kyi sdom pa gsum ni phyi ma phyi ma rnams rgya che zhing/ snga ma snga ma rnams kyi spang bya spong tshul dang yon tan mngon du byed tshul gong ma de dang der 'du bas na snga ma rnams yar ldan gyi tshul gyis yod do/ rgya che ba ji ltar yin/ rgya che chung mnyam pa rnams la bzang ngan gyi dbye ba dang/ngo bo gcig dang tha dad kyi tshul ji lta bu ce na/*

[579] The three nonvirtues of mind are desire (or greed), aggression (or harmful intent), and ignorance (or wrong view).

The vidyādhara vows are, on top of the prior features of relinquishment and acquisition, the discipline of relinquishing concepts adhering to ordinary [appearances] and deities [of the visualized maṇḍala] (*tha mal dang lhar zhen*), and in terms of the feature of method, they are the discipline of abiding in the two stages[580] and ensuring that the wisdom of great bliss[581] does not decline. The feature of time is [that the vows] remain for as long as space endures.[582]

At the time when that is the case [that all three are held by one person], in the mental continuum of that Highest [Yoga Tantra] vidyādhara, (1) his bhikṣu vows; (2) the discipline of relinquishing the seven things to be relinquished of body and speech[583] that serves as one part of what is known as the "discipline of refraining from negative actions," a subgroup of the cittotpāda vows; and (3) the discipline of relinquishing the seven things to be relinquished similarly for the vidyādhara are all three of one nature, because all three of those relinquishments are of the same class, being the mental factor of intention, which is to relinquish the seven things to be relinquished of body and speech. For example, in the mental continuum of one person, there do not simultaneously

[580] The creation and completion stages (*bskyed rim dang rdzogs rim*) of Highest Yoga Tantra, which represent the visualization and dissolution of the deity of the tantric maṇḍala.
[581] "Great bliss" (*bde ba chen po*) in the context of the knowledge holder vows, including a differentiation of the nature of the samaya vows (*dam tshig sdom pa*) into relative and ultimate, is also discussed in "Rig pa 'dzin pa'i 'dul ba la 'jug pa bshad pa" in *Theg pa gsum kyi 'dul ba*, 54a2/447.
[582] VDC, 493. *'di ltar dge slong gi sdom pa ni lus ngag gi spang bya 'khor bcas spong ba'i tshul khrims tshe ji srid 'tsho ba zhig go/ sems bksyed pa'i sdom pa ni/ spang bya'i khyad par snga ma'i steng du yid kyi mi dge ba gsum 'khor dang bcas pa gtso bor spong zhing/ blang bya'i khyad par dge ba'i chos bsdus pa dang/ byed las kyi khyad par sems can don byed pa'i tshul khrims dus kyi khyad par byang chub chen po ma thob kyi bar du blangs pa zhig go/ rig pa 'dzin pa'i sdom pa ni/ spang bya dang blang bya'i khyad par snga ma rnams kyi steng du/ tha mal dang lhar zhen gyi rnam par rtog spang zhing/ thabs kyi khyad par rim pa gnyis la gnas te/ bde chen gyi ye shes mi nyams par 'dzin pa'i tshul khrims dus kyi khyad par/ nam mkha' ma zhig gi bar du gnas pa zhig go/*
[583] The seven things to be relinquished (or seven nonvirtues) related to body and speech are killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, divisive speech, harsh speech, and idle speech.

arise as different substances two intentions [such as when one has the intention] to relinquish killing [and yet is] motivated by anger as its causal motivation.[584]

Some might say that in that case, it is logically impossible for the [three vows] to be of one nature because these three motivations contradict each other. Although the causal motivations are not equivalent, the concurrent motivations transform upwards because the vidyādhara is endowed with and guards all three disciplines as concordant with the cittotpāda of the Vajrayāna.[585] That is also found in a tantra that says:

> Because he is of the nature of being able to turn into gold—
> turning iron, copper, and even silver into gold—
> the vidyādhara is like that with the prātimokṣa and bodhisattva [vows].

This teaches that the three vows in the mental continuum of the vidyādhara are the disciplines concordant in terms of being motivated by the vidyādhara's cittotpāda as their concurrent motivation.[586]

However, it does not teach that the bhikṣu and cittotpāda vows in their mental continuum *are* the mantra vows. This is because the three sets of vows taken in the way

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[584] VDC, 493–94. *de ltar yin pa de'i tshe na/ bla med kyi rig pa 'dzin pa de'i rgyud kyi dge slong gi sdom pa de dang/ sems bskyed kyi sdom pa'i nang tshan nyes spyod sdom pa'i tshul khrims zhes bya ba de'i yang phyogs gcig tu gyur pa'i lus ngag gi spang bya bdun spong gi tshul khrims de dang/ rig pa 'dzin pa'i yang de lta bur gyur pa'i spang bya bdun spong gi tshul khrims gsum po de ngo bo gcig pa yin te/ spong ba de gsum ka lus ngag gi spang bya bdun spong ba'i sems byung sems par rigs gcig pa'i phyir/ dper na gang zag gcig gi shes rgyud la/ rgyu'i kun slong zhe sdang gis bslang ba'i srog gcod spong ba'i sems pa rdzas gzhan gnyis cig car du mi 'byung ba bzhin no/*

[585] VDC, 494. *de ltar ngo bo cig pa mi 'thad de/ kun slong gsum po 'gal ba'i phyir/ zhe na/rgyu dus kyi kun slong mi mthun yang/ de dus kyi kun slong gong nas gong du gnas gyur pa yin te/ rig pa 'dzin pas ni tshul khrims gsum ka yang rdo rje theg pa'i sems bskyed dang mtshungs ldan du byas te bsrung ba'i phyir/*

[586] VDC, 494. *de skad du yang rgyud las/ gser 'gyur nus pa'i rang bzhin gyis/ lcags dang zangs su gyur pa dang/ dngul yang gser du 'gyur ba bzhin/ so sor thar dang chang chub sems/ rig pa 'dzin pa de bzhin no/'di ni rig pa 'dzin pa'i rgyud kyi sdom pa gsum po rig pa 'dzin pa'i sems bskyed kyis de dus kyi kun slong byas par mtshungs pa'i tshul khrims su ston pa yin gyi/*

explained above have very great differences in terms of the unshared objects from whom they are taken and different rituals for taking them, differences of extent of things to be relinquished and vows, and a very great difference in the length of time they last.[587]

By abiding in the higher vows in that manner, one must guard whatever lower vows that were received on that basis as if they were one's eyeball. This is because when generating minds striving towards the progressively higher vehicles by way of the complete transformation of the concurrent motivations, one suppresses the faults of the causal motivations of the lower vows and all qualities of relinquishment and accumulation are possessed in an upward manner.[588]

First, Shākya Chokden begins with a question introducing a shift from his discussion of the secret mantra vows to a three-vow presentation with the question that begins the section: "How is his mental continuum endowed with all three vows?" His answer to this constitutes the first key term that he engages, and which he repeats three times within the short section: upward possession (*yar ldan*). This indicates that the latter vows are progressively greater—more expansive or extensive—and that the abandonment of behavior eschewed by lower vows, as well as the way the manifestation of the respective good qualities, are included in the higher ones.[589] This term is related in three-vow treatises to a more specific term, which he does not use: upward

[587] VDC, 494–95. *de'i rgyud kyi dge slong dang sems bskyed kyi sdom pa sngags kyi sdom pa yin zhes ston pa ni ma yin te/gong du bshad pa de ltar blangs pa'i sdom pa gsum po de ni gang las len pa'i yul mi mthun/ ji ltar len pa'i cho ga mi 'dra/ ji snyed blangs pa'i spang bya dang sdom pa la khyab che chung gi khyad zhugs/ ji srid du blangs pa'i dus la ring thub gi khyad par shin tu che ba'i phyir ro/*

[588] VDC, 495. *de ltar sdom pa gong ma la gnas pas rten de la ji tsam mnos pa'i sdom pa 'og ma rnams mig 'bras bzhin du bsrung dgos te/ theg pa gong ma gong mar sems bskyed pa na sdom pa gsum po'i dus kyi kun slong gnas yongs su gyur pa'i tshul gyis/ 'og ma'i rgyu'i kun slong gi skyon zil gyis mnan nas spong ba dang bsdud pa'i yon tan mtha' dag yar ldan gyi tshul du ldan pa'i phyir/*

[589] Sobisch translates this as "possessing 'upwardly,'" with the latter term in quotes. Sobisch, *Three-Vow* Theory, 192.

possession of qualities (*yon tan yar ldan).* Jan-Ulrich Sobisch identifies this term as the most challenging to define due to its conflicting understandings by various Tibetan authors.[590] The notion of "upward possession" raises the questions: What is it that is possessed upwardly? Does this imply inclusion of the former, or some aspect of the former, in the latter? Both superiority and inclusion are implied. Does this justify not adhering to the former in times of contradiction, as Vibhūticandra seems to suggest with his analogy of "outshining" and Gampopa seems to suggest with his allowances to break the lower vows? Or, is it rather the opposite, does this imply that the inclusion of the former in the latter dictates that the former continue to be actively relevant, albeit transformed?

In his 2016 article, "Coming to Terms with a Monk's Seduction," Benjamin Wood notes a fifteenth-century usage of the term "upward possession" by Soton Shākya Pal, a biographer of a fourteenth-century monk Rinchen Namgyal, about whom several versions of a story are told about his supposed sexual encounter with a lay woman.[591] Shākya Pal's uses "upward possession" to excuse the monk's indiscretion, claiming that he had acted inspired by his cittotpāda vow of altruism to relieve the suffering of the lust-ridden woman by fornicating with her. This informal narrative approach to the concept reflects Gampopa's assertion that "any lower vow that endangers the life or obstructs a high vow is not to be observed."[592] This offers in fact two completely opposite implications from the concept of "upward possession": that one *must not* adhere to the lower vows in the case that they contradict the former and that one *must* adhere to the lower vows because they cannot possibly contradict the higher vows, given that they are included within them. Here, we have an upward possession of superiority, exemplified

[590] *Three-Vow Theory,* 192.
[591] Wood, "Coming to Terms with a Monk's Seduction," 211.
[592] Sobisch, *Three-Vow Theories,* 319.

by the acts of Rinchen Namgyal, and an upward possession of inclusion, exemplified by Shākya Chokden's statement that one must guard the lower vows as if they were "one's eyeball."

For Gampopa, contradiction is possible and "upward possession" is able to take on a hierarchical sense because the vows are differentiated based on their own natures as opposed to the natures of the vow taker, as Jigten Sumgön would assert and as opposed to something ontologically lighter, like their functionality, the time scale for their jurisdiction in the vow holder, and ritual sources.

Perhaps the challenge in translation and analysis of this term is rooted in whether upward possession implies a hierarchy or an inclusion. If the former, a choice on the part of the vow holder is necessary to ensure the higher vows take precedence over the lower vows. If the latter, no personal choice is required and the vows need not be weighed against each other. That is, if upward possession implies a characteristic of the vows themselves in that the former are naturally included in the latter, no personal choice is required because choosing the latter will include (not preclude) the former.

After establishing this relationship of inclusivity, he then poses two potential questions: whether the vows are divided into good and bad and whether they are one or many in nature. Shākya Chokden then presents the natures of each of the three vows. On the basis of these descriptions of their nature, Shākya Chokden next states his primary reason for the three vows to be of the same nature: they are of the same nature because they are of the same class of mental events. Shākya Chokden then states, clarifying a point he initiated in the earlier discussion of the three levels of prātimokṣa, that two contradictory mental states cannot arise at the same time in one person. The example he offers is that it would be impossible for one to have the intention to relinquish killing while having anger as its causal motivation. However, this leads him into a

potentially contradictory position, since he asserts that the three vows have three separate motivations. He concedes that some might say that it is illogical for three separate mental events, or groups of mental events, to have three separate motivations but one nature. This brings him to present the first of his two analogies: the alchemist.

