

## Meditations in Mongolia: Promoting Peace Compassion & Tolerance with the Kalachakra, Wheel of Time

In Mongolia as in other regions of Central Asia a diverse set of Buddhist traditions have been cultivated by the Buddhist faithful. Among these traditions, perhaps some of the most important customs are those associated with Tibetan Tantric Buddhism, and more specifically, a particular symbol known as the "Kalachakra, Wheel of Time". The "Kalachakra" "Wheel of Time" is a "Mandala"; a Buddhist symbol that has a round, perfectly shaped symmetrical form. It is divided into four separate sections; each of them contributing to a single unitary shape. Recognized in many regions throughout much of the world today, the "Mandala", first appeared as a religious representation of Hindu, and afterward Buddhist conceptions of the cosmos. As a complex composite of both philosophical and religious belief, the "Mandala" is a representation of conceptions of the universe that have existed for millenia. Having appeared in Sanskrit the classical script of India and incorporated into the teachings of Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, the lexis of the term provides an opportunity for people to examine the realities of life that transcend ordinary notions of time and space. These notions, both time and space, as esoteric as they may be, are in fact embedded in the term "Mandala" as it contains two syllables, "manda" meaning essence and "la" meaning container. It is however true that the precise meaning of the term may lie somewhere beyond mere literal translations of the written word. English translations of the term have in fact included such key phrases as "Container of Essence" and perhaps more aptly, "Sphere of Essence". But it is arguable that neither has captured the deep meaning of the word. Understanding the Meaning in the Word When we reflect upon the meaning of the term, both literal and figurative, for many of us, it may certainly sound quite mysterious. And for some people who have had no previous exposure to the word at all, a wide range of images both good and bad could quite possibly be called to mind. But for those willing to expend only a little bit of effort and consider the significance of the word itself, the term could quite possibly, open up a whole new world just waiting to be explored. In an assessment of the meaning of the word and its relation to self exploration and the expansion of human consciousness, M. Gankhuyag, a lama at Ulaanbaatar's Gandan monastery says "the Kalachakra, Wheel of Time, a "Mandala", has long been associated with the legendary land of Shambala. Often described as a mythical place in a region surrounded by majestic snow covered mountains, Shambala is a pure land: a place where sentient beings travel upon a beautiful path. It is a great road to both peace and enlightenment". As a means to facilitate this journey, the "Kalachakra", "Wheel of Time" has been utilized by Mongolian and Tibetan Buddhists to assist people to find their own unique spiritual path. In a set of rituals, some of which were purportedly performed by the Lord Buddha himself, Mongolian Buddhists continue to engage in a number of activities that include chants, dance, and perhaps most interesting meditations upon fire. In these sacred fire rituals, rarely known to individuals outside of Mongolian and Tibetan circles, more than twenty types of material including flesh, butter, seeds, and wood are offered to venerable deities who exist within the flames of a fire. The purpose of these activities are not only to please the gods, they increase the probability of a desirable rebirth and in some cases even release the individual from the ceaseless cycle of painful human existence. This is of course a fundamental objective of the Buddhist faith and all of its teachings. And while each of these rituals have been devised to bring people closer to a true state of enlightenment, the fire meditations provide people with a unique opportunity to begin to understand key concepts at the heart of Buddhist thought. And while these ideas include a vast number of concepts perhaps none of them are more important than the Buddhist principles of impermanence and emptiness. Both of these concepts timeless precepts which in many instances continue to have a very important impact upon the psychology of people in the world's most populous regions were no doubt, important elements in the consciousness of the Buddha. And they have subsequently become an important part of the Buddhist faith. They are an integral part of the "Dharma", the body of Buddhist thought, and the "Sangha", the entire Buddhist community. Pondering the Word and Image When we focus upon the meaning of space and time and its relation to the "Mandala", we find that the concepts of impermanence and emptiness are well represented. These concepts are not only included in the literal meaning of the word. They are also manifest in the physical representation of the image, especially the "Kalachakra", "Wheel of Time". And while the meaning of the word, "Mandala", may provide individuals seeking spiritual guidance with an opportunity to begin to understand some of the finer points of Buddhist thought, the physical representation of the image provides a tangible concrete form, to provide interested people with an opportunity to begin to absorb a set of abstract ideas that could otherwise be quite difficult to comprehend. To illustrate this point it can be said that the "Kalachakra" may be divided into three distinct layers of meaning. Each layer is joined to form an integrated image that represents the relationship between all things, particularly the relationship between the universe, the individual, and the mind. Unraveling an Ancient Multilayered Lexis As a means to express the relationship between the universe, the individual and the mind, the outer layer of a "Kalachakra" typically represents the whole human environment complete with depictions of the natural elements the earth, wind, water and fire. And it may even include a representation of Mount Meru. Mount Meru, a symbol in Tibetan mythology, is a place which represents the center of the universe, a dwelling place of gods. It also represents the stillness of the human mind; a symbol of self cultivation for those who have chosen the Buddhist path. The inner layer of the "Kalachakra", in contrast, represents the existence of humans within their native surroundings. The integration of these two layers represents a natural reciprocity that exists between both the organic and inorganic elements in the environment, the larger community and individual people. Individuals choosing to utilize the "Kalachakra", to more fully understand the Buddhist path, may come to realize the relationship between the natural elements, the perception of self, and the human mind. This is a natural state of progression that involves a profound course on the development of the human mind and ultimately, and more importantly the human soul. The third layer of meaning by comparison, also known as the "other Kalachakra" represents the teaching of the "Dharma". This layer represents the natural integration of their inner and outer layer, which culminates in a realization of the teachings of the Buddha that are so beautifully illustrated within the context of this sacred symbol. It no doubt represents the natural unity of the universe. In "the other Kalachakra", some have referred to this integrative process with its natural ebb and flow, as the rhythm of time. This rhythmic flow as represented by the slow moving currents of the wind and rain, in concert with the natural movement of the varied elements of the universe, could quite possibly, even be referred to as a sacred symphony of sound. Opportunities to Expand Human

