

# A Narrative Account of a *Gaṇacakra*, and the Fulfilment of *Guhyasamāja* through *Cakrasaṃvara*

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## Introductory

I was informed of the most interesting biography of Kṛṣṇācārya by Kun dga' grol mchog (the *Nag po spyod pa'i rtogs pa brjod pa'i yal 'dab*)<sup>1</sup> after completing a translation of Tāranātha's version of that same siddha's life.<sup>2</sup> Immediately, this version struck me as being important because of its somewhat different approach to the manner of recording biography and the extra dimensions it added to a study of comparative biographies of the siddha. As work on it progressed, it became clear that there were other areas of the biography which merited some interest. One of these was because it included Kṛṣṇācārya's *caryā* songs in a sequence which I had not seen before, one designed to employ them as exemplars and sounding boards for the series of narrative events which went to make up the biography itself, rather than in their more usual form as a graded series of songs reflecting stages of spiritual attainment.

However, the present paper looks at two quite different aspects of the work which are also worthy of some discussion. One deals with the structure of a *gaṇa* ceremony to confirm the young siddha-to-be into the correct understanding of which tantra he should follow, and the other touches on the issue of one set of teachings being "perfected" or in some way brought to a stage of finalization by another. In this latter case the the biography contains a series of songs sung by several *ḍākinīs* which demonstrate how the tantra of *Guhyasamāja* is said to be brought to a state of "completion" by *Cakrasaṃvara*. This topic seems to be one not frequently encountered in the available literature. Several Tibetan lamas I talked with in 1992 said that they doubted the propriety of putting one tantra in any sort of opposition to another anyway, "even if they were from the two lower groups", and they said that they doubted if that indeed had been the case for including the songs which make this differentiation in the body of Kun dga' grol mchog's

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<sup>1</sup> This text occurs in *The Autobiographies of Jo nañ Kun dga' grol mchog and His Previous Embodiments*, 2 vols., New Delhi: Tibet House, 1982.

<sup>2</sup> *Tāranātha's Life of Kṛṣṇācārya*, tr. D. Templeman, Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1989.

work. Both aspects of this paper, that dealing with the structure of the *gaṇa*, and that which looks at the instructional songs themselves, are dealt with in the narrative order in which they appear in the biography itself. My main interest here is to review only the bare narrative outline, as well as the songs in their role as exemplars of absolute truth. It remains for us to look at the translated passages in some detail, to determine if there has been a case here of playing one tantra off against the other. This then is the theme of this paper and although I think little, if any new, ground will be broken, at least some light may be shed on a relatively unexamined topic. At another level it is my hope that this small article will furnish more information on the structure of the *gaṇacakra* to add to the body of information started by Marcelle Lalou in her important paper, “Preliminaires d’une Etude des *gaṇacakra*”.<sup>3</sup>

### On the “Gradation” of Tantras

The most common way in which the topic of “gradation” within the body of works known as the tantras is approached, seems to be in the delineation of the “classifications” of tantras into their four or six main groups. A standard work by mKhas grub rje<sup>4</sup> notes the structure of the tantras as *kriyā*, *caryā*, *yoga* and *anuttara*, this same hierarchy being followed by many other scholars and commentators, including Kun dga’ grol mchog in the text under consideration. mKhas grub rje further notes that the *Guhyasamāja tantra* is the chief of the Father tantras and the *Śrī Cakrasaṃvara tantra* is the chief of the Mother tantras. Kun dga’ grol mchog takes this basic taxonomy a small step further when, employing the words of the *ḍākinī* leader of the *gaṇacakra*, Kṛṣṇācārya is told that the “standard” structure should be seen as the “Outer” tantras, comprising *kriyā*, *caryā* and *yoga*, and the “Inner” tantras, comprising *guruyoga*. The Anuttara is seen as the peak of the classification. She sang,

As for the vehicle of the most high Anuttaratantra  
Containing as it does secret, highly secret and most profoundly  
Secret meanings as its very basis,  
It is said that its pinnacle is the Cakrasaṃvara tantra ...<sup>5</sup>

There is clearly a hierarchization at work in such divisions. Although “skilful means” as a rubric covers any residual danger of *actually* pitting one tantra against another, or seeing in such a classification one tantra as being

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<sup>3</sup> In: *Studies of Esoteric Buddhism and Tantrism in Commemoration of the 1150th Anniversary of the Founding of Koyasan*, ed. Y. Matsunaga, Koyasan: Koyasan University, 1965, pp. 41–6.

