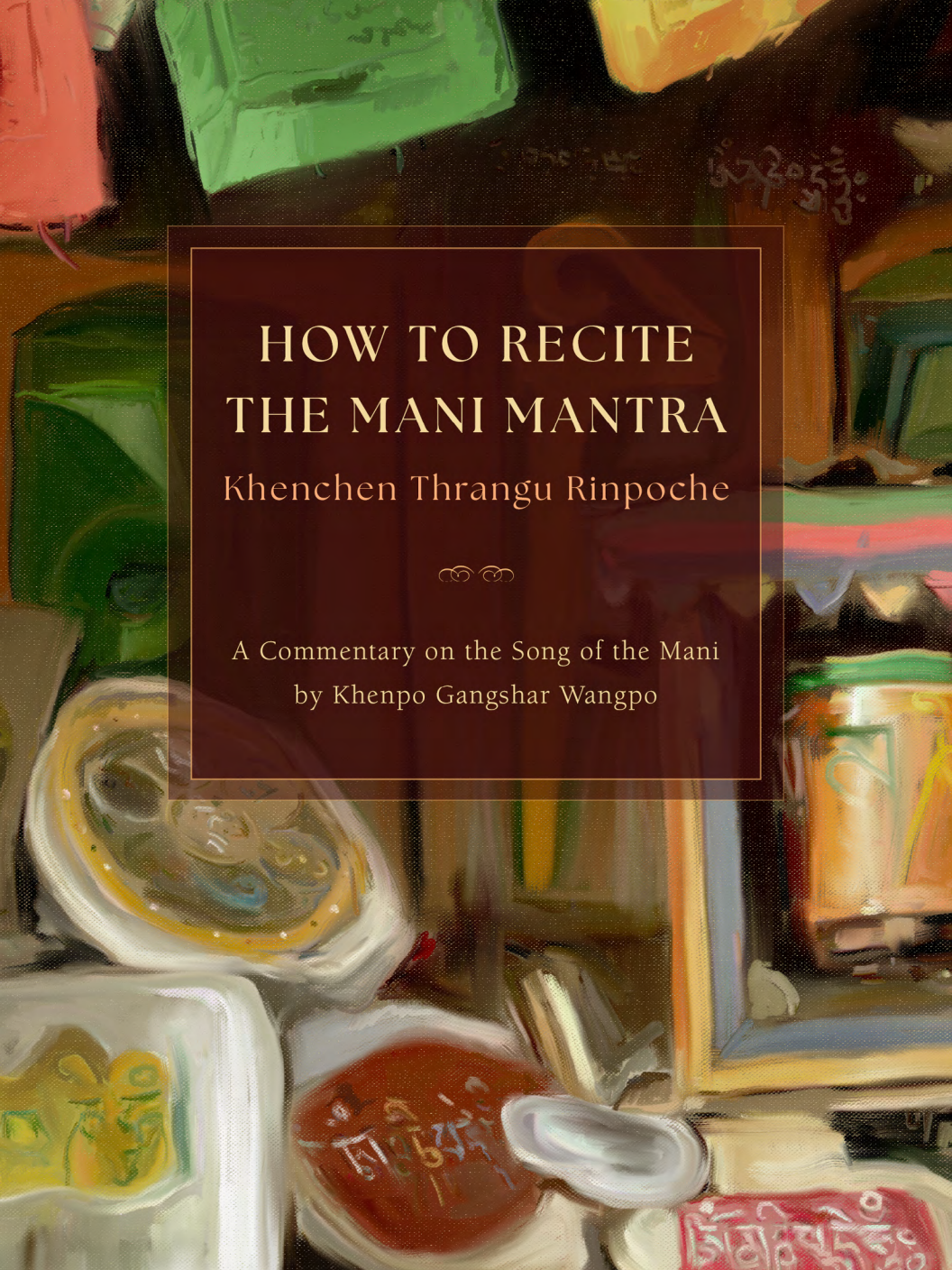




HOW TO RECITE THE MANI MANTRA

Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche



A Commentary on the Song of the Mani
by Khenpo Gangshar Wangpo

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THRANGU DHARMAKARA

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When the dharma first spread in Tibet, it was taught that there was a great necessity for developing love and compassion. For that reason, many people began to do the practice of Avalokiteshvara, who is the essence of the compassionate mind of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and to recite the OM MANI PADME HŪM mantra. There is also the sutra about Avalokiteshvara that was placed in a chest and translated. From the very beginning of the spread of the dharma in Tibet, the Tibetan people have recited the Mani mantra quite a bit.

