



A Concise Explanation of Ganacakra

by Adzom Gyalse Gyurme Dorje

*Great universal lord, embodiment of all the families,
Glorious teacher, at your feet I bow!*

Here, I shall give a concise explanation of the marvellous ganacakra, a method for quickly reaching the fruit of the two accumulations on the basis of the profound and swift path of the secret mantra Vajrayana. When gathering the *ganacakra*,¹ all *yogins*, who have the *cause* characterized as knowing, the fortress of the *view*, and the *condition* characterized as engagement, the clearance of the pitfalls of cultivating *samadhi*, and are skilled in *means*, the friend or life-force of the *action*, should enter the ganacakra—the secret conduct—in order to achieve transcendence.² Yogins should thus strive in ganacakra one-pointedly for a multitude of purposes such as actualizing the result. As the omniscient Drimé Özer³ stated:

On full moon and new moon, the 8th and the 29th,
On the 10th of the waxing moon and the 10th of the waning moon, at
day and at night,
Strive in approach and accomplishment; offer the feast, fulfilment and
confession.
Wholeheartedly apply the profound key points of
The yogas such as the winds, mind, channels, and *bindus*.
Meditating thus on the path of the union of bliss, clarity and non-
thought,
One will become a vajradhara and attain perfect buddhahood, within this
life-time.⁴

An overview of ganacakra:

1. its essence
2. its literal meaning
- 3 its divisions

1. Essence of Ganacakra

The essence is the perfection of the two accumulations and the bringing of delight and fulfilment to the deities, the teacher and the vajra-brothers and sisters.

2. Literal Meaning of Ganacakra

The word *gana* means gathering. The *All-Illuminating* states:

The gathering of the supported (delighted deities), individuals (fortunate disciples), the substances (abundant feast) and great method (excellent *samadhi*) is called a secret gathering.⁵

3. Divisions of Ganacakra

Regarding its divisions, the *Four Seats*⁶ states:

An assembly of friends is called a *gana*.
By eliminating conceptual thoughts, the *cakra* is expressed.

The divisions are:

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

a) Outer Ganacakra

The outer ganacakra is the accumulation of the feast substances constituting a diversity of sensory delights.

b) Inner Ganacakra

The inner ganacakra refers to a gathering of method and wisdom — that is, of vajra brothers and sisters — in equal number, or in a number that matches the number of deities, or as a large gathering. The *Secret Tantra*⁷ states:

For the small assembly there are two, six or ten;
For the middling, the number of deities in the *mandala*;
And for the great, even more.

A small gathering comprises the principal male and female; three pairs [six practitioners] symbolizing enlightened body, speech and mind or five pairs [ten practitioners] representing the five families. In this way there can be two, six or ten practitioners. For a middling assembly, the number of practitioners equals the

number of deities in the *mandala*. For a great assembly, there will be even more practitioners. For these gatherings, pure samaya amongst the practitioners is of vital importance.

c) *Secret Ganacakra*

The secret ganacakra is the offering of the inner feast, with the blazing and dripping,⁸ using method and liberation—the creation and completion practices—to the deities of the three seats of completeness⁹ in the city of the vajra-aggregates, one's own body.

d) *Innermost Ganacakra of Suchness*

The secret and innermost ganacakra, is to take wisdom as the path and transcend the fabrications of an offering and an offerer. These practices belong to the later completion stages and should be studied by listening to the nectar-like speech of a master who holds the lineage. Through them the practitioner gains certainty and brings into experience the oral instructions that are given according to an individual's disposition and capacity.

Now, so as to explain primarily the intent of the first two, *the outer and the inner ganacakra*, there is the preparation, the main part and the conclusion:

I. Preparation

The preparation entails eight branches that should be applied:

1) *The Branch of the Secluded Places*

Ganacakra should be offered in a place that holds the blessings of the buddhas, *vidyadharas* or bodhisattvas of the past. Or it should be practiced in a sacred place in which *dakas* and *dakinis* assemble, or a place which increases the power of *samadhi*, experience and realization, such as in the midst of rocky, snow or forest-covered mountains, pleasure groves, or places secluded from worldly distractions.

2) *The Branch of the Occasion*

In such a sacred place, ganacakra should be offered in an auspicious year or on an auspicious month or day or when there is an important event, such as *rabné* rituals,¹⁰ *homa* offerings,¹¹ the approach and accomplishment practices, initiations, festivals, or thanksgiving ceremonies.

3) *The Branch of the Support, the Individuals*

The individuals offering ganacakra should include a vajra-master who has accomplished the practices of approach and accomplishment and has experience and realization, together with an assembly of vajra-brother and sisters holding the samayas and vows.

4) *The Branch of Conducive Friends*

The practitioners' view and conduct has to be in accord with the development and completion stages of the deity.¹²

5) *The Branch of the Deities to Be Accomplished*

This entails taking as the support the mandalas of the unsurpassed tantras which are more exalted than the kriya-action tantras.

6) *The Branch of Skilful Activity*

Here, there are six instructions to be followed:

- 1) Do not perform the ritual of ganacakra before having requested and received permission to do so.¹³
- 2) Do not offer ganacakra before having performed the offering *mudra*.¹⁴
- 3) Do not perform the liberation offering before the first portion has been offered.¹⁵
- 4) Do not make offerings to the *yogins* and *yoginis* until the heaps have been arranged.¹⁶
- 5) Do not perform the activity, praise and invocation before having offered songs and dance.
- 6) The *yogins* and *yoginis* should not get up and leave before having offered the remainder.

7) *The Branch of Vows and Pledges*

The root and branch samayas of the practitioners have to be undefiled.

8) *The Branch of the Fruit to Be Attained*

The fruit to be attained is the experience of the inexhaustible adornments of the enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities and activity.

II. The Main Part

*The Stages of Vajra Activity*¹⁷ states:

When there is a gathering of friends, this is called 'the gathering of practitioners.' When all the ingredients are present, this is explained as 'the

gathering of blissful abundance'. When the deities and dharma protectors are gathered, this is explained to be 'the gathering of the great assembly'. This then ensures that the continuous perfection of the two accumulations will be recognized as 'the great gathering'.

Here, as stated, there are four points to be applied:

- 1) The gathering of fortunate ones
- 2) The gathering of wealth and abundance
- 3) The gathering of delighted deities, and
- 4) The gathering of excellent *samadhi*

1) *The Gathering of Fortunate Ones*

The assembled vajra-brothers and sisters constitute 'the gathering of fortunate ones'. If a gathering of only men assembles, it is 'a feast of heroes'. If a gathering of only women assembles, it is 'a feast of the heroines'. If both heroes and heroines assemble, it is 'a feast of method and wisdom'. If there are only yogins assembled, it is 'a feast of yogins'. Generally, it is explained that when both vajra-brothers and vajra-sisters assemble it is called 'the ganacakra'. Although this is the case, it is nonetheless crucial to check if it is appropriate to offer ganacakra or not. If there are breaches and violations of the samayas between the master and vajra-brothers and sisters, or if the secret conduct¹⁸ is beyond someone's scope, or the participants cling to pure and impure and the like, then it is inappropriate to offer ganacakra. It is thus important to understand what is to be adopted and what is to be avoided.

2) *The Gathering of Wealth and Abundance*

In the past, when the yogins and yoginis gathered the ganacakra in sacred places, in India and elsewhere, the feast substances and articles were worth five hundred *sang*¹⁹ of gold, or at least ten sang's worth. Hence, it is important that the feast should be a magnificent arrangement of valuable, excellent and pure substances. It is stated in the tantras:

Essentials such as *dawa*,
Excellent tastes such as *mamsa*,²⁰
Flowers, sandalwood *malas* and more,
Please accept all these excellent offerings!