<sup>4</sup> *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, tr. F. D. Lessing and A. Wayman, 2nd edition, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978.

<sup>5</sup> Kun dga’ grol mchog, *op.cit.*, folio 11a, lines 4–5.

superior to another,<sup>6</sup> there still remains the danger of a student perceiving it as such, despite the cautions to the contrary. The question must be asked as to whether Kun dga' grol mcho's analysis simply fitted the case of the *gaṇacakra* he was writing of in the biography of his own lineal primogenitor, or whether he was really engaging in a game of setting a tantric hierarchy for the texts he was involved primarily with in his own life and practice, the *Guhyasamāja*- and the *Cakrasamvara* tantras. The Tibetan exegetic literature on the cult of Cakrasamvara is quite large, and to answer such a question would necessitate surveying the literature of, for example, Tāranātha as well as the texts systematized by Pad ma dkar po as well as Kun dga' grol mcho's own autobiography itself, which is of course beyond the scope of this paper.

## The Biography of Kṛṣṇācārya

As regards the biography itself, it sets out to provide a record of the Mahāsiddha Kṛṣṇācārya's life within the constraints of memory, direct information, and already existing accounts. Kun dga' grol mchog takes several of Kṛṣṇācārya's previous biographers to task for misunderstanding various aspects of the siddha's life,<sup>7</sup> but most importantly he constantly challenges the readers themselves in case they confuse the inner and outer events or even presume to judge the inner meaning of the life itself.<sup>8</sup> Kun dga' grol mchog then provides us with several hermeneutic devices to explain many of the difficult points of Kṛṣṇācārya's life, the most intriguing of which is that which the author states at the outset of the work:

... for the sake of convenient appearances, this mighty siddha himself adopted the stratagem that he would not gain siddhahood in this very body ... and he did not (therefore) appear to achieve his aim (attainment of *yuganaddha*). However, as the meaning (of this) is couched in intentional language, it will have to be explained later.<sup>9</sup>

It is within these constraints that we have to approach the actual narrative of the outer events of the life of the siddha. However, these same constraints of language intentionality do not seem to apply to the events of the *gaṇacakra* itself especially the series of songs sung by the *ḍākinī* chief explaining the

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<sup>6</sup> Something Wayman already noted was a problem in the time of “older” Tibetan Gurus, who seemed to favour exegesis of the latter two categories: *op. cit.*, Introduction to the second edition, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Kun dga' grol mchog, *ibid.*, folios 35a, line 2–35b, line 4.

<sup>8</sup> For example, see Kun dga' grol mchog, *op. cit.*, folio 29b, line 3, folio 30b, line 3 and folio 31a, lines 4–5.

<sup>9</sup> Kun dga' grol mchog, *op. cit.*, folio 2b, line 5 and folio 3a, lines 4–5.

differentiation between the tantras. These appear to be more straightforward in meaning and because of their very setting, in a locus where only statements of the absolute truth are possible, one of the hallmarks of a true *gaṇacakra*, we would be advised to accept them as beyond interpretation.

## Early Studies and Meeting with Lakṣmīkarā

In his youth Kṛṣṇācārya met the yogini Lakṣmīkarā and was empowered into the cycle of Hevajra in the teaching tradition of Saroruha. This he presumably studied further under his early mentor Śiṣyavajra, a well known master of the Guhyasamāja teachings and renowned as a disciple (whether directly or as a lineal disciple is not really made clear) of the tantric Candrakīrti, who is said to have lived in the first half of the ninth century A.D. and whose work, the *Pradīpoddyotana*, is well known as a commentary on the Guhyasamāja. Presumably it was into this very cycle of teachings that Kṛṣṇācārya was introduced during this early period and it is from there that he moved onwards in the remainder of his biography. A short while later Kṛṣṇācārya met the previous yogini Lakṣmīkarā again and told her that he was searching for the *Guhyasamāja tantra*. She replied,

The ultimate tantra is the *Samāja*.