Some people who recite the Mani mantra understand its meaning. They know that they should supplicate Avalokiteshvara and meditate upon the antidotes for the six afflictions, and they recite the Mani mantra with this understanding. But some people have no one to tell them what to do, and they just recite the mantra as an empty thing in their mouths. They don't know that it is a method to reduce the afflictions; they don't try to

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give rise to a pure motivation. They only know that they are supposed to have faith and devotion in Avalokiteshvara, and they recite OM MANI PADME HŪM thinking it will probably help them. Is there any benefit in reciting the Mani mantra in this way? There is some benefit. However, if you understand how to use this mantra as an antidote for the afflictions, then it becomes extremely beneficial and very fortunate.

Khenpo Gangshar Rinpoche, a great master and siddha of modern times, wrote a song called “Song of the Mani” which helps us think about the defects of samsara and about karma, cause, and effect. Because of Khenpo Gangshar’s compassionate aspirations, his mind instructions are particularly beneficial and powerful. In particular, because of his activity and his lineage, these teachings are like the root from which the dharma has grown to spread in the West. I am sure that this is part of Khenpo Gangshar’s great blessing and his compassionate aspiration. That is why this dharma is especially helpful for practitioners in the West.

I myself do not have any great compassion or resolve, nor any blessings or powers, but I had the extremely good fortune of actually meeting Khenpo Gangshar and hearing these instructions directly from him, and this was a wonderful opportunity for ME. Khenpo Gangshar was an excellent lama,

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and because of his compassion and blessings, I believe this teaching will benefit practitioners.

We need to recite the OM MAṆI PADME HŪM mantra, but we need to be very careful. As we recite it with our speech, our minds need to be in harmony with it. We need to have a good, kind heart. If we recite the mantra without understanding why, without a pure motivation, when we are under the control of the afflictions, then it is almost pointless. But if we recite the mantra with the understanding that the six syllables of the mantra are the antidotes for the six afflictions, then it has great purpose and great benefit.

The song begins:

These days sentient beings with negative karma
Are not taming the afflictions in their minds.
Though they recite the syllable OM,
Their minds fall under the power of pride—it makes
you want to weep.
The gods' suffering of dying and falling—how
miserable!
But even if one doesn't recite OM,
A mind without pride is the essence of OM.

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Khenpo Gangshar is saying that people try to practice the dharma, yet they don't know the main point of the dharma, and so they recite the six syllables of the Mani mantra without knowing what they are. The first of the six syllables of OM MAṆI PADME HŪṂ is the syllable OM. The meaning of OM is that we need to conquer the pride in our minds. Yet people recite the syllable OM without knowing that OM is actually the antidote for the affliction of pride. Not knowing this, they fall under the power of pride and create a lot of negative karma. This makes you want to cry. Because they are acting on pride, they will be reborn in the future in the realm of the gods, where they will experience death and downfall, and so they are worthy of our compassion. Of course, beings who are born in the realm of the gods do experience temporary pleasure, but eventually they have the extremely great suffering of dying and falling. If we come under the power of pride as we recite the syllable OM, we are not really reaching the essence of the syllable OM, and we will not receive the full benefit of the mantra. Of course, it will have some benefit, as it is a very powerful mantra, a secret mantra, but reciting the mantra with a prideful mind is not what we should do. Even if we are not saying the syllable OM, if our minds can

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become free of pride, calm, peaceful, and gentle, that is the essence of the syllable OM.

Though they recite the syllable MA,
Their minds fall under the power of envy—it makes
you want to weep.
The demigods' suffering of fighting and quarrelling—
how miserable!
But even if one doesn't recite MA,
A mind without envy is the essence of MA.