The alchemist analogy, discussed further below, is a quotation from an unidentified tantra, cited differently in different sources. Drakpa Gyaltsen used it in his *Eliminating Errors*, which may be its first usage in this context. Vibhūticandra cites it as well, as does Gorampa, Shākya Chokden, Ju Mipham and others. The analogy states that like an alchemist who has the nature of being able to turn things into gold, and can turn iron, copper, and silver into gold, one who has taken secret mantra vows (*vidyādhara*, *rig 'dzin*), does the same with the prātimokṣa and cittotpāda vows. Shākya Chokden cites a verse from a tantra that he does not identify by name, and which Drakpa Gyaltsen refers to as the *Teaching of the Hundred-Thousand Tantra Establishing the Notion of Suchness.*

Here, however, Shākya Chokden uses the analogy neither to refer to the three types of families nor to imply the vows themselves transform. Instead, he clarifies that the motivation of the former transforms into the higher. This is a modification also of Vibhūticandra's use of the term "outshine" or "suppress" (*zil gyi gnon*). He is specifically clarifying the concept of the single nature here. That two things have a single nature, or a same nature, does not mean they are one entity. Here, for the nature of earlier vow to be transformed when taking the latter does not mean that it becomes one and the same with the latter. It does not teach that the lower vows *are* the higher vows, which would render the lower meaningless or mean that the vow holder has just the higher vows, as if the earlier rites were not conducted at all.

Shākya Chokden's explanation of this analogy follows, explaining it in terms of how the three vows can both have the same nature and yet remain essentially distinct. He says that the analogy "teaches that the three vows in the mental continuum of the vidyādhara are the discipline that accords with the temporal motivation by means of the vidyādhara's cittotpāda."

The two elements of this statement that hold the most weight are "the discipline that accords with the temporal motivation" and "by means of the wisdom holder's cittotpāda." This sentence implies the way that the vow holder, the person, holds the vows in such a way that their "nature" is the same, because since the natures of the vows are the mental factor of the intention to relinquish, their nature is an enduring mental state that transforms with the temporal transformation of the motivation in the vow holder. However, their singular motivation in the tantric practitioner, the singular mental factor of relinquishment, does not mean that the vows themselves are singular in effect or utility. This is how Shākya Chokden accounts for both the singularity and separateness of the vows: they are single in nature, being the mental class of intention, but they are separate in terms of the content of the motivations (*kun slong*) that gave rise to them.

He says, "However, it does not teach that the bhikṣu and cittotpāda vows *are* the mantra vows." Thus, just because they have the same nature, it does not mean that the vows themselves are the same. It is rather that separate things partake of the same nature. The reason for this is that externally, they remain distinct in terms of "objects from whom they are taken, "rituals for taking them," "the number of things to be relinquished," "the scale or scope of the vows," and, as discussed above the amount of time they are taken on. From this perspective of difference, there is a rejection of the notion that some may be forfeited for others, or that there is a hierarchy that

allows for the privileging of the higher over the lower, as in Vibhūticandra's and Gampopa's views.

He finishes with the two technical terms central to the Sakya system: transformation of state and upward possession. Here, his use of "upward possession" specifies that it is the qualities that increase, using the phrase similarly to those who propound upward possession of qualities (*yon tan yar ldan*), although he does not use the complete phrase. The linking concept between vows abiding separately and having the same nature is the notion of a transformation of state, or, as translated by Cyrus Stearns in his work on Vibhūticandra, as "transmutability" (*gnas 'gyur*). This term is found in the abhidharma, referring to something quite different, although not unrelated. In both abhidharma and Yogācāra contexts, Vasubandhu uses this term to explain the transition of state from an ordinary person to an ārya, or noble person.[593]

Transformation can mean that the thing newly transformed is of an incompatible nature with what came before the transformation, that they are mutually exclusive (*'gal ba*), but it can also mean the exact opposite, that a transformation entails the inclusion of what came before. Shākya Chokden summarizes his three-vow theory in his "Śrāvaka Discipline Chapter," this time adding an analogy, which is a standard of the genre. He states:

> The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* says, "Obtaining the intention to relinquish is explained as the perfection of discipline."[594] The way they are possessed is that they are possessed as a single nature, because two intentions of the same type but different substance cannot arise around a single primary mind. Their distinguishing features are different because, since their causes

[593] *āśrayaparāvṛtti.* See Kritzer, *Vasubandhu and the Yogācārabhumi*, 202.
[594] Śāntideva, *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 10b3.

> for being obtained, things to relinquish, and things to take on are definitely individual, it is not possible for there to be a common locus for all three. An example of something having a single nature and different distinguishing factors is that it is like a golden pot that previously was not owned by anyone being given to be shared among three different people.[595]

While this analogy is not found in his more extensive three-vow discussion at the end of his "Vidyādhara Discipline Chapter," it is found again in his "Prātimokṣa Discipline Chapter" referring to two different sets of three vows. He writes:

> One might say, well then, at the time when that bhikṣu endowed with the three vows gives back his bhikṣu vows, he also gives back the other two earlier vows because all three vows in his mindstream are of the same nature. That is not a fault, because on top of that single intention that is their substance (*rdzas*), their distinguishing factors (*ldog pa'i cha*) abide separately as three. For example, this is like one substance such as a knife with three different owners.[596]

In both of these cases the concern is a practical one and is underpinned by an assumption of loss. If a practitioner loses some vows, will he lose them all? This is the same concern addressed in

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[595] SDC, 4–5. *spyod 'jug tu/ spong ba'i sems ni thob pa la/ tshul khrims pha rol phyin par bshad/ ces pa ltar ro/ ldan tshul ni ngo bo gcig du ldan pa yin te/ gtso bo sems gcig gi 'khor du sems pa rigs mthun rdzas gzhan gnyis mi 'byung ba'i phyir/ ldog pa ni tha dad pa yin/ [4] te/ 'thob byed kyi rgyu dang spang bya dang blang bya so sor nges pas gsum po la gzhi mthun mi srid pa'i phyir/ ngo bo gcig cing ldog pa tha dad pa'i dpe ni/ sngon sus kyang bdag tu ma bzung ba'i rdzas gser gyi bum pa lta bu gcig bdag po 'gal ba can gsum la thun mong du byin pa bzhin no/*

[596] "Prātimokṣa Vow Chapter," 345. *'o na sdom gsum ldan pa'i dge slong des dge slong gi sdom pa phul ba'i tshe/ sdom pa snga ma gyis [reading gnyis] kyang phul bar 'gyur te/ de'i rgyud kyi gsum ka ngo bo gcig pa'i phyir ce na/ nyes pa med ste/ rdzas sems pa gcig po de'i steng na/ ldog pa'i cha tha dad pa gsum gnas pa'i phyir dper na/ gri lta bu'i rdzas gcig bdag po tha dad pa gsum gyis bzung ba bzhin no/*

the *Abhidharmakośa* when the aforementioned list of three vows are addressed with the same anxieties.

Three-vow discussions that support the "transformation of state" model of threefold possession do not generally include extensive explanations of how exactly the vows "transform." Yet, there is a glimpse of how this might operate particularly for the prātimokṣa. In his "Prātimokṣa Vow Chapter," Shākya Chokden reframes the difference between the two types of prātimokṣa vows: those of śrāvakas and those of bodhisattvas, while discussing a third category, the bodhisattva prātimokṣa, purposefully dropping the phrase "vows" in order to differentiate it from the vows arisen from the śrāvaka traditions ordination ceremonies that are retained in Mahāyāna and tantric contexts.[597]

In *Golden Lancet*, the term "bodhisattva's prātimokṣa" is also used, implying that the difference is in the holder of the vows and not the vows, though that does not seem to hold true elsewhere, when the category is given without the intermediate genitive, but rather with "bodhisattva" as a qualifier: "bodhisattva prātimokṣa."[598] In his answer to the first question within the third chapter of the *Golden Lancet*, Shākya Chokden rejects the existence of a śrāvaka prātimokṣa vow that arises newly during the tantric empowerment for a practitioner who has not undergone the vinaya ordination of the śrāvaka tradition. He presents a definition of such a vow asserted by the opponent he refutes—that its nature is defined broadly as "the intention, together with its seeds, to relinquish harm to others, together with its basis."[599] He uses this same

[597] The phrase "bodhisattva prātimokṣa" has an Indian canonical basis, though with a different meaning, in the Mahāyāna sūtra titled *The Mahāyāna Sūtra Called* "*The Four Qualities of the Bodhisattva Prātimokṣa*." This has been partially translated and researched by Nalakshina Dutt on the basis of a Sanskrit edition from Nepal, he estimates to be from the eleventh or twelfth centuries.[597] Dutt identifies this sūtra as a compilation of extracts from the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* and the *Upāliparipṛcchāsūtra*, describing the conduct of the bodhisattva.
[598] Sobsich, *Three-Vow* Theory, 91n249 and 92n250.
[599] *GL3*, 4. *de'i ngo bo ni gzhan la gnod pa gzhi dang bcas pa spong ba'i sems pa sa bon dang bcas pa'o*.

definition in his "Prātimokṣa Vow" to define a bodhisattva prātimokṣa that does not rely on the śrāvaka ordination ritual, but rather arises during the ritual for taking cittotpāda vows.[600] It is thus clear that he does not refute that this definition applies to the nature of the bodhisattva prātimokṣa, but he rather rejects its conflation with the prātimokṣa vows of the śrāvaka tradition. He is clear to differentiate a bodhisattva's prātimokṣa *vows* from the bodhisattva prātimokṣa (*byang chub sems dpa'i so thar*), also referred to as mere prātimokṣa (*so thar tsam*). He folds the latter into the cittotpāda vow.

As discussed above, the cittotpāda is divided into three disciplines in terms of its nature: the discipline of guarding against negative actions the discipline of gathering virtuous qualities, and the discipline of accomplishing the benefit of beings. The first of those is considered the bodhisattva's prātimokṣa, which Shākya Chokden states is the actual basis of the cittotpāda vows that are related to active bodhicitta. While guarding against negative actions of body and speech is covered by the prātimokṣa vow that is common to the śrāvaka vehicle, the bodhisattva vow includes this particular bodhisattva prātimokṣa, which covers guarding against negative actions of the mind. He defines this bodhisattva prātimokṣa as "the intention, together with its seeds, to abandon the three [nonvirtues] of mind from among the ten nonvirtues."[601] In this way, he differentiates the bodhisattva's prātimokṣa from the standard statement in Buddhist ethical literature that vows are meant to restrain from the ten nonvirtues of body and speech.

In the section of the "Prātimokṣa Vow Chapter" titled, "identifying the vows," he considers a different set of three vows, those of only the prātimokṣa category, while mirroring the language of the tantric set: holding all three in one person, (1) whether they cease at death,

[600] "Prātimokṣa Vow Chapter," 287. *gzhan la gnod pa gzhi dang bcas pa spong bar 'dod pa'i sems byung sems pa*
[601] *GL3,* 5. *mi dge ba bcu'i nang nas gtso bor yid kyi gsum spong ba'i sems pa sa bon dang bcas pa yin pa/*

(2) whether they are of the same or different in nature, and (3) whether they are all lost when one is lost. After differentiating the prātimokṣa into that of the śrāvakas and of bodhisattvas, he further differentiates them into prātimokṣa vows and prātimokṣa alone or "mere prātimokṣa," the individual liberation, itself. This is a way to allow for a result not bound by ritual necessities, and to place a Mahāyāna practitioner who is not any type of monastic at an equal status with a monastic. It retains the centrality of the vow ritual for vow-holders while extracting something like its essence (not to be confused with its nature, *ngo bo*) that is attainable by means of an internal, mental accomplishment. So, within the broad category of the prātimokṣa vows, there seems to be a progression from most concrete and externally produced to more subtle and internal, similar to the *prātimokṣana* that occurs at the moment of the ordination ceremony, itself also not to be confused with the nature of the vow itself that persists from thereafter, as discussed in chapter 1.

