



Sweet Droplets of the Honey of Accomplishment

A Concise Explanation of the Indispensable Points of the Feast-Gathering
by Tsele Natsok Rangdrol

Well now, at this occasion of the path, the supreme form of merit and wonder is the offering of the profound feast-gathering on a vast scale. Therefore, I shall explain:

1. the *essence* of the feast-gathering
2. the *literal meaning* of feast-gathering
3. the *divisions* of the feast-gathering
4. the *method* of performing the feast-gathering
5. the *benefits* of performing the feast-gathering

1. The Essence of the Feast-Gathering

The *essence* is the perfection of the two accumulations and the diversity of the substances that delight and bring fulfillment to the deities, the teacher and the vajra brothers and sisters.

2. The Literal Meaning of Feast-Gathering

The Sanskrit word *gana* translates into Tibetan as *tsok* (*tsbogs*) [and into English as *gathering*.]¹ It is called a *gathering* because it consists of the substances of skillful means and wisdom arranged as an abundant gathering of food, drink and sensory delights.

3. The Divisions of the Feast-Gathering

If divided, there are:

- a) the outer,
- b) the inner,
- c) the secret, and
- d) the suchness feasts.

a) The Outer Feast

Outwardly, the great golden ground and the four continents, Mount Meru and the lakes of enjoyment² are naturally arranged as the *feast receptacle* and the *feast articles*. Since beginningless time, all sentient beings living in this universe³ have been spontaneously present as the *feast ornaments*. This is the marvelous *outer feast offering* of the naturally occurring universe, both animate and inanimate. It is being offered in great uncontrived naturalness to the gathering of the gurus,

yidams and dakinis, and it constitutes the *outer feast*.

b) The Inner Feast

On an inner level, of the many substances present, those of skillful means are the solid foods; those of wisdom are the liquid drinks; those of non-duality are both food and drink together, and so forth. In essence, the *inner feast* is the blessing of whatever sensory delights have been gathered so that they become offerings.

c) The Secret Feast

Secretly, using our own body, within the *feast receptacle*—the skin—this *conglomeration* of flesh, blood, sense organs and all the other organs (i.e. everything else) are sanctified so as to become the nectar of primordial wisdom. Thus blessed, this (nectar of primordial wisdom) is offered as the *secret feast*.

d) The Suchness Feast

On the level of suchness, the *feast receptacle* is the infinite expanse of natural awareness, free of elaboration, unconfined, unrestricted, and all-pervasive. Within it resides the inconceivable dynamic display of *concepts*—thinking, consciousness, mind, sense perceptions, subtle and gross movements of good and bad thoughts. These are blessed so as to become the *feast of natural awareness, natural wisdom, and natural liberation*. Within the natural primordial state, free from anything offered and anyone who offers, the recognition of things as they are constitutes the *true ultimate feast offering of suchness*.

In conclusion, you should understand correctly that everything without exception—appearance and existence, outer and inner, container and contained—is by nature nothing other than the feast.

4. The Method of Performing the Feast-Gathering

With these distinctions in mind, the method of performing the actual practice of the inner feast offering is as follows. Generally speaking, of all the sensory delights—sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and so forth—there is nothing that cannot be a feast substance. In particular, arrange beautifully whatever you can gather in the way of feast substances, such as food whose nature is skillful means and drink whose nature is wisdom. Through the wisdom-play of fire, water and wind (the syllables *ram*, *kham* and *yam*), all the impurities—the *gathering* of shortcomings that are confused appearances on the relative level—are purified. By the light that streams forth from the seed syllables of the wisdom display of the three *kayas* (*om*, *ah* and *hung*), the feast substances are blessed as the nectar of undefiled great bliss, a treasure that fulfills all wishes and desires. Next, offer this (very nectar) to the gathering of the deities of the mandala in the space above, in the form of the offering substances;⁴ Dedicate it to the dharma protectors and guardians as the fulfillment offering of whatever they desire; enjoy it together with all the vajra brothers and sisters as substances of accomplishment and samaya; and give it, as the leftover portion of the command,⁵ to the gathering of local guardians and

dakinis and so forth.⁶ Thus, offer and/or give according to whatever is appropriate for the guests on every level.⁷ When making the offering to these different levels, from within the state of the samadhi of the play of primordial wisdom, which is untainted by thoughts of conceit, prestige, yearning, stinginess, hope and fear, you should offer purely—with pure perception, devotion, compassion and the highest intention.

