

The Teaching on Dakini Day

**ACHIEVING PERFECT
GANACHAKRA PRACTICE**

by Bao Shangshi
The 6th Rigzin Chenpo, Padma Wangchen
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གསང་བ་ཡེ་ཤེས་ 密慧佛母
Sangwa Yishe (Tibetan) Dakini Guhyajñana (Sanskrit)

This is a teaching on effective feast offering practice by Bao Shangshi, the 6th Rigzin Chenpo Padma Wangchen. It was given on the 25th of the 9th month which is the month of Lhabab Duchen (22nd of the 9th Month of the Tibetan Lunar Calendar). Lhabab Duchen is the anniversary of the Buddha Sakyamuni's descent from Tushita Heaven.

For more on the meanings and the benefits of feast offerings, you may refer to Bao Shangshi's previous teachings in which some have been translated into English. This article is a supplement to these teachings. It is also a reminder to us to do feast offerings correctly so as to benefit from them. (Feast Offering - Ganachakra (Sanskrit); Tsog (Tibetan)).

Bao Shangshi also said to do feast offerings twice in a month, on the 10th and 25th of the Tibetan Calendar.

This is an English translation of the Chinese transcript 空行母荟供日的教言 (31st October 2021, weixin) by the volunteer translation team. Mistakes are that of the team. With gratitude to Bao Shangshi for this virtuous opportunity to translate.

May all achieve accomplishments through their continuous efforts in making feast offerings. May Bao Shangshi, the 6th Rigzin Chenpo Padma Wangchen remain in this world to turn the wheel of dharma continuously.

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ACHIEVING PERFECT GANACHAKRA PRACTICE

Recipients of Offerings

Generally, there are two categories of offerings. They are either for the deities, or for those in the six realms. Thus, offerings are for the guru, yidam, dakini, protectors, the sentient beings in the six realms, and all the protectors of this world. Lastly, there are simple and complex visualisations of yourself benefitting from the ritual.

A simple explanation about the visualizations for you to benefit from the rituals of offering is that you need to treat all the items as the items for accomplishments, and that they are given to you by the Victorious Ones. So before consuming or using these items, lift them up with your hands and let them gently touch your forehead in the space between your eyebrows, throat, and heart. Visualise : when the items touch your forehead, the offering items radiate white light that melts with the space between the eyebrows, and purifies your karma from body; red light that melts with the throat, and purifies your karma from speech; and finally, blue light that melts with the heart, and purifies your karma from thoughts. These are the steps to get the blessings of body, speech and mind, from the Victorious Ones.

How Do We Benefit from Making the Offerings?

Minimally eat a little bit, in order to accept the blessings from the Victorious Ones. Note the difference in the order for consuming the offerings for the 10th and 25th of each Tibetan month. On the 10th, you start by eating the solid food first, and on the 25th you start by drinking the beverages.

Afterwards, you pray to a hundred thousand dakinis to bless you.

There is a simple way of offering the remaining food. You only need to cut a small slice from the torma and offer it. It is not necessary for everyone to give a bit of their food offerings here, but it is required at vast ganachakra practices. At such rituals, participants will offer a bit of their remaining food to the protectors in this world, and to the sentient beings who are like our mothers.

Therefore, there are ganachakra practices for the deities and for the six realms. You start each ritual by thinking and transforming the food on the table as amrita, and that you are doing the ganachakra for the sake of sentient beings, for them to attain Buddhahood. It is also for your wish that the karma from body, speech and mind be removed, for both you and all others.

The first set of recipients are the guru who is the master of the ritual, the yidam, the assemblies in the mandalas of the three doors, and the assemblies of dakas, dakinis and protectors at the 24 sacred places. Make the offerings with a mindset of achieving perfect accumulation of merits.

Next, before the mandalas of all the dakas and dakinis, guru, yidam, and all the protectors, sincerely repent for having broken any of these precepts and samaya : Pratimoksa, Bodhisattva or Vajrayana. The ritual of ganachakra serves two aspects which are, cultivating merits and repentance.

