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Performing Text as Practice: Rdza Dpal sprul's Practice Manual on the *Bodhi(sattva)caryāvatāra*

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Introduction: an Indian classic and its 19th-century Tibetan propagator

With its outline of the path of a *bodhisattva*, the religious ideal of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the *Bodhi(sattva)caryāvatāra* (BCA) is considered among the world classics of religious literature. Composed by the Indian master Śāntideva at the beginning of the eighth century CE, it has gained wide popularity among a highly varied readership, one that has encountered it in both traditional and modern contexts in its complex history of transmission. This interest is reflected, among other things, in the sustained production of a diverse literature that relates to the BCA, and the possibility of approaching the text from many different perspectives might very well be seen as one reason for its popularity. In the manifold encounters of it, the BCA has been perceived, for example, as a spiritual text that addresses the "universal longings" of mankind, a philosophical treatise that explicates the intricacies of Madhyamaka thought, a devotional text praised for its poetical qualities, a model for the performance of ritual, or a practice manual that teaches different techniques of contemplation and meditation.[1]

In the more recent history of the transmission of the text in Tibet, Rdza Dpal sprul (1808–1887),[2] a charismatic yogin and scholar, played an important role in disseminating the BCA among a vast and varied audience. As pointed out in detail elsewhere,[3] Dpal sprul's engagement with the text not only generated deep and lasting interest in the BCA among his fellow Rnying ma disciples, but stimulated

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[1] See Gómez 1999: 266f.

[2] In general, dates of Tibetan personalities are provided according to the details of the TBRC database (http://www.tbrc.org), if not specified otherwise. Rdza Dpal sprul's full name is O rgyan 'jigs med chos kyi dbang po.

[3] See my forthcoming article "An Indian Classic in 19th-Century Tibet and Beyond: Rdza Dpal sprul's Role in the Dissemination of the *Bodhi(sattva)caryāvatāra*," where I investigate the immense literary production of texts related to the BCA in the 19th century and try to specify both Dpal sprul's role within this trend and its broader intellectual and social context.

discussion among Tibetan intellectuals of various other traditions as well,[4] and even shaped specific readings that would become important when this text met with a modern global audience.

As tradition has it, Dpal sprul taught the text more than a hundred times,[5] and indeed Mkhan po Kun dpal (1862–1943), a close student of Dpal sprul and his most important biographer, reports numerous concrete cases when his master bestowed teachings of the BCA.[6] These involved highly varied settings, ranging from intimate advice for single students to larger teaching events, where Dpal sprul instructed huge audiences of laypersons as well as monastics. Dpal sprul is also credited with instituting a specific seminar devoted to the BCA at various monasteries, during which textual exegesis was combined with practical exercises, and which was conducted on an annual basis.[7]

Apart from the general vigour with which Dpal sprul engaged in teaching this text, particular qualities are frequently mentioned that are thought to explain his success. The following quote by his disciple Kun dpal summarizes these qualities and explicates his particular style of teaching:[8]

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[4] Of particular importance are the extensive controversies about the correct interpretation of the BCA that evolved between Dpal sprul's disciple 'Ju Mi pham (1846–1912) and several scholars from the Dge lugs tradition. For a case study of the debate between Mi pham and Dpa' ris Rab gsal (1840–1912), see my recent dissertation (Viehbeck 2012).

[5] See Kretschmar 2004: 2.

[6] In the hagiography of his master (*Dpal sprul rnam thar*), Kun dpal reports teachings at the following places and monasteries: Wa shul & Gser thal (p. 795.3f.), Dhi chung & A ri (p. 796.1), Rdo yul (p. 800.3f.), various places in the vicinity of Rdzogs chen such as Śrī sengha'i chos grwa, Padma'i thang, and Nags chung ma'i ri khrod (pp. 800.4–801.1), Kaḥ thog (p. 802.4), Ser shul dgon, La ba, Khri 'du, and Sgrub brgyud dgon (p. 803.4f.), Rdza dgon (p. 804.4f.), Dge gong (p. 804.5), Rdza rgyal dgon (p. 806.2f.), and Sko 'or (p. 838.5). For quotes from the *Dpal sprul rnam thar*, I considered two different prints, namely, the edition that is included in one version of Dpal sprul's collected works (*Dpal sprul bka' 'bum*), referred to as A, and the edition in the collected works of Mkhan po Kun dpal (*Kun dpal gsung 'bum*), referred to as B. In general, page references are provided according to edition A. Variants in the reading are indicated by the respective abbreviations (A, B).

[7] Kun dpal mentions such seminars for Ser shul dgon, Rdza dgon, and Dge gong (see *Dpal sprul rnam thar* 804.3, 804.4, and 804.5, respectively); Kretschmar adds another such seminar for Rdzogs chen Monastery (Kretschmar 2004: 39).

