



Connecting with the Buddhas through Chanting the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta

Given the necessity of daily meditation practice, why then should we Buddhists take the time to chant the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta at least once a day?

The answer lies in the sutta. Koṇḍhañña became Enlightened while he was listening to the Buddha's first sermon. It is not just a bunch of Pali words strung together; otherwise, this debut sutta would not have been the one and only discourse that all the Buddhas delivered in common. It is a garland of holy verses that has the power to cleanse and calm your mind as you chant the sutta with your mind being fully present with the Buddha.

If you chant the sutta with respect and undivided attention (i.e. with your mind being fully present with the Buddha or his teachings as opposed to being absent-minded), you will experience soothing serenity and deepening sense of stillness. As the chanting continues, your mind is being cleansed, calmed and brought to a meditative state. Many who chant the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta with such total absorption that they become one with the sutta have reported experiencing the same inside phenomena that they do when they meditate – sometimes even more so. Their minds are brought to stillness even without them trying.

As you chant the sutta with total absorption, you are transmitting a vibrational energy that allows you to connect with all Buddhas. This energy does not come from you but is activated by you through the chanting of the sutta that all the Buddhas delivered. That is why when you emotionally become one with the sutta, you also emotionally become one with the Buddhas. And, that is why chanting the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta is such an effective warm-up to bring your mind to a meditative state before you begin a sit-down meditation. And, if you chant the sutta with your eyes closed so as to meditate at the same time, that chanting will be even more powerful.



Tips for chanting the sutta with total absorption:

- 1) Breathe in deeply and then slowly breathe out. Repeat such breathing a few times. Let go of all your worries, problems and responsibilities just for now. Your mind has been carrying too much for too long. It's time to give your mind a rest from thinking. Relax all your muscles. These are basically the same things that you do to prime your mind before meditation.
- 2) Chant with respect as if you are having an audience with the Buddhas.
- 3) Emotionally connect with the Buddhas by one of three ways that suits you the best:

a) Recall one or more virtues of the Buddha such as his unconditional love or mettā.

While a round of chanting takes less than 20 minutes, it took Gautama Buddha more than 20 asaṃkhyeyas before he could give us this sutta that led to the birth of Buddhism. The former bodhisattva had sacrificed his life, physical organs, flesh, blood, wealth, power, and many other things countless of times. This alone is enough to prove that no one would sacrifice for us and love us as much as the Buddha. He owes us nothing, and his giving to us is unconditional.

Although the five ascetics abandoned him when he stopped practicing self-mortification and did not initially welcome his post-Enlightenment visit, the Buddha did not abandon them. Like a river that does not have water for itself but for others, he freely shared the Dhamma with everyone in the hope that they too would succeed in putting a permanent end to their suffering. The Blessed One wants nothing from us. He only wishes us lasting happiness, and thus shows us the way.

b) Reflect upon the Buddha's core teachings.

For those who find it difficult to stop thinking, this method will help release your mind from the tight grip of worldly thoughts. One of the lessons in the sutta is that people make themselves unhappy by clinging to ill feelings, hurtful memories, other people, places, power and possessions. When the mind is released from such gripping, it becomes relaxed. As you continue to chant the sutta, the melodic and meaningful verses will continue to relax, calm and cleanse your mind, bringing it closer and closer to a meditative state. By then, you are ready for a sit-down meditation.

c) Meditate while chanting the debut sutta.

This method is for people who can chant the sutta fluently from their memories. The way to do it is by chanting the sutta as if the sound comes from the center of the body rather than the head. Simply close your eyes softly as you do during meditation. As you chant, gently channel your attention towards the center of your body. During meditative chanting, you can choose to keep your mind blank. Alternatively, you can visualize a Buddha image, a cetiya (pagoda) or a crystal ball at the center of your body. With continued practice, meditating while chanting will become natural to you. As you do, not only you are chanting but also practicing the Middle Way meditation.



Benefits of Chanting the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta

To reap full benefits from the chanting, your mind needs to be fully present with Gautama Buddha or all Buddhas. Chanting the sutta with total absorption yields at least 22 benefits. These benefits also apply to the chanting of other verses that pertain to the Buddha and his teachings.