Shākya Chokden states that the bodhisattva prātimokṣa and śrāvaka prātimokṣa vows are the same in that they rely on the same ritual, the spoken instructions that are the productive condition (*byed pa'i rkyen*). This means that there is no alternative ordination ceremony apart from that found in the vinaya, and it also suggests that the cittotpāda vow ritual does not replace the vinaya ceremony even in terms of the production of a prātimokṣa. He also states that there is no difference in its own nature (*rang gi ngo bo*), which is the intention to relinquish those things to be relinquished in relation to body and speech.[602]

[602] PVC, 344. *de gnyis kyi khyad par ni/ man ngag gi byed pa'i rkyen cho ga mtshungs shing/ rang gi ngo bo lus ngag gi spang bya spong ba'i sems dpa' tsam yin pa la khyad par med kyang nyer len gyi rgyu mi 'dra ste/ snga ma ni nges 'byung gi bsam pa'i nyer len can yin la/ phyi ma byang chub mchog tu sems bskyed pa las byung ba'i phyir ro/*

However, Shākya Chokden states that their appropriating cause[603] is different. The essential, substantial origin of the former is renunciation while that of the latter is bodhicitta. He then proceeds to make a further distinction, not only between śrāvaka prātimokṣa and bodhisattva prātimokṣa but between the vows and something like a prātimokṣa essence, a distinction relevant in both the case of a śrāvaka and a bodhisattva. This isolated "prātimokṣa" and the vows associated with it are not commensurate categories; the two have a significant difference in scope or extent (*khyab che chung*). It is not entirely clear what exactly this concept of an isolated prātimokṣa that does not entail vows could be, but he does assert that it most certainly does not rely on the ritual ceremony that he earlier stated is a shared condition for prātimokṣa vow production for both śrāvaka and cittotpāda vow-holders. However, in the particular case of bodhisattvas, this vow-less prātimokṣa does arise alongside the cittotpāda vow as a bodhisattva prātimokṣa (while not entailing prātimokṣa vows). The reason for this is that when the cittotpāda vow is produced, at the same time there arises the primary mind and mental event of the desire to relinquish harming others (along with its basis), which is acquired (*nyer len*) by endeavoring to benefit others. While this wish to benefit others and relinquish harming them, which happens upon the production of the cittotpāda vows is a condition for the arising of bodhisattva prātimokṣa, it is not necessarily a condition for the arising of the bodhisattva prātimokṣa vows. Those vows depend on all elements of the ritual being complete.[604]

Shākya Chokden acknowledges that the Vaibhāṣikas assert that the nature of the vows—and there he specifies (as does Sakya Paṇḍita) the śrāvaka prātimokṣa vows—are material. But he contrasts this with a correct assertion: that the nature of śrāvaka prātimokṣa vows actually

[603] (*nye bar len pa'i rgyu*, *upādānakāraṇa*)
[604] PVC, 344–45.

persist as the nature of a singular set of primary mind and mental events within a man or woman who possess the support (*rten*), the appropriate type of body. He then offers the example by stating that the nature of a bhikṣu vow, a vow for a fully ordained monk, is a single continuum (*rgyun chags*) of firm resolve (*nges pa'i sems pa*) obtained from the authoritative ritual of the four supplications as its cause and that persists until they are lost at death. At the time of producing bodhicitta, the resolve to attain enlightenment, the bodhisattva prātimokṣa comes about, but not the relevant vows, because prātimokṣa vows rely only on the ritual.

The import of the nature of vows is that it carries implications for how long those vows last. He then quotes the sixth verse of the first chapter of Sakya Paṇḍita's *Differentiation of the Three Codes*, a definition of the cittotpāda vows:

> Because they arise from mind, they are not material.
> So, as long as the intention does not decline,
> those vows will persist.[605]

He then posits some possible confusions if this were applied to the prātimokṣa vows, stating that, according to this quote, if the nature of prātimokṣa vows are asserted to be mental factors, then it would entail the unwanted consequence that the vows would persist until enlightenment. Or, one would hold them for as long as the mind, which is the vow itself, does not decline. Shākya Chokden then directly addresses Sakya Paṇḍita's statement that the vows are lost at death because they are material. He states that this is not Sakya Paṇḍita's own view, but rather a

[605] Rhoton, *A Clear Differentiation*, 278. *sems las skye phyir gzugs can min/ des na ji srid sems ma nyams/ de yi bar du sdom pa yod.*

Vaibhāṣika tenet not held by higher schools. The view held by the Sautrāntikas and above, the correct view (*don la gnas pa'i phyogs*), is that the vows are lost at the time of death because, upon death, there is no longer the act of holding them, or consent to hold them (*shi nas khas blangs med pa'i phyir*).

Shākya Chokden then engages again his three-vow relational analogy that utilizes approaches taken in Tibetan three-vow theory debates. He posits the question as to how the lay and novice vows are endowed by the mind of a fully ordained monk. His answer is that they are possessed as a single substance (*rdzas*, Skt. *dravya*). "Substance" (*rdzas*) colloquially has a heavier, materialistic meaning, like ingredients, the thing in itself, or a tangible object, but here he seems to still mean the same thing in terms of abhidharma taxonomy, the same in the category of dhātus, something like a "real" dharma. He states that for that fully ordained monk to hold all three as one substance contradicts that the intention to relinquish the five things to relinquish, the intention to relinquish the ten, and the intention to relinquish nonvirtue of body and speech in general, and the specific acts that damage the vows, are different or separate substances. It also contradicts that two simultaneous mental events that are of the same type but different in substance can accompany one primary mind. All three are simultaneously possessed within one mindstream because they are obtained by their causes for being obtained and not lost by their causes for loss. Thus, a prātimokṣa vow must be taken in its own ritual context, even though it later transforms into the bodhisattva's prātimokṣa, also a mental factor, when the bodhisattva vows are taken.

Finally, the question is posed: Since they exist as one nature (and here Shākya Chokden returns to the original words *nature*, in Tibetan *ngo bo*), are all three sets lost if one set is lost? In other words, if a fully ordained monk gives back his bhikṣu vows, does he become relegated to

the status of a novice without having to retake his novice vows? If he gives back his bhikṣu vows, is he a vowed layman or a novice, or a man with no vows at all? His answer is that, while they are the same in that they are the same substance, that of being intention (*rdzas sems pa gcig po*), they are different in terms of their distinguishing features (*ldog pa'i cha*).[606]

Conclusion

Several layers of scriptural sources, including the Indian tantras and commentaries, as well as other doctrinal categories and dialectic tactics converge in three-vow texts, which is a hallmark of the Tibetan doxographic project. The scholar of Sakya Yaroslav Kamarovski writes of the multilayered cycle of determining and refuting that is the ongoing project of Tibetan orthodoxy as follows:

> The history of Tibetan Buddhist philosophical writings is the story of complex and often uneasy alliances between epistemology, logic, theories of emptiness, tantric views, and other elements that derive from divergent sources, different times, and dissimilar contexts. Possible combinations of those elements and their subdivisions are virtually inexhaustible, and together they inspired remarkably creative interpretive endeavors by generations of Tibetan thinkers.[607]

[606] PVC, 345. *rdzas sems pa gcig po de'i steng na/ ldog pa'i cha tha dad pa gsum gnas pa'i phyir dper na/ gri lta bu''u rdzas gcig bdag po tha dad pa gsum gyis bzung ba bzhin no/*
[607] Kamarovski, *Visions of Unity*, 6.

This speaks directly to what can appear as a jumble of scriptural references, creative ideas, and particularly unclear delimitations of orthodox or sect-specific views that encircle three-vow theory discussions. What appears to be unique is that they have no single Indian canonical basis and that Indian paṇḍitas appear as opponents rather than sources of authority. Kamarovski goes on to say that underlying the project of organizing the unwieldy volume and categories of scripture as the primary avenue for determining a correct view was the effort to determine the original intention of an authoritative source, whether it be the historical Buddha, an ancient or contemporaneous Indian author, or a Tibetan founding father or icon of a sect at the inception of its formation. Three-vow theory is no different in that it can only be understood within an intertextual conversation that most often pointed backward to other views and authors in prior times, at times becoming contentious. While the arguments in three-vow debates were polemical in nature, it is often difficult to separate out each sect's views with clarity, as terms and perspectives slip and take new shapes in new contexts. Even though new terminology was developed within the genre, definitions and usages were not fixed, and authors took a great deal of liberty in delimiting the parameters of interpretation.

In his "A Crisis of Doxography," Jacob Dalton notes that the creative expansion of Buddhist scripture over the eighth to eleventh centuries in India that was the development of tantra, and the tantras, coincided exactly with when Buddhism was transmitted to Tibet and translated into Tibetan. This made for a particularly unstable form of Buddhism that was absorbing new practices and doctrines (adding on new scriptures rather than eschewing them) and yet had not established a single orthodox presentation of how everything fit together. Tibetans must have witnessed these Indian masters—namely, in this context, Vibhūticandra and Śākyaśrībhadra—grappling with how to identify an orthodox Buddhism by carefully ordering

and arranging seemingly contradictory doctrines. This accounts for the fact that while India was revered as the Land of the Noble Ones, the source from which the true teachings were delivered to the Land of Snows, Indians (that is, the masters who traveled to Tibet) were not all revered as such. Vibhūticandra became the foil, upholding a wrong three-vow theory, despite the fact that he wrote it in Tibet, making his views eminently accessibly to contemporary Tibetan thinkers. Śākyaśrībhadra is painted as a judgmental curmudgeon, grudgingly offering the Tibetan people a scribbled together bodhisattva vow ritual, despite the undeniable legacy he left for vinaya reform. Tibetans had to continually propose various schemas and models to order and reorder an unwieldy amount of contradictory practice and scripture; three-vow theory is one such model.

Conclusion

Complex sets of exegetical concepts motivate Tibetan and Indian scholarly analyses of the vows as they "are," as a discrete entity, a component of the person, to be defined, analyzed, and categorized in and of itself without initial recourse to the specifics of behavior. A vow arises during a ritual and at a specific moment during that ritual, and its continued operation relies on the support (*rten*) of the person who is the vow holder and the previous vows that vow holder has taken. The very notion that a vow has a nature makes possible several strands of discussion on vows, and, more broadly, the nature of the vow serves as a doctrinal element in the transition from saṃsāra to enlightenment, a soteriological technology. Unbroken vows are conceptualized as integral to a path to liberation. Along that path, if not broken or returned, the prātimokṣa vows are lost at death, though their karmic force continues through future lifetimes; the cittotpāda vows are lost at enlightenment, their goal fulfilled; and vidyādhara vows have both relative and ultimate forms that serve as a continuum from consciousness to wisdom, organized specifically within the components of an unenlightened person to those of an enlightened one, enduring into the liberated state.

From one perspective, the vow itself is not itself a karmic act (*karman*) but is the mechanism that is responsible for the connection between the karmic act and the karmic result. A vow is not, and cannot be, restricted to the karmic act of the ordination ceremony, as the ceremony is limited in duration; a vow cannot end when the ritual ends. Quite the opposite, the ritual, the karmic act itself, produces the vow, which then continues to operate, generating merit.

A vow is not the mere lack of certain actions or the mere act of doing them (restraint from misdeeds or performance of virtuous acts), because a mere lack does not function and any given act will end. In a system of momentary dharmas, neither a witnessable act nor an imperceptible restraint remain in the continuum of a person, but the promises made, to act or not, do. This posed a particular challenge for Buddhist philosophical systems that did not have the category of an enduring unconscious and wrestled with the failed, yet ever re-arising, ontological category of the avijñaptirūpa.