Although it is renowned widely, you must nevertheless keep it as a secret treasure.

The Mother tantra is the blissful *Cakrasaṃvara tantra*,

The path relied on by ten million *ḍākinīs*.

She went on to say, “*The highly secret and limitless Hevajra tantra, as well as the Guhyasamāja tantra and others, are indeed [known as] the Most Secret Cakrasaṃvara Cycle, to be revealed to you. This therefore is the tantra you should cleave to.*”<sup>10</sup> This is the first reference we have that the *Śrī Cakrasaṃvara tantra* is to be regarded as the apotheosis of all the tantras of the *anuttaratantra* class. Interestingly enough, Kṛṣṇācārya’s early transition from the *Hevajra tantra* is recorded by many of the biographers I have used as reference for his life, that is, Abhayadatta,<sup>11</sup> Bu ston,<sup>12</sup> and Kun dga’ grol mchog. Tāranātha remains silent on Kṛṣṇācārya’s early *dams*, but later in his lengthy biography of the siddha, he says that other “sectarians”, those who were primarily devotees of Hevajra, Guhyasamāja and the Black Yamāntaka, all claim that he used “their” tantra as his means of

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<sup>10</sup> Kun dga’ grol mchog, *op. cit.*, folios 5a, line 5–6b, line 2 (my emphasis).

<sup>11</sup> Abhayidatta, *Caturaśīti-siddha-pravṛtti*, translated as *Buddha’s Lions*, J. B. Robinson, Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1979, pp. 81–5.

<sup>12</sup> *The Collected Works of Bu Ston*, Vol. 6 (Śata-Piṭaka Series, No. 46), ed. Prof. Dr. Lokesh Chandra, New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1966, folio 42a, line 3–folio 46b, line 1.

liberation, which point he refutes.<sup>13</sup> dPa' bo gtsug lag makes no mention of Kṛṣṇācārya's early *yi-dams* at all.<sup>14</sup>

Thereafter Lakṣmīnkarā encouraged him to find Jālandharipa, who was to act as his second preceptor. Jālandharipa empowered Kṛṣṇācārya into the Cakrasaṃvara Mother tantra and gave him directions to Urgyen, where he was to find the leader of the *ḍākinī* gathering and seek her blessing on a set of bone ornaments which Jālandharipa entrusted to Kṛṣṇācārya. These bone ornaments represented the stage of the *caryās*, that is, perfection of wisdom exemplified in every single action.

## The Ḍākinī Gaṇacakra at Urgyen and the Song of the Thirty-seven Ḍākinīs

Urgyen is clearly described in the relevant passages as being like the “palm of one’s hand, which extended everywhere like a heavenly mansion. [It was] laid out as thirty-two crossed arrows in a swastika shape, intersecting each other here and there, set out in a chequer-board formation”,<sup>15</sup> and it was in this perfected and regularized site that the *gaṇacakra* was to occur.

He saw and heard the *ḍākinīs* there sing in a quiet drone and perform beautiful dances of welcome in delicate dancing steps, the like of which he had never seen before. Kṛṣṇācārya was astounded by their beauty, to which he was inordinately attracted, and also a little bemused by the bizarre and slightly fearsome appearance of some of them, with their beards, three eyes and goat’s hair ornaments. That night, as he walked around the city’s gridded roads, he came upon a temple at its centre, and as drowsiness overcame him, he decided to stay the night there. Later in the night the *ḍākinīs* came there and the site took on a most wondrous form, with music, song, and dance, and a spontaneously glowing light pervading the temple. The chief *ḍākinī* assumed the central position of the temple which, as will be recalled, was in the very centre of Urgyen. From her throne, draped as it was with a coverlet of human skin, she presided over a question and answer session performed by two *ḍākinīs* in secret symbolic gestures that accorded with strict rules of etiquette governing the manner they employed their bodies and voices. Later these two took Kṛṣṇācārya on a leisurely tour around the *maṇḍala*, and then seated him in its very centre next to the chief *ḍākinī*. Ruddy rays of light emerged from between her eyebrows and the other *ḍākinīs* flashed and flickered their own middle eyes in response. Then they all formed into rows and, preliminaries over, the *gaṇa* proper started. The *ḍākinīs* extracted from their armpits “the sixteen red heart

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<sup>13</sup> Tāranātha, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>14</sup> dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba, *Chos byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, 2 vols., Beijing: Peoples Publishing House, 1986, pp. 752, line 20–754, line 14.