[8] *Dpal sprul rnam thar* 805.1–5: *gsar rnying gi gzhung gang bshad thams cad de dag gi lugs ltar ma 'dres par bshad pa dang | khyad par spyod 'jug ni | sa skya pa'i nang du rje btsun bsod nams rtse mo'i 'grel pa ltar dang | dge lugs pa la zin bris dang dar ṭīka (A ṭākra) ltar | bka' rgyud pa la dpa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba'i 'grel pa ltar dang | rnying ma'i nang sher 'byung blo gros kyi 'grel chen dang | thogs (A thog) 'grel ltar bshad par mdzad la | de dag gi tshe yang gsar rnying gi grub mtha'i phyogs 'dzin dang | dgag bzhag gi zer mchu rang bstod gzhan smad (B smrad) sogs skabs su ma babs pa dang | dus kyi dbang las chags sdang gi rgyur 'gro ba'i gtam rnams cha shas tsam yang ma 'dres par 'grel pa mkhan po'i lugs ltar bshad pa de dang de'i rang bzhed kha gtsang gsal zhing | dag la zur phyin pa | don gyi gnad thog tu 'dril zhing | ha cang rgyas bsdus kyi mthar ma lhung ba nyams len gyi steng du bskor nas gsungs pas lha ldan smon lam rab 'byams pa mang pos kyang yi rangs kyi me tog 'thor zhing gus pas btud |.*

All [his] explanations of scriptures of the Gsar [ma] and Rnying [ma traditions] were given according to the respective traditions, without mixing them. In particular, he (i.e., Dpal sprul) explained the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* according to the commentary of Bsod nams rtse mo among Sa skya pas, according to [Tsong kha pa's] "notes" (*zin bris*) and the commentary of Dar [ma rin chen] for Dge lugs pas, according to the commentary of Dpa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba for Bka' rgyud pas, and according to the great commentary of Prajñākaramati and the commentary of [Dngul chu] Thogs [med] for Rnying mas. During the time of these [earlier scholars], too, there was no taking sides [for or against] the system of the Gsar [ma] and the Rnying [ma traditions], or empty talk of refutation and ascertainment, that is, [mere] self-praise or disparagement of others; and he (i.e., Dpal sprul) explained [the text] according to the tradition of [individual] "commentator-scholars" (*'grel pa mkhan po*), without mixing in even a bit of talk that would have caused attachment or anger in specific contexts. He clarified their respective positions in an honest way (*kha gtsang*) and aimed at a correct [representation]; he steered [explanations] towards the essential point, did not fall into the extremes of too extensive or too condensed [an explanation], and based [his] explanations on [first-hand] experience. Whence even many Rab 'byams pas[9] from the prayer festival (*smon lam*) in Lhasa spread flowers of rejoicing and bowed down respectfully [before him].

It is not surprising, considering the intellectual and social background of Dpal sprul and his disciples, that Kun dpal highlights his master's openness towards and knowledge of the various scholastic approaches to the exegesis of the BCA. During his time in particular, "non-partiality" (*ris med*) was held high as an ideal, and thus served as a shared premise that bonded scholars from different scholastic traditions.[10]

Another quality that Kun dpal stressed is Dpal sprul's inclination towards a practice-orientated approach to the BCA. Not only Kun dpal mentions this aspect

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[9] These are scholars who have been awarded the highest academic title of Dge bshes Rab 'byams pa in the Dge lugs educational tradition.
[10] It is, however, questionable whether one should think of the loose networks of scholars that emerged at this time as a unified "*ris med* movement," as it has sometimes been depicted. For a criticism of such constructions in Western academic writing, see Gardner 2006: 112ff.

repeatedly, but also other direct students of Dpal sprul, such as the famous Mkhan po Gzhan dga' (1871–1927), and later members of his school identify practical application as the key feature of Dpal sprul's tradition of teaching this text.[11] What does this specific approach entail, and in what ways did it affect Dpal sprul's reading of the BCA?

A leaning towards practice can be also observed in his literary output on the BCA. Dpal sprul did not produce a full-fledged commentary on the BCA, as had been done by numerous scholars of various traditions before him and as was inaugurated for his own Rnying ma tradition by his direct disciples, but he did leave us with three rather short treatises: a supplication to the transmission lineage of the BCA (*Spyod 'jug brgyud 'debs*); a very detailed structural outline of the content of the BCA (*Spyod 'jug sa bcad*); and, most important for our present line of investigation, a short practice manual in which he picks out various content of the BCA and gathers it into a set of contemplative exercises (*Spyod 'jug sgom rim*).[12]

Between text and practice: some preliminary reflections on the nature of *sgom rim* literature