- 1) Connect with the Buddhas** – By chanting as if you are having an audience with the Buddhas, you are being connected with the most powerful source of purity, wisdom and unconditional love.
- 2) Plant Seeds of Virtue** – What you focus on you become. When you focus on one or more virtues of the Buddha while chanting the sutta, you plant seeds of these virtuous qualities in your conscious and subconscious minds. If you water them with focused attention every day, they will blossom in your mind and grow into your behavior.
- 3) Being Reminded that You Are Loved Unconditionally** - Chanting the sutta reminds you that there are people who love you enough to sacrifice their convenience, time, wealth, power, flesh and blood so that you have the blueprint for lasting happiness and freedom from

suffering. Their love is like the river, the moon and the sun that give equally to all without conditions and expectations. You might have heard that love causes pain but the Buddhas' kind of love never causes tears. Recalling this fact repeatedly will remind you to love yourself unconditionally as well.

4) Unclutter Your Mind - Chanting the sutta can help divert your attention from work, money and relationship problems to something much higher. Thinking about a problem all the time doesn't make it go away. In fact, doing so could make the perceived problem appear worse than it really is and cause unnecessary stress. The mind is wisest when it is still. When the mind is uncluttered – free from worry, fear, anger and attachment, etc. – a solution arises in the absence of thought.

5) De-stress – Chanting the sutta helps you de-stress and improve your mood. It gives you a break from the sights, sounds and stimulation of the material world. Its soothing sound can transport you into a spiritual space that is free from mental chatters. Several scientific studies show that chanting and meditation stimulate the brain's production of alpha waves which boost creativity, reduce depression and promote emotional serenity. They also stimulate the body's production of a happiness hormone called "serotonin," which makes you relaxed and feel good about yourself.

6) Stop Emotional Bleeding – Chanting the sutta will remind you of the truths about life; thus, making it easier for you to let go of unwise wanting, negative thoughts and toxic feelings. It will make it easier for you to accept and face the reality with peace instead of getting upset over that which cannot be controlled, changed or undone. Sometimes, we make ourselves unhappy by being attached to other people and possessions and by clinging to past experiences that entered our six senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, physical touch, and emotional touch). If you want to be happy, you have to be selective about what to keep in your mind. Let go of all junk. Keep only jewels.

7) Prime Your Mind before Meditation - We tend to think too many thoughts during the day that when we eventually have time for a sit-down meditation, we find it hard to stop thinking. Chanting can soothe and slow down the mind, bringing it to a meditative state or close to a meditative state.

8) Remind You of the Brevity of Life and the Impermanence of Things – Life is too short to be miserable. Even Gautama Buddha faced pressure from families and problems from unscrupulous people but he never let anything or anyone take away his purity, inner peace and happiness. While you cannot always control external events, you have full control over your inner peace. Both problems and pleasures arise and end. Except for Nibbāna, everything else is impermanent. The only place that is permanently free from problems is Nibbāna. Hence, a line in the sutta says "whatever is subject to origination is also subject to cessation". It helps to remind yourself that this too shall pass.

9) Heighten Mindfulness – Chanting the sutta raises your mental awareness so that you can catch yourself faster when a toxic thought or speck of irritation arises. You can then quickly snap out of it. By being more mindful of your thought, you can save yourself a lot of pain and stress as well as from unconsciously hurting other people's feelings. Chanting the sutta helps you keep guard of your thoughts and emotions so that you are in control of them rather than being controlled by them.

10) Being Reminded of Life-Changing Questions – Chanting the sutta will remind you to ask yourself questions that could change the course of your day and, as a result, your life. Examples: “Does what I’m about to do contribute to my long-term happiness or will it cause me pain in the future?”; “Did I do my best to practice mindfulness?” and “Did I do my best to be kind today?”

11) Improve Decision-Making Ability - The more you chant the sutta, the more you familiarize yourself with the Buddha’s core teachings. Provided that you understand the contents of the sutta in its entirety, familiarity through repetition will result in these teachings being imprinted into your subconscious mind. Because over 90% of your decisions are made by your subconscious mind, you are more likely to make decisions that are in line with the Buddha’s teachings than otherwise. Repetition helps because we human beings tend to be forgetful and unconsciously make ourselves unhappy every now and then. Chanting the sutta at least once a day will remind you to love yourself the right way; thus, saving yourself a lot of grief.