<sup>15</sup> Kun dga' grol mchog, *op. cit.*, folio 6b, lines 2–3.

essences of the demon yak”, as well as other foods which were piled up in the *maṇḍala*’s centre. The hearts were then cut into a thousand pieces by the *ḍākinīs* with their crooked, blazing, copper knives, and both they and the other victuals were shared among the throng in their celebratory repast. Kṛṣṇācārya was among those who shared the food, the like of which he had never tasted before.

After the feast and ceremony were over, the chief *ḍākinī* welcomed Kṛṣṇācārya as the sole *vira* present at the *gaṇacakra*, the sole representative of “means”, an important point in Lalou’s taxonomy (see below). In her first song she confirmed him on the path, gave him a prediction and described the division of the tantras as fourfold, *kriyā*, *caryā*, *yoga* and *guruyoga*. Over and above those levels she sang that there was,

The secret Anuttaratantra, the very pinnacle of the paths.

It is the mother’s heart, which is the secret, ultimate way.

In the Guhyasamāja there are two stages of the path, both of which are spoken of.

Over and above the sphere of Guruyoga and the lower stages is

The higher stage which is the very highest, the Anuttarayoga tantra.

What others are there, if indeed there are any, which are higher than the Śrī Saṃvara?

She then told Kṛṣṇācārya that they were “thoroughly mixed together with the blood from the heart’s cavity” (which has allusions to a verse in a later song) and advised him that, “Since words are merely sounds, you should not dwell upon them, // Think on their meanings instead!”<sup>16</sup> Kṛṣṇācārya then felt extremely confident about this revelation of the superiority of the *Cakrasaṃvara tantra* which had been explained to him, and took the deity as his tutelary repeatedly. He saw the true face of the chief *ḍākinī*, the *jñāna*-mother, and he sang of his feelings in a song based on the mental images which spontaneously flooded his mind at the time. At this stage he felt confident enough in the superiority of Cakrasaṃvara to wish to change the views then prevailing in Northern India, which seemed to favour the practice of Guhyasamāja. (At this point one should recall the early training Kṛṣṇācārya had under Śiṣyavajra and all that was entailed in it.) He sang a song in which he quite clearly put forward an agenda which Kun dga’ grol mchog records thus,

As for those Indian pandits

Who excel in verbosity and are inordinately proud of their own learning,

I will make them hear the pleasant drum of the doctrine other than that of  
Guhyasamāja,

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<sup>16</sup> Kun dga’ grol mchog, *op. cit.*, folio 10b, line 5–folio 11a, line 5.

Those who proclaim nothing other than their own obdurate *vāsanas*.<sup>17</sup>

In the following verses he asked to be shown how to actually differentiate between the two tantras. He sang,

...

How will I differentiate between the bDe mchog<sup>18</sup> and the gSang 'dus<sup>19</sup>  
meanings, which are both provisional and ultimate in their meanings?  
How will I differentiate between the bases of the fruitional and the  
liberation stages?<sup>20</sup>

At that the chief *ḍākinī* radiated a blissful smile and proceeded to give him all the instructions he could need in this difficult pursuit of separating the levels of practice in the two great tantras. She sang,

... You have come here, Oh yogeśvara,  
With your mental doubts wavering like a swinging palanquin.  
Now you have eradicated those doubts and all those other concerns of yours.  
You have great faith in the doctrine of Guhyasamāja,  
But you are still a person who has some serious doubts about your attachment  
to Śrī Saṃvara.  
Listen with full attention to my song of Ultimate Truth,  
Which I, the chief of the *ḍākinīs*, will give to you.