Besides these, it is a way of eradicating external obstacles, and inner obscurations. External obstacles with form are those caused by earth, water, fire, wind and others. They are also the natural calamities, and the disasters caused by human

beings. Inner obscurations are our own delusions. And secret obscurations are our own self-grasping. Dissolve all of them into the empty space, and wish that they are all removed.

When we have sufficient merits, and pure karma, all the inner obscurations and outer obstacles will dissolve naturally. Often, when we don't have enough merits, we will meet many obstacles. At other times, when the power of repentance is lacking, and there is heavy karmic debts, obstacles will also appear. Therefore, the feast offerings to the deities, and to the beings in the six realms can help to lessen the obstacles to the body, speech and mind. This way, you are naturally laden with lesser obstacles.

A later part of the Ganachakra Liturgy for Sangwa Yishe (Secret Wisdom Dakini) mentioned about "receiving the remaining offerings and award accomplishments." Here, the intended recipients of the remaining offerings are the 28 carefree female bodhisattvas (dakini who appear as guardians although they have already gained mastery of skill beyond this phenomenal world), other worldly gods, sentient beings in the six realms, and karmic creditors and debtors.

Therefore, we need to do ganachakra twice monthly. The important intentions of practice are to accumulate merits and to repent. The ganachakra must be done at stipulated times, to accumulate merits, repent for karmic misdeeds, as well as to wish for the well-being of all sentient beings. This ritual is known as ganachakra (Sanskrit), tsog (Tibetan) or feast offering. It is therefore very important.

Obstacles and the Importance of Clearing Them during Ganachakra Practice

We break samaya and arise delusive thoughts all the time. Also, we always encounter obstacles to our body, speech and mind,

spiritual self, secular work, and health. And we can't seem to see some of these obstacles although they are already obstructions in our paths to enlightenment : wavering faith, a weak mind of bodhicitta, and not deriving the corresponding results for the efforts put into practice. Because of these obstructions, we need to do ganachakra and repent.

During repentance, it is important to believe in the Buddhadharma, and always believe in the Victorious Ones. However, often times, we only believe in ourselves although we do say, "I believe in the Buddha, I believe in the Buddha!" When it comes to the crux of the matter, there are many who would only believe in themselves, and forget about the Buddha. And this is because the power of faith is weak. As a result, they cannot feel the blessings from the Victorious Ones.

If we are grounded in faith, most karma except for those that have matured, can be transformed by having unwavering faith. How often that we forget the Triple Gem, our samaya, and only believe in ourselves and our own ways, and not the methods given in the Buddhadharma, when we are emotionally affected. This is really a common problem... we tend to believe in ourselves and think that only our ways are good.

There are many methods in the Buddhadharma, including that for arousing a mind of bodhicitta and for repentance. However, we often forget about them, and think that only our methods are the best and are extremely wonderful. So we continue to use our own methods to deal with matters. Therefore, we sometimes forget the Triple Gem, and our faith in the Buddha is also weak. Our faith in the dharma is even weaker.

Often, practitioners keep themselves busy with their practices. Their bodies are thoroughly engaged in Buddhist activities.

They also keep themselves busy doing recitations with their mouths. Despite all these practices, they never internalised the teachings. As a result, when obstacles present, they don't treat them as obstacles. They could even think that the obstacles shouldn't appear because they forget their beliefs in causality. Now, if you believe in karmic cause and effect, all that you encounter are meant to be, as they are the effects of what you have done in your previous lives. So, if you are firm in your belief of karmic cause and effect, you should repent. This is because all the karmic debts resulting from what you did before, as well as all the obstacles that you encounter are conditioned and have interdependent relationships. Therefore, through the power of your faith and repentance, you can transform them using the methods in the Buddhadharma.

However, there are many people who cannot transform themselves and become spiritually low because they think there is no way out. But there really are methods... the Buddha told us the many ways for repentance, and for accumulating merits. You should, through the power of your repentance, and that of your merits, use your wisdom to transform your karma. Even if you are without wisdom, you can use the many methods in the Buddhadharma taught by the Victorious Ones to deal with the issues at hand, and you will be able to manage many things properly.