At the current, still relatively early stage of studies in Tibetan literature, it is often very difficult to make general statements about individual genres.[13] As indicated by the term itself, *sgom rim* texts combine two principal features: firstly, they are of an overall practical nature, since they deal with "practice" (*sgom pa*) in a very general sense. In fact, what the term *sgom pa* entails may vary from case to case, ranging from "contemplation," "meditation," "cultivation," "exercise," to "ritual" – and hence can be translated differently in each instance. Secondly, these texts adhere to a strict chronological order, since they present a sequence of practices where each step or stage (*rim pa*) is the prerequisite for the subsequent one. The chronologically

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[11] See, e.g., the remarks in the commentaries of Kun dpal (Kretschmar 2004: 188f.) and Gzhan dga' (*Gzhan dga' mchan 'grel* 474.6f.). Mkhan po Bkra shis dpal ldan from Skyabs rje Monastery distinguishes different styles in the explanatory approaches to the BCA, with Mi pham and Kun dpal, two particularly close students of Dpal sprul, embodying the "practice instruction style" (see Kretschmar 2004: 127f.).

[12] Critical editions of the Tibetan texts along with English translations of all of these three works are provided in Viehbeck 2005. An English translation of Dpal sprul's *Spyod 'jug sgom rim* by Adam Pearcey can also be found at the homepage of the Lotsawa House (http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/patrul-rinpoche/bodhicharyavatara-brightly-shining-sun; accessed August 2, 2013).

[13] An attempt to cover some important genres of Tibetan literature can be found in José Cabezón and Roger Jackson's *Tibetan Literature* (Cabezón & Jackson 1996), which does not, however, deal with *sgom rim* literature.

ascending order of Buddhist teachings and practices is a key basic concept and reflected in various literary genres: in Tibet, specialized doxographies are ordered according to the subtlety of the respective philosophical views; broad Mahāyāna Buddhist teachings are presented in a gradual format in *bstan rim* ("Stages of the Doctrine") texts; and also a kind of literature developed that deals with the ascending paths (*lam* / *mārga*) and stages (*sa* / *bhūmi*) that are reached by applying these teachings.[14]

Many of the literary forms in Tibet are of course influenced by Indian patterns. In this regard, it is likely that Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama*s (in Tibetan *Bsgom pa'i rim pa*, or, abbreviated, *Sgom rim*) served as an important model for the later Tibetan *sgom rim* texts, at least in their general scope of a gradual presentation of meditative practices.[15] Concrete indications of such a connection can be found, for example, in a particularly famous *sgom rim* text by Dwags po Bkra shis rnam rgyal (1512/13–1587). In his work *Nges don phyag rgya chen po'i sgom rim gsal bar byed pa'i legs bshad zla ba'i 'od zer*, the Bka' brgyud scholar lays out the steps of Mahāmūdrā practice according to his own tradition, which he supports with numerous references to Kamalaśīla's model.[16] When Tibetan *sgom rim* literature is viewed as a whole, Bkra shis rnam rgyal's work can be seen as an example of a specific kind of *sgom rim*, namely, of a text that presents the different steps of a particular contemplative and meditative practice. Such a format can pertain in principle to any spiritual practice, including the specialized practice of individual *yi dam*s (*iṣṭadevatā*), complex tantric practices like the "transference of consciousness" (*'pho ba*), but also basic exercises, such as the different stages of taking refuge (*skyabs 'gro*). Another kind of *sgom rim* text relates again to a specific topic, but in the more concrete sense of a particular text. Rong ston shes bya kun rig (1367–1449), an influential scholar from the Sa skya tradition, for example, was very prolific in composing *sgom rim*s on a whole range of Indian Buddhist core texts.[17] He also

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[14] For short depictions of the genres of doxography (*grub mtha'* / *siddhānta*), *bstan rim*, and literature related to stages and paths, see Cabezón & Jackson 1996: 170ff., 229ff., and 261ff., respectively.

[15] Adam 2002 provides translations of all three of Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama*s.

[16] This text has been translated into English by Lobsang P. Lhalungpa; see Namgyal 2006. The strong connection between Bkra shis rnam rgyal's work and Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama*s has previously been pointed out in Matthew Kapstein's review of Lhalungpa's translation; see Kapstein 1990: 101f.

[17] A recent edition of his collected works contains short *sgom rim*s on the following Indian treatises: *Madhyāntavibhāga*, *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, *Uttaratantraśāstra* (all attributed to Maitreya); *Ratnāvalī* (Nāgārjuna); *Madhyamakāvatāra* (Candrakīrti); *Pramāṇavārttika* (Dharmakīrti); and *Madhyamakapratītyasamutpāda* (Kṛṣṇapāda). All these works are included in the first volume of the ten-volume edition; see *Rong ston gsung 'bum*. Interestingly, Rong ston also composed commentaries

authored a *sgom rim* on the BCA, which is, to my knowledge at least, the only other *sgom rim* on this text composed prior to Dpal sprul's manual.[18] The structure of both works, however, is so radically different that an influence of Rong ston on Dpal sprul's work can be ruled out.