The wondrous and beautiful teaching, possessed of the seven ornaments,  
whose  
Magical activities taught long ago, are a repository of the most profound  
belief,  
With its chapters conjoined in due order, containing well composed words,  
Is indeed the Śrī Samāja, the King of Tantras and the jewel of the learned.  
In that tantra's various parts are sequestered secret meanings,  
And you will find the core-path's breadth hard to assess.  
It is not something we *ḍākinīs* can instruct you in.  
How then may a learned person gain an understanding of the inner meaning of  
these words I have spoken?

These words have never been put into written form:  
They are gathered here with me in the clear heart of the *ḍākinīs*.

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<sup>17</sup> Kun dga' grol mchog, *op. cit.*, folio 12a, line 3.

<sup>18</sup> "Highest bliss", i.e. *Cakrasaṃvara*.

<sup>19</sup> "Secret convocation", i.e. *Guhyasamāja*.

<sup>20</sup> Kun dga' grol mchog, *op. cit.*, folio 12a, line 4.

In this way, to cause your direct understanding of all this to broaden,  
You must perform the songs and dances of the *ḍākinī* gathering!<sup>21</sup>

Thereafter follows a song of instruction to Kṛṣṇācārya in which the *Guhyasamāja* is compared (perhaps less than favourably) to its point of “completion”, that is the *Cakrasaṃvara tantra* itself. By using the word “completion”, I mean that the *Cakrasaṃvara tantra* is referred to as a logical *extension* of the *Guhyasamāja*. The thirty-seven *ḍākinīs* who sang the song add further to the note of caution already expressed previously, warning him about the necessity of his becoming fully involved in the *gaṇacakra* if he were to resolve all his doubts. They sang,

You, mighty yogin, should listen to this...  
It is not a song sung before—[*you* must] sing it then today ...!  
As for Śrī Cakrasaṃvara and Saṃvara,  
All those tantras are sealed with *vajra*-knots,  
And have been taken out from a completely secret repository.  
The way to understand the locus of their essential heart-meaning is the way  
which follows;

As the place of union of means and wisdom  
Is indeed the heavenly place where *vajra* and lotus kiss each other,  
The path of conjoinedness is bliss indeed!  
The deities are not [thus] taught in the *Guhyasamāja*—this is a unique  
teaching indeed!

Ornamenting of your body with finely wrought jewels which have  
been bestowed on you,  
Means that you must go to a cemetery without any vestigial concepts of  
selfhood, wearing human bone fragments and  
You must hold a garland of human bones like a *vira*.  
Those ornaments are not mentioned in the *Guhyasamāja*—this is a  
unique teaching indeed!

With mind bereft of attachment to calming, blissful meditation,  
Your face becomes filled with the thoughts of the nine kinds of  
wrathful lust.  
Your mind is out of control with passion, and your sharp fangs are  
bared.  
The mind is not thus glorified in the *Guhyasamāja*—this is a unique  
teaching indeed!

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<sup>21</sup> Kun dga' grol mchog. *op. cit.*, folio 12b, line 3–folio 13a, line 2.

In your hands are a jewel, a lotus and a wheel, as well as other implements  
You disdain to hold any weapon which appears beautiful,  
Holding instead a sword, skull-cup, trident and a sounded small drum.  
These do not appear in the Guhyasamāja—this is a unique teaching indeed!

On the outside, you have fully explored the eight great cemeteries [of India].  
You must completely abandon those places which are inferior and where the  
local deity lives on the site.

On the inside, the realms of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are treated as one and the  
same thing.

These places are not necessary in the Guhyasamāja—this is a unique sort of  
teaching!

The wheel of the twenty-four lands is revolved fully,  
And is the sacred place of the deity's mind, speech and body.  
Yogins get the essence of Buddhahood in this very life.  
That the lands are not mentioned in the Guhyasamāja—this is a unique  
teaching indeed!

By the strenuous effort of your accumulated *karma*,  
You have, at this time, in this very life, become a fortunate, blessed being  
quite swiftly.