The second of the six syllables is MA, and its essence is the antidote to envy. If we recite the syllable MA with envy or competitiveness in our minds, there is no benefit at all. The reason is that envy or competitiveness is the cause of rebirth in the realm of the demigods, who experience the suffering of quarreling and fighting. However, even when we are not reciting the syllable MA, if we tame and eliminate the envy and competitiveness from our minds, this is the essence of MA. It is necessary and very beneficial to use our mindfulness and awareness to tame our jealousy and competitiveness.

Though they recite the syllable NI,
Their minds fall under the power of desire—it makes
you want to weep.

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The suffering of human dissatisfaction—how miserable!
But even if one doesn't recite 𑖦𑖩,
A mind without desire is the essence of 𑖦𑖩.

The third syllable of the mantra is 𑖦𑖩. What is the meaning of 𑖦𑖩? In terms of cause, it is the antidote for the affliction of desire; in terms of result, if we give up desire, we will not need to experience the birth, aging, sickness, and death of the human realm. In the human realm, we have the particular sufferings of busyness and deprivation. We have so many things to do—we get very busy in the world, and then our wishes are not satisfied and we feel deprived. So that we don't do this, there is the syllable 𑖦𑖩, which is the antidote for desire. But if we do not know that the syllable 𑖦𑖩 can remove the cause for experiencing birth, aging, sickness, and death, then reciting 𑖦𑖩 does not work as an antidote. If, as we recite it, our desires grow stronger and stronger, there is not much benefit to reciting it. If we understand as we recite the syllable 𑖦𑖩 that it is the antidote for the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness, and death in the human realm, this is good. But even if we don't recite it, if we do what we can to stop ourselves from chasing after our desires, to decrease our desires, to recognize them, to endeavor in the methods to tame our desires, this is the essence of the syllable 𑖦𑖩.

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Though they recite the syllable PAD,
Their minds fall under the power of ignorance—it
makes you want to weep.
The suffering of animals' stupidity—how miserable!
But even if one doesn't recite PAD,
A mind without ignorance is the essence of PAD.

The fourth of the six syllables is the syllable PAD, which can tame the affliction of delusion. We need to tame delusion because if it increases, this will lead to rebirth as an animal, where we will experience the sufferings of stupidity and dullness. We recite the syllable PAD to tame the delusion within our being so that we will not experience that suffering. Yet many people do not understand this, and so as they recite PAD, they follow after their delusion. This is something that just makes you want to cry. If we do not apply ourselves to methods for taming our delusion, we will be reborn as animals. As animals not only will we experience the suffering of dullness and stupidity, but we will have no opportunity to practice dharma. We will be overcome by our afflictions and suffer greatly. If we recite the syllable PAD, that is good. But even when we are not reciting the syllable PAD, if we apply ourselves to methods to tame the delusions so that they do not increase, if we are mindful and

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aware of what we are doing, this is the essence of the syllable PAD and is extremely important.

Though they recite the syllable ME,
Their minds fall under the power of stinginess—it
makes you want to weep.
The hungry ghosts' suffering of hunger—how
miserable!
But even if one doesn't recite ME,
A mind without stinginess is the essence of ME.

The fifth of the six syllables is the syllable ME. Why do we say the syllable ME? It is the remedy that can help suppress the affliction of stinginess. The result of decreasing our stinginess is that we will not need to experience birth in the realm of the hungry ghosts and the sufferings of hunger and thirst. But many people recite the syllable ME without understanding that it is the antidote for stinginess. Because they don't understand that, they will not receive much benefit from their recitation. As they recite it, their stinginess grows stronger and stronger, and this is a pitiable situation that makes you want to cry. They are very worthy of our compassion. Why? In the future they will be reborn in the realm of the hungry ghosts and will experience great hunger and thirst. If we recite the syllable

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ME, that is good, but even when we are not reciting ME, if our minds are not overcome by stinginess and we can apply mindfulness and awareness to decrease our stinginess, this is the essence of the syllable ME.

Though they recite the syllable HŪṂ,
Their minds fall under the power of anger—it makes
you want to weep.
The hell-beings' suffering of heat and cold—how
miserable!
But even if one doesn't recite HŪṂ,
A mind without anger is the essence of HŪṂ.