In the light of the various literary productions in Tibet that relate to Indian Buddhist works – different forms of commentaries for the most part – the question arises of in what specific way the practical focus of a *sgom rim* text reshapes the presentation of the content of the original text. To answer this question satisfactorily would require a comprehensive study of *sgom rim* literature, and hence lies well beyond the scope of the present article. In the current enquiry we will limit ourselves to the investigation of a single specimen, Dpal sprul's *Spyod 'jug sgom rim*. The following analysis of its content and its relation to Śāntideva's original will not only provide insight into how to go about answering the question just posed, but also explain more clearly what Dpal sprul's "practical approach" to the BCA entailed. A structural overview of these relations is given in the appendix.

Putting Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* to practice: Dpal sprul's *Spyod 'jug sgom rim*

For the most part, Dpal sprul's practice manual follows strictly the order of Śāntideva's treatise, but, given its own specific focus, places a different emphasis on individual elements. It opens with a quote of the first verse of the original text, thereby stating its central concern, namely, an explanation of the precepts of a *bodhisattva*. The main body of the text is then divided into four topics, presented in a logical sequence: First, the prerequisites for entering this practice are laid out. The second topic then leads the adept through a specific ritual for taking the vow of a *bodhisattva*. Having been prepared in this way, one proceeds to learn about the actual conduct of a *bodhisattva* in the third chapter. The concluding section describes the benefits of this kind of practice. Among these four topics, the first and the last are treated only marginally, clear emphasis being put on Chapters Two and Three, which can be seen as constituting the main content of Dpal sprul's text.

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on all three of Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama*s (*Rong ston gsung 'bum*, vols. 8 & 9). For an earlier enquiry into his life and works, see Jackson 1988.
[18] See *Rong ston sgom rim*. An English translation of this text by Adam Pearcey is provided at the homepage of the Lotsawa House (http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/rongton/garland-jewel-ornaments; accessed August 7, 2013).

The first topic ("The person that is capable [of this kind of practice]") addresses briefly – in just a single sentence – the qualities that are required for engaging in the practice that the text is on the point of elaborating. In the original text, these qualities are mentioned only much later, in Chapter Four, which is dealt with rather cursorily in Dpal sprul's text.

The second topic discusses the attitude that a practitioner will need to develop. This attitude, summarised as *bodhicitta*, is divided into two aspects: aspiration (2.1.) and application (2.2.). The former refers to the standard definition of *bodhicitta* as the intention of wishing to attain awakening for the benefit of others;[19] the latter deals with its application in the sense of taking a formal vow to cultivate this attitude. While this vow is commonly taken from a religious teacher according to a fixed ritual,[20] Dpal sprul describes a method whereby the practitioner can take the vow alone, using the original BCA as a liturgical text. Here, taking the vow consists of three parts: preparation (2.2.1.), main part (2.2.2.), and conclusion (2.2.3.), and entails the contemplation and recitation of almost the entirety of the first three chapters of the original text. First one prepares oneself for taking the vow by generating enthusiasm about the benefits of *bodhicitta* (2.2.1.1.) through contemplating the content of the first chapter of the BCA, where the qualities of this attitude are praised. Then merit is accumulated (2.2.1.2.) in the form of a sevenfold practice comprising the following elements: offering; taking refuge; confessing negative acts; rejoicing; requesting the turning of the wheel of Dharma; praying not to pass into *nirvāṇa*; and dedication. The individual parts of this practice involve not only the evocation of certain mental images, but also concrete actions; hence it is pointed out that offering, for example, requires the preparation of real substances. All these practices are accompanied by the recitation of verses from the second and third chapter of the original text, Dpal sprul indicating the respective passage simply by providing its first few syllables, assuming that his audience will know the text by heart. Once the aspiration of *bodhicitta* has been sufficiently fostered during mental training (2.2.1.3.) centring on another passage of the third chapter, the adept is deemed well equipped to actually take the vow of a *bodhisattva*. This is performed

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[19]   Here, Dpal sprul refers to the respective passage in the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* (AA 18b).
[20]   While there are numerous descriptions of taking this vow, two general traditions are commonly distinguished, namely, liturgies that conform to either the Madhyamaka or Cittamātra tradition. See Sobisch 1999: 18ff., for differences in ritual among these two traditions.

by reciting two verses of the original text (BCA III, 22–23),[21] whose importance is reflected by the fact that the passage is repeated three times. The ritual then concludes by rejoicing in the benefits of taking this vow, as described in the remaining verses of the third chapter. In the course of this ritual, Dpal sprul's explanations are kept to a minimum and merely summarise the meaning of certain passages from the BCA; that is, Dpal sprul lets the original text speak for itself and appropriates it for the direct administration of the *bodhisattva* vow.