The power inherent in conjoining the psychic channels, seed essence and the  
psychic winds of your body,

Is not bestowed in the Guhyasamāja—this is a unique teaching indeed!

In order to protect the quicksilver elixir as a basis, the vajrācārya will, in that  
pure place,

Use seed-essence of red heart's blood as an ingredient.

This is not performed in the Guhyasamāja—this is a unique teaching indeed!

Mantras of the deities and their fields of activity are co-emergent.

The three divine messenger-consorts of the throat are mixed up together.

A series of continuous, running *vajra*-knots were tied by hand. This is not  
disclosed in the Guhyasamāja—this is a unique teaching indeed!

The psychic channels are the abodes of *viras* and *ḍākinīs*.

Inasmuch as they abide in their natural places,

They are blessed by the magical syllables, *ā li* and *kā li*.

This is not spoken of in the Guhyasamāja—this is a unique teaching indeed!

Your six bone ornaments which you have donned as clothes,  
Together with your *khaṭvāṅga* trident, *ḍamaru* drum, brahmin's  
thread and *kāpāla* skull-cup,  
Are symbols of your undertaking the ascetic practices of the *viras*.  
These are not made public in the Guhyasamāja—this is a unique  
teaching indeed!

Mastering the places of pilgrimage, twenty four in number,  
Both inner and outer, is the *utpattikrama* practice.  
By this very means you will be granted the twelfth stage in this very  
lifetime.  
This is not found in the Guhyasamāja—this is a unique teaching  
indeed!

By the *sampannakrama* practice of kissing Vasantatilaka,  
Having blocked the narrow path where the *ro.ma* and the *rkyang.ma*. psychic  
channels move,  
It moves swiftly into the direct [*ava*] *dhūti* psychic channel.  
Thus the teachings of the Guhyasamāja are given extra qualities —  
this is a unique teaching indeed!

Thus he was instructed and he understood that the path of being  
empowered into a *maṇḍala*, and the *utpattikrama* and *sampannakrama*  
were taught by means of symbols given by yogins and yoginīs. It is  
beyond doubt that he learned to differentiate well between them.<sup>22</sup>

We may see from this song that there has been a clear delineation of the basic differences between the so-called Father and Mother tantras in the above thirteen verses, each one containing an important point which separates the *Cakrasamvara* from the *Guhyasamāja tantra*, which is seen by comparison to be somewhat more restrained and more fastidious in nature. To summarize the *ḍākinī*'s song in the *Cakrasamvara tantra*, (1) means (*vajra*) and wisdom (lotus) kiss in great passion; (2) one is enjoined to wear only cemetery ornaments which represent lack of self; (3) one must adopt the attitude of being out of control with compassion; (4) one must disdain holding any symbolic item other than weapons; (5) full internal bodily pilgrimage is required: *samsāra* (external pilgrimage) and *nirvāṇa* (internal pilgrimage) become one; (6) pilgrimage through the twenty-four lands of the body gives the yogin familiarity with the deity's body, speech and mind; (7) conjoining psychic channels, seed, and winds; (8) the *vajrācārya*'s blood and seed are

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<sup>22</sup> Kun dga' grol mchog, *op. cit.*, folio 13b, line 1–folio 14b, line 2.

used to protect the *bodhicitta*; (9) lack of distinction between inner and outer activities; (10) psychic channels are blessed by *mantra* sounds; (11) *vira* ascetic practices undertaken as superior to other practices; (12) visiting the twenty-four inner and outer pilgrimage spots is the *utpattikrama* practice stage; (13) *vasantatilaka* is kissed, and by controlling the psychic channels, the *bodhicitta* is impelled into the central channel.

These practices are therefore seen to “enhance” the and to add a level to it which is not available otherwise, but really, what appears to be said is that the *Guhyasamāja* is *incomplete* without these above mentioned extra dimensions.