In particular, the yogins' view and meditation must be in accord with the feast substances. This is stated in the *Tantra of the Arising of Amrita*.²¹

Nagas and brahmins eat clean food.
That they will be liberated, this I have not explained.
Dogs, pigs and untouchables, eat unclean food.

That they will be liberated, this I have not explained.
Therefore, listen to this scripture of definitive meaning!
Skilled yogins
Experience the nature of the distinct five families as the single
dharmakaya.
Realizing this, one will be liberated. This I have explained.

This makes it clear that it is crucial for the yogins' view and conduct to be in harmony.²² Thus, when giving offerings to a large assembly, it should be *caru* foods.²³ Likewise, the offerings for a *rabné* ritual should be *caru*, so should not include impure substances such as meat, alcohol, garlic and onions. However, when practicing ganacakra, the indispensable substances of method and wisdom are meat and alcohol. As for the meat, unless the animal suffered for a long time from sickness or famine, or was liberated and guided by a qualified master, it is impermissible for the meat that is offered to come from an animal killed specifically for the ganacakra. It is best to buy 'meat that could not be sold nine times'²⁴ or else one should buy 'meat of the three purities.'²⁵ As for alcohol, unless an individual has reached the stage of heat²⁶ and is thus able to purify and transform the alcohol, it is not permitted to drink such a quantity of alcohol that one's mindfulness is impaired. Therefore, only use a very small amount of substances such as meat and alcohol. Furthermore, offerings may include solids and liquids such as: *dagyé* (curd and pies), *datrom* (confection),²⁷ *tsegal* (ritual cakes made from a dough of flour mixed with rice beer and sweets), *mamsa* (meat), *kuntugyü* (salts), *jamdé* (condiments),²⁸ various fruits, *dzagé* (alcohol), *kang* (bone marrow), *ladu* (vegetables), and *yochen* (garlic).²⁹ Arrange whatever substances you can acquire without judging them as either pure or impure. Except where they serve as enhancement for the 'all-victorious conduct' of supreme yogins, it is stated that it is inappropriate to add the 'wolf substances', such as offerings made by 'samaya breakers' and 'brought by widows.'³⁰ This gathering of whatever sensory delights one can acquire constitutes what is called the outer ganacakra. Regarding the musical instruments, it is important to use those that correlate to the activity performed: for example, conches for peaceful practices, long trumpets for enriching, shawms for magnetizing and bone trumpets as well as the supreme skull drum for wrathful practices.

When offering ganacakra, arrange any sensual delights, such as gold, silver or silk, without any stinginess or attachment. However, even if the offerings are small, like those of a *kushali*,³¹ it is the visualization and meditation that are most important. Thus, it is stated that it is sufficient to use the seasonal fruits and vegetables³² as food and clean water as drink.

3) *The Gathering of Delighted Deities*

The gathering of delighted deities is the mandala of whichever deities of the three roots one relies upon.

4) *The Gathering of Excellent Samadhi*

Each phase of the ritual should always be accompanied by the *Four Gates of the Secret Mantra Scripture*:

- 1) practicing clearly the generation phase is the gate of the words' meaning,
- 2) invoking the *yidam(s)* is the gate of secret mantra,
- 3) focusing one-pointedly is the gate of *samadhi*, and
- 4) using secret signs and symbols is the gate of *mudra*. It is crucial to recollect the purity of deity, mantra, *samadhi* and *mudra*.³³

Hence, the great Guru of Uddiyana stated:

Whatever activity, offering or recitation is performed,
Non-distracted, with stable *samadhi*,
Do not just utter the secret mantra's words like shamans! Evoke the words'
meaning!
For practicing without *samadhi* is to be like a barking dog.
Even though temporarily it might seem like practice, if without meaning
it is like aimlessly wandering about.
Thus practice with a proper posture, speech that is silent, and a mind that
is free from discursive thought!

Thus, as it is said, an undistracted visualization is of utmost importance.

Blessing the Feast

There are various ways to bless the feast, but in general one places the substances—the delightful foods and drinks that were especially prepared for the ganacakra—within the feast receptacles, the *kapala(s)* or vast lustrous vessel(s). Then, visualizing oneself as the deity, from the syllables *ram*, *yam* and *kam* in one's heart, light shoots forth which transforms into fire, wind and water. The fire of wisdom burns away all grasping at the feast offering as entities; the wind of clear seeing (*vipashyana*) scatters all grasping thoughts; and the water of calm abiding (*shamatha*) washes away all remaining subtle stains of dualistic grasping. The feast substances are purified into emptiness. Again, they arise vividly as the samaya substances of the five meats, five amritas, immeasurable enjoyments and sensual delights. Then from the syllables *om*, *ah* and *hum* in one's heart, there shoots forth white, red and blue light which dissolves into the substances. Imagine that immeasurable syllables of *om*, *ah* and *hum* fill the feast substances. From them light radiates out, inviting the infinite *jñanamrita*, which dissolves into, and becomes inseparable from, the *samayamrita*. Imagine that the seed syllables also dissolve into light. In this way, the untainted wisdom of samaya and jñana united becomes great cloud-banks of sensual delights.

Inviting the Deities to the Feast

According to some ritual traditions, there are the following six mandalas: the mandala of the field of accumulation, the mandala of the blazing periphery,³⁴ the mandala of restoring the breakages and impairments, the mandala of the samaya of the generation phase, the mandala of natural wisdom and the mandala of the delightful ganacakra. From among them, here we are considering the mandala of the delightful ganacakra. Either from both the front-visualization and self-visualization or from one's heart, inconceivable light rays shoot forth inviting all the deities residing in the infinite buddha-fields of the victorious ones' three kayas³⁵—the gurus, yidams, dakinis, dharmapalas, wealth deities and treasure guardians—to take their seats in the space in front and join the feast as our guests.

First Portion of the Feast

Imagine that goddesses of sensual delights are sent out, filling the whole sky. They all carry in their hands lustrous vessels made of various jewels, all filled with food and drink. Then, imagine that as many offering substances as there are in the realms of gods and humans, and as many unique offerings as there are, sprung forth through the aspirations of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, come to join this feast and are offered as cloud-banks of excellent offerings to the deities of the mandala. The gathered deities, extremely pleased and delighted, grant supreme and ordinary siddhis. Other texts explain that, in the manner of deities dissolving into other deities, the offering goddesses dissolve into the deities' bodies. Thus, the deities' body, speech and mind are pleased and the great accumulation is simultaneously accomplished.

Second Portion of Confession

The offering goddesses each carry a *kapala* filled with the five meats and five amritas, and particularly with red and white bodhicitta. Focus on the offering of the great equal taste of bliss and emptiness. Confess, with strong remorse and regret, any inherently negative deeds or breakages of vows—impairments, breakages, transgressions or confusions of the vows of individual liberation, bodhisattva and mantra vehicles—incurred throughout the course of your lives in beginningless time until now, and ask for forgiveness. Imagine that the assembled deities are delighted and, filled with love, grant forgiveness.³⁶ All shortcomings and flaws are purified without exception and the impairments³⁶ in relation to the wisdom deities are restored. Thus, gain firm confidence that in this way the four primordially protected king-like samayas³⁷ are actualized.