The greater part of Dpal sprul's manual is dedicated to Chapter Three, the application of *bodhicitta* by engaging in the conduct of a *bodhisattva* in the form of the six perfections (*pha rol tu phyin pa / pāramitā*), many of which are described in separate chapters of their own in the original text. For Dpal sprul, each of these perfections is associated with a particular positive state of mind, which can be attained through mental training (*sems sbyong ba*) during specific contemplative exercises. Perceived in this way, Śāntideva's text can be used as a concrete guideline for bringing certain reflections to mind. Dpal sprul's explications are often loosely related to the original text and simply summarise its most important issues. Only the commentary on Chapter Eight, the section on the perfection of meditation, which is clearly highlighted in Dpal sprul's rendering, makes use of direct quotations from the original text to elaborate on individual contemplative exercises.

The first perfection, generosity (*sbyin pa / dāna*), is mentioned only briefly. This perfection is not described concisely in any specific part of the original text, but is usually seen to tie in with the first three chapters – in particular, the *bodhisattva* ritual – and the last chapter, the section on dedication.[22]

Discipline (*tshul khrims / śīla*), the next perfection, is related to Chapters Four and Five of the original text, and explained by Dpal sprul in a twofold way: first, he lists the methods to be used for observing discipline (3.2.1.), and then he explains how these methods are applied (3.2.2.) by observing one's own behaviour attentively, by striving for a form of conduct that is conducive to the *bodhisattva* vow, and by avoiding actions that are in conflict with it.

Patience (*bzod pa / kṣānti*) is trained by imagining situations in which one usually would lose one's patience and then applying certain lines of reasoning as an

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[21] Verse numbers are provided according to the bilingual Sanskrit-Tibetan edition of Bhattacharya (BCA [Bh]).

[22] According to Steinkellner 1997: 15 and Kaschewsky 1999: 54f., generosity ties in with the first three chapters of the BCA, whereas Kelsang Gyatso 2000: 5f. sees the link as being with the tenth chapter.

antidote against such a reaction. Dpal sprul provides a list of 24 such difficult situations, which is then contrasted with a set of three times three reflections.

The perfection of perseverance (*brtson 'grus / vīrya*) is summarised from two angles, the avoiding of factors that are discordant to perseverance (3.4.1.), i.e., certain types of laziness, and the generation of factors that are conducive to its development (3.4.2.). For each of the two, as with the practice of patience and discipline, Dpal sprul draws upon standard lists of elements that are important in this regard. However, in all these cases the exact relation to the content of the original treatise is not made explicit in the text and seems to be a task that is left to a competent instructor.

The lengthiest part, more than a fourth of the whole text, is dedicated to meditation (*bsam gtan / dhyāna*), a fact that is reflected in the style, which is less terse than in the other sections. This is also the only perfection for which Dpal sprul incorporates direct quotes from the original text, which then serve as a basis for contemplative exercises. The adept prepares for these exercises by abandoning factors that could disturb meditation, e.g., mundane concerns (3.5.1.1.) and discursive thoughts (3.5.1.2.). The main practice of meditation consists of two commonly known exercises, which originate from the BCA: the practice of equalizing oneself and others (3.5.2.1.) and the practice of exchanging oneself with others (3.5.2.2.).[23] In Dpal sprul's rendering of the first exercise, BCA VIII, 90 expresses the core idea of this practice, namely, that one should protect all beings in the same way as one protects oneself, since everyone is equal in the sense that all beings strive for happiness and want to avoid suffering. This is further supported by a quote from Nāgārjuna's *Suhṛllekha*.[24] Through sustained reflection the adept gains certainty about the content of these passages. Having prepared oneself in this way, one should train in wishing happiness for others whenever one experiences it for oneself. In an analogous manner, one should train in wishing others freedom from suffering whenever one experiences it oneself. Dpal sprul then goes on to elaborate the meaning of three further verses from the same passage (BCA VIII, 97–99). Each of these verses addresses certain doubts that might arise in regard to these contemplations, and hence is geared to generate further confidence in this exercise.

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[23] For a detailed explanation of these two practices, together with the commentary of Mkhan po Kun dpal, see Padmakara 1999: 180–192.
[24] Dpal sprul refers to a passage of the *Suhṛllekha* (SL 68cd) which points out that through countless rebirths countless beings have acted as one's mother and hence one should be grateful in this way to others.

For the second practice, too, Dpal sprul starts by quoting a key verse from the original text (BCA VIII, 131). How the exchanging of oneself with others is brought about in concrete contemplative exercise is, however, only laid out a few verses afterwards. Dpal sprul quotes also the first verse of this passage (BCA VIII, 140) and then explicates the different steps of this training. His explanations thereby effectively summarise the content of the following three passages of the original text (BCA VIII, 141–46; 147–150; and 151–154), reflection on which ought to thoroughly expunge any remaining traces of envy, rivalry, and pride, respectively. At the end of the training, Dpal sprul hints at alternative methods for adepts with less time. These might use a passage from Nāgārjuna's *Ratnāvalī*[25] or just a single verse from Śāntideva's dedication (BCA X, 56) as a basis for contemplation. Clearly, Dpal sprul's main intention is not to cover the content of the BCA in a comprehensive way, but to pick out individual thoughts and get his students to actualize them in their spiritual practice.