Thereafter follows another lengthy song which clarifies the difference between the two tantras, as if the *ḍākinī*'s song was not quite clear enough itself. It seems to me that this might be another of the fairly frequent inserts by Kun dga' grol mchog himself, as I find no attribution to either the chief *ḍākinī* or one of her followers and it seems contextually improbable that Kṛṣṇācārya would have enunciated it at that particular time in the proceedings. A slightly complicating factor is that there appears to be none of the sententiousness that there is in the other, shorter comments which Kun dga' grol mchog inserts throughout the text to explain away the seemingly inexplicable actions which Kṛṣṇācārya performs, as noted above in footnote 8. The text itself says,

What was said about the teachings of the *Guhyasamāja* was exemplified in a concrete form by a heavenly palace. These teachings did not lack a single one of the [requisite] qualities, and were, moreover, recognized by the teachings of Cakrasaṃvara. To demonstrate the differences [Kun dga' grol mchog [?] says],

“In the *Guhyasamāja*, all the Tathāgatas of the four families are seated in the four directions,  
And the four consorts of the Tathāgatas are seated in the interstices.  
In this teaching [Cakrasaṃvara], the fathers and mothers face each other and kiss in great bliss  
And manifest the seven elements of practice—this is unique and perfect!

The *Guhyasamāja* is the ornament of the lower tantra levels.  
This teaching is ornamented with gems representing Lack of Self-Nature—this is unique and perfect!

In the *Guhyasamāja*, there is an appearance of tranquillity and compassion.  
In this teaching there is an appearance of the nine mental aspects of wrath, desire and dance—this is unique and perfect!

In the *Guhyasamāja* there is the ritual gesture of the *vajra*- wheel as well as other ritual signs too.

In this teaching [Cakrasamvara] the yogins and yoginīs hold weapons—this is unique and perfect!

In the *Guhyasamāja*, the abode of the gods is like a jewelled sky-palace. In this teaching it is encircled by the eight great cemeteries of non-conceptuality—this is unique and perfect!

In the *Guhyasamāja* there are nine sections and the deities soar in the heavens.

In this teaching one does three circuits of the twenty-four lands—this is unique and perfect!

In the *Guhyasamāja* one is empowered by purifying the outer body, speech and mind.

In this teaching one is enjoined to practise with the three inner things—the psychic channels, seed-essence and the psychic winds—this is unique and perfect!

In the *Guhyasamāja*, lustration water is used for empowerment.

In this teaching the Vajrācārya's heart-blood and seed-essence is set up in three places—this is unique and perfect!

In the *Guhyasamāja* the person who is bound by *samaya* vows, and the visualized deity are blended together.

In this teaching the three consorts are mixed together symbolically by gesture—this is unique and perfect!

In the *Guhyasamāja* the spheres of perfection are taught as being non-dual symbolically.

In this teaching the abode of the psychic channels is blessed by mystic letters—this is unique and perfect!

In the *Guhyasamāja* the ordinary level *vajra* ascetic practices are employed.

In this teaching the extraordinary level of the *vira*'s ascetic practices are performed—this is unique and perfect!

In the *Guhyasamāja* the vessel and its contents are purified by the *utpattikrama* practice.

In this teaching both the twenty-four outer and inner spheres are simultaneously purified by the *utpattikrama*—this is unique and perfect!

In the *Guhyasamāja* one enters the *sampannakrama* practice by means of the five stages.

In this teaching both the *vasanta* and the seed-essence join at the lips, and by the four-fold stages, in a state of instant bliss, they fuse into each other<sup>23</sup>—this is unique and perfect!<sup>24</sup>

This inserted didactic song, possibly by Kun dga' grol mchog, emphasises how he sees the *Cakrasaṃvara tantra* as being a stage further advanced than the *Guhyasamāja* and may be summarized thus: (1) the exercise of passion is the sevenfold practice in the *Cakrasaṃvara*; (2) the bone ornaments in the *Cakrasaṃvara tantra* represent lack of self; (3) appearance of calm is enhanced to wrath and passion; (4) in keeping with verse 3, weapons become the appropriate ornaments; (5) pilgrimage inside one's own body obviates external supports; (6) extends the metaphor in verse 5; (7) empowerment externally in the *Guhyasamāja* is replaced by internalized practice; (8) the *vajra* masters blood and seed are the empowering agencies in *Cakrasaṃvara*; (9) *Cakrasaṃvara* relies on symbol and gesture; (10) internal blessing by *mantras* enhances symbolic levels of the *Guhyasamāja*; (11) *Cakrasaṃvara* enjoins one to perform the *vira* practices; (12) *Cakrasaṃvara* simultaneously works on all internal psychic points; (13) immediate, bliss-filled fusion of *yuganaddha* in *Cakrasaṃvara*.