Here, what does the nature of the vow concept allow doctrinally? It offers a category of dhātu to be referenced when analyzing the interrelation of the three vows. It offers a positive phenomenon that generates merit, rather than a mere lack that cannot. It offers such a phenomenon also to be posited as something that is continuous into higher, exalted states of mind: The instance of mind (*shes pa*) that is the vidyādhara vow becomes an instance of wisdom (*ye shes*). The aspirational and active aspects of relative bodhicitta have a counterpart of ultimate bodhicitta. These examples show a ritual production of a mental state, damageable by certain acts and intentions (the downfalls), but when continuously sustained becomes an aspect of the enlightened state.

A vow is defined within an ontological classification system that is ritually produced and perpetuates as a lineage when a specifically defined authentic preceptor endowed with specific qualities externalizes and substantiates the vow as a mode of ethical force to students endowed with their own proof of authenticity. This divorces the visible signs of virtue from the invisible potential for restraint in order to generate and perpetuate merit beyond the ritual activity of its production. The question of how a vow is ritually produced inspires different concerns depending on which of the three sets of vows are at issue. The concerns of the latter two sets of

vows are to some degree reliant on and modeled after the first, though each also represents its own set of doctrinal concepts, both reinforcing and disrupting the ethical framework of the former. The latter two are abstracted and, as ethical codes, involve infractions that are increasingly difficult to witness or prove than those at the level of pedestrian restraint from physical or verbal misdeed.

Three-vow theory is fundamentally a system of both integration and abrogation, in that it is both a system of opposing virtues muscled into a unity and at the same time an acquiescence to the reality of contradiction that must entail hierarchy and repeal. The nature concept is harnessed both to demonstrate sameness and to prove distinction across the three. One can see the pendulum swing from one to the other: from Drakpa Gyaltsen's theory of transformation based on the alchemy metaphor that would all but dissolve the first two levels of vows into the third via a complete transformation to Vibhūticandra's claim of their different natures, the latter not absorbing but entirely eclipsing the former two. Although the former was criticized by Vibhūticandra, and may appear to be contradictory positions, they both lead to the same consequence—neglect of the two lower vows. Thus, later three-vow theorists, including Shākya Chokden, had to devise a model in which the hierarchy, inclusion, and expansion of the later vows did not lead to a paradigm in which the former lost their import. There had to be both sameness and difference.

In some ways, three-vow theory represents a movement from the letter of the law to the spirit of the law. It is a movement from an analysis of contradiction not in terms of acts, behaviors, or comportment proscribed by one or another of the vow systems, but rather in terms of a continuous, silent functioning mental factor at work in the person regardless of behavior. If the nature of a vow stands in for the letter of the law, anxiety over the contradiction across

behavioral expectations can be overridden with a claim that even if outward comportment changes, a nature that has been ritually constructed remains. That this nature might transform or develop with additional sets of vows allows for a Mahāyāna tantric practitioner to absorb, rather than contradict any competing ethical codes.

A theory of interrelation, it can also be seen as a Buddhist approach to abrogation, how to handle competing jurisdictions, seemingly contradictory ethical codes. It reflects a confluence of various opposing factors, resolving seeming contradiction across tantra and monastic practice. Three-vow theory can thus only truly be understood as a Vajrayāna concern: it is a concern and topic of analysis for tantric practitioners in Mahāyāna traditions and monastic communities. The word "nature" is at the heart of the Mahāyāna soteriological and ontological systems that Shākya Chokden had such unorthodox views about: the three natures (*trisvabhāva*) of the Yogācāra system,[608] the lack of nature (*niḥsvabhāva*) in Madhyamaka, and the status of a nature in relative and ultimate truth. It is stated that to cling to a nature of virtue is to lose the outcome of that virtue. But this did not stop historical Tibetans from engaging in discourse to determine the nature of a vow.

One would think that three-vow theory could be an explicit way to promote or eschew monastic practice, and it very well could have been used in this way in oral tradition. But the texts do not seem to support this. The Sakya tradition has strong historical elements of both monastic practice and householder tantric practitioners. The Sakya founding fathers were three generations of laymen, tantric householders, and members of the same family. Both Gorampa and Shākya Chokden, on the other hand, were fully ordained monks, and Shākya Chokden is known for having instituted monastic reform at his monastic seat Serdokchen.

[608] Kamarovski, *Visions of Unity*, 123–24.

Another central question for understanding these debates and Shākya Chokden's positions, a question that appears unanswerable with the current resources is: What is at stake? Given that there was never a time when Tibet had a Buddhism without tantra, and never a Buddhism (entirely) without monasticism, why did a sense of tension between them persist? Was the continued negotiation of exactly how one person held all three vows at once meant to protect tantric practices or to protect monastic identity, or both at once?

It is only in this tantric context that these three-vow concepts have significance to these three particular sets of vows. Further, it is here that a "vow" becomes a fixed concept, singular in concept but threefold in its taxonomy, with each unit categorically commensurate to one another. The vow concept, with multiple terms and referents in Tibetan and Sanskrit treatises, comes to inhabit a category of its own whose emergent properties must be dealt with by way of new logical maneuvers and rationalizations. Three-vow theory and its conceptual frameworks might be seen as the analytic consequences of taking three disparate doctrinal elements and fixing them into a single category of practice. The concerns of three-vow theory, which are in many ways abhidharma discussions transferred to a tantric context, contend with anxiety over the "antinomian" language of the tantras by allowing the samayas of the secret mantra to absorb, on the relative level, the language of a vow as an intention (*bsam pa*). Indeed, Shākya Chokden asserts that if all three vows are intention to relinquish and train, and the lesser motivations behind the intentions of each lower is transformed into the higher, there is no contradiction, no threat among them, and no internal contradiction to the foundation of the tradition as a monastic tantric soteriological path.

Three-vow theory and the three-vow genre thus rest on the assumption that a vow is a recognizable doctrinal element and a stable category and that the three sets each stand

unquestionably as instances of this category. The history of Indian Buddhism and the extant literature on vows reveals that each set of vows is the product of a long and gradual process wherein three disparate doctrinal and ritual elements were forged into a threefold progressive schema and identified as "vows," with the presumptions and valences of each set making their way creatively into the realm of the other two in ways that were not predestined or necessary to be the case. There are certainly other ways, many more straightforward, that a Buddhist ethics of vows could have developed in Mahāyāna communities that both retained monastic institutional practices and incorporated tantric soteriological practices. Each new development in the long history of Indian Buddhism had to project itself back in time to a point of origin, declaring its superiority to those forms that had done so before. New teachings were authenticated by new vows but, within the project of forever looking back, also by retaining the old vows.

In the three overlapping sets of vows, we see not only a repetition and redefinition of language but a constant return to the past to rewrite a history wherein the vows were a structure that served as a legitimizing factor that carried with it multiple layers of traditions. However, the three-vow genre and its conceptual framework exist because of events in the course of the development of Buddhism in India that are generally taken as given but could certainly have been otherwise, namely, that a ritual for the arousal of bodhicitta and restricting of thoughts and deeds that damage one's relationship with a tantric guru and deity ultimately came to be seen as vow conferrals on a par with monastic ordination. The literature for each of the vows when taken separately reveals long and gradual developments and strikingly divergent ways in which disparate doctrinal elements came to be seen as three contradictory but indispensable instances of a natural category.

An analysis of the categories, sets, levels, and types of vows across the Tibetan canon touches on many other fundamental sets that organize Tibetan orthodoxy and orthopraxy, extending across the entire map of Buddhist thought to engage, resist, and complicate standard hermeneutical systems: relative and ultimate, mind and matter, the four tenet systems, the three vehicles, the two Mahāyāna philosophical systems, both Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna as textual traditions and as differentiators of identity for practitioners as śrāvaka or as bodhisattva who aspire to the status, respectively, of arhat or buddha. While a hallmark of the Tibetan Buddhist soteriological project is the continued absorption of past ideologies into new systems with new hermeneutic tools to integrate seemingly or blatantly contradictory doctrinal elements, it is still the case that some of these elements were not absorbed. There were still abandoned schemas and rejected categories.

The path to buddhahood is presented as both immediate and accessible and impossibly difficult and long. And yet, short or long, at the heart of so much Buddhist path doctrine, including vows, is an unabashed acknowledgement of failure. The reality of violation dominates even the oldest scriptures on vows. The triskandha ritual and the sevenfold offering ritual were fundamentally confession rituals.[609] Essential to the teachings on the bodhisattva vow is the confession ritual in which one aspires to see a vision in a dream. The primary list of downfalls to the prātimokṣa vows of fully ordained monks is found in the *Prātimokṣa Sūtra*—the biweekly confession ritual. They were, as Nancy Barnes puts it, "means to restore one's courage after the last defeat."[610] Intention fills in the gap between how we are and how we wish we were, promising a continuum of such a link into an ultimate state exceedingly contradictory to our

[609] Barnes, *The Triskandha, Practice in Three Parts*, 5. While it was "always flexible enough to permit the accretion of other suitable practices for various occasions and in various texts," the ritual always included a confession of sins component. Barnes writes, "The Triskandha is fundamentally a confession ritual."
[610] Barnes, 8.

current experience of suffering and harm. Ritual affirms this link, promising a continuum and stability of such intention despite evidence to the contrary of our own making, and offers methods for dealing with that evidence, in forms both private and public.

Appendix 1: Bibliographic Note

Shākya Chokden's *Good Questions* is not divided into chapters but is rather a continuous list of questions. Its set of answers, *The Golden Lancet*, is divided into three chapters: the first two, on prātimokṣa and cittotpāda vows, respectively, are included as a single text and the third as a separate text, though it includes within its title, "the third chapter" (*le'u gsum pa*) within all available versions of Shākya Chokden's Collected Works. What follows is a summary of all questions within those two chapters as listed in the *Good Questions* and answered in the *Golden Lancet*, noting discrepancies between the two.

The first chapter, on prātimokṣa vows, consists of thirty-two questions that correspond to topics in the first chapter of Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen's *Differentiating the Three Vows* (*Sdom gsum rab dbye*): questions #1–9 pertain to issues of the nature of prātimokṣa vows as discussed by Sakya Paṇḍita in verses #1 through #58. Shākya Chokden here addresses key abhidharma concepts such as perceptible (*vijñāpti*) and imperceptible (*avijñapti*) aspects of karma and form, causes for obtaining the vows, their status upon the death of the vow holder, the beings that can hold them, lay (*upāsaka*) and ritual fasting (*upavāsa*) vows in different doctrinal systems, differences between Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika systems, and the difference between Mahāyāna and śrāvaka prātimokṣa vows. Questions #10–26 take up the subject of virtue and its relationship to the dharmadhātu, dealing with questions of the relationship between ethics and ontology and address verses #59–155 in Sakya Paṇḍita's text. Question #27 returns to the topic of karma theory, though it addresses a topic not discussed in Sakya Paṇḍita's text until chapter 2

on the cittotpāda vows: the negative effects of unskilled (*mi mkhas pa*) love and compassion and their place within the abhidharma classification of causes. Question #28 cites Sakya Paṇḍita's verse #211 to indicate the consequences of failing to differentiate the two types of wrongdoing, natural wrongdoing (*prakṛtisāvadya*, *rang bzhin gyi kha na ma tho ba*) and wrongdoing by prohibition (*pratikṣepaṇasāvadya*, *bcas pa'i kha na ma tho ba*), and the consequences of overextending the latter to those who do not hold full sets of vows. Questions #29 and #30 address issues of Indian Buddhist history and query, respectively, whether the eighteen śrāvaka Buddhist schools each had its own vinaya, and whether the vinaya was put down in writing at the time of the third council. As for their correspondence with Sakya Paṇḍita's work, the former addresses verse #174 and the latter applies to questions of vinaya history a later discussion of the purpose of the third council that appears in verse #597 in chapter 3 on secret mantra vows.[611] Question #31 seeks to clarify Sakya Paṇḍita's verse #218 regarding a story in the *Ratnakuṭa Sūtra* in which a group of monks give back their vows in order to avoid an improper situation of eating food given by the laity. The final question in this first section on prātimokṣa vows, #32, seems to correspond to Sakya Paṇḍita's verse #222 and returns to the consequences of whether virtue inheres in nature by querying what the faults are in stating that buddhas are the agents of all happiness but not of all suffering.