The sixth syllable is HŪṂ. What is the purpose of reciting HŪṂ? We need to tame the hatred and anger within our minds because hatred leads to rebirth in the hell realm, where we experience all the sufferings of heat and cold. This is a very frightful situation, and so that we do not have to experience that result, we need to eliminate the cause, which is hatred, and that is why we recite the syllable HŪṂ. Even when we are not saying HŪṂ, if there is no hatred in our minds, this is the essence of the syllable HŪṂ. It is extremely important to apply mindfulness and awareness so that we are not overcome by the affliction of hatred and we can decrease and eliminate it.

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We say the six syllables of the mantra OM MAṆI PADME HŪṂ as the antidotes for the six afflictions in order to free ourselves from the six classes of samsara. It is very important to think about this as we recite the six syllables. Whether we are reciting the six syllables OM MAṆI PADME HŪṂ or some other essence mantra, we need to try to quell the afflictions within our minds.

Though they recite the syllable HRĪḤ,
Sentient beings are bound up in suffering—it makes
you want to weep.
Lacking compassion, one group fights with another.
Experiencing the full ripening of negative karma—how
miserable!
But even if one doesn't recite HRĪḤ,
When compassion arises in the mind,
It is the intent of noble Avalokiteshvara.

OM MAṆI PADME HŪṂ is a six-syllable mantra, but sometimes it is extended into a seven-syllable mantra with the addition of the final syllable HRĪḤ, which is the essence of the compassionate mind of Avalokiteshvara. The seven-syllable mantra is OM MAṆI PADME HŪṂ HRĪḤ. When we say the syllable HRĪḤ, it's because we need to overcome the

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six afflictions and to make sure that we do not experience the six types of suffering. The main essence of this is the essence of the compassionate mind of Avalokiteshvara, which is the syllable $HR\bar{I}\dot{H}$. Having this compassion in our hearts for all sentient beings is the essence of the syllable $HR\bar{I}\dot{H}$, so we need to remember compassion when we recite $HR\bar{I}\dot{H}$. But if we recite the syllable $HR\bar{I}\dot{H}$ yet bring suffering to sentient beings—if we kill them, beat them, get into fights, and cause strife—this makes you want to cry. If we lack compassion as we say the syllable $HR\bar{I}\dot{H}$, then we get angry, we get jealous, we get prideful. This leads to fighting and conflict between people, which leads us to perform bad actions. We then experience the suffering that is the full ripening of those actions. This is really a frightful situation. But even when we are not saying the syllable $HR\bar{I}\dot{H}$, if in our minds we have compassion that thinks about all sentient beings, this is the essence of $HR\bar{I}\dot{H}$ and the intent of Avalokiteshvara. This is the essence of the six-syllable mantra. Meditating on compassion in this way is extremely important.

May all fortunate beings
Not turn the outer wheel of the five poisons
But always turn the inner wheel of the five wisdoms.

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When we do dharma practice, we often visualize a mantra garland or mantra wheel that spins. This is a method for transforming the five afflictions into the five wisdoms, and our minds need to be tamed and undistracted as we do this. As we do this, we should not turn the external wheel of the afflictions: we should not have greed, hatred, delusion, pride, and so forth spinning one after the other. Instead, we need to remember as we recite the mantra and visualize the wheel spinning inside that this is the antidote for the afflictions.

Sometimes people spin prayer wheels. What is the reason for using a prayer wheel? Spinning a prayer wheel is also a way to transform the five afflictions into the five wisdoms. Normally we spin the wheel of the afflictions: we go from jealousy to pride, from pride to anger, from anger to jealousy, and so forth. If on the outside we are turning our prayer wheel while on the inside we are turning the wheel of the afflictions, there is no benefit to this at all.

We turn the prayer wheel to develop the five wisdoms. When hatred arises, we need to recognize it and to transform it within our samadhi. If we do that, then the hatred can be transformed into mirrorlike wisdom. When desire arises, it can be transformed into discerning wisdom. When delusion arises, it can be transformed into the dharmadhatu wisdom,

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and so forth. To transform the afflictions into the essence of the five wisdoms, we need to apply the antidotes and transform them into the five wisdoms. If we can do that, then turning the prayer wheel is meaningful.