The reason that a majority of us do not accept the above is because we don't believe in the Triple Gem, neither do we in karmic causes and effects. The reason why we distance ourselves from the Buddhadharma is because we don't believe in the Triple Gem. If this isn't the case, at critical moments, such as when we are in dire straits, what should come to our minds instantaneously are the Triple Gem, repentance, and that what is happening is due to karma. On

the contrary, what usually comes to our minds immediately is how we should retaliate or that we can use our own ways to sort matters out. This truly is the common and grave mistake that we all make.

We can find the solutions to our issues if only we would ponder over them after we have calmed down, and this is only possible if we have in our minds, the Triple Gem and the Buddhadharmā, and sincerely repent and pray. However, we often don't take this route. Instead, we would use our own ways. As such, we really need to repent and cultivate merits at scheduled times, which is twice in a month.

Without repentance and cultivation of merits, we might not be able to see the obstacles that have already appeared before us. Also, we turn a deaf ear to those who warn us that we have encountered obstacles. This is because we are selective in what we hear. It could also be a case where we have been advised against some matters, but we just wouldn't heed the advice as we are of the view that our ways are the right ones. This is the time when we will insist on the views, thoughts, and ways that contradict that of others. We won't accept true words, and this is exactly why we will meet obstacles. To many, when they are about to encounter issues, they won't listen to anyone else, not even the Buddhadharmā. They think themselves to be like the creators of samsaric existence, and of the three worlds, so they only believe in themselves. This isn't confidence nor is it believing. It is arrogance. For such cases, we will often encounter obstacles. Therefore, for the sake of introspection, we need to do ganachakra practice – repent and pray on the stipulated two days every month.

In addition, you need to accumulate merits and repent daily in your morning and night practices. This might purify karma and clear some of your karmic debts. Truly, we came to this world

with heavy karma, but we certainly can leave this world with less. Gradually, we should build good to perfect connections. To this end, we would then have lived life to the fullest, and die happy. What has been described are about the practitioners of lower faculties. As for those of middling faculties, they have a better hold of themselves. They usually start off without much confidence, being surrounded by wrong understandings and toxic views. But they gradually clear their karma through practicing the dharma. The result is they become more confident about living and dying - when they are middle-aged, and in the last part of their lives, also, when they are about to die.

As for the practitioners of upper faculties, they already came to this world with better and complete connections, and dependent origination. So whether it is about faith, bodhicitta, right understanding or emptiness, they will realise the meanings by abiding by rules, and maintaining the right state of mind. They are more confident when taking the path to Buddhahood and can accomplish in this life. They are carefree about life and death, and are totally in the state of practice.

Achieving accomplishments in your practice in this life, and attaining Buddhahood in this life are not necessarily the same. While the former is not the latter, the latter encompasses the former. When you achieve accomplishment it could be having mastery over practice, and you are carefree as you have grasped the skilful means to practice, and have meditative concentration. This means you understand where you are going, so you are carefree. In addition, there are different levels of accomplishments. There are the great, the greater, and the ultimate perfect accomplishments.

Perfect Ganachakra Practice

No matter what, for doing ganachakra, we need to remember this : The time in every month that we are required to accumulate merits and to repent. Please pay attention to this. As for our mindsets, regardless if it is the faith in the Triple Gem, understanding of the visualisations in the ganachakra ritual, or arousing bodhicitta for sentient beings, we all need to maintain the right mindset, from start to end of each ganachakra session. Please be prepared.

Similarly, prepare the offerings of beverages and food. Do your best but within your own limits. When it is not convenient for you to prepare the offerings, you may offer your own food before you finish them. Due to the dependent origination of ganachakra, you need to offer both liquid and solid food. If you have no beverage, a cup of clean water works as well. It could be the distilled or mineral water that are easily available now.

Start preparing the offerings with a pure mind. Don't ever think or establish that the food are for yourselves. When you have this objective in mind, it is because you don't have the Triple Gem in mind, because the first thing you think about is yourself. So, begin by thinking that they are the offerings to the Triple Gem, and only the residuals are for yourself. You need to have a mindset that all that you consume and even the leftovers are the blessings from the Victorious Ones. You need to treasure them. Also, do your best to eat tidily, and finish all the food. Do not be messy.

Can We Share the Offerings with Other People?

You may share the offerings of ganachakra rituals on the 10th, or the offerings to Standing Tara on the 25th. However, there