The second chapter of the *Golden Lancet,* on cittotpāda vows, consists of eleven questions, ten from the *Good Questions* and an additional one (question #9) not found in the root text. Questions #1, #2, and #3 address the distinction between the Cittamātra and Madhyamaka cittotpāda vow lineages and rituals for generating bodhicitta. The first asks which of these two is included within the tantras and the second asks whether the Cittamātra ritual will produce the

[611] See also Silk, "The Indian Buddhist Mahādeva," 40.

cittotpāda vow in a person who holds a Madhyamaka view. The third asks whether the root downfalls are the same in Asaṅga's *Bodhisattvabhūmi,* a purportedly "Cittamātra" text, as they are in Śāntideva's *Śikṣasamuccaya,* a Madhyamaka work. These correspond to verses #1 through #19 of the bodhisattva section of Sakya Paṇḍita's text. Questions #4, #5, and #6 examine Sakya Paṇḍita's claims in his verses #12, #13, and #17 that the Cittamātra ritual requires the prātimokṣa as a prerequisite while the Madhyamaka ritual does not. Question #5 in particular addresses a one-day vow to refrain from taking life that serves as a prerequisite for the Madhyamaka ritual, referencing Sakya Paṇḍita's verse #15. Question #7 queries whether ultimate bodhicitta is generated ritually as taught in Nāgārjuna's *Bodhicittavivarana*[612] and pertains to verses #20–29 in Sakya Paṇḍita's work. Question #8 investigates at what point in the ritual liturgy the generations of bodhicitta are produced and stabilized. Questions #7 and #8 do not appear to pertain to any specific verse in Sakya Paṇḍita's work. Question #9, which does not appear at all in the *Good Questions,* takes up the topic of the practice of the exchange of self and other, which is covered in Sakya Paṇḍita's work in verses #36–56. Questions #10 and #11 pertain to dedication of merit in the śrāvaka vehicle and correspond to verses #52–55 in Sakya Paṇḍita's text.

The "third chapter" of the *Golden Lancet,* covering the questions from the *Good Questions* on the topic of vows within tantra, appears in all versions of his Collected Works as a separate text, *Chapter Three: A Certain Discussion on the Topic of the Knowledge Holder Vows* (*Le'u gsum pa rig 'dzin sdom pa'i skabs kyi 'bel gtam rnam par nges pa*). It consists of answers to the final fifty-eight questions of the *Good Questions,* all on the topic of the third set of the three vows, secret mantra vows, or vidyādhara (knowledge holder) vows. These are separated

[612] Nāgārjuna, *Commentary on the Mind of Enlightenment*, *Bodhicittavivarana*, *Byang chub sems kyi 'grel pa* (Dg.T. 1800).

into fifty main questions (which, Shākya Chokden declares after the fiftieth answer, makes an even one hundred, including both questions and answers) and eight supplementary questions (*kha skong ba'i dri ba brgyad*).

In addition to his *Good Questions* and their answers, the two-part *Golden Lancet*, Shākya Chokden composed a number of other texts on vows. One other specifically belongs to the *Good Questions* genre of material. While residing in Serdokchen, he composed a short twelve-folio response to three questions, titled *Answers to Three Well-Known Questions from the Good Questions on "Distinguishing the Three Vows"* (*Sdom pa gsum gyi rab dbye'i dri ba brgya dang brgyad las kun la grags che ba'i dri ba gsum gyi lan gdabs pa*).[613] The three questions he addresses in this text are found in the prātimokṣa section of his *Good Questions,* though they pertain not to specific topics of vow content per se but rather to the relationship between ontology and ethics, as they address theoretical issues within Indian śāstric literature. They are here numbered according to the *Good Questions*, though Shākya Chokden answers them in reverse order from how they appear in that text. They are as follows: question #22 on a discussion in Asaṅga's *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* regarding the relationship between uncompounded virtue and uncontaminated seeds in the foundation consciousness; #18 on the relationship between the dharmadhātu and virtue in Asaṅga's *Uttaratantraśāstra,* and #13 on Dharmakīrti's position on impermanence. Question #22 does not appear at all in his *Golden Lancet,* while question #18 does appear but with slightly different wording and includes additional lines found in the *Good Questions* but not the *Golden Lancet.* Question #13 is addressed in full in both *Golden Lancet* and *Three Well-known Questions*.

[613] Shākya Chokden, *Answering Three Well-Known Questions from the One Hundred and Eight Questions on "Differentiating the Three Vows," Sdom pa gsum gyi rab dbye'i dri ba brgya dang brgyad pa las kun la grags che ba'i dri ba gsum gyi lan gdab pa* (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006). The colophon does not supply a date of composition.

This set of texts on questions and answers clarifying Sakya Paṇḍita is not Shākya Chokden's only composition on vows and their ideological issues. Shākya Chokden's contribution to what Jan-Ulrich Sobisch has termed "three-vow theory" is found in yet another text, called *An Explanation of the First Level of Vows, Prātimokṣa Vows, from within the "Extensive Explanation of the Three Vows"* (*Sdom gsum gyi rnam par bzhag pa rgya cher bshad pa las so sor thar pa'i rim pa dang po rnam par bshad pa*), composed in 1457.[614] Based on this title, which is assigned to it in all three versions of Shākya Chokden's Collected Works consulted, it appears to be a single text within a triad, each text on one of the sets of three vows. However, neither of the two other such texts appear within any Collected Works nor as arranged by Kamarovski in his seminal work on Shākya Chokden's corpus, *Visions of Unity*. The same is the case with another text, *Śrāvaka Discipline, from the Presentation on the Disciplines of the Three Vehicles* (*Theg pa gsum gyi 'dul ba rnam par bzhag pa las nyan thos kyi 'dul ba*), whose title also implies that there are two others in a set of three texts on discipline, though neither of these others appear listed as separate texts in any of the Collected Works consulted. This latter text, on śrāvaka discipline, does in fact only contain a discussion of the śrāvaka discipline, with no clear date of composition (though it was printed in 1498[615]), appearing to constitute a stand-alone work on monastic practice—not as a triad with the other two sets of vows nor paired with a Mahāyāna counterpart—though a closer reading could reveal further complexity. This indicates that what appear to be chapters of a single work in fact circulated separately, were printed separately, and listed separately in some catalogs.

[614] Kamarovski, "Visions of Unity," 52.
[615] Volker Caumanns, "The Collected Works of gSer mdog Pan chen Shākya mchog ldan: The Formation and Early Transmission of a 15th-Century Literary Corpus," in *Fifteenth Century Tibet: Cultural Blossoming and Political Unrest*, edited by Volker Caumanns and Marta Sernesi (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2017), 128n48.

The former text, however, *Extensive Explanation of the Three Vows*, which includes in its full title that its topic is only one of three, the prātimokṣa vows, is clearly simply mistitled and in fact contains the standard structure for three-vow texts, including chapters on all three vow sets, as well as a final discussion engaging how one practitioner holds all three vows simultaneously, in which Shākya Chokden presents his most direct three-vow theory. However, to further complicate matters, the second and third chapters of *Extensive Explanation of the Three Vows* are titled as if they were originally intended to be included within the latter text, *A Presentation of the Discipline of the Three Vehicles*, and not the former, on vows (*sdom pa*). Chapters 2 and 3 of *Extensive Explanation* are titled "A Definitive Explanation of Bodhisattva Discipline" (*byang chub sems dpa'i 'dul ba rnam par nges pa bshad pa*) and "Engaging in the Vidyādhara Discipline" (*rig pa 'dzin pa'i 'dul ba la 'jug pa*),[616] and for this reason, all chapters have been cited individually. Volker Caumanns shows that two similar chapters appear in a list of texts in an unidentified compendium (*bka' 'bum*) mentioned in the *Clear Sun of the Buddha's Teachings* (*Thub bstan gsal ba'i nyin byed*), an eighteenth-century biography of Shākya Chokden composed by Shākya Rinchen. The chapters appear as one entry, referenced together under the title "Two Chapters on the Bodhisattva and Secret Mantra Discipline from the *Definitive Discipline of the Three Vehicles* (*Theg pa gsum gyi 'dul ba rnam par nges pa las byang sems dang gsang sngags kyi 'dul ba'i le'u gnyis*)."[617] Though the titles are similar, they use slightly different phrasing: the primary title contains "ascertainment" (*rnam par nges pa*)" rather than "presentation" (*rnam par*

[616] Shākya Chokden, *An Explanation of the First Level of Vows, Prātimokṣa Vows, from within the* "*Extensive Explanation of the Three Vows,*" *Sdom gsum gyi rnam par bzhag pa rgya cher bshad pa las so sor thar pa'i rim pa dang po rnam par bshad pa*, in *Gsung 'bum Shākya mchog ldan* 6, 341–496. (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006). The section on bodhisattva discipline begins on page 35a3(409), and the section on engaging in "knowledge holder" discipline begins on page 53b1 (446). The section on holding three vows at once begins on page 76b6 (492). See also *Śrāvaka Discipline: from An Explanation of the Discipline of the Three Vehicles* (*Theg pa gsum gyi 'dul ba rnam par bzhag pa las nyan thos kyi 'dul ba*) (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006).
[617] Caumanns, "The Collected Works of gSer mdog Pan chen," 150.

bzhag pa), and the third set of vows, or disciplines (*'dul ba*), are referred to as "secret mantra" (*gsang sngags*) rather than "knowledge holder" (*rig 'dzin*) as they are in the *Extensive Explanation*. In the edition of the Collected Works published in 2013 by China's Tibetological Publishing House (Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang) in Beijing, these "chapters" are listed in the Western-style table of contents in the same order and location as the other editions, but there they are listed as separate texts.[618] David Jackson mentions these chapters as belonging to a single text, though also does not give a date or place of composition.[619]

It is unclear what this editorial jumble might suggest. At the very least it indicates the separate lives of the text chapters, seen in their individual listing and separate printing from one another. It could be that they were taught separately and treated as distinct texts. It could be that the cross-organization and arrangement of the sub-parts of two separate texts was a scribal inconsistency or an editing choice after their composition, to some degree based on their separate circulation. It is difficult to say whether this chapter title discrepancy is purposeful by the author or a compiler or scribal choice or error. Further study on dating these texts by their content would be needed in order to settle this, as the texts were possibly (if we take 1498, the printing date, to be close to the date of composition, which is of course dubious) composed forty years apart, one possibly when Shākya Chokden was a young man and one during the last decade of his life.

[618] (Pe cin: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2013).
[619] David Jackson, "Commentaries on the Writings of Sakya Paṇḍita," 17. Jackson also mentions the printing date of 1498 for only the first of the three parts.