Third portion, the Liberation Offering

When the third portion feast substance is placed before the vajra-master, he or she recites "*hum*". Thus, the goddesses who previously blessed the sensual delights dissolve back into oneself. The third portion should not be sanctified with the consecrated water, alcohol, or 'inner offering.'³⁸ It is said that if one has a

liberation effigy, one should place the third portion within it and move both to the side.³⁹ In any case, sprinkle that third portion which has captured the life-force(s) with non-consecrated rakta. A realized being who has liberated the self performs ‘The Buddhas’ Instructions from the Mantrika’s Triangular Ritual Fire Pit’⁴⁰ to the beings that are captured in the effigy, such as those who show all the ten grounds,⁴¹ those who have committed the seven violations,⁴² or those who belong to the five kinds of enemies,⁴³ all of whom are to be liberated by others with compassion. Through the vajra-master’s *samadhi* which fulfils the three satisfactions⁴⁴ by being stable, powerful and focused,⁴⁵ the mind is separated from the body. Then, the ‘flesh and blood’⁴⁶ is consecrated with amrita and becomes undefiled wisdom nectar, which in turn is offered. Imagine that the deities enjoy this with delightful and wrathful expressions. All dualistic thoughts, the root of impure samsara, are released into the expanse of great non-dual bliss. Thus sustaining the *samadhi* of the primordial purity of the three worlds⁴⁷ is the single key point which perfects all offerings of union and liberation and confession and fulfilment.

Some scriptures explain that the first portion is offered to the general *bali*⁴⁸ of the three roots; the second portion of confession to the bali of the dakinis; and the third portion of liberation near the malign bali of the lower activities or, if one does not have this bali, to the bali of the protectors. In another tradition one would offer the first portion to the three roots’ bali and the second and third portions—the confession and liberation offerings—near the bali of the lower activity. One can also offer all three portions near the three roots’ bali. If it is not easy to offer the three portions near the balis, then it is permitted to simply offer the individual feast plates or the whole feast into in one big bowl. When one performs the fulfilment for the liberation offering, visualize the fulfilment substances through the key points of deity, mantra, *mudra* and *samadhi*, as Samantabhadra’s vast offering clouds continuously filling the whole expanse of space. Evoke the meaning of each and every word of the ritual manual of whatever feast-offering one follows. If the ritual includes a ‘sky-offering portion’, offer this fourth portion outside the shrine room. If the ritual liturgy does not mention the fourth portion, then it is not necessary to offer a substitution.⁴⁹

Next, the ritual assistant(s) distributes the feast to the entire assembly, beginning with the vajra-master. The ritual assistant begins with prostrations and then, with his or her left hand in the ‘lotus *mudra*’ and holding the *madana*,⁵⁰ and with his or her right in the ‘three-pointed *mudra*’, he or she recites:

Kyé! Behold all phenomena as excellent! Do not entertain doubts regarding all that is gathered. Eat, regarding brahmins, dogs, and untouchables as having the same nature!⁵¹

The ritual assistant, with arms crossed, holds the substances of skilful means and wisdom and gives them to the vajra-master. The vajra master, with left hand in the

'lotus *mudra*'; and right hand in the 'three-pointed *mudra*' (thumb pressing on the little finger and remaining three fingers extended), takes the feast. It is also permitted that the vajra-master, having performed the 'lotus *mudra*', takes the feast with both hands joined. Moreover, do not simply start to eat and drink in an ordinary way. Instead, distribute the substances to the assembly without favour or dislike. And do not engage in mindless entertainment such as making jokes. Also, do not be selective about which feast substances one receives. Regarding the downfall of the hawk or wolf-like behaviour, the great Guru of Uddiyana said:

If one has craving and is greedy for the feast, one will be reborn as a wolf.
If one does not know how to enjoy the feast while maintaining the three perceptions, one will be reborn a hungry ghost with a tightly closed mouth.

The three perceptions are:

1. perception of the teacher as the heruka in union,
2. perception of one's vajra-brothers and sisters as gods and goddesses,
3. perception of the ganacakra as the siddhis.

Furthermore, it is said that there should be six satisfactions:

1. to satisfy the deities of the field of accumulation with outer, inner and secret offerings,
2. to satisfy the yogins and yoginis with foods and drinks,
3. to satisfy the wisdom mandala with the essence of amrita,
4. to satisfy the deities of the body mandala with the wisdom of bliss and emptiness,
5. to satisfy the outer and inner dakinis with the offering of songs, and
6. to satisfy the haughty spirits with the bali.

Thus, delight in the outer, inner and secret ganacakra and, as stated in the great tantra, *The Union of the Sun and Moon*:⁵²

Perform the vajra song and dance!

Therefore chant the feast songs,⁵³ *Ema Kirī*⁵⁴ and so forth. Moreover, uphold the three 'inseparables':

1. the body is inseparable from the yidam,
2. the speech is in essence inseparable from mantra, and
3. the mind is inseparable from dharmata.

The three freedoms from doubt are:

1. to be free from doubts regarding the tantras, scriptures and the teacher's speech,
2. to be free from the doubts over purity and impurity regarding the mandala of siddhis, and
3. to be free from doubts regarding the secret conduct.

The three prohibitions:

1. do not engage in careless conduct,
2. do not harbour desire, anger or jealousy, and
3. do not sow disharmony amongst ones vajra-brothers and sisters.

The three inappropriate concepts regarding meat and alcohol:

1. although one may be a bhikshu, it is inappropriate to harbour concepts,
2. although one may be a brahmin adhering to purity, it is inappropriate to harbour concepts, and
3. although one may be a follower of the kriya-action tantras, learned in ritual, it is inappropriate to harbour concepts.

The three types of accumulating negativity to be avoided:

1. do not accumulate negativity towards the guide, one's teacher(s),
2. do not accumulate negativity towards the oral instructions of the profound path, and
3. do not accumulate negativity towards friends on the path, one's vajra brothers and sisters

The three things that should not be given to the public:

1. do not give out the supports for initiations such as sindura to the public,
2. do not give out one's portion of the feast—the support of the blessings—to the public, and
3. do not give out the amrita of accomplishment to the public.

The three secrets are:

1. the secret of the time when the ganacakra is to be performed,
2. the secret of the arrangement of the ganacakra, and

3. the secret of the method of performance.

The three utterances to be avoided:

1. do not utter disrespectful words towards one's teacher(s),
2. do not utter ordinary words during the ganacakra, and
3. do not utter harsh words towards ones vajra-brothers and sisters.

Giving the Remainder Offering

According to the elaborate explanation, it is best to arrange heaps of human ash upon the skin of a violator.⁵⁵ The second best option is to sprinkle the grains or sand mandala with scented water and rakta. At least, arrange five piles of grains upon whatever support one has. Alternatively, as the *Heruka Galpo* states:

Within the mandala of the remainder at the north-eastern border, Draw with rakta E's or crescents upon a 'violator's skin'. Similarly, other sources advice you to draw—in the mandala in the north-east or south-west—a *dharmodaya*,⁵⁶ and a crescent upon a circular mandala of scented water for the peaceful deities, or upon a violator's skin for the wrathful deities.

In any case, place a *bhanda*⁵⁷ or a copper vessel upon a stand. If you desire mainly pacifying activity, place the pure remainder within the vessel. If you desire mainly wrathful activity, place the impure remainder within the vessel. The recitation, visualisation and so forth [for the ritual] are hidden elsewhere and I shall not explain them here. As before, collect the impure remainder from the whole assembly. However, if collecting the impure remainder is difficult because too many samaya-holders have assembled, then it is permissible not to collect the impure remainder. In brief, it is explained that the impure remainder is gathered beginning from the ends of the row of practitioners and it is excellent if each impure remainder is placed in separate vessels. According to the tradition of my most precious teacher,⁵⁸ this kind advice is given:

The pure remainder that was set aside earlier is placed upon the impure remainder of the vajra-master. Upon this is placed 'the glorious inheritance' – the leftover pieces of the previous offerings.⁵⁹ It is important to include an incense stick during the day and a burning candle at night, in order to avoid a direct encounter⁶⁰ with the remainder guests.