May they not count with the outer black mala of the
afflictions
But always count with the inner vajra mala of
nonthought.

Similarly, when we recite mantras, we use a rosary, or mala. We do this to tame our minds. As Khenpo Gangshar says, we should not use the mala of the afflictions, going from hatred to desire to delusion and so forth. Internally, we need to go through the mala of the meditation on emptiness. As we recite and use the mala, we need to be meditating on emptiness and compassion. Otherwise, if we are developing the afflictions—if we have feelings of hatred or jealousy as we recite the mantra—there is no benefit to using the mala. We need to use mindfulness, awareness, and carefulness with our malas and to remember that this is a method for taming the afflictions.

While they turn the outer, physical wheel,
They are turning the inner wheel of distraction.

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Next is a discussion of how we need to eliminate the things that we need to eliminate. As we turn a prayer wheel with our bodies, we turn the wheel of distraction inside with our minds. As we turn the external wheel, at the same time we need to try not to be distracted by all the coarse thoughts in our minds. We need to have a peaceful mind, one that is not overcome with the afflictions. Otherwise, if we are turning the wheel with our body, but inside we have all kinds of thoughts and distractions turning, then we will go from one distraction to the next to the next, and this will not bring us much benefit. As we turn the wheel with the body, we need to remember not to let ourselves be overcome by afflictions and distractions.

While outwardly they count with the physical mala,
Inwardly they are counting with the mala of negative
thoughts.

The song continues, as we use the mala outside with our body, on the inside with our mind we turn the mala of evil thoughts. This is not what we should do. As we use the mala on the outside, we should also remember that on the inside we need to be loving, compassionate, faithful, and devoted. On the other hand, when we sit and count with our mala,

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if we have one evil thought after another with each bead we count, that's not good. We need to be extremely careful.

It is easy to misunderstand the words of this song. When you read the song, you might think that it's saying that we don't really need to recite the OM MANI PADME HŪM mantra, that there's no reason to recite it, or even that we shouldn't recite it. But that is not what the song is saying. We do need to recite the OM MANI PADME HŪM mantra. But it is very important that as we recite it, we tame these six afflictions within our minds. This is why Khenpo Gangshar wrote this song.

Song of the Mani

by Khenpo Gangshar Wangpo

OM MANI PADME HŪM HRĪH

These days sentient beings with negative karma
Are not taming the afflictions in their minds.
Though they recite the syllable OM,
Their minds fall under the power of pride—it makes
you want to weep.
The gods' suffering of dying and falling—how
miserable!
But even if one doesn't recite OM,
A mind without pride is the essence of OM.
Though they recite the syllable MA,
Their minds fall under the power of envy—it makes
you want to weep.

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The demigods' suffering of fighting and quarrelling—
how miserable!

But even if one doesn't recite MA,
A mind without envy is the essence of MA.

Though they recite the syllable NI,
Their minds fall under the power of desire—it makes
you want to weep.

The suffering of human dissatisfaction—how miserable!
But even if one doesn't recite NI,
A mind without desire is the essence of NI.

Though they recite the syllable PAD,
Their minds fall under the power of ignorance—it
makes you want to weep.

The suffering of animals' stupidity—how miserable!
But even if one doesn't recite PAD,
A mind without ignorance is the essence of PAD.

Though they recite the syllable ME,
Their minds fall under the power of stinginess—it
makes you want to weep.

The hungry ghosts' suffering of hunger—how
miserable!

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But even if one doesn't recite ME,
A mind without stinginess is the essence of ME.

Though they recite the syllable HŪṂ,
Their minds fall under the power of anger—it makes
you want to weep.
The hell-beings' suffering of heat and cold—how
miserable!

But even if one doesn't recite HŪṂ,
A mind without anger is the essence of HŪṂ.

Though they recite the syllable HRĪḤ,
Sentient beings are bound up in suffering—it makes
you want to weep.
Lacking compassion, one group fights with another.
Experiencing the full ripening of negative karma—how
miserable!

But even if one doesn't recite HRĪḤ,
When compassion arises in the mind,
It is the intent of noble Avalokiteshvara.

May all fortunate beings
Not turn the outer wheel of the five poisons
But always turn the inner wheel of the five wisdoms.