Appendix 2: *Good Questions*

Good Questions on the Treatise Called "Clearly Differentiating the Three Vows" by Shākya Chokden (consisting of the first two of three chapters, respectively on the prātimokṣa and cittotpāda vows, composed in 1475, organized and numbered below based on the order they are answered in the *Golden Lancet*).[620]

[26b] Homage to Mañjuśrī[621]

I ask these [questions] to all of those
who are not confused about the fields of knowledge,
who have clear knowledge and unbiased mind toward the three piṭakas and classes of tantras.[622]

And so, this is titled, *One Hundred and Eight Points of Doubt: Questions in Verse Issuing from the Treatise Called "Clearly Differentiating the Three Vows*."[623]

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[620] Shākya Chokden, *Sdom gsum rab dbye la dri ba legs pa*, in *Gsung 'bum Shākya mchog ldan*, 17:496–512. Kathmandu, Nepal: Sachen International, 2006. BDRC MW00EGS1016899_19A56E.
[621] The homage given here, *na mo wa gi shva ra ya*, is a variation on Mañjuśrī's less common mantra *oṃ wā gī shva ri mum*. For a use of this mantra in a Tibetan context, see Kunsang Namgyal Lama, "Tsha Tsha Inscriptions: A Preliminary Survey," in *Tibetan Inscriptions*, ed. Kurt Tropper and Cristina Scherrer-Schaub (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 13n36.
[622] *rig pa'i gnas la ma rmongs shing/ sde snod gsum dang rgyud sde la/ mkhyen pa gsal zhing thugs gzu ba/ de dag kun la 'di 'dri'o/*
[623] *de yang 'di ltar sdom pa gsum gyis rab tu dbye ba zhes bya ba'i bstan bcos las brtsams te dri ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa dogs pa'i gnas brgya dang brgyad pa zhes bya ba/*

The youth with completely beautiful, fresh major and minor marks,

born in the land of completely white snow mountains

Whose powerful knowledge is infinite,

I pay homage with stainless complete purity

to the Mahāpaṇḍita [Sakya Paṇḍita].[624]

Your excellent explanations are pleasing to the ear, gentle, and

pleasing to the mind. The meaning of the words is easy to grasp,

yet they are not understood, and there are several points of doubt.[625]

I will ask [these questions] with discrimination and respect

with a mind that is not contemptuous

to your followers who possess clear analysis and are learned.[626]

I have faith in all of those who are skilled in

inserting well into the ears of other smiling intellectuals

the garland of lotuses of the abundant dharma discourse,

together with the radiant jewel of fame.[627]

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[624] *rab mdzes mtshan dpe gsar pa'i lang tsho can/ rab dkar gangs ri'i ljongs su byon gyur pa/ rab 'byams mkhas pa'i dbang pos* [reading *po'i*] *paN chen la/ rab dang rnyog pa med pas phyag bgyi'o/*

[625] *khyod nyid legs bshad rna bar nyan cing 'jebs/ yid la 'bab cing tshig don gzung sla bar/ gyur kyang ma shes the tshom gnas 'ga' zhig/*

[626] *khyod nyid rjes 'jug rnam dpyod gsal ldan cing/ thos par ldan la khyad gsod min pa'i blos/ rnam par rtags te gus pas dri bar bya/*

[627] *chos kyi 'bel gtam yid 'ong padmo'i phreng/ snyan grags nor bu'i mdangs dang lhan cig tu/ rnam dpyod 'dzum ldan gzhan gyi rna ba la/ legs* [27] *par rgyud mkhas de dag kun la dad/*

[Chapter 1: Prātimokṣa Vows]

(1) Where is the explanation that the prātimokṣa vows in the śrāvaka tradition are only avijñaptirūpa? Is it not also explained that they are also vijñaptirūpa?[628]

(2) If the intent of the treatises is that "the śrāvaka prātimokṣa vows arise from the body and speech of the upādhyāya and ācārya," [24] are there not ten causes for obtaining the vows?[629]

(3) If vows are lost through death, which is due to the reason of their being material, does this not pertain to the dhyāna and anāsrava vows?[630]

(4) If, in the Mahāyāna tradition, those vows exist as long as the relinquishing mind is not damaged, then must one protect even the Mahāyāna upavāsa vows until the next morning?

How are the following not contradictory: the statement, "Therefore, for as long as that mind is not damaged"[631] and the statement, "the vows of a monk, and so on, that are held by the

[628] (1) *nyan thos lugs la so thar gyi/ sdom pa rig byed min pa'i gzugs/ kho nar bshad pa gang na yod/ rig byed gzugs kyang ma bshad dam/* After the opening verses of homage, my translation does not retain the verse structure. The verses in Tibetan are in seven-syllable lines, with an unequal number of lines.
[629] (2) *nyan thos so thar mkhan slob kyi/ lus ngag las ni skye zhes pa/ gzhung gi dgongs pa yin na ni/ sdom pa'i thob rgyu bcu med dam*
[630] (3) *gzugs can yin pa'i rgyu mtshan gyi/ shi bas gtong na bsam gtan dang/ zag med gnyis la mi thal lam/* These first three questions are answered together in the *Golden Lancet*.
[631] Here Shākya Chokden quotes two verses from Sakya Paṇḍita's *Differentiating the Three Vows.* See *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, chapter 1, verse 6. Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation*, 42 and 278: *byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa ni/ sems las skye phyir gzugs can min/ des na ji srid sems ma nyams/ de yi bar du sdom pa yod/ mdo rgyud bstan bcos thams cad kyi/ dgongs pa yang ni de nyid yin*. The second quoted verse is *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, chapter 1, verse 12. Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation*, 42 and 279: *'o na sems bskyed kyis zin pa'i/ dge slong la sogs sdom pa rnams/ bslab pa phul dang shi 'phos dang/ rtsa ba chad pa la sogs pa/ gtong rgyu kun gyis mi gtong 'gyur/*

cittotpāda," and so on.[632]

(4b) Do the Drikungpas, who say that even the prātimokṣa vows exist after death, not explain this intending the Mahāyāna prātimokṣa?[633]

(5) Where is the specification that bhikṣus have the upavāsa of the Vaibhāṣikas? Where is there a clear ritual of upavāsa in the vinaya tradition?[634]

(6) Is there any tradition of śrāvakas that accepts that an animal can be a support for the prātimokṣa vows?[635]

(7) Does the statement "according to Sautrāntikas, the upavāsa is taken for as long as one wishes" refer to taking [several] upavāsas at once?

If you accept [the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*'s] statement that "one will [be able to] take [upavāsa] even after having [the morning] meal," as indicating that meaning, [this is wrong:] such words refer to the specific [position] of the Vaibhāṣikas [expressed in the line of the same text], "will receive [upavāsa] at times other than pre-dawn." It does not serve as an answer to the current debate. Where in the scriptural tradition of the Sautrāntikas is there taking [several] upavāsas at

[632] (4) *theg chen lugs la spong ba'i sems/ ji srid ma nyams de srid du/ de yi sdom pa de yod na/ theg chen lugs kyi bsnyen gnas kyang/ nang par phan chad bsungs dgos sam/ des na ji srid sems ma nyams/ zhes dang sems bskyed kyis zin pa'i/ dge slong la sogs sdom pa rnams/ zhes sogs mi 'gal tshul de ci/*
[633] *so thar sdom pa shi nas kyang/ yod ces smra ba'i 'bri khung pas/ theg pa chen po'i so thar gyi/ dbang du byas par ma bshad dam/*
[634] (5) *bye smra'i bsnyen gnas dge slong la [GL:las]/ ldan pa'i dmigs bsal gang na yod/ 'dul ba'i lugs kyi bsnyen gnas kyi/ cho ga gsal po gang na bzhugs/*
[635] (6) *dud 'gro so so thar pa yi/ sdom pa'i rten du khas len pa'i/ nyan thos sde pa yod dam ci*

once?[636]

(8) If in the upavāsa of the Secret Mantra tradition, meditation on the deity is supreme, analyze if this is self or front visualization? If it is self-generation, then why is there no independent self-generation of the Kriyā tantra? If it is front visualization, does one take poṣadha vows before you generate Uṣṇīṣavijaya and so on? What is the need for the novices and bhikṣus who do the ritual of [i.e. who practice] the Uṣṇīṣavijaya and Amoghapaṣa, and so on, to do self-acquisition of poṣadha? When a good upāsaka has received all of the branches of the upavāsa, are the earlier vows not destroyed with the essential correcting words? [637]

(9) If the [karmic] ripening of all virtue whatsoever produces happiness, what is the [karmic] ripening of uncontaminated virtue?[638]

(10) If equanimity is neither of the two [virtue nor nonvirtue], what is the ripening of stained virtue from the fourth dhyāna and above? And, if what is called "equanimity" is neutral, then what about the ripening that arises from the seeds in the ālaya?[639]

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[636] (7) *mdo sde pa rnams bsnyen gnas ni/ ji ltar 'dod tshe len ces pa/ dus gcig stabs su len nam ci/ zas zos nas kyang len ces pa/ de yi don du khas len na/ de 'dra bye brag smra ba yi/ nang par gzhan la nod ces pa'i/ dmigs bsal yin gyi skabs kyi ni/ rtsod pa'i lan [27b] du 'gyur ba med/ bsnyen gnas dus gcig len pa de/ mdo sde'i gzhung lugs gang na yod/*

[637] (8) *gsang sngags lugs kyi bsnyen gnas la/ yi dam bsgom pa mchog yin na/ lha de bdag mdun gang yin brtags/ bdag bskyed yin na bya rgyud kyi/ rang rkang bdag bskyed med pa ci/ mdun bskyed yin na rnam rgyal sogs/ ma bskyed gong du gso sbyong gi/ sdom pa len pa mdzad dam ci/ rnam rgyal don zhags la sogs pa'i/ cho ga byed pa'i dge tshul dang/ dge slong gis ni gso sbyong ni/ rang gis blangs pa'i dgos pa ci/ dge bsnyen bzang po bsnyen gnas ni/ yan lag tshang bar mnos pa'i tshe/ gnad bcos pa yi tshig de yis/ sngar gyi sdom pa mi 'jig gam/*

[638] 9) *dge ba gang yin thams cad kyi/ rnam smin bde ba bskyed na ni/ zag med dge ba'i rnam smin ci/ /*

[639] (10) *btang snyoms gnyis ka ma yin na/ bsam gtan bzhi pa yan chad kyi/ zag bcas dge ba'i rnam smin dang/ btang snyoms zhes pa lung ma bstan/ yin na kun gzhi'i sa bon las/ rnam smin 'byung ba de ci zhig*

(11) If "white" karma is explained as virtue, then how does it ripen as "black"? If "black karma" is considered wrongdoing, how does it ripen as "white"?

Was it not taught in the lower abhidharma that if the causal motivation is wrongdoing, then even if the temporal motivation is virtuous, that karma will not serve as "white"?

Does it not appear in the higher abhidharma that virtue that is aligned with unvirtuous temporal motivations is like the son of a barren woman?

Is this not taught in agreement by both the higher and lower [abhidharma] that because the causal motivation is the principal projector, it is the projecting cause, and because the temporal motivation is the principal accomplisher, it is the accomplishing cause?[640]

Since the two actions, by means of "white" and "black" karma in the desire [realm], are enacted in a way that mixes the two, are the ripenings mixed accordingly? Considering that, must one accept that it is possible for both the ripening of lower realms and the heavens to be in a single mindstream?