12) Turn Knowing into Doing – Meditative chanting is similar to meditation in the sense that it brings the mind towards stillness. In so doing, you are practicing the Buddha’s core teachings - which is the whole point of studying the Dhamma. The positive karma of purifying your mind will remain with you through the afterworld and rebirths, and no one can take it away. This virtuous asset will serve as a spiritual capital when you carry on your Middle Way journey in your next rebirth. You will be blessed with moral wisdom and the ability to distinguish right from wrong. Meditation will become easier to you the next time round, and you will attract virtuous people and favorable circumstances that lead you to the Buddha’s teachings and the Middle Way practice.

13) Bless Your Future – We design our destiny with every thought we think, every word we speak and every act we do. Chanting the sutta influences our day-to-day decisions. It reminds us to love ourselves, do the right thing and be compassionate to others. For example, we choose to forgive people instead of holding grudges or we replace angry thoughts with kind thoughts and empathy. In so doing, we create a happy future for ourselves. “Good luck” is in fact the result of one’s good karma. By following the Buddha’s teachings, we bless our future.

14) Create A Pleasant Vibe for Yourself and Your Environment – Everyone carries around a certain vibe that speaks of their core character or their current emotional state. Chanting the sutta will improve not only your personal vibe but also the vibe of your environment. The same room in your house will feel differently after you chant the sutta with total presence in that room everyday for seven consecutive days.

15) Boost Health and Healing – Scientific research studies show that chanting activates the body’s healing mechanism through its soothing vibrations. It promotes healing by lifting the emotional health of a psychosomatic patient. It can help reduce physical pain by shifting the patient’s attention from the illness to the Buddha and his teachings.

16) Beautify Your Body Cells – About two-thirds of our physical body is made up of water. Positive vibrational energies generated from wholesome thoughts and speeches such as chanting and speaking kind words can significantly improve the molecular structure of water in our body, according to Japanese researcher Masaru Emoto who is the author of internationally acclaimed books “The Hidden Messages in Water” and “Love Thyself”.

17) Win Genetic Jackpots – Nothing in life is accidental. There is a cause for every effect. Chanting produces a multitude of favorable karmic results. By chanting with respect for the Buddha and his teachings, we will be blessed with self-respect and respect from others. Regular chanting of the sutta will result in better rebirths and better physical attributes. We will be blessed with healthy and beautiful physical organs that we use in the chanting - hands, mouth, lips, larynx, tongue, teeth and gum. On top of that, we will be blessed with a pleasant voice and great ears.

18) Draw Wholesome Forces – Like attracts like. The wholesome energy generated by the chanting of the sutta has the power to attract wholesome people and circumstances into your life and dispel those that are not. By chanting the sutta daily, you also help keep the Buddha's teachings alive, ensuring that virtue will continue to thrive in this world.

19) Dilute Punishment – Each of us carries around karmic time bombs. They are the ugly fruits of unwholesome acts that we did in our previous and present lifetimes. They follow us everywhere like shadows and are due to explode when we least expect so that we get an unexpected illness, loss and other forms of “bad luck”. Chanting the sutta frequently can help reduce the gravity of negative karmic retribution in proportion to the degree of your mental stillness and purity. Evil fruits that await to ripen will be diluted while good fruits from your wholesome acts will be hastened to ripen.

20) Nestle in Happiness – The Buddha is the greatest embodiment of pure, unconditional love. He and his teachings are the best emotional refuge that you can always rely on. That is why connecting with the Buddha and following his teachings to the letter will guarantee you with inner peace and happiness. There is no surer path to unconditional happiness than connecting with the Buddha within you (Body of Enlightenment) through the Middle Way meditation and meditative chanting.

21) Prioritize by Purpose - Chanting the sutta reminds you of what matters the most. You were not born to make a living. You were not born to own this or that or anybody. You were born to make your way towards eternal happiness also known as Nibbāna. Your present existence is simply part of a much bigger journey towards that ultimate goal. It is the journey that spans across lifetimes.

22) Closer to Enlightenment – Frequent meditative chanting brings you closer to Enlightenment and eventually Enlightenment because your mind is with those who have gone forth to Nibbāna.