For some mandala rituals the remainder should be held aloft because the remainder offering liturgy advises you to do so. The pure remainder is divided and offered, except for one portion, to the mandala. The remaining portion is placed and used as the pure remainder as explained above. In general, the ritual

assistant sprinkles it with amrita and rakta. In order to avoid being poisoned by an encounter with the remainder guests,⁶¹ the 'lotus *mudra*' should be performed and the remainder held with the '*garuda mudra*'. If a vajra-master with realization of the view is present, some scriptures explain that each of the five families should be performed, but according to the tradition of my most precious teacher, the vajra-master should visualize his upper palate as *vira Hayagriva* and his or her lower palate as *Vajravahabi*. From the deities' union arises the bodhicitta which has the nature of amrita. The master then blesses the remainder by spitting three times with the 'secret space *mudra*'. The first spit purifies all the faults and defects; the second transforms the remainder into the nature of untainted amrita; and the third transforms it into enjoyments of sensual delights which multiply inexhaustibly.

If the vajra-master does not hold the highest view, the remainder is sprinkled with amrita. Were one to spit on it, this would be comparable to the guard contaminating clean food:⁶² it would lead the dakinis to command harsh retribution.

Visualize the remainder feast receptacle as a kapala or a vast and extensive lustrous vessel bubbling with wisdom amrita. Imagine within it a variety of outer and inner offerings, such as silken tents, canopies and ribbons, flesh, blood and bones, all of which transform into inexhaustible clouds of offerings that delight the wisdom and worldly invited remainder guests. The remainder guests are those of the seven higher and lower ranks. Those of the seven higher ranks are as stated in the *Heruka Galpo*:

1. those that reside in the spontaneously perfect abode of the naturally pure dharmadhatu, and
2. those of the ranks of the heruka, who are blessed by *samadhi* and become the object of visualization,
3. the male, skilful means,
4. the female, wisdom,
5. the *kbrodhis* of the places,
6. the *pishacis* of the lands, and
7. the mandala of the four wisdom gate keepers.

Those of the seven lower ranks are:

1. the thirty-two *dakinis* mentioned in the *Secret Moon-Drop*,
2. the eighteen great *kimkaras* mentioned in the *Yamantaka* teachings,
3. the three *rakshasas* mentioned in the *shri Heruka* teachings,
4. the eight *jvalas* mentioned in the unsurpassed *Mayajala* teachings,

5. the seven *matrikas* and the four *bhaginis* mentioned in the mother tantras and scriptures,
6. the sixty-four *dutis* mentioned in the *Mighty Lotus*, and
7. the twenty-eight *ishvaris* mentioned in the *Guhyagarbha* to whom both the pure and impure remainder are offered.

Know that all these spirits and deities vary in the appearance of their bodies, faces, hands and characteristics.

The ritual assistant, counting the two steps of both the right and left legs as one, walks seventy steps away from the practice place. This is called the 'feeding pathway of the rakshasas.' There he or she places the remainder heaped like a stand. Although there are various ways to pile the remainder, they are not explained here. Other texts also suggest making an offering of rinsing water. According to my kind teacher, in order not to be poisoned, within the shrine room and while holding the bali-plate, so that the plate faces oneself, pour rinsing water onto it.⁶³ During a *drupchen*,⁶⁴ the *lhakia*, 'the promised remainder', is placed in the south-east of the mandala, because that is where the dakinis gather. Generally, it is also said to be placed in the north-east of the mandala. On the day that the remainder is given, the collected remainder is placed altogether as a pile outside.

It is said that a scattered remainder will cause quarrels to arise among vajra-brothers and sisters. Do not give the remainder to beggars and the like, since this is said to lead to inauspiciousness within the country. There is no fault, however, if the remainder is eaten by birds, since they belong to the family of dakinis. It is explained that one should immediately dissolve the visualized remainder mandala once the remainder has been offered. Taking good care of these points regarding the remainder will ensure that the many ferocious mundane and super-mundane deities invited to the remainder do not create inauspicious circumstances for you, the ritual assistant, the assembly or the nation.

Exhortation

Exhort the deities to take their previously taken samayas seriously. Recite the summoning liturgy for the bali and visualize, while maintaining the three satisfactions, that the offering of flesh and blood transforms into amrita.

Covenant

The covenant is given to the protectors of the three classes of tantras who follow the command of the three kaya teacher(s). Thus, through the giving of the covenant, the protectors are entrusted with the activities of aiding the dharma brothers and sisters and pacifying their obstacles. Pour the rinsing water for the covenant on the base of the bali of the sthavaras.

Sthavaras⁶⁵

The *sthavara* goddesses, as previously commanded by Padmasambhava, are entrusted with the four activities,⁶⁶ such as the protection of Tibet against the threats of heretics and barbarians. In order to avoid angering the *sthavaras*, visualize a white silken curtain surrounding the *sthavara* offering.

Suppression Dance

In order to suppress the hidden retinue of ghost and spirits, it is crucial that you place the seal while maintaining the view of the inseparability of emptiness and compassion.

Again, recite the offering, praise and confession prayers. Then receive the siddhis, dissolve and re-emerge, dedicate and recite aspirations and prayers of auspiciousness. Since this is already clearly explained in other texts, here, I shall not explain the individual visualisations for these practices.

III. Showing the Excellent Benefits of Gathering the ganacakra

It is stated in *The Two Segments*:⁶⁷

For the practitioners, all the sensual delights of
Whatever they eat will transform into siddhis.

As it is said:⁶⁸

The faults of the transgressions of samaya will be dispelled,
Everything unfavourable will be defeated,
One will accomplish whatever one desires,
One will gather the accumulation of merit,
All food will bestow siddhis,
The remainder deities and spirits will be satisfied.
Through the ritual of the ganacakra,
Which swiftly grants the prophecy for receiving
The siddhi of *mahamudra*,
One will reach the desired goal.

*The Vajra-Net*⁶⁹ states:

Amongst the accumulations of merit, ganacakra is supreme.
All one's wishes for this life will be accomplished,
Negative forces and obstacles will be pacified.
In the next, in the realm of the victorious vidyadharas,
One will reach the level of Samantabhadra.

The *Samvarodaya*⁷⁰ states:

Abundant happiness,
Freedom from disease, a virtuous mind,
All wishes will be fulfilled and final release will be attained.
Thus abundant siddhis will be gathered.

The *Naturally Arisen Perfection Tantra* states:⁷¹

The qualities of ganacakra 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 one is born in lives to come
One will never lack necessities,
The wheel of Dharma will never cease to turn for you
And one will always have abundant wealth, enjoyments,
Sustenance and belongings.
These are the temporary benefits.
There are also the higher qualities that one will receive:
In the intermediate state, one will recognize one's own perception as the
wisdoms.⁷²
Being liberated there, one will remain on the unchanging ground,
Sending forth emanations throughout the three thousand-fold universe
To benefit beings.
Qualities like this one will attain!

Yeshé Tsogyal said:

On the tenth of the waxing moon and on the tenth of the waning moon,
On the eighth and the fifteenth,⁷³
Gather the ganacakra and make offerings.
Offering the ganacakra merely once will close the doors to the lower
realms,
And you will not even return and take birth as a human again.
Understand that this can be established with certainty, through logic.