Song of the Mani

May they not count with the outer black mala of the
afflictions

But always count with the inner vajra mala of
nonthought.

While they turn the outer, physical wheel,
They are turning the inner wheel of distraction.

While outwardly they count with the physical mala,
Inwardly they are counting with the mala of negative
thoughts.

Having abandoned the inner vajra temple,

They build external temples,

Binding themselves to suffering

And making it hard to aspire to purify the obscuration
of karma—the enemy.

Instead of externally carving letters of attachment and
aversion,

Internally carve the meaning of the six syllables of the
six wisdoms

Into the hard rock of ego-clinging.

May beings not cycle in the six realms! May they attain
buddhahood!

The Benefits of the Six-Syllable Mantra, the Essence of Noble Avalokiteshvara

The noble and supreme Avalokiteshvara is the essence of the great compassion of all the buddhas. Therefore, reciting the six-syllable mantra of Avalokiteshvara develops love and compassion and decreases hatred and envy. Accordingly, happiness, well-being, and various good qualities increase. Furthermore, because the thousand-armed, thousand-eyed noble Avalokiteshvara embodies the thousand buddhas of the fortunate eon, the six syllables bestow the blessings of the thousand buddhas. Reciting the six syllables or even hearing their sounds, seeing their letters, or wearing them around your neck brings blessings and protection from obstacles. Taking Mani pills that have been blessed with the six syllables also bestows blessings and pacifies illness and harmful spirits. These are the general benefits of the mantra; the specific qualities of each of the six syllables are shown in the table.

The Benefits of the Six-Syllable Mantra

Because the six-syllable mantra possesses exceptional benefits, it is appropriate either to recite it silently or to do vajra recitation with a melody. Endeavoring in the practice of the six syllables of Avalokiteshvara by reciting tens of millions or hundreds of millions of mantras, listening to the sounds of the six syllables, and causing others to hear them is extremely important.

This was written by Khenchen Karma Lodrö Ringluk Mawe Senge, Kyabje Thrangu Rinpoche. May goodness and virtue flourish!

	Defilement pacified	Birth from which one is liberated	Wisdom attained	Buddha aspect	Pure land	Activity accomplished
OM	pride	god	equality	Ratnasambhava	the Glorious	enrichment
MA	envy	demigod	accomplishment	Amoghasiddhi	Perfect Activity	destruction
NI	desire	human	five wisdoms	Vajradhara	Dharmakaya	supreme
PAD	delusion	animal	dharmadhatu	Vairochana	Akanishta	ordinary
ME	stinginess	hungry ghost	discernment	Amitabha	Sukhavati	magnetizing
HŪM	hatred	hell-being	mirrorlike	Akshobhya	Abhirati	pacification

About Khenpo Gangshar Wangpo Rinpoche

Born in Eastern Tibet in 1925, Khenpo Gangshar Wangpo of Shechen Monastery was a great scholar and meditation master, a principal teacher of Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, and many other great lamas. An outstanding student, he received the title of Khenpo at a very young age.

In late 1956 Khenpo Gangshar went to Surmang Monastery to start a shedra (monastic college) with Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. At that time, due to the rapidly deteriorating situation in Eastern Tibet, Khenpo Gangshar radically changed his teaching style. He gave the general teachings of Buddhism, as well as extremely profound meditation instructions that had previously been taught only to the monastic elite, to anyone—monastic or lay, male or female. He encouraged hermits who had taken lifelong vows to remain in seclusion

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to reenter ordinary life and transmit what they had learned and realized. Realizing the terrible difficulties and suffering that lay ahead, he wished to help those people who would soon be engulfed in turmoil by giving them the instructions on how to liberate their minds.

Although he himself had prophesied the Chinese takeover of his homeland, Khenpo Gangshar did not leave Tibet. He was imprisoned and, according to his surviving family, he died in prison in 1961.

Credits



THRANGU DHARMAKARA

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Translation of “Song of the Mani” and “The Benefits of the Six-Syllable
Mantra”: Steve Gilbert and Tracy Davis

eBook cover and layout: Beata Tashi Drolkar

First eBook edition: July 2026, dharmaebooks.org



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