

# Healing the Earth – Healing Yourself



**A Modern Sur Chöd Ritual  
by John Jackson**

# Modern Sur Chöd Guide

## Purpose

The Sur Chöd is one of the four daily practices performed at Bön monasteries and is usually performed in the evening. It is an offering of food, transformed by fire, mantra and our meditative intention, into all that might be desired by the four guests. The four guests include all beings, from the highest enlightened beings to those who have done us harm. We especially invite those that are disturbed, or harmed by us so that they may come to experience peace. Through the generosity of making these offerings the practitioner brings peace to the environment, repays debts to those that we may have harmed, accumulates merit, and experiences deep abiding peace and harmony.

The Sur Chöd may also be performed for the benefit of a person who has died, for through the practice we provide the deceased with all that they desire, releasing them from their attachments, and opening the doorway to a higher rebirth. Traditionally the Sur Chöd would be performed daily for 49 days after the passing.

## Preparations

Prepare the food offerings. Traditionally this would be a bowl of tsampa (roasted barley) with butter, mixed with grains, incense and medicinal herbs. You may substitute and include other foods, such as flour, rice and dried foods, but it should not include meats, and it should be food that will burn easily. If you are doing this for someone who has recently passed, you might include his or her favorite foods. Be sure to have a beautiful bowl and spoon to make the offerings into the fire.

### Materials Needed:

Fire or Charcoal  
Bowl of Water  
Incense  
Mustard Seed  
Bowl of Dry Food

Prepare a fire. This should be large enough to easily consume the food that will be offered and be burning well before the ritual starts. If you cannot do this outside with a fire, you can use a charcoal to burn small amounts of food offerings, and you multiply the size of the offerings through your visualization and intentions.

We begin with the *Invitation* in which we transform ourselves into the Buddha of Compassion, Shenla Odkar (see image on last page), for the ritual will be most powerful when we perform it from a space of infinite compassion. Then we invite the Four Guests: all the enlightened beings, all the spiritual protectors; all the beings of existence, and all the beings to whom we owe karmic debts and who are the objects of our compassion. If you are doing this for a specific person who has passed, but sure to offer them a respected seat in the front. See and feel all these beings collected in space surrounding you.

The *Purification with Water* and *Purification with Incense* prayers are to purify the offerings, ourselves, all the guests, and the ritual space. Incense and a bowl of clear water with a cedar sprig will be needed. The *Securing the Boundaries of the Ritual Space* is to establish an energetic boundary around the ritual space and requires light colored mustard seeds.

We begin offering the food into the fire as we recite the *Sur Chöd Prayer* three times, and then continue singing the A KAR A ME DU TRI SU NAK PO ZHI ZHI MAL MAL mantra until all the offerings are given. The practice concludes with recitation of the *Praise of the Mantra* and a *Prayer of Aspiration*, followed by *Dedication of Merit*.

## **Invitation**

*(Recited while feeling all the guests gathering in the space around us.)*

OM

We invite all the sacred beings to join us,  
We Invite all the enlightened ones,  
We Invite all the guardian spirits,  
We Invite all the wise guides,  
Please come to this great feast offering,  
Please enjoy our peaceful communion.

We Invite all the spirits of nature,  
We Invite the spirits of the trees, plants and mushrooms,  
We Invite the spirits of the rocks, mountains and the earth itself,  
We invite the spirits of the storms, rivers, lakes and oceans,  
We Invite the spirits of the animals, the reptiles, and the billions of insects.  
Please come to this great feast offering,  
Please enjoy our peaceful communion.

We Invite all those that are our friends,  
We Invite all those who are suffering,  
We Invite all those who we have hurt,  
We Invite all those who have hurt us,  
Please come to this great feast offering,  
Please enjoy our peaceful communion.

We Invite all our ancestors,  
We Invite all our children,  
We Invite all beings,  
Please come and enjoy this great feast offering,  
Please enjoy our peaceful communion.

## **Purification with Water**

*(While sprinkling water over offerings and ritual area.)*

OM

This clear water, symbol of clarity and emptiness,  
The flowing and infinite nature of reality,  
Purifies and cleanses our minds, guests and offerings.  
May all karmic traces and obscurations be purified.  
May all the gods on high be purified.  
May all the water spirits below be purified.  
May all the nature spirits dwelling between be purified.  
May this ritual space be purified.  
May all these offerings and implements be purified.