(12) If the dharmadhātu is not virtue, then why is this taught in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*,

[640] (11) *las dkar zhes pa dge ba la/ 'chad na rnam smin gnag pa ci/ las nag ces pa sdig pa la/ zer na rnam smin dkar ba ci/ rgyu yi kun slong sdig yin na/ dus kyi kun slong dge yin kyang/ las de dkar por mi 'gyur zhes/ mngon pa gong mar [GL: 'og mar] ma bshad dam/ dus kyi kun slong mi dge ba/ dag dang mthsungs pa'i dge ba ni/ mo gsham bu dang 'dra'o zhes/ mngon pa gong mar mi 'byung ngam/ rgyu yi kun slong 'phen byed kyi/ gtso bo yin phyir [28a] 'phen byed rgyu/ dus kyi kun slong 'grub byed kyi/ gtso bo yin phyir 'grub byed rgyur/ gong 'og mthun par gsung min nam/*
The following is not included in Shākya Chokden's answers: *'dod pa'i rten la dkar nag gis/ las gnyis 'dres mar 'jog pa bzhin/ rnam par smin pa'ang 'dres sam ci/ de lta na ni ngan song dang/ mtho ris rnam smin rgyud gcig la/ srid par khas len mi dgos sam/*

Uttaratantra, and *Madhyāntavibhaṅga*? If what is intended [by calling the dharmadhātu virtue] is merely the lack of wrongdoing, then what about all that is unobscured and neutral?[641]

(13) Dharmakīrti said that existence itself is necessarily impermanence. Which scriptures of logic teach that mere existence is necessarily that?[642]

(14) Is it not taught in Nāgārjuna's *[Mūla]madhyamaka[kārikā]* that nonthings are necessarily compounded? If that is the case, does it not follow that the dharmadhātu is compounded?[643]

(15) What is the profound liberation that is taught in the *Ratnavāli?*[644]

(16) If emptiness endowed with the essence of compassion is not sugatagarbha, then why is sugatagarbha taught with respect to the expanding lineage (*rgyas 'gyur rigs*)?[645]

(17) If the dharmadhātu cannot become a cause for complete enlightenment, why is dharmadhātu posited as a causal lineage? Why it said in the definitive scriptures that "dharmadhātu is posited a

[641] (12) *chos dbyings dge ba ma yin na/ mngon rtogs rgyan dang rgyud bla dang [answer: theg pa chen po bsdus pa dang?]/ dbus rnam 'byed par gsung de ci/ chos dbyings dam pa'i chos dang ni/ dam pa zhes pa dge ba la/ tshad ldan gzhung las ma gsungs sam/ chos dbyings ngo bo bdag med ma/ bde chen sgygu ma'i sku de mar dge ba/*
The following is not included in Shākya Chokden's answers: sdig pa med tsam la dgongs na/ ma sgribs lung bstan min kun ci/
[642] (13) *yod pa nyid la mi rtag pas/ khyab par chos kyi grags pas gsungs/ yod pa tsam la des khyab par/ rigs pa'i gzhung lugs gang gis ston/*
[643] (14) *klu sgrub kyi ni dbu ma las/ dngos med la'ang 'dus byas kyis/ khyab par gsungs pa ma yin nam/ de lta yin na chos kyi dbyings/ 'dus byas yin par mi thal lam/*
[644] (15) *rin chen phreng bar gsungs pa yi/ zab mo bkrol ba ci la zer/*
[645] (16) *stong nyid snying rje'i snying po can/ bde gshegs snying po ma yin na/ rgyas 'gyur rigs la bde gshegs kyi/ snying por gsungs pa de ci zhig/*

lineage because it is the cause of noble dharmas"?[646]

(18) If the dharmadhātu were neutral, then would not a doubt arise that because there are no other phenomena besides the dharmadhātu, virtue and wrongdoing would also be neutral?[647] If it is not suitable for the dharmadhātu to be all three, why does that doubt not also arise? If the dharmadhātu is not asserted to be an existent, all things that do not exist as things not included in the dharmadhātu would not be asserted to exist?

(19) If what is existent is an established phenomena, how does this invalidate the dharmadhātu being virtue?[648]

(20) If "nontransferable dedication is meaningless,"[649] what about the aspiration prayer made by

[646] (17) *chos dbyings rdzogs pa'i byang chub rgyur/ 'gyur ba med na chos kyi dbyings/ rgyu yi rigs su 'jog de ci/ 'phags pa'i chos kyi rgyu yi phyir/ chos dbyings rigs su 'jog go zhes/ tshad ldan gzhung las gsung de ci/* The following is not in Shākya Chokden's *Golden Lancet*: *chos dbyings dam pa'i chos dang ni/ dam pa ces bya dge ba la/ tshad ldan gzhung las ma gsungs sam/* The *Golden Lancet* continues with the following: *chos dbyings ngo bo [28b] bdag med la/ bde chen sgyu ma'i sku de yang/ dge ba min par bzhed lags sam/ de lta na ni bstod pa las/ dge ba zhes kyang ma gsungs sam/*

[647] (18) *chos dbyings lung ma bstan yin na/ chos kyi dbyings las ma gtogs pa'i/ chos gzhan med phyir dge ba dang/ sdig pa'ang lung ma bstan du 'gyur/ snyam pa'i dogs pa mi 'byung ngam/*
The following is not in Shākya Chokden's answers: *chos dbyings gsum kar mi rung na/*
de mtshungs dogs pa'ang ci mi 'byung/ chos dbyings yod par mi bzhed na/ chos kyi dbyings las ma gtogs pa'i dngos po med pa'i dngos po kun/ yod par mi bzhed de ci zhig/

[648] (19) *yod pa sgrub par gsungs pa yi/ chos dbyings dge bar ji ltar gnod/*

[649] Here, Shākya Chokden quotes Sakya Paṇḍita's *Differentiating the Three Codes.* See *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, chapter 1, verse 105. Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation*, 54 and 283: *mi 'gyur bsngo ba don med yin/ mdo sde rnams las chos kyi dbyings/ 'gyur ba med ces rgyal bs gsungs/*. Rhoton translates this verse as: "Indeed, a dedication that does not transform/ is pointless. Yet the Victor has stated in sūtras that the Realm of Reality/ is unchanging." Shākya Chokden contrasts this with the story of Maitrakanyaka (see following note) and Sakya Paṇḍita's use of the story to assert that "some prayers are not inevitably fulfilled" (*Clear Differentiation*, 54). *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, chapter 2, verse 41. Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation*, 86 and 293: byang chub sems dpa'i blo sbyong ba'i smon lam 'ga' zhig mtha' mi btsan/ gal te bstan na mdza' bo'i bu rgyun du klad nad chen por 'gyur/

Maitrakanyaka,[650] the merchant girl?[651]

(21) If dharmatā as a cause to be dedicated were not suitable even as mind training, what is taught as the nonabiding dedication?[652]

(22) If uncompounded virtue did not exist, why are the uncontaminated seeds in the ālaya that are uncreated from beginningless time explained in the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* as virtue? If they do not exist that way, what is explained as the antidotes to the ālaya?

If whatever is the sugatagarbha is uncompounded, what is taught in the nine essences in the *Mahāyānottaratantra*?[653]

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[650] The story of the merchant Maitrakanyaka (or Mittavindaka in the Pāli sources) is a jātaka story from the *Divyāvadāna*, also quoted in the *Repaying Kindness Sūtra* (*mDo drin lan bsab pa*, Toh 353, mdo sde, *aḥ*, 86a2–198b7). The story tells of Maitrakanyaka, the Buddha-to-be (in the Sanskrit version), kicks his mother in the head when she tries to restrain him from leaving on a sea journey. He eventually meets a man who, as punishment for harming his own mother, is forced by karma to carry a flaming, spinning iron wheel on his head until he meets another who has committed the same act. Upon meeting, the wheel transfers to Maitrakanyaka's head. As the future Buddha, Maitrakanyaka makes an aspiration that he may never transfer the wheel to the head of another but carry it with him for the rest of his life. This aspiration generates merit that frees him from the wheel immediately. Maitrakanyaka is referred to as a girl here, since in the story his father bestowed on him a girl's name in response to a prediction that he will only survive if he is given a girl's name. It is possible Shākya Chokden here considers Maitrakanyaka a female character for this reason. The unchanging dedication, or nontransferable dedication, here refers to Maitrakanyaka's dedication for the sake of others with the same karma not having to carry the iron wheel transferring back to himself, resulting in himself not having to carry it. For the full story and Pāli variations, see also John Brough, "Some Notes on Maitrakanyaka: Divyāvadāna XXXVIII," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 20, no. 1/3 (1957): 111–32, http://www.jstor.org/stable/610368. For its possible authorship and inclusion in the *Divyāvadāna*, see Andy Rotman, *Divine Stories: Divyāvadāna, Part One* (Boston: Wisdom, 2008), 12, 387n30, and 387n32. For more on Tibetan source and discussions of this story, see Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation*, 93n10.

[651] (20) *mi 'gyur bsngo ba don med na/ tshong dpon mdza' bo'i bu mo yis/ smon lam btab pa de ci zhig*

[652] (21) *chos nyid bsngo rgyur byed pa ni/ blo sbyong du yang mi rung na/ gnas min bsngo ba gsungs de ci/*

[653] (22) *ma byas pa yi dge med na/ theg pa chen po bsdus pa las/ thog med dus nas ma byas pa'i* [In his answers, this line is: *ma byas chos nyid kyis thob pa*]*/ kun gzhi steng gi zag med kyi/ sa bon dge bar bshad de ci/ de 'dra med na kun gzhi yi/ gnyen por bshad pa de gang yin/* The following is included in the questions, but in the *Golden Lancet* is answered across three questions: *bde gshegs snying po gang yin pa/ de dag 'dus ma byas yin na/ theg pa chen po rgyud bla mar/ snying po dgur gsungs pa de ci/*

(23) If the dharmadhātu of not only sentient beings but also matter were the essence, why is it said in the tantras and the three commentaries on the mind[654] that the essence of the buddhas exists in all that is stable and that moves?[655]

(24) [In the *Uttaratantra*] if the example of a jewel in tattered rags had a [particular] intention, would that mean that the naturally present gotra is not present in sentient beings?[656]

(25) Is it not our tradition to sprinkle water at the time of dedication? What is the teaching in the vinaya to hold water?[657]

(26) If all actions that are produced by desire, hatred, and ignorance are nonvirtue, what is the contaminated virtue that arises from being motivated by ignorance? If all actions motivated by the three roots of virtue are virtue, what is the nonvirtue that, although it is motivated by virtue as its causal motivation, is concordant with an afflicted temporal motivation? If this did not exist,

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[654] The three commentaries on the mind are listed in the *Great Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary* (2939) as *Phyag rdor stod 'grel*, *Rdo rje'i snying 'grel*, and *Rigs ldan pad dkar gyi 'grel chen dri med 'od*. Elizabeth Callahan (correspondence) identifies the first as Vajrapāṇi's *Commentary That Summarizes the Condensed Cakrasaṃvara Tantra* (*Lakṣhābhidhānāduddhṛitalaghutantrapiṇḍārthavivaraṇa, mNgon par brjod pa 'bum pa las phyung ba nyung ngu'i rgyud kyi bsdus pa'i don rnam par bshad pa*), also known as *Vajrapāṇi's Commentary on the Upper [Section]* (*Phyag rdor stod 'grel*, Toh 1402, rgyud, *ba*, 78b1–141a2. The second is Vajragarbha's *The Commentary That Summarizes "The Hevajra Tantra"* (*Hevajrapiṇḍārthaṭīkā, Kye'i rdo rje bsdus pa'i don gyi rgya cher 'grel pa*, Dg.T. 1180 (a and b) 1b1–46a7 and 46b1–126a7. The last is Pundarika's *Stainless Light: Commentary on Chanting the Names of Manjusri*, *Āryamañjuśrīnāmasaṃgītiṭīkāvimalaprabhā, 'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa'i 'grel pa dri ma med pa'i 'od*, Dg.T. 1398, 184b6–232b5. For an alternate perspective, see Jowita Kramer, *Noble Abbot of Mustang*, 156n67.