As regards the feast substances, at times when you are in possession of something to offer, arrange a feast of whatever sensory delights can be enjoyed, without any stinginess or attachment. At times when you have nothing to offer, it is fine to use just water. If you know how to transform the substances through the power of the highest motivation and through the power of samadhi, then—since there is not even a single atom that cannot constitute a feast offering—anything whatsoever that appears can be offered from within the state of the great wisdom-play of *dharmata*.

While enjoying any type of food or drink, whatever it might be, visualize it as the feast-gathering of siddhis,⁸ and consider that your aggregates, elements and sense fields⁹ are spontaneously perfected as the mandala of the victorious ones. The appearances and nature of the static channels, moving winds, and arranged essences¹⁰ are primordially and naturally present as the places, higher places, fields, higher fields and so forth.¹¹ The external twenty-four sacred places are also present internally within the vajra body, in the crown and so forth.¹² The dakas and their consorts that reside in the external sacred places, such as Luminous Vajra,¹³ are also spontaneously present internally as the channels, inner air and essences¹⁴ of the channel of cultivation¹⁵ and so forth. It is stated thus in all the tantras: if, for merely one instant, while holding the *samadhi* of the yogas,¹⁶ you inwardly offer the feast to your body,¹⁷ you will simultaneously gain the merit of performing the feast-gathering for all the assemblies of dakas and dakinis of the external twenty-four sacred places.

Moreover, according to the supreme vehicle, the Great Perfection: within the expanse of the light sphere in the heart are the thirty-six peaceful buddhas;¹⁸ within the skull mansion of the head are the fifty-eight wrathful herukas; within the net of the speech chakra is the gathering of deities of awareness-holding dakinis; and within the main chakras at the six centers are the blessed sages of the six classes, and so forth. Thus, all the assemblies of peaceful and wrathful deities are but the mandala of the victorious ones of the vital points of the body. Furthermore, it is said that even the pores of the body are palaces in which infinite dakinis reside. Since this is the case, it is important to understand the key point that all food and drink is by nature the feast-gathering.

In brief, the feast-gathering of the arranged substances is offered to the gurus, yidams, dakinis, dharmapalas, and vajra brothers and sisters in general. By holding the key points of samadhi, the feast-gathering of the aggregates of the illusory body is offered in particular to the gods and demons of the animate and

inanimate world, as it becomes an object of offering for [the gods] above, the [beings] in-between and [the spirits] below.¹⁹ The regular feast-gathering of food and drink, which has not been obtained through wrong livelihood or mishandling religious funds,²⁰ is offered especially to the physical body, the mandala of the victorious ones. On an ultimate level, while everything naturally arises and is naturally liberated, the dharmata feast of whatever appears is offered from within the primordial purity of the nature of mind, free from delusion and dualistic fixation, and transcending all negation and affirmation, accepting and rejecting. This, in brief, constitutes the genuine feast-gathering.

5. The Benefits of Performing the Feast-Gathering

The purpose and benefit of performing the feast-gathering are as follows: It is stated in the *Naturally Arisen Perfection Tantra*²¹ of the Ultimate Vehicle:

The qualities of performing feast-gatherings are as follows:

The obscurations of countless past and future lives

Will all be purified in a mere instant in the presence of the peaceful and wrathful deities.

Wherever you are born in your lives to come

You will never lack necessities,

The wheel of Dharma will never cease to turn [for you]

And you will always have [abundant] wealth, enjoyments,

Sustenance and belongings.

These are the temporary benefits. There are also the higher qualities that you will receive:

In the intermediate state, you will recognize your own perception as the wisdoms.²²

Being liberated there, you will remain on the unchanging ground,

Sending forth emanations throughout the three thousand-fold universe

To benefit beings.

Qualities like this you will attain!