ConsciousnessWhen we think of the "Kalachakra", "Wheel of Time", the great mystery of human life with all of its hidden secrets may upon further consideration become an active element in the consciousness of any cultivated mind. In the teachings of the Dalai Lama, the rituals associated with the "Kalachakra" have become an important part of his efforts to promote the realization of people who are seeking spiritual development across wide regions of the Asian continent and throughout the world as a whole. In India, Tibet and Mongolia, for example, His Holiness has performed a number of "Kalachakra" ceremonies as a rite of initiation to grant permission to Buddhist practitioners to begin to practice the "Kalachakra Tantra". These rituals are performed to provide blessings and good fortune to all of the people who inhabit the environment in which the sacred ceremony is performed. The practice of the "Tantra", a word that may mean Hindu or Buddhist scripture, or in its more literal form, "stream of continuity" is a process whereby members of the "Sangha" attempt to free people from human suffering as part of their ongoing quest for spiritual enlightenment. First performed by the Dalai Lama in the fifth decade of the twentieth century shortly after the Chinese occupation of Tibet, the "Kalachakra" ritual has purportedly been cloaked in a number of misconceptions that have yet to be fully described. As a means to dispel any misunderstandings about the nature and significance of the symbol or any rituals associated with its existence, His Holiness has performed a number of rituals often utilizing the legendary sand "Mandala". In this sacred ritual monks participating in the ceremony construct an ethereal "Kalachakra". It is made from fine grains of sand. And after bearing witness to the natural beauty of the symbol, and upon pondering the profound nature of its design, the "Kalachakra" is subsequently crushed. The grains of sand from the "Kalachakra" are then shared among members of the entire community in a ritual designed to reinforce the teachings of the Buddha and promote the health and well being of the entire "Sangha". These rituals are performed to promote feelings of happiness and goodwill, and most importantly to promote enlightenment for those seeking the Buddhist path. Implications for Human Thought and Development In an exhortation of the merits of the "Dharma" that are reflected in the Kalachakra ceremonies, the Dalai Lama has encouraged members of the "Sangha" to embrace the opportunities that surround them as life as we know it will surely come to an end. According to His Holiness there are three fundamental principles that can help people to exercise their opportunities as they exist here on earth. These include the realization of the opportunities our human existence affords us, an appreciation of the rarity of these opportunities, and a realization of the great significance of these opportunities. Once we have become inspired to exercise such options we can then attempt to attain the three primary objectives of the "Dharma". They include the attainment of a higher rebirth, the attainment of liberation from cyclic existence, and the attainment of full enlightenment. From a Buddhist perspective it is possible to say that enlightenment often becomes possible only with a fundamental transformation of the human mind. If we look to examples of enlightened people we find that the cultivation of such a condition is often contingent upon the realization that human existence is dependent upon a number of conditions and entities both organic and inorganic. Therefore as it is virtually impossible for an individual to exist as a discrete entity, the notion of an independent self is not a reality but merely an illusion. As we begin to acknowledge the implications of this reality enlightened individuals often begin to see the natural unity of the universe. Religious piety is likely to increase. And feelings of compassion, peace and tolerance are likely to flow. Developing a New Mongolian Psychology When we consider the collective consciousness of the Mongolian people however we must begin to come to terms with the violent assault upon Buddhist beliefs that occurred during much of the twentieth century. Beginning shortly after the People's Revolution, Soviet political repression had a major effect upon the thought processes of the Mongolian people and continued for many decades. Yet the fate of Mongolian monks and members of the "Sangha" was by comparison even much worse. Many monks perished and members of the Mongolian lamasery were left to cower in the corner. Nothing could have been more depressing. In more than a decade however, prospects for the Mongolian "Sangha" have appeared much brighter. The Gandan Monastery has been resurrected. And large numbers of people are free to worship in a climate that is almost completely open. The benefits of this newfound freedom are quite obvious. If we consider the contemporary consciousness of the Mongolian people we find that more and more people are returning to their religious roots. Children are becoming more familiar with the "Dharma". And while their still may be a long way to go, a more natural form of selflessness consistent with the teachings of the Buddha has come increasingly into play. A Modern Day Consciousness Based upon Buddhist Thought When we consider the developments in Buddhist thought during the last decade we can experience a new form of contentment that is strong and deep. As children become more familiar with the "Dharma" our heritage and culture begins to bloom. Buddhist values like Peace, Compassion and Tolerance increasingly take root. The benefits of such a state of mind are completely clear. And as we consider the prospects for the spread of our faith we should feel heartened. A new era is upon us. We should exercise the opportunities that now exist. We feel fortunate. It is now once again a very good time to be a Buddhist in Mongolia. For this we are happy and grateful. We will continue to ponder the natural mysteries that are a part of our faith. And we will continue to spread the teachings of the Buddha so Peace and Enlightenment will continue to spread throughout the land. It is with this sentiment that we will continue to light the lamp that shines so brightly upon the Buddhist path. Source: Illuminating the path to Enlightenment, Tenzin Gyatso, His Holiness, The Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet, Thubtin Dhargye Ling publications (2002). \* The Mongolian terms for Kalachakra are Dukhuin Khor and Morgoliin Khurd.

## About the Author

Allows you to combine subjects throughout the three or four years of your degree programme. Offers programme information, subject areas, entry requirements.

Source: <http://www.productsherbal.com>