[655] (23) *sems can ma gtogs bem po yi/ chos dbyings snying po ma yin na/ rgyud dang sems 'grel bskor gsum las/ brtan g.yo kun la sangs rgyas kyi/ snying po yod par gsung de ci*

[656] (24) *gos hrul nang na rin chen gyis/ dpe bstan dgongs [29] pa can yin na/ sems can rnams la rang bzhin gyi/ gnas rigs med par mi 'gyur ram/*

[657] (25) *bsngo ba'i tshe na chu sgreng ba/ rang lugs min nam 'dul ba las/ lag chu zad par zung de ci/*

what about the killing of the deceitful merchant by the boat captain?[658]

(27) If it is asserted that ignorant love and compassion are a cause for the lower realms, when you analyze whether it is "a projecting cause or a completing cause,"[659] which is it?[660]

(28) What about [Sakya Paṇḍita's] statement that all downfalls "for those exerting themselves in the vows of upāsaka and novices, . . "[661] would necessarily be wrongdoing, while [conversely, there is] Drakpa Gyaltsen' explanation that the proscribed downfalls are neutral?[662]

(29) Where is there a clear [scriptural] reference that says, "There are eighteen vinayas for the eighteen śrāvaka traditions?"[663]

(30) It is commonly said, "The vinaya was put down in writing at the third council." Were all

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[658] (26) *chags sdang rmongs gsum gyis bskyed pa'i/ las kun mi dge ba yin na/ zab bcas dge ba gti mug gis/ kun slong dag las 'byung de ci/ dge rtsa gsum gyis kun bslangs pa'i/ las kun dge ba yin na ni / rgyu'i kun slong dge ba yi/ bslangs kyang dus kyi kun slong ni/* The following is not included in Shākya Chokden's answers: *nyon mongs can dang mtshungs ldan pa'i/ mi dge ba de ci zhig yin/ de 'dra med na ded dpon gyis/ tshong pa g.yo can bsad de ci/*

[659] This does not appear to be a direct quote from *Differentiating the Three Codes*, but relates to *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, chapter 2, verse 51. Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation*, 48 and 281: *'phen byed dge bas 'phangs pa la/ rdogs byed kyang ni dge ba dang/ 'phen byed sdig pas 'phang pa la/ rdogs byed kyang ni sdig pa dang/ 'phen byed dge la rdzogs byed sdig/ 'phen byed sdig la rdzogs byed dge/*

[660] (27) *mi mkhas pa yi byams snying rje/ ngan song rgyu ru bzhed gyur na/ 'phen byed rgyu'am rdzogs byed kyi/ rgyu zhes brtags na ji ltar 'gyur/*

[661] Here, Shākya Chokden quotes Sakya Paṇḍita's *Differentiating the Three Codes.* See *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, chapter 1, verse 211. Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation*, 68 and 289: *dge bsnyen dge tshul sdom brtson la'ang/ sdig med srid par mi 'gyur te/ de dag la yang dge slong gi/ ltung ba thams cad ''byung phyir ro/*

[662] (28) *dge bsnyen dge tshul sdom brtson la'ang/ zhes par ltung ba thams cad la/ sdig pas khyab par gsungs pa dang/*
rje btsun chen po'i bcas ltung dag/ lung ma bstan du bshad pa ci/

[663] (29) *nyan thos sde pa bco brgyad la [the answers has this line as: nyan thos gyes pa]/ 'dul ba bco brgyad yod ces pa'i/ lung khungs gsal po gang na yod*. Here, Shākya Chokden quotes Sakya Paṇḍita's *Differentiating the Three Codes.* See *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, chapter 1, verse 174. Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation*, 63 and 287: *de las gyes pa bco brgyad la/ 'dul ba'i dbye ba'ang bco brgyad yod/ dang por sdom pa len pa dang/ bar du bsrung dang phyir bcos dang/*

eighteen vinayas written down at that time?[664]

(31) The downfall of eating without the giving-taking [ritual of trading verses for food from a layperson] [665] occurs even for a preceptor bhikṣu. So, what about the explanation that it is appropriate for that bhikṣu too to engage in the giving-taking with other bhikṣus?[666]

(32) Although the creators of all suffering are not the perfect buddhas, what is the fault if one explains the creators of happiness to be the perfect buddhas?[667]

[Chapter 2: Cittotpāda Vows]

(1) If the traditions of the generation of bodhicitta of the Mahāyāna are determined to be two—Madhyamaka and Cittamātra—and if individual rituals for taking them and repairing downfalls are also determined to be separate, then the ritual for mind generation that is taught in the tantra classes aligns with which of the two traditions?[668]

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[664] (30) *'dul ba yi ger bris pa ni/ bka' bsdu gsum pa yin zhes grags/ dus der 'dul ba bco brgyad po/ thams cad yi ger bris sam ci/*

[665] The *Golden Lancet* references Sakya Paṇḍita's *Differentiating the Three Codes* (*Sdom gsum rab dbye*), chapter 1, verse 187–188. See also verse 218. Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation*, 69 and 289: *dkon mchog brtsegs pa'i mdo sde las/ dad rdzas za ba'i nyes mthong nas/ dge slong lnga brgyas sdom pa phul/ de la thub pas legs zhes gsungs/ 'phags pa byams pa'i bstan pa la/ 'dus pa dang por de lung bstan/*

[666] (31) *byin len ma byas za ba yi/ ltung ba dge slong bslab byin la/ 'byung zhing des kyang dge slong la/ byin len rung bar bshad de ci/*

[667] (32) *sdug bsngal kun gyi byed pa po/ rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas ma yin yang/ bde ba'i byed po [29b] rdzogs sangs rgyas/ yin par bshad na skyon ci yod/* See *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, chapter 1, verses 221 and 222. Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation*, 69 and 289: *de la kha cig 'di skad du/ gal te gshis la dge ba dang/ sdig pa gnyis ka med pa la/ thub pas ltung ba 'cha' na ni/*

[668] (1) *theg pa chen po'i sems bskyed la/ dbu ma sems tsam lugs gnyis su/ nges shing len pa'i cho ga dang/ ltung ba phyir bcos la sogs pa/ so sor nges na rgyud sde las/ gsungs pa'i sems bskyed cho ga de/ gnyis po gang gi lugs dang mthun/*

(2) If the rituals are differentiated by view, then would the cittotpāda vows not arise by means of the ritual of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* for one who is endowed with the Madhyamaka view?[669]

(3) Is it taught in the *Śikṣasamuccaya* itself that the root downfalls that are taught in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* are included in the root downfalls that are taught in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*?[670]

(4) If the prātimokṣa vows are not necessary for the support for the cittotpāda of the Madhyamaka tradition, what is the intention of the statement that the seven branches are the preliminaries?[671]

(5) [Drakpa Gyeltsen] explains [in his commentary on the *Twenty Verses on the Bodhisattva Vows* by Candragomin] that at the time of the daily confession, the discipline of refraining from misdeeds arises. Is that itself also prātimokṣa?[672]

(6) If the seven types of prātimokṣa are required for the support of the cittotpāda of the Cittamātra tradition, where would you seek the intention behind the statement of the noble lord [Drakpa Gyeltsen's] teaching [in his commentary on the *Twenty Verses on the Bodhisattva Vows*

[669] (2) *lta bas cho ga khyad 'byed na/ dbu ma'i lta ba dang ldan pa/ de la byang sa'i cho ga yis/ sems bskyed sdom pa mi skye'am/*
[670] (3) *bslab btus las gsungs rtsa ba yi/ ltung bar byang sa las gsungs pa'i/ rtsa ba'i ltung bar 'dus so zhes/ bslab btus nyid las gsungs de ci/*
[671] (4) *dbu ma lugs kyi sems bskyed kyi/ rten du so thar mi dgos na/ yan lag bdun pa sngon 'gro bar/ gsungs pa'i dgongs pa gang zhig yin/* See *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, chapter 2, verses 15–17. Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation*, 82–83 and 292.
[672] (5) *rje btsun rtse mo'i rgyun bshags kyi/ dus su nyes spyod sdom pa yi/ tshul khrims skye zhing de nyid kyang/ so so thar par bshad de ci/*

by Candragomin] that they are not its support?[673]

(7) If the Victor did not teach the ritual for ultimate cittotpāda, what about the teaching in the treatise of Ārya Nāgārjuna, the protector, himself, called "Commentary on the Mind of Enlightenment"?[674]

(8) What about the following: After the student recites "padma yoga citta," and so on, and is invited to arouse relative and ultimate bodhicitta, has it arisen and become stable with "surate, samaya," and so on.[675]

(9) How did [Sakya Paṇḍita's] opponent [Jigten Sumgön in the *Single Intention*] assert the exchange of self and other as unequivocally a greatly mistaken understanding of the dharma? Do they not explain meditation on exchange on the eighth bhūmi? For [such] opponents, if one does not read [as correct] the opponent's detailed differentiation between obtaining and not obtaining the patience of taking on suffering, is this not a waste of scripture and logic?[676]

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[673] (6) *so so thar pa rigs bdun po/ sems tsam lugs kyi sems bskyed kyi/ rten du dgos na rje btsun gyi/ de dag de yi rten min par/ gsungs pa'i dgongs pa gang du btsal/* I have not yet located the direct quote here, "de dag de yi rten min par," but, continuing question #4, the quote refers to *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, chapter 2, verse 16, in which he says that the prātimokṣa vows are not required for the Cittamātra tradition of bodhisattva vows.

[674] (7) *don dam sems bskyed bya ba yi/ cho ga rgyal bas ma gsung na/ 'phags pa klu sgrub skyob nyid kyi/ byang chub sems 'grel ces bya ba'i/ bstan bcos dag las gsung de ci/* The text cited is Nāgārjuna's *Bodhicittavivarana* (Dg.T. 1800). See *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, chapter 2, verses 20–29. Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation*, 83–84 and 296.

[675] (8) padma yo ga tsitta sogs [The answers reads: *sa rba yo ga tsi tta sog*s]/ slob mas bzlas de kun rdzob dang/ don dam sems bskyed 'dzin bcug nas/ sū ra ste sa mā ya zhes sogs kyis/ skyes zin brtan par mdzad de ci. For a translation of an empowerment ritual with such a mantra included within the ritual arousing of bodhicitta, see *Mahāsiddha Practice*: *From Mitrayogin and Other Masters*, Treasury of Precious Instructions, vol. 16, trans. Padmakara Translation Group (Boulder: Shambhala, 2020), 225.

[676] (9) *bdag gzhan brje ba mtha' gcig tu/ nor chen chos shes phyogs snga mas/ ji ltar khas blangs sa brgyad par/ brje ba sgom par 'chad min nam/ phyogs sngar sdug bsngal dang len gyi/ bzod pa thob dang ma thob pa'i/ zhib cha phye ba ma klags na/ lung rigs chud 'dzar mi 'gyur ram*

(10) If śrāvakas dedicated [their merit] to the complete enlightenment of buddhahood, where would you seek the intention behind the statement by Ārya Nāgārjuna [in his *Precious Garland*] that "Completely dedicating one's activity is not explained in the śrāvaka vehicle"?[677]

(11) Is the explanation of dedication [in the statement,] in the life of Viśvantara [Pāli: Vessantara], "I [give this chariot] to the brahmin who wants it," and so on,[678] asserted to be a śrāvaka dedication?[679]

[677] 10) *nyan thos rnams kyi rdzogs byang du/ bsngo ba byed* [30a] *na 'phags pa yi/ nyan thos theg pa de las ni/ spyod pa yongs bsngo ma bshad ces/ bya ba'i dgongs pa gang du btsal*

[678] See *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, chapter 2, verse 54. Rhoton, *Clear Differentiation*, 87 and 294: *bdag gis bram ze 'dod pa la dga' bas shing rta 'di btang bas/ dngos po thams cad btang nas ni/ rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas thob par shog/ de sogs bsngo ba mang du gsungs/* This refers to the jātaka story, common in non-Mahāyāna literature and culture, of the Buddha's previous life as Vessantara, who gives his chariot (and children) to an evil brahmin and makes the aspiration that, by the force of his gratitude, he one day attain enlightenment.

[679] (11) *thams cad sgrol gyi skye rabs las/ bdag gi bram ze 'dod pa la/ zhes sogs bsngo ba bshad pa de/ nyan thos bsngo ba yin bzhed dam*

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