**OM SHUD DHO KU SHUD DHO TSANG SA LE SANG NGE YE SO HA**

### **Purification with Incense**

*(While waving incense over offerings and throughout the ritual area.)*

OM

This pure incense, the nectar of groves and forests,  
The essence of awareness that pervades all existence,  
Whose scent clears away all negative thoughts and emotions,  
Purifies our minds, guests and offerings.  
May all karmic traces and obscurations be purified.  
May all the gods on high be purified.  
May all the water spirits below be purified.  
May all the nature spirits dwelling between be purified.  
May this ritual space be purified.  
May all these offerings and implements be purified.

**OM ZHIM ZHIM DRAM DRAM BUN NE TIM TIM YE SO HA**

### **Securing the Boundaries of the Ritual Space**

*(While scattering mustard seeds outside the ritual area. The seeds are transformed into guardians that protect the ritual.)*

OM

By the power of our meditation,  
And by the supreme power of pure awareness,  
These guardians who are white mustard seeds,  
Great heroes that destroy all obstructions,  
Being golden in color and empowered with mantras,  
Protect us from all negativities and obstructions.

**SO OM NYE LO YO RU RU PU RU PU RU DZA LA DZA LA TI TA YA MAN T'OR TSE TRA MO HA**

Pacify all hindrances to the virtues in ourselves and others,  
And pacify all that are the friends of the vices.  
Let the boundaries be secured against all obstacles  
That would be hindrances to this sacred ritual.

## Sur Chöd Prayer

*(Repeated three times while spooning the offerings slowly into the fire.)*

I bow to all our sacred guests.  
I pay homage to the sources of enlightenment.  
By the power of our meditation and the blessings of the enlightened ones,  
This infinitely vast offering of food into the fire, which is an immeasurable cloud of generosity,  
Is offered to the highest guests, the sources of enlightenment,  
Is offered to the virtuous guests, our guides, and protectors,  
Is offered to all the beings who might cause disturbances and to whom we are indebted,  
And it is offered to all the beings of existence who are the objects of our compassion.  
May our guests be delighted by our offerings and be satisfied with our generosity!  
Especially may our debts owed to all these beings be resolved through their satisfaction with these offerings!  
And having pacified all disturbances, difficulties, and blockages,  
We dedicate this offering that we and all others may realize ultimate happiness.  
May abundance come to all beings!

*(The heart mantra is sung continuously until all the food is offered.)*

**A KAR A ME DU TRI SU NAK PO ZHI ZHI MAL MAL  
A KAR A ME DU TRI SU NAK PO ZHI ZHI MAL MAL SO HA**

## Praise of the Mantra

A KAR is nature of mind, completely pure.  
A ME is primordial awareness, clearly visible as light.  
DU TRI SU purifies anger, attachment, and ignorance.  
NAG PO purifies jealousy, pride, and laziness.  
ZHI ZHI purifies the suffering of samsara.  
MAL MAL is the bliss that arises from recognizing Nature of Mind.  
SO HA clears all doubts.  
Truly this heart mantra dissolves all the sources of suffering.  
Having experienced the depths of suffering in samsara,  
May all beings come to attain enlightenment.

## Prayer of Aspiration

May all disturbing energies become pacified!  
May all suffering beings discover self-realization!  
May all great wisdom teachings spread and increase!  
As for all the beings spread throughout this world,  
May their sins and ignorance become purified!  
May their accumulations of merit increase!  
May our prayers be heard!  
May all our prayers of aspiration manifest!  
As for all the enlightened beings of the past, present and future,

For ourselves and all sentient beings,  
May we connect with all in a state of non-duality!  
May we achieve self-realization through the compassion of the enlightened ones!  
May the aspiration prayers of all beneficent beings manifest!  
May the wisdom teachings spread throughout this world!  
May the joy and happiness of all beings increase!  
May all harm and negativities decline!  
May any negative wishes grow weaker!  
Moreover, may all the beings of samsara,  
Having cut the stream of misery and suffering,  
Come to obtain unexcelled good fortune,  
And realize their true enlightened nature!

### Dedication of Merit

All pure virtue accumulated through body, speech, and mind,  
I dedicate for the welfare of all sentient beings.  
After having purified all obstacles and obscurations of the past, present, and future,  
May we all swiftly achieve enlightenment.

*There are many versions of the Sur Chöd practices. This modern version, which was designed to be accessible by a wide Western audience, was composed by John Jackson based upon the teachings of the great masters Shardza Tashi Gyaltzen Rinpoche and Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche.*



Shenla Odkar, The Buddha of Compassion

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