And, the eminent scholar Pema Lekdrup⁷⁴ said:

In essence, therefore, the qualities of performing the ganacakra 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 unfavourable 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!

And, Machik Labdrön said:

Amongst all the conditioned virtues, there is no greater merit than gathering the ganacakra.
Gathering the ganacakra once, one will be liberated from the age of famine.⁷⁵
Gathering the ganacakra twice, one will become a universal monarch of the thousand-fold universe.
Gathering the ganacakra thrice, one will attain the supreme and ordinary siddhis.
Gathering the ganacakra for a fourth time, attaining the stages of the herukas, one will spontaneously accomplish the twofold benefit,
And one will travel unobstructedly to the buddha-fields. Thus the benefits are immeasurable!

Longchenpa said:⁷⁶

Its excellent benefits are as follows:
The accumulations of merit and wisdom will be perfected,
All transgressions of the samayas will be restored,
Assemblies of dakas and dakinis will come and gather in the places of the practitioners and accomplish the activities,
The masters and the gathering of the deities of the mandala will be delighted,
The ocean of samaya-bound guardians will guard and protect you,
Your current life will be long, without disease,
You will enjoy renown and a vast gathering of helpers and enjoyments.
Whatever you wish for will be effortlessly and spontaneously accomplished.
The supreme and ordinary siddhis will be attained.
All obstacles and negativities will be purified
And thus, in a future life, you will attain unsurpassable awakening.
Like this you will obtain unthinkable and unspeakable qualities!

*Whatever merit may arise from this composition, I dedicate to sentient beings throughout space!
May all sentient beings thus perfectly attain the result of the two accumulations!
Whatever shortcomings there may be, due to confusion,*

I admit and confess, with the omniscient ones as my witness!

At the earnest requests of my disciple, the learned monk and scholar Drakyab Sherap⁷⁷ and others, I, Gyurme Dorje, wrote this text at Tasbi Gephel Ling.⁷⁸ May virtue and goodness abound!



Translation Origin

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1 Tib. *tsbogs kyi 'khor lo bskor ba*. Lit. 'to gather the ganacakra'. While the verb *bskor ba* in Tibetan primarily means 'to turn', in this context *bskor ba* means to gather (as/in) the *mandala* of ganacakra. It is difficult to translate the Sanskrit term *ganacakra* and its Tibetan equivalent, *tsbogs kyi 'khor lo*, into sensible English. Thus, here I have chosen to render *tsbogs kyi 'khor lo* as ganacakra. Whenever Adzom Gyalse uses the Tibetan abbreviation, *tsbogs*, depending on the context, I have rendered the term either as feast or as ganacakra.

2 Tib. *la dor ba*. Here a synonym for *la zla ba*. Lit. to transcend. This implies the transcendence of world conventions. (Oral clarification by Tulku Rigdzin Pema Rinpoche.)

3 That is Longchenpa (Klong chen pa, 1308–1364). This quotation is from Longchenpa's *Finding Comfort and Ease in the Nature of Mind* (*Sems nyid ngal gso*). See: Dri med 'od zer, "Sems nyid ngal gso," in *Gsung 'bum/ dri med 'od zer/ deb nyi shu pa/* (Pe cin: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009), 63.

4 Longchenpa instructs yogins to especially strive in practice on the 8th (Medicine Buddha & Tara), the 10th (Guru Rinpoche), the 15th (New Moon & Amitabha), the 25th (Dakini), the 29th (Dharmapala) and the 30th (Buddha shakya muni) day of the Tibetan calendar.

5 The full title of the tantra is *The Tantra of the Great All-Illuminating Bindu* (*Thig le kun gsal chen po'i rgyud*). *The Great All-Illuminating Bindu* is a tantra of the outer cycle (*phyi skor*) of the pith-instruction class (*man ngag sde*) of the *Great Perfection* (*Rdzogs chen*) teachings. It provides an outline and explanation of the view, meditation and terminology of the *Great Perfection*, the highest teachings of the Nyingma School. I was unable to locate the quote passage within the tantra. For a Tibetan edition of the tantra, see: "*Thig le kun gsal chen po'i rgyud*," in *Snga' gyur rgyud 'bum phyogs bsgrigs/ pod 6/*, (Pe cin: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2009), 35b–127b. Please note that Adzom Gyalse has added the explanations in brackets (*yig chung*) to the quoted passage. For this section, The literal meaning of ganacakra, and for the explanation of The inner ganacakra, Adzom Gyalse follows very closely the presentation of ganacakra as given by Longchenpa in his Guhyagarbha Tantra commentary *Dispelling Darkness in the Ten Directions* (*Gsang snying 'grel pa phyogs bcu mun sel*). For an English translation of the relevant section, see: Longchen Rabjam, *The Guhyagarbha Tantra: Secret Essence Definitive Nature Just As It Is*, transl. Lama Chönam and Sangye Khandro (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2011): 482–484. (Please note that my translation differs from that of Lama Chönam and Sangye Khandro.) For the Tibetan, see: Dri med 'od zer, "Rgyud gsang ba snying po'i 'grel pa/," in *Gsung 'bum/ dri med 'od zer/ deb nyer gsum pa/* (Pe cin: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009), 373–374.

6 Although the Tibetan title *Gdan bzhi* suggests that this verse is from the *Catuspīthatantra*, I was unable to locate the quote within the tantra or one of its satellite texts. It might be a) a passage from a Tibetan commentary on the *Catuspīthatantra*, b) a misattribution or c) it could be that *gdan* here refers to a chapter or section of a different text.

7 Tib. *gsang rgyud*. Eng. *Secret Tantra*.

8 This is a reference to the visualization employed in the practice of Inner Heat (*Gtum mo*).

9 Tib. *Gdan gsum tshang ba'i lha*. Eng. the deities of the three seats of completeness. Often referred to as the *mandala* of the three seats [of completeness] (*gdan gsum*

[*tshang ba'i*] *dkhyil 'khor*). The three seats are 1) aggregates (*skandha*) and elements (*dhātu*), 2) the sense fields (*ayatana*), and 3) limbs (*aṅga*). In 1) reside the *tathagatas*, in 2) reside the male and female bodhisattvas, and in 3) reside the male and female wrathful deities.

10 The *pratishṭha* or 'rabné' ritual (*rab gnas*) is a practice of consecrating a representation of enlightened body, speech and mind, such as a stupa or a statue.

11 The *homa* or 'jinsek' offering (*sbyin sreg*) is a fire oblation in which offerings are made into fire, symbolizing the deity.

12 That is that the practitioners must act in accord with the view and conduct prescribed by the tantra practiced. Thus, do not practice ganacakra in the company of people who have not received the initiation, who do not abide by the samayas, or who harbour wrong views and behave inappropriately. (Oral clarification by Khenpo Pema Namgyal)

13 This often takes the form of formal verse, requesting the vajra-master to preside over the ceremony, recited by the ritual assistant (*las kyi rdo rje*). The verse may be as follows: "Please direct your mind towards sanctifying, purifying and consecrating the feast substances." (*tshogs kyi yo byad rnams bsangs sbyang byin gyis brlab pa la thugs gtad par zhu*). The ritual assistant would then recite a similar request before the offering of each portion of the feast. The above line serves as a mere sample and may differ from one ritual tradition to another.

14 The offering of the feast or the portions of the feast should go along with the appropriate *mudras* for each of the offerings.

15 The feast must be performed in the correct order as laid out by the ritual liturgy.

16 Tulku Rigdzin Pema Rinpoche explains that this means that one should not offer the feast to the yogins and yoginis until the three portions have been offered.

