

Explanation of the Emptiness Mantra

OM SWABHAWA SHUDDHA SARWA DHARMA SAWBHAWA SHUDDHO HANG

This mantra is in the Sanskrit language, and translates as “The nature of all phenomena is pure – maintain that nature.”

* *OM* is the head of the mantra, and includes the purifying syllables OM, AH, and HUNG. Its recitation removes the obscurations of the three doors – the body, speech, and mind.

* *SWA* means itself.

* *BHAWA* means nature, nature of itself.

* *SHUDDHA* means pure. Together, this part of the mantra means naturally pure, without fabrication from beginningless time. In our study and practice, we are not trying to make something new. Rather the important thing is to understand how phenomena exist, how they manifest.

* *SARWA DHARMA* means all phenomena, all of samsara and nirvana.

* *SWABHAWA SHUDDHO HANG* means maintain that nature, maintain the nature of that purity.

This is the law of the universe and this is how we have to practice in order to realize it.

We say that we are dispelling confusion, studying and practicing in order to achieve the perfect state of enlightenment. This does not mean that we are creating the perfection, we are not making something perfect. Rather, we are realizing what is already perfect. This purity was not created by the Buddha. It is the way of the nature of phenomena, its mode of abiding, the way it is. This is the actual goal of our study – to realize the nature of phenomena.

In the purity, there are two states – the conventional and the ultimate states. The conventional purity state consists of all phenomena; causes and conditions work distinctively without any mistake. The ultimate nature is the all-pervading nature of emptiness and wisdom. When we study, the explanation seems to be that there are two separate state but, of course, these are not two different entities. They are non-dual. When we don’t understand or realize this, it is called “confusion.” In *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, the first chapter mentions that the nature of samsara is emptiness, and its characteristic is confusion. Through this confusion, we suffer. The nature of nirvana is also emptiness, but its characteristic is dispelled confusion. Because the confusion is dispelled, there is no longer any suffering. So, in these very few words, this mantra explains the whole philosophy of the teachings.

To realize this philosophy, these teachings, we must study and practice. We have to go through the path. For example, if we are interested in a cup of tea, we have to make a fire one way or another. Whether it’s an electric fire or a wood fire, we have to make it in order to have a hot cup of tea. So similarly, we cannot get away from this. Therefore, always practicing without expectation becomes very important. So, briefly, this is the philosophy of the practice.

*As taught by Khenchen Konchog Gyaltsen, unknown date or place.
Transcribed and edited by Khenmo Trinlay.*