Whereas the chapter of the perfection of insight (*shes rab / prajñā*) is often celebrated as the most important of the entire work, the *Sgom rim* provides only a very rough and selective presentation of its content. In Dpal sprul's presentation, the practical application of this chapter's intricate philosophical discussion lies in an understanding of the non-existence of an intrinsic self of a person (3.6.2.1.) and of phenomena (3.6.2.2.). With regard to the first, he hints at a couple of basic questions that are meant to undermine the belief in such a self. The selflessness of phenomena is discussed in more detail through a set of four contemplations, commonly known as the "Four Applications of Mindfulness."[26] For each of the four topics – body, sensations, mind, and phenomena – Dpal sprul offers some key reflections that help to bring the content of the respective passages of the original text (BCA IX, 79–88; 89–102; 103–106; 106–111)[27] to mind. Like the earlier discussions of standard sets, these reflections provide only a rough summary and are only loosely connected with the actual text of the BCA. The rest of the chapter, which addresses many of the

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[25] See *Ratnāvalī* (RĀ) 5.84c–5.87b.
[26] The practice of the so-called "Four Applications of Mindfulness" (Pāli *satipaṭṭhāna*) gained prominence in various different Buddhist traditions. An early description of this practice can be found in the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* (see MN I: 55ff. or DN II: 290ff., for the Pāli text, or Nyanaponika 1991: 115ff., for an English translation). In comparison with this early version, Dpal sprul's represents only a very abridged rendering, while adding new philosophical reflections and concepts to the basic discussion. The historical development of this practice is discussed in Schmithausen 1976.
[27] In order to determine the sectioning of these topics, use is made of Dpal sprul's own structural organization of the BCA as set forth in his *Spyod 'jug sgom rim*. For an edition and English translation of this text, see Viehbeck 2005: 86ff.

philosophically more demanding issues, is not covered in any way in Dpal sprul's exposition.

The manual closes rather abruptly with a quote of one verse (BCA X, 57) from the last chapter, the dedication (*bsngo ba / pariṇāmanā*), which is also used for the same purpose in the manual itself. While this section is not marked explicitly in Dpal sprul's text, we may assume that it represents the otherwise missing fourth section that discusses the result that follows from the described practice, since the result of generating *bodhicitta* is also mentioned in the descriptive tag of the dedication in Dpal sprul's outline of the BCA.[28]

Conclusion: the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* as a liturgical text and manual for mind training (*blo sbyong*)

Although Dpal sprul's *Sgom rim* follows the presentation of Śāntideva's original text closely, especially its chronological orientation, its focus on content relating to Buddhist practice casts a very specific light on the BCA. Two distinct elements of practice are thereby of particular importance: the performance of the ritual of taking the *bodhisattva* vow, and the application of that promise by training in the six perfections in the form of contemplative exercises, here labelled as "mind training" (*blo sbyong*).

Both of these elements are essential components of the original text, and have also been highlighted in different forms of literature. As Jan-Ulrich Sobisch has pointed out, it may well be that the verses of the second and third chapter of the BCA originally came about through the combining of two distinct rituals, the *bodhisattva* ritual and the ritual of aspiring to virtuous conduct (*bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*).[29] Different verses from the entire section were clearly employed for recitation in the context of ritual by both later Indian and Tibetan authors.[30] Dpal sprul's use of these verses of the original text for taking the *bodhisattva* vow is therefore not at all a novelty, but very much in line with other traditional texts that relate to the BCA in the practice of ritual. While these rituals commonly involve a number of participants, Dpal sprul describes this particular

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[28] See Viehbeck 2005: 153.
[29] See Sobisch 1999: 22f.
[30] Sobisch 1999: 17ff. mentions ritual texts by Jetāri and Sa skya Paṇḍita, but there are many more examples of Śāntideva's work having been used in this way.

ritual in a way so that it can be conducted alone, and hence shifts it from the public arena to the domain of personal spiritual practice.

