

From the Unreal to the Real — Mantram

Let's use one of the finest mantras as an example of how mantra meditation is done and why it is so beautiful. This very famous and particularly lovely and effective mantra is "*Asato Ma Sat Gamayo.*" This is an ancient Sanskrit mantra from yoga and, in a nutshell, it means "Lead me from the unreal to the real." Its subtle meaning is "Lead me from my attachment, my preoccupation, with the unreal into communion with, and realization of, what is real (meaning God or Spirit)."

How to Practice

To practice this mantra, sit comfortably. Do your deep breathing. And when you are ready, in notes which are soothing to you and easy to sing, begin chanting

Asato Ma Sat Gamayo

Perhaps you wish to sing it twice before every inhalation, or once. It depends on the rhythm which you prefer. Remember, this is not an initiated mantra. You do not need to know your specific note and rhythm. You can experiment and find the note and rhythm which are most comfortable to you.

Then after singing this aloud for a few minutes — for 5 minutes, for example — begin to chant at a whisper level, loud enough so that you might hear yourself but allowing the energy of the mantra to become more and more interiorized. After 2 or 3 minutes of whisper chanting, move on to mental chanting. And then let the mental chanting help you to go beyond the normal humdrum of your thoughts.

When you have chanted mentally for a time, you will notice that other thoughts try to interfere or divert your attention. So the knack of chanting a mantra is to be able to put your mantra wherever the distraction or turbulence is striving to divert you. Simply put the mantra in the area of your mind where you are aware of the distraction and the distraction will fall away if you simply maintain the mantra for a while. Then, as other

distractions arise, once again put your mantra in the area of your mind where the most pronounced distraction is until that distraction dissolves or diffuses. In this manner you will gradually find that your mind is free of turbulence, released by this practice of mantra.

When you have used the mantra mentally and the only thing that remains in your awareness is the mantra (because the turbulence has been dealt with), then the mantra, *Asato Ma Sat Gamayo*, will begin to fall apart and diffuse itself. When the mantra falls away, sometimes one syllable or two syllables at a time, then the mantra has done its job. All that remains is the surge of the mantra. No longer do the words occur to your awareness because you have transcended the normal mind and are experiencing peace, or light, or love, or joy, or a profound wisdom of the meaning of the mantra.

Abide in this blissful state and then, when it is time to come back out, retrace the level thoroughly in order to become a fine meditator through mantra, through sound and word. So go back to mental chanting for a minute or two, and then whisper chanting for a minute or so, and then out loud chanting for another minute. And when you're chanting out loud, feel free to stretch your body, move it around. Even stand up and stretch, with the feeling that the mantra is still in your physical body, enabling you to sense this deep, inner truth in your physical body and in your daily activities.

Benefits

The science of mantra involves initiation into a personal mantra from a Guru who takes into account your individuality, your individual rhythm, your individual notes (notes which are more natural to you than other notes). He also determines your natural rhythm and the nature of the energy field surrounding your body is also considered. However, this is a general mantra which can help you to experience what a mantra is like.

In most cases a general mantra can give you a degree of experience in meditation. It's likely that a general mantra will help you transcend the turbulence within you to move into awareness of your Buddhi and your place of insight and on occasion also to experience the wonder of your inner self.