



AMERICAN MEDITATION SOCIETY

THE GONG MEDITATION

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The sound of the gong flows in your mind. It becomes a kind of mantra: the sound flows in the mind. And by allowing it to flow in the mind with total innocence, without fighting against it, that beautiful sound naturally has a calming effect upon the mind.

Permeating

On Sunday mornings we hear the church bells ringing and I hear God speaking in the sound of those bells. When we go to a Hindu temple, there are bells outside and we ring the bell before we enter the temple. Our minds become quieter and quieter and we get into the mood for devotion. This is part of gong meditation, which has existed in Tibet for thousands of years. If you go to some of the monasteries in Tibet, you will find a gong being struck at mealtime. So even while eating that sound is forever permeating your mind.

Penetrating

The precise moment when the gong is to be struck has been scientifically worked out by the yogis. They have worked out how thoughts operate in a person's mind. We think a thought is a continuum. But really it is not a continuum but a series of little thoughts that combine to make it seem as one thought. It's like a movie film, where although it appears to be a continuous picture, there is a series of frames of pictures which run through the projector. We might think thought is continuous, but thought is constituted by a series of gaps. The gong is struck at precise moments to penetrate that very gap.

A thought is like a story: it has a beginning, a middle, and an end. You watch the thought, you don't stop the thought, you let it play. As the thought ends, you effortlessly pick up your mantra.

At the times when the gong is struck you will find that if you are involved in a thought, the sound of the gong very gently brings you back to the mantra. Sometimes with the sound of the gong, your mantra recedes and then a thought comes up. Sometimes during gong meditation, the sound reverberates all the time, even if there's a thought or even if there's a mantra.

When the sound of the gong continues in the mind, or it stimulates the mantra, then all thoughts that pass through the mind have no lasting effect on the mind. They are like clouds floating away.

Reverberating

At the end of the gong meditation there are several minutes when the gong is no longer being struck and yet you hear the sound. This is a good experience because the aim has been achieved: the mind is aware of a continued reverberation while the gong is not struck. The purpose of the Tibetan gong meditation is to experience this deeper level of awareness.

Eternal Hum

In the ultimate state when your mind is attuned to the reverberation of the gong and its subtlety, its fineness, you hear a sound all the time -- the eternal hum -- which in sound value represents your unification with the entire universe.

In the state of meditation when you start hearing this eternal hum, which reverberates like the sound of the gong, it means that you have gone to deeper layers of the mind.

Mantra Fading

We use the gong practice so that you can learn to use your mantra. In every mantra, you will find the sound of the gong contained subtly within the mantra. That is how the gong sound and your mantra blend. This teaches you how you must meditate: as the sound of the gong fades away, so should the mantra fade away easily.

Once you get used to the gong, then automatically you'll get into the habit of letting your mantra fade away. You let it float away. And as it floats away, you dive deep within yourself. You reach deeper layers of your mind. That is where the beauty is. It is so mystical, but scientific at the same time. It is systematic and scientific.

Integrating

Another purpose of gong meditation is for you to experience the difference between the small "I" and the big "I." Every human being has the little ego-self, which we call the small "I", and the real Self, which we call the big "I." As you get deeper into this form of meditation, you can become so identified with the gong, with the sound of the gong, that the small "I" can be observed acting. In the sound of the gong, as you float away with that sound, you can distinctly feel yourself separate from the little "I", and there you experience the big "I", the real "I" within yourself in full consciousness as the big "I" watches all the activity of the small "I".

While meditating with the gong, you must have had thoughts passing through the mind. You might have noticed and felt that the thoughts were not as emotional as

they would normally be out of meditation or in other meditation. In other words, the thoughts didn't stick.

Gong meditation shows us with some little practice how we can stand apart and view ourselves and the world, and yet be so involved in it. To be in it and not of it, that's the secret. And that will surely lead you to salvation, nirvana, or whatever term. Terms don't mean a thing. What really matters is the integration within us, whereby we can express the joy that we experience. Experiencing it and expressing it, that is the aim of life.

Activating

Everything in the universe is nothing but vibration. Vibration in congealed form is perceptible by the physical senses. The physical senses have a greater link to the conscious mind, while the finer sense within you, which some call the sixth sense, has contact with far deeper layers of the mind. When you meditate you go beyond the grosser senses and into the deeper and deeper layers of the mind, and you enhance all the physical senses. And not only do you enhance them but use them as instruments to activate the sixth sense. It is the activation of the sixth sense that helps you perceive things in greater depth. It helps you to greater awareness. It helps you enter the realms of knowingness.

Grace

The subtle sound of the vibrating gong in our meditation can be equated with grace. That reverberating sound is always there, always there. And yet our minds are filled with thoughts. One thought comes and the other thought goes, comes and goes. Yet behind all that there is the reverberating sound. Grace is always there. If we integrate the ego-self and the real Self, we draw upon grace. And grace permeates every thought, word and deed; but we have to allow it to permeate. And when that happens, everything becomes joyful.