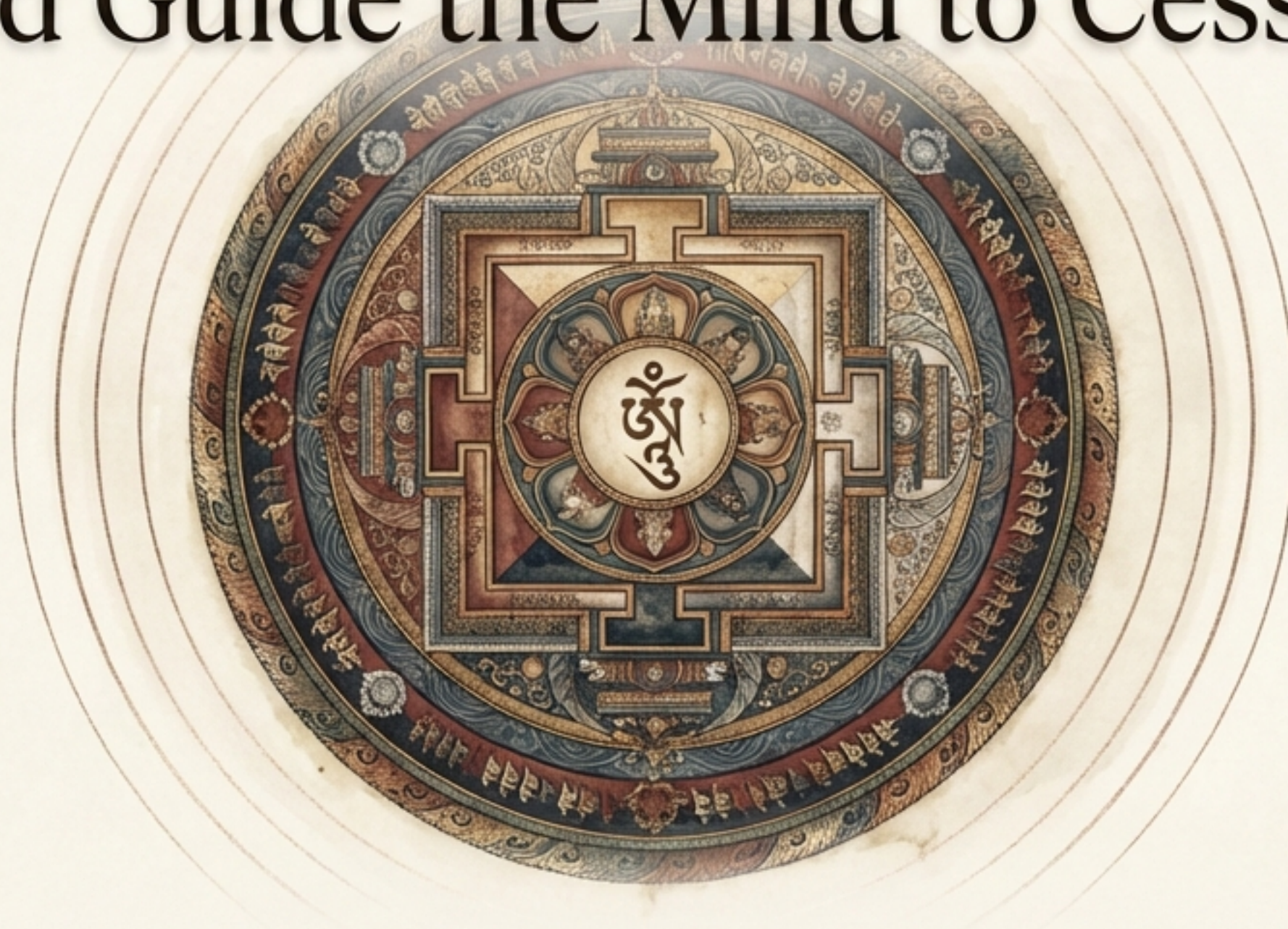


The Geometry of Stillness: How Form and Sound Guide the Mind to Cessation



An exploration of the mandala and gong as tools for realizing impermanence and non-self.

