



**Patrul Rinpoche's
The Words of My Perfect Teacher
ON RED OFFERINGS**



Nowadays householders, announcing that they are going to protect themselves and their flocks from disease for the year, call in some lamas and their disciples – none of whom have received the necessary empowerment or oral transmission, nor practised the basic recitation – to open up the mandala of some wrathful deity. Without going through the generation and perfection phases, they goggle with eyes like saucers and whip themselves into an overwhelming fury directed at an effigy made of dough. [* Correctly understood, such an effigy symbolizes the false notion of a truly existing self. Here sacred ritual is being used in an external way, contrary to its intention.] They always perform "red offerings" of flesh and blood, and their cries of "Bring them! Kill them! Just you wait...Hit them!" arouse feelings of violent aggression in everybody who hears them. A closer look at such ceremonies shows that they are as Jetsun Mila says:

Inviting the wisdom deities to protect worldly beings is like dragging a king off his throne and making him sweep the floor.

Padampa Sangye says:

They build a Secret Mantra mandala in the village goat-pen and claim that is an antidote.

Practices of this sort poison the Secret Mantrayana and transform it into the practices of the Bonpos. Those who perform "liberation" practices should be beyond all self-centred interest. Only such people, acting on a vast scale for the benefit of beings and the teachings, may legitimately

liberate enemies and obstacle-makers who are committing the ten pernicious acts. But when such a practice is done with ordinary anger, taking sides, not only will it have no power to liberate the beings at which it is directed, it will also cause rebirth in hell for the people who perform it.

For someone not accomplished in the generation and perfection phases and who does not observe the samayas, the performance of the "red offerings" of meat and blood brings realization neither of the wisdom deities nor of the Dharma protectors. Instead, all kinds of malevolent gods and demons gather to partake of the offerings and tormas. They might seem to bring about some immediate benefit, but the final outcome will be a multitude of undesirable consequences.

A far better protection than all of that would be to place your confidence in the Three Jewels. Ask teachers and monks who have pacified and controlled their own minds to recite the refuge a hundred thousand times. You will be brought into the care the Three Jewels; nothing undesirable will happen to you in this life and all your wishes will be realized spontaneously. Beneficent gods will protect you, and all those who might do you harm – the demons and obstacle makers – will be unable even to approach.

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When clerics visit their patrons, they happily eat all the sheep that have been killed and served to them, without the least hesitation. When they perform special rituals to make offerings to the protectors, they claim that clean meat is needed as an ingredient. For them, this means the still bleeding flesh and fat of a freshly killed animal, with which they decorate all the *tormas* and other offerings. Such fearful methods of intimidation can only be Bonpo or tirthika rites- they are certainly not Buddhist. In Buddhism, once we have taken refuge in the Dharma we have to give up harming others. How could having an animal killed everywhere we go, and enjoying its flesh and blood, not be a contravention of the precepts of taking refuge? More particularly, in the Bodhisattva tradition of the Great Vehicle, we are supposed to be the refuge and protector of all infinite beings. But for those very beings with unfortunate karma that we are supposed to be protecting we feel not the slightest shred of compassion. Instead, those beings under our protection are murdered, their boiled flesh and blood set before us, and their protectors- we Bodhisattvas- then gleefully gobble it all up, smacking our lips. Could anything be more vicious and cruel?

The texts of the Secret Mantra vajrayana say:

For whatever we have done to upset the simha and tramen
By not gathering offerings of flesh and blood according to the texts,
We beg the dakinis of the sacred places to forgive us.

Now here, "gathering offerings of flesh and blood according to the texts" means to gather them as explained in the tantric texts of the Secret Mantrayana- namely, the flesh of humans, horses, dogs, elephants and cows. These five kinds of meat are undefiled by harmful action because they are all creatures which are not killed for food. This is quite the opposite of sticking to concepts of clean

and unclean in which human flesh, the flesh of dogs and the like are seen as unclean and inferior, and the succulent, fatty meat of an animal that had just been killed for food is seen as clean. Such attitudes are referred to as:

Viewing the substances of the five samayas of relishing
As pure and impure, or consuming them heedlessly,

in other words, having ideas of pure and impure which transgress the samayas of relishing. Even those five acceptable kinds of meat may only be used if you have the power to transform the food you eat into ambrosia and if you are in the process of practising to attain particular accomplishments in a solitary place. To eat them casually in a village, just because you like the taste, is what is meant by "heedless consumption contrary to the samayas of relishing," and is also a transgression.