After this plethora of advice, Kṛṣṇācārya found that he was in a state of joyous meditational bliss and that the *ḍākinī* horde had completely vanished. He emerged from the temple at dawn and perceived a throng of *ḍākinīs* in the haze. Among them he found the one who he realized was the one designated to bless the bone apron sent with him by Jālandharipa, and this she did, tying them with sealed running *vajra*-knots. Thus ended the *gaṇacakra* and the instructional verses which were so much a part of them.

We may note in all this the great similarity with the schema set out by Marcelle Lalou in her above mentioned article. She suggests that in a *gaṇacakra* one would expect to find the following criteria: (1) nocturnal timing for the feast which is open to all; (2) employing available fare and with a varying means of managing the feast according to the circumstances; (3) accompaniment by joyous music, song and dance, and perhaps even a newly consecrated site; (4) a demonstrable “skill in means” as regards the partners, which must confirm, in concrete form, the union of “means” and “wisdom”; (5) a consecrated site (the *maṇḍala*), offerings, mantric sounds, etc.; (6) maintenance of a seemly and orderly manner, according to set rules of precedence. Clearly almost all these points are evident as occurring even in the short précis I have given here, culled as it is from the *gaṇacakra* description itself, which comprises sixteen folio sides out of the nearly sixty which go to make up Kun

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<sup>23</sup> The reader is referred to note 37 on page 304 of Wayman, *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, for a discussion of the term *vasanta-tilaka* and its role as the exemplar of the perfect combination of Saṃvara and Vajravārāhī and the white and red aspects of *bindu*.

<sup>24</sup> Kun dga' grol mchog, *op. cit.*, folio 14b, line 2–folio 15b, line 2.

dga' grol mcho's work on the Life of Kṛṣṇācārya.

The reader will have noted that almost all of the points made elsewhere about the *Cakrasaṃvara tantra*'s structure,<sup>25</sup> such as the sixty-two deity *maṇḍala*, the six- or sevenfold correspondences, even the so-called running *vajra*-knots,<sup>26</sup> by which the bone ornaments are finally bound by the *ḍākinī* chief, occur in the songs or the narrative itself. A closer study than is permitted here would demonstrate an extremely close and orderly concordance between the outline of the *krama* practices and the details of the *gaṇacakra* itself.

That Kṛṣṇācārya was to attain the very highest spiritual rank by means of the *Cakrasaṃvara* practices, is evident from a passage quoted by Kun dga' grol mchog which says that Kṛṣṇācārya would attain the state of “*yugaṇaddha* without any further recourse to learning”,<sup>27</sup> that is, the very rank of Vajradhara, a prediction made by the Conqueror himself! It was, however, only to occur in the after-death period, another manifestation of Kṛṣṇācārya's stratagem of living according to “convenient appearances”, and yet another aspect of this remarkable siddha's life worthy of further study.

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<sup>25</sup> For example, in *Śrī-Cakrasaṃvara-Tantra, A Buddhist Tantra*, ed. Kazi Dawa-Samdub, New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 1987 (reprint of the 1919 edition), and Shin'ichi Tsuda, *The Saṃvarodaya-Tantra: Selected Chapters*, Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1974.

<sup>26</sup> Tāranātha, *The Collected Works of Jo-nang Tāranātha*, 17 vols., ed. C. Namgyal and T. Taru, Leh: Ladakh, 1982–8. The reference is to Volume 7, a *sādhana* for *Cakrasaṃvara*, p. 87, line 7.

<sup>27</sup> The state known as *zung 'jug mi slob pa'i go 'phang* is referred to in Kim dga' grol mchog, *op. cit.*, folio 3a, line 2.