17 *The Stages of Vajra Activity* (*Rdo rje las rim*) likely refers, as also suggested by Sangye Khandro, to a commentary attributed to Buddhaguhya entitled *Stages of Vajra Activity* [for the *Mayajala*] (*Mayajalavajrakarma*, [Sgyu 'phrul dra ba] *rdo rje las* [kyi] *rim pa*). However, I was unable to find the quote within this text. Instead, I found the quoted passage within *The Magical Net of Vajrasattva, The Mirror of All Secrets* (*Vajrasattvamayajalaguhyasarvadarsha*, *Rdo rje sems dpa'i sgyu 'phrul dra ba gsang ba thams cad kyi me long*) attributed to the translators Vimalamitra and Jñanakumara. In his commentary *Dispelling Darkness in the Ten Directions* Longchenpa likewise attributed the passage to *The Stages of Vajra Activity*. Thus, *The Stages of Vajra Activity* may be a misattribution, or another title for *The Mirror of All Secrets*, or the title used for yet another commentary which quotes *The Mirror of All Secrets*. For the Tibetan quotation within *The Mirror of All Secrets*, see: "Rdo rje sems dpa' sgyu 'phrul dra ba gsang ba me long gi rgyud chen po las/ lam gyi khyad par ma lus pa bshad pa'i le'u ste bcu gcig pa'o/", in *Snga 'gyur rgyud 'bum phyogs bsgrigs/ pod 13*, ed. *Thub bstan nyi ma*, (Pe cin/: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang/, 2009), 249a–249b.

18 This refers to the secret conduct (*gsang spyod*) that the tantra requires the practitioners to abide by.

19 A sang (*srang*) was a Tibetan unit of weight equivalent to the Chinese *liang* (tael). One sang is about 37.5 grams.

20 Further below, Adzom Gyalse explains *da-wa* (*zla ba*) as the offering articles of *da-gyé* (*zla rgyas*) and *da-bram* (*zla bram*), and *mamsa* as meat.

21 Tib. *Bdud rtsi 'byung ba' rgyud*. Eng. *The Tantra of the Arising of Amrita*. This tantra belongs to the cycle of scriptures dedicated to the *yidam Amritakundali* (*Bdud*

rtsi yon tan). *Amritakundali* is one of the *Kagyé*, the eight *Mahayoga yidams* of the Nyingma School. For the quoted passage, see: “Thams cad bdud rtsi lnga’i rang bzhin las/ ma hA yo ga’i don gyi lung dang sgrub thabs bdud rtsi chen po ’bum sde las brus pa’i/ bam po chen po lnga pa/,” in *Snga gyur rgyud ’bum phyogs bsgrigs/ pod 25/*, (Pecin/: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang/, 2009), 95a–95b.

22 The tantra quoted above reveals that for the ganacakra to lead to liberation, the practitioners who join the ganacakra must have an unbiased attitude towards the feast substances. (Oral clarification by Khenpo Pema Namgyal)

23 Tib. *tsA ru*, Skt. *caru*. The Tibetans borrowed this term from the Sanskrit. The *Tsikdzö Chenmo* (*Tshig mdzod chen mo*) explains that it consists of pure substances such as ‘three whites’ (i. e. milk, butter and curd). Monier Williams defines the Sanskrit term *caru* as an oblation (of rice, barley and pulse), boiled with butter and milk.

24 Tib. *rab tshong dus dgu ’grims (pa’i sha)*. ‘Meat that could not be sold nine times.’ This refers to meat that could not be sold due to its poor quality. The idea is that this meat comes from an animal that has died naturally or has been suffering long-term from natural causes. Thus it is of poor quality. (Oral clarification by Khenpo Pema Namgyal.)

25 Tib. *mam gsum dag pa*. The three purities. This means that it is not permitted to buy meat if one has 1) heard (*thos*), 2) seen (*mtshong*), or 3) doubts (*dogs pa*) that the meat was killed for the ganacakra.

26 Heat (*drod*) is the first of four stages of the path of joining (*sbyor lam*), of the five paths (*lam lnga*) of the mahayana.

27 Tib. *thud*. A confection of roasted barley, butter, sugar and dried curd.

28 This refers to condiments and seasonings (*tshod pa*) that are added to some traditional Tibetan foods, such as dried cheese, dried fruits, roots etc.

29 Adzom Gyalse here provides a list of traditional Tibetan offering articles, which are referred to by specific vajrayana terms, and only used in the context of the ganacakra. Adzom Gyalse then explains which term refers to which substance. Since these terms have no meaning outside the ritual context, I have left them untranslated.

30 Adzom Gyalse further stresses the purity of the offerings. With this Adzom Gyalse taps into the traditional belief in pollution (*grib*) and contamination (*mmol*). This implies the belief that substances or offerings that were obtained through negative actions or improperly handled pollute the ritual and destroy its power. For a discussion of this belief in pollution and contamination, see: Sophie Pickens, *Divine Blue Water: The Contamination Purifying Smoke Offering Performed by The Great Master Padmasambhava*, MA Dissertation, (Rangjung Yeshe Institute of Kathmandu University, 2012), 21–27.

31 Tib. *ku sa lu*. Skt. *kushalin*. While in Sanskrit the term has a variety of meanings, in Tibetan Buddhist works it mainly refers to someone who takes a very simple approach to life and does not appear to do much in the way of conventional activity but who meditates internally.

32 This implies offerings that are naturally present, and thus no money or only very little money has to be spent on obtaining them. (Oral clarification by Khenpo Pema Namgyal.)

33 For an explanation of ‘recollecting the purity’ (*dag dran*), see: Getse Mahāpaṇḍita Tsewang Chokdrup, ‘Husks of Unity: A Clarification of the Development Stage

Rituals', in Jigme Lingpa, Patrul Rinpoche and Getse Mahapandita, *Deity, Mantra and Wisdom*, transl. Dharmachakra Translation Committee, (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2006), 132.

34 Tib. 'bar ba mtshans kyi dkyil 'khor. The mandala of the deities and spirits that reside at the border of the main mandala. (Oral clarification by Khenpo Pema Namgyal.)

35 Tib. sku gsum rgyal ba'i zhing khams. Eng. buddha-fields of the victorious ones' three kayas. This refers to the nirmanakaya, sambhogakaya and dharmakaya fields of the buddhas.

36 By acting in inappropriate ways with respect to the samaya connection that we share with the deities, we impair the samayas and thus the connection that can bring us to enlightenment. (Oral clarification by Khenpo Pema Namgyal.)

37 This is a reference to the four uncommon samayas of the Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*): 1) non-existence (*med pa*), 2) openness (*phyal pa*), 3) spontaneous presence (*lhun grub*), and 4) singularity (*gcig pu*).

38 Tib. nang mchod. Lit. inner offering. This refers to amrita.

39 The third portion with or without the liberation effigy is moved to the side, so that when the feast substances are blessed, the third portion is not blessed together with the feast substances. See: Khenpo Chemchok, "The Words of the Vidyadhara That Bestow the Majesty of Great Bliss: Notations on the Rigdzin Düpa, the Inner Sadhana for the Longchen Nyingtik Cycle," in *The Gathering of Vidyadharas: Text and Commentaries on the Rigdzin Düpa*, edited and translated by Gyurme Avertin, (Boulder: Snow Lion, 2017), 72.