A Mandala is a Guided Journey for the Eye

The design is engineered to guide attention. The path mirrors the meditative process:

- The outer ring is busy and varied → representing the complexity of daily experience.
- Moving inward across boundaries → a process of simplification and focus.
- Arriving at the square palace → finding stability and order.
- Settling in the central lotus → realizing stillness and the source.

Key Idea: This “outer-to-inner” pull is the core function of the mandala as a contemplative object.





The Outer Field: The Intricate Dance of the World

The broadest outer ring is filled with repeating medallions and symbols that represent the interconnected, cyclical nature of existence.

Key Motifs & Meanings:

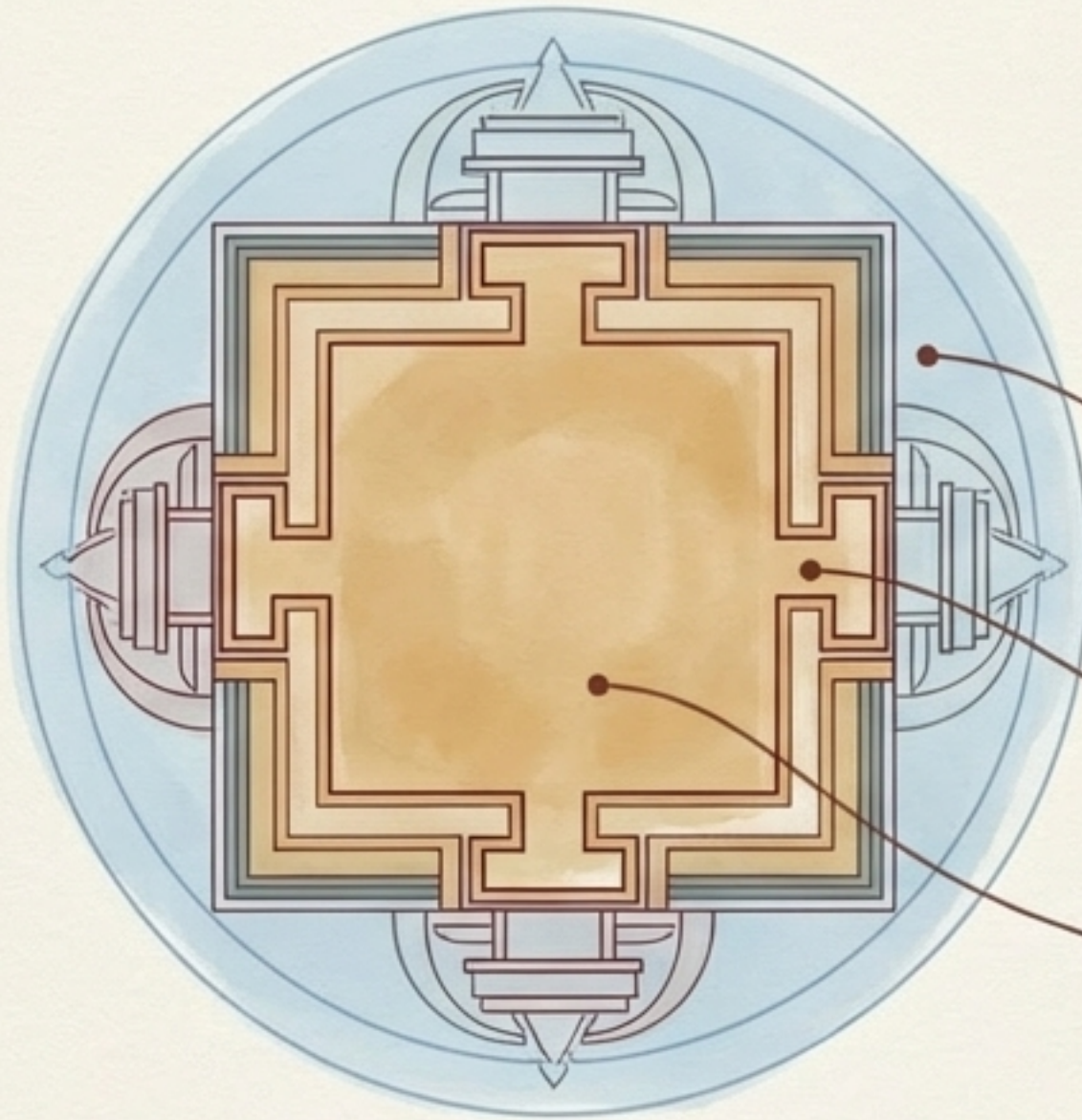
- **“Flower of Life” Lattices:** Interconnectedness, the underlying harmony of forms.
- **“Metatron’s Cube” Networks:** The structural intelligence organizing matter.
- **Wheel Borders:** Cyclical time, continuity, and unbroken flow.
- **Floral Scrollwork:** Fills negative space to keep the eye in a circular, meditative rhythm.