The second focus, on "mind training," can also be explained in terms of the historical development of literary genres. *Blo sbyong*, commonly translated as "mind training" or "purification of the mind," became quite popular in Tibet, and a specific literature dealing with this practice emerged from it. The best-known example is probably the widespread *Blo sbyong don bdun ma*, originating in the Bka' gdams tradition. Although *blo sbyong* as a genre of religious literature is an indigenous Tibetan development, it draws heavily on Indian sources. Its most important source is the BCA, particularly its eighth chapter, where the two main exercises used in *blo sbyong* literature – exchanging oneself and others (*bdag gzhan brje ba / parātmaparivārtana*) and realizing the equality of oneself and others (*bdag gzhan mnyam pa / parātmasamatā*) are described.[31] With its general emphasis on practice and a focus on the exercises described in the eighth chapter of the BCA the scope of Dpal sprul's *Sgom rim* is therefore very much in line with that of other *blo sbyong* texts. Dpal sprul himself refers explicitly to this genre in his introduction to the main part of his manual, where he makes clear that the practice of the six perfections will be set forth as a practice of mental training (*sems sbyong*).[32] This overall thrust of Dpal sprul's text was noticed by later compilers of Dpal sprul's collected works, where this *sgom rim* was labelled as a *blo sbyong* text.[33]

While both of these aspects – the BCA as a model for ritual and contemplative exercises – are clearly within a traditional scope of approaching the BCA, Dpal sprul's own choice to focus on them is by no means an obvious or self-explanatory one. Here, Rong ston's *Sgom rim* on the BCA, the only similar text composed prior to Dpal sprul's, may serve as an enlightening comparison: this text basically skips most of the contents of the BCA and focuses solely on the ninth chapter, the perfection of insight. This is a section that Dpal sprul's concentration on contemplative exercises of the *blo sbyong* type covers only marginally.

Reasonable ways of elucidating the manual's structure might also be gained by looking at its possible usage. As mentioned already, one of the methods Dpal sprul used to disseminate the teachings of the BCA and to make it available to a varied

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[31] Sweet 1996 provides an overview of the *blo sbyong* genre. See especially pp. 247f. for the role of the BCA in its development.

[32] The passage in question is given in Viehbeck 2005: 46f.

[33] See *Dpal sprul gsung 'bum*, vol. 1, p. 17.4–5.

audience was the establishment of annual "seminars" on the BCA.[34] During these seminars, which were arranged for periods of either twenty days or three months and attracted large audiences, textual exegesis was combined with actual practice. Generally, this latter apparently involved ritual recitation of the text in combination with offerings, homages, confessions, etc. and also taking the *bodhisattva* vow on a daily basis.[35] Considering the content of the *Sgom rim*, it is quite likely that this text played a role in these seminars, as an indicator of practical exercises that could be used in combination with a traditional commentary on the BCA. This assumption is corroborated by the often very terse style of the manual, which presupposes profound knowledge of the text – a kind of understanding that could be gained through the use of further commentaries and detailed oral explanations, as was the custom in this specific context. The applied combination of theoretical explanations and practical performance, it seems, should be seen as one of the main factors for Dpal sprul's success, which has resulted in his fame as a recent propagator of the BCA and the continued popularity of this text, now highlighted as a guideline for personal spiritual practice.

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[34] According to Kretschmar 2004: 39, the Tibetan expressions used for these seminars are *spyod 'jug tshogs pa*, *spyod 'jug cho ga*, *spyod 'jug mchod pa*, and *spyod 'jug rgan ma*.
[35] Unfortunately, there is only very limited information on the details of these seminars. Kun dpal alludes only briefly to the occurrence of such seminars in various passages of his *rnam thar* (see *Dpal sprul rnam thar* 804.3, 804.4, and 804.5); Andreas Kretschmar provides further information, often based on oral explanations by members of Dpal sprul's teaching tradition (see Kretschmar 2004: 30, 39, 48, and 486). In note 359 he also mentions a written ritual outline of these seminars, but he could not get access to this text. Knowledge of its contents would certainly help to clarify the role Dpal sprul's *Sgom rim* played in them.

Overview chart: structure of Dpal sprul's *Sgom rim* in relation to Śāntideva's original text