40 'The Buddhas' Instructions from the Mantrika's Triangular Ritual Fire Pit' (*sngags grub khung kha nas sangs rgyas pa'i gdams ngag*) is a technical term used to refer to the liberation ritual performed by the vajra-master. For an explanation, see: Khangsar Tenpe Wangchuk. "The Light of the Sun and the Moon—Generation and Perfection Stages: Notes Explaining the Words of the Rigdzin Düpa, the Inner Sadhana for the Longchen Nyingtik Cycle," in *The Gathering of Vidyadharas: Text and Commentaries on the Rigdzin Düpa*, edited and translated by Gyurme Avertin, (Boulder: Snow Lion, 2017), 154.

41 The ten grounds [of liberation] (*[bsgral ba'i] zhing bcu*) refer to the ten evil deeds which, when all enacted by a single enemy, make that enemy suitable for liberation. Such a person or spirit is called 'an enemy showing all ten grounds' (*zhing bcu tshang ba'i bstan dgra*). According to the Nyingma School these are: 1) a general enemy of the Three Jewels (*dkon mchog spyi dgra*), 2) the personal enemy of the vajra-master (*rdo rje slob dpon gyi sgos dgra*), 3) a samaya corruptor (*dam nyams pa*), 4) one who has contravened samaya (*dam las log pa*); 5) one who has shared secret samayas with those who are improper vessels for the path of secret mantra (*dam la 'khus pa ste gsang ba snod ngan la spel ba*), 6) one who arrives at a congregation of practitioners and berates them (*sgrub pa'i 'du bar ong nas gsbe ba*), 7) one who, like the chief of a band of armed robbers, harms everyone (*yongs la gnod pa'i jag dpon lta bu*), 8) one called 'hostile to samaya' – who is the sort who needs to be exorcised (*dam dgra zhes bya ba ste bzlog pa mkhan lta bu*); 9) one whose style of negative conduct is non-virtuous through-and-through (*mi dge ba kho na longs spyod pa ngan pa'i ngang tshul can*) and 10) beings of the three lower realms (*ngan song gsum*).

42 The seven violations (*nyams pa bdun*) are to forsake; 1. the life-force, 2. the authentic meaning, 3. the teachings, 4. the samayas, 5. karma; and to violate 6. out of

wrong-view or 7. from desire. (*yang srog sa nyams pa/ don las nyams pa/ bka' las nyams pa/ dam las nyams pa/ las kyi nyams pa/ mtshan mas nyams pa/ 'dod pas nyams pa bcas so/*) According to Kangsar Tenpe Wangchuk ego-clinging is here identified as the seven violations. See: Khangsar Tenpe Wangchuk, “The Light of the Sun and the Moon—Generation and Perfection Stages: Notes Explaining the Words of the Rigdzin Düpa, the Inner Sadhana for the Longchen Nyingtik Cycle,” in *The Gathering of Vidyadharas: Text and Commentaries on the Rigdzin Düpa*, edited and translated by Gyurme Avertin, (Boulder: Snow Lion, 2017), 155.

43 Tib. *sku dgra mam lnga*, Eng. the five kinds of enemies. These are: 1) to be a personal enemy of the vajra-master (*rdo rje slob dpon gyi sku dgra*), 2) to be a general enemy of the mahayana (*theg pa chen poi spyi dgra*), 3) to denigrate the secret mantrayana (*rdo rje theg pa smod pa*), 4) to harm the entire kingdom (*rgyal khams yongs la 'tshé ba*), 5) to harm the yogins (*rnal 'byor par gnod pa*).

44 The vajra-masters *samadhi*, or meditative concentration, must have the power to be able to fulfil the three satisfactions (*'tsheng pa gsum*). This implies that 1. the being liberated is satisfied since its mind is liberated into the dharmadhatu; 2. the deities are satisfied upon receiving the flesh and blood that has been transformed into wisdom nectar; and 3. the yogin performing the ritual is satisfied, since as a result of the ritual his or her life force increases. (Oral clarification by Drokpa Tulku)

45 Tib. *log rdugs 'byams dang bral ba*. Lit. not reversing, or being weak and scattered. In order that the practitioner does not accumulate negative karma, the practitioner's *samadhi* should be stable, by clearly visualizing him or herself as the deity. In order for the liberation to be effective, the weapon used for the liberation must be visualized as the powerful kila. The practitioner must remain focused on the object of liberation—the enemy of ego-hood—visualized as Rudra. (Oral clarification by Drokpa Tulku based on Jikme Lingpa's explanation.) Jikme Lingpa states: “Visualize yourself as the deity so that the ritual does not reverse. Visualize the weapon—the dagger—clearly as the kila so that the ritual is effective. Visualize the object of liberation as Rudra so that the ritual is focused.” (*mi ldog pa'i phyir du rang nyid lhar gsal/ mi rdugs pa'i phyir du srol byed phur pa ki la ya gsal/ mi 'byams pa'i phyir du bsgral bya'i rudra dngos su gsal/*) Jigs med gling pa, Bla ma dgongs 'dus kyi cho ga'i nram bshad, (Gser rta rdzong: Gser ljongs bla ma rung lnga rig nang bstan slob grwa chen mo, 2005), 288. For a further explanation, see also: Khangsar Tenpe Wangchuk. “The Light of the Sun and the Moon—Generation and Perfection Stages: Notes Explaining the Words of the Rigdzin Düpa, the Inner Sadhana for the Longchen Nyingtik Cycle,” in *The Gathering of Vidyadharas: Text and Commentaries on the Rigdzin Düpa*, edited and translated by Gyurme Avertin, (Boulder: Snow Lion, 2017), 153 (therein the terms have been translated as “irreversibility”, “repulsiveness” and “to be without sympathy”).

46 Please note that here flesh and blood (*sha khra*) refers to a red-painted bali made from flour and butter that is used at this point and not to actual flesh and blood. The same applies for the phrase of ‘flesh and blood’ used later on in the commentary.

47 Tib. *srid gsum*. Eng. the three worlds. These are: 1) the nether world of the nagas (*sa 'og klu'i srid pa*), 2) the surface world of humans (*sa'i steng mi'i srid pa*), and 3) the upper world of the gods (*gnam steng lha'i srid pa*).

48 The *bali* or *torma* (*gtor ma*) within Tibetan Buddhism is a ritual cake, usually hand-moulded from butter and flour and coloured with dyes, which can symbolize a deity, a mandala, an offering, or even a weapon. In this case it represents a specific

mandala.

49 This means that it is not necessary to offer the fourth portion or a substitution.

50 Adzom Gyalse uses the Sanskrit term *madana* to refer to the alcohol that is offered during the ganacakra.

51 to drop all conceptual thoughts while enjoying the feast substances. Although Adzom Gyalse merely indicates which passage should be recited, for the sake of clarity, the entire verse is provided here following the frequently quoted version by Sakya Pandita. Sa skya paṅḍita, “Tshogs ’khor cho ga,” Sa skya bka’ ’bum/ glegs bam gsum pa/ (3), (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006), 13a. (*dir ni chos rnams bzang por ltos/ ’du ba rnams la the tshom med/ bram ze khyi dang gdol pa yang/ rang bzhin gcig pa nyid du zo/*)

52 *The Union of the Sun and Moon* (*Nyi zla kha sbyor*) is one of the seventeen tantras of the pith-instruction section (*man ngag sde*) of the Great Perfection. The tantra presents an explanation of the ‘bardos’ or ‘intermediate states’ (*bar do*) and is the source of the often recited ‘vajra song’ (*rdo rje’i glu*). The line that Adzom Gyalse quotes is likely an abbreviation of the following lines from *The Union of the Sun and Moon*: “*de phyir rdo rje’i glu len cing/ rtag tur do rje gar yang bya/*” See: “Nyi zla kha sbyor gsang ba’ rgyud chen po,” in *Snga gyur rgyud ’bum phyogs bsgrigs/ pod 5/*, (Pecin: mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2009), 266a.