Crossing the Threshold into the Sacred Enclosure

The transition from the outer field to the inner palace marks a shift from the cosmos of experience to the structure of realization.

Geometric Symbolism:

- **Circle:** Totality, the cosmos, the entire 'field' of experience.
- **Square Palace:** Structure, stability, the ordered and sacred world.
- **Four Gates:** The four directions, offering entry into the center from any side. These are the entry points for realization.



The Unfolding Lotus: Purity at the Still Center

Core Symbolism:

- **Bindu (Center Point):** The unmoving source; the axis of the entire design.
- **Lotus:** Purity and awakening. It arises from the world yet remains unstained by it.
- **Eight Petals:** Wholeness and completeness, resonating with the Noble Eightfold Path.



The Mantra: A Continuous Activity of Compassion



Syllable Meanings:

- **OM** (ཨོཾ): Sacred body, speech, mind
- **MA** (མ་): Compassion
- **NI** (ནི): Jewel / precious intent
- **PAD** (པད): Lotus (purity)
- **ME** (མེ): Wisdom
- **HŪṢ** (ཧཱུཾ): Indestructible awakened heart

Why a Circle?: Mantras in this tradition are not linear sentences. A circular arrangement represents no beginning and no end—a continuous compassionate activity. It is a visual expression of *pratītyasamutpāda* (dependent origination).

HŪṂ: The Unmoving Heart Where All Realms Collapse



- **The Six Syllables and the Six Realms:**

The mantra is a method for purifying the six realms of suffering (Gods, Titans, Humans, Animals, Ghosts, Hell).

Doctrinal Significance of HŪṂ:

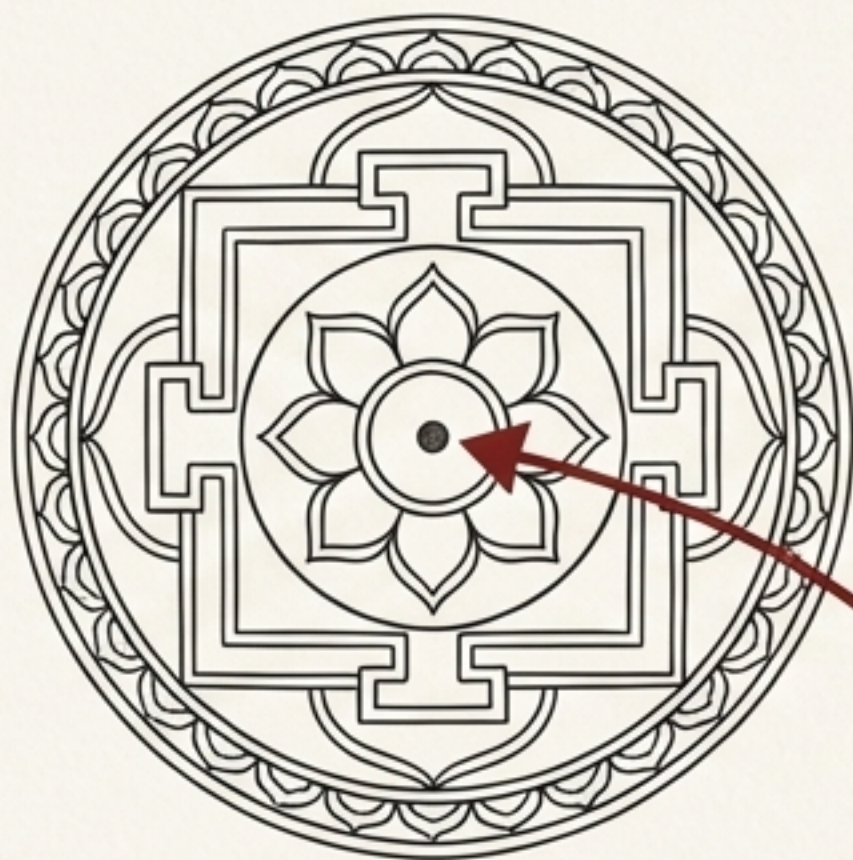
- HŪṂ corresponds to the Hell realms, whose core suffering is **hatred and aversion (dosa)**.
- Placing HŪṂ at the center signifies that hatred is the deepest root defilement. When it ceases, all other realms collapse.

