

Tsog Offering

Extract taken from 'The Happy Twins: Dzogchen and Mahamudra'¹

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Tsog

We will do the *tsog* offering puja again tonight. The whole idea of doing the offering is to gain the blessing of Padmasambhava, which is to say, everything that arises is the form of Padmasambhava. In the longer tantric texts like this one it will say something like "***We now eat without any discrimination between good taste and bad taste, or between clean and dirty, and so on.***"

Don't pass judgment on the offerings

If you are offered something, and you think, '*I don't like it*' then hear what your mind is saying. This is the blessing of Padmasambhava and you are saying you don't like it! He will be very happy to know that; in fact he will know now to try harder!! He is doing his best but your report back to him will be very useful as an encouragement for his development. Mmm, I don't think so. It is pure but, '*Oh, but it doesn't taste right.*' According to what? Your criteria.

¹ Two texts were studied on this retreat. The Mirror of Luminous Revelation (from Nuden Dorje Drophan Lingpa) and The Mahamudra Middle Way of the Ganges (from Tilopa).

Your system of evaluation is so small. Become big. The mind is vast and infinite. Eat then, *'Oh, but it tastes like this.'* Yes. Exactly – it tastes like that. Wow! This is before liking and not liking. If you flip it over so that like and not like comes before this, how will you ever taste this? It is that simple.

Therefore, we should do our best to make good offerings. We shouldn't try eating them ourselves beforehand and after things are offered they should not be thrown out, as rubbish or trash. You can put some out on a plate in a place for people to eat, and you can keep some and eat it later or share it; it is not harmful or poisonous.

Whenever you encounter something in ordinary life and you say, *'This is not good'* you put 'not good' on to the object. We have discussed this before. It is better to say, *'I don't like this.'*

For meditators this is the great chance to think, what is liking? Something is in my mouth and it's a bit too sour or too spicy, or whatever. *'Oh, I don't like this.'* Thank you dear object for reminding me that I am narrow and small and stupid. You should bow to this thing without spitting it out. Take it from your mouth and put it on the top of your head and leave it there for twenty-four hours! This attitude is very helpful since we live in a consumerist capitalist society where everything is thrown away. With so much variety people have so many micro ideas about what they are going to eat, and what they are not going to eat. The *tsog* is all food and drink, and not only that - it is blessed. Your judgment makes you small. You are not being asked to eat or drink poison.

In the early days of the Buddha when his monks went out begging, it was reported back to the Buddha that some of his monks were saying, *'Oh, I don't like this. You should give me proper meat or fish.'* And the Buddha said, *'My monks from this day on will eat whatever is put in their begging bowl.'* Because of that some people would put stones or all kinds of rubbish in the begging bowls of the monks. The fact that someone was wearing monk's clothing doesn't mean that everyone liked them. There have always been people who are against religion. The monks had to accept what they were given.

The whole thing about renouncing society is that you have left the power position where you got to make choices according to your own prejudice. We should try to remember that, and not put out too much *tsog* or prepare too much. It's not about quantity. Open to whatever the taste is. It is a taste. Some flavour is in your mouth.

You might have the thought that you are a vegan and therefore you don't eat meat. This *tsog* is the blessing of the practice and this practice has been done for a very long time. There are all kinds of reasons for it being in the form that it is. You may choose not to, for yourself, but you have to think what is the basis of your choice? As long as you are very clear.

Namkhai Norbu said, *"Don't enter into limitations; don't limit yourself."* The world is there. Other people are doing all of these things. If you want to relate to other people and fulfil your

bodhisattva vow even just among human beings, you have to find some way of relating to human beings. If you can't relate to people with two arms, two legs, two eyes and one nose, how are you going to relate to scorpions and centipedes? What are you going to do if you have nothing in common? You don't have to do anything unpleasant with them if you don't want to. You just have to be able to relate to what is there.

Judgment cuts inside and outside – good and bad. Judgment is not a friend of meditators. The whole purpose of the practice is to help us — it's not to attack ourselves or undermine our vegan or other dietary principles — but just to ask, *"What is the nature of a judgment?"* I am ascribing power to the object when I say, *'I don't eat that because it's dangerous, or it's bad, or it's sinful...'* Where is that? It is in your mind. If you recognise your mind and you are clear that this is your mind you can work with that.

Comment: The offering text says to enjoy eating the *tsog*, enjoy it like an ornament without rejecting whatever pleasure it brings.

James: Yes, that's the other side. Exactly – more pleasure.

Comment: However it is also possible to reject pleasure.

James: Indeed – but not a good idea. Sometimes we have this idea of equanimity: that we should be even with everything and all phenomena are even in emptiness. That doesn't mean that we don't have different reactions. If you put salt on your tongue and then some pepper up your nose, something different will occur, so they are different but they are each equal in their emptiness. Each is a sensation which arises and vanishes.

The variety of phenomena as they arise is inseparable from emptiness. So pleasure is pleasure; pain is pain. Life is both painful and pleasurable, and both are empty. If you try to have less pain and more pleasure than you have an ordinary life. If you open yourself to pleasure and pain as they arise according to circumstances, without madly seeking for them, and you see that they are empty, then you have the dharma practice. But if you say, *'Oh well, I am a very modest simple-living person. We should just buy very inexpensive and ordinary things for the tsog. That way we can get lots more and bulk it up.'* Why? It can also be something incredible and delicious. And then it's gone.