

## Om Mani Padme Hung - the sounds of compassion

Compassion involves relating to the core of total goodness deep within people, while accepting their superficial impurities and helping them cope with their problems. This is reflected in the meditations on Om Ma Ni Pad Me Hung, the mantra of bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. To each of its six syllables are related qualities of primordial goodness, such as uncompromising generosity, as well as those of the negative counterparts, such as greed through fear of loss, which mask them. While chanting or muttering the mantra, the meditator radiates sincere compassion, in the form of healing lights, towards fellow beings in the six realms of the Wheel of Life, contemplating at the same time the mental poisons which cause rebirth in such states. The chanting is believed to gradually close, for the meditator, the door to rebirth in these states and to reveal their true nature of enlightenment.

A seventh syllable Hrih is considered to be the quintessence of the six syllables Om Ma Ni Pad Me Hung. It is their mother or their seed. Some Buddhists chant just the six syllables while others prefer to add the seventh. This aeons-old mantra was given to our world by Buddha Sakyamuni in several mahayana discourses and he ascribed many wonderful benefits to its recitation.

OM is related to the family of Buddhas known as the Tathagata family and to the 'primordial wisdom of the realm of voidness' (dharmadhatu) associated with it. This is the enlightened counterpart of pride and the appropriate area of the six perfect practices (*paramita*) to cultivate is forbearance. Of the life components (*skandha*), it relates to forms, both physical and mental. The power of Om is epitomised by Buddha Vairocana, who presides at the centre of the mandala. Reciting the Om purifies the mind of imprints left by past pride and also of the potential consequences of pride: rebirth as a god (*deva*). Its utterance is the expression of compassion for the sufferings of the deva realm.

Ma is related to the Action (*karma*) family of Buddhas and to the 'primordial wisdom through which all is accomplished' associated with it. This is the enlightened counterpart of jealousy and the appropriate area of the six perfect practices (*paramita*) to cultivate to overcome it is diligence. Of the life components (*skandha*), it relates to mental formations (*samskara*). The power of Ma is epitomised

by Buddha Amogasiddhi, who presides over the northern quarter. Reciting Ma purifies the mind of imprints left by past jealousy and also of its potential consequences: rebirth as a jealous demi-god (*asura*). Its utterance is the expression of compassion for the sufferings of the asura realm.

Ni is related to the jewel (*ratna*) family of Buddhas and to the primordial wisdom of sameness associated with it. This is the enlightened counterpart of desire and attachment and the appropriate area of the six perfect practices to cultivate to overcome it is right conduct. Of the life components, it relates to feelings, both physical and mental. The power of Ni is epitomised by Buddha Ratnasambhava, who presides over the southern quarter. Reciting Ni purifies the mind of imprints left by past clinging and also of its potential consequences: rebirth as a human(*deva*). Its utterance is the expression of compassion for the sufferings found in the human realm.

Pad (pronounced *pay* by Tibetans) is related to the vajra family of Buddhas and to the combined wisdom of relative and ultimate (*prajna-jnana*) associated with it. This is the enlightened counterpart of confusion and the appropriate area of the six perfect practices to be cultivated to overcome it is that of wisdom (*prajnaparamita*). Of the life components, it relates to consciousness. The power of Pad is epitomised by Buddha Aksobya, who presides over the eastern quarter. Reciting Pad purifies the mind of imprints left by past confusion and also of its potential consequences: rebirth as an animal.

Me is related to the lotus family of Buddhas and to the primordial wisdom of discernment associated with it. This is the enlightened counterpart of greed and the appropriate area of the six perfect practices to be cultivated to overcome it is uncompromising generosity. Of the life components, it relates to the cognitive process. The power of Me is epitomised by Buddha Amitabha who presides over the western quarter. Reciting Me purifies the mind of imprints left by past greed and also of its potential consequences: rebirth as a wandering, deprived spirit.

Hung is related to the all the Buddha families combined and to the mirror-like primordial wisdom. This is the enlightened counterpart of anger and the appropriate area of the six perfect practices to be cultivated to overcome it is meditation. It corresponds to the totality of the life components. The

power of Hung is epitomised by all the Buddhas throughout space. Reciting Hung purifies the mind of imprints left by past anger and also of its potential consequences: rebirth in paranoid, hellish states.