- HŪṂ represents cutting off **aversion**, leading to the end of **reactive resistance**. When there is no resistance, there is no becoming.

“Avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā ... avijjāya tveva asesavirāganirodhā...” (SN 12.1)

From Form to Sound: The Map Becomes the Territory

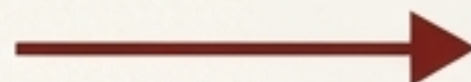
Outer Complexity → Square Palace → Lotus → HŪṂ



Strike → Full Sound → Decay → Silence



Outer Complexity → Square Palace → Lotus → HŪṂ



Strike → Full Sound → Decay → Silence

The mandala provides the visual map for the journey inward. The gong provides the direct, felt experience. Both are instruments designed to guide awareness from complexity to stillness and cessation.



The Gong is an Anicca Machine

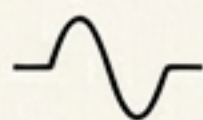
A gong is not a bell. It does not produce a fixed melody. It creates a broad spectrum of frequencies with a long, decaying resonance.

The Core Function: It makes impermanence (*anicca*) unavoidable. You cannot grasp or hold a gong sound as a stable object. You can only experience its three phases directly:

1. **Arising**
2. **Changing**
3. **Ceasing**

How a Single Strike Reveals the Entire Path

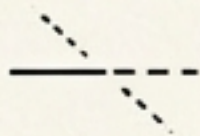
The Mantra Works Without Chanting:



Sound arises → **nāma** (mind)



Sound vibrates the body → **rūpa** (form)



Sound fades → **anicca** (impermanence)

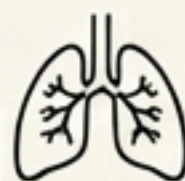


No sound remains → **suññatā** (emptiness)



Awareness remains → **anattā** (not-self)

This is Satipaṭṭhāna through sound:



- **Kāyānupassanā**: Feeling vibration in the chest, skull, skin.



- **Vedanānupassanā**: Observing pleasant, neutral, or subtle unpleasant feelings without clinging.



- **Cittānupassanā**: Seeing anticipation, fading interest, and ultimately, stillness of mind.



- **Dhammānupassanā**: Directly observing arising, passing away, cessation, and letting go.

The Practice: Gong-Based Samādhi



A. Physical Setup

- Hang the gong freely so it can vibrate without obstruction.
- Use a soft mallet to prioritize clarity and decay over volume.



B. Position






- Sit or stand a few feet away, upright but relaxed.
- Eyes can be softly open (recommended) or gently closed.