53 The feast song (*tshogs glu*) is an aspirational song melodiously entuned when offering the feast to the assembled.

54 This refers to the famous ‘vajra song’ (*rdo rje’i glu*), named after its beginning syllables ‘*ema kiri*’, taught in the *Tantra of the Union of the Sun and Moon* (*Nyi zla kha sbyor*).

55 Tib. *zhing lpags*. Eng. violator’s skin. The skin of a being who has fulfilled the ten grounds of liberation. See the section above on the liberation offering for more details. Rather than using the skin of an actual human being, a painting or drawing of a skin is more commonly used and sometimes also animal skin. (Oral clarification by Drokpa Tulku.)

56 Tib. *chos ’byung*. Skt. *dharmodaya*. Eng. source of phenomena. This is a technical term referring to the drawing of a special triangle used within vajrayana rituals.

57 Tib. *bhandba*. Skt. *bhanda*. A “vessel” or “cup” but in a ritual context can also mean skull-cup.

58 Tib. *rje bla ma*. Lit. lord teacher. Adzom Gyalse uses the affectionate name ‘most precious teacher’ to refer most likely to his father and main teacher Adzom Drukpa (A ’dzom ’brug pa 1842–1924).

59 ‘Glorious inheritance’ (*dpal gyi pha ’bab*) is a technical term referring to the leftover pieces of food that haven’t fallen off the offering plates.

60 Tib. *gdong thug bzur*. Lit. to avoid a direct encounter. Since the remainder guests can be potentially harmful, the ritual assistant should avoid direct contact with them. Placing a candle at night within the remainder offering is said to prevent this direct encounter.

61 In order to prevent being poisoned by an encounter (*gdong dug*) with the potentially harmful remainder guests, the ritual assistant holds the remainder offering with the ‘*garuda mudra*’.

62 If the vajra-master is realized, his or her spit is considered sacred and thus by

spitting on the remainder, the remainder is blessed. However, if the vajra-master is not realized, his or her spit is ordinary 'dirty' spit and thus contaminates the remainder offering.

63 The offering plate that the ritual assistant used in order to carry the remainder may have been contaminated by the remainder guests in the process. Thus, in order to prevent being 'poisoned by' the plate, the ritual assistant pours rinsing water onto the plate and thus cleanses the plate of any potential contamination.

64 *Drupchen* (*Sgrub chen*), literally 'vast accomplishment', is a form of intensive tantric group practice, wherein a group of practitioners continuously practice a particular sadhana in a specially prepared place for several days. Bringing together a vast array of methods of the Vajrayana, this form of practiced is considered to yield vast accomplishment for all the participants.

65 The *sthavara* (*Bstan ma*) are female protector deities bound under oath by Padmasambhava. For an account of the binding of the sthavaras at Yangleshö, see: Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-born: the life story of Padmasambhava*, (Boston: Shambhala, 1999), 52–54; and: Martin Boord, *A Bolt of Lightning from the Blue*, (Berlin: Khordong 2002), 119–120. For more information on the *sthavaras*, see: Robert Mayer, *A Scripture of the Ancient Tantra Collection: The Phur-pa bcu-gnyis*, (Oxford: Kindsdale Publications, 1996), 128–132. The oral lineage of Vajrakila recounts two separate occasions where the *sthavaras* were bound, in Nepal and Tibet respectively: Martin Boord, *The Cult of the Deity Vajrakila*, (Tring: The Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1993), 107–109 & 121–122.

66 The four activities are: 1. pacifying (*zhi ba*), 2. enriching (*rgyas pa*), 3. magnetizing (*dbang ba*), 4. wrathful/subjugating (*drag po*).

67 *The Two Segments*, (*Brtag pa gnyis pa*) is commonly used to refer to *The Tantra of Hevajra, He Who Affords Protection Through Nets of dakinis* (Toh. 418, *Kye'i rdo rje mkha' gro ma dra ba'i sdom pa'i rgyud*). For the quoted passage, see: D 418: *Kye'i rdo rje mkha' gro ma dra ba'i sdom pa'i rgyud kyi rgyal po*, *Rgyud, Nga*, 27b.

68 Although Adzom Gyalse does not name the source of this quotation, the relevant passage appears to be from *The Wish-fulfilling Jewel: A Ritual Manual for g Ganacakra* (*Tshogs kyi 'khor lo'i cho ga yid bzhin nor bu*) preserved in the *Tengyur* and attributed to Ratnarakṣita. See: D 2494: Ratnarakṣita, *Tshogs kyi 'khor lo'i cho ga yid bzhin nor bu*, *Rgyud*, Zi 249a.

69 Tib. *Rdo rje drwa ba*. Eng. *The Vajra-Net*.

70 Tib. *Sdom 'byung*. Skt. *Samvarodaya*. An abbreviation for *The Tantra of the Arising of shamvara* (Toh. 373, *Bde mchog [sdom] 'byung ba'i rgyud*). For the quoted passage, see: D 373: *Bde mchog [sdom] 'byung ba'i rgyud*, *Rgyud, Kha*, 275a.

71 The tantra entitled *Naturally Arisen Perfection* (*Rdzogs pa rang byung gi rgyud*) is one of the eighteen tantras of the pith-instruction class of the Great Perfection teachings. For the quoted passage, see: "Dzogs pa rang byung chen poi rgyud las/spyi tshogs bsgral ba'i lung bstan pa'i le'u ste bco lnga pa'o" in *Snga gyur rgyud bum phyogs bsgrigs/ pod 4/*, (Pe cin: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2009), 91b–92a. The same passage is also quoted in Tsele Natsok Rangdrol's ganacakra commentary.

72 This refers to the five aspects of primordial wisdom (*ye shes lnga*): 1. wisdom of dharmadhatu, 2. mirror-like wisdom, 3. wisdom of equality, 4. wisdom of discernment, and 5. all-accomplishing wisdom.

73 Here Yeshe Tsogyal instructs the yogins to especially strive in practice on the 8th day (Medicine Buddha & Tara), the 10th (Guru Rinpoche), and the 25th (dakini)

day of the Tibetan calendar. Please also note that the quotation from Drimé Özer at the beginning of this Adzom Gyalse's commentary gives a similar instruction.

74 That is Tsele Natsok Rangdrol. Here Adzom Gyalse quotes Tsele Natsok Rangdro's short ganacakra commentary.

75 Tib. *mu ge'i bskal pa*. Eng. the age of famine. This refers to a specific period of degeneration in our universe. Accordingly, the degeneration of the emotions of beings, causes the destruction of the universe. As a result of this destructions beings will at one point go through a period of seven-year long famine. This is 'the age of famine'.

76 The passage comes from Longchenpa's *Wish-fulfilling Ocean: The Stages of the Feast Offering* (*Tshogs mchod kyi rim pa yid bzhin rgya mtsho*). See: Dri med 'od zer, "Tshogs mchod kyi rim pa yid bzhin rgya mtsho/," in *Gsung 'bum/ dri med 'od zer/ dpal brtsegs/ mes po'i shul bzhag/*, (Pe cin: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009), 175–176.

77 Drakyap Sherap (Brag gyab shes rab)

78 Tashi Gephel Ling (Bkra shis dge 'phel gling) is the actual name of the encampment commonly referred to as Adzom Gar (A 'dzom sgar), the main seat of Adzom Gyalse. It is located in Tromtar, on the southern bank of the Dzing River ('Dzing chu).