

SIGNIFICANCE OF SMOKE OFFERING

by Ven. Minam Rinpoche

It is commonly practiced by Tibetans in appeasing the deceased and repaying Karmic debtors in this and previous lives. The commonly practiced Smoke Offerings are the Morning and Evening sessions respectively, in Tibetan it is called Sur Puja. This method of mind training further reduces the defilement of the mind and is a practice performed throughout the 3 year 3 Month and 3 Fortnight retreats of a Lama on a daily basis.

Morning sessions: Offering of Food that was burned to create smoke and offered to the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and other realized beings. This is done in order to accumulate mass merits and also to practice generosity.

Evening sessions: In similar manner as above morning session, and medicinal herbs and pills were added in addition to the food. This offering is made to wandering souls trapped within this Samsara that are unable to take rebirth. It was said the reason these souls that are trapped is mainly due to strong attachment of their previous life prior death. The food were blessed through a series of auspicious prayers chanted with pure motivation and intention to benefit. The tempting smell of smoke attract these souls and thus satisfied their desires and the medicinal pills/herbs tuned their mind so that they realize that they are already dead and thus make their way to another rebirth. Depending on the aspiration and wish of the participants during the ritual, it can also be a practice to repay karmic debt accumulated since beginningless time. In a effective practice and offering, one's practice and daily live will be obstacle free and prosper.

Family members of the deceased normally engage monks to perform the Smoke Puja for a duration of 49 days. Similarly the herders of yaks or sheeps in Tibet perform this practice to dispel untoward obstacles and sickness of their herds. They perform both the morning and evening smoke offerings and inbetween sessions they recite the Chenrezig and Guru Rinpoche mantras. This is still actively practice by most Tibetans.

Similarly the offering of the body of the deceased commonly known as "Sky Burial". Rather than wasting fuel cremating the body or wasting the edible flesh by burying, they offered it to the birds.

Some even perform other meritorious deeds and dedicate it to the deceased in order to close the doors of the rebirth into the lower realms. There are those who offered everything they possess such as house, animals, food, money to the monastery and then proceed on a pilgrimage journey. Once they return from the pilgrimage trip (normally taking months), they restart their lives anew from scratch. All the merits accumulated throughout the journey and all the good deeds were transferred to the deceased.

Minam Rinpoche highly recommend this practice before one proceed to offer one's own body in the practice of Chöd. This method of offering material goods is to train one's mind towards authentic generosity. Rinpoche also told of some funny stories of Chödpas in Tibet.

Ratnashri Dharma Centre in Malaysia is organizing weekly Smoke Offering on every Sunday 8:30pm. All participants are welcome to bring along family and friends and are advise to bring own food offerings which will be combined with offerings by others. Food such as medicinal herbs, honey, yogurt, biscuits and other edible snacks is recommended. Please do not make meat base offerings as

this will inadvertently invite wrathful devas and other spirits that causes obstacles and terror to the vicinity. Normally meat based offerings were done in powerful places such as places where great adepts had the Dharma Wheel were turned or attained enlightenment.