C. The Mindset

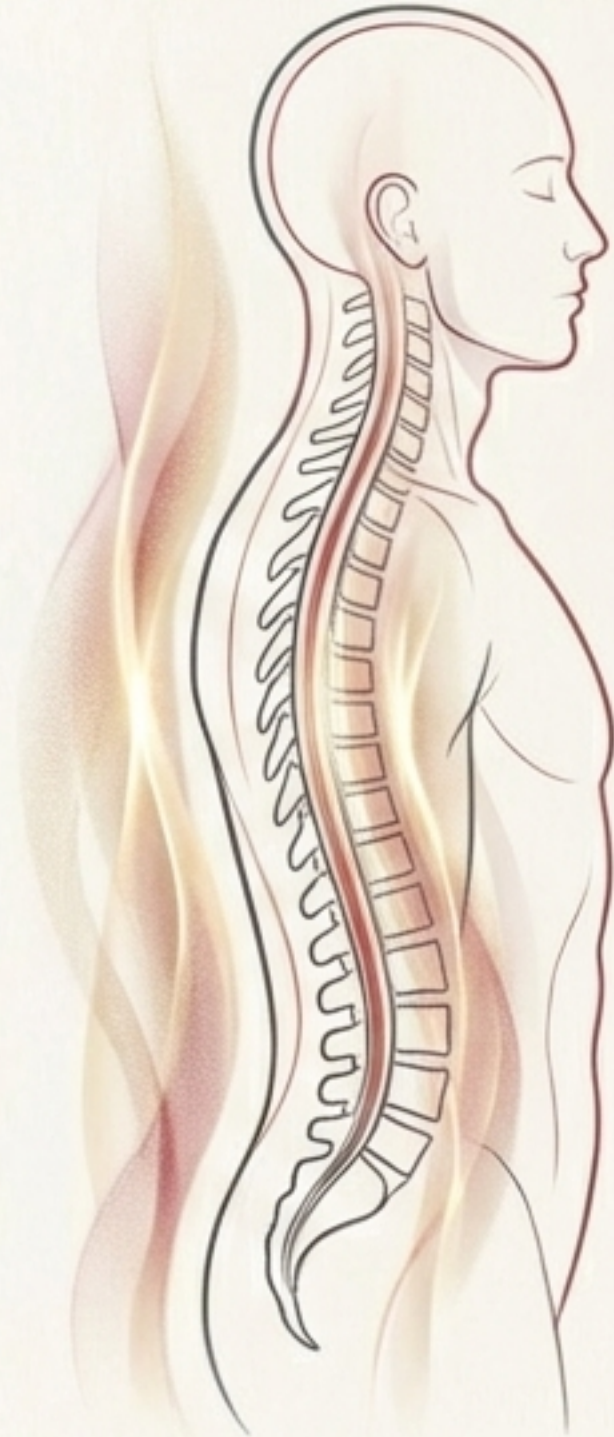
- Do not chant.
- Do not set intentions.
- Simply settle.

The Five Steps of Listening

-  **1. Establish the Body.**
Before striking, feel your contact with the ground. Relax the jaw, shoulders, and belly. Let the breath be natural.
-  **2. One Single Strike.**
Strike once, gently, near the center. The goal is a clear tone that can be followed into silence.
-  **3. Listen Without Following.**
As the sound arises, simply notice it. Don't name it, track it, or expect silence. Observe vibration, spreading, changing, thinning, disappearing.
-  **4. Stay Until the Sound Fully Ceases.**
This is the heart of the practice. Stay with the sound, and then with the *absence* of sound. Notice that when the sound is gone, awareness remains. This is *nirodha*.
-  **5. Do Nothing.**
After the sound ends, rest in the after-silence for a few breaths. The gong does not create silence; it reveals it.

Session Cadence: A session may consist of 5–10 strikes over 15–30 minutes.

What is Happening in the Body?



The Experience: Meditators often feel activation along the spine—at the pelvic floor, abdomen, chest, throat, and head—creating a sense of vertical openness.

The Neurological Explanation: The gong's frequencies synchronize the nervous system.

- **Low Frequencies:** Regulate the vagal nerve system (body calming).
- **High Overtones:** Maintain cortical alertness. This combination releases muscular holding and heightens interoceptive awareness, making the central channel more prominent.

A Sutta-Based Explanation: This is not “energy moving,” but rather:

- ***kāyasaṅkhāra passaddhi*:** calming of bodily formations.
- ***cittasaṅkhāra passaddhi*:** calming of mental formations.
- ***ekaggatā*:** unification of attention.

The Feeling of “Ascending”: When lateral distractions drop away, vertical body-mapping becomes dominant. Nothing is moving up; distractions are falling away.

One-Sentence Essence:

*"Strike once, listen until nothing remains,
and know that awareness does not cease."*

"The mandala uses form to exhaust form."

"The mantra uses sound to exhaust sound."

A final word from the Buddha:

Lokaṃ ca loka-samudayaṃ ca loka-nirodhaṃ ca paññāpemi.

**I declare the world, its arising,
and its cessation right here.**

– SN 12.44