In essence, therefore, the qualities of performing the feast-gathering are immeasurable. Through it, you will perfect the activities of pacifying, enriching, magnetizing and subjugating. You will restore all impairments and breakages of samaya. You will delight and satisfy the deities, gurus, oath-bound protectors, and vajra brother and sisters. All unfavorable and unwanted circumstances will be dispelled. You will perfect the two accumulations of merit and wisdom. You will simultaneously accomplish supreme and ordinary siddhis. Through this, you will obtain benefits too vast to describe. Since this is the special, profound circumstance, the condition and method of secret mantra, the unsurpassable Vajrayana, I urge you to strive continuously with diligence!

This concise explanation of the feast-gathering was composed at the request of the awareness and mantra-holder, Rabdze Kure Göchang, (Karpowa Kunga Tendzin).²³

May this composition benefit beings! There are many much more elaborate teachings to be found in the tantras regarding the arrangement of the feast-gathering and how to perform the practice, and while it would be possible to elaborate on these, it is rare in these degenerate times to find someone with the ability to make use of them. Even if such explanations were given, it would simply be a waste of effort, and so for that reason I thought that what I have explained here would suffice. Virtue, virtue, virtue!



Translation Origin

Translated by [Samye Translations](#), 2016 (trans. Stefan Mang, ed. Libby Hogg). Many thanks to Khenpo Lodrö Rabsel, Lama Rigdzin Zangpo, Drupchen Dorje and Han Kop for kindly providing suggestions and clarifications.

This work is licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#).

Bibliography

Tibetan Source

sna tshogs rang grol. “tshogs ’khor rnam bshad mdor bsdu nyer mkho dngos grub sbrang rtsi’i zil mngar/.” In *gsung ’bum/_sna tshogs rang grol*. TBRC W21019. 7: 377–388. Gangtok: mgon-po-tshe-brtan, 1979.

Secondary Sources

Dodrupchen Jigme Tenpe Nyima. *A Guide to the Practice of Sang*. On Lotsawa House. Trans. Adam Pearcey, 2006.

English, Elizabeth. *Vajrayogini: Her Visualization, Rituals, and Forms*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2002.

Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Tayé. *The Treasury of Knowledge—Book One: Myriad Worlds*. Translated by the Kalu Rinpoche Translation Group. Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1995.

Ngawang Zangpo. *Sacred Ground: Jamgon Kongtrul on Pilgrimage and Sacred Geography*. New York: Snow Lion, 2001.

1 The Tibetan word *tsbogs* literally means gathering and can be used as both a noun and a verb in Tibetan. Thus it can equally mean a gathering and to gather. Here, the author plays on the meaning of the word: Through gathering and offering the feast substances, we gather and perfect the two accumulations. Moreover, in the teachings on the feast-gathering, mention is made of the four gatherings of 1) practitioners, 2) offering substances, 3) deities, and 4) merit and wisdom. The Tibetan term also implies the offering of the gathered substances and might thus be best translated as feast. Therefore, depending on the context, I have translated *tsbogs* as gathering, feast or feast-gathering.

2 This is the traditional cosmological description of the universe, in which the cosmic Mount Meru, rests in the center of our universe upon a golden base, surrounded by the seven lakes of enjoyments and the various continents. For a detailed description, see: Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Tayé, *The Treasury of Knowledge—Book One: Myriad Worlds*, (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1995), 109—111.

3 That is, the world just described above.

4 Since the invited guests—the gurus, yidams and dakinis—are objects of worship and respect, one visualizes them in the space in front and above.

5 The protectors were previously bound under oath and commanded to serve practitioners of the Dharma. The enlightened master who bound them promised that if they obeyed this command they would receive the leftover portion of the feast. Now, each time we perform the feast gathering, we fulfill that promise: if the guardians obey the command and act in accord with the Dharma, they will always receive the leftover portion.

6 In the lines above, Tselé Natsok Rangdrol gives a list of how the offerings should be made. The list ends with “and so forth,” which indicates that, of the many possible activities, just a few are mentioned here.

7 “On every level” implies that, depending on the respective assembly, the feast is either offered (as to the guests above, invited out of respect) or given (as to the local guardians and dakinis.) On every level is a reference to the four types of guest. Dodrupchen Jigme Tenpe Nyima explains: “1. The rare and supreme ones, the ‘Jewels’, who are the guests invited out of respect, consist of the dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya buddhas, as well as the Dharma, the Saṅgha, and all the gurus, yidam deities, dakinis and so on. They all appear vividly above, like clusters of stars in the sky. 2. The protectors, who are the guests invited on account of their qualities, are the eight mahadevas, the eight great nagas, the eight great rahun, the four great kings, the nine great terrifying ones, the ten guardians of the directions, the twenty-eight constellations, and the seventy-five glorious protectors of pure abodes, together with their retinues, their attendants, attendants’ attendants, and families, and all positive forces, local deities and guardians. All of them gather like billowing clouds in the sky. 3. The six classes of beings, who are the guests invited out of compassion, consist of the gods, human beings, demi-gods, animals, pretas, hell-beings and so on, all gathered together like a dense mist in the air. 4. Obstructing forces, who are the guests to whom we owe karmic debts, include all karmic creditors, such as the 80,000 types of obstructing forces, headed by Vinayaka, king of obstacle makers, as well as the fifteen great dōns who strike children, and Hariti with her five hundred children. All of them are assembled on the ground, as if a huge crowd of men and gods were gathered there.” See Dodrupchen Jigme Tenpe Nyima, “A Guide to the Practice of Sang”.

8 That is, focus on the feast gathering, as explained above, as being the great deathless wisdom nectar. (Oral clarification by Khenpo Lodrö Rabsel.)

9 The *skandhas*, *dhatus* and *ayatanas*.

10 That is, the unpurified *nadis*, moving *pranas* and *bindus*. (Oral clarification by Khenpo Lodrö Rabsel.)

11 Here, Tsele Natsok Rangdrol lists the categories into which the twenty-four sacred places are grouped: the places (Skt. *piṭha*), higher places (Skt. *upapiṭha*), fields (Skt. *kshetra*), higher fields (Skt. *upakshetra*) etc. For a detailed outline, see: Ngawang Zangpo, *Sacred Ground: Jamgon Kongtrul on Pilgrimage and Sacred Geography*, (New York: Snow Lion, 2001), 66–69. And: Elizabeth English, *Vajrayogini: Her Visualization, Rituals, and Forms* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2002), 200–201.

12 Again, for a more detailed description of the twenty-four sacred places and their mapping on the vajra body, see the previous citation.

13 Luminous Vajra (Tib. *rdo rje 'od ldan*) is the name of one of the classes of dakas and dakinis residing within the body. (Oral clarification by Khenpo Lodrö Rabsel.)

14 That is, the purified *nadis*, *pranas* and *bindus*.

15 The channel of cultivation (Tib. *rtsa sgom pa*) is the name given to one of the main channels within the body. (Oral clarification by Khenpo Lodrö Rabsel.)

16 This is referring to the yogas of the generation phase (Tib. *bskyed rim*) and completion phase (Tib. *rdzogs rim*). (Oral clarification by Khenpo Lodrö Rabsel.)

17 That is, to the sacred places within our body, and the deities residing therein. (Oral clarification by Khenpo Lodrö Rabsel.)

18 The thirty-six peaceful deities, together with the six sages listed below, constitute the 'standard' mandala of forty-two peaceful deities.

19 That is to say, by recognizing the body to be like an illusion, the practitioner transforms his or her body into an offering that is to be given to the gods and demons. This is similar to the practice of Chöd (Tib. *gcod*). Unlike the Three Jewels, gods and demons are not objects of worship and veneration, and therefore one's body is given as a 'donation' or gift, rather than being offered to them. (Oral clarification by Khenpo Lodrö Rabsel.)

20 Food or drink that has been obtained through any kind of negative action should neither be offered nor consumed. (Oral clarification by Khenpo Lodrö Rabsel.)

21 Tib. *rdzogs pa rang byung gi rgyud*. The tantra entitled *Naturally Arisen Perfection* is one of the eighteen tantras of the Pith Instruction Class (Tib. *man ngag sde*) of the Great Perfection teachings.

22 This refers to the five aspects of primordial wisdom: 1. wisdom of dharmadhatu, 2. mirror-like wisdom, 3. wisdom of equality, 4. wisdom of discernment, and 5. all-accomplishing wisdom.

23 Tib. *dkar po ba kun dga' bstan 'dzin*. More commonly known as Ngawang Kunga Tenzin (Tib. *ngag dbang kun dga' bstan 'dzin*), the Third Khamtrul Rinpoche (1680–1728).