A	B		
(BCA IV)	1. The person that is capable [of this kind of practice] (*rten gyi gang zag*)		
	2. The attitude: generating *bodhicitta* (*bsam pa sems bskyed pa*)	2.1. Aspiration (*smon pa*)	
BCA I: Praise of *bodhicitta* (*bodhicittānuśaṃsā*)		2.2. Application (*'jug pa*)	2.2.1. Preparation (*sbyor ba*)
BCA II: Confession of negative acts (*pāpadeśanā*)			
BCA III: Acceptance of *bodhicitta* (*bodhicittaparigraha*)			
			2.2.2. Main part (*dngos gzhi*)
			2.2.3. Conclusion (*mjug*)
(BCA I–III; X)	3. Application: how to engage [in practice] (*tshul ji ltar 'jug pa'i sbyor ba*)	3.1. Generosity (*sbyin pa*)	
BCA IV: Attentiveness for *bodhicitta* (*bodhicittāpramāda*); V: Guarding alertness (*saṃprajanyarakṣaṇa*)		3.2. Discipline (*tshul khrims*)	3.2.1. Methods of observing [discipline] (*srung byed kyi thabs*)
			3.2.2. How to observe [discipline] by these [methods] (*des ji ltar srung tshul*)
BCA VI: The perfection of patience (*kṣāntipāramitā*)		3.3. Patience (*bzod pa*)	
		3.4. Perserverance (*brtson 'grus*)	3.4.1. Abandoning the three [types of] laziness, which are discordant factors (*mi mthun phyogs le lo gsum spang ba*)
BCA VII: The perfection of perseverance (*vīryapāramitā*)			3.4.2. Generating the six powers, which are conducive factors (*mthung phyogs stobs drug bskyed pa*)
BCA VIII: The perfection of meditation (*dhyānapāramitā*)		3.5. Meditation (*bsam gtan*)	3.5.1. Abandoning discordant factors (*mi mthun phyogs spang ba*)
			3.5.2. Main part: practice of meditation (*dngos gzhi bsam gtan bsgom pa*)
		3.6. Insight (*shes rab*)	3.6.1. Identifying the nature of insight (*shes rab kyi ngo bo ngos bzung ba*)
BCA IX: The perfection of insight (*prajñāpāramitā*)			3.6.2. Applying this [insight] to the topic of selflessness (*de yul bdag med la 'jug pa*)
BCA X: Dedication (*pariṇāmanā*)	4. The result of such engagement (*de ltar zhugs pa'i 'bras bu*)		

A) The related general content of Śāntideva's BCA; chapters in parentheses refer to content treated only marginally in the *Sgom rim*

B) Structure of Dpal sprul's *Sgom rim*

C) Direct references – in the form of recitations and contemplations – to passages from the BCA; numbers provided according to the bilingual Sanskrit-Tibetan edition of

Bhattacharya (BCA [Bh])

		C
2.2.1.1. Generating enthusiasm about the benefits [of *bodhicitta*] (*phan yon gyi brod pa bskyed pa*)		BCA I
2.2.1.2. Gathering accumulations: the practice of the seven branches (*tshogs bsags pa yan lag bdun pa bya ba*)	2.2.1.2.1. Offering (*mchod pa*)	BCA II, 1–25
	2.2.1.2.2. Taking refuge (*skyabs su 'gro ba*)	BCA II, 26
	2.2.1.2.3. Confessing negative acts (*sdig pa bshags pa*)	BCA II, 27–65
	2.2.1.2.4. Rejoicing (*rjes su yi rang ba*)	BCA III, 1–3
	2.2.1.2.5. Requesting the turning of the wheel of Dharma (*chos kyi 'khor lo bskor bar bskul ba*)	
	2.2.1.2.6. Praying not to pass into *nirvāṇa* (*mya ngal las mi 'da' bar gsol ba 'debs pa*)	BCA III, 4–9; applies to 5–7
	2.2.1.2.7. Dedication (*bsngo ba*)	
2.2.1.3. Mind training (*blo sbyangs pa*)		BCA III, 10–21
		BCA III, 22–23
		BCA III, 25–33

3.4.2.1. The force of interest (*mos pa'i dpung*)		
3.4.2.2. The force of steadfastness (*brtan pa'i dpung*)	3.4.2.2.1. The confidence of activity (*las kyi nga rgyal*)	
	3.4.2.2.2. The confidence of ability (*nus pa'i nga rgyal*)	
	3.4.2.2.3. The confidence of defilements (*nyon mongs pa'i nga rgyal*)	
3.4.2.3. The force of extraordinary delight (*khyad par dga' ba'i dpung*)		
3.4.2.4. The force of discarding, of dispelling hindrances (*gegs sel dor ba'i dpung*)		
3.4.2.5. The power of great effort (*lhur len gyi stobs*)		
3.4.2.6. The power of dominion (*dbang bsgyur gyi stobs*)		
3.5.1.1. Abandoning mundane concerns (*'jig rten spang ba*)		
3.5.1.2. Discarding discursive thoughts (*rnam rtog dor ba*)		
3.5.2.1. The practice of equalizing oneself and others (*bdag gzhan mnyam pa bsgom pa*)		BCA VIII, 90; 97–99
3.5.2.2. The practice of exchanging oneself with others (*bdag gzhan brje ba bsgom pa*)		BCA VIII, 131; 140; X, 56
3.6.2.1. The practice of selflessness of persons (*gang zag gi bdag med bsgom pa*)		
3.6.2.2. The practice of selflessness of phenomena (*chos kyi bdag med bsgom pa*)	3.6.2.2.1. The application of mindfulness to the body (*lus dran pa nye bar bzhag pa*)	
	3.6.2.2.2. The application of mindfulness to sensations (*tshor ba dran pa nye bar bzhag pa*)	
	3.6.2.2.3. The application of mindfulness to the mind (*sems dran pa nye bar bzhag pa*)	
	3.6.2.2.4. The application of mindfulness to phenomena (*chos dran pa nye bar bzhag pa*)	
		BCA X, 57

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