"Pure meat," therefore, does not mean the meat of an animal slaughtered for food, but "the meat of an animal that died because of its own past actions," meaning meat from an animal that died of old age, sickness, or other natural causes that were the effect of its own past actions alone.

The incomparable Dagpo Rinpoche said that taking the still warm flesh and blood of a freshly slaughtered animal and placing it in the mandala would make all the wisdom deities faint. It is also said that offering to the wisdom deities the flesh and blood of a slaughtered animal is like murdering a child in front of its mother. If you invited a mother for a meal and then set before her the flesh of her own child, would she like it, or would she not like it? It is with the same love as a mother for her only child that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas look on all beings of the three worlds. Slaughtering an innocent animal that has been the victim of its own bad actions and offering its flesh and blood to them is therefore no way to please them. As the Bodhisattva Dantideva says:

Just as no pleasures can bring delight
To someone whose body is ablaze with fire,
Nor can the great compassionate ones be pleased
When harm is done to sentient beings.

If you perform rituals like the offering prayer to the protectors using only the flesh and blood of slain animals, it goes without saying that the wisdom deities and the protectors of the Buddha's doctrine, who are all pure Bodhisattvas, will never accept those offerings of slaughtered beings laid out like meat on a butcher's counter. They will not even come anywhere near. Instead, powerful evil spirits who like warm flesh and blood and are ever eager to do harm will gather round the offering and feast on it.

For a short while after a practitioner of such "red offerings" has done his work, people may notice some minor benefits. But since the spirits involved are constantly harming others, they are liable to cause sudden problems and sicknesses. Again the practitioner of the "red" rituals will make his appearance and offer flesh and blood, and again that will help for a little while. This is how evil

spirits and practitioners of the red rites become inseparable companions who always support each

other. Like beasts of prey on the prowl, they roam around, obsessed solely by their urge to consume flesh, gnaw bones, and seek ever more victims. Possessed by evil spirits, practitioners of such rituals lose whatever disillusionment with samsara and thirst for liberation they may have had before. Whatever faith, purity of perception and interest in Dharma they once had, these qualities all fade away until the point comes when even the Buddha himself flying in the sky before them would arouse no faith in them, and even the sight of an animal with all its innards hanging out would arouse no compassion. They are always on the lookout for prey, like killer *raksasas* marching to war, their faces inflamed, shaking with rage and bristling with aggression. They pride themselves on the power and blessing of their speech, which comes from their intimacy with evil spirits. As soon as they die they are catapulted straight into hell- unless their negative actions are still not yet quite sufficient for that, in which case they are reborn in the entourage of some evil spirit preying on the life force of others, or as hawks, wolves and other predators.

During the reign of Dharma King Trisong Detsen, the Bonpoas made offerings of blood and meat for the king's benefit. The Second Buddha from Oddiyana, the great pandita Vimalamitra, the great Bodhisattva Abbot and the other translators and panditas were all completely outraged at the sight of the Bonpos' offerings.

They said:

A single teaching cannot have two teachers;
A single religion cannot have two methods of practice.
The Bon tradition is opposed to the law of Dharma;
Its evil is worse than ordinary wrongdoing.
If you permit such practices, we shall go back home.

The panditas were all of the same opinion without even having to discuss the matter. When the king asked them to preach the Dharma, not one of them came forward. Even when he served them food, they refused to eat.

If we, claiming to walk in the footsteps of the panditas, siddhas and Bodhisattvas of the past, now perform the profound rites of the Secret Mantrayana in the manner of Bonpoas and cause harm to beings, it will destroy the sublimity of the doctrine and dishonour the Three Jewels, and will cast both ourselves and